

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



E P H E S I A N S

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# How to Develop a Positive Self-Image

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 19, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:1–6**

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

EPHESIANS 1:3

## Outline

Introduction

I. Recognize Your Righteousness

II. Rely on Your Resources

III. Rest in Your Relationship

Conclusion

## Introduction

All right, take your Bibles and turn, please, tonight, to Ephesians chapter 1. Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful chapter this is—Ephesians chapter 1. Now, this morning we talked about the peril of pride. We told you how pride provokes God; it provokes Deity. We told you how pride proves our depravity. We told you how pride precedes destruction, how pride does so many terrible, horrible things. And so, we came away from the service perhaps saying, “Well, one thing I don’t need to be is proud. I need to be humble.”

But many people do not understand what genuine biblical humility is. They think that biblical humility is going around all hung over, having an inferiority complex, and saying, “Well, I am just no good.” Well, friend, that is not true. You are somebody. And you need to develop to have true humility and to have a true understanding of who you are. You need to have an understanding of what God says about you. You need to see who you are in Christ.

I want to give a longer sermon title tonight than I normally give. Tonight the sermon title is going to be just simply “Developing a Positive Self-Image.” Or, we could make it a little longer: “How to Develop a Positive Self-Image.” Or, we’ll make it a little longer than that: “Three Definite Ways to Develop a Positive Self-Image.” And I want you to see these things as they come here from the book of Ephesians.

I’m beginning chapter 1, verse 1: *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,*

*to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” (Ephesians 1:1–6)*

Now, the key to living a victorious Christian life is to discover who you are in Christ. Many Christians have never really discovered that.

¶ They remind me of the man who had an identity problem and an energy crisis at the same time. He didn't know who he was, and he was too tired to find out.¶

Well, I want you tonight to pay attention and put away that tiredness, and I want you to find out who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever noticed that in the average Bible, if you'll look at the margin where it's thumbed the most, you'll find the Bible has been used the most in what we call the “behavior passages.” If you'll take somebody's Bible and look through it, the verses that deal with behavior will be the ones that will be marked up the most, underlined the most. And the Bible pages will be smudged there the most, and they'll be worked over the most there because we just have a way of going to those kinds of passages.

You say, “What do you mean, Pastor, by the ‘behavior passages’?” Well, I'm talking about passages like Ephesians chapter 6 that tells us how to put on the whole armor of God and how to fight the warfare. And boy, we say, “Well, that's what I need to do.” And we get over there, and we study that and study that—or maybe in the twelfth chapter of Romans that tells all of these things to do and not to do, or maybe in the Beatitudes that tell us how to live, and how to act, and all of these things. And we study those behavior passages over and over again. But I want you to learn something about Christianity tonight: *Christianity is not behavior modification*. Now, many people have the idea that it is. But, you see, God does not work from the outside in. God does not modify our behavior in order to change us. God changes us in order to modify our behavior.

Now, I told you this morning that sin is an inside job. Remember I used the illustration of the worm that starts on the inside of the apple, having had its egg laid in the blossom, and works its way out—that sin comes from within, out of the heart of man. And when God deals with sin, God deals with the inside first. And God deals with the heart first. Somebody has said that “you'll never purify the water by painting the pump,” and you're not going to purify your life by outward modification. If you try to, what you're going to end up with is legalism—and it is deadly.

Now, let me just give you, before we get into the message tonight, basically an

outline of the book of Ephesians. It'll be a very rough outline. But in Ephesians chapter 1, Paul tells us who we are. That's so important that we understand that—who we are. And then, in chapters 2 and 3, he tells us how we got to be who we are in Christ. And then, in chapters 4 through 6, he tells us how to live like what we are in Christ. Now, first of all, he tells us what we are in Christ. Then he tells us how we got to be what we are in Christ. And then, he tells us how to live as we are in Christ. Now, that's always Paul's pattern. First of all, Paul gives the doctrinal portion: what we are and how we got to be what we are. And then, he gives the practical portion: how to live like what we are. He deals first of all with being, and then he deals with doing.

Now, if you start with doing rather than being, if you do not understand the doctrinal, if you just simply start in the practical, you're going to get into legalism, you're going to be frustrated, and you're going to try to live in a way that's not going to work out. It is frustrating to live contrary to an identity that you do not have in your heart and in your mind.

Now, Jesus said, for example, *“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:32) Now, it is truth that frees us. And by the way, what is truth? Truth is what God says; that's what truth is. Truth is what God says. Whatever God says, that's truth. That truth is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the Bible says, *“[You will] know the truth, and the truth [will] make you free.”* (John 8:32) But you see, the truth does not free you until you know it. *“[You] shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:32) Now, it doesn't matter how true the truth is, and it doesn't matter how many wonderful truths there are in this Bible—they will not give you liberation, they will not set you free, until you know those truths. You must know the doctrinal before it can translate into a practical.

¶ Have you ever gone to a circus and seen a circus elephant, and he has a chain around one of his hind legs? And there's an iron ring there, and there's a chain. And you would expect, because that's such a big ol' elephant, you would expect to see that chain hooked up to a piece of concrete that's sunk deeply into the ground, or maybe you'd expect to see that chain locked to a wall somewhere, but it's not. Many times, that chain is just hooked to a wooden stake, and that wooden stake is driven into the ground about that far—maybe six inches into the ground. And that elephant will be there, and he'll be going back and forth with that hind leg out like this. And he'll be reaching down, getting that straw, and throwing it over his back, and swinging his head and going back and forth. And he'll always leave that leg up there with that chain tied to it.

Now, anytime that elephant wanted to, he could pull that chain out of the ground, if he really wanted to, if he desired to. That chain does not keep him there. I'll tell you what keeps him there: when he was a young elephant, they trained him. And they put a chain on him, and they put a stake into the ground that he could not move. They tied

him to some tree, or to some wall, or to some stake that was beyond his strength to move, and he pulled against it and could not move it, and he pulled against it and could not move it, until he learned in his mind that he could not move that stake. And now they can put a stake six inches in the ground, and he'll never try and pull it out because he has in his mind that he is fastened; he has in his mind that he is chained, and that is his mental perception. Now, what he perceives is not true. He perceives that that stake will hold him. It is not true. If he knew the truth, the truth would set him free. The truth is that he could pull that stake out of the ground. But he does not know it; and so, rather than living by what he is and his true conditions, he lives by his perceptions, and his perceptions have him bound.†

Now, many Christians do not understand the truth. They do not know who they are in Christ. They've never really understood their self-image. They do not know what they have in Christ. And, therefore, they are never, ever really liberated. They have a lid on their minds spiritually. They say, "I cannot do this. I cannot be free. I cannot succeed. I am chained by this habit. I am chained by this failure. I am chained by my limited knowledge," and so forth. And it is not true. But if we believe it to be true, it may as well be true.

†Years ago, I read a book by a cosmetic surgeon called *Psycho-Cybernetics*. I don't remember everything I read in that book, but basically what this man said in this book—Maxwell Maltz, I believe his name was—what he said was this: that many times a person would come to him who would have a disfigurement, something wrong; someone with a facial characteristic that needed to be corrected. And the doctor, with his skill and his patience, would perform surgery and correct that disfigurement, but the person, when they looked in the mirror, still saw themselves as disfigured. They still conceived of themselves as being less than acceptable in appearance. They still thought of themselves somehow as being ugly. And no matter how successful the operation was, for some patients, it made no difference because they had locked into their mind so strongly that they were disfigured that even though the characteristics were changed that disfigured them, in their mind, they still saw themselves as disfigured.†

Now, many Christians need to understand that they have, sometimes, a perception of themselves that it is not true. Like the elephant, or like the people with plastic surgery, the perception is not true. But they believe it to be true, and, therefore, they're never set free. Remember the truth is what God says, not what you think about it. What God says is true, no matter how you feel about it. It is truth if God says it. But it will never set you free until you know the truth.

Now, I want you to learn three things that are going to liberate you tonight, that are



going to give you a proper self-image, to understand what God says about you. And then, you're going to see that this truth is going to set you free, and it's going to give you a self-image that is going to be a healthy self-image and bring you to true humility.

## I. Recognize Your Righteousness

Number one, the first truth is this: if you would be free, you need to recognize your righteousness. Now, look here in chapter 1, verse 1: "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*" (Ephesians 1:1) Now, let me tell you something, friend: tonight, if you are in Christ Jesus—that is, if you have received Christ as your personal Savior; if you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ; if you have repented of your sin, trusted Christ, and you've been saved—you are a saint.

Now, sometimes our Roman friends take certain individuals who have achieved certain things in their Christian lives, and they say, "We're going to canonize them." That doesn't mean they're going to shoot them out of a gun, but it means, "We're going to make them a saint." Well, friend, nobody can make me a saint; I am already a saint. You're looking at St. Adrian. That's right. I am! And you say, "How arrogant!" No, my dear friend, you are a saint, too. Now, there are only two classes of people in the world: the saints and the *ain'ts*—that's all. And you are one or the other.

Now, what the word *saint* means. Paul just wrote to all of these Christians here at Ephesus, and he called them "saints." The word *saint* means "a sanctified one." It means "one that God has made righteous and set aside for Himself." "Well," you say, "I'm not a whole saint." No, you're a saint or an *ain't*. Nobody is half-saved; nobody is half-saint. *To be half-saved is to be altogether lost.*

Now, what is humility? You may say, "Well, you know, I just don't think I ought to call myself a saint." Well, let me tell you what real humility is: real humility is accepting what God says about you. That's real humility—not what you think about it, but what God says about you.

Now, there are some people... Have you ever tried to lead a person to Christ, and you just couldn't lead that person to Christ because that person would never believe what God said about his sinnership? All right, I have talked to some Christians, and I've never been able to lead them to victory because they will not understand, they will not receive, what God says—not only about their sinnership when they were lost, but about their sainthood now that they're saved. Some Christians just resist the idea. They don't get victory because they cannot accept the fact that they're saints.

Now, if you asked a Christian if he's a saint, he says, "Well, I wouldn't call myself a saint. I'm saved, but..." Why wouldn't you call yourself a saint? He says, "Well, I am, you know, I'm just no good." Who said you were no good? Jesus died for you. If you're

one of His saints, what right have you got to say that you're no good? I hear people say, "Well, you know, I'm just not what I ought to be." Now, you know, that sounds humble. That's not humble. You know what that is? A man says, "Well, I know I'm just not what I ought to be." That's rebellion. I mean, let me ask you a question: If you're not what you ought to be, why not? Why aren't you what you ought to be? Do you think God's going to take that as an excuse? No. If you ought to be that way, then get that way.

Now, I'm telling you, dear friend, God calls you a saint. You're saying, "Well, you mean that I'm supposed to be sinless?" No, dear friend, you can't be sinless. But I'm going to tell you one thing: you can be blameless. Look, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 4: "*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*" (Ephesians 1:4) Every one of us tonight ought to be blameless before the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saints of God. You say, "Well, but I'm not perfect." That makes no difference. Dear friend, in God's sight, you're His saint. In God's sight, God sees you as perfect.

I want to show you something. Look in Romans chapter 4 here for just a moment. Now remember, in Ephesians, Paul is talking about the grace of God. Now look in Romans 4:4: "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*" (Romans 4:4)—Romans 4. That means if you could be saved by being a good boy, it would mean that you've earned your salvation and God is in debt to you. Well, I want to tell you, God is no man's debtor. "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*"—now, look at what he goes on to say—"*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*" (Romans 4:4–6)

Do you know what the word *impute* means? It means "to put that on your account." Now, you say, "Well, that's a term I don't use." Well, you use it all the time. If you go into one of these department stores, you say, "Charge it." What you're really saying is, "Put that on my account. Impute that to my bill." Next time you go to one of these department stores, say, "Impute it." It means the same thing. God puts righteousness on your account, not of works.

*I would not work my soul to save,  
For that my Lord hath done,  
But I would work like any slave,  
For love of God's dear Son!*

But I want to tell you, my dear friend, that the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace through faith—not of ourselves, not of works. (Ephesians 2:8–9) And when I trust Christ, the moment I trust Christ, the moment I give my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, at that moment, I become a saint; I am righteous. "Well," you say, "what if you sin?"

Well, what do you mean, “What if”? Is there anybody here who has not or does not?

But now, let’s go on to read here verse 7—Romans 4, verse 7: “*Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*”—you say, “That’s all past. Yes, for the past sins, but what about the fresh ones?” Look in verse 8—“*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*” (Romans 4:7–8) God never will impute sin to one of His children.

You know, some people say, “Well, what if you sin after you get saved. Won’t you lose your salvation?” Friend, is there anybody who hasn’t sinned after he got saved? *I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven*—not the best. I am telling you, dear friend, when you understand what the Bible’s definition of sin is, the thought of foolishness is sin. “*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*” (James 4:17) “*For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*” (Romans 14:23) Every one of us, every day, would say, “Yes, in some way we’ve failed.” But I want to tell you—put it down big; you put it down plain; you put it down straight: if you’ve repented of your sin and trusted Jesus Christ to save you, you are righteous in God’s sight, and you are a saint of God. You’d better understand that because until you see who you are, you’re not going to behave like you ought to behave. You see, your behavior comes out of the conception of who you are, and when you see that you’re the righteousness of God in Christ, then you’re going to begin to behave that way.

Now, I’m not saying that when we sin we ought not to confess our sin. Indeed, we ought to confess our sin. But how many of us also have confessed our righteousness—that we are the righteousness of God in Christ? That’s what the Bible says that we are. That’s not bragging. The Bible says in Romans 12, verse 3: “*For I say, through the grace given unto me*”—and notice it’s by grace—“*to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think*”—that is, don’t be a bragger. We talked this morning about don’t be proud, don’t—“*think of yourself more highly than you ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*” (Romans 12:3)

And so, the very first thing I want you to see, if you would have this proper self-image, if you would see who you are in Christ, if you would have a healthy, wholesome, well-balanced personality, you must recognize your righteousness. And your righteousness does not relate to your works at all; it relates to your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I’m not saying that you ought not to do good works. We’ll deal with that. But I’m saying, dear friend, your righteousness is an imputed righteousness. God puts it on your account, and it comes to you through what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross. It is grace all the way.

## II. Rely on Your Resources

Now, the second thing, the second step: not only recognize your righteousness, but secondly, rely on your resources. I want you to look, as we go back to Ephesians chapter 1, where is our home base. Go back to that with me for a moment. Do you know what bothers me? I don't hear many pages turning. Maybe you're already there. Okay, look in verse 3: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"*—now, watch it—*"who hath"*—that is, it's already done—*"hath blessed us with all"*—a-double-I—*"spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"*—*"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 1:3)

Now, you need to understand, not only are you righteous in God's sight, not only does God call you a saint, but that God has given you everything that you need to live a Christian life. Now, I'm not going to pull a trick and ask you a little trick question. I could ask you, "How many of you have all of the patience you need?" Many of you would not lift your hand. Or, how many of you have all of the love that you need? Or, how many of you have all of the wisdom that you need? Or, how many of you have all of the faith that you need? You say, "Well, I don't have all of the patience I need. I don't have all of the love that I need. I don't have all of the wisdom I need. I don't have all of the faith I need." Well, what does God say in verse 3? That God has already blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:3)

Now, I want to ask you a question: Who is right—you or God? According to this verse, you have everything that you need to live the Christian life. You have all the love you need. You have all the patience you need. You have all of the faith that you need. You have all of the wisdom that you need. You say, "If I have it, why don't I have it?" Because you've not understood that you have it. You do not have a conception of yourself as having it. You do not perceive yourself as having it. You're like that elephant that's being held by that little peg. You're like that person whose face has been changed, but you've never changed on the inside. And, therefore, you still see yourself without wisdom, without love, without patience, without faith, without strength. You conceive of yourself that way, and because you conceive of yourself that way, you live that way.

Now remember, dear friend, you have to learn who you are before you can behave as you ought to. First comes the doctrinal, then comes the practical, then comes the behavioral—after you understand who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only should you recognize your righteousness, but you should rely on your resources.

† Several years ago, we had one of my dearest friends here to preach for us. His name was Peter Lord. Some of you know Peter Lord. Others of you do not know Peter Lord. Peter Lord pulled a joke on one of our deacon's wives. It wasn't a joke; it was really an illustration. But he went to Gene Howard, who happens to be, now, the

chairman of our deacons, before the service, and he had a ten-dollar bill, I believe it was, and he said, “Gene, is your wife’s Bible right there?” She was out of the auditorium at that moment. He said, “Yes.” So, he said, “Will you just take this ten-dollar bill, place it there in her Bible? I want to do something.” And so, he did something like this. He took that bill—boy, I’ve just got just ones; pretend that’s a ten—and he placed it in the Bible like that and then closed the Bible and gave it back. Gene put it back on the seat where Beth was to occupy that seat after a while.

Then, after a while, after we had the song service, and the Bible was there—and of course she’d not thumbed through it; she didn’t know that money was there in her Bible—he said, “I need a volunteer to help me.” He looked around and he spotted her as if it were just on, you know, just on a whim. He said, “That lady right there. Would you come up?” Of course he already knew who she was. He’d already had the whole thing planned. And he said, “Now Gene, when she comes up, make certain that she brings her Bible.” So, he handed her the Bible and said, “Hey, don’t you think you’d better take this with you?”

And so, I remember the night. I was sitting here. Betty Howard came and she stood up here. Peter Lord stood and he looked at her. He said, “Betty, do you believe I’m a man of God?” Well, what else could she say standing up there? She said, “Yes, I believe you’re a man of God.”

“Do you believe that I would lie to you?”

“Oh no, Mr. Lord, you wouldn’t lie to me.”

“Betty, do you trust me?”

She said, “I think so.”

“Well no, just tell me: Do you trust me?”

“Yes, I trust you.”

“Now Betty, do you love me?”

“Well yes, Brother Lord, I love you.”

“Well now, Betty, if you know I’m a man of God, and if you trust me, and so forth, if I ask you to do something for me that you could do, and it wouldn’t cost you anything, and I ask you to do it for me, would you do it?”

“Well,” she said, “Yes. Yes, I would.”

“Well,” he said, “fine.” And he said, “If I asked you to do something that you could do right where you are, standing right there, would you do it?”

“Yes.”

“Fine,” he said. “Now,” he said, “give me ten dollars.” “Well,” she said, “let me go to my purse.” He said, “No, no, I didn’t say anything about your purse. I said that you could do it right here where you are right now. Didn’t I say that?”

“Yes.”

“Did you say that you believe me?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe I’m a man of God?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe I’d ask you to do something you cannot do and tell you that you could do it?”

“Oh no.”

“Okay then, give me ten dollars.”

“But I don’t have ten dollars.”

He said, “Now wait a minute. Do you love me?”

“Yes.”

“Do you trust me?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe I’m going to ask you to do something you cannot do if I say I’m not going to do it?”

“No, you wouldn’t say you were going to ask me to do it if I couldn’t do it.”

“All right, fine. Give me ten dollars.”

“But I don’t have ten dollars.”

“Now look. Do you love me?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe me?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, give me ten dollars.”

She said, “But I don’t have ten dollars.”

He said, “Is that your Bible?”

“Yes.”

“Would you hand it here?”

“Yes.”

He opened it up, looked in there, brought out ten dollars, and said, “Why didn’t you give it to me?” She said, “How’d that get in there?”

“Well,” he said, “I put it in there. All I was asking you to give me was what I’d already given you.”

Now, why didn’t she give him that ten dollars? “Well,” you say, “he was unfair. She didn’t know it was in there.” Right—that’s right. She did not know, did she, Gene? She didn’t know it was in there. Now, had she known it was in there, she could have reached out and given it to him. You see, what kept her from giving that ten dollars to that preacher? She didn’t know it was there.†

You see, you’ll know the truth. When you know the truth, the truth sets you free.

Now, if you don't understand what you have in Christ, if you don't... You see, God does not ask anything of you that He has not already given you. *"Of thine own have we given unto [him]."* (1 Chronicles 29:14) *"Of him, and through him, and to him are all things."* (Romans 11:36) And everything that God demands of me, God has already given me. Do you understand that? You see, God doesn't ask me to manufacture anything. It is already mine in Christ. And according to Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3, God has already blessed me *"with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Ephesians 1:3)

Now, how many of us have all the love that we need? Let's see your hands. Sure. Kind of hard to do, wasn't it? "Boy," you say. Just how many of you have all the patience you need? Let me see your hands. "Yeah, boy," you say, "that just doesn't seem right." You know what that is that doesn't seem right? It's that peg that's stuck in the ground about six inches deep that the devil has you chained by, because that's the hangover from the old life, when you were chained and before you were set free in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I want to tell you, dear friend, that truth is believing what God says. Now, it's more important to believe what God says than what you think. Now listen, when you understand what God says, when you understand the truth, the truth will set you free. And I'm saying, dear friend, in order to have a healthy self-image, number one, you are to recognize your righteousness in God's sight. You are a saint. God has imputed righteousness to you, and you are the righteousness of God in Christ. And God has imputed that righteousness, and God will never impute sin to you. That doesn't mean He'll not carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you if you disobey Him, but He will never put that sin on your account. One half of one sin would damn you forever if you ever had that sin imputed to you.

Peter said the same thing. I thought about Simon Peter this time—2 Peter chapter 1, verse 3: *"According as his divine power hath given unto us"*—listen to it—*"all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* (2 Peter 1:3) He has given us all things—a-double-I: *"all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* (2 Peter 1:3)

Now, we have some people—some of the charismatic, Pentecostal types—who talk about getting the "second blessing." They have the idea that you get saved, and then after you get saved, then you go for a while, then you receive the Holy Spirit after you get saved. And they call the receiving of the Holy Spirit after you get saved the "second blessing." Well, I want to tell you something, friend: if you're saved, you already have the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not saved. Now, I'm not trying to be controversial, and I'm not trying to be a smart aleck. And I thank God for my beloved

Pentecostal, charismatic friends. Many of them are better Christians than some Baptists I know. Do you understand what I'm talking about? But I do want you to understand doctrine because it's very important that you understand doctrine.

The Bible says in Romans 8:9 that *"now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* (Romans 8:9) We all have the Holy Spirit in us. That's what makes us saved, and that's how Jesus got in us. How did Jesus come into us? If Christ is not in us, then we're not saved. How does Christ come in? Not bodily. He comes in through His Spirit. And when we believe, we're baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. We've all been made to drink into that Spirit; that is, we're in the Spirit. The Spirit is in us because we're in Christ and Christ is in us.

Now, wait a minute. Pay attention. Stay with me right now and think for just a moment. The Holy Spirit of God is in every believer. So, what is the second blessing? Do I believe in the second blessing? Yes, I do. Let me tell you what the second blessing is to me: the second blessing is understanding what got in the first place. I mean, most of us didn't realize what we got when we got saved. Now we have it. It's not that we receive the Holy Spirit. It's not that. And when I say it, I'm talking about the blessing, not the Blessor. The Blessor is a Him: the Holy Spirit of God. But you see what the second blessing is, if you want to call it the "second blessing." And I can remember when I got mine, when my eyes were opened. And I'm still learning, but what a blessing—what a blessing—to learn that He has already blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:3)

Friend, when you got saved, when you got Jesus, when you were born again, you got the full load; I mean, you got it all. God does not give His Spirit by measure. (John 3:34) You receive everything. According to what Paul says, God has *"blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 1:3) Second Peter chapter 1, verse 3: *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness"*—how does it come?—*"through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* (2 Peter 1:3) *"All things that pertain to life and godliness"* (2 Peter 1:3)—everything that you need to live the Christian life. You don't need anything else. God has already given you all things that pertain to life, all things that pertain to godliness. You don't need one more thing than you already have to live a godly life.

But how does it come? *"Through the knowledge of him [who's] called us."* (2 Peter 1:3) *"[You'll] know the truth, and the truth [will set] you free."* (John 8:32) When you understand who you are in Christ Jesus, when you recognize your righteousness, God calls you a saint. And when you rely upon your resources—God has already blessed us with all spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3)—that's what the second blessing is: when you discover what you got in the first blessing.

Do you want me to tell you what the third blessing is? The third blessing is



discovering you didn't discover it all the second time. And the fourth one is discovering there's still more. And the rest of your life you will spend discovering what you got that moment you stepped from death into life, what you got when you received the Lord Jesus Christ. But friend, I want to tell you that when Jesus came into you, Christ came into you. "And in Him is the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily." (Colossians 2:9) And He is in you. And if the fullness of God is in Him and He's in you, tell me, what more do you need? What more do you need? "*God...[has] blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ [Jesus].*" (Ephesians 1:3) Now, it's not until you know that that you begin to have this healthy self-image, to understand who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. Rest in Your Relationship**

Now, the third thing I want to say, if you want to have a healthy self-image, you don't want to be proud, but you want to see who you are and what you are in the Lord Jesus Christ—and remember, real humility is accepting what God says about you as a Christian—number one, recognize your righteousness—not of any good that you've done, but sheerly by His grace—number two, rely upon your resources—God has already blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—number three, rest in your relationship. Rest in your relationship.

What is your relationship? Well, look, if you will again, in Ephesians chapter 1, and this time in verse 6. The Bible speaks of what God has done "*to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*" (Ephesians 1:6) Now, what is your relationship? Your relationship is one of acceptance—not merely that you have accepted God, but He has made you "*accepted in the beloved.*" (Ephesians 1:6) Now, who is the beloved? Jesus. And you are in Christ. And so, what is true about Jesus is true about you. When God the Father looked over the battlements of heaven, when the Lord Jesus was being baptized, God the Father said of God the Son, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matthew 3:17) Now, if you are in Him, you are accepted in Him, in the beloved—you are accepted in the Lord Jesus.

Now, you see, the problem with so many of us, the reason we do not have a good self-image, the reason we have such a warped personality and psyche is that we have this feeling of rejection. Sometimes it's called an "inferiority complex." Sometimes it's called a "feeling of rejection" and other things. Why do we have it? It is inbred; it is incipient in the race. You see, when Adam sinned, Adam's sin cause rejection. What happened to Adam and Eve after they sinned? They were put out of the Garden of Eden; they were rejected.

I heard about Cain and Abel, who came to their daddy one day after that, and said, "Daddy, you ought to see the beautiful place that we've seen. We climbed up and

looked over the wall—the most gorgeous beautiful garden you’ve ever seen. Dad, do you think we could live in a place like that?” Adam said, “We did once, boys, before your mother ate us out of house and home.”

Now, Adam was rejected, and Eve was rejected. And there is, in the race, there is incipient in us, by just the old nature, by the old Adamic nature—we come into this world with an inborn feeling of rejection, and we spend most of our time looking for acceptance. And that looking for acceptance, trying to be accepted, all it does is it makes us proud. We’re trying to do things. It makes us slaves. As I’ve said, “We live by what other people think.” We live by what Madison Avenue says, or by what the clan says, or by what the clique says.

Why do you think kids will leave a good home, where they have a nice, soft bed, and nice carpets on the floors, and good clean clothes to wear, and love of a father and a mother? Why do they leave that home and go live in a commune—and with a bunch of unwashed, unruly kids—and eat sardines, potted meat, crackers? Why do they do that—sleep on a dirty mattress? Because in the commune they have a feeling of being accepted, that’s why.

Why do you think kids go to rock concerts? You say, “They like the music.” Boloney! Nobody could like that. I mean it. Have you listened? We were at the beach, walking down the beach, and there was a fellow there with a beach blaster, or a ghetto blaster or something. I mean, he had that thing turned up, and waves were going out back as fast as they could. I mean, it was terrible! It was terrible. I gave him a dirty look and kept on walking fast. Just don’t tell me they like that music. Oh, they might think they like it; they may be addicted to it. But it’s not normal to like; it’s not natural to like. It’s like drinking liquor, smoking cigarettes—you have to learn to like it. People, when they begin to smoke, they get sick to their stomach. They begin to drink; they get sick to their stomach. They don’t like it to begin with. They have to learn to like it. Why do they do that? Why do these kids go to these rock concerts? I’ll tell you why. One of the reasons is they feel accepted in a rock concert. It’s that sense. It doesn’t matter whether you’re fat, skinny, got pimples, or anything else. You go to a rock concert, and there’s a sense of belonging. They want to be a part of something and have not found it in the Lord Jesus. And so, at the commune, some, you know, they have the idea Mom and Dad don’t love them. They feel rejected. Now, Mom and Dad love them, but they don’t feel loved, and so they run off.

Everybody dresses a certain way to be accepted. Madison Avenue tells us if we don’t use the right kind of toothpaste, we won’t be accepted; if we don’t wear designer clothes, we will not be accepted; if we don’t have, as I said this morning, the right little animal on our shirt pocket, we’re not going to be accepted. This rejection is enforced.

Well, you know, kids are cruel. Did you know that? I’m talking about little kids. You

know, when you're in grade school, somebody came up and said, "Did you know that your ears stick out?" And boy, I want to tell you, lock in on that and you'll never look in the mirror without going like this. Or they'll say, "Did you know that one nostril is bigger than the other?" Kids are that way, aren't they? And all your life you go through life saying, "Boy, I'd be a pretty good guy if one nostril weren't bigger than the other." And you just want to be accepted; you just want to be a part. And we just have this inborn rejection.

Now, what happens is that many Christians still have this need for acceptance. And it's sort of a hangover need. I mean, even after they get saved, they fail to understand that they are now accepted in the beloved. And so, many Christians get off into legalism, and they're trying to be accepted when they've already been accepted. And many Christians are working hard to make God love them. They think, "Boy, if I could just give more money, if I could just be at the church more, if I could just pray harder, if I could just study, if I could just memorize more verses, maybe then—maybe then—God would love me, maybe then God would accept me." Now friend, I want to tell you something: He has already accepted you, so quit working at it. It is His grace that has made you accepted. Look again in verse 6: *"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."* (Ephesians 1:6)

Now, I want to give you what I consider to be the greatest truth in the message tonight, and it is this: *God does not change you in order that He may love you; God loves you in order that He may change you.* Did you lock in on that? Did that compute? God does not change you so He can love you. Friend, He already loves you. As a matter of fact, He even loved you before you were saved. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5, verse 8: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8) Now, if God loves a dirty, no-good, lowdown, rotten sinner, don't you think He loves His own sons, His own daughters; those who are a part of His family; those who are in the forever family of faith? You are accepted in the beloved.

Now, God loves the sinner. He does not accept the sinner until the sinner repents of his sin. But when you repent of your sin, when you receive Christ, then, by His grace—not anything that you do, or you have to work to make yourself accepted. You are accepted. You are in the beloved.

Do you remember the story of Mephibosheth in the Old Testament? Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, the grandson of Saul. Now, David and Jonathan entered into a blood covenant that they would love one another, fellowship one another, fight one another's battles, share one another's possessions. They entered into a blood covenant one with the other. Now, this covenant extended not only from David to Jonathan and not only from Jonathan to David, but a blood covenant also descended to the children; it

included the children. Now Jonathan, before he died, had a son whose name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was heir to the throne, but he was Saul's grandson. And Saul was the king of Israel. And it could have been handed down from Saul to Jonathan to Mephibosheth, but Saul and Jonathan were slain. And David became king because David was God's anointed. Somebody took Mephibosheth, who at that time was crippled. Because a nurse fell with the little baby in the nursery, the little baby became lame in his legs. And she took this little baby to a place in the Bible called Lodebar, and there he grew up fearing David and hating David.

Now, the reason that he feared David and hated David was because he did not understand about David. He did not know that David loved him. He did not know that David had made a covenant with his father. And Mephibosheth's rebellion against David was a result of believing a lie about David. He didn't know the truth. David was not what Saul said that David was. And so, he didn't understand who David was, and he also did not understand that he was accepted by David because of Jonathan. And so, one day David found Mephibosheth. David brought Mephibosheth to him. Mephibosheth fell on his face before David. He thought David was going to kill him right there on the spot. David said, "Mephibosheth, I don't want to kill you. I want to bless you. I want to treat you as one of my sons. I want to restore your inheritance. I want you to sit at the table with me. I want to love you. I want to honor you. I want to bless you."

Now, why did David do all of this? He made it very clear, and the Bible tells us in the Samuel materials that he did it because of Jonathan. Mephibosheth was accepted because of Jonathan, not because of Mephibosheth. But David said, *"Is there [anybody] left of the house of Saul, that I may shew [the] kindness [of God into him] for Jonathan's sake?"* (2 Samuel 9:1)

Now friend, why am I accepted? Not because I'm in such great shape, not because of anything that I have done, but I want to tell you, God has accepted me for Christ's sake—the same thing exactly. The Bible says, *"Be...kind..., tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) And just as Mephibosheth was accepted in Jonathan, I am accepted in Jesus.

And when I see this, when I see right away that God already loves me—I mean, God loves me now, even though I'm imperfect, even though in my own stature there are faults and failures and foibles, still I want to tell you, I am the righteousness of God in Christ. That righteousness has been imputed to me. And I need to recognize my righteousness, and I need to rely upon my resources. God has blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:3) And I need, dear friend, not only to do that, but I need to receive my relationship, which is this: that I am accepted in the beloved. And I need to quit trying to work my way to God. Listen to me. Listen to your pastor tonight. *Holiness is not the way to Christ. Christ is the way to*

## holiness.

I was reading a book the other day. It was actually a Bible. Well, actually, I'll tell you just what kind of Bible it was: it was a Ryrie Study Bible. And in the back of that Bible—and I have deep respect for those who put together the Ryrie Study Bible—but I read the portion on being filled with the Holy Spirit, and it said, “If we would be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must live righteous and a godly life,” and so forth and so forth. And I thought to myself, “Oh no, if you would live a righteous and a godly life, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit.” I'm not just playing with words.

‡Have you ever gone to the bank and needed money, and if you can prove you don't need a loan, they'll give you some?‡

I mean, listen, if I could live a righteous and a holy life, why would I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What I'm trying to say is, dear friend, I come to God as I am and say, “Here I am, Lord,” and He says, “You're accepted.” Now, if I cling to my sins, of course I can't be filled with the Holy Spirit. The moment I come to Him and just say, “Here I am, Lord,” I'm accepted in the beloved. And *He does not change me in order that He might love me; He loves me that He might change me.* And *holiness is not the way to Christ. Christ is the way to holiness.* I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I have already every spiritual blessing that I need in Christ Jesus. And I have been received—I have been accepted—in the beloved. And when I learn to do that, friend—when I recognize my righteousness, when I rely on my resources, and when I rest in my relationship—I'm going to have a self-image that only God can give me. And then He's going to begin to make me more and more like Himself.

## Conclusion

Now listen, the key to all of this is that little phrase “in Christ.” If you were to read it... Let's read it again. I want you to listen to it: “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful*”—here it is—“*in Christ Jesus*”—look in verses 2 and 3—“*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*”—all right, and—“*according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*”—and then verse 6—“*to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*” (Ephesians 1:1–6) And I could just keep on reading through the book of Ephesians, and over and over again the Bible says we're “in Christ.” How do we get into Christ? By repentance and faith. That places us in the Body of Christ.

•Now listen, what does it mean to be in Christ? Well, if I were to put you in a barrel, you'd be in a barrel right? Then I'd put the barrel in the Mississippi River. Where are

you? You're in the Mississippi River, right? I mean, if I've got you in a barrel, you're in the barrel, and I put the barrel in the river, where are you? You're in a barrel in the river, right?†

You say, "Yeah, Preacher, I understand; okay. Now," you're saying, "don't talk down to me." Okay, now listen, I'm not talking down to you, but I want you to understand. Where are you now? You're in Christ, right? Where is Christ? He's seated in the heavenlies. Where are you? Seated in the heavenlies, right? What is true about Christ is true about you. And you see, He's already enthroned, is seated, in the heavenlies. And all things are beneath His feet. And when you understand who you are in Christ, you talk about having a good personality, you talk about self-acceptance, a good self-image—you'll have it. And it won't be pride; it will be genuine humility. Humility is accepting what God says. "You'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)†

# Praise to the Trinity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 24, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 1:3–14

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.”*

EPHESIANS 1:3

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word, please, and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1. This is a Thanksgiving message. The title of our message today is “Praise to the Trinity.” Now, let me give you a secret, friend: the secret of everything, really, when you get to the bottom line, is just praise. That’s what we’re going to do in all eternity. We’re going to praise the Lord. That’s why we’re saved—so we can praise Him and worship Him. And sometimes, if your prayers get dry, begin to pray and they’ll get juicy again. Sometimes, if you’re feeling low, pull some of the groans out of your plans and shove in a few “hallelujahs” and see if it doesn’t pick up. Sometimes, if you run out of things to pray about, begin to praise and you’ll have an ocean to swim in. Sometimes, if it seems that God is not near, begin to praise, because God occupies the praise of His people. (Psalms 22:3)

Now, the scripture that we’re going to read today—and I’m not going to read it all at one time because it is a great, long sentence—it begins in Ephesians 1, verse 3, and it goes all the way through verse 14. And Paul just keeps on talking. He never stops in this sentence. One phrase leads to another phrase that leads to another phrase and

that leads to another phrase.

Now, if Paul were a writer, when he got this to the editor, the editor would probably say, “Mr. Paul, break this up into several smaller sentences.” If he were in an English class, they would say, “Now Paul, you can’t make a sentence fourteen verses long. That’s just too long.” Well, listen, Paul gets so excited he just can’t stop talking.

*There was a young poet from Japan  
Whose poetry no one could scan.  
When told it was so,  
He said, “Yes, I know.*

*But I always try to get as many words in the last sentence as I can.”*

Now, that’s the way Paul was. Right here, he’s just talking, and it seems like he just keeps on cramming it in. You’re going to find here, in these verses, the most all-inclusive statement of the gospel, I believe, that you’ll find anywhere in the entire Bible. It is a marvelous statement. But actually, as you analyze it, Brother Jim, it’s like a hymn of praise, and it has a refrain. First of all, there’s praise to the Father, and then there’s a refrain. And then, there’s praise to the Son, and then there is a refrain. And then, there is praise to the Holy Spirit, and there is a refrain.

Let me give you the refrains right now. Look in verse 6, the first one: *“to the praise of the glory of his grace.”* (Ephesians 1:6) That is the first refrain. And then, look with me, if you will, in verse 12: *“that we should be to the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:12) That’s the second refrain. And then, look, if you will, in verse 14: *“unto the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:14) Each time Paul says something, and then Paul says, “Hey, let’s praise the Lord about that. Let’s just praise His glory for what He’s done.”

## **I. Praise to the Father Who Has Selected Us**

Now, the very first thing that he wants to praise the Lord for, and the very first thing I want you to praise God for, is, let’s offer praise to the Father who has selected us. Begin now in verse 3, and look: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”—* now, watch verse 4—*“according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”* (Ephesians 1:3–4)

God selected us. And when did God select me? When did God choose me? When did God choose you? The Bible says here that God did it *“before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) Before God scooped out the seas, before God piled up the mountains, and before God flung out the sun, moon, and stars—before God did all of that—God had you in His heart and in His mind. The Bible says that you were selected by the Father before you were ever even born. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “God



surely must have chosen me before I was born because He wouldn't have chosen me afterward." Well, dear friend, I want you to know that God has chosen me and God has chosen you.

Now I want to make something abundantly clear. When the Bible says we're chosen in Him, this is not the choice of one sinner above another sinner. It is not God saying, "This man is predestined for hell, and this man is predestined for heaven." That is not it at all. And please do not ever let that get into your heart and into your mind. Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. Do you understand that? Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. And I'll give you four reasons that anybody wants to be saved can be saved.

### **A. Jesus Died for All**

Reason number one is that Jesus died for everybody. First John 2:2 says—and, by the way, jot these scriptures down—*"And he is the propitiation"*—that means "the satisfaction," "the atonement," "the payment," "the expiation"—*"he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2) When Jesus died, He died for the sins of the world. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, he said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29) So, that's reason number one that everybody can be saved.

### **B. God Wants All Saved**

Reason number two: Not only did Jesus Christ die for the sins of the whole world, but the second reason I want you to see is that God wants all people saved. Let me give you a scripture; jot it down—1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Timothy 2:3–4) Do you know what God would? That all men would be saved. Let me give you another one like that—2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9) God wants all people saved.

### **C. The Holy Spirit Convicts All**

Now, listen: Jesus died for all. The Father wants all to be saved. The Holy Spirit convicts all people. Let me give you another scripture: John chapter 16, verse 8, speaking of the Holy Spirit. And it says this: *"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* (John 16:8) Not just the elect—He convicts everybody. There are some people who have the idea that God only calls some people. Oh no, dear friend. The Holy Spirit convicts everybody. And the Scripture says that Christ is that Light that *"lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* (John 1:9)

## D. The Bible Calls All

Are you thinking? Christ died for all. The Father loves all, and He wants all saved. The Holy Spirit convicts all. And the Bible calls all. Let me give you the last invitation in the Bible: Revelation chapter 22 and verse 17. Jot it down. *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come”*—somebody tells you; you can tell anybody else. Amen?—*“And let him that is athirst come”*—hey, do you want God? He wants you. *“Let him that is athirst come.”* And then, he wraps it up, the last invitation in the Bible—*“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Revelation 22:17) Now friend, that doesn’t sound like a limited atonement to me. That doesn’t sound to me like some people are predestined to go to hell and some people are predestined to go to heaven.

*“Whosoever heareth,” shout, shout the sound!  
Spread the blessed tidings all the world around;  
Spread the joyful news wherever man is found;  
“Whosoever will, may come.”*

—PHILIP P. BLISS

So, I want you to see, folks, that we were chosen, selected of God; not that He predestined somebody to be lost and somebody to be saved, but I want to tell you we were in the heart and mind and bosom of God before the foundation of the world. It is His choice of us that enables us to make our choice of Him. *“We love him, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) We can’t take any credit for our salvation. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Holy Spirit brought it and wrought it in this heart of mine. And so, I just say, “All praise, all glory, on this Thanksgiving service, to the Lamb that was slain, to the God who preordained and foreordained my salvation and your salvation.” Now, He’s the One who sought us out. He’s the One who found us. But we still had to make a decision. Dwight L. Moody said concerning the elect, “The elect are the whosoever wills; the non-elect are the whosoever won’ts.” And I believe that is certainly true, thank God.

Now, why did He choose us? Well, look at it. It just gets better. Now, notice in verse 5: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself...”* (Ephesians 1:5) It gets even better: not only are we chosen; we are predestinated. Now, predestination, again, deals with God’s children. Those who are chosen are predestined to be His children, to be adopted into His family. Well, I want to ask you a question—don’t answer it out loud, but think about it: Are we born into the family of God or adopted into the family of God? What does verse 5 say? How does verse 5 say we got into the family of God? Adoption, doesn’t it? *“Predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”* (Ephesians 1:5) But so many other verses speak of us being born of the Spirit and of water and being born of the Word of God. (John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23)

Now, are we born into the family of God or adopted into the family of God? The

answer is “yes.” You see, we are sons by a twofold process. Now, we are born into the family of God when we repent of our sin and receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. And a miracle takes place on the inside, and we are born again. And, therefore, we share His nature, and we’re next of kin to the Deity and next of kin to the Trinity. You can think about it—that we share the very nature of God.

But now, this verse tells us that the God who chose us “*predestinated us [to] the adoption of [sons].*” (Ephesians 1:5) Back in this time, a man would have many wives, and sometimes he would have children by slave women. And while they were born into his family, they were not necessarily heirs. But if he took a son and he said, “I’m going to make this son my heir,” then he would take that son down to the city gates and they would have a special ceremony, a legal ceremony, and therefore the son would be adopted into the family.

Now friend, Paul talks about our position and our privilege. He’s talking about what happens on the inside and what happens to us legally. Spiritually, I’m born into the family of God. Legally, I am adopted into the family of God. And since I’m adopted into the family of God, I’m an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. (Romans 8:17) You can say “amen” if you want to.

Now folks, that is exciting, when we think of what the Father has done for us. And this is the reason that Paul says in verse 6: “*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*” (Ephesians 1:6) Who is the Beloved? Jesus. At the baptism of Jesus, God the Father said, “*Thou art my beloved Son.*” (Luke 3:22) At the Transfiguration, God the Father spoke from heaven and said, “*This is my beloved Son.*” (Mark 9:7) Now, verse 6 says that I am “*accepted in the beloved.*” (Ephesians 1:6) I am in Christ. And do you know how much acceptance I have before God? I have the same acceptance before God that Jesus Christ has. You say, “Blasphemy!” Not blasphemy; Bible truth.

Jesus is praying in John chapter 17—and we’re going to be back in John chapter 17, God willing, this Wednesday night—Jesus is praying in John chapter 17, and He prays for His disciples. And then, He says, “Father, that they might understand that I’m in you, and you in me, and I in them, and that, Lord, you have loved them”—now, listen to this—“Lord, you have loved them as you have loved me.” (John 17:23) Do you know the kind of love that God has for me today? The same kind of love He has for Jesus. I am accepted in the Beloved. Everywhere you go you see, “For members only,” “Keep out,” and “Not wanted.” Friend, I’ll tell you, you’re wanted in Jesus, and you are accepted in Jesus. He has accepted us. And faith is our acceptance of His acceptance of us.

## **II. Praise to the Son Who Has Saved Us**

And so, the Apostle Paul here, as he begins to write about our great salvation, he says,

*“To the praise of the glory of his grace,”* (Ephesians 1:6) and that’s stanza one in this hymn to the Trinity, this praise to the Trinity. And then, not only does he speak of the Father who has selected us, but in the second stanza, he begins to speak about the Son who has saved us. Begin reading now in verse 6 and following: *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:6–12) And now, here’s the second stanza; it is praise to the Son who has saved us.

#### **A. The Pardon We Have in Jesus**

And, first of all, He speaks of the pardon that we have in Jesus. He speaks there in verse 7 of the *“redemption through his blood,”* and he speaks of the *“forgiveness of sins.”* (Ephesians 1:7) Thank God for the rich, royal, ruby red blood of the Lord Jesus Christ—Dr. Tommy, as we were talking about last night, that crimson thread that runs all the way through the Bible; that scarlet red river of redemption. We are redeemed by His blood. Are you redeemed by this blood? Friend, *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22) Jesus died. He was butchered on a cruel Roman cross. He experienced excruciating, unfathomable pain that I might be saved. Oh, how I ought to praise Him today!

And then, not only did He redeem me with his blood, but He forgave my sins—every spot, every blur, every blemish, and every stain washed whiter than snow in the blood of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, when they would have that high day of atonement, the high priest would take two goats: one goat would be slain, and the blood of that goat would have its blood poured out there on the altar and as a sacrifice for sin; but then, the high priest would take another goat, and he would lay his hands on the head of that other goat, and he would confess the sins of the people over the head of that other goat. And then, that goat was called a “scapegoat.” Have you ever heard the expression “a scapegoat”? He was called the scapegoat. The sins would be put on that goat, and then he would be led away, way out in the wilderness, and he would be let go, never to return again. And the idea of forgiveness literally means “to bear away.”

The Bible says He has removed our sins from us, *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalms 103:12)—not as far as the north from the south. You can measure the

North Pole and the South Pole. But you just keep on going east as far as you want, and you keep on going west as far as you want, and friend, that's how far God has removed our sins from us. The Bible says that God has buried our sins in "*the depths of the sea.*" (Micah 7:19) And Miss Bertha Smith said, "And He posted a 'No Fishing' sign right there." Friend, they're gone—our sins are gone.

## **B. The Purpose We Have in Jesus**

And so, the Apostle Paul praises the Father who selected us: He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Then, he praises the Son who has saved us. And we have redemption, and we have forgiveness. Dear friend, but not only a pardon; also, a purpose. You see, a Christian, a person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only one who understands where he's going; he's the only one who understands what this world is all about. We are the only ones who can make rhyme or reason out of this world. We have the key that unlocks the mystery of history. Do you want to understand what it is? Well, look at it. Look at verses 9 and 10: "*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.*" (Ephesians 1:9–10)

Oh friend, listen, God has a plan, and that plan will not be thwarted. Do you know what's going to happen? Jesus Christ, in the fullness of time—now remember, He's never ahead of time; He's never late—He's going to harmonize everything.

Do you know why everybody is so stressed? You look at people today; they are stressed. You know, it used to be, our forefathers, if they missed a stagecoach, they'd say, "Well, you know, there will be another one along in a couple of months." We get all bent out of joint if we miss a section in a revolving door. You know, we are "all stressed up and nowhere to go."

Now, we're just so stressed up. Do you know why we are so stressed? It's because everything is out of its place; everything is out of place. The devil is out of his place: he belongs in hell. Jesus is out of His place because He's not yet come to take the kingdoms of this world, and they'll become His kingdom. (Revelation 11:15) The Church is out of place because she belongs with the Heavenly Bridegroom—the Bride. Sin is out of place because that belongs in hell with the devil. Israel is out of place because she needs to be regathered and brought back and put in the land. But I want to tell you, dear friend, God is working on a plan when everything is going to be in tune with Jesus, and then everything is going to be in tune with everything else. Heaven will be in tune with earth. The spiritual will be in tune with the material. God will be in tune with man, and man will be in tune with man. What a day that will be! And folks, we're in on it.

Listen, it centers in Jesus, but it concerns us. This is what Jesus did for us.

### C. The Possession We Have in Jesus

In Christ we have pardon. In Christ we have purpose. And in Christ we have possession. Look in verse 11: *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated”*—there’s that blessed word again; we can’t lose it—*“according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”* (Ephesians 1:11) Now, we’re going to have an inheritance. Right now what we have is just the down payment that Paul speaks of a little later in this passage—*“the earnest of our inheritance.”* (Ephesians 1:14) We’ve just got the down payment right now—the Holy Spirit in our heart. God can’t give us the whole load, friend. We couldn’t bear it, and we couldn’t spend it.

¶ Think of a little boy whose daddy is a billionaire, and his daddy dies and leaves him a billion dollars. Do you think they’ll turn a billion dollars over to a five-year-old child? He wouldn’t know what to do with it if he had it, right? What they do is, somebody gives him his needs, and they take care of him—maybe buy him a new bike—but that’s only the down payment of his inheritance.¶

Friend, I want to tell you something: the Holy Spirit in your heart right now is just *“the earnest of [your] inheritance.”* (Ephesians 1:14) One day the full load is going to be yours, and the riches of His grace will turn to the riches of His glory. You think about that. Remember that I said to you a while back that we’re adopted into the family of God. That’s the reason the Bible calls us *“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”* (Romans 8:17) Do you know what a joint heir is? You lawyers know. A joint heir is what? Share and share alike. Hey, we’re heirs of God, and joint heirs of Jesus Christ, amen?

Now listen, in Jesus, who has saved us, we have a pardon, we have purpose, and we have a possession. All of this is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, again, Paul has to refrain to this hymn. Look at the refrain, as he speaks again of the Lord Jesus Christ, this wonderful Savior. Look in verse 12: *“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:12)

### III. Praise to the Spirit Who Has Sealed Us

Now, finally, the third stanza of this hymn to the Trinity. First of all, praise to the Father who selected us. Secondly, praise to the Son who saved us. Thirdly, praise to the Spirit who sealed us. Look now, if you will, in verse 13: *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession”*—and there’s our refrain

again—*“unto the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:13–14) We are *“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”* (Ephesians 1:13)

Now, I preached on the sealing of the Holy Spirit a while back, and you will remember that the seal is an official stamp on a document that is put on us by God the Holy Spirit. When you go out into the Wild West and you watch them brand a cow out there, they take that red-hot branding iron and they sear that into the flesh. It actually is burned into the flesh of that cow. And then, ownership is established. That is a brand. It is a mark. It is a seal that is actually burned into the flesh. Well, I want to tell you, deeper than that is the Holy Spirit in your heart and in your life that tells you that you belong to Jesus Christ. Esther chapter 8 and verse 8 says that the king’s seal cannot be broken. (Esther 8:8) That speaks of our security that we have in Christ.

Now, you think about what we have, folks. You think about what we have: We were chosen in the past. We are secure in the future. And we’re accepted in the present. Amen? That’s what we have in the Lord Jesus. That’s why Paul could not stop writing. He just keeps on going and going and going. He can’t stop the end of this hymn of praise, as he’s just praising the Lord and giving glory to the Lord who has sealed us.

When a seal was put on a document after a transaction, it meant the full price had been paid. It meant that ownership had been transferred. It meant that security was there because the seal is there. And our salvation is signed, sealed, and delivered.

## Conclusion

Thanksgiving week, I want you all week long to be praising the Father who selected us. All week long, I want you to be praising the Son who saved us. All week long, I want you to be praising the Spirit who has sealed us to the praise of the glory of His grace. What a salvation we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

¶ Years ago, up in Philadelphia, there was a woman who had a little boy who was crippled in his legs. He had some bone disease. The mother was exceedingly poor, and she was a widow. This was her only son. She would go off to work and she would spread newspapers down on the floor because the floor in that little apartment was not really fit for the boy to stay on. So, she would spread newspapers on the floor for little Jimmy to crawl around on. He had no babysitter, and she had to go out and work as a maid just to get a few pennies to keep body and soul together. Little Jimmy was a bright boy. And he was crawling around on those newspapers, and he read a story about a famous physician, an orthopedic surgeon named Dr. Lorenz, who was from Austria. And in this story he read how a very wealthy man there in the city of Philadelphia had sent all the way to Austria and flown this physician across the ocean to come and operate on his daughter, who also had a problem and could not walk. And the doctor had done this very intricate and marvelous surgery.

When Jimmy's mother got home, Jimmy called her over and said, "I want you to read that." And then, he said, "Mother, wouldn't it be wonderful if I could have that kind of an operation?" She convulsed and sobbed because she knew how poor they were, but she read the paper and found where the hotel was. She found out where Dr. Lorenz was staying. She got a streetcar and went to the hotel. She knocked on the door, and when the physician opened the door, she fell at his feet and started to weep, just convulsed and sobbed. And he said, "Madam, please, what's wrong? Can I help you? Are you sick?" She said, "No, no," and finally she poured out her story and said, "Could you do something for my Jimmy?" He said, "Well, madam, do you have any money?" and again she broken into sobs.

He said, "Lady, not for me; for the hospital and the other expenses. Do you have...?" She said, "I don't have any money." He said, "Let me see what I can do." And he went to this foundation and took some of his money and some other things, and the next scene is little Jimmy in that hospital room, and he's being operated on. And, with those loving and tender and skilled hands, those bones are being made right. And he's in the hospital room. And Jimmy's mother, after she'd get off work, would come by the hospital to see him and talk with him. And unbeknownst to her, he'd already been doing those exercises. One day he said to his mother, "Mamma, I want you to close your eyes. Stand over by the window, and don't look until I tell you to." And he said, "Now open your eyes." And when she opened her eyes, Jimmy had been off the bed and had walked—the first time she'd ever seen him—across that room. She began to leap and dance and praise God for that miracle.

Later Dr. Lorenz came into see little Jimmy, and he said, "Jimmy, I got to go back to Austria." He said, "Doc, please don't go." He said, "I've got to go. I've got my family over there. I've got friends. I've got to go, but Jimmy, I love you, and it's been such a joy to know you." That little boy looked into the face of that doctor, and he pulled him down close to the bed. And this is what he said to him: he said, "Doc, as long as there's a tongue wagging in my head, there isn't anybody ever going to forget what you've done for me."†

Now friend, what that doctor did for that boy is only a pittance compared to what God has done for us. Thank God for the Father who selected us! Hallelujah for the Son who saved us! Glory for the Spirit who has sealed us! And how we ought to praise Him and thank Him. There—a hymn of praise to the Trinity.†



# The Riches of a Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 2, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:3**

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 1:3

## Outline

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- I. The Source of These Riches
- II. The Spirituality of These Riches
- III. The Sufficiency of These Riches
- IV. The Sphere of These Riches
- V. The Security of These Riches

Conclusion

## Introduction

All right, take your Bibles, please, and turn to the book of Ephesians. We begin an exploration today, and we're going to be on a safari for three months, exploring Ephesians, God's guidebook to growth. And if you haven't grown in these three months, I'm going to be disappointed—highly disappointed. I want us to *“grow in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 3:18) **Some Christians, I know, are like a wasp. A wasp is bigger the moment that it's hatched, when it comes out of the nest, than at any other moment. From that time, it starts to shrink. And I know some people, I think, have their highest moment the moment they're saved. They're bigger at that time for the Lord, it seems, than any other time, and then they just sort of settle back to the dreary average rather than growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

It is one thing to be saved; it is another thing to “grow in the grace, and knowledge of Jesus”—and the book of Ephesians puts the emphasis upon growth. But the book of Ephesians also tells of the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus. It tells us how to go from the rags of our self-righteousness to the riches of God's glory and His righteousness—and that's what we're thinking about today. Our key verse this morning is verse 3, a nugget that God lays at the front door, right on the threshold of this temple of truth. It says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us*

*with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*” (Ephesians 1:3) And so here he’s talking about the riches that belong to those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you, friend, that you may be worried about the depression, or the recession, or whatever they call it. Our Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, announced recently that the United States was launching a vast new effort on an international scale to deal with the world energy crisis and the deteriorating financial situation. And this is what Mr. Kissinger had to say—and I want to quote: “If current trends continue, we face further and mounting worldwide shortages, unemployment, poverty, and hunger.” And then he went on to say—and I want you to listen to this, friend: “No nation east or west, north or south, consumer or producer, will be spared.” Now he looked in every direction but one. He looked east, and he looked west; he looked north, and he looked south; but, friend, he didn’t look up.

I want to tell you something. There is no depression in glory. Did you know that? Did you know that the capital in the banks of heaven has not diminished one little bit? And did you know they don’t have a floating dollar up there? Did you know that your assets are safe and secure if they’re in the Lord Jesus Christ? Did you know that if you are saved, you are immensely, gloriously wealthy? That’s what it’s all about.

Now, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9, *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”* (2 Corinthians 8:9) Now, God doesn’t want any children unless they’re rich children. You are fabulously, immensely rich, and the purpose of this message this morning is to help you to rejoice in the riches of the redeemed. That’s what the book of Ephesians is talking about. Look in verse 15 of this same chapter: *“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;”—*this is Ephesians 1:15—*“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”* (Ephesians 1:15–18) Oh, the riches! Paul said, “I just pray somehow that the scales will fall from your eyes and you will discover and know just exactly how rich you are.”

## **I. The Source of These Riches**

Now, there are several things I want us to notice. The first thing I want you to notice in verse 3 is the source of these riches—the source of these riches. The Bible says in Ephesians 1:3, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us.”* (Ephesians 1:3) Where do these riches come from? Friend, they come from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who has blessed us. I

want to say, to begin with, therefore, that these riches are not riches that you earn; these riches are riches that are inherited. They are bestowed. We have a rich Father.

I was with a preacher one time in a revival crusade, and he took me out to the very elite section of that city down by the glorious, beautiful St. John's River. And he was showing me all of the palatial mansions, and he showed me one exquisitely large and fabulous house. And I said, "Oh, well, that's nice, but you ought to see my brother's place." "Oh," he said, "has he got anything nicer than this?" I said, "Oh, yes." Well, we talked quite a bit about my brother's place, and after about fifteen minutes, I told him my brother was Jesus, and he ought to see my brother's place.

My Father is rich in houses and land, and my brother, the Lord Jesus Christ—my elder brother—has gone to prepare a place for us. And, oh, friend, if you're a child of the King, you have a brother who owns heaven and earth. And if you're a child, then you are an heir—an heir—of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I'm talking about the riches of the redeemed; and, friend, if you're not saved, don't jump up and down. Don't say, "Praise God, I'm rich!" because this is all in the family. Now, the Rockefellers have a lot of money, but that doesn't do me any good, because I'm not in that family, friend. This is to those who are in the family of God—if God is your Father. You see, notice verse 2: "*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ephesians 1:2)—"*God our Father.*" Now, if God isn't your Father, you're not rich. But if God is your Father, and He's rich, and you're His heir, then you are rich. "Oh," you say, "well, God is the Father of everybody." No, friend, God is not the Father of everybody. God is the Father of those who've been saved, amen? If you've been born again, the Bible says, "*As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" (John 1:12) Jesus said to those who are unsaved, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" (John 8:44)

Now, friend, if you're saved, God is your Father. And if God is your Father, and you are His heir, then you are rich—wonderfully rich! So don't include yourself if you're not in the family. But on the other hand, friend, if you are in the family, how sad for you to be a millionaire and go around acting like a pauper! There are so many blessings.

You know, we sing that song, Brother Lane, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." A scientist one time sat out to determine how many stars there were in the universe. And the figure that he came up with—and I'd like to know how he did it—was ten raised to the twenty-eighth power; that is, ten with twenty-eight zeros after it. And he's saying that's how many stars there are in the universe.

Now, after that, and interestingly enough, Sir James Jeans, an eminent British scientist, thought he would try to estimate how many grains of sand there are on the

earth. And do you know what he came up with? Exactly the same number: ten to the twenty-eighth power. He said he estimated that is how many grains of sand there are in all of the earth. Well, I really don't know how he got it. I can imagine down there in Cocoa Beach, where I used to pastor, if you got a city block and started counting, that it would take you a long time. But I want you to read what the Bible says in Psalm 139, verses 17 and 18. It says this: *"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand."* (Psalm 139:17–18) "If I would count them, God's thoughts toward me, they are more in number than the sand"—more than ten raised to the twenty-eighth power!

So, how are you going to count your many blessings? You can't count them. You can't count your blessings. You can't estimate the love of God for you, dear friend. "My Father is rich in houses and lands, He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!" He is the source of these blessings. And, dear friend, when Mr. Kissinger said there may be depression east, and there may be depression west, and north and south, and rich and poor, and producer and consumer, he forgot to check on heaven. And there is the source of the believer's riches.

## II. The Spirituality of These Riches

And so, that's the first thing I want you to notice: the source of our riches. They are from God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of greatness, the God of glory, the God of goodness. He is the source of our riches. The second thing I want you to notice with me is the spirituality of these riches, because I'm going to lose some of you right now. There are a lot of you who want to be rich, but the wrong way. You don't want the right kind of riches. All you want is that long green. You want that old moolah; you want that filthy lucre. And you think, "Boy, if I just had a lot of that, that would make me happy." No, it wouldn't, dear friend. Only true riches can make you happy.

And notice how God describes these riches: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings"*—"spiritual blessings." (Ephesians 1:3) The spirituality of the riches: you see, true riches are always in the realm of the spiritual—they must be, because the spiritual is the only thing that's going to last. It's the only thing that's going to escape the gnawing tooth of time and the corroding fingers of decay—spiritual riches. Jesus said, *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."* (Matthew 6:20) *If you want to know, friend, just really how rich you are, you add up everything that you have that money cannot buy and death can't take away.* Then you'll know how rich you are: everything that you own that money cannot buy and that death cannot take away.

For example, money can't buy peace of heart. Money cannot buy forgiveness of sin.

Money cannot buy a home in heaven. Money cannot quiet the cries of a guilty conscience or heal the bloody wounds of a wasted life. True riches are spiritual riches, because spiritual riches meet true needs. We want money because we feel that money can meet our needs. Well, dear friend, our greatest needs are spiritual, and therefore, if we have what it takes to meet our greatest need, then we are rich indeed. And the Bible says in Philippians chapter 4, verse 19, to those of us who are the children of God, *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19)

Now, as I’ve said before, sometimes we want things we don’t need and need things we don’t want. *Sometimes I have wanted a second helping of ice cream. I didn’t need it. Sometimes my dad said, “You need a spanking.” I didn’t want it, but I needed it. You know, there are things that sometimes that we need and don’t want, want and don’t need.* But the Bible says, bless God, that *“my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* This means there will be an unfailing supply of all that we need. And yet there are so many Christians who have failed to appropriate the promises of God. God has supplied their need. He *“hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”*

### III. The Sufficiency of These Riches

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: Not only the source of the riches, and not only the spirituality of the riches, but I want you to notice, thirdly, the sufficiency of the riches. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all...”*—and some translations translate “with every,” and it’s better—*“with [every] spiritual [blessing]...”*—because the word *blessing* is singular; therefore, the word should be *every* rather than *all*. It should be read this way—*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with [every] spiritual [blessing] in heavenly places in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:3) Or, it could be *“with all spiritual blessings”*—it doesn’t change the meaning very much—*“with all spiritual blessings...in Christ [Jesus].”* That means that nothing that love can give has been withheld. May I say that again? God is infinite love, and nothing that love can give has God withheld from you if you’re saved. And nothing that you will ever need has been overlooked.

Now you don’t believe that right now. If you did, you’d just be bouncing sitting right there in that seat—you’d be so happy if you really understood. You see, the problem is we read this and it doesn’t get into our noggins; it doesn’t get into our hearts. We don’t understand what God is saying. Friend, *one of these days somebody is going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves.*

Now you say, “Oh, yeah, He’s going to bless me.” No, friend, He has blessed us.

The Bible says, He *“hath blessed us.”* Now, already we’ve got it; not, we’ll get it, we’ve got it now; not some blessings, all spiritual blessing. Nothing that love can give has been withheld. Nothing that the saint will ever need has been overlooked. He will supply the needs of your spiritual soul and your body of the past, the present, and the future; your needs for salvation, sanctification, service, and glorification. All that you’ll ever need is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He *“hath blessed us with all”*—every—*“[blessing].”* Sometimes people want to know, “Friend, have you had the second blessing?” I don’t want to stop there. Second blessing? Why stop when I’ve got them all. Man, I’ve got them all, every blessing, and they’re all in Jesus. Jesus is all, and all is in Jesus! And if you understand that you have the Lord Jesus Christ! If this ever really dawns on you!

You know, we talked in our study in Romans—and some of you were not there, so let me just plow this ground just a little bit more—you know, the Bible says in Romans 8, verse 32, *“He that spared not his own Son...how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32) What a great verse! God gave us His Son. Well, if God gave us His Son, the Lord Jesus, isn’t He going to give us everything with the Lord Jesus? The logic of that verse is so tremendous. If God gave us the great gift unasked, will He not give us the others for the asking? If He gave us one great gift that cost so much, will He not bestow the lesser gifts, which cost Him nothing but the delights of giving?

For example, if I gave you a valuable painting, don’t you think that I would not begrudge the wrapping that the painting was in? If I gave you a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh, don’t you think I’d give you the paper that it’s wrapped in? I gave my wife an engagement ring when we were engaged, and I said, “Wilt thou?” and she wilted. Now, do you think I would give her the ring and say she couldn’t have that little box with the fuzz on the outside?

Oh, listen, friend. *“He that spared not his own Son...how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* Suppose you were to say to me, “Can I have your boy to be crucified for his enemies?” I’d say, “Of course not.” But suppose I loved you so much that I’d give my son to be crucified by his enemies, then you said, “Can I have his football and his bicycle?” I’d say, “Of course.” If I loved you enough to give you my son, wouldn’t I give you his football and his bicycle? Do you get the logic of this thing, friend? If He gave the first gift while we were enemies, how much more now that we’re His own dear children is He going to give us all that we need! How rich I am! How rich I am! How rich I am! *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* Glory to God!

It’s wonderful. This is the sufficiency of the riches. Friend, I want to tell you again, nothing that love can give has been withheld from you. May I say it again? Nothing that love can give has been withheld from you. Nothing that love can give—nothing that the

saint will ever need—has been overlooked. He *“hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”* That’s the reason Paul said, “I just pray you get your eyes opened; I just pray you’ll see it.” (Ephesians 1:18) Just what is the hope of His calling? The riches of His glory. I hope you’ll see what your inheritance is; I hope you’ll see what you have in Christ Jesus.

#### **IV. The Sphere of These Riches**

All right now, the next thing I want you to notice—the fourth thing: I want you to notice the sphere of the riches—where these riches are. Where are they deposited? *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 1:3) Now, literally, you notice the word *places*, if you have a King James Version of the Bible, is in italics. That is, it’s kind of curvy writing. That is to show us that it is not in the original; it has only been supplied by the translator to make it read more smoothly. But what it literally says is this: that He *“hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in [the heavenlies]”—“in [the heavenlies].”* It’s not talking about heaven; it’s not talking about the heaven that people go to when we die. And if you think that, you’re going to say, “Yeah, sure, when I get to heaven, I’m going to have all these riches.” But if you read it that way, you’re going to miss completely, friend. He’s not talking about going to heaven some day; he’s talking about heaven coming to you right now. And if you don’t understand that, you’re really going to miss it.

You see, we sing a song, “Heaven came down, and glory filled my soul.” You see, right now, everybody in this congregation is living in one of two worlds: the *worldlies* or the *heavenlies*. You see, right now, either you’re in the *worldlies*—you’ve never been born again—or you’re in the *heavenlies*. He’s talking not about a place, but he’s talking about a sphere or a realm—the heavenly places; that is, the sphere of the spiritual. You see, there’s an unseen world all around us: it’s called the *heavenlies*. There’s an unseen world right here in this auditorium this morning—you don’t see it.

Did you know up here on this platform there are cowboys and horses, and there are cartoons, and there’s music, and, oh, there are all kinds of things—murder mysteries and other things—right here on this platform. You don’t see it because you don’t have a television to tune it in. There’s music in the air, but you don’t have a radio to bring it in. Some of you’d better not be listening to a radio right now. But anyway, right out here there are all kinds of things going on right now. There might be a murder mystery right here. The Indian just got shot right there. Somebody just fell off a cliff. You can’t see it. If you were to bring Columbus here—Columbus who sailed the ocean blue—and tell Columbus that, friend, it would be easier for him to believe that he could find the east by sailing west than it would be to believe that there’s music and pictures and all that in this

room, right? Of course—of course! He could not conceive that kind of a world. And yet, that world is all around us. All you have to do is tune it in. You just tune in to station J-E-S-U-S, and you're going to tune in another world, too—and that is the world of the *heavenlies*.

A Christian lives in a different world. He marches to the beat of a different drummer. He whistles a different tune. And *that* is where our blessings lie. And don't make the mistake of thinking that the world that cannot be seen is not the real world. Friend, it is more real than this world. One day this earth is going to be turned to a cinder, but I tell you, the Bible said that Abraham "*looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*" (Hebrews 11:10)

Mr. Moon, who is with the Moody Bible Institute in the Department of Science, and directs the Moody films on science, was talking with a Nobel Prize-winning scientist. And they were talking about Christianity, and Mr. Moon said, "Are you a believer?" He said, "Well, I'm a believer in God, but not the kind of a believer you are." He said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, where do you believe heaven is?" "Well," he said, "heaven is out yonder somewhere." And he said, "Well, do you think it's beyond the reach of our telescopes?" And this scientist was just kind of toying with Mr. Moon. He said, "You know, if Abel is in heaven, and Abel was about eight to ten thousand years old when he died, and he started out toward heaven, if he'd have been traveling at the speed of light, we'd still be able to pick him up with our telescopes, wherever he is, or if heaven is there,"—you know, just making fun of the immensity of space—"then if you traveled at the speed of light, 186,000 miles a second, and kept on traveling, why, you'd still be not too far, according to the age of this world."

And Mr. Moon said, "I want to ask you a question." He said, "Do you believe in the porosity of space and things?" He said, "Yes, I do." Now, what that meant was this: that this scientist believed, for example, that a wall is just really very porous, or this desk is very porous, or my hand is very porous; that is, that the particles in this desk, or in that wall or whatever, are as far spread apart as the stars are in our galaxy, and that there is a mass of energy that just holds these things together, and that if there were not for these charged particles of electricity, one form of space could pass right through another form of space without ever touching it. For example, I could pass my hand right through this desk, and it would never touch this desk at all. There's plenty of space for my hand to pass through. You see, we don't understand space. I mean, things are almost more a thought than they are a form. We could say that the desk is solid, but it's not necessarily solid. It's made up of jillions of very small moving particles—electrically charged particles—and just kind of held together by an electrical flux. And so Mr. Moon said to this scientist, "Would you say it would be possible therefore for one world like this world to exist with another world like this world, both of them occupying the same



space, never colliding with one another, if they were on the right frequency and one never being seen by the other?” He said, “Not only for one world, but for thousands of worlds like this to exist in the same place.” Then Mr. Moon said, “Well then, getting to heaven won’t be any problem to me.” He said, “All I’ll do is switch frequencies.” And that’s right. You see, what I’m trying to say is this, friend: It’s right now—right now! There is another world. Even we understand it in the electronic realm. There’s another world around us in electronics. But there is yet another world—a spiritual world—that is very real.

Do you remember when Elisha was at Dothan and his servant was all upset because the enemies were all around, and he said, “*Alas, my master! how shall we do?*” (2 Kings 6:15) And Elisha the prophet said, “[*O God*], *open his eyes, that he may see.*” And the Bible says that the eyes of that servant were opened—“*and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.*” (2 Kings 6:17) You see, they were there, but the servant could not see them. One day, our eyes are going to be opened to that realm called the *heavenlies*. The *heavenlies*: this is where your riches are. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.*” (Ephesians 1:3)

So we are seated with Christ in the *heavenlies* right now. Now we may be down here on earth in the *bodilies*, and in the *worldlies*, but spiritually, we’re seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the *heavenlies*.

## V. The Security of These Riches

Now, one last thing this morning I want you to notice: Not only the sufficiency of the riches, and not only the sphere of the riches—they’re in heavenly places—but I want you to notice the security of the riches. For it says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*”—or, “in the *heavenlies*”—“*in Christ.*” (Ephesians 1:3) And in Christ there is the security of the riches, because the Bible teaches, “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Now, this phrase “in Christ” is a small phrase. Are you listening? Pay attention. You’ll learn something now. It is a small phrase, but it is used almost 150 times in the Bible: “in Christ.” It is used fourteen times in this one chapter: “in Christ.” This is the security of the riches: in Christ. Now it’s a small phrase, but a small key may unlock the door to a very large treasure: “in Christ.” And this is the secret of having all of these riches: It is being in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what does it mean to be in Christ? Well, you see, there are only two men in all eternity, really: Adam and Christ. And either you’re a part of Adam, or you’re a part of

Christ. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:22, *“In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) That is, you’re either a once-born man or a twice-born man. Either you are in Adam—that is, you’re sentenced to death—or you’re in Christ, and you have a brand-new life.

Now, if you are in Christ, that means that all that happened to Jesus happened to you. That is, when Jesus was crucified, you were crucified. When Jesus was buried, you were buried. When Jesus arose, you arose. When Jesus ascended, you ascended. When Jesus is sat down in heavenly places, you are seated with Him in glory. You see, you are in Christ. Christ acted for you. The Bible says, *“As he is, so are we in this world.”* (1 John 4:17) *“As he is, so are we”*—if you are in Christ.

Now, this is deep; but get it, friend. That’s where your security is: being in Christ. How do you get into Christ? Well, when you repent of your sin and trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit of God baptizes you into the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:13) He just simply places you—not water baptism, Spirit baptism—the Holy Spirit takes you and puts you into Christ, into His mystical, invisible Body. And then God looks at you as though He looks at His own dear Son. God doesn’t see your sin anymore; God sees the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are in Christ. You have become a part of Christ. Nod your head if you’re understanding. Listen. You’re in Jesus, and when you get into Jesus, God looks at you as He would look at His own dear Son. That’s security, friend.

Somebody said to a Christian, “Oh, you belong to Jesus?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “But what if you lose your salvation?” He said, “I can’t lose my salvation, for He holds me in His hand.” Somebody said, “But what if you slip through the fingers?” He said, “I can’t: I’m one of the fingers.” Brother, not only does He hold us; we are in Him.

I never will forget hearing Miss Bertha Smith, retired missionary from China. How many of you know Miss Bertha? Let me see your hands. One of you. Oh, what a gal she is! Boy, Miss Bertha, she’s a warrior for Jesus, if you ever saw one. She was talking in our church down in Florida, and she was talking about how we are. You know, the Bible says “our lives are hid with God in Christ,” (Colossians 3:3) you know. And so she had a box—a shoebox about that big—and on the outside she had “God.” And so she opened that shoebox up, and on the inside of that was another little box, smaller. She had written on that “Jesus,” for the Bible says, “Christ is in God, and we’re in Christ.” (John 17:23) And so now, there’s God, and then there’s Jesus in God. And then, she opened that box, and inside of Jesus was one that said “Me.” There I am in Jesus. And I thought, “Boy, that’s glorious! How is the devil ever going to get to me if he’s got to tear up that first box and then that second box to get to me?”

But she wasn’t finished yet. She opened that one that said, “Me,” and inside that was a still smaller box, and that had “Jesus” on it again. Now, friend, it will make you want to

walk around. Now, you listen—listen. I am in Christ, and Christ is in me. You can't get better than that, can you? I am in Christ, and Christ is in me. Now, how's the devil ever going to get to me? I mean, he's going to have to tear up that big box, and that next box, and once he gets through Christ and starts on me, he's going to find Christ on the inside of me. Listen. That is the security.

There are a lot folks who are wondering about losing their salvation. Are you going to lose your salvation? Do you know what these folks think that think they can lose their salvation? They think that if they can ever get to heaven and slam the door behind them, they'll be safe; but as long as they're down here on this earth, they're not safe. But they think that security is in heaven. They get in, and close the door, and say, "Phew, I made it." Friend, you're not going to be secure in heaven if you're not secure down here. The angels fell from heaven. *Security is not in a place; it's in a person. If you're in Jesus, you're as secure as you'll ever be. And if you're not in Jesus, you're not secure.* He is the security of our riches. He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in...Christ [Jesus]"—"in Christ [Jesus]."

## **Conclusion**

Now, what more can He say than to you He hath said? You're rich—gloriously, fabulously rich—if you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

# A Threefold Cord

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 10, 1988

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 1:2–14

*“And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Our Salvation Has Been Planned by the Father
  - A. When Did God Choose Us?
  - B. Why Did God Choose Us?
  - C. Wherefore Has He Chosen Us?
- II. Our Salvation Has Been Purchased by the Son
  - A. We Are Freed by His Blood
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Conclusion

## Introduction

This thing that we have called salvation is a wonderful thing because it's great that God saves us. That's a wonderful thing to know—I mean, that God would save us; that's great. But it is even greater to know that we can be saved and know that we're saved. We don't have to say, “I hope I'm saved,” “I think I'm saved,” “Maybe I'm saved.” We can say, “Praise God, I'm saved and I know it.” That's doubly great. But my dear friend, it is twice great and gloriously great to know that not only can we be saved, and not only can we know that we're saved, but we can know, without a shadow of any doubt, if we are saved, we can never lose our salvation. Now folks, you're going have to admit that if that is true—and it is true—it's wonderful that not only does He save us by His grace; He keeps us by His grace. And what He keeps us with, what He binds us to Himself with, is a threefold cord. Now, the Bible says that *“a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”* (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

I'm going to break into Ephesians 1:2, and I'm going to read the longest sentence in the Bible. Now, this sentence just goes on and on and on, and it goes all the way to

verse 14 without stopping. Now, Paul got so excited he couldn't stop. Have you ever gotten that excited—you just keep on talking? It just seems like he can't take a breath. It reminds of that little piece of poetry:

*There was a young poet from Japan,  
Whose poetry no one could scan;  
When told it was so,  
He said, "Yes, I know,  
But I always try to get as many words in the last line as I can."*

Now, that's what Paul was doing here. Paul is just trying to cram it all in, and he just won't stop. He just keeps talking and talking and talking. The longest sentence in the Bible: it begins with grace, it ends with glory, and it is the most complete statement on the gospel you will find. And actually, in this sentence, you're going to find that he mentions God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and what part each has in our salvation and in our security.

Now, let's begin reading: *"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* (Ephesians 1:2–14) Period. Amen. That's a long sentence, isn't it? I mean, he's on a roll. He can't stop talking about what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, as I read that to you, if you were trying to pay attention and you couldn't keep up, you couldn't digest that sentence. And it just turned into words after a while, and you said, "Well, I'm just listening, and he's rattling off words. And I can't stay up, and I can't

keep up.” So, what we’re going to go do is we’re going to back up now. We’re going to look at it in three divisions. And actually, what you have here is a hymn of praise to the Trinity. Look in verse 6. He speaks of God the Father, and then he says, *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:6) And there he’s speaking about God the Father. And then, look in verse 12: *“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:12) And there he’s talking about God the Son, because he’s talking about what God the Son has done. And again, he says, *“to the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:12) And then, look, if you will, in verse 14. He speaks of the Holy Spirit, who is *“the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:14) So, he says, “Praise to the Father, praise to the Son, and praise to the Holy Ghost.” And you have a hymn of praise to the Trinity. And he talks about what God the Father has done in our salvation. He talks about what God the Son has done in our salvation. He talks about what God the Spirit has done in our salvation.

## **I. Our Salvation Has Been Planned by the Father**

Now, first of all, let’s see that our salvation has been planned by the Father. All right, it has been planned by the Father. Look in verse 3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”* (Ephesians 1:3–4)

### **A. When Did God Choose Us?**

Now, this tells us that God the Father planned our salvation before He laid the foundations of the world. Before He swung this planet into space, before He scooped out the seas and heaped up the mountains, flung out the sun, moon, and the stars, it was in the mind of God. Verse 4: *“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) Now, you talk about old-time religion! Folks, that’s old-time religion. *“God is love,”* (1 John 4:8) and Love is not content to live alone so we have been chosen—we’ve been chosen. Verse 5 says we have been predestined, or “predestinated.” (Ephesians 1:5)

Now, a lot of people get bent out of shape by this, but you ought not to get bent out of shape by this; you ought to get blessed by it. You see, dear friend, that God has chosen you to be saved. Now, pay much attention. This does not mean that God chose one sinner above another sinner. But what it does mean is that God had you in His heart and in His mind before the foundation of the world. Don’t get the idea that some people are predestined to go to hell and some people are predestined to go to heaven. Don’t get the idea. If you get that idea, dear friend, and you think it on through, it’s going

to give you some strange thoughts indeed. I believe in a sovereign God who has chosen us, but I also believe there's not a man, not a woman, not a boy, not a girl on Planet Earth that God doesn't want saved. And I believe that anybody that comes to the Lord Jesus Christ can be saved. No one is chosen to be lost. If men are lost, it is because they will not come to Christ. Let me make that plain.

Jesus did not simply die for the elect. He died for the sins of the world. First John 2:2: *"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"*—*"for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2) He died *"for the sins of the whole world,"* (1 John 2:2) and God wants all people saved. First Timothy 2:3 and 4: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Timothy 2:3–4) God wills that everybody be saved. Again, Peter says in 2 Peter 3:9: *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

All right, the Holy Spirit of God convicts every man. Jesus said in John 16:8: *"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* (John 16:8) That's what the Holy Spirit does. The Bible says Christ is that *"true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* (John 1:9) And, therefore, everybody is invited to come to Jesus. Revelation 22:17: *"And the Spirit"*—that's speaking of the Holy Spirit—*"and the bride"*—that's speaking of the Church—*"say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come"*—any time you hear the gospel, you can tell it to somebody else—*"And let him that is athirst come"*—hey, do you want God? You can have Him. Are you thirsty for Jesus? Wonderful—*"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* (Revelation 22:17) We sing it:

*"Whosoever heareth," shout, shout the sound!  
Spread the blessed tidings all the world around:  
Tell the joyful news wherever man is found,  
"Whosoever will may come."*

—PHILIP P. BLISS

Now, the death of Jesus, therefore, is sufficient for all, but it is only efficient to those who believe. But, God has chosen us. Now, you say, "That's confusing to me." Well, that's fine. It's confusing to me, too, and it has been confusing to theologians down through the years. But let me tell you this, dear friend: we were in the heart and mind of God before He made this planet, but God gives everyone an invitation to come to Christ. And we can only choose Him because He first chose us. Thank God for that.

## **B. Why Did God Choose Us?**

Now, that is when He chose us: *"before the foundation of the world."* (Ephesians 1:4) Why did He choose us? Look in back at Ephesians 1:4: *"According as he hath chosen*

*us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*” (Ephesians 1:4) The greatest miracle in the world is not walking on water or changing water into wine; it is, dear friend, taking a hell-bound sinner and transforming him and making him holy and blameless. When God looks at me, it ought to be as someone holy and blameless. You say, “I don’t believe it. You’re a two-legged rascal.” Well, I may be, in your eyes, but, dear friend, I am *“holy and without blame before him in love.”* (Ephesians 1:4) You know, a little girl was asked by a Sunday school teacher, “Is there anything God can’t do?” She said, “There’s one thing God can’t do: He can’t see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” Praise God! *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?”* (Romans 8:33)

### **C. Wherefore Has He Chosen Us?**

Now, listen. When did He select us? *“Before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) Why did He choose us? *“That we should be holy and [blameless].”* (Ephesians 1:4) Wherefore has He chosen us? Well, look in verse 5—it even gets better: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”* (Ephesians 1:5) Now, it says here that we’re chosen before the world and then predestinated to be like the Lord Jesus. Again, predestination is not saying from eternity that “this man will go to heaven and the other man goes to hell.” Predestination says that those who trust the Lord Jesus are going to be like the Lord Jesus.

Now, predestination teaches me on the authority of the Word of God that because He chose me and because I have trusted Him, it is settled forever that I’m going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And friend, that settles the question of my security. I mean, if I am *“predestinated...unto the adoption of children”* (Ephesians 1:5)—I mean, if I am predestinated to be adopted into the family of God—tell me, what can stop it? What can stand in the way? Nothing! I am predestinated; I have been chosen to be like the Lord Jesus.

Now, I’m predestinated here to the adoption of sons. (Ephesians 1:5) Look at that. Now, let me teach you something here, and I touched on it a couple of Sundays ago: we are spiritually born into the family of God—that deals with our position in Christ—but we are legally adopted into the family of God—and that deals with our privileges of Christ. Now, are we born into the family of God or adopted into the family of God? Both.

When this was written, a man may have had a number of slaves, and some of the wives were slaves. This man may have had many wives; some of his wives may have been slaves, and, therefore, not all of his sons would have been his heirs—only the sons that were freeborn and not the sons of slaves. But, if he wanted one of these slave sons to be his heir, then there had to be a legal ceremony in the city gates to make this



son that was his son in the flesh his legal son. So, a son might be physically born but then legally adopted. Now, we are spiritually born, and we are legally adopted into the family of God. And, therefore, because He has done this to the praise of His glory, verse 6 says, *“he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:6)

Now, you think about your salvation. You’ve been chosen in the past, predestined to the future, and accepted in the present—that’s where you are. You are accepted in the beloved. Now, who is the Beloved? Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, what did God the Father say? *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17) Now, why am I accepted before God the Father? I am *“accepted in the beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:6) Now, therefore, how much does God love me? Now, you’re going to disagree with this mentally at first, but I want to tell you how much God loves you, and me, and us. He loves us as much as He loves Jesus. Now, let that sink in.

You say, “Pastor, that’s too hard to take in. He couldn’t possibly love anything as much as He loves His own Son.” Well, let me give you a verse of Scripture: John 17:23. Jesus said, *“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (John 17:23) He loves you like He’s loved His own Son, the Lord Jesus. See? You are *“accepted in the beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6); you are a part of the Body of Christ. And, therefore, if God loves His Son, He certainly loves His Son’s Body. And, if God loves His Son’s Body, He has to love you because you are the Body of Christ. We are in the Beloved.

Now, what should all of this cause us to do? This salvation that’s been planned by the Father before the foundation of the world that causes us to be adopted legally into the family of God and accepted fully in the elected—what should that do? Well, look in verse 6. God says He does this *“to the praise of the glory of his grace.”* (Ephesians 1:6) Do you know what your reaction ought to be right now? Your heart ought to swell up, and your soul, with passionate, emotional praise to God the Father. Oh, how you ought to praise the glory of His grace!

## **II. Our Salvation Has Been Purchased by the Son**

Now, that’s the first cord: your salvation has been planned by God the Father before the foundation of the world. But, not only has it been planned by God the Father; it has been purchased by God the Son. Now, begin to read in verse 7: *“In whom”*—the Beloved. In whom? In Jesus—*“In whom we have redemption through his blood”*—thank you, Jim, for singing about the blood and reading what Bill Bright had to say about the blood—*“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good*

*pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:7–12) And then, in verse 14 he speaks of *“the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:14) So, our salvation has been planned by the Father and purchased by the Son.

### **A. We Are Freed by His Blood**

You see, listen, we were children of slaves. Adam was a slave of Satan. He sold his inheritance to Satan. He sold his birthright to Satan. But Jesus redeemed us with His blood. We have, first of all, been freed by His blood. Look in verse 7: *“in whom we have redemption.”* (Ephesians 1:7) That is, He bought us back with His blood. We have come from sinful slaves to saintly sons.

### **B. We Are Forgiven by His Grace**

Thank God for the blood. But not only are we freed by his blood; we are forgiven by His grace. The Bible says, *“according to the riches of his grace.”* (Ephesians 1:7) Now, the word *forgive* means “to carry away.” In the Old Testament, they had what they called “scapegoats.” You’ve heard the phrase today “the scapegoats.” Actually, they had two goats. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take one goat, lay his hands on the head of that goat, and confess the sins of the people. And then, he would lay his hands on the head of the other goat and confess the sins of the people. Then one goat would be killed, and the blood of that one goat would be sprinkled on the mercy seat in the tent of meeting, the tabernacle. And then, the other goat would be led away into the wilderness, and he would be carried far, far away and turned loose and be lost forever in the wilderness. Now, what was God showing by that? God was showing that our sins redeemed by the blood are carried away, never, never to be brought back again. Now listen, this is the grace of God that does this. *“In whom we have...forgiveness.”* (Ephesians 1:7) Verse 7 says: *“the forgiveness of sins.”* (Ephesians 1:7)

### **C. We Are Filled by His Wisdom**

Look: we are freed by His blood; we are forgiven by His grace—but He’s not finished with us yet—we are filled with His wisdom. Look in verse 8: *“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.”* (Ephesians 1:8–9)

Now folks, God—the great God of the universe—because we’re saved, gives us His mind. We have an insight into the things of God. God has an eternal purpose. Now, you’re an insider; you know what God is doing. We—only the saints—can understand our existence here on earth. *To everybody else history is a mystery.* Only the saints know the truth. Now, God’s plan concerns us, but it centers in Jesus. Do you want me to tell you what God is up to? Look in verse 10; here’s what it is: *“That in the dispensation”—*that means “that in the plan”—*“of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”* (Ephesians 1:10) Now, what God is saying is this: that one day, in the last glorious age, *“in the dispensation of the fulness of times,”* (Ephesians 1:10) God is going to bring everything into harmony. At that time the world is going to be free from stress. Now, right now, *we’re all stressed up and nowhere to go;* but in the fullness of time, everything is going to harmonize. According to verse 10, there’s coming a time when everything is going to be in tune with Jesus. *People wonder what the world is coming to. It’s coming to Jesus.*

Everything is going to be in tune with Jesus. Now, you think about it. If everything is in tune with Jesus, then everything will be in tune with one another. If we tune this piano to a tuning fork and tune an organ to a tuning fork, it stands to reason the piano and the organ are going to be in tune to one another. When everything is in tune to Jesus, everything is going to be in tune with itself and one another. You see, in the fullness of time, God is going to bring together the spiritual and the material. In the fullness of time, God is going to bring together heaven and earth. In the fullness of time, God is going to bring together God and man. And all of this is because of what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross, and God lets us in on that.

#### **D. We Are Fixed by His Wealth**

But, not only are we filled with His wisdom; we’re also fixed with His wealth. Look, if you will now, in verse 11: *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:11–12) One day, the riches of His grace, which we enjoy now, will turn to the riches of His glory. It’s absolutely certain. Again, he uses the word *predestine*; it can’t be stopped.

Folks, you’re looking at a wealthy man tonight. I mean, I have an inheritance. So do you. And it’s predestined for you, and it is all because God the Son purchased you. You see, the first cord is God the Father planned your salvation. The second golden cord is that God the Son purchased your salvation. In verse 14, he calls it “the purchased possession.” (Ephesians 1:14) In that, you have freedom. In that, you have forgiveness.

In that, you have fellowship. In the wisdom of God, in that, you have the full inheritance of the children of God.

### III. Our Salvation Is Preserved by the Spirit

Now, there's one other thing that you have. Here's a threefold cord now. He talks about what God the Father has done. Then, he talks about what God the Son has done with His own blood. And then, he talks about what God the Spirit has done. Now, listen. Our salvation is planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, preserved by the Spirit. Now watch—I want you to see what Paul is saying here and what God the Holy Spirit is saying through him. He moves now into the third area of praise in this hymn of praise to the Trinity: *“in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”*—now folks, it gets tough. I mean, it gets strong. Here's the threefold cord. Now, you're preserved by the Spirit, you're—*“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance”*—do you know what the word *earnest* means? It means “pledge” or “down payment”—*“until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”* (Ephesians 1:13–14)

Now, what does this verse mean when it says we are *“sealed with [the] holy Spirit of promise”*? (Ephesians 1:13) What do we mean by *sealed*? When I say, “sealed,” four different people think of four different things. If you're a child, you probably think of an animal in the zoo. If you're a homemaker, you probably think of the thing that you put on top of the Mason jar when you make preserves. And if you're a man, you probably think of the thing that's causing your transmission to leak. If you're a lawyer, you're probably thinking of a legal stamp to put on a document—and that's the seal that he's talking about right here. You are *“sealed with [the] holy Spirit of promise.”* (Ephesians 1:13)

Now, what Paul is doing here is using a legal term, and he's being legal all the way through here when he's talking about the adoption and all of this, and the inheritance and all of that. How do we know that all of this is true? And how do we know that it's sure? Well, we know it's predestined, we know it's planned, by God the Father; we know it's purchased by God the Son; and now we know it is preserved by God the Spirit. For God the Spirit becomes the seal and the earnest, the pledge, the down payment.

Now, in Bible times, when a seal was put on a document, it meant three things: one, it meant there has been a finished transaction; two, it meant ownership had been transferred; and three, it means the document is secure, it is sure. And, therefore, the seal is put upon it. Now folks, when you and I got saved, it simply means there's a finished transaction. Jesus paid it all. It is a purchased possession, okay? It also means that now we belong to Him; we are adopted legally into his family. Ownership is there,

and it means, because the seal is put there, that it is fixed; it is sure.

Now, you have an illustration of this type of a seal in the book of Esther. And in the book of Esther, there's a great verse that illustrates what we're talking about. Let me give it to you: Esther 8:8. Don't look for it because it'll be the benediction before you find it, but Esther 8:8: *"Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring"*—now, the king had a ring with his insignia on it. They would write a document, roll it up, fold it over, put hot wax on the margin, and put the king's ring in that hot wax, the king's insignia on it. Now, what happens is this—*"Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse."* (Esther 8:8) Amen?

Now, that's true of an earthly king. How much more true is it of the Heavenly King? We are *"sealed with [the] holy Spirit of promise."* (Ephesians 1:13) I want you to understand, folks, what you have in Jesus: your salvation, planned by the Father, *"chosen...in him before the foundation of the world"* (Ephesians 1:4); your salvation, purchased by the Son with His own blood—and the Bible calls it in verse 14 a *"purchased possession"* (Ephesians 1:14); and then, it is preserved by the Spirit.

Now, he uses another term, not only a "sealing," but he uses in verse 14 "the earnest" of the Spirit. (Ephesians 1:14) Do you know what this word *earnest* means? It means a "down payment," or a "pledge." If you were going to buy a house, you put up some money to begin with. You put up a sizable sum that means you're coming back for the whole thing. Now, the Holy Spirit that you have in your heart, who seals you into Christ, is also the earnest, the pledge, that one day our Lord is coming back for His purchased possession, okay? That's what it means. I mean, folks, He's coming for me. Why? He's got so much invested in me. I mean, He put the down payment in my heart. And look, here's a word that I love. Oh, what a blessed word this is—look at it—verse 14: *"which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption"* (Ephesians 1:14)—not *if*, but *until*. Just put a circle around that word *until*.

*My heart can sing when I pause to remember  
A heartache here is but a stepping stone  
Along a trail that's winding always upward,  
This troubled world is not my final home.  
But until then my heart will go on singing,  
Until then with joy I'll carry on,  
Until the day my eyes behold the city,  
Until the day God calls me home.*

—STUART HAMBLEN

*"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until"*—not *if*, but *until*—*"the purchased*

possession”—and again, he says it—“*unto the praise of his glory.*” (Ephesians 1:14)

## Conclusion

He mentions what God the Father did, and then verse 6 says He did it “*to the praise of [His] glory.*” (Ephesians 1:6) He mentions what God the Son did, and then in verse 12 he says, “*to the praise of his glory.*” (Ephesians 1:12) And then, he mentions what God the Spirit does, and in verse 14 he says, “*unto the praise of his glory.*” (Ephesians 1:14) And friend, if we don’t praise Him, what ingrates we are for this great salvation we have in the Lord Jesus. “*Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.*” (Psalms 150:6) “*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

Father, I thank you so much for the salvation that we have, Lord. When others who don’t know you are wandering like a ship at sea on a dark stormy night without a rudder or a compass, sharks all around, Lord, we thank you that you have pulled back the veil of eternity. You’ve shown us, Lord, what happened before the world was brought into space. You’ve shown us, dear Lord, what we’re going to be and what we’re going to have. And, Lord, then you put the down payment in our hearts. Thank you for it, Lord. God the Father, I praise you tonight, and we the people of this church praise you, our God. And, God the Son, our fairest Lord Jesus who suffered in agony and blood, we praise you tonight for what you’ve done for us. Blessed, precious Holy Spirit, our seal, our security, the earnest in our heart, O Spirit of God, we praise you for the glory of your grace. In the name of Jesus. Amen.†

# A Tribute to the Trinity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 7, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:3**

## Outline

Introduction

I. We Have Been Chosen by the Father

II. We Have Been Redeemed by the Son

III. We Have Been Sealed by the Spirit

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to Ephesians chapter 1. And for our Lord's Supper thought tonight, we're going to continue the message this morning on the one true God that I said is the triune God. And what we're going to see, as we look in Ephesians chapter 1, is a praise to the Trinity, the God who is three in one. And what we're going to read in a moment is Ephesians 1, verses 3 through 14.

And believe it or not, that is one complete sentence. It doesn't stop. It just goes on and on and on and on. And all the way through all of these verses, eleven verses, is one sentence. And it's like Paul is so excited about what he's writing, he just can't stop writing. He's writing about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He's writing about the fact that we are chosen by God the Father. He's writing about the fact that we're redeemed by God the Son. And he's writing about the fact that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. And, evidently, he's so excited, he can't stop.

He's like that poet that someone wrote about who was Japanese. And they said, "There was a young poet from Japan, whose poetry no one could scan. When told it was so, he said, 'Yes, I know, but I always try to get as many words in the last line as I can.'"

Now, that's what the apostle Paul is doing now. He's just writing about the redemption that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, I want us to see what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, what we have in God the Father, and what we have in the Holy Spirit of God.

## I. We Have Been Chosen by the Father

First of all, your redemption that we're celebrating tonight at the Lord's Table is based in this: you were chosen by the Father. Now, look again in chapter 1, verse 3:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Now, this tells us that we’re saved because God the Father chose us. We were chosen by God the Father. Look in verse 4: “According as he hath chosen us in him”—that is, in Jesus. Now, when did He do this? Verse 4 tells us He did it—“before the foundation of the world.” Before He swung this planet into space, before He scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains, and put out the sun, moon, and the stars, we were in the heart and mind of God. Friend, that is old-time religion. That is old-time religion.

Why did He choose us? Because God’s nature is love, and love wants an object to love. And so, what good is love, if there’s no one to love? And so, God put His choice upon us. He decided He would love us. Now, the fact that we are chosen does not mean that God has chosen one sinner above another sinner, but it does mean that God had the church, the bride of Christ, in His mind before He created this world. Therefore, we are chosen, and we cannot take credit for our salvation. God thought it, Jesus bought it, the Spirit wrought it, and grace has taught it, and brought it. It is all of God, and nothing of us.

Somebody asked a little boy, “Have you found Jesus?” He said, “No, Jesus found me. I was the one who was lost, and He found me.” And, when did He do it? He did it before the foundation of the world.

Now, what does it mean to be chosen? I want to slow down here for just a moment and tell you something, friend. Don’t get the idea that in eternity past, God looked out and He said, “This one is going to go to hell, and there’s nothing he can do about it, and this one’s going to go to heaven, and there’s nothing he can do about it.” I reject that. Friend, God wants everybody saved.

Let me give you some scriptures now—1 John chapter 2, verse 2—it speaks of Jesus, and it says, “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”—the sins of the whole world. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. And, therefore, God wants all people saved.

Put this scripture down—1 Timothy 2, verses 3 through 4: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior—now, listen to this—who will have all men to be saved—that is, that He wills all men to be saved—and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Not some men, but all men.

Again, 1 Peter 3, verse 9: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some



men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward—listen to this—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Put it down: Jesus died for all. God wants all people to be saved. And the Holy Spirit of God invites all people.

Put this scripture down—John chapter 16, verse 8: “And when he is come—speaking of the Holy Spirit—he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” The Holy Spirit of God convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And Jesus invites all to come. The Bible invites all to come.

Put this scripture down—Revelation 22, verse 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

You can go to any man, anybody, any boy, any girl, any place, anytime, and say, “Come to Jesus.” If you’ve heard, you can say, “Come.” And we sing it, “Whosoever heareth, shout the sounds, spread the blessed tidings all the world around. Tell the joyful news wherever man is found: whosoever will may come.”

I like what Dwight L. Moody said, when he said, “The whosoever wills are the elect, and the whosoever won’ts are the non-elect.” You want to be saved? God will save you. But it is God’s choice of you that makes possible your choice of Him. You could never, ever come to Him had He not chosen you first and set His love upon you.

Now, why did He choose us? Look in verse 4—look at it again: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame.” God chose you, friend, that you would be holy and blameless. Are you holy? Are you without blame? It doesn’t say sinless, but blameless. There ought to be no one here tonight that is blameworthy, that you have un-confessed, un-repenting of sin in your heart and in your life.

We know when He chose us: before the foundation of the world. We know why He chose us: that we might be sinful and blameless. And we know the wherefore that He saved us: it gets even better. Look in verse 5: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

Now, we’re predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Predestination is not saying that God from eternity is saying that one man is going to heaven and another man is going to go to hell. He tells us what predestination is about in this verse. We are predestined unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

Now, we are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus. When I gave my heart to Jesus, it is settled, friend. I’m going to be like Him. You’re looking at a man who’s predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says a part of this predestination is involved in

something called adoption. Do you see that? Now, there are two facets to your coming to the Lord. You are born into His family, and you are also adopted into His family. You say, "Well, what's the difference?"

Well, back in Bible times, sometimes a man would have many wives. It was not God's plan, but they would. They would have many wives. Some of the Bible heroes had many wives. And, sometimes, some of those wives would be slaves. And he would have children by the slave wife. Well, that child, who was also had a slave for a mother, would not be legally a part of the family. And so, while the father would sire that child, then there would be a ceremony when he would also, if he wished, adopt that child, and bring that child into the family, and give that child all of the legal standings that come with being a bona-fide child and an adopted child.

And so, spiritually, we're born into the family of God. Legally, we're adopted into the family of God. And, therefore, we are fully accepted. Look in verse 6. He does this "to the praise of the glory of his grace, whereof he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Now, the beloved is Jesus. And where are you? You're in Jesus. How much does God love you? God loves you as much as He loves Jesus. You say, "That's blasphemy." No, that's Bible—that's Bible.

Now, listen. There's something about us that wants to withdraw from that. But Jesus prayed in John chapter 17: "Father, help them to know that thou hast loved them, even as thou hast loved me." You see, we're in Christ. We are the Body of Christ. That's what it's all about. We are accepted in the beloved.

Now, people, by nature, feel rejected ever since Adam was deposed from the Garden of Eden, but we are accepted in the beloved. Now, folks, once we understand this, you know what we ought to do? We ought to just say, "Praise the Lord." Look at it—look in verse 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, whereof he has made us accepted in the beloved."

Don't you love that word accepted? Listen, friend. Grace is God's acceptance of me. Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. God accepts me in the Lord Jesus Christ. When God looks at me, now He does not see my sin. He can't see my fault. He sees Jesus.

A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl, "Is there anything God can't do?" She said, "Yes, there's one thing God can't do. He cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ." I'm in Jesus, and He is in me. And so, we have been chosen; we have been chosen by the Father.

## **II. We Have Been Redeemed by the Son**

But, secondly, we have been redeemed by the Son. Look now in verses 7 through 12: "In whom we have redemption through his blood,"—whose blood? The beloved,

Jesus—"the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times—oh, and that's coming—that he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Now, let's just look at our redemption. First of all, we've been set free by His blood. Do you see it in verse 7? We have redemption. We have redemption. We were in the slave market. Jesus bought us with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. Thank God for the shed blood. We are redeemed through His blood. We'll never stop preaching about the blood. We'll never stop singing about the blood. We'll never stop praying on the basis of the blood. There is a blood sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin."

Some modern churches are going through the hymnal and taking the songs of the blood out. They call it the religion of the slaughterhouse. But, friend, love the blood. The Bible calls it the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. And so, we have been freed by His blood, and we've been forgiven by His grace.

Look again in this same 7th verse: "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The word forgive literally means to carry away. It's typified in the Old Testament.

On the Day of Atonement, they would do a special thing. The priest would take two goats—two he-goats—and they would take one of the goats, and they would kill it, and catch the blood in a basin, and present that blood to the Lord as an atonement for sin. Then they would take that other goat, and the priest would lay his hands on the head of that other goat, and confess the sins of the people on the head of that goat.

And then they would take that goat, called the scapegoat, and lead him out into the wilderness, way out in the wilderness, where he could never find his way back—gone, gone, gone, bearing away the sin. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ has done by His grace. He has forgiven us by His grace. And never will those sins be brought up against us any more. They are in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

But not only have we been freed by His blood, and forgiven by His grace, but we're filled with His wisdom. Begin now in verse 8: "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

Now, what is the wisdom that He gives us? Folks, we're the only ones who understand the mystery of history. We're the only ones who know what it's all about. I mean, what is God up to? God gives us this wisdom. We see God's eternal purpose.

Now, God's purpose, friend, concerns us, but it centers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 10: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in the heaven, and which are on earth; even in the Lord Jesus Christ." That's the time when God, through the atonement, and in the fulness brings together everything in heaven and earth, and there is perfect harmony.

There is war in the world tonight. There's strife in the world tonight. You know why? Because things are out of place. Satan is a criminal, and the criminal belongs in prison. He's not there yet. The devil's not in hell. Jesus is the King, but He's not on the throne here on this earth yet. And God has not set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. The church is the bride, and the bride is not yet with the bridegroom. But the bride will be with the bridegroom, and the King will be on the throne, and the enemy and the criminal will be in prison. And then, God brings heaven and earth together in harmony: the spiritual and the material, God and man, and man and man. And that's the reason we ought to long for and pray for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But not only that, friend, are we filled with wisdom, but we are fixed with an inheritance. Look, if you will, in verses 11 and 12: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Now, friend, one of these days, the riches of His grace will turn to the riches of His glory. And it's absolutely certain, one more time He uses that word, predestinated. And so, what do we have? Friend, we're chosen by God the Father. We are redeemed by God the Son, with His precious blood.

### **III. We Have Been Sealed by the Spirit**

And, thirdly, we are sealed by God the Spirit. Begin now in verse 13: "In whom— talking about Jesus—ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." By the way, if you want people to believe, you've got to give them the Word of truth. That's our job. That's our duty. "In whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Now, when the Bible says we're sealed by the Holy Spirit, what does that mean? What do you think of when I say seal?

Well, if you're a boy or girl, you might think of an animal balancing a ball on his nose—in the zoo, a seal. If you're a woman who puts up preserves, you might think of a

rubber ring that goes inside the Mason jar. If you're a mechanic, you might think of something that keeps the transmission fluid from leaking on the ground.

But if you're a lawyer, you may think of a document that has a seal upon it. That's what He's talking about now. He's talking about a stamp, a seal, that makes a document legal and says to everybody it's legal.

In the Bible, a seal stands for three things: it stood for a finished transaction, it stood for ownership, and it stood for security. The seal on it—that means you're not to break that seal. Esther chapter 8 and verse 8 says, "For the writing which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring may no man reverse." Well, in that book, he's talking about an earthly king. But that's the reason that the Lord used this figure about a seal, so that we might understand. Our salvation is signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit of God.

And then, I love this. It says of the Holy Spirit, "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

Now, sometimes, a man may have a boat for sale, a car for sale, a dog for sale, and somebody comes and sees it, and says, "Well, how much is that boat?" He says, "Well, that boat is \$5,000. You want to buy it?" "Yes, I want to buy it." "Well, you'd better show me that you want to buy it, because if you don't, I'm going to sell it to somebody else." "No, no, don't sell it. Here's \$100. Here's some earnest money. Hold it for me; hold it. I'm coming back. I'm going to bring the rest of it back." This is earnest money. It means I'm going to come back and purchase the whole thing.

The Holy Spirit that we have within us, the Bible calls "the earnest of our inheritance." You see, we haven't gotten the full load yet. We don't have the full inheritance yet. God has given us the down payment. When God the Holy Spirit sealed you, He also gave you the word earnest. Did you know this same word earnest is used in Greek language today for engagement ring? An old boy puts an engagement ring on a girl's finger, he's just saying, "You know, sweetheart, I'm going to marry you. Here's the earnest. Here's what I'm giving you as a promise that I am going to marry you." And notice—I love this—it doesn't say "if," but it says until—until. Look at it—look in verse 14: "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." There's that word praise again.

## Conclusion

Oh, it's so wonderful what we have in the Lord Jesus. It's signed, sealed, and delivered. We were chosen by God the Father, we were redeemed by God the Son, and we are sealed by God the Holy Spirit.

I was thinking about this, as I was thinking about this little devotion thought. And I went back to school days when I was in grade school. And I looked over there. I was

sitting here in school. Across the aisle, one, two, three, four, five, six desks up, was Joyce Louise Gentry. Here's Adrian Pierce Rogers.

I didn't do anything right. I didn't have my homework. I forgot my lunch money and everything. She did everything right, straight A student, and, you know, "Yes, ma'am," dressed pretty, always had her lunch money, everything right, always had her homework done. And I would sit there, and I would look at her. She didn't even know I was looking at her.

Couldn't get my mind on my schoolwork, just looking at that girl. So I sat down, and I wrote her a note. It's a wonderful note, a love note. She has it today, all the way back to 6th grade; she has that note. I walked by her desk, and I put that note on her desk. She had no idea I was even looking at her, until she got that note.

And she looked at it, and read it, acted like she didn't pay any attention to it. But, if she didn't, why does she still have it after all these years? Still has that note, that little poem. I won't tell you what it said, but it was one magnificent piece of poetry. And she has that today.

And then I persuaded her to spend a little time with me. We fell in love. I gave her an engagement ring, and we got married. You see, I sat my eyes on her before she knew anything about it. That's what God did for us. He put His eyes on us before the foundation of this world. And then, He said, "I choose you."

You know the reason that Joyce chose me? Because I chose her—I chose her. I set my affection on her. I decided I wanted her to be my bride. Thank God that He chose me. Before I even knew He was thinking about me, He set His love on me, and He sent the Holy Spirit as the down payment, as my wedding ring. And you know what? I can hardly wait for the day when the marriage is consummated when our Lord comes.

Thank God for the Father who chose us, for the Son who redeemed us, for the Holy Spirit, the engagement ring, that we have in our hearts right now. And, friend, as we come to the Lord's Table right now, we're coming to celebrate what we have in Jesus.

Brother Jim, let's sing a chorus as we prepare our hearts. Let's stand.

# From Grace to Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: June 6, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:3–14**

## Outline

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## Introduction

I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 1 tonight—would you please?—Ephesians chapter 1. The title of our message tonight is “From Grace to Glory”—“From Grace to Glory.” And, I want to begin reading in Ephesians chapter 1 and beginning in verse 4—Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4. Paul begins the sentence...well, let’s begin in verse 3 to get the whole sentence: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In*

*whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:3–14).*

And, the sentence ends there. That’s all one sentence. It’s the longest sentence in the Bible. Paul got to talking about Jesus and couldn’t quit. He was like the little boy—they said, “Do you know how to spell banana?” He said, “I sure do, but I don’t know when to quit.” And, I think that’s the way Paul was when he was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ here: he just got so excited that he got carried away. And so, Paul was excited, and what excited Paul, I pray tonight, will excite you. This sentence has, in the beginning, the word *grace*, and it has at its end the word *glory*. And, between that grace and that glory there are some wonderful things. So, I want you to see the wonderful things that are going to happen to you on the way to heaven—from grace to glory. Now, I want you to notice what Paul uses to describe the Christian—the words that he uses, the phrases that he uses, the promises that he displays as he describes what happens to us on our pilgrimage to heaven as we go from grace to glory.

## **I. We Are Chosen**

The very first thing he tells us is that we’re chosen. Look in verse 4: “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4). We, dear friends, are God’s chosen people. God purposed our foundation—our salvation—before the foundation of the world. Before He swung this planet into place, before He scooped out the oceans, and before He heaped up the mountains, and before He flung out the stars, we, the Church, were in the heart and mind of God, because, you see, God is a God of love. And, what good is it being a God of love if there’s nobody or nothing to love? And so, God just set His love upon us. God set His affection on us, and God chose us way before we knew anything about Him, way before we came into existence.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a great, great preacher of yesteryear, and I like what he said about God choosing us: Spurgeon said, “God certainly must have chosen me before I came into the world because He never would have chosen me afterward.” Well, I think he was being a little, perhaps overly, modest—I don’t know, but, dear friend, there’s nothing that would have made God choose us before or afterward, because when God saw us, He saw our weakness, He saw our sinfulness, He saw our unworthiness. But, God set His affection upon us. Now, when we’re chosen—I want to make it very clear—I trust that this does not mean that God has chosen one sinner above another sinner. That’s not it at all. God loves all sinners. But, what this means is that the Church was in the heart and mind of God before all creation. We are chosen of Him. Think of our wonderful salvation. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Spirit



wrought it. And, it was all before this world ever came into space. Even Jesus was crucified, the Bible says, before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) And so, the reason you love Him, very frankly, is because He first loved you. You chose Him because He first chose you.

Somebody asked a little boy if he had found Jesus yet, and the little boy was quite a theologian. He said, “Found Jesus? I didn’t know He was lost.” He said, “I was lost, and He found me.” And, aren’t you so glad that He has? Aren’t you so glad that God chose us and God set His affection on us? We sing that song:

Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood (Robert Robinson).

Now again, I want to say that does not mean that some are chosen to be lost and some are chosen to be saved. God would have all men to be saved. I want you to put this in the margin: 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4. And, never let anybody move you away from it. Listen to it now: *“this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come [to] the knowledge of...truth”* (1 Timothy 2:3–4). Don’t you ever get the idea that God has chosen one man to go to heaven and another man to go to hell. We’re to preach the gospel to every creature. And, the Bible says, *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). And, if a man is lost, it’s not because he has been predestined to go to hell; it is because he will not come to Jesus, who said, *“Come unto me...and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). God’s choice of us, however, enables us to make our choice of Him. But then, God allows us to choose, and we must choose. We can choose or refuse, but we cannot choose Him unless He had first chosen us. And, His choice of us enables us to choose Him.

## **II. We Are Predestined**

Then, I want you to see something else about this wonderful salvation: not only are we chosen, but we are also predestined. Look, if you will again, in verse 5: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children...”* (Ephesians 1:5). Friend, I am predestined. It gets even better: we’re chosen before the foundation of the world, and then we are predestined to the adoption and to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, predestination is not God saying from eternity that this man is going to heaven and this other man is going to hell. No, predestination is what God does for saved people. You see, *“[those] whom he [foreknew], [them did] he also...predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (Romans 8:29). That’s what the Bible tells us in Romans 8 and verse 29: “whom God foreknew, He predestinated” (Romans 8:29). What

that means is this: that I have been chosen by God. God, before He made this world, determined that He was going to have His Church. And then, because of His choice of me, and I chose Him—because of that—then God says, “That settles it. That teenage boy, mean as he was, profane, dishonest, disobedient, but he chose me. He repented of his sin. He chose me.” And God, looking from His abode in eternity, said, “I predestined that young man to be like Jesus.” And friend, that’s where my security is. I am “[predestined] to be conformed to the image of [God’s] Son” (Romans 8:29). And, I want to tell you, dear friend, what has been predestined in eternity can never be undone in time. I want to tell you that I am as certain for heaven as though I were already there. One day I am going to be like Jesus. I am predestined. It’s settled in the heart and mind of God.

### **III. We Have Been Adopted**

But, not only have we been chosen, not only have we been predestined; we have also been adopted. Look again in verse 5: “*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*” (Ephesians 1:5). Now, I want to ask you a question: How do we get into the family of God? Are we born into the family of God or are we adopted into the family of God? Be careful how you answer that question, because the answer is yes. Yes, we are born into the family of God, and we are also adopted into the family of God.

Now, when this was written, some men had a multiplicity of wives and they had many children. And, some of those wives were slaves, and some of those wives were not slaves, but a different kind of wife. I know today all wives think they’re slaves, but that’s beside the point. And, the man would have a number of children, and he would want some children to receive his inheritance. Other children—perhaps the children of the slave—he did not want to receive his inheritance. And so, there would go...there would be a legal ceremony held in the city gates, where this man would legally make this child his heir, and this would be called the “adoption.” So, you see, this man would have sired that son, and he would also have adopted that son. You see, the Bible gives both figures because both things have happened to us. God the Father has sired us. (He has fathered us.) And, He has also adopted us. One speaks of our position in the Lord Jesus, and the other speaks of our...well, let me say...let me back up and see if I can say it better. We are spiritually born into the family of God, and that deals with our position in Christ. And then, we are legally adopted into the family of God, and that deals with our privileges in Christ. So, as sons, we have a position in Christ, and as adopted sons, we have privileges in Christ. Now, you are adopted, but you haven’t gotten the full realization of that adoption yet. I mean, it hasn’t all come to you.

Now, let’s suppose that there’s a little baby boy who is adopted by a very wealthy

man, and that child grows into maturity. And, right away, the child is going to have the very best of food, and he's going to have the very best of care and the very best of surroundings. But, he doesn't write any checks or anything. He's just a little baby. And then, when he grows up, he may go to a fine school, and he may have a tutor, and he may have people to watch over him, and he has a fine allowance, but only so much. You see, he is adopted, but he has not yet come into the inheritance. And, that's the way we are right now, dear friend: we're waiting for that full manifestation. Romans chapter 8, verse 23 says, *"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, [that is], the redemption of [the] body"* (Romans 8:23). One day, dear friend, the full adoption is going to be ours, and all that was included when He adopted us we're going to inherit.

#### **IV. We Have Been Accepted**

But, not only have we been chosen, and not only have we been predestined, and not only have we been adopted, but because of that, we have been accepted. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). Think how wonderful it is. Just think about it for a moment: we're chosen in the past, predestined for the future, and accepted in the present. Isn't that wonderful? Chosen in the past, predestined for the future, and accepted right now. And, the Bible says we are *"accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). Don't you like the word *accepted*? You know, you go around and you see a sign says, "Not wanted. Stay out. No trespassing. Members only. Rejected. No," and it's negative. But, in the Lord Jesus Christ, you, my dear friend, are accepted.

Now, what does it mean—*"accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6)? Who is the beloved? The beloved is Jesus. You are accepted because you are in Christ. Remember, Jesus is called "the beloved Son." God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son." To say that you're "accepted in the beloved" just simply means that you are accepted in Christ. When God sees you, He does not really see you; He sees His Son Jesus, because you are in Christ. Jot this scripture down: John 17, verse 23. Jesus is speaking of the union and the communion of the child of God with Himself, and He said, *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...that the world may know that thou has sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me"* (John 17:23). Now friend, if you want to stay up all night tonight and just meditate on a verse, just take this one. Do you know what it says? The only reason I believe this is because I believe the Bible. I do not believe it because of logic. I do not believe it because of emotion. I just have to believe it because the Bible teaches it. Jesus says that God loves me like God loves His own Son. That's what it says. God loves me as He loves Jesus. Listen to it again: *"I in them...thou in me, that they may be"—"that they may be"—"made perfect*

*in one; and...the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me*" (John 17:23). The same love that God has for His own dear Son He has for us. You see, we are *"accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). When we're in Christ, then the same acceptance that Jesus has I have. Now, you talk about being accepted! Friend, that's pretty good acceptability. We are accepted in Christ.

And so, I've been chosen. Because I've been chosen, I've been predestined. And, because I have been predestined, I have been adopted. And, because I've been adopted, I've been accepted. And, it just sounds so wonderful. But, I'm not accepted because of me. I don't want to go around bragging and boasting about it. Who's going to get the praise and who's going to get the glory for it? Look again in verse 6: *"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). There won't be any peacocks in heaven. Dear friend, we're going to have to say, "Hallelujah! Glory to God for His grace" that God loves us as He loves His own dear Son.

## **V. We Are Redeemed**

But, not only are we accepted; then verse 7 tells us we're redeemed: *"In whom we have redemption through his blood"* (Ephesians 1:7). Now, we have come, dear friend, from sinful slaves to saintly sons. That's what He's saying: *"In whom we have redemption..."* (Ephesians 1:7). And, it's always—always—through the blood. There's no other way to be redeemed except by the blood. And, I'm so glad that Dr. Tommy Lane led us tonight in singing about the blood. I thank God for Dr. Lane and for his love for the Lord Jesus and his love for the great doctrines of the church and the songs that we sing tonight. We need to just keep on singing, because that redemption is through His blood. Dear friend, this book tells about the blood Jesus from Abel's sacrifice and Abel's lamb right on down to the book of the Revelation, where the Bible says, *"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 12:11). You cut the Bible anywhere, and it will bleed. There's a red river of blood that runs all the way through this book.

I read somewhere—I don't know whether it is still true, but it used to be true (and for all I know, still may be true)—that in all of the ships of the British Navy, they...excuse me, in all of the ropes on those ships in the British Navy, that if you were to take any one of those ropes and cut it, in the very center of that rope would be a scarlet thread that runs through every rope in Her Majesty's Navy. Now, whether that is still true or not I know not, but at one time it was true—and still may be true—that there's a scarlet thread that runs through the heart of every rope—every piece of rope. I want to tell you, dear friend, there's a scarlet thread that runs all the way through this book. We have redemption through His blood.

## VI. We Are Forgiven

But, not only are we redeemed—now, look in verse 7—we also are forgiven. Look again: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:7). Now, this word *forgiveness* literally means “to bear away, to carry away.” And, if you’ve read the Old Testament—and I know you have—in Leviticus chapter 16, you found the ritual there, or the ceremony, of the scapegoats. And, what would happen is this: in order to illustrate the forgiveness of our sin, the high priest would take two goats, and one goat would be slain and its blood gathered in a basin. And, that blood would be taken, and brought before God, and sprinkled on the mercy seat, because the Bible says, *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22). And then, the other goat would be taken (the one that was not slain), and the high priest would lay his hands upon the head of that goat and confess the sins of the people and put the sins of the people on the head of that goat. And then, that goat was led away into the wilderness and released, never to come back again. And, we call that goat the “scapegoat”—the “scapegoat”—because the sins were laid upon him. Jesus is that scapegoat. But, only, it took two animals to portray what Jesus did: one animal to shed his blood, another animal to bear away the sin. But, this word *“forgiveness of sins”* that we’re talking about here literally means “to bear away.” We are forgiven. Our sins are gone. They are borne away by our precious Savior. *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12).

## VII. We Are Enlightened

But, not only are we forgiven; we are enlightened. Look, if you will, in verses 8 through 10: *“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which [in] earth; even in him”* (Ephesians 1:8–10).

Dear friend, we’re the only ones who knows what’s going on; we’re the only one who knows what it’s all about. You see, God didn’t make this world out of a whim, and a fancy, and a guess, and a hunch. And, He didn’t just create it, wind it up, and fling it out, and leave it alone. There is a purpose to history, and Jesus solves the mystery of history. Somebody has said that “history is His story.” God is up to something, and we are right in the middle of it. Everybody’s trying to find out what man’s purpose here upon the earth is, but they’ll never know until they understand the Bible. To everybody else it’s a puzzle, but to us it is not a puzzle. Now, God’s plan concerns us, but it centers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is going to bring—one time, one day—He’s going to bring it

all together. Everybody says, “What’s the world coming to?” Friend, it’s coming to Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:10).

Now, our world is coming apart at the seams. I watched the news this afternoon. The Israelis have invaded Lebanon, and who knows what’s going to happen there. Who knows how the situation’s going to be exacerbated there with the Falklands. And, who knows what is going to happen to this seething, boiling, pulsating mass of humanity that is upon this ever-shrinking globe, as multiplied millions and even billions of people will go to bed tonight hungry without enough food in their bellies and little babies will gnaw at dry breasts. And, our world has become a swamp of discontent, where the mosquitoes of heat—the mosquitoes of hate—are breeding by the millions.

What’s going to happen? Well, dear friend, if you didn’t know—if you don’t know—the Lord Jesus Christ, as I’ve said this morning, you would have every reason to be a pessimist. But, I want to tell you that the Bible says there’s coming a time when this entire world is going to be made in tune with the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at it again: *“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times”—verse 10—“he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are [in] earth; even in him”* (Ephesians 1:10). There’s coming a time, there’s coming a day (that we sang about tonight), when the material and the spiritual are going to be blended perfectly. There is coming a time when heaven and earth are going to be in perfect union and communion. There is coming a time when man and God will be perfectly in union and communion. There is coming a time when man and man are going to be in perfect peace. There’s coming a time when man and the animals will be living in harmony, and there’s coming a time when the animals will live together and the lamb and the lion shall lie down together. And, *“the [whole] earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters [that] cover the sea”* (Habakkuk 2:14). When is that going to be, dear friend? *“In the dispensation of the fulness of times”* (Ephesians 1:10), when the Lord Jesus Christ is on the throne. Dear friend, when all things are brought to Jesus and when all things are reconciled to the Lord Jesus Christ, then all things are going to be reconciled one to another. When we’re in tune with Jesus, then, at last, we’ll be in tune with one another.

I read years ago about a father who was doing some serious work, and his little boy kept pestering him. The father felt that he’d get rid of the child for a while; and so, he gave him a jigsaw puzzle to work. He said, “Here, Son. Here’s a map of the world. Put it together.” He knew the little fellow didn’t know much about geography. He wasn’t that old. He thought he’d be a long time. But, after a while, he came back, and he had the puzzle done. It didn’t take very long. He did the jigsaw puzzle in jig time. And, they said, “How did you”—he said—“How did you do it?” “Well,” he said, “Daddy, there’s a puzzle.

There's a picture on both sides." He said, "On the other side there's a picture of a man." He said, "When I got the man's right, the world was right." And, you know, that's the way it's going to be, dear friend, when Jesus is in His rightful place. He's not in His rightful place right now, and everything else is out of whack. But, when Jesus is enthroned, when the Prince of peace rules from Jerusalem, when the Lord reigns from Zion, there's going to be harmony in this world. So, we are enlightened. We know what's going to happen. We know what the world is headed for. I feel sorry for other people who do not know.

### **VIII. We Are Enriched**

But, not only are we enlightened—let's continue to read—we are enriched. Look, if you will, in verses 11 and 12: *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:11–12). Now friend, this talks about our inheritance, our riches. You see, remember I told you that you get the initial pledge? Look down in verse 14; it speaks of the *"holy Spirit of promise, [Who] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory"* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Now, right now we have the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. The word *earnest* means the "down payment, the initial pledge." But, after the initial pledge comes the daily supply. *"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). And, after the initial pledge and the daily supply there's going to come the full legacy. One day the riches of His grace will turn, dear friend, to the riches of His glory. And, there is the certainty of it, because one more time we come to that word *predestinated*. And, who or what can stop God's sovereign will? Hallelujah! We are going to receive that full inheritance.

### **IX. We Are Sealed**

I want to move on. Not only have we been enriched, but, dear friend, we are sealed. Look, if you will, in verses 13 and 14: *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom...after that ye believed"*—watch it now—*"ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"* (Ephesians 1:13).

Now, what does this mean? When I speak of a seal, different people think of different things. The children think of an animal in the zoo. The women think of that thing that keeps the fruit from spoiling in the fruit jar. A man thinks of the thing that keeps the oil from leaking in the transmission. But, that's not what the Bible is talking about here when it talks about a seal. It's not talking about a rubber gasket. It's not talking about an animal in the zoo. But, he's talking about a legal transaction. When a

transaction was done in Bible times, they would melt hot wax, and the king would put his ring and the emblem of his ring in that hot wax; and he would seal that document with a legal stamp. And, when something was sealed, it meant three things: first of all, it meant there had been a legal transaction that had taken place; number two, it meant that there was a new ownership; and number three, there meant...it meant security, because when a thing was sealed, the seal was not to be broken without proper authority.

You might want to write down “Esther chapter 8 and verse 8,” because this is what it says: *“Write [thee] also [concerning] the Jews, as it [pleaseth] you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring...no man [may] reverse”* (Esther 8:8). Isn’t that beautiful? Oh, *“the writing [that] is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring...no man [can] reverse”* (Esther 8:8). Again, our Lord just keeps telling us how secure we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only are we enriched, but, dear friend, we are sealed. I can’t understand why people don’t want to be saved. Dear friend, if people understood what we have in the Lord Jesus, I don’t believe you could keep them away with a machine gun. In Christ we are signed, sealed, and delivered.

## **X. We Are Perfected**

But, let’s go on. And finally, not only are we sealed, but we are also perfected. Look, if you will, in verse 14. Now, the perfection is yet in the future. And, I continue to read: *“[we are] sealed with [the] holy Spirit of promise”—verse 13—“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until”—and I love that word until. Not if, but until—“the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory”* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Now, what is...the Holy Spirit in my heart is God’s down payment, and the Holy Spirit in my heart is God’s pledge and promise of the future. Now, look at this word again—the word *earnest* in verse 14. Did you know, in modern Greek, this is the word that is used for wedding...for an engagement ring? Isn’t that beautiful? You see, right now, the Holy Spirit is God’s engagement ring to you. An engagement ring is just a promise that a guy’s sincere, that he means business.

And, and, I remember when I gave Joyce that engagement ring. We went down there, and I bought it for something—I don’t know...maybe ten dollars down and a dollar a week, or something like that. I don’t remember. I was working my way through school, and we were living from hand to mouth. And, it wasn’t much of a ring in size, but I’ll tell you, if love meant anything, it’s the biggest diamond anybody ever bought. And, and, we bought that diamond there, and I remember, on that Christmas Eve, I was a smart guy. Boy, I got two gifts in one: I got engaged and gave her a Christmas present at the same time. The pastor’s no dummy. And, I just had to get one gift there. And, I remember



when I said to Joyce, “Wilt thou,” and she wilted right there. And, I gave it to her, and when I gave Joyce that diamond, that was an earnest. That was saying, “I mean business. I love you. I want to give myself fully, completely, totally, totally unto you.” And, that word today that we translate here “earnest” is used among the Greeks today for an engagement ring. Oh, thank God—thank God—for our future that we’re going to have with Him.

Notice again the word *until*. It’s not the word *if*; it is the word *until*. Again, we sing that song:

My heart can sing when I pause to remember  
A heartache here is but a stepping stone  
Along a trail that’s winding always upward,  
This troubled world is not my final home.

But until then my heart will go on singing,  
Until then with joy I’ll carry on,  
Until the day my eyes behold the city,  
Until the day God calls me home (author unknown).

*Until*, dear friend, is the Christian’s word, and we’re waiting until that great *until*. And, we have, and I have, in my heart now, God’s dear Holy Spirit that tells me I belong to Jesus. And, I can hardly wait until God’s grace turns to God’s glory, and it will not be long, dear friend, because we’re traveling a road called “from grace to glory.”

## Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. Do you know Jesus? Oh, dear friend, He’s set His affection on you. He has chosen you—He has chosen you. He’s “*not willing that [you] should perish*” (2 Peter 3:9). He wants to save you—He wants to save you, that He might enrich you. He wants to enrich you, that He might satisfy you and meet your every need.

I wonder tonight, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking around—how many in this building can say, “Brother Rogers, I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. And, not only that, but God’s Spirit, the earnest of my inheritance, bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. And, not only that, but I have confessed Jesus Christ openly and publicly before men. And, not only that, but I have followed my Lord Jesus in the obedience of believer’s baptism by immersion after I’ve been saved. And, not only that—I am now living for the Lord Jesus in the fellowship of a New Testament, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, soul-winning church.” If you can give me that kind of a testimony, would you just lift your hand right now? Hold it up. Let it be your testimony tonight. Just keep it up

'til it feels good, and say, "Thank you, Lord. I could say, 'yes.' Hallelujah! Thank you for that, Jesus." Now, take your hands down.

Some of you could not lift your hand. Some of you could not lift your hand because you've never received Christ and been saved. Others of you have been saved, but you've not yet made it public. Some of you have not yet followed Jesus in baptism. Some of you don't have the full assurance of your salvation. Some of you are not a member of a Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church where you live. And, you know there's a decision you need to make, and I want to pray for you, right now, that you'll make it and that you'll make it correctly.

Let's bow our heads. Continue in prayer: Father, I do pray sincerely tonight for these who need the Lord Jesus, that tonight—tonight, tonight—they will say, "yes" to Him and be saved. O Lord, I just pray that little boys, and girls, and men, women, teenagers would come to Jesus and, Lord, that you'd work that divine miracle in their hearts. Lord, I know that it's your work. And so, Lord, I cast the people upon you. Holy Spirit of God, draw them to Jesus—draw them to Jesus—is my prayer and our prayer. In His wonderful, wonderful name. Amen.

# The Longest Sentence in the Bible

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 26, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:3–14**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 1:3

## Outline

Introduction

I. Praise for the Father Who Has Selected Us

II. Praise to the Son Who Saved Us

III. Praise to the Spirit Who Has Sealed Us

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and open tonight to Ephesians chapter 1? You remember last Sunday night Dr. Sidlow Baxter was in Ephesians chapter 1, and I’m certainly not going to try to add to anything that he said, but maybe to, amplify just a little bit and rejoice some more in this wonderful, wonderful passage of Scripture. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 3 and we’re going to conclude our reading in verse 14. And as I read, you will notice that this is one complete sentence. It takes eleven verses for one sentence. This is the longest sentence in the Bible. Now this sentence begins with grace. Notice, it says here, “Blessed be the Lord, and God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Or, actually, verse 2: “Grace be to you (that’s where it begins), grace be to you, and peace, from God, our Father...” It begins with grace and then in verse 14 it ends with glory. So here’s the longest sentence in the Bible. It begins with grace and it ends with glory. Listen to it. “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ, in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” Period. There it is. That’s really that’s all one sentence. It’s as if Paul is so excited he can’t stop. I’m reminded of a silly little thing that, that says, Once there was a young poet of Japan whose poetry no one could scan. When told it was so, he said, “Yes, I know, but I also try to get as many words in the last sentence as I can.” Now that’s the way Paul is. It’s just, he just keeps on putting a, a, parenthetical phrase in there and just keeps going on and on and on and on and on and on. It starts with grace and it ends with glory. And to me this is one of the most exciting verses or sentences in all of the Word of God because you will never, in my estimation, find a more complete statement of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what is really here is a hymn of praise to the Trinity. Let me show you what I’m talking about. For example, look, if you will, in verse 6: “To the praise of the glory of his grace...” Now who is he talking about there? He’s talking about God the Father. Verse 2: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father...” And verse 6: “To the praise of the glory of his grace...” So it is a hymn of praise to God. And then, God the Father. And then, if you look on down to verse 12: “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” It is a praise to God the Son. And then look on down, if you will, in verse 14. It speaks of the Holy Spirit. “Which is the earnest of the inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” That is, the praise of the glory of the Holy Spirit who is the earnest in our heart. It is a praise to the Father, a praise to the Son, and a praise to the Holy Spirit. Now I want you to keep that in mind as we prepare our hearts now for the Lord’s Supper. And I want you to see the three stanzas in this tribute to the Trinity, this tribute to the Trinity, this hymn of praise to the Trinity.

## **I. Praise for the Father Who Has Selected Us**

First of all, there’s praise for the Father who has selected us. Look, if you will, in verse 3 again. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before him in love.” And how can we ever forget what Sidlow Baxter told us last Sunday night as he talked to us about God the Father selecting us. Before He ever swung this planet into space, before He ever scooped out the seas, heaped up the mountains, flung out the sun, the moon, and the stars, we were in the heart and mind of God. You talk about old time religion. Now, folks, that is old time religion. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “God surely must have chosen me before I came into this world or He never would have chosen me afterward.” Well, I think that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a little whimsical about that. But, dear friend, before the world ever was, before the universe ever existed, you sitting here tonight were in the heart and mind of God. Now what does this mean, that He has chosen us? This does not mean, and I want to make it very clear and very plain, that God has chosen one sinner above another sinner. But it does mean that the church was in His heart and mind before the foundation of the world. And you cannot take credit for our salvation. I can’t take credit for it. My dear friend, God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Holy Spirit wrought it. It is all the work of God. Now, dear friend, we chose Him. But the only reason that we can choose Him is because He first chose us. Somebody asked a little boy, said, “Have you found Jesus yet?” He said, “I didn’t know He was lost. I was lost. He found me.” And, friend, that is so true. We don’t find the Lord; He found us. And, somehow, some people take this, truth, which is a wonderful truth, and they pervert it to say that some people are eternally pre-destined to go to hell. No such thing! My dear friend, God wants everyone saved. And if you have any doubt about that, I want to give you, four Scriptures and you jot them down. The first is 1 John 2, verse 2. And John says, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, “And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” Jesus died for all the world. God wants all people saved. If you have doubt about that, 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4, for the Bible says, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.” And Second Peter chapter 3, verse 9 says, “The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that A-L-L, all should come to repentance.” And then, my dear friend, the Holy Spirit of God convicts every man. John 16 and verse 8. The Bible says the Lord Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.” Not just the church, not just the saints, but he will reprove the world. And, therefore, all people are invited to come to Jesus. I can stand in a pulpit like this and say, “Whosoever will, may come,” for the Bible says in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Sure, we were chosen of God, and I thank God that I am chosen of Him. It is His choice of me that enables me to make my choice of Him. But, dear friend, anybody who wants to be saved may be

saved. Isn't that wonderful? Dwight L. Moody tried to explain it this way. He said, "The elects are the whosoever wills and the non-elects are the whosoever won'ts." And if you don't want Him, then, dear friend, you'll not have Him. But if you want Him, you may have Him. And I, I and so, dear friend, this is, when He selected us – before the foundation of the world. And why did He select us? The Bible tells us in verse 4 that we should be holy and without blame before Him. I talked this morning about His mighty transforming love. The greatest miracle is not the healing of the sick or even the raising of the dead. The greatest miracle is that He can take a hell-bound sinner, give him a new nature, transform him, and make him holy and blameless. And, and wherefore are we selected? Well, look, if you will, in verse 5. He has predestinated us, "...unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself..." And He did it all according to the good pleasure of His will. Now when the Bible here uses the word predestination, it's not talking about Him, primarily, choosing us to be saved, but it means that those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And, we are predestined to be adopted into His family. Well, you say, "Wait a minute, pastor. Are we born into His family or are we adopted into His family?" The answer to that is yes. We are both born into His family and adopted into His family. Now you'll have to understand the way people lived in this day. In this day, there would be sometimes a patriarch ruler and he would have many wives. That was not God's plan, not God's best plan, but some people had in this day many wives. Sometimes a patriarch ruler would have children by a slave wife. But that child would not receive the inheritance because he was not an adopted son. But what would happen sometimes is that, a patriarch ruler would decide that he wanted this son that he had sired to be his legal heir. And so they would go to the city gates and they would have a ceremony. And so, now the child that has been born into the family and has the nature of the father also has the inheritance of the father, and he becomes an heir and a joint heir with the other sons. And that's what the adoption means, that we are adopted into God's family and, therefore, we are fully accepted. Look, if you will, in verse 6. The Bible says, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." That's so wonderful. Now, friend, if you want something to rejoice about at the Lord's Table, you think about it. You are chosen in the past, predestined for the future, and accepted in the present. That's the way you are. You've got something to shout about. You've got something to rejoice in. You go all over this world today and you'll see signs that'll say, "Stay Out. Not Welcome. Members Only." I saw a sign the other day that said, "Don't Even Think About Parking Here." I mean, it, people are, people are just saying, "You're not welcome. Stay out." But the Bible says, the Bible says you are accepted in the beloved. Who is the beloved? Jesus. So how accepted are you? You are as accepted as Jesus is accepted. God the Father said of the Lord Jesus, "This is My beloved Son." And, and you are

accepted in Him. Let me give you a verse of Scripture, John 17, verse 23. Jesus is talking about His own and He said, "I in them..." See, He's in me. "...and thou in me..." Christ is in me and the Father is in Jesus. So the Father is in me. Listen. John 17:23: "I in them, and thou in me, that thy may be perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." How much does God love you tonight? He loves you as much as He loves Jesus. You say impossible. Well then, just take this verse and tear it out of your Bible. Jesus said, "Father, help them to see that You love them as You have loved me." Why? Because you are in Christ. And when God is loving Christ, He is loving you because you are in Christ. You are a member of His body. And so, the Father loves you because you've been made accepted in the beloved. And so this hymn of praise begins, begins with, praise to the Father who has selected us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless, that we receive the adoption of sons, that we are accepted in the beloved, the Lord Jesus. Thank You, Father. Praise the Lord who selected us.

## **II. Praise to the Son Who Saved Us**

Then He moves to the second, stanza in this tribute to the Trinity, and this second stanza is not only praise to the Father who selected us, but praise to the Son who saved us. Look, if you will, in verse 7. It speaks of the Son. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Now what do we receive in Christ? Well, first of all, we receive a pardon. Look in verse 7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." Now this reminds me of a ceremony that they had in the Old Testament. God wants us to understand salvation so much that He gives us so many illustrations of it. One illustration is the scapegoat in the Old Testament. Actually, there were two goats. And the high priest would take two goats. One goat would be killed. His blood would be shed, because the Bible says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." The high priest would take the blood of that goat, catch it in a basin, and go present it, at the mercy seat there at the altar. That blood represented, a payment for sin. Then another priest would take a goat, this time called the scapegoat, and he would lay his hands on the head of that goat and, and, confess the sins of the people, laying his hands on the head of that goat. And then

they would take that goat and led it away out in the wilderness, as far away as they could lead it, and just let it go, never to return again. And, you see, the word forgive literally means to bear away or to carry away. And so God has given us an illustration. Our sin is atoned for by the precious blood of Jesus and carried away. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. That's what Jesus has done for us. That's what we're celebrating tonight. Praise God, first of all, for a pardon. But not only for a pardon, but also for a purpose. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; and hath made known unto us the mystery of his will..." Folks, we're the only people in the world who know anything, we really are. Nobody else knows anything except us. I'm talking about the saints. All the wise acers in the universe \_\_\_\_\_. The high muckety-mucks, in the world of philosophy and the scientists with their cyclotrons and atom smashers, they don't know anything unless they know Jesus. It's all just ignorance. We're the only one who knows what it's all about. He's made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself. God has given us a pardon and a purpose. Now watch it. What is it all about? What is God up to? Verse 10. I hope that you've got it underlined. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times..." Now, you see, time is getting ripe. We, I'm in, the, the dispensation means in the age of the fullness of times, "...that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." Now, now what does this mean? Well, "In whom also we have obtained an, an inheritance, being pre-destinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." God has a purpose. "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Now God's plan of redemption involves us, but it centers in Christ. What is God up to? Well, God is going to bring all things into harmony. Verse 10, look at it again. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ..." Do you know what's wrong right now? Everything is out of its place. Satan is out of his place. He belongs in hell. He's not there, but he will be. The church is out of her place. We're right now sojourners in earth. We've not yet received our inheritance. We're looked down upon, the scum of the earth. But one of these days, we're going to judge angels. And the Bible says, "The meek will inherit the earth." The church is out of her place. Israel is out of her place. She belongs back in the land. And, by the way, they're coming back. The Jews are coming back. You've been reading the paper? And I will say to the north part, "Give up." And the soviets now are letting the Jews return back to Israel. Israel is out of her place. But do you know why Satan is out of his place and the church is out of his, her place and Israel is out of her place? Because Jesus is out of His place. I mean, Jesus right now has not yet come to inherit His throne. But one of these days, Christ is coming back to this earth to rule and to



reign. And when He does, everything is going to come into harmony. He's going to bring it all into one. The spiritual and the material are going to come together. Heaven and earth will come together. God and man will come together. And man and man will come together. What a day that will be. And, friend, it's all in the Lord Jesus Christ. God shows us His purpose, that Jesus might receive all praise and honor and glory. We have a pardon in Christ. We have a purpose in Christ. And we have a possession in Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 11: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things together." One day the riches of His grace will become to us the riches of His glory, and it is absolutely certain. It is predestinated. And who can stop the sovereign will of Almighty God. Friend, you are a plutocrat tonight. You are very, very rich. You have been adopted and you're waiting your inheritance, and it is coming as surely as I'm standing here.

### **III. Praise to the Spirit Who Has Sealed Us**

Well, here's the third stanza in this tribute to the Trinity. First of all, he gives a praise to the Father who selected us. He chose us before the foundation of the world. And then he gives a praise to the Son who saved us: a purpose, a, a, pardon, a possession. And then he gives a praise to the Spirit who has sealed us. Look, if you will, now in verse 13, look at it. "In whom ye also, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit. Now when I say a seal, different things come to mind according to your background. If you're a boy or girl, you probably think of an animal in the zoo that balances a ball on his nose. If you're a woman, you may think of that thing that goes on a Mason jar when you put up those preserves, that little rubber ring. Now if you're a man, you may think of a seal in the transmission that keeps the oil from leaking out or the transmission fluid. If you're a lawyer, you may think of that, thing that you press onto a paper to seal a document. And this is what, the apostle Paul is talking about here is a legal seal, a legal stamp. And what, what he means here is that when a legal transaction has taken place, in order to show security and ownership, the, a, a seal would be put upon it. Now how good is a seal? Well, it all depends on who puts the seal on. These boys and girls who are going to graduate, they'll get a diploma, and on that diploma will be a seal. Well, a seal is no better than the high school that they graduate from. God has set His seal upon you after that you were saved. And what it means is that your salvation is guaranteed by the Father, sealed with the Spirit, and you, as a child of God, are signed, sealed, and delivered. I love Esther chapter 8 and verse 8 where it says, "For the writing which is written in the king's name and sealed

with the king's ring, no man can reverse." I love that. Of course, they were talking about an earthly king. How much more true is that of the heavenly King, written with the King's hand and sealed with the King's seal. No man can reverse.

## **Conclusion**

So tonight, when we take the Lord's Supper, just remember, friend, that you have been selected by the Father. You have been saved by the Son. You have been sealed by the Spirit. And you can't be more blessed or more secure than that. I can understand, can't you, why Paul just could not finish this sentence that begins with grace until it ended with glory?

# The Longest Sentence in the Bible

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 9, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:4–14**

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”*

EPHESIANS 1:4

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## Introduction

Turn, please, with me, in your Bibles, to Ephesians chapter 1. We are exploring Ephesians, God’s guidebook to growth. We come this morning to what I call “The Longest Sentence in the Bible.” Paul starts talking, and he cannot stop. He gets so excited about what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ that he goes on and on and on and on. And you keep wanting to find a place to put a period, but you can’t find a period.

He’s like that little boy—somebody asked him if he knew how to spell *banana*. He said, “Yes, but I don’t know when to stop: *b-a-n-a-n-a-n-a-n-a-n-a*.” Paul didn’t know when to stop; he was so excited about the Lord.

Now I want you to read this entire sentence with me, and then we're going to come back and look at it. Now I want you to listen carefully, because this sentence is about you. This is your life. Here the Lord is just giving your biography: from grace to glory; from eternity past to eternity future. Now, friend, if you're not interested in what you have in the Lord Jesus, and you're not interested in your own personal spiritual welfare, what on earth would you be interested in? What on earth could you be interested in? Pay attention. This excited Paul; it ought to excite you.

Beginning in verse 4: *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation”—or “the economy”—“of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom...”*—you think he's going to close, but he hangs a preposition in there—*“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:4–14)

There's the sentence. Paul just couldn't find a place to stop. It kept getting bigger and better the more excited he became, as he thought about all that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so as you have your outline, I trust that you'll be taking notes this morning. Certainly you'll not be able to take down everything, but I trust you'll take down some notes as God speaks to your heart.

## **I. Our Past**

First of all, I want you to notice verse 4—and verse 4 says we are chosen. (Ephesians 1:4) And that speaks, friend, of our past—of our past. Did you know that God chose you, that God purposed your salvation, before He laid the foundations of the earth? You talk about the old-time religion, now that's old-time. I mean, that's before there were any trees and mountains and birds and bees and fleas. Now, that's before there was anything. God, way back in eternity past, chose you; God chose me. You know, these

kids play football, or they play basketball, or they play softball, and they choose sides. And there's somebody who always wonders if he's going to be chosen at all. Isn't it wonderful to know that God chose us way so far back? You see, God is love, and what good is it to be a God of love if there's no one to love? Love, by its very nature, cannot dwell by itself; and so, since God's nature is love, God created people like us, and chose us, that He might love us.

And that brings me to say something I've said before, friend: *God does not love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because God loves us.* Oh, you are somebody because God chose you by His grace. And by His sovereign will, God chose to bestow His love upon you. I like what Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say about it. Spurgeon said this: "God certainly must have chosen me before I came into this world, or He never would have chosen me afterward." Isn't it wonderful to know that even before we got here God looked down and said, "I see who he's going to be, and I choose him"?

That means I can't take any credit for my salvation. It wasn't primarily that I chose God. I love Him because He first loved me. (1 John 4:19) Somebody asked a little boy, said, "Have you found the Lord?" He said, "Oh, I didn't know He was lost." He said, "I was lost, and He found me." Praise God, there's a difference, friend.

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood.*

—ROBERT ROBINSON

How wonderful that God has chosen us! He has chosen us.

Now, this does not mean that God has chosen one sinner above another sinner. This does not mean that God chooses one to go to heaven and one to go to hell. The emphasis is not God choosing one sinner above another sinner, but He has chosen us—those of us who are the saints. Now I want to say, friend, that if you want to be saved, you can be saved. Don't worry about not being one of the chosen ones, for the Bible says clearly in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 and 4, "*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*" (1 Timothy 2:3–4) It is God's will that all men be saved. The Bible says in 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9, "*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9) And the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." (Revelation 22:17)

And so, when the Bible teaches that we're chosen, it's not a matter of God choosing this one to be saved and rejecting that one, but it means that God had a plan in His mind, and that Christ was crucified before the foundation of the world, and God had us in his heart before He swung this planet into space. And that makes me happy.

I like what Dwight L. Moody has to say about the elect or the chosen ones. You know, there are some people who believe that you're elected to be damned or you're elected to be saved, and there's nothing you can do about it. What will be will be, whether it ever *bes* or not. I mean, that's what they believe: that you're just simply made for heaven or hell before God ever created you. No, that's not true, dear friend. Dwight L. Moody used to say, "The *whosoever-wills* are the elect, and the *whosoever won'ts* are the non-elect." You see, if you want to be one of God's elect, just choose the Lord Jesus. Just say, "Lord, I choose you, because you chose me." But remember, you could not choose Him unless He first chose you, unless He loved you so much that He set His affection on you and He sent His Son to die for you. And it is God's choice of us that enables us to make our choice of Him. But God allows us to choose.

But I'm so grateful that He chose me so that I could choose Him, and I'm so grateful that in eternity past I was in the heart, the mind, the bosom of Almighty God. And there's no room, therefore, for boasting, friend. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Holy Spirit wrought it. And I've got it. Praise God! I tell you, it's wonderful to know that God has done this wonderful thing. He has chosen us in Christ. And so, that is our past.

## II. Our Prospect

Now I want you to notice the next verse that speaks of our prospect, or our future. In verse 5, it says we were predestinated—not only chosen, but predestinated: "*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*" (Ephesians 1:5) It gets even better: I'm chosen before the world was swung into space, and I'm predestinated to be like the Lord Jesus Christ one day. And I want to say about predestination, also like God's choice, predestination is not God saying from eternity that one man goes to heaven and that another man goes to hell; but predestination does teach me this: On the authority of the Word of God, when I have received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, it is settled forever that one day I am going to be made exactly like my Savior. I have been "*predestinated...unto the adoption of children.*" That is, one day He's going to make us all like Jesus. "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" (Romans 8:29) That's what the adoption of sons is. We're made like the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's fixed—it's settled—in the mind of God. Friend, you talk about a verse on eternal security—there's one! Predestination settles it forever. God says to those who have chosen His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, because His Son the Lord Jesus has chosen us, it is settled—it is fixed—the adoption of sons.

Now we don't realize, but, friend, there's more to come. The adoption—the main part of the adoption, the real adoption—takes place in the future. The Bible says in Romans 8, verse 23, "*Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit,*

*the redemption of our body.*” (Romans 8:23) You see, the adoption we’re predestinated to is that our bodies one day are going to be redeemed. Right now, my spirit has been saved. My soul is being saved. One day, my body will be saved. You see, I’m immediately justified in the spirit, progressively sanctified in the soul, one day ultimately glorified in the body. That’s the adoption, and it’s predestinated. He’s going to “*change our vile body...like unto his glorious body.*” (Philippians 3:21) Say, doesn’t that excite you to be made like Jesus? You know, the psalmist said, “*I shall be satisfied, when I [awaken in] thy likeness.*” (Psalm 17:15)

I heard a long time ago about a man, a farmer, who’d never been to a big city—lived out in the farm all his life, never seen a building over three stories tall. And he went to town for the first time and saw an elevator for the first time. It fascinated him. He didn’t even know what it was. And he was standing there watching with his big half-grown son, and he noticed an old lady got on the elevator and the doors shut behind her. The dials moved. The door opened again, and a beautiful young lady stepped off. He couldn’t believe his eyes. He said to his son, “Son, you stay right here. I’m going to go get your mother and run her through that thing.”

Now I’ll tell you what, friend, when God’s elevator takes over in the Rapture—when Jesus says, “Come up hither”—we’re going to be transformed. We’re going to receive the adoption, the redemption of our bodies, and when we come back here to this earth, there’s going to be a greater change between that woman that got on and that one that got off. Oh, what a change is going to take place when our Lord makes us over in His image, in His likeness! We’re going up and coming back down different people. I tell you, it’s going to be wonderful.

### III. Our Present

So he talks about our past: We have been chosen. He talks about our prospect: We are predestinated to the adoption. And since he talks about our past, and our prospect, now he talks about our present in the next verse. What are we right now? Well, in the past, we’re chosen. Prospectively, we’re predestinated. Presently, we are accepted. And so, notice in verse 6 now—he says in verse 6, “*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*” (Ephesians 1:6) Now, friend, it gets better and better: chosen in the past, predestined in the future, and accepted in the present. Accepted: isn’t that a wonderful word? Don’t you like the way the word accepted sounds? You go up and down the streets, you see signs: “Keep off!”; “Stay out!”; “No trespassing!”; “Members only”; “Not wanted”; “Rejected”; “Failure.” Isn’t it wonderful that God “*hath made us accepted*”? But if we’re made accepted, friend, we can’t boast about it, because the Bible says we have been made accepted.

And how are we made accepted? What is there about such an unacceptable guy as

Adrian Rogers that I could have intimate fellowship with the God of grace and the God of glory—that I am acceptable in His sight, the thrice-holy God of Israel, and a sinner like me? How could I be accepted in Him? Oh, look at the verse—look at the verse. The Bible says we are *“made...accepted in the beloved”*—*“in the beloved”*—*“in the beloved.”* Now, what does that mean? Who is the beloved? The beloved is Jesus. God said, *“This is my beloved Son.”* (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17) Do you know the way that I am accepted? When I’m in Christ, God looks at me as He looks at His own dear Son. I am acceptable because I’m in Jesus, and God the Father receives Jesus. God the Father receives me. And God doesn’t see me when He looks; He sees Jesus. That’s glorious.

I want to show you a verse that if it weren’t in the Bible would be so hard to believe. But we must believe it, because it’s in the Bible. Look in John 17, verse 23, for a moment. Now, keep your place there in Ephesians—we don’t want to wander too far. But Jesus is praying to the Father, and He talks about His children, His saints, those who’ve been born again. And Jesus speaks of Himself in these words: *“I in them,”*—that is, Jesus is saying, *“I’m in my children”*—*“and thou in me,”*—*“Father, you’re in me, and I’m in them—“that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me,”*—now, here’s the phrase I want—*“and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (John 17:23) Now, you think about it. God loves me as He loves His own dear Son. *“Let the world know that thou, O Father, hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”*

Did you know how much God loves Adrian Rogers today? As much as He loves Jesus Christ. You say, *“Blasphemy!”* It sounds that way, but it’s true. It’s in the Word. *“O Father, help them to know that thou hast loved them as you love me.”* See, I’m in the beloved, and when God looks down, He just sees this beloved Son. And I’m in Christ! And so, God loves me: that’s why I’m acceptable. I am *“accepted in the beloved.”* My past: I’m chosen. My future: I’m predestined. My present: I’m acceptable. Isn’t that great? Man, that’s good! That’s what it means to be saved. Glory to God! It’s wonderful!

And so, a true Christian, when he understands this, ought to just praise the Lord. He doesn’t brag about how good he is; he brags about the grace of God. That’s the reason verse 6 says, *“To the praise of the glory of his grace.”* People who don’t understand grace don’t understand what I’m talking about. They say, *“You’re not good.”* Of course I’m not that good! You’re not that good—no one is! But we are *“accepted in the beloved.”* It is the glory of God’s grace. That’s the reason when people understand the meaning of the word *grace* they start to sing songs like *“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”*



## IV. Our Pardon

All right, the next thing I want you to notice is not only our past, and our prospect, and our present, but our pardon. Notice verse 7—this tells us that we have redemption: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:7)—*“redemption through his blood.”* This tells us that *God makes saintly sons out of sinful slaves through the blood of Jesus Christ.* I call the blood of Jesus Christ that redeems us the red river of redemption.

### A. The Source of the River

The source of that river is the bosom of God in eternity past, because the Bible says we were *“chosen...before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) The Bible tells us that Christ was slain in the heart and mind of God before the foundations of the earth were ever laid. (Revelation 13:8) And so, in eternity past, before this planet was molded and flung into space, this river of redemption welled up in the heart of God.

### B. The Course of the River

But not only the source the river; I want you to notice the course of the river. I see this river of blood as it flows past the gates of the Garden of Eden, because God slew an innocent animal and clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skin. For *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22) I see this river of blood as it courses and bounds past that altar of Abel, where Cain and Abel came to worship the Lord. And Cain worshipped and offered the fruit of his hands and the fruit of the ground, but Cain was rejected. And Abel offered a little lamb, and God had respect toward Abel’s offering, a blood sacrifice. For *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* I see the river of redemption as it flows into a new world, because after Noah had sailed the good ship grace and it came to rest upon Mount Ararat, then Noah got out and made a blood sacrifice to the Lord. I see this crimson river as it flows on there on Mount Moriah when Abraham was about to offer up Isaac, his own dear son. And there was a ram caught in the thicket that took Isaac’s place, because *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins].”* But God Himself provided the blood sacrifice. And onward the river rolls, and I see it as it flows into the land of Egypt, and there when the Passover lamb was slain God said, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”* (Exodus 12:13) For *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* And deeper and wider the river of redemption flows. We see it in all of the Levitical offerings and all of the temple sacrifices. God is teaching a lesson: *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* And I see the river of redemption as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died in agony and blood, and His rich, red, royal blood was poured out there upon Calvary. And I say, oh, thank God—thank God—for the blood of Jesus. We *“were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ.”* (1 Peter

1:18–19)

But the river has not stopped flowing, and the radiant streams of the blood of Christ are flowing out into the city of Memphis right now and into this auditorium right now. And sinners today are being changed by the power of the blood of Jesus. There is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood. And it will not cease to flow until it gets into heaven, because even in heaven they're singing unto Him who loved us and redeemed us with His blood—oh yes. “And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.” “There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.” We are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18–19) Look at it again—look at verse 7: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood.”* (Ephesians 1:7)

### C. The Force of the River

Now, what is the force of the river? The forgiveness of sin. The source: the heart of God. The course: it has flowed through all history from eternity past to eternity future. But the force is this: that only the blood of Jesus can forgive your sins. Friend, you put away your pocketbook: it will not buy remission of sins. You put away your good deeds and your baptismal certificate: it will not buy the remission of sins. *“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) It is what Jesus did on Calvary that enables us to be forgiven of our sins.

I was interested to read that in 1959 they had an accident at the Oak Ridge Atomic Laboratory here in Tennessee. A door exploded, blew open, in the processing cell there in that laboratory, and one-fifth of an ounce of plutonium was broadcast out into the air—one-fifth of an ounce. Do you know what they had to do over at Oak Ridge when one-fifth of an ounce of plutonium got out into the air? Everybody that was within four acres had to turn in their clothes to be decontaminated, and everybody had to take special medical tests. All of buildings were washed, and all of the roofs were resurfaced. Why, the surrounding lawn was even dug up and buried very deeply. They even took a chisel and chiseled off one hundred yards of a road. And all of the buildings were repainted, and everything had to be done because one-fifth of an ounce of plutonium. The reactors were shut down. The processing plant was closed, and it cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to decontaminate that area because man is so afraid of radioactivity.

Would to God we were that afraid of sin! And, oh, dear friend, let me tell you, there's only one thing that can take away sin; there's only one thing, at an infinite cost greater than hundreds of thousands of dollars—and that is the blood of Jesus Christ.

## V. Our Purpose

And so, we've seen our past. We've seen our prospect. We have seen our present. We have seen our pardon. Now, the next thing I want you to notice is our purpose—and we find that in verses 8 through 10, because there God enlightens us. He opens our understanding to see what our purpose is. Notice beginning in verse 8: *“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation...”*—if you want to know what God is up to, here it is—*“that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”* (Ephesians 1:8–10) That is our purpose. You see, God's purpose centers in Christ, but it includes us. Why were we chosen before the foundation of the world? Why were we predestined to the adoption of sons? Why have we been made accepted in the beloved? Why was the blood of Jesus Christ shed for our sins? Why? God is working on a purpose, and the purpose is to bring together everything.

You see, we live in a world of discord. We live in a world of tension. We live in a world of frustration. We live in a world of pain. We live in a world that is at war with itself. But one of these days God's purpose is going to be finished. And what is His purpose? Look at it again; it's very important—verse 10: *“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”* Everything is going to harmonize.

You see, if I were take a tuning fork, and start it vibrating, and tune the organ to that turning fork, and tuned the piano to that tuning fork, then the organ and the piano have to be in tune with one another, right?

You see, one day everything is going to be in tune to Jesus Christ. And, therefore, everything is going to be in tune with everything else. Heaven and earth are going to be harmony. Man and God are going to be in harmony. The spiritual and the material are going to be harmony. The animals and humans are going to be in harmony. Men will be in harmony. Our own bodies will be in harmony. Everything will be gathered together in Jesus Christ. We're going to know life as God meant it to be. God is working toward that purpose. All is going to be in Christ, and Christ is going to be in all, and all will be brought into harmony with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is our purpose. This is our goal. This is where we're headed.

And God enlightens us. He helps us to know this. There's no way you could figure that out. No rationalist, no philosopher, could understand that; but, thank God, we've been enlightened. We don't have to be in the dark. God's got a purpose. God's got a goal. We have some people today who call themselves existentialists. What they mean is, “Nothing makes any sense.” That's just what that big word means: “Nothing makes

any sense; we can't figure it out." And there are a lot of people today who just say there's no rhyme, no reason. One philosopher said, "Unless there is some rhyme, some reason, life is just a mystery braying across the ages." Another one said, "Life is just a bad joke. People can't understand what it's all about." Thank God I know what it's all about. I have been enlightened. I know what God is up to. One day everything is going to be brought into oneness in the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven and earth are going to be together. Isn't it wonderful to be a part of a plan like that? Friend, we've been enlightened, and that is our purpose.

## **VI. Our Portion**

And so, we've talked about our past. We've talked about prospect. We've talked about our present. We've talked about our pardon. We've talked about our purpose. But we're not finished yet. No wonder Paul couldn't stop. He goes on to talk about our portion, or our provision—whichever you wish—in verses 11 and 12: "*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.*" (Ephesians 1:11) Now he talks about our inheritance. We have been enriched—we have been enriched. This is our portion, the inheritance.

You see, you ought to be interested in an inheritance. If you had a rich uncle or a rich aunt somewhere, wouldn't you want to know it if she had included you in her will? Don't you realize that the Bible is God's last will and testament? The New Testament is God's promise to you, and the Holy Spirit is the lawyer who helps you to understand what you have. Isn't that great? And it's signed, attested to, in the crimson blood of the Son of God. And you have inheritance that's unbreakable, that's "*undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*" (1 Peter 1:4)

Friend, that ought to excite you. If you're not excited, it must be because you're not saved. If you're not excited, you've got calluses on your soul. Friend, I want to tell you something: There is an inheritance. Now you say, "Well, it doesn't seem like so much. I'm still not doing too well." Well, maybe you haven't appropriated your inheritance, or maybe you don't understand it. But the inheritance is in three parts.

### **A. The Initial Pledge**

First of all, there is the initial pledge. That's in verse 14. God has given to us the earnest of the Spirit. (Ephesians 1:14) When we became His heirs, He gave us the initial pledge; that is, He put his Holy Spirit in our hearts. That's just simply the down payment.

### **B. The Daily Supply**

The second part of the inheritance is the daily supply. "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19) That's the daily supply.

We told you about this before. Suppose a little five- or ten-year-old boy received an inheritance of twenty million dollars—do you think they would turn over twenty million dollars to a ten-year-old boy? Of course not! It would be his, but they would be waiting till he came to manhood before he could take it over, right? They'd probably buy him a new bike and say that's the down payment. Then, they'd give him his food and his clothing, send him to school. That's the daily supply. But one day he gets to be a man; one day he receives the full adoption. And when he receives the full adoption, then he gets it all.

### C. The Full Adoption

Friend, one of these days—one of these days—when we're able to handle, then we will receive full adoption, and we will get it all. Do you know why most of us don't have any more than we have? We've got just about all God can trust us with—we've got just about all God can trust us with. You couldn't trust a ten-year-old boy with twenty million dollars. But one day, when we're made like Him, when we receive the adoption, when we receive the placing as sons, then we will receive it all.

And I know this word *adoption* bothers some of you, because you say, "Now, wait a minute: am I born into the family of God or adopted into the family of God?" The answer to that is, yes, you are both born and adopted. Spiritually, you're born into the family of God. Legally, you're adopted into the family of God. And you'd have to understand the situation in olden times to understand this. In olden times, a man would have many wives sometimes. They practiced polygamy, though it was not God's best plan. But here was a man who might have a son by a slave woman, who would be one of his wives and a slave at the same time, and that son would not be one of his legal heirs. He would have his father's nature, but he would not have his father's inheritance. But sometimes the father would look at one of those sons and he would say, "Son, I'm choosing you." See? "*Chosen...before the foundation of the world.*" (Ephesians 1:4) And he chooses this son, carries him down to the city gates, and they have a formal ceremony where he is adopted into the family. Not only is he born into the family; he is adopted into the family. You see, dear friend, spiritually, we are born into the family of God; but God our Father has fathered us. We have His very nature with in us. But then also, legally, He has adopted us and given us the full placing as sons. But that full placing as sons comes when we get our glorified bodies.

We had an inheritance, there's a down payment; there is a daily supply; and, glory to God, one day, when Jesus comes, there is going to be the adoption; that is, the redemption of our bodies. And it's all going to be made complete. And so that, dear friend, is our portion.

## VII. Our Protection

And so now we're going to move on and think about our protection. Verse 13 tells us that we've been sealed. It gets better yet. No wonder Paul couldn't quit. And Paul says, *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth..."*—and nobody's ever saved without hearing the Word of truth: *"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how they shall preach, except they be sent?"* (Romans 10:14–15) How important it is to preach the Word of God that people can hear the Word of God so they can believe the Word of God—*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."* (Ephesians 1:13) And that, my friend, is our protection—our protection. We are *"sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."*

Now, when we talk about a seal, the kids think of an animal that balances a ball on his nose. That's not the kind of seal I'm talking about—not one of those. The ladies think about what goes in a Mason fruit jar. I'm not talking about that. The gentleman think about what keeps the oil from leaking out of your transmission. I'm not talking about that—not that kind of a seal. The seal that Paul is referring to here is a legal stamp that was put upon a document. And what a legal stamp is to a document, the Holy Spirit is to a believer. The minute I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, God seals me with the Holy Spirit. A seal stood for three things: number one, a finished transaction; number two, ownership; number three, security. The seal was not to be broken.

Look for a moment in the book of Esther, if you will, and I want you to see what I'm talking about. You see, every king in this time had a ring, and on that ring was the king's seal. And when the king would make a document, he would take some melted wax and melt that wax, and then he would press that seal down into that melted wax. All right, in Esther chapter 8 and verse 8—you remember that Esther received permission from King Ahasuerus that the Jews would be protected—and notice in Esther chapter 8 and verse 8: *"Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name..."*—oh, thank God, friend, when we pray, we pray in the King's name, in the name of Jesus—*"in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse."* (Esther 8:8) Praise God, man, when you believe, you are sealed by the King of kings and the Lord of lords! This is talking about an earthly king, King Ahasuerus. And it is possible, of course, that some other king could have been mightier than that king. But I want to ask you, dear friend, who is mightier than the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who after that we have believed, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise? (Ephesians 1:13) A transaction completed—ownership: we belong to Him. His seal, His mark, His insignia is upon us—and protection!

## VIII. Our Perfection

So I tell you, I see my past. I see my prospect. I see my present. I see my pardon. I see my portion. I see my protection all right here in this passage of Scripture. Isn't it great to be signed, sealed, and delivered? Oh, wonderful, wonderful! What a salvation! And now, the next thing I want you to see, and finally, is not only our protection, but our perfection. And our security is in our perfection. Notice in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 14, the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit of promise, "*which is the earnest of our inheritance...*"—that is, the Holy Spirit is at one time our seal and also our down payment, our security—"*which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*" (Ephesians 1:14)

When a man went to buy a piece of property, not only was the transaction sealed, but he'd give a down payment; he'd give a down payment to say, "I mean business." You see, our redemption, though it has been paid for in full, we've been purchased at Calvary, the Lord Jesus Christ has not redeemed what He's purchased in the sense now of really picking it up and making it all that He's going to make it. There's more to come. But He has given us the down payment. He paid the price with His own blood—we've already seen this—and now after He's paid the price to purchase us, then He gives us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the down payment.

It's interesting, this word *earnest*, it's a word that we get "earnest money" from. A man goes to buy a piece of property, he puts up some money to show he's in earnest, that he's sincere about it. Did you know this same word in Modern Greek is the word that is used for an engagement ring, when a man says to a girl, "I want to marry you," and he gives her an engagement ring? God the Holy Father has given us the engagement ring, and one day there's going to be a wedding in the sky. One day we're going to hear the shout say, "*Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*" (Matthew 25:6) And the wedding ring—the pledge, the earnest, the down payment, the security—is the Holy Spirit in our hearts. That, my dear friend, speaks of our perfection—because one day—one day—it's going to happen.

He "*is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption.*"

## Conclusion

You know, it doesn't say, "If the redemption," but "until." I like that word *until*.

*My heart can sing when I pause to remember  
A heartache here is but a stepping stone  
Along a trail that's winding always upward,  
This troubled world is not my final home.  
But until then my heart will go on singing,  
Until then with joy I'll carry on,*

*Until the day my eyes behold the city,  
Until the day God calls me home.*

—STUART HAMBLEN

Until then.



# Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 13, 1985

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 1:13–14

*“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”*

EPHESIANS 1:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Ephesians chapter 1. In just a moment, we're going to look at verses 13 and 14. When I mention a seal, what do you think of? Now, if you're a boy or a girl and I mention a seal, you probably think of an animal, one that can keep a ball on his nose, and goes in and out of the water, and enjoys fish—that is, eating them. If you are a housewife and I mention a seal, you may think of that rubber gasket that you use when you put preserves in that Mason jar. If you're an automobile transmission expert and I talk of a seal, you may think of that gasket that keeps the juice from leaking out of the transmission, the transmission fluid there. But if you're a lawyer and I talk about a seal, you think of seal that is put onto a document; you think of something that is embossed into the paper, or somehow put there by print or wax or whatever means, to say this is an authentic, bone fide document. It has authority behind it. It is sealed.

Now, we're going to talk today on this subject: “Signed, Sealed, and Delivered.” Now, it is the last meaning of the word *seal* that I'm going to use—the legal meaning—

and that's what Paul is using here. Beginning in verse 13 he speaks of what happened to us when we got saved, and he says, "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed*"—do you see it?—"ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13–14)

Now, I remind you again that Paul was a lawyer, and he's using the word *sealed* here in a legal way. Now, Paul says that when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, when we're born again, one of the ways that we could know that we're saved, one of the proofs, one of the authenticating evidences that we are genuine, bone fide, legally belonging to Jesus Christ is that God places His seal upon us. Now, the seal that God places upon us is the Holy Spirit of God, because every believer, when he is saved, receives the Holy Spirit of God. Amen?

Now look, folks, there's no such thing as getting saved and then later on receiving the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us in Romans 8: "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" (Romans 8:9) If you've not received the Holy Spirit, you've not yet received Jesus. The only way that you can receive Christ is to receive God's Holy Spirit. He lives in you; He abides in you. And when He comes into you, it is the same thing to you that a seal is to a legal document. "*Ye were sealed*"—the Bible says—"with that holy Spirit of promise." (Ephesians 1:13) And a seal, first of all, a seal, dear friend, means finality; it means the transaction is done. Secondly, a seal means security; it means the transaction is safe. And thirdly, a seal means identity; it shows to whom the transaction has been delivered. Now, I want you to think about the fact that Christians have the sealing of the Holy Spirit of God.

## **I. A Seal Means Finality**

Now, first of all, the word *sealed* tells us that there has been finality. It is final. In verse 14, he mentions "*the purchased possession.*" (Ephesians 3:14) If you have time, when you go home, read the thirty-second chapter of Jeremiah, and you are going to find there that Jeremiah went out and bought a field. Jeremiah the prophet, he spent about three thousand dollars for this field. He bought it from his nephew. The Jews were about to be carried away into captivity, and Jeremiah knew that not only would they be carried away, but they would also be brought back from captivity. And so, God said, "Jeremiah, you go and buy this field. When you buy this field, you get the documents signed and sealed, and that will be a sign that you have faith—that not only are you going into captivity, but you're also coming back—because who would want to buy a piece of property he would never again see?" (Jeremiah 32:6–8) And so, Jeremiah went and bought this piece of property. You can read about it there in Jeremiah chapter 32. But

the interesting thing is that the Bible says that when Jeremiah paid this price, they brought the evidence and they sealed it. (Jeremiah 32:10) What it means is that it has been paid in full. As a matter of fact, when these young people began to sing, I thought, “How fitting! Jesus paid the price.” That’s the first thing they said: “Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe.”

Now, dear friend, Jesus has purchased you, and there is finality. And when you receive the Holy Spirit of God, that means that the price has been paid in full. There’s nothing else you can do and nothing you need to do. Let me tell you, friend, without Jesus nothing can be done, and with Jesus nothing else needs to be done. Do you understand that? It is paid in full. When Jesus died on the cross, He bowed his head and He said in the Greek language one word: “*tetelestai*.” It is three words in the English language: “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) And that word literally means “paid in full.” When a man of that day would go into a business transaction, he would pay the price, and then to get a receipt they would write that word on it: *tetelestai*—“paid in full.” Jesus paid it all. And when I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, that means that my salvation has been completed. Jesus Christ, with His ruby red, rich, royal blood, has purchased my salvation. Praise God, I have been paid for! And so, it means, number one, it means finality. It means it is done; the great transaction is done.

## II. A Seal Means Security

But there’s a second thing that it means to be sealed: not only does it mean finality, but it means security. You see, a seal is as strong as the person who makes that seal. The seal has behind it the authority of the institution for which the seal stands. Now, the Bible teaches that we have the authority of God upon our lives; that is, we are not only saved by Jesus Christ, but we are secured by Jesus Christ. His seal is upon us.

Now, you’re in the book of Ephesians. Look in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30. In Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30, the Bible says this: “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*” (Ephesians 4:30) Do you see what that means? Dear friend, when He put His seal upon you, in the first place, it means that “you belong to me.” There’s a finished transaction. But secondly, there is a fixed transcription; that is, it is done, and you are sealed until the day of redemption.

Now, in the book of Esther, I want to show you what a seal meant to these people. Now remember, these people understand the background that perhaps you don’t understand—the people in Ephesus. So, let me give it to you. In Esther chapter 8 and verse 8—just write it in your margin; most of you’ll never find Esther ’til the invitation so just right this down—Esther chapter 8 and verse 8. Listen to this: “*Write ye also [concerning] the Jews, as it [pleaseth] you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring*”—now listen to this—“*for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed*

*with the king's ring, may no man reverse.*" (Esther 8:8) See that? "[What] is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring...no man [can] reverse." (Esther 8:8)

The kings of that day would wear a ring, and on that ring would be the king's signet, and when the king would write something, when the king would declare something, when the king would decree something, they would take melted wax and they would put it on the paper. He would put his signature there, and then, with that melted wax, he'd just put his signet right into that wax. And that was signed with the king's own handwriting, and then it was sealed with the king's signet. And that meant that you'd better not fool with the king—the king had written that; the king has sealed that.

Now, what the apostle is talking about here in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 13 and 14—the King of kings, the Lord of lords, has sealed us. Can you think of a power that can overcome the King's seal, that can reverse what the King has said? You see, Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30 says, "*Ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" (Ephesians 4:30) You say, "Brother Rogers, are you talking about that Baptist doctrine of eternal security?" No, I'm talking about that Bible doctrine of eternal security. And if it's a Baptist doctrine, let's get rid of it. *I don't believe in Baptist doctrine. I believe in Bible doctrine.* I believe Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, and all the rest of us had better find out what the Bible teaches. Now, if the Bible teaches eternal security, we ought to believe in it. If the Bible doesn't teach it, we ought not to believe in it. It's an amazing thing—if I ever preach on eternal security and get on the radio or television, I'm going to get some mail. And some of it will be hot, and some people tell me, "You ought never ever to preach on eternal security because that's a dangerous doctrine." Well, friend, truth is always dangerous, and what we better decide is whether it is true or whether it is not. I want to give you six reasons why I believe in the eternal security of the believer, why I believe that this seal is secure.

#### **A. I Am Secure Because of His Presence in Me**

And the very first reason that I want to give you—and you can just jot these down because they're easy to remember—I am secure because of His presence, Jesus' presence in me.

Now, if you have your Bibles, let's just do a little Bible searching here for just a moment, and turn with me to John chapter 14 and verse 20. Jesus Christ is talking about what happens when we get saved, and He says, "*At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father*"—now, do you think there's ever going to be a time when Jesus Christ is not in the Father? Of course not—"*I am in my Father, and ye in me*"—that is, "The same way I am in God, you are in me." I am in Christ today. Now, watch it—"*and I in you.*" (John 14:20) You see, today I'm in Jesus, and Jesus is in me.

Look up here. Can you see Jesus? No, but you can see me. But I want to tell you

something, friend: when you look up here, you're seeing a man in whom Jesus lives. He's in me. I mean, He's in me, folks; like it or not, He's in me. You see, look, I am the visible part of the invisible Christ. He is the invisible part of the visible Christian. I am in Him, and He is in me. And, you see, since He is in me, that makes me His body. I am the Body of Christ. He's the head, and I'm the body. Now, dear friend, by the way, no man can drown with his head above water. Amen? My head is in the heavenlies. Now listen, folks. Let me tell you something. He is the head; I am the body. He is in me; I am in Him. And if I perish, a part of Jesus will perish. It is unthinkable.

## **B. I Am Secure Because of His Promise to Me**

I am secure, number one, because of His presence in me. Secondly, I am secure, dear friend—by the way, the Bible speaks at least eighty-eight times of Christ being in us—but I'm also secure because of His promise to me.

I want you to take your Bibles now—you're in John—turn to John chapter 5 and verse 24. Look at it with me for just a moment. Now, when our Lord precedes a statement by the phrase “verily, verily,” do you know what that means? It means, “Wake up, wake up”; “pay attention, pay attention.” In John chapter 5, verse 24, He says this: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word”—have you heard it? I have—“and believeth on him that sent me”—have you believed on the God who sent Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world? I have—“hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24) “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” (John 5:24) “Adrian, do you have everlasting life?” I do. “Well, you’re bragging.” No, I’m not. I’m just agreeing with Jesus. Amen? I have heard His Word. I have believed. I have everlasting life—not will get it; I already have it. “Hath”—modern translation: “has”—“everlasting life.” (John 5:24)*

You're looking at a man now that has everlasting life. Now, suppose I got saved and kept it for ten years and then lost it. What did I have? Ten-year life. Suppose I kept it for twenty years and then lost it. What did I have? Twenty-year life. Now friend, let me tell you something: whatever it is, if you ever lose it, whatever it was, it wasn't everlasting. Pay attention. Whatever you have, if you ever lose it, whatever it was, it wasn't everlasting. Now, you're looking at a guy that has everlasting life. And if I ever lose it, it wasn't everlasting. I never had it. But Jesus said you do have everlasting life: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24)*

Friend, if I lose my soul, He'll lose His honor—because He told a lie; He'll lose His honor. I have now everlasting life. Everlasting life is not something you get when you

die. It's something you get when you believe. *"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."* (John 5:24)

### **C. I Am Secure Because of His Purpose for Me**

Reason number one, dear friend: His presence in me. Reason number two: His promise to me. Number three is His purpose for me. In Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, I want you to look at this. Again, the Apostle Paul is talking about confidence and a surety, and he says this: *"Being confident of this very thing"*—that is, with a rock-ribbed assurance—*"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6) Do you know what that means, folks? Listen to it: *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6) Let me ask you a question: Who began the good work? Jesus. Who will perform it? Jesus.

Now folks, listen. The Holy Spirit of God, number one, was the Convicter. The reason that you wanted Jesus Christ is because He convicted you of your sinfulness and of His Saviorhood. It was the Holy Spirit of God that did that. Don't get the idea that it was your idea to come to God. The only reason that you love Him is because He first loved you. (1 John 4:19) The Holy Spirit of God came into the world. He was the Convicter. All right, when you got saved, was it a do-it-yourself job? Of course not! Not only was the Holy Spirit the Convicter; the Holy Spirit was also the Converter, wasn't He? The Bible says you're *"born of the Spirit."* (John 3:6, 8) Now, pay attention. The same Holy Spirit who is the Convicter and the Converter is the Completer. He's the Completer. *"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6)

Now, if it depends upon you, you're going to lose it. It depends upon Him. Do you know the way you keep it, dear friend? The same way you got it. Now, if you got it by works, you can lose it by works. But if you got it by grace, you're kept by grace. Now, these people think they can work their way to heaven. Every time a person, whether he realizes it or not, thinks he can lose his salvation, somewhere in the back of his mind he has a works mentality, a works salvation. He thinks that somehow he got it by living a certain way, and so no longer, if he lives that way, he'll no longer have it. Dear friend, you keep it the same way you got it. If you're saved by grace, you're kept by grace. *"He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it."* (Philippians 1:6) What the Apostle Paul is saying is, "What God starts He's able to finish." Do you believe that? Do you believe God's going to be thwarted and frustrated? Do you believe that Almighty God is going to be headed off at the pass, that He starts to do something and says, "Oops, I blew it; I messed up, and I'm not able to do it"? No! Listen: *"He [who] hath begun a good work in you [is able to] perform it."* (Philippians 1:6) So, that's the third reason: the

purpose; His purpose in me. He has purposed to keep me.

#### **D. I Am Secure Because of His Protection Around Me**

Now, the fourth reason: I am also secure by His protection around me. Turn to John chapter 10, verses 27 to 29. Listen to what Jesus said. Jesus said there, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”* (John 10:27–29) Now listen, friend: His protection around me. We’re in His hands. You’re in better hands than Allstate.

Now, pay attention. Now listen, we are in His hands. Can you think of a power that can un-pry the mighty hand of Jesus Christ and take you out? *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”* (John 10:27–28)

Well, somebody says, “Well, no man can take you out of the hand of God. That’s true, but the devil could take you out of the hand of God.” Well, look at the word *man* there in your King James Version of the Scripture, if you’re using that, and you’ll notice that the word *man* there is in squiggly writing; it’s italicized. That means that the word *man* is not even really in the original Greek language; it has been supplied by the translators, trying to make it read more smoothly. And this particular instance, it doesn’t really add to the meaning, however, because actually, what it should say is “neither shall any pluck them out of my hands.” You name it, man nor demon nor influence or anything else—there’s nothing that can take you out of the hand of God.

Some people think the devil could take you out. Well, friend, this always seemed to me to be very silly because, you see, if the devil could, he would. You see, that would be a strange doctrine, wouldn’t it? I mean, if you’re still saved, He could take you out, but he just decided not to. Hasn’t He been good to you? So, no longer are you going to heaven by the goodness of God; now you’re going by the goodness of the devil. No. Listen to me, dear friend. The only reason he hasn’t is because he can’t. If he could, he would. The Bible says, *“Neither shall any...pluck them out of my hand.”* (John 10:28) His protection around about me. We’re not saved by holding on to God. We ought to hold on to God. But, my dear friend, we are saved and kept saved by His holding on to us.

#### **E. I Am Secure Because of His Prayers Concerning Me**

Now, I want to give you another reason that we are eternally secure: not only His protection round about me, but His prayers concerning me. Turn to John chapter 17 for just a moment. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is praying His great, high, priestly prayer, and I want you to notice in verse 9 what He prays. He prays, *“I pray for them: I pray not*

*for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*” (John 17:9) Do you know what Jesus Christ is doing for you right at this moment? He’s praying for you. Isn’t that a blessing?

Now, you know the reason we don’t really get blessed by that as much as we might get blessed by it? Because it seems so otherworldly. He’s way up yonder behind the blue praying for us. Suppose you knew that He was right outside that door praying for you—I mean, down on His knees. Wouldn’t that be a blessing to you? I mean, suppose you knew at this moment the Lord Jesus Christ, in bodily form, was right outside that door, down on His knees praying for you. Wouldn’t that be a blessing? Well, friend, it is just as true, though He’s in heaven—just as true. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 7 that *“he ever [lives] to make intercession for [us].”* (Hebrews 7:25) He is now praying. He now lives, and He is praying to make intercession for us.

Now, listen. What does He pray for us? Well, let’s see what He prays. Look in verse 15: *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* (John 17:15) Now, there are so many people who think, you know, that when we get to heaven, when we get out of this world, we’re going to be secure. But Jesus didn’t pray that. Jesus didn’t pray that one day we’d go to heaven and be secure. *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil”* (John 17:15)—“but Lord, that you keep them.”

† These people who believe you can lose your salvation, do you know what they ought to do? They ought to put some .45 pistols in the counseling room, and as soon as the person gets saved—*blam!*—shoot and save them. I mean, listen, think about it. I mean, if a person continues to live down here, he might lose his salvation, right? So, get him out of here and get him to heaven as soon as you can. I mean, it’s far more important to live eternally, isn’t it, than to live a few more years down here. So, save them and shoot them. Now, if you believe in baptismal regeneration, as some people do, save them, sink them, and shoot them. But, I mean, listen, folks, the sooner you die, the better it would be if you don’t believe in eternal security.†

But now, listen. Jesus didn’t say, “I pray that you’ll take them out of the world.” Jesus said, “I pray that you keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15) Now, you pay attention to me, folks: *salvation is not in a place; it’s in a person.* If you think that you’re going to be secure when you get to heaven and you’re not secure down here, I’ve got a rude awakening for you: the devil fell from heaven; the angels fell from heaven and eternal salvation. *Security is not in a place; it’s in a person.* Do you know something? We have something that the angels don’t have. *I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.* I am more secure here on earth than an angel is in heaven. I have something that I cannot lose. And Jesus said, “I don’t pray that you take them out of the world, but I pray that you will keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15) You see, dear friend, I am



secure in His prayers concerning me.

#### **F. I Am Secure Because of His Power over Me**

And then, finally, I am secure in His power over me. Now, in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 5, the Bible says we *“are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”* (1 Peter 1:5) We *“are kept by the power of God.”* (1 Peter 1:5) It is God’s power that keeps us. It is not my power. It is His power.

You see, dear friend, I have children that I love, and they’re precious to me. I would protect my children at any cost if I could, but I am human and I fail and I’m weak. But God is almighty. Do you think that God has enough power to keep His own? Do you think He wants to? Sure, so, we’re kept by the power of God. You see, what He desires to do He is sufficient to do. Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 5. Now, do you know what people say? “Oh, look, man, if you tell people that they are eternally secure, do you know what’s going to happen to them? They’re going to relax. They’re going to let down. They’re going to get all carnal, and they’re going to get all worldly.”

Let me tell you something, folks. Did you know that the Puritans that we still think of today as being the most straight-laced and rigorous godly people—as a matter of fact, we make fun sometimes of their godly living: “That’s puritanical.” Have you ever heard that expression?—friend, I want to tell you that the Puritans believed in eternal security. Let me tell you something: the best people I know today, the godliest people I know today, the most self-sacrificing people I know today, the most consistent people I know today, the most evangelistic people I know today, and the most Spirit-filled people I know today believe in the doctrine of eternal security. That doesn’t make people lax.

† Let me tell you what happened. In 1937, they finished the Golden Gate Bridge, this magnificent structure that was built across San Francisco Bay. I’ve driven over it. Many of you have. It’s a beautiful bridge there. It was, at that time, the biggest suspension bridge ever built. When they built the first section of that bridge, however, there was a tragic loss of lives, and a number of people fell from that bridge and drowned in the treacherous waters below. I think there were some twenty-nine lives that were lost as people fell overboard or relaxed their grip. And they fell, and they perished.

Now, when they built the second section of this great bridge, they decided they would do something about that, and they built a great net. They built it of manila rope and stretched it under the workmen as they worked. As a matter of fact, it cost, back in that day, one hundred thousand dollars to build this great net. And that net, they say, saved ten lives. Ten people fell, but the net caught them. But the interesting thing about it is this: Did you know that, when they put the net under those men, that the work progressed at a rate of twenty-five percent greater than it had on the first section? It didn’t cause these people to work less; it caused them to work better because they

knew that they were secure. They knew that underneath there was a net, and it caused them to be able to concentrate on the joy that they had.†

We had, in our Men's Conference here yesterday, Zig Ziglar. And Zig said many things, but he said one thing that had a tremendous impact on me. He said, "You know, a Christian is somebody who has his past forgiven"—amen?—"and he has his future secure." Amen? Now, when he has his past forgiven and his future secure, now he can concentrate on the present, amen? But you see, dear friend, if he's still worried about whether his sins are forgiven and he's still worried about whether he's going to be able to keep it, you can understand how discombobulated he's been right here. But when you know that you're sealed, it's paid in full, and when you know that you're sealed—and the King's seal can no man break—then you can begin to enjoy this wonderful salvation that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. A Seal Means Identity

Friend, I want to tell you that a seal, number one, that seal means finality: it is done. Number two: It means security: the King's seal can no man break. Number three: It means identity: it means that you belong to Him. You see, not only is there a finished transaction; there is a grateful transference. Then the seal put upon it means it passes out of this ownership and it passes over to this ownership. Now you belong to Him. As a matter of fact, in Ephesus, where Paul wrote this, Ephesus was known for its lumber, and they would ship trees and big parcels of wood to other seaports. And the owner would put his seal upon his particular piece of lumber that would be shipped because when it got to the new port, that seal would be the sign of ownership. "This belongs to me. There's my seal upon it." A seal is a mark of identity.

Now, listen to this scripture—2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 19: "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.*" (2 Timothy 2:19) Amen? "*Having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his*"—and then, the Bible says in this same passage—"*And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" (2 Timothy 2:19) That is...what does that mean? All right, if I have been signed, sealed, and delivered, if I belong to Him, I must live for Jesus Christ. That Spirit of God who is in me—the Holy Spirit of God, that seal—says that I'm no longer my own. When He sent His Holy Spirit into me, that is saying, "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

The seal that is on me says this: "Adrian, you don't belong to you any more." I belong to Him. So, that tells me about my responsibility. But do you know what else it tells me about? Friend, this is wonderful: it tells me about His responsibility. Have you

ever paid a lot for anything—car, house, or something? I tell you what, the more you paid for it, the better you took care of it. Isn't that right? Have you ever thought what the Lord has invested in you? You see, listen, folks. *"The Lord [knows] them that are his."* (2 Timothy 2:19) That seal, the Holy Spirit of God that He has placed into me, says—listen—He has put a tremendous investment in me. He has bought me with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has too much invested in me not to take care of me. That's wonderful!

Do you know, one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible is Romans chapter 8, verse 32. Now, Paul, I remind you again, was a lawyer. Paul liked to argue. You know, I like to argue; I really do—Joyce says too much. I like to argue. I mean, in a good sense. I like to say, "Well, if that means that, then this means this." I like that kind of thing. Now, here's the way the Apostle Paul was thinking. Look. He says in Romans chapter 8, verse 32: *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32) Now, notice what he's saying here. He's got an argument in his mind. What he is saying is if God gave Jesus for you, then would He hold back anything else? I mean, if He didn't spare Jesus, would He hold back anything else? I mean, if there was ever a promise that God would have been tempted to go back on, it would have been the promise to send His Son, right? If He kept that one, can we expect Him to keep the rest? You see, I mean, if God spared not His own Son...

† You see, suppose you were in need, and it took my son's life to satisfy your need. And suppose you said, "Well, Mr. Rogers, will you give your son that my need might be met?" I love my boys. I woke up this morning thinking about my son Steve, praying for him. I talked yesterday to my son David. He's a missionary in Spain. We talked like he was next door. Wait 'til we get that bill! But we talked to David twice yesterday. We don't talk to him that often. By the way, he said to tell ya'll that he loved you and to keep praying for him. I love those boys. And I don't want to brag about him, but I'd die for my boys and girls. I'd die for them if necessary. But suppose you could talk me into giving them to die for you. Now, that's a different story than me dying for them—me giving them to die for you. But suppose I loved you that much: I would give you my son, not just to die for you, but to die in agony and shame on a bloody cross, to be spit upon, abused, misused, and so forth. Suppose I loved you that much. That's how much God loves us. Suppose I loved you that much—to give you one of my sons.

Now, those of you who are parents, I want you to think about this. By the way, folks, I want to tell you, before I had children, I used to think, "How great Jesus' love for me as when He died for me!" After I've had children, I think, "How great the love of God the Father was that He gave His Son!" Suppose I loved you that much that I would give you one of my sons, and then you would say to me, "Hey, since you gave me your sons, will

you give me his basketball, his blue jeans, and bicycle?” I’d say, “Sure.” I mean, listen, if I love you enough to give my son, wouldn’t I love you enough to give his bicycle or basketball? Of course!f

That’s Paul’s argument. Listen, Paul is saying, “If God spared not His own Son, how much more shall He with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32) Do you see what He’s talking about? If He loved you enough to send Jesus, if He’s got that kind of an investment in you, don’t you think He’s going to take care of us? You see, the seal means ownership. And listen, not only do I have a responsibility to him; but friend, He’s got an investment in me. *“The Lord [knows] them that are his.”* (2 Timothy 2:19) And since we have believed, we are *“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”* (Ephesians 1:13)

## Conclusion

Do you know something, folks? If people could really understand what we mean by eternal security, I don’t believe you could keep them away with a machine gun. People just don’t understand what it means to know the Lord Jesus Christ. If you’re saved, you’re sealed; and when you’re sealed, you’re secure.

Bow your heads with me in prayer.

# The Conquering Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 1, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 1:15–23

*“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:”*

EPHESIANS 1:20–21

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Dominion Was Legally Lost
- II. Dominion Was Rightfully Recovered
- III. Dominion Is Gloriously Given

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, I believe if you'd cut my shoelaces, I'd just go on to heaven right now. That is wonderful. Praise the great God! And what great music today to open our hearts to our study from the Word of God on the conquering Christ! I would like for you to find, please, Ephesians chapter one. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse fifteen. Now, there was a truth that Paul wanted the church at Ephesus to know, and I'm certain that God wants the church in Memphis to know, and the church around the world to know. And so it was this truth that motivated the apostle Paul to pray the prayer that he prayed for the saints at Ephesus.

I want you to listen to this prayer. It begins in verse fifteen. He says, “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” Now, he's talking about his prayer life for the Ephesians. And here's the prayer that he prayed. It begins in verse seventeen: That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. What he is saying is this: “I am praying that God will open your heart to something incredibly wonderful.” He goes on to say, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe,

according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Imagine this. Imagine that you have a very wealthy father, and this father says to you, “My son, I want to give you and your bride a very beautiful estate. It will be magnificent, like a ranch, like a garden. It’s like a home. It is indescribably beautiful. Because I’m wealthy, and because I love you, my son, I’m giving it to you. I want you to be the head over this estate. I want you and your bride, as she stands by your side to rule over it. And I put here, my son, everything that you will possibly ever need for your joy, your happiness, and your fulfillment.” Then suppose one day a stranger drives up. You and your bride are there. This stranger’s wicked. He’s diabolic. He’s exceedingly clever, and he begins to talk with your wife, and later on with you. And he begins to question your father. He begins to question your father’s motives. He begins to question your father’s love, and he begins to put doubts in your mind about your father. And he says, “You know, I can tell you a better way to run this estate if you’ll listen to me. You will enjoy it much more. You will succeed much more, if you will just let me tell you how you can be the lord over this estate. Just follow what I say. Appoint me as the director. Just sign right here. Just turn it over to me. Give it to me. Of course, I only want to hold it so I can give it back to you and show you how to run it the way you ought to run it.”

And suppose you signed a legal document, because that property was legally yours. And you sign a legal document, and give it over to that lying, conniving, stranger. You hand your legacy over to him, and say, “Now, I’ll run this estate for you my new master. Thank you for showing me now how to run it. You know so much more about it than my father ever did.” And you now sign on to work on the estate that you once owned and were to have dominion over.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, has something like that ever happened?” Yes. The Garden of Eden—the Garden of Eden. God made Adam and Eve, and God set them in a garden. God put them upon this earth, and God said, “I give it to you, because I love you, Adam and Eve, and I want you to have dominion over it.” Now, Genesis chapter one, verse 26—listen to it: And God said, Let us make man in our own image, and after our likeness. And listen to this: And let them have dominion. That’s the key word. Put in your margin Genesis 1:26. Let them have dominion. Did you hear it? Dominion. What does dominion mean? To rule. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the cattle, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Every bug, every insect, Adam and Eve were to have

dominion over. Man was given rule over this earth. He was to control and master his resources. When God created man, He created him to have dominion. Man was designed for dominion. He was made for mastery. Got it? Man was designed for dominion. He was made for mastery. God gave Adam and Eve all that they needed. And put this verse in your margin—Psalm chapter eight and verse six. Again God reiterates why He made man and why He made woman to begin with. The Bible says, “Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands. God made man to rule. Adam was king of the earth.

Now, what has happened? Well, it’s obvious today that man doesn’t have dominion. Man doesn’t rule today. Man’s not in charge today. It’s very obvious that Satan is in control and not man. Pick up this morning’s newspaper, as I’ve already done, and read. Read about the disease. Read about the death. Read about the hate, the war, the crime, the sorrow, the disappointment, the despair, and the frustration that is everywhere, and ask yourself, “If God made man to have dominion, what has gone wrong, and what can be done about it?” That is the crux of the matter this morning.

There are three things I pray God the Holy Spirit will etch upon your consciousness, and write indelibly upon your soul this morning about your lost dominion and how to regain it, how to get it back. Because through our conquering Christ, we can retrieve and have restored what Adam sold and signed over to Satan so long ago. But in order for you to get back to where you ought to be, and to have what you ought to have, and what God desires for you to have, you have got to know truth. And that is why the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians. I pray that God will open your understanding that God will help you to know this. I’m telling you there are thousands, and thousands, and thousands, and millions of people who are saved and on their way to heaven, just as the Ephesians were already saved, and yet they don’t understand this. Paul didn’t pray they’d be more wealthy, or more healthy, or more happy. He prayed that they would understand what God has for them.

## **I. Dominion Was Legally Lost**

What are these three truths? What are they? Number one. When Adam lost his dominion, it was legally lost. Got it? Dominion was legally lost. Now, if you gave your son something, and your son sells it to someone else, or even gives it to someone else, and signs it over to him, no matter how much you paid for it, if he legally gives it to someone else, even though it might break your heart, it’s legally lost.

Now look in Ephesians two, and look in verses one through three. He talks of those of us who were once lost, and he says, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.” Who is that? Satan, the spirit that

now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation—that means our behavior—in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Now, how did all of this come about? How, now, does man begin to walk according to the prince of the power of the air? How does this come about? Well, you remember that at one time Satan, who was an angel, rebelled against God. Satan's name was Lucifer, and Lucifer means light bearer. He was indescribably beautiful, incredibly powerful. He was the finest, most superb creature that God ever crafted in His creative ability. The Bible says of him, "He fills up the sun." That is, he was a perfect 10. God made him.

But one day pride rose in this creature, and he said to himself, "I'm too beautiful. I'm too wise. I'm too powerful to be anything less than God." And Isaiah chapter 14 says, "He said in his heart I will be like the most high. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." And he led a rebellion of the angels against God. The Bible tells us that a third of the angels followed Satan in this rebellion as Satan himself thought that he could overthrow the throne of God. And Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night.

But no sooner had he unsheathed his sword of rebellion than the thunders of Almighty God rolled through the corridors of heaven. And Satan was banished. Jesus said, "I beheld Satan like lightening fall from heaven." Those angels that followed him became demon spirits. Satan is now banished from heaven, but he sees Planet Earth. He sees man there in the garden. He sees Adam and Eve and says, "I believe I'll go down there, and I believe that I will achieve on earth what I failed to achieve in heaven." And so he goes down to this earth, and he lies to Adam and Eve, and tempts them, and they believe him, and they sign over their estate, and they sign over their dominion to him.

And God was dethroned in Adam's heart, and God was dethroned in Eve's heart. But Adam didn't enthrone himself; he enthroned Satan. And what Satan failed to achieve in heaven, he now achieved on earth. He lost the war in heaven, but he gained the victory on earth. Now, here comes a question. If Satan went into that garden, and he lied, and he deceived Adam and Eve, and tricked them, and got them to trust in him, and sign everything over to him, why doesn't God just step in and take it back? God can't do that. And, why can't God do that? Because of the song that was just sung from this platform—Holy, Almighty. He is both Almighty, but He is holy. And God runs this universe by His own righteous and holy laws.

God runs the universe legally. That is, righteously, according to His own laws. And God can't just go and snatch Adam's lost dominion back. It was legally lost. It must be



legally regained. Now, what I'm talking about to you right now is that Adam's dominion was legally lost. The universe is run by divine law. Now, when Adam chose to follow Satan, he became Satan's slave.

Put these verses down—Romans 6, verse 16: Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants are ye to whom ye obey. You have the right to turn yourself over to someone else. Adam had the dubious right to yield himself to Satan, and he did. Listen to the verse again. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness? Adam had a choice, and rather than yielding in obedience to righteousness, he yielded to sin unto death. But he did it, and he became a slave of Satan.

Now, when Jesus was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness, you remember the three temptations? The devil showed Jesus all of the kingdoms of this world, and he said to Jesus, he said, "If you will bow down, and worship me," he said, "I'll give it all to you." And then he said this—he said, "Because it's been delivered to me." Remember that? It has been delivered to me. Luke 4, verse six: All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. Satan says, "It's mine."

Now Jesus did not say, "Satan, that's not yours." He never disputed Satan, because Jesus knew that Adam had yielded over the domain to Satan. He had yielded himself a servant of righteousness, and Satan now has dominion, and Adam has become Satan's slave. And Adam lost all of his legal rights to rule. And now, who is the god of this world? Don't say Jehovah. Now, He's God over and above this, and ultimately all things belong to Him. But understand these scriptures.

Second Corinthians 4:4: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. Who is the blinder? Satan himself. Listen to Ephesians chapter six, and verse 12: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our enemy doesn't have hide, and hair, and sinew, and corpuscle. Our enemy is sinister and spiritual. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, the rulers of the darkness of this world. Satan is in power. Why? Because God made Adam to have dominion, and Adam willfully, sinfully, deliberately, turned it over to Satan, and it was legally lost. Got it? Good. Man's dominion was legally lost.

## **II. Dominion Was Rightfully Recovered**

Here's the second thing you need to understand. Man's dominion was rightfully recovered—rightfully recovered. If it was legally lost, it had to be legally regained. This is God's mighty plan. Look again, if you will, in Ephesians one, verse seventeen: That

the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints—skipping to verse four, verse 20—which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places—and verse 22—and hath put all things under his feet.

Now, what is all this talking about? This tells how Jesus got it back. What was the reason for Christmas? Why the incarnation? Why did the Son of God step out of heaven, and come to this earth, walk the dusty shores of Galilee, sweat blood in Gethsemane, die in agony? Why? To rightfully regain what Adam had given. Remember this. It was legally lost. God runs the universe by divine law. It must legally be regained. If God just stepped in and snatched it all back, and gave it back to Adam, it would make a farce of divine judgment and divine justice.

Now, God owes Satan nothing, but God owes His own righteousness everything. God is going to be true to His principles of righteousness and justice. If God were to snatch it back, and give it back to Adam, then sin would have ultimately won, and God would have tumbled from His throne of holiness.

Now, here's the key. The dominion was given to a man, Adam. It was lost by a man. It must be regained by a man; a member of Adam's race must be found. But a member of Adam's race must be found to gain it back on whom Satan has no claim. You see, Adam became a slave of Satan. And, what are the sons and daughters of slaves? They are slaves also. So, there needs to be someone to come into this world. It was lost by a man. It needs to be regained by a man. Therefore, he must be of Adam's race, but he cannot be a son of Adam. That, my friend, is the reason for the incarnation. That's the reason God became a man. That's the reason God stepped out of heaven and walked this earth in sandaled feet.

Put these verses down—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 21 and 22. Are you listening? For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. Now, put this verse down—Hebrews chapter two, verse 14: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood...—that's what he calls us: children. We are just like little children. We have flesh and blood—He also himself—Jesus—took part of the same—that is, Jesus took flesh and blood. Now, listen to this—that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil. Satan has so much dominion; that is, he has the power of death. He holds life and death over his slaves. But Jesus, in order that He might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil, He had to become flesh and blood. God could not snatch dominion away from Satan as God. He has to do it as man, but He has to be perfect man.

Put this scripture down—Galatians four, verses three through five: Even so, we,

when were children, were in bondage. We're slaves. We are slaves in bondage, under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent for His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. You see, in order for God to redeem us, He has to have a man to redeem us. But this man has to be a perfect man. He cannot be a fallen son of Adam, because then he would have been a slave. But he had to be made of a woman to be a member of the human race.

And so there stepped into history, the second Adam from above, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was perfectly human, yet He was the Son of God. He was not a descendant of Adam, though He was born of a woman. Satan had no claim upon the Lord Jesus. He was absolutely, totally righteous. He inherited no sin from Adam, and the man that we call Jesus Christ our Savior—listen to me—He was truly human, and unquestionably divine at the same time. That's the miracle of Christmas. That's the miracle of the incarnation. Our dominion was legally lost. It is legally regained. Jesus was very God of very God, but He will defeat Satan as very man of very man, as much man as if He were not God at all, but sinless man. It would have been a hollow victory had God just snatched the dominion back from Satan, or had Jesus, when He came to this earth, used weapons that were not available to Adam. But Jesus, when He defeated Satan, used the very weapons that were available to Adam, had Adam used them.

If you read in Luke chapter 4, the Bible tells in the first part of that chapter how God anointed Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power. Jesus did not pull rank on us. Jesus did not defeat Satan as God, but He defeated Satan as a man, anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, the same anointing that Adam could have had. And then, when Satan came against Jesus in those temptations, how did Jesus defeat Satan? With the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit. Jesus said to Satan, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. It is written, Thou shalt serve the Lord God, and him only." And Jesus took the sword of the Spirit and ran him through with the sword, the Word. And Jesus had two things as a man, the anointing and the authority—the anointing of the Spirit, the authority of the Word—and with that He came against Satan; the same weapons that Adam should have used.

Now, Satan knows he's up against it. For a while, it looks like everything is going his way. But now something has happened—a child has been born of a virgin. He has no sinful nature. He has no itch that Satan can scratch. Satan says, "What am I going to do? I must get Him to sin. If I can make Him sin, if I somehow can get Him to fall, then I've won. But if I don't get Him to sin, I've lost it all. I've lost, not only in heaven, but I've lost on earth." So a warfare begins. The battle of the ages begins to rage. On one side is the sinister minister of evil, Satan. The other side is the holy, virgin-born Son of God

and son of man, man who has come to redeem Adam's lost dominion.

The first skirmish takes place in the wilderness. You remember that, and Satan brings all of the artillery of hell against the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus never questions Satan's right to give dominion, but Jesus knew that if He ever yielded to that, He would become a slave of Satan, just like Adam had. Such a thing was impossible. So Satan tucks his tail, and runs there in the wilderness. And, by the way, the first Adam lost it all in a garden. The last Adam won it all back in the wilderness. Hallelujah, thank God.

But now, a second battle begins. Satan is not finished yet. Dark Gethsemane, Jesus, knowing that soon He would go to the cross, goes into Gethsemane, and there He begins to weep and to cry, and to pray, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." For what was in that cup? All of the sin of Adam, and of all of the sons of Adam, distilled in that cup, all of the vileness, the wickedness, the lasciviousness, the sodomy, the adultery, the rape, the pride, the hatred, the child abuse, the drunkenness, the blasphemy. It was all in that cup. Satan says, "Look, he doesn't want to drink it." And Satan was right. He did not want to drink it. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But the silence from heaven said, "There's no other way." And Jesus said, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." I wish the first Adam had said that. Thank God the second Adam did. And I want to tell you that nevertheless is the word that has changed your destiny and mine. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.

Luke tells us that Jesus was in agony—agony. It's a Greek word which means a battle. He was in a battle. He was in a war, and He won. His soul was sorrowful unto death. Satan doesn't give up yet. Satan doesn't understand Calvary. Satan thinks surely Jesus will not go to the cross. And, if He sees on the cross, that not only will Jesus be separated from the Father, but He will be the object of the Father's loathing, surely He'll say, "Not that." And so, the hounds of hell are baying for the blood of Jesus Christ. And they hound Him to the cross.

I want to tell you Satan made a tactical error there, my friend. Because the Bible says, "He through death would destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And Jesus, the darling Son of God, was nailed to that cross. They stretched Him out on that hellish machine, and put searing nails through the palms of His hand, nails through His feet. A Roman crucifixion was meant to strike sheer terror in the hearts and minds of those who saw it. But His was no ordinary crucifixion. The sins of the world were upon Him. All of the sin of mankind was distilled and laid on His shoulders, and the eternities were compressed upon Him, and He said, "There is no sorrow like as my sorrow." And not only was He forsaken of God the Father, but He became the object of the Father's wrath. He took our hell, our shame, our blame, our suffering, our separation. The fires of hell were poured out upon Him. It was a battle. And then, He said, "Tetalestai." Do you know what that means? One word in the Greek language,

three in the King James Version. It's finished—it's finished, it is paid in full. Adam, I bought it back. I got it back. I paid. Satan has no mortgage against your inheritance. You're no longer a slave. I have redeemed you as a man. I bought it back.

But Satan doesn't give up. Satan says, "Yes, He died, and He's been buried, but He's down there in that cold, clammy tomb, and He'll stay there." And the sneering Sadducees said, "He's dead." And the prideful Pharisees said, "He's dead." And the smirking scribes said, "He's dead." And delighted demons said, "He's dead." But the Bible says, in Acts chapter two, it was impossible that death could hold Him. On that third day, on that Easter morning, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, arose from His bed of slumber; like He'd been spending the night in a hotel, He got up and folded the napkin that was upon His face, in tranquil repose, in absolute control. There was death, that monarch of terrors; there was death. And for the first time death had the look of terror on his face. And Jesus, with a nail-pierced hand, reached up and pulled death from his throne to the floor of that tomb, which was to be now death's dungeon. And when He did, the crowned toppled from death's head. Jesus put His heel on the neck of death, reached down and pulled the sting out of death, put the crown on His own head, took the keys from death, and walked out, and said, "Behold, I have the keys of death and of hell." And He rose for us.

But it's not over yet. He ascended for us. And that's what Paul is saying, "I hope that these folks can understand." Look, if you will; go back to the book of Ephesians. Look in verse 19—he says here, "I pray that you will understand what is this exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come. Folks, that speaks of the wonderful resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus.

### **III. Dominion Is Gloriously Given**

Now, in the few moments I have left, let me give you the third wonderful thing. First of all, this dominion was legally lost. Secondly, this dominion has been righteously regained. Thirdly, it is gloriously given—gloriously given. God gives it back to those who will receive it. Now, the Bible makes it very plain. Look in chapter two—Ephesians two, verse six—the Bible says, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Look in Ephesians four, verse eight: Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive. Who was captivity? Satan. Satan was taken captive. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

And now, listen. A new thing has happened. Turn to Ephesians chapter five, and verse 30—the Bible says, “For we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones, of Jesus. Now, here’s the new thing. We have something that Adam never had. Adam was innocent. We are righteous. Adam was there in the Garden of Eden, and he sinned. But you and I have the Lord Jesus Christ as a part of us. Don’t think of the church now as an organization with Christ as the president. The church is an organism. It is a body with Christ as the head, and what is true about the Lord Jesus Christ is true about you. Jesus did not defeat Satan on His behalf. He defeated Satan on our behalf. And so, we have been co-executed, co-risen, co-exalted, and co-enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ. Here’s the bottom line. He became a son of man, that we might become sons of God. He took our sins, that we might be innocent. He became guilty, that we might be acquitted. He was filled with despair, that we might be filled with joy. He took my shame, that I might take His glory. He endured the pains of hell, that I might have the blessings of heaven. And I want to say, friend, the Lamb has triumphed. The Lamb has triumphed. He has prevailed, and therefore, He says to His church—listen—All power, all authority, is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore.

## **Conclusion**

Does Jesus have authority over Satan? Does He? So do you. Are demons subject to Jesus? They’re subject to you. Satan hopes you never learn this. Paul said, “O God, open their understanding. Help them to see. Help them to know the great and mighty power. God, help them to know it.” And God help you to know it, that your dominion legally lost, rightfully regained, has been gloriously given. The Lamb has prevailed. All hail the power of Jesus’ name.

One demon was heard talking to another demon, I’m told, saying, “If those liberal theologians ever really let Jesus Christ out of that grave, hell help us, all heaven will break lose—all heaven will break lose.” Friend, it’s time that heaven broke lose. It’s time that we understand that Jesus, as a man, has triumphed, and very God of very God, but He, the second Adam from above, has reinstated us in His love. What a mighty God we serve!

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me; buried, He carried my sins far away. Rising, He justified, freely forever; one day, He’s coming; oh, glorious day! If you want Jesus as your Lord and Savior, if you want to get back your lost dominion, if you want a right relationship with the heavenly Father, would you pray a prayer like this? Lord Jesus, come into my heart; forgive my sin; save me Lord Jesus. I believe you’re the Son of God. I believe you died for my sin on that cross. And now I accept you by faith as my Lord and Savior. Take control of my life, and rule over my life. Thank you Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, or if you want to pray that prayer, if you want to become a child of God, look at me right now, in the balcony; if you would like to become a child of God, if you would like to be saved, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. When we sing this invitational hymn in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to do the most wonderful thing you could possibly do. You may be on the back row of the upper balcony, but I want you to step out down one of these aisles. And I want you to find a minister, and there'll be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles. And I want you to say to that minister, "I am giving my heart to Jesus. I'm trusting Jesus," or "I want to be saved." Put it in your own words. And what we're going to do is take an open Bible, answer any questions, and seal your decision in prayer. "Pastor Rogers, would Jesus save me today, if I trust Him?" I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will. And don't you listen to that dirty devil, that liar, who wants to send you to hell with him. Come to Jesus today. As soon as we begin to sing, step out, and make your way down this aisle. And, I promise you, Jesus will save you. You may be a boy or a girl. You can come. You may be a member of this church and never really been saved. You may come. You may be a member of some other church, or no church, but you may come, if you want Christ as your personal Savior.

Others of you who know that you're saved, and want to put your church membership here, I'm going to ask you to come also at the same time.

# Victory in Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 18, 1985**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:15–23**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Man's Dominion Was Legally Lost
- II. Man's Dominion Was Righteously Recovered
- III. Man's Dominion Is Gloriously Given

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**hank you, Joyce, and thank all of you who had a part in our praise worship tonight. It's been wonderful and exciting, and we look forward to the next time that we meet together as the Body of Christ here at Bellevue and in Memphis, Tennessee to praise the dear Savior. Open your Bibles, please, tonight to Ephesians chapter 1 and we're going to begin reading in verse 15—Ephesians chapter 1.

Now you will remember, perhaps, that Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison. But when you open the Book of Ephesians, my dear friend, you don't smell the musty air of a prison. The breezes of Calvary come up and blow in your face as you open the Book of Ephesians. It is a book of victory all the way. And all through the night in our songs we've been talking about the victory that we have in Jesus. And that is the title of our message tonight: "Victory in Jesus." That has been, dear friend, the theme of our bold breakthrough as we are going out marching into Canaan: is victory in Jesus. *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things"* (Romans 11:36). It's all wrapped up in Jesus Christ.

Now tonight, if you would be victorious, and if you would know the victorious life, you must learn the Scripture, the truth that is here delineated beginning in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 15. The Apostle Paul is talking about the church at Ephesus, and he says, *"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:"*—now it is very important that you understand that these people were great saints already. They loved God. They were saved. They were on their way to heaven. And yet the great apostle is praying for them, "Oh, God, open their eyes, and give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the



knowledge of Him.” My friend, if you think you know it all, you don’t. There is so much more to learn. And so Paul goes on to pray—*“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling...”*—by the way, remember the word *hope* means “certain glad assurance”— *“of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”* (Ephesians 1:15–23).

Now folks, Paul said a lot of things in his life, but here I believe he said a mouthful, if you can just understand all that he has packed in to these verses. Now let me tell you something, friend. God designed you for dominion. You were made for mastery. God created you to rule and to reign. And if you’re not ruling, if you’re not reigning, if you don’t have mastery, if you don’t have dominion, if you don’t know victory, then you are not living according as God has designed for you to live.

In the Book of Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26, God said, *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion...”*—now that’s why God created you: so that you could rule and have dominion. God did not make you to fail. God did not make you to be intimidated. God did not make you to be stepped on and misused. God made you to have dominion. God gave man rule and control over this earth. He was to be the master of this earth—*“let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”* (Genesis 1:26).

Man was given rule to control and master this world and it’s resources. He was to have dominion. Again the same thing is taught in Psalm 8 and verse 6: *“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet”* (Psalm 8:6). Talking about man, God made man and woman to have dominion, but you read in the newspaper and look around you and ask if man has dominion. Read about the death and disease and hate and war and crime and lust and sorrow and disappointment and despair, and tell me if man has dominion. He doesn’t have dominion. He is not an overcomer. He is overcome. He does not have dominion; he is dominated.

Now, what has gone wrong? Well, I want us to learn three things, and they all deal with man; it’s all wrapped up in man.

## I. Man's Dominion Was Legally Lost

First of all, man's dominion was lost by the first man; man's dominion was lost—legally lost by the first man. Now look, if you will, please, in Ephesians chapter 2, and look at verses 1 through 3: *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”*—well, how did we get *“dead in trespasses and sins”*? Well, continue to read—*“wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”*—underscore that phrase—*“among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”* (Ephesians 2:1–3).

Well now, how did we get to be *“the children of wrath”*? How did we get to be *“the children of disobedience”*? Where did we get this *“nature”*? How is now the devil called *“the prince of the power of the air”*? How did the devil get to be *“the prince”*? I thought man was to have dominion. What happened? Well, you will remember, if you know your Bible history, that Satan rebelled against God. Satan said, *“I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:14). But no sooner had Satan unsheathed the sword of rebellion than the thunders of God's wrath rolled down the corridors of heaven and Satan was banished from heaven; he was kicked out of heaven. And now Satan has turned his attention to man.

Now evil people have always known that, if you can't harm someone, harm someone that that someone loves, and you've harmed that someone anyway. Satan could not get to God. He could not get at God. And so now he turned his attention to man. And he tempted Eve and he tempted Adam to disobey. And they did. How did he tempt Adam to disobey? How did he tempt Eve to disobey? He tempted them to achieve for themselves on earth what he himself had failed to do in heaven. Adam and Eve were tempted to be gods.

Remember Satan had said, *“I will be like the most High.”* It didn't work up there. And so he came down to earth and he said to Adam and Eve, *“Eat thereof...and ye shall be as gods”* (Genesis 3:5). It was the same temptation. He tempted them to try to be on earth what he himself had failed to do in heaven. And so what happened is that Adam believed this lie. Adam took this temptation and he dethroned God and tried to enthrone himself. Adam did not enthrone himself. Adam did not become God. Adam became a servant. And when Adam dethroned God, Adam enthroned Satan. And Satan, who failed to achieve a throne in heaven, now has a throne in the heart of man. Satan lost the war in heaven, but he gained a victory on earth. And while Satan had no throne in heaven, Satan now has a throne in the heart and mind of mankind.

Now here's a truth I want you to learn. And if you will learn this, it will unlock so

much of the Bible to you. The entire universe is ruled by divine law. And what Adam lost in the Garden of Eden, he lost legally. He turned it over to the devil. The dominion and the authority that Adam had were a legal gift from God. God gave Adam dominion. And when God gave it to Adam, He gave it to Adam with no strings attached, as it were. It was Adam's, and God gave Adam that dominion. Since it belonged to Adam, Adam could legally give it to someone else, if he chose to. It was legally his, and he willfully gave it away. He gave it to the devil. It was legally given. It was legally lost. The dominion that Adam had from God was a legal gift.

And when Adam chose to obey Satan, he became Satan's slave. Romans chapter 6, verse 16, says this: *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Romans 6:16). Now Adam in the Garden of Eden delivered the dominion over to the devil. You say, "Brother Rogers, was it really given to him?" Absolutely! Do you remember there when the devil tempted the Lord Jesus Christ? The Bible says there in Luke chapter 4 and verse 6: *"And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me"* (Luke 4:6). See? It was delivered by Adam, delivered to the devil. Who delivered it to the devil? God? Of course not! Adam delivered it to the devil. Jesus did not say to the devil, "That's not yours to give." Jesus never disputed the devil. As a matter of fact, Jesus called the devil, *"the prince of this world"* (John 14:30). And Paul called the devil, *"the prince of the power of the air."* Paul called him in 2 Corinthians 4:4: *"the god of this world."* He has a dominion that was delivered to him.

Now get this in your mind. The universe was lost legally. God gave Adam dominion. Adam chose to be a servant of Satan. He enthroned Satan in his heart. And Adam willingly turned that dominion over to the devil. And the devil now has dominion. And because of what Adam did, the devil had dominion. That's the reason the Apostle Paul goes over to say in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12).

## **II. Man's Dominion Was Righteously Recovered**

Now listen, dear friend. The first Adam lost it legally. It was legally lost. The universe is run by divine law. If dominion is to be regained, it must be legally regained. It was legally lost by the first Adam. It is going to be righteously recovered by the second Adam. God's mighty plan in the universe, the battle of the ages, is that God is rightfully and legally going to reestablish and recover Adam's lost estate. Please get it in your mind: It was legally lost; it is going to be legally recovered. Suppose God had just stepped in and God said, "Now Adam, you gave it all to the devil, but Adam, I'm God,

and I'm going to take it all away from the devil by force. And I'm going to give it back to you. I'm going to destroy the devil. I'm just going to overlook your sin, and I'm just going to give it all back to you." If God had done that, God would not have been righteous. It would have made a farce of divine justice.

I want to make something very clear. God owes the devil nothing. But if God is going to be true to His own righteousness, and God is going to be true to His own principles of justice, He must recover man's fallen estate, and He must do it legally. It was legally given. It was legally lost. It will be legally recovered. If God did not do it legally, the devil would always be able to point a finger at the face of God and say, "God, you are not a God of justice; you are not a God of righteousness."

Now listen. Man's dominion was lost by man, and therefore it must be recovered by a man. It cannot be recovered by God acting as God alone. You see, the dominion was given to a man, it was lost by a man, and it will be legally recovered by a man. A member of Adam's race must be found upon whom Satan has no claim, in order to recover this dominion. Now all of us are, by nature, children of wrath. Look, if you will, in Ephesians 2, verse 3, the last part, we are "*by nature children of wrath.*" The last part of verse 2: we are "*the children of disobedience.*" And the first part of verse 2: "*ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*" That is, we are now Satan's slaves, before we are redeemed. I'm talking about our pre-salvation experience.

Now God must find a man who can go and recover what Adam lost. He must be of Adam's race, but he must be a member of Adam's race over whom Satan has no legal claim. But since Adam was a slave, all of the sons of Adam are legally slaves. All of the children of Adam are legally slaves. So God has a problem. God must have a man, but that man cannot be a son of Adam. If he's not a man, it cannot be legally recovered; but if he is a son of Adam, he is already a slave. And no slave can redeem a slave.

That is the reason, ladies and gentlemen, for the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark these Scriptures down—1 Corinthians 15, verses 21 and 22—now listen: "*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). And then jot this Scripture down—Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14: "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,*"—that is, "*the children of disobedience*"—"he also himself likewise took part of the same;"—that is, Jesus came in flesh and blood—"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Paul says the same thing in Galatians chapter 4, verses 3 and 4 and 5: "*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:*"—that is, we were slaves—"but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under

*the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:3–5).*

What are all of these verses telling us? That He became a man. Jesus had to be a man. The dominion was given to man. It was legally man’s. Man turned it over to the devil. It was legally given, legally lost. It must be legally regained and reclaimed by a man. But that man cannot be a son of Adam. If he is a son of Adam, he is the son of a slave. And all sons of slaves are slaves themselves. He must be a member of Adam’s race without being a descendant of Adam. And that is the reason that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Remember when I preached to you—I believe it was last Sunday—on the power of the blood? *“Taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me;”—*you see, Satan delivered it to Him—*“and to whomsoever I will I give it.”* Adam gave it to Satan, and Satan said, “It’s mine now to give it to whomsoever I will I give it.” *“If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine” (Luke 4:5–7).*

Oh, he’s trying to get Jesus to sin. One worship of Satan on the part of Jesus, and the whole plan would come apart, the plan of redemption. One sin on the part of Jesus would give Satan the victory. Satan knew he must seduce the last Adam as he did the first one. So now he’s aiming all of the artillery of hell at the Son of God. What he is saying to Jesus Christ is this: “You worship me, and I will give all of this.” But had He worshiped the devil, the devil knew he wouldn’t lose it. Had Jesus worshiped the devil, then when the devil gave it to Him, the devil would have it right back, because again Jesus would have been a Satan-worshiper and He would have delivered it right back to the devil.

And so the Lord Jesus answers the devil here in verse 8: *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8).* And three times the temptation came, three times there in that wilderness. Now I want point out that the first Adam failed in a beautiful garden. The last Adam, the Lord Jesus, overcame in a wilderness. Jesus did not challenge Satan’s claim. Now listen. I imagine that Jesus might have said, and could have said, “Satan, I want you to know that I am God in human flesh, and as God, if I wish to, by the right and the prerogatives that are mine as God, I could speak a word and obliterate you right now. But I’m not going to overcome you as God. I am going to overcome you as a man.” And as a man there in the garden, Jesus Christ used the same two weapons that were available to Adam in the Garden of Eden. And He used the same two weapons that were available to Adrian in Memphis, Tennessee, and the same two weapons that are available to anyone.

Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 1. He used the Spirit of God. Notice: *“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil”* (Luke 4:1–2). He used the Spirit of God. And notice in verse 8, He used the Word of God: *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* And I want to say, dear friend, that the same Holy Spirit that was available to Jesus Christ as a man is the Holy Spirit that is available to me as a man. And the same Word of God that Jesus used as a man is the same Word of God that I have in my Bible on this pulpit tonight as a man.

Now dear friend, I want to tell you something. Jesus did not overcome the devil with anything that is not available to you tonight: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Again, the devil met Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus fought another battle there. It seemed as though Jesus would die of agony and of a broken heart, but the Lord Jesus again overcame the devil in Gethsemane. The final battle was bloody Calvary. And the devil pushed Jesus to Calvary, thinking that Jesus would resist and rebel against the will of God. But that was the devil’s greatest blunder. The hounds of hell were baying at the feet of Jesus Christ for His blood, but Jesus willingly submitted. Jesus bowed His head, and Jesus being innocent died, and He paid the full sin debt. He recovered the lost estate. He bought back the redemption. He paid it in full.

As I told you this, when He was on the cross, He said, *“Tetelestai,”* which means, “It is finished; it is paid in full” (John 19:30). Satan’s legal claim upon the human race was cancelled and Satan’s kingdom was ruined. This is what the Bible means when it says in Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14, *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* He destroyed the devil. The word *destroy* here means, “to render powerless.” He rendered the devil powerless.

But now the battle is not over yet. Jesus Christ is in the grave. The devil says, “Well, perhaps I can keep Him in the grave. If I can keep Him there, then I can win the victory.” Turn to Acts chapter 2, and let me show you how that goes—Acts chapter 2, and begin in verse 22—Peter is preaching: *“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders...”*—notice what he says—*“a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you...”*—not that He did, but that God by Him. You see, God worked through Jesus as man—*“in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it”* (Acts 2:22–24).

Now the devil did the very best he could to hold the Lord Jesus. All of the resources of the underworld were marshaled against the Lord Jesus. But Jesus overcame death by the power of God. He was raised from the dead. And He said in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 18: *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death”* (Revelation 1:18). Jesus was victorious.

Now that brings us back to where we are in the Book of Ephesians. Jesus now has come to this earth. He has lived a sinless life. He was born of a virgin. He died. He paid the ransom in full. He bought back the lost estate. He paid with His own blood, *“for the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). That is what Jesus paid. He was put in the grave. The devil tried to keep Him in the grave. He was raised by the power of God. And the Bible says in Colossians chapter 2, verse 15, *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2:15).

When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead He *“spoiled principalities and powers.”* The word *spoiled* means, “to strip, as you strip the hide from an animal,” or, “to disarm a defeated foe.” And when Jesus Christ came out of that grave, the kingdom of evil and darkness was thrown into complete bankruptcy, and Satan’s dominion has dissolved.

### **III. Man’s Dominion Is Gloriously Given**

Now I have said that it was legally lost. I have said that it was righteously recovered. It was lost by a man. It has been recovered by a man. And now it is available to every man and woman on earth. Not only was it legally lost. Not only has it been righteously recovered. But it has also been gloriously given. Go back now to Ephesians chapter 2 with me a moment. Now look in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 4: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:4–5).

You see, dear friend, He took our sins, that we might be innocent. He became guilty, that we might be acquitted. He took our despair, that we might be filled with joy. He took our shame, that we might have His glory. He took the flames of hell, that we might have the blessings of heaven. And His death had my name on it. His resurrection had my name on it. And so He *“hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).”*

And so He has been raised up, and we are raised up with Him. Look in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 8: *“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive...”*—who was captivity? The devil. The one who led us captive is now taken captive. And when Jesus ascended, He—*“led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men”* (Ephesians 4:8).

Now dear friend, turn to Ephesians chapter 5 and look in verse 30. Look at it. Oh, what a blessing! I pray God that you'll understand it: *"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones"* (Ephesians 5:30). Now we are a part of the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to me, friend. The Church is not merely an organization with Jesus Christ as the president. The Church is an organism with Jesus Christ as the head. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. That's what I was trying to say this morning when I said, "If you're in Adam, all that belongs to Adam belongs to you." And what belonged to Adam? Defeat, and failure, and death. But if you are in Christ, all that belongs to Christ belongs to you. We are members of His body, of His bones, of His flesh.

And where is Jesus? He is ascended. He is on high. All things are beneath His feet. He is lifted up far above all dominion and power. That's why Paul said, "I want you to understand this." go back to Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 19. He says, *"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet"*—man, the God-man. It is gloriously given to the sons of men.

## **Conclusion**

If you let the devil take authority over you, if you let the devil boss you, it is because he has blinded you. That's the reason the Apostle Paul prayed for these Ephesians and he said, "Oh, God, I pray that the eyes of their understanding might be opened, that they might see, that the lost might have a revelation of the knowledge of God." And I want to tell you, dear friend, that we have victory in Jesus.



# Kingdom Authority

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 25, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:15–25**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Kingdom Authority Was Gloriously Given

II. Kingdom Authority Was Legally Lost

III. Kingdom Authority Has Been Righteously Regained

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Ephesians chapter 1 as we begin this series on Kingdom Authority, and I'm very, very grateful for the truth that we're going to be sharing together, and if this truth does not light your fire, your wood is wet. What a wonderful, wonderful truth we have to discover, to deploy today, and that is the truth concerning Kingdom Authority.

Our friend Jack Hayford has written a beautiful song entitled "Majesty," and that song begins,

Majesty, worship His majesty.  
Unto Jesus be all glory, honor, and praise.  
Majesty, Kingdom Authority,  
flow through His throne unto His own.  
His anthem raise. (Jack Hayford)

Kingdom Authority. And I want us to take that phrase today, "Kingdom Authority," and I want us to look at it. There's not a more beautiful and exciting and wonderful truth than the truth concerning Kingdom Authority and what it means to us.

Now most of us have no problem accepting the fact that Jesus Christ is King and He has authority, but what we fail to understand is that He our King has given that Kingdom Authority to His subjects, and we too with Him may exercise Kingdom Authority. That thought—listen—that thought is staggering! Now authority in itself, if you talk about authoritarianism, is sort of an ugly word, a repulsive word, and people don't like authoritarian figures. As a matter of fact, you see these bumper stickers every so often: "Question Authority." And there's some truth in that. I mean, who says so? Why should I do this or that? But after you have questioned authority, and you find out it is His authority, then get under it and get in on it, and learn how to exercise Kingdom Authority.

Now there's a difference between authority and power. Power deals with brute force. Authority deals with right. There are two different words that are translated *power* in our King James Version. Jesus said, "Behold, I give you power over all the power of the enemy." The first word is the word *exousia*, which literally means authority, and Jesus is literally saying, "Behold, I give you authority over all of the power, the force, of the enemy." The word *authority* literally means the official right. You might, if you're taking notes, put "authority equals official right." When Jesus was preaching and teaching, the scribes and the Pharisees asked Him, "Who gave You this authority?" That is, who gave You this official right? Now authority is conferred; power is innate. You have whatever power you have, or lack of it, innately, but authority goes beyond power. It goes beyond force. Authority is official right. Now you say, "Pastor, I'm already getting confused." Well, just stay hitched, and you're going to learn something very, very wonderful.

Back in 1940, there were three physicists: Enrico Fermi, Leo Szilard, and Eugene Wigner. These physicists were working, actually, in a makeshift laboratory, in a handball court, in the University of Chicago, and they developed a process to split the atom. The Atomic Age began. They took Einstein's formula,  $e=mc^2$ , and they said with that formula we can unleash the power of the atom, and so they found out a way to split the atom and multiply the energy in that atom, 6 million to one. We entered into the Atomic Age.

Well, my prayer today is that we will discover a greater force than that, and that is Kingdom Authority today, and that God will help us to apply that to our hearts.

Now have you ever seen a real king? Well, if you haven't, look up here. You're looking at one. Have you ever seen a Baptist priest? Well, if you haven't, look up here. You're looking at one. But also look at your brother or your sister on either side of you. They are a king, and they are a priest, and then go stand in front of the mirror when you get home and say, "Well, lookie there. There's a king and there's a priest in that mirror across from me." The Bible says that, when we're redeemed, God has made us kings and priests unto Him.

One of my favorite stories our former pastor used to tell—Dr. Robert G. Lee was on a train one time when he was riding. He made up his mind that he was tired; he didn't want to talk to anybody. And he said, "I sat next to a man who was wearing clerical robes, and this man had his collar on," as Dr. Lee said, "backward." That is, he had one of these white bands around his neck. Dr. Lee said, "That's all right." He said, "If he wants to walk into his collar when I back into mine, that's fine. I don't have any problem with that." But he said, "I just wasn't in the mood to talk, and, after a while, the man turned to me and that man said to me, 'What do you do?'" Dr. Lee said, "I'm a king." He looked him up and down. He said, "A what?" He said, "I'm a king!" He said, "Are you serious?" He said, "Yes," and he said, "I'm also a priest." He said, "You don't look like a

priest.” “Well,” he said, “I am a priest.” He said, “I know what you are. You’re a Baptist preacher!”

Well, folks, I want to tell you that the children of God are kings and priests, and God made us that way. Many of us don’t live like it, and so what we’re going to do today is to learn how to exercise Kingdom Authority that has been given to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now let me say this. I want to say three things today about Kingdom Authority, and this is to set the stage for the rest of these messages that will extend for a long time.

## **I. Kingdom Authority Was Gloriously Given**

Kingdom Authority was graciously given to Adam. Let’s begin to read in God’s Word here in Ephesians 1, verse 15. The Apostle Paul is writing to the Ephesian church, and he says, “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” Now, folks, I could just pull over and park right there. Paul is praying for this church, and he says, “Oh, that the God of glory would give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him.” That’s what I’m trying to help us to have today—the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him. God’s people perish for a lack of knowledge. And he goes on to say, I’m praying for you that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling”—and the word hope means divine certainty of His calling—“and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him”—that is, Christ—“at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things”—now listen—“to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” There’s so much there; we could spend 10,000 years discoursing on it and never get all of that truth that is there in this particular passage.

Now what Paul is saying to this Ephesian church: “You’re saved. I’m glad you’re saved. Now my prayer is that God will open your eyes to the Kingdom Authority that is yours through your salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Three things I want you to learn about Kingdom Authority. Number one: it was graciously given to Adam. Number two: it was legally lost by Adam. Number three: it was righteously regained by Christ and given to the church. Now that’s simple, isn’t it? It was graciously given to Adam. When God made Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden of Eden, God gave to Adam and Eve

Kingdom Authority. He made them to rule on this earth. Put in your margin Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26: “And God said, Let us make man...”—you say, “Pastor, why is that plural? Let us make man?” Because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are speaking together. This is the Holy Trinity in council—“And God said, Let us make man in our image...”—well now, in God’s image? Does God have dominion? Yes, He does. Does God rule? Yes, He does. Does God have authority? Yes, He does—“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion...”—underscore that—“let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” When God created Adam in the Garden of Eden, God made Adam a king. God made Adam one who was to have dominion. This word *dominion* means to tread upon; that is, whatever is beneath him, all of this, this creation, is to be beneath Adam’s feet. He was to control and master the resources of this earth.

Now put this in your margin, too. We’re just talking about how this dominion was given to the first man, Adam. It was graciously, gloriously given. In Psalm 8 and verse 6, David is talking about man, mankind; he’s talking about us, and this is what he said that God’s original intent was. Psalm 8, verse 6: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and hast put all things under his feet.” That’s the original plan. That’s why we were made. God made us to have dominion. Do you believe that? Okay. Now you see this Kingdom Authority was gloriously given.

## **II. Kingdom Authority Was Legally Lost**

Now here’s the second thing. It was legally lost—not just lost, but legally lost. Now you’re in Ephesians chapter 1; let’s just go on into chapter 2. As I’ve told you before, the chapter divisions are not in the original manuscripts. They’re just there to keep preachers from preaching too long. So in chapter 2, verse 1: “And you...”—now he’s been talking about Jesus who has been exalted above all principality and power, and then he says, “And you hath he quickened”—that word means “made alive”—“who were dead in trespasses and sin; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air”—now he’s saying, “You were dead in sins. You were following the prince of this world; that is, the devil, the prince of the power of the air”—“the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

What happened to mankind? How did this thing get garbled? I mean, how did it get turned on its head? God made us to have dominion, but He said, “You were dead in

your sins. You were following Satan. You're walking according to the course of the prince of the air, the spirit that now worketh in disobedience." Well, you remember last week I talked about how Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night, how that bright shining angel that we read about in the book of Ezekiel rebelled against God. He was filled with pride and arrogance. Do you remember that? And he was cast out of heaven; he fell. He was banished from heaven. Jesus said, "Behold, I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." But now the devil who fell from heaven has turned his attention to man. Satan in the form of a serpent, which literally means a shining one—remember he's an angel of light—as a shining one came into the Garden of Eden, and now he begins to tempt Adam and Eve.

And what is the temptation? He tempts Adam and Eve to secure for themselves what he himself had tried to secure in heaven. He tempts them to be as God, to be like God. What Satan failed to accomplish in heaven he tempts Adam and Eve to accomplish on this earth. And Adam believed a lie, Eve believed a lie, and they chose against Almighty God. And when they did, God was dethroned in Adam's will, in Adam's heart. Remember we said authority derives from power. God Almighty has the power. He gave the right to rule to Adam, but Adam legally forfeited that right. He listened to Satan's lies, he believed the lies of Satan, and he dethroned God. But when he dethroned God, he did not really enthrone himself. What he did was to enthrone Satan. He became a slave of Satan.

Now here's what the Bible says about that. Put this in your margin—Romans chapter 6 and verse 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" When Adam and Eve began to obey Satan, what they did they yielded themselves to Satan, and Romans 6 tells us that when you yield yourself to someone, you become their slave. The word *servant* is literally the word *bondslave*. That's what it is in the Greek language. Listen to it: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are?" Let's read it this way. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his slaves ye are to whom ye obey?" Now what happened is this authority was gloriously given, but it was legally lost, and now Satan, who failed to achieve a throne in heaven, now has a throne in the heart of man, and the war that Satan lost in heaven, he has now won on earth. He now has enthroned himself over Adam. Adam has forfeited his dominion. He has given it over to Satan. He delivered it to Satan.

Now here's a very key verse. Don't miss this verse. It's Luke chapter 4 and verse 6. Jesus began His earthly ministry after His baptism by going into the wilderness, and there, as we're going to see later on, He had a spiritual battle with Satan in the wilderness; and one of the things that Satan did was to endeavor to tempt Jesus to worship him—that is, for Jesus to worship Satan. Satan wanted Adam to worship himF

he wants Jesus to worship him; he wants the universe to worship him. Now here's what Satan said to Jesus—don't miss it: "And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give unto thee, and the glory of them..."—he's talking about the kingdoms of this world—"All this power will I give unto thee, and the glory of them"—now listen to this—"for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it." "It was delivered to me." Jesus never said, "Oh, no, it wasn't." He never said that, because it was delivered to Satan, and Jesus knew it. God gave that authority to Adam. Adam gave it to Satan. And Satan said, "I'll give it to You, Jesus, if You'll just worship me." "It was delivered to me—it was delivered to me."

Listen. This authority was graciously given. It was legally lost. Adam became a slave of Satan, and Adam lost his legal right to rule. Adam's Kingdom Authority was gone, and now, as we see in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, Adam and his children have been dethroned, they are spiritually dead, and they have no longer legal authority. Therefore, how does the Bible describe Satan? In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, he's described as the "god of this world." Why? Adam was to have that authority, but he gave it to Satan. How is Satan described in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12? The one we do battle with. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities"—you know what the word *principalities* means? It means kingdoms—"against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Authority was graciously given. Kingdom Authority was legally lost.

### **III. Kingdom Authority Has Been Righteously Regained**

Now you ready for the good part? All right now, here's the good part. Here's why Jesus came. That authority has been righteously regained—righteously regained. I said legally lost; I say righteously regained. I didn't say, lost and regained. I said legally lost, righteously regained. If you don't understand that, you'll miss the whole thing about Kingdom Authority. This is the reason the Apostle Paul is praying that their eyes would be opened. Now notice he says in verse 17, "I'm praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality."

Remember 6:12 says "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers." But Jesus is far above that principality, amen?—"far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not

only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Now, Lord, help me to say this. I just pray you won’t miss this. I’m telling you, folks, this is wonderful. Now what happens is this: Jesus Christ left heaven, came to this earth, to gain back man’s lost estate. Now remember this: it was legally lost; it must be righteously regained. Why doesn’t God just kill the devil? Why doesn’t God just snatch the authority from Satan and give it back to Adam, and just be done with it? People wonder all the time, “Well, why does God let the devil get away with all that he gets away with?” Remember that it was legally lost; it must be righteously regained. If God were to just step in, snatch authority from Satan, kill the devil, give it back to Adam, that would make a farce of divine justice. Now God doesn’t owe the devil anything, but He owes much to His own holiness, to His own righteousness, to His own law. This is a universe that is run by law, and so God’s plan—don’t miss this, folks; don’t miss this—God’s plan is a man. Now it centers in a man. How was dominion lost? Well, where was dominion given? It was given to a man. How was it lost? It was lost by a man. How must it be regained? It must be regained, it must be recovered, by a man in order for it to be legally recovered. It was legally given, legally lost; it must be legally recovered. It was given to a man, was lost by a man; it must be recovered by a man. That’s why God became a man. That’s why the incarnation.

You see, a member of Adam’s race must be found to redeem us, but this member of Adam’s race must be one upon whom Satan has no legal claim. Now the Bible says, when we yield ourselves as slaves, then we’re slaves, and a child of a slave is a slave also. A child of slaves belongs to the slaveholder, the slave owner, and we became slaves of Satan, and all of Adam’s children are slaves of Satan. That’s what Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, tell us: we were children of disobedience. We were children of the disobedient one. Now yet our dominion must be regained. It was lost by a man; it must be regained by a man. But that man must be a man upon whom Satan has no legal claims. That’s the reason for the virgin birth. Are you listening to me? That’s the reason for the virgin birth. That’s the reason for Christmas. That’s what this whole thing is about. That’s the reason that Jesus had to be the virgin-born Son of God. He was not a son of Adam, but He was man of very man. Are you listening? Now, is this getting through? I want you to understand this.

Listen to these scriptures. Put them down big and plain and straight. First Corinthians 15, verses 21 and 22: “For since by man came death”—who was that? Adam—“by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” Who was that? Jesus. By man came death. By man came the resurrection of the, of the dead. “For as in Adam all die...”—as in Adam all die. Folks, that includes every one of you—“as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” All of the sons of Adam are dead; all of the sons of Christ are alive. You see, this is the reason for the incarnation. I gave you this

verse last week. I hope you'll understand it even more this week. Hebrews 2, verse 14—listen to it: “Forasmuch then as the children”—he’s talking about us, the children of Adam—“are partakers of flesh and blood...”—that is, we’re human; we have bodies; we’re mankind—“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself”—now he’s talking about Jesus—“he also himself likewise took part of the same”—that is, Jesus became flesh and blood. Now listen—“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death”—that is, the authority of death—“that is the devil.”

Is that making sense to you? We were flesh and blood. The dominion was lost by flesh and blood. It was given to flesh and blood. It was lost by flesh and blood. Jesus became flesh and blood that He “through death might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” A spirit cannot die, but a body can die. He took a body. “The wages of sin is death.” When I say a spirit cannot die, I mean a spirit cannot die the physical death that our sins deserve, but He took flesh and blood upon Himself.

This is the reason for the virgin birth. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not a fallen son of Adam. He was, therefore, not a slave of Satan, but yet He was made of a woman. He was a member of the human race. That’s so great. That’s so wonderful. Satan has absolutely no claim on the Lord Jesus Christ. Had Jesus been born like we were born, He would have been a son of Adam, He would’ve inherited Adam’s sin, He would’ve been a son of a slave, a slave Himself. Jesus was truly human but at the same time unquestionably divine. When He walked this earth, He was very God of very God and also very man of very man, but He did not defeat Satan as a God. He defeated Satan as a man.

Now if you don’t understand that, you don’t understand what Christmas is all about. Now He became a man, He took flesh and blood, because it was legally lost. It was legally given, legally lost; it must be legally and righteously regained so as not to make a farce of divine justice. Now when Jesus became a man—here’s the good part—when Jesus became a man, He overcame Satan not as God, but as man, as righteous, sinless, holy man, and Jesus, when He defeated Satan, used resources to defeat Satan that were available to Adam in the Garden of Eden, the same resources that Adam could’ve used in the Garden of Eden. Now He’s going to defeat Satan this way.

Now Satan sees Jesus, the virgin-born Son of God. Satan knows what he did to the first Adam, and he says to himself, “Now I must defeat this second Adam, because if I don’t defeat Him, He will defeat me, and Kingdom Authority will be taken away from me. Here’s One who has come from heaven to reclaim Adam’s lost estate.” So Satan sets out to get Jesus to do what? To sin—to sin, to sin. And Satan is an egomaniac. Satan thinks, “Well, I know the pride that was in my heart.” He even has the audacity to tempt the virgin-born Son of God. He says to himself, “I got the first Adam to sin. Now I’ll get



the second Adam to sin, the last One to sin, this last Man, and if I can get Him to sin, I'll have Him in the same position I had the first Adam." That's the reason for the wilderness temptation you read about, where Satan came to Jesus and he tempted Jesus to sin, because just one sin on the part of Jesus and the whole plan of redemption comes crashing down. Read about it in Luke 4, verses 5 and following: "And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Adam lost his estate in a beautiful garden, but Jesus overcome Satan in a wilderness. But how did Jesus overcome Satan? Alan Redpath imagines Jesus saying something like this to Satan—I don't know that He said it, but He could well have said it: "Satan, as God, which I am, I could obliterate you, but I'm not going to defeat you as God. I'm going to defeat you as man." And the same weapons that belonged to Adam in the Garden of Eden were the weapons that Jesus Christ used. What were they? The Spirit of God and the Word of God. Luke chapter 4, verse 1, says, "He was led of the Spirit." Jesus was filled with the Spirit, anointed with the Spirit at His baptism, and then Jesus took the Word of God. Satan said, "Bow down and worship me." Jesus said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only." The anointing of the Spirit and the authority of the Word—that's the way Jesus won this battle, and that's the way Jesus continues to win the battle. You see, folks, it was as man that Jesus defeated Satan. Satan hounded Him to Gethsemane. I wish I had time to talk about that.

Then bloody Calvary—that was the worst mistake that Satan ever made. The hounds of hell were baying for the blood of Jesus. Satan thought, "Surely, He'll not do this. He'll not pay this price. He will not take the sin of the world. He'll not pay for Adam's race. He'll not become the object of the Father's loathing." But Jesus said in Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." And Jesus went on to dark Calvary, and He cried upon that cross, "It is finished." They put Him in that tomb. Satan now marshals all of the forces of hell to keep Him in that tomb, to keep Him from being raised, because if He comes out of that grave that means that God the Father has accepted the payment, that Satan's legal power, his right, has broken. You know on the third day that Jesus came out of that grave and was shown to be the Son of God with power, and God raised Him as He walked out of that grave, and Satan's kingdom came crashing down. Then the Lord Jesus went out there to the Mount of Olives, and He says to His disciples, "All authority given unto Me. I've got it now—in heaven and in earth." He's already had it in heaven; He now has it on earth. It has been righteously regained.

“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations. I have this authority, and now I am giving it back to you, My sons and daughters.” He has ascended to the high hills of glory. Look in Ephesians 1, verse 21: “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion”—that’s Satan’s lost dominion—“and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

## **Conclusion**

Folks, I have run out of time today, but I just want to tell you something. We are in this series of messages going to learn how to get in on that authority that Jesus has gloriously given now to the Church. It is ours. And Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 10, verse 19, “Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.” That is, over all; I give you authority over all the power of the enemy. “And nothing shall by any means—any means—hurt you.” Somebody imagines one demon talking to another demon, and they’re talking about what Jesus did on the cross—how He spoiled principalities and powers, how Jesus redeemed the sons of men, how Jesus broke Satan’s hold on the human race—and these demons were talking about that, how Jesus went down into the grave, and how Jesus came up from the grave, and how He has ascended the high hills of glory, and how He is sitting at the right hand of the majesty on high, and how all of the children of God are in Christ seated and ascended with Him, and one demon says to the other demon, “If those liberal theologians ever really let Jesus out of that grave, and if those Bible preachers ever really explain this to the people, hell, help us, all heaven will break loose.” Amen? “Hell, help us; all heaven will break loose.” Jesus said, “All authority is given unto me. Go ye, therefore.” “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.”

# Kingdom Authority

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 25, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 1:15–25**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Kingdom Authority Was Gloriously Given
- II. Kingdom Authority Was Legally Lost
- III. Kingdom Authority Must Be Righteously Regained

Conclusion

## Introduction

**B**e finding Ephesians chapter 1, and today we want to talk to you on this subject: “Kingdom Authority.” We want to help you discover Kingdom Authority, to enjoy Kingdom Authority, and to exercise Kingdom Authority. And my heart is so full, because I’m afraid that you’re going to miss the blessing, miss the truth, if you do not listen. But my prayer is that God will impregnate your heart with this great, dynamic, life-changing truth of Kingdom Authority.

Back in 1940, Enrico Fermi, and some other men, in a makeshift laboratory—actually, a handball court at the University of Chicago—worked. And they took Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, and they began to apply it. And they said, “We can divide, we can split, the atom, and release power, in a ratio of 1 to 6 million.” That’s what they did. And the atomic age began. Now that power was there all the time. But it was unknown, undiscovered, and, therefore, unapplied.

Folks, there is a power that exceeds atomic power so incredibly it’s not even worthy of comparison. And that is the power that God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. And He has given that power to us. That power is called Kingdom Authority. And we read about it in the book of Ephesians. And I want you to begin in chapter 1 and verse 15. Paul learned that the Ephesians had given themselves to Christ. He learned of their faith in Christ, and then, he began to pray for them. He began to pray, “O God, help them to understand the power that is inherently theirs through the work of Christ.” And dear God, help me, today, as I preach, that I might be an instrument to help the people of God to understand this.

Now listen to what Paul said. He said: “*Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints*”—they were saved, and they loved one another, but he’s not satisfied. He said, I—“*cease not to give thanks for you, making*

*mention of you in my prayers”—well, would you like to eavesdrop on his prayer? Would you like to find out what he prayed for, when he prayed for those saints in Ephesus?—“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him”—I want you to have wisdom, revelation, and knowledge about your Savior. That’s what he’s saying—“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power”—underscore that—“toward us”—not just power, but power to us—“who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet”—under Jesus’ feet—“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:15–25).*

Now whether you understand it or not, what he is talking about there is the Kingdom Authority that belongs to the children of God. And if you’re a child of God, I want to tell you something, friend: You have incredible authority and power. Whether you’ve discovered it, whether you’ve split the spiritual atom or not, it’s there, inherently.

Have you ever seen a real live king? Would you like to see one? Take a look. He’s right here. Me—Prince Adrian. Have you ever seen a Baptist priest? Would you like to see one? Right here. Did you know the Bible says that God has made us kings and priests? (Revelation 1:16; Revelation 5:10). Look to the person to your right, the person to your left. There’s a king, and there’s a priest, if they’re saved. Go home, and look in the mirror, and, if you’re saved, if you’re a child of God, looking back at you will be a king and a priest. God has made us a kingdom of priests. That’s wonderful!

The former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, tells a story I used to love to hear him tell, about how he got on a train, one time, and he was tired. He’d been talking to so many people that he just wanted to be quiet. He didn’t want to talk to anybody. But he said, “I sat down next to a man who was wearing clerical robes”—you know, the black suit, and the white turnaround collar, and so forth. “But,” he said, “I really was not in the mood for conversation.” “But,” he said, “that man turned to me, and said, ‘Who are you, and what do you do?’” Dr. Lee said, “I looked back at him, and said, ‘I’m a king.’” He said, “Well, you don’t look like a king.” He said, “I’m also a priest.” He said, “Well, you’re not dressed like a priest.” And then, Dr. Lee said, you know, that he was wearing his collar backwards. He said that was all right, if he wanted to do that. He said, “It’s all right, if a man wants to walk into his collar, when I back into mine.” He said, “That’s fine, however he wants to dress.” But he said, “I am king and a priest.” And then,

that man said, “Oh, I know who you are. You’re a Baptist preacher.”

And friend, you don’t have to be a Baptist preacher, however, to be a king and a priest, or a queen and a priestess, if you know the Lord, because God has given to all His children Kingdom Authority. And that’s what we’re going to be looking at, and that’s what we’re going to be studying, today. And basically, this is just a foundational message. And I pray that God the Holy Spirit will write three truths upon your heart, today. Now they are incipient in this passage in Ephesians chapter 1. But we’re going to look at a number of ancillary passages that point this out: that God has made us kings and priests, a kingdom of priests, and we have Kingdom Authority.

## I. Kingdom Authority Was Gloriously Given

Now here’s the first thing I want you to learn: that Kingdom Authority was gloriously given to Adam—gloriously given, or graciously given, to Adam. Now put in your margin there in Ephesians 1: “Genesis 1, verse 26.” And it tells how God created the first man and the first woman, and put them in the Garden of Eden. And Genesis 1, verse 26, speaks of the Holy Trinity in counsel: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: “*And God said, Let us*”—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—“*make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion*” (Genesis 1:26). Underscore the word *dominion*. That means “rule.” “*Let us make man in our image*” (Genesis 1:26). Does God rule? Does He reign? Of course He does. Does God have dominion? Yes.

God says, “I want a creature like Me. I want someone to rule and to reign. I want him to have dominion on the earth. Let’s make man in Our image, and let them have dominion.” So Adam was given dominion over the earth. Adam and Eve were to be king and queen, to sit at the place of authority. The word *dominion* means “to rule over, to tread down.” The things of this earth were to be under their feet.

You know, King David, who wrote the Psalms by divine inspiration, one night, was looking up at the stars—that candelabra in the heavens—and, he said: “*When I consider the heavens, the work of Your hand, when I look out into the vast never reaches of space, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?*”—what is man? And then, he said, by divine inspiration, what man is, in verse 6. Psalm 8, verse 6—“*Thou madest him*”—that is, *man*—“*to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet*” (Psalm 8:3–6). That’s how God made Adam. God gave the first man dominion, but, as we’re going to see, he lost it.

Look around, today. You don’t see the sons of Adam ruling, and reigning, and having dominion over this earth, as God gave spiritual dominion. Something has gone wrong. Consult this morning’s newspaper. Read about the death, disease, the hate, the war, the crime, the lust, the sorrow, the disappointment, the despair: that’s everything.

I think about a little boy who was sitting on the front steps of the schoolhouse, crying. The janitor saw him crying, there. He said, “What’s wrong, son?” Well, the little boy was to bring his birth certificate to school. And his mother said, “Be very careful, son. That’s an important document. Don’t lose it.” And he lost it. The janitor said, “What’s wrong, son? He said, “I lost my excuse for being born.” Now that’s what Adam did. Adam lost the reason that God created him. God made him to have dominion. It was graciously, gloriously given. Got it? Okay.

## II. Kingdom Authority Was Legally Lost

Now here’s the second thing I want you to understand: Not only was it graciously and gloriously given, but, it was legally lost. Not just lost—*legally* lost. Adam took that dominion that God had given to him, and Adam gave that dominion to Satan. Now obviously, Satan deceived him. Obviously, Satan, a con artist, deceived Adam. But nonetheless, Adam—faithless, unbelieving, disobedient Adam—yielded to Satan, and became Satan’s slave. That’s what the third chapter of Genesis is all about: how that serpent crawled his slimy, corroding path into the pages of history and deceived the first man and the first woman.

The word *serpent* literally means “shining one.” The word *Lucifer* means “light-bearer.” When he was created, he was created a holy angel. There was no sin in him. God did not create a devil. God created a holy angel with the power of choice. And that angel rebelled against Almighty God. And Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. And he was banished from Heaven. No sooner had he unsheathed his sword of rebellion than the thunders of Jehovah’s righteous judgment spoke. And Jesus said: “*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*” (Luke 10:18). But he’s cast out to the Earth.

And now Satan begins a battle on this earth. He attempts to achieve on earth what he failed to achieve in Heaven. And now he wants to enthrone himself on earth. And who now has dominion over the Earth? Adam does. Satan wants to usurp that dominion. Satan wants that authority. So he comes to Adam, and, through an underhanded move, he gets Adam to obey him. And Adam yields himself to Satan. He doesn’t understand what is going on, now. Satan says to Adam, “You will be as God.” But Adam did not become God. He became Satan’s slave.

Romans chapter 6, verse 16 is a very important verse. In Romans chapter 6, verse 16, the Apostle Paul explains it this way: “*Don’t you know that to whom you yield yourselves servants*”—or, *slaves*—“*to obey, his servant, or his slave, you are?*” (Romans 6:16). The *King James* gives it “servant,” but the Greek word is *slave*. Adam yielded to Satan, and he became a slave to Satan. His *Kingdom Authority* was gone. He lost his legal right to rule.

Now when Satan tempted Jesus—this is a key verse right now, don't miss it—when Satan tempted Jesus, he tempted Jesus to worship him, to worship Satan. But here's how he tempted Jesus: He showed Him all of the kingdoms of this world, the glory, the power, the splendor of those kingdoms. And then, this is what Satan had the audacity to say to the Son of God: *“And the devil said unto him, All this authority will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will give it.”* (Luke 4:6).

Now Jesus didn't contradict him. Jesus did not remonstrate against what he had said. He said, “Jesus, if You worship me, I will give You the power, the glory, the authority of this world. Because,” he said, “it has been delivered to me.” It was delivered to him. God gave it to Adam. Adam delivered it to Satan. And Satan said, “I'll give it to You, Jesus, if You'll just worship me.” It was graciously given. It was legally lost. Satan said, “It has been given to me.” And man, now, is spiritually dead and spiritually dethroned. Legally, he has lost the authority—the *Kingdom Authority*—that was given to him.

Continue to read in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1. Look at it. Now remember *there were no chapter divisions in the original manuscripts. Somebody said they were put there to keep preachers from preaching too long.* Chapter 2, now, verse 1: *“And you hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins”*—Adam, who was given life, now is dead. And the sons of Adam are dead. Adam, who was given authority, is now dispossessed and dethroned. Now notice—*“In which in times past ye walked according to the course of this world”*—look at this, now, verse 2—*“according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2:1–2).

What is that spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience? That's the spirit of the devil. Now the Bible calls Satan, in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, *“the god of this world”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). Paul, later on, in Ephesians chapter 6, and verse 12, says: *“For we're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world”* (Ephesians 6:12). There's a dark prince who rules in this world, who has authority in this world, because Adam delivered it over to Satan. It was gloriously given. It was legally lost.

### **III. Kingdom Authority Must Be Righteously Regained**

Now if you don't understand that, you're going to miss everything we have to say. Say, “Gloriously given.” Say, “Legally lost.” Got it? Okay, now, here's the third thing. Now we're going to tighten the focus a little bit. Now you're going to understand why Jesus Christ came, what this whole thing about the incarnation, Christmas Day, what this is all about. It was legally lost. It must be righteously regained.

The question comes: “If Satan has done all of this, and Satan has all of this power, this malevolent influence, why doesn’t God just step in? Why doesn’t God just kill the devil—obliterate, evaporate him? Kill him? Banish him? Put him in the lowest Hell—whatever He wants to do—and just take that authority, and give it back to Adam?” If God were to do that, it would be a farce of divine judgment. God would be fixing it, but He wouldn’t be fixing it right. God owes Satan nothing, but God owes much to His own sense of righteousness, holiness, and justice. It was legally lost. It must be legally regained.

Now how was it given? It was given to a man. How was it lost? It was lost by a man. How must it be regained? It must be regained by a man. God could destroy Satan, as God. He is Jehovah God. He owes the devil nothing. Satan has absolutely no power over Almighty God. In one word, He could be completely destroyed. But God is going to be true to His own righteousness, His own holiness, and His own justice. And by a man, He is going to destroy the power of Satan.

Now let me give you some verses that back this up. God’s plan must center in a man. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 21 and 22: *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). There are only two men, really, who have ever lived: Adam and Jesus. And either you are in Adam, or you’re in Christ. In Adam, all die. If you are in Adam, what pertains to Adam pertains to you. That’s a sinful nature, judgment, death, and Hell. In Adam, all die. If you’re in Christ, what pertains to Christ pertains to you. *“Even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22). *“Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead”* (1 Corinthians 15:21). There had to be a man who would undo what the first man did.

Put this verse down: Hebrews 2, verse 14: *“Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood”—the children (he’s talking about us, the children of God) —“Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself”—* when it says, *“he also himself,”* it’s talking about Jesus—*“He also himself likewise took part of the same”—*now, the same *what?* The same flesh and blood—*“That through death he might destroy him that had the power”—the authority—“of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

Have you got that? You see, it was lost by a man. He had to become flesh and blood. Adam’s sin deserved judgment. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). Jesus had to take flesh and blood, a body, so He could die, and, by death, pay sin’s penalty, and be raised from the dead. And what Adam had legally lost, God will righteously regain, by God becoming a man.

Put this verse down: Galatians 4, verses 3 to 5: *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage”—*okay, before we’re saved, we’re in bondage. We’re slaves



of Satan. You see, the son of a slave is a slave. Understand that? A daughter of a slave is a slave. Adam was sold into slavery. He gave that dominion, that rule, to Satan. It was delivered to him. And now all of Adam's progeny are slaves. We're under dominion. You say, "Well, I'm not a slave of Satan." Oh, yes, you are, if you're not saved. You say, "Well, I'm free to do whatever I want." That's true. But you're not free to do as you ought. You're Satan's slave. You're in bondage. You're in bondage to lust, and pride, and arrogance, and disobedience—*"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But"*—thank God for that *but*—*"But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law"* (Galatians 4:3–5). That is, to redeem these slaves, to buy these slaves back. These are in bondage.

*"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman"* (Galatians 4:4). Now catch this, very carefully: He had to be a man. But had He been a son of Adam, He would have had the sinful nature of Adam. A son of the slave is a slave, and a slave can redeem no other slave. Got it? But on the other hand, He had to be a man. It was lost by a man—legally lost. It must be righteously regained. That, my friend, is the reason for the virgin birth. Listen. That's the reason for the virgin birth. That little baby in Mary's womb was a man. But He was not a son of Adam. He's the Son of God. He was not the son of a slave. But He was made of a woman. As much man, as if He were not God at all. As much God, as if He were not man at all. He was very God of very God, and very man of very man. But He did not defeat Satan as God. He defeated Satan as a perfect man. He paid the debt on the cross, *"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14).

Now it would have been a farce, and a hollow victory, had God simply snatched the dominion from Satan, and turned it back over to sinful man. God's plan is far richer, fuller, and greater than that. And so when Jesus Christ came to this Earth, born of a virgin, totally, absolutely sinless, Satan knew that he had a problem on his hands. He knew that a new battle was beginning. He knew that this battle for dominion, and authority, was being waged. And Satan remembered the thing that made the devil the devil—his desire to be like God. Satan remembered what he had done to the first Adam; and how he had tempted, and tricked, and deceived Adam into sinning; and how the dominion was given over to him. And so Satan says, now, "I've got to get this one to sin. I have got to get Him to sin. Because, if I can get Him to sin, then He will deliver the whole world back to me, or I will retain what I already have. So I must get Him to sin."

That's what Luke 4 is all about. Jesus, as He began His public ministry, He is baptized. The Holy Spirit, like a dove, descends upon Him. And Luke chapter 4 says He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. For forty days, He's tempted there (Luke 4:2). Satan is trying to get the Son of man, the Son of God, to sin.

But Jesus didn't have any itch the devil could scratch. He said: "*The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*" (John 14:30).

Was Jesus tempted to show that He could sin? No, He was tempted to show that He could not sin. He was the holy, righteous Son of God. That's where that passage that I alluded to, a while back, from Luke 4, comes from. He takes Jesus up to an exceeding high mountain—we're dealing, now, with authority—and he showed Him all of the glory, the power, the authority that is in the rulers of this world. And he says to Jesus, "See all this? I'll give it to You. It's been delivered to me. Therefore, it's mine to give to whomever I want to give it. And I'll give it to You, if You'll just worship me" (Luke 4:6).

Can you imagine the audacity of Satan? Saying that to the Son of God? Bow down and worship me? Satan has always wanted to be worshiped, to be like the Most High. Now what did Jesus do? Jesus defeated Satan. But how? He did not defeat Satan as God, though He was perfect God. He defeated Satan, as a man should defeat Satan, as a man. And Jesus, in that wilderness temptation, did not pull rank on me or on you. He used the two weapons that were available to Adam in the Garden of Eden and the two weapons that are available to us in this sanctuary today: the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

The Bible says that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He went about doing good. There, in Luke chapter 4, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4:1). The Holy Spirit of God was upon Him. And then, when Satan came to tempt Him, Jesus unsheathed the Word of God, and said, "Satan, it is written," and ran him through with the sword: "*Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*" (Luke 4:8). And by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures—the two weapons: the Word of God and the Spirit of God—the same weapons that were available to Adam in the Garden. Because, Adam had the Word of God—those same weapons. Where the first Adam fell, in a garden, the second Adam won, in a wilderness—the Son of God.

Adam Redpath imagines Jesus saying something like this to Satan: "Satan, I want you to know that, as God (which I am), I could obliterate you. But I'm not going to obliterate you, as God. I'm going to destroy you, as a man. I'm coming against you, as a man—a perfect man, filled with the Spirit and armed with the Word. That's the way I'm going to win the battle." And that's the way He won the battle.

The hounds of Hell bayed after Jesus, trying to get Him to sin. Satan was surely thinking that He would not go to the cross. Surely, He would not pay the price that Adam's sin deserved. Surely, He would not pay the ransom. Surely, He would not redeem the fallen sons of men. Surely, He would not suffer so. Surely, He would not become the object of the Father's wrath.

But there, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the battle of the ages is being waged. And

it hinges on one word: *“Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42) . It was Satan who said to God, “Not Thy will, but mine be done.” But the second Adam— Jesus—said: *“Not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42). And as a man, *“he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:8). *“That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

And when Jesus went to that cross, and suffered, and bled, and died, He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30) . Do you know what that means? Do you remember reading about the Dead Sea Scrolls over there, in Israel, down by the Dead Sea? I’ve seen those caves where those scrolls were found. A little shepherd boy threw a stone into a cave to try to fetch out a goat, and he heard a clink. And he went into that cave and found these jars. And in these jars, were all kinds of documents—the Dead Sea Scrolls. But they also found some bills in there, some legal bills. And across those legal bills were written the same word that Jesus said from the cross: “paid in full, finished.” That’s exactly what it means: “paid in full, finished.”

You see, the price has been paid, and the ransom has been paid, and the redemption has been done, and Jesus, the second man, came to undo what Adam, the first man, did. It was graciously given. It was legally lost. It was righteously regained. That’s the reason that God became a man. That’s the reason for the incarnation. That’s the reason that Deity walked in sandal shoes on the dusty shores of Galilee. That’s what it’s all about.

And now our risen, ascended Lord has ascended the high hills of glory. And where is He now? Well, here’s what Paul’s saying. I want you to understand. Look in verse 19. We’re still in Ephesians 1: *“What is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe”*—not to those who don’t believe, but those who do believe—*“according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him”*—Jesus—*“from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality”* (Ephesians 1:19–21). Remember? *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities”* (Ephesians 6:12) . But He is now Jesus, *“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church”* (Ephesians 1:21–22). Remember, Adam was to have all things under his feet? Remember, Psalm 8, verse 6? Now all things are under the feet of the second Adam, and He is the head over all things to the Church.

Now look at that very carefully. Friend, don’t think of the Church as an organization with Jesus as the president. The Church is an organism with Jesus as the head. Do you see the difference? Listen. We are in Christ, and He is in us. *“Over ... the church, which*

*is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:22–23). The authority, therefore, that belongs to Him belongs to us.

Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 6: *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:6). Where is Jesus? *"On the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (Hebrews 1:3). All things are beneath His feet. Where are you? You say, "Well, I'm sitting right here, physically." But notice what it says here, about you, in verse 22: *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church"* (Ephesians 1:22). Look in chapter 2, verse 5: *"Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ"—that is, we were raised; we died with Jesus; we were raised with Christ—"(by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:5–6).

## Conclusion

Now I want to ask you a question: Are you sitting in this auditorium, this morning, or are you sitting in heavenly places? The answer is yes, yes, yes. Physically, we are here; but, in Christ, we have been raised. When He died, we died. His death had our name on it. When He was raised from the grave, we were raised from the grave. When He ascended, we ascended. When He is seated at the right hand of God, so are we, in Christ.

If I were to put you in a barrel and put that barrel in the Mississippi River, where would you be? In the Mississippi River, right? Well, if you're in Christ, and Christ is at the right hand of God, where are you? Seated with Him. Man, the devil hopes you don't understand this. That's the reason Paul said, "I am praying that your eyes will be opened, that you will be enlightened, that you will understand this" (Ephesians 1:18). That's my prayer, that you'll understand it: *"the exceeding greatness of his power"* (Ephesians 1:19).

Someone imagines a couple of demons speaking. One demon says to the other, "Demon, if those liberal theologians ever really let Jesus Christ out of that tomb, and those so-called Baptist preachers begin to preach it—whew! Hell help us, all Heaven will break loose." Don't you think it's time all Heaven broke loose? Don't you think it's time that the people of God begin to understand and to exercise Kingdom Authority?

Now the truth I've give to you this morning has a thousand ramifications, and in the coming weeks, we're going to be talking about some of them. Bow your heads in prayer.

# How to Share Your Testimony

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 21, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 2:1–10**

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## Introduction

**P**raise the Lord! Thank you so much. Oh, for a thousand hands to ring, a thousand tongues to sing, in honor to our dear king—and a great song. Would you take, please, your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 2. And when you have that passage, look up here and let me tell you something very, very exciting: how you can be used mightily of the Lord. I want to tell you tonight “How to Share Your Testimony.”

And my dear friend, never ever underestimate the power of a Christian testimony. We are called to be witnesses and not lawyers. A witness is somebody who tells what he’s seen and heard. A lawyer is somebody who argues a case. We are witnesses of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My dear friend, a Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.

Now I’m not against a well-reasoned presentation of what we call an apology for our faith. We ought to be able to give that. But there are many who are new Christians who are not theologically trained yet who still can be a dynamic witness for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the Bible says concerning the devil that those early Christians overcame him by the word of their testimony, and those last-day Christians will

overcome him by the word of our testimony. We need to learn how to give our testimony.

And again I want to say you don't have to be a theologian to be able to give your testimony. Remember the man born blind, and Jesus healed him, and then the Pharisees jumped on his case? Oh, they were angry because this man had been healed, and they got him and backed him into a corner, and they started to ask him all kinds of theological questions. This man just said, "Well, I'm sorry. I can't answer all of those questions, but," he said, "one thing I know: once I was blind and now I see" (John 9:25). Friend, that shut them out. "Once I was blind and now I see." And a Christian with a testimony is never at the mercy of an infidel with an argument. Remember that.

Now it's important that we learn to share our testimony. Our testimony is the convincing thing when we witness and share the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I want to give you an outline for sharing your testimony; and you can fill in the personal part, but I'm just going to give you the outline here in Ephesians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. Here, if you're saved, is your spiritual biography and your future history: "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all*"—that includes you and me—"had our conversation"—the word *conversation* means "behavior"—"*in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich and mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us*"—that means "has made us alive"—"*together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:1–10).

And there in those 10 verses you have your past, your present, and your future. In those 10 verses we see past guilt, present grace, and future glory. And I want you now to look at those 10 verses and learn some wonderful things about what has happened to you, what is happening to you, and what will happen to you. Now you can customize it, you can put in your own illustrations of what God has done for you, but this is the framework, I believe, that every real testimony ought to include. This is your spiritual biography and your history.

## I. What You Were: Past Guilt

Now let's look at what you were before you got saved. Let's look at your past guilt.

### A. Without Christ, You Were Dead

And first of all, I see in chapter 2 and verse 1 that you were dead. Did you know that? *"And you hath he [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins."* Now let's make this very clear. When a man gets saved, he needs more than the forgiveness of sin. Most of the people in this world put the great emphasis on the forgiveness of sin, but you need far more than the forgiveness of your sins. If you forgive a dead man, he's still dead.

What we need to understand, dear friend, is why we are dead. Death in the Bible, as I tried to say to you this morning, is not the separation of the soul from the body. The soul can move out of the body. Death in the Bible is the separation of the soul from God. You see, when a man became sinner, or when we were sinners by nature, then we are just simply minus God.

When Adam sinned, God moved out of Adam. God used to live in Adam. God inhabited the spirit of Adam. When God said to Adam, "Adam, if you disobey me, you will die," well, Adam disobeyed God. Did he die? "Well," you say, "yes, he died, because God said, 'Adam, in the day you eat of this forbidden fruit you will die'" (Genesis 2:17). But now wait a minute. The Bible also records that he went on to live for hundreds of years, and God said he was going to die that same day. Well, did he die, or didn't he? Well, the answer is yes, he did die. But how did he die? He died immediately in the spirit; he died progressively in his soul; he died ultimately in his body. You see, the minute Adam died, God moved out of Adam.

Now the Bible says of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 1, *"In him"*—in the Lord—*"was life; and the life was the light of men"* (John 1:4). *"In him was life; and the life was the light."* So watch it. When the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. When the Lord went out, Adam was depraved. When the life went out, Adam was dead. When the light went out, Adam was darkened.

And so here's a man now without Christ. He is dead, he is depraved, and he lives in darkness. Now that's the way God describes every man, every woman, every boy, every girl without Christ: *"dead in trespasses and sin."* They have existence, but they don't have life. Jesus came to people who were already existing and said, "I have come that you might have life" (John 10:10). To have eternal life does not mean to exist forever. They do that in hell. To have eternal life means to have Jesus, to have Christ. It speaks not only of the duration of life, but it speaks of the quality of life.

So what were you before you got saved? Well, you were dead in trespasses and sin. But my dear friend, let me just say right now that there are some people who don't like

the idea that they are dead in trespasses and sin, because they think they are nice, normal people.

Jesus raised three people from the dead. Do you remember who they were? Jesus raised from the dead a little girl, Jairus's daughter—do you remember that?—and he walked into that room, and that little girl had just died; her body, I take it, was still warm; perhaps the glow of life had not yet faded from her cheeks. Jesus walked into that bedroom, and they were laughing Jesus to scorn, but Jesus took her by the hand and He said, "All right now, darling, get up." That's just about what he said: "Little maiden, rise." "Get up, sweetheart," just like you'd wake your little girl in the morning for school. That little girl got up and stretched (Mark 5:38–42; Luke 8:49–55). And that's a beautiful thing that we do in Living Pictures—that little girl or boy sits up very similar to a little girl from the dead.

Then, later on, he raised another person from the dead. The other person that Jesus raised from the dead was the son of a widow. Now he had just recently died. He had died just a few hours or minutes before. They were on their way to the funeral with him. He was a young man, and Jesus interrupted that funeral processional, and Jesus raised that widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:12–15).

Now the third person that Jesus raised from the dead was Lazarus. I remember that story in John chapter 11. Now Lazarus had been buried for four days, and already corruption had set in, remember? Jesus said, "Roll away the stone," and they said, "Lord, you don't want to do that. The odor of death is in there. Don't do that, Lord. You don't know what you're doing." And Jesus said, "Roll away the stone." And Jesus raised him from the dead (John 11:38–44).

Now watch. The little girl Jesus raised from the dead. There was a young man that Jesus raised from the dead. The little girl had just died a few moments before. The young man had died perhaps hours before. Lazarus had been dead for four days. Question: Which one was the most dead? Which one? They were all just as dead. Dead is dead, folks.

All right, you know, sometimes we see these little boys and girls around here—I'm talking about boys and girls of the age of accountability and very much like that little girl—we say, "That sweet little thing, that sweet little thing, preacher, that little child couldn't be dead in trespasses of sin." Or we see a fine young man, or we see some old rotten corrupted man—we say, "Yeah, he's dead. He's Lazarus. He's dead." We can tell he's dead. He's a thief, a pervert, a drunkard, or whatever. Friend, I want to tell you that the boys and girls in our church who are at the age of accountability and don't know Jesus are just as dead as the worst drunkard on skid row. That little boy, that little girl in your family, I'm talking about, who has reached the age of accountability is just as dead, folks. Dead is dead, whether it's a little girl in her bedroom or Lazarus in a grave.



The Bible says that we're dead in trespasses and sin. And we need to get a burden for these boys and girls who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, not only were they dead, but you were also.

### **B. Without Christ, You Were Devilish**

I hate to tell you this, but this was true about you. You were devilish. Look in verse 2: *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."*

Did you know, dear friend, that the walking dead in Memphis, Tennessee are living under the dictatorship of the devil? These people without the Lord Jesus Christ, they talk about how free they are. They're not free at all. They're slaves. As we've said before, they're free to do what they want, but they're not free to do as they ought. They're not free to live, until they have the power of Jesus, who said, "I have come that you might have life," for those who are dead, and then He said, "If the son shall make you free, you be free indeed" (John 8:36).

### **C. Without Christ, You Were Disobedient**

But people without Christ, they're dead. Not only are they dead; they're devilish. And because they're devilish, they're also disobedient. Look again in the last part of verse 2: *"The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."* Man is inherently disobedient. He is inherently rebellious. All you have to do is put a sign upon the wall that says "Wet paint; Don't touch"—people will want to touch it. It's in every one of us, that spirit of rebellion.

Have you ever noticed you don't have to teach a child to lie? You have to teach them not to lie. You don't have to teach a little child to steal. You have to teach them not to steal. You don't have to teach a little child to be selfish. You have to teach a little child not to be selfish. Now we think that little children are little cherubs, don't we? I mean, you know, they're just little angels. But folks, I hate to disappoint you, all except for my little grandbabies, they—everyone of them, everyone of them—the Bible says that they are dead, they are devilish, they're disobedient.

### **D. Without Christ, You Were Depraved**

Now watch it: they're also depraved. Notice in verse 3: *"Among whom also we all had our [behavior] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind"*—why do we do this? Well, watch—*"and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."* Everybody in here, by nature you're a sinner; by nature you are depraved, a child of wrath. It's born in you. David said in the Psalms, *"In sin did my mother conceive me"* (Psalm 51:5). The Bible says, "The wicked are estranged from the

womb: they go astray, speaking lies as soon as they're born" (Psalm 58:3). A little child can lie before he or she can talk, isn't that true? I mean, they'll make you think they've got a pin sticking them, and they're just lying. The little rascal just wants you to pick them up. And that's true: they can deceive you before they can talk. They go astray, speaking lies, as soon as they're born.

Now that's the way you were; that's what you were. Now you can fill in the illustrations in your testimony, but friend, you were dead, you were devilish, and you were depraved. That was true of every one of us. Now that's what we used to be, okay? That's past guilt.

## II. What You Are: Present Grace

Now I want to talk to you about present grace, what we are right now. Let's begin reading in verse 4: "*But God...*"—thank God for that *but*, amen? Thank God for the change of direction—"*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"

Now this deals with present grace; this deals with what God has done for you, what did God do for you when he saved you.

### A. You Are Restored

So first of all, He restored you—He restored you. He gave you life. You were dead, but the Bible says in verse 5, "*[But] when we were dead in sins, [he] hath quickened us together with Christ.*" That word *quickened* means revived, restored, given life again.

Now this is the reason that salvation must be of grace. Do you think a dead man can bring himself back to life? I mean, did Lazarus, when he was in the grave, did he have any power to bring himself back to life? That young man, that widow's son, did he have any power to bring himself back to life? Did that little girl who was dead, did she have any power to bring herself back to life? You see, we always love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Friend, if God didn't take the initiative, none of us would be saved, isn't that true? I mean, you see, the Lord took the initiative to raise the dead physically, and the Lord has taken the initiative to raise you spiritually.

Now people don't understand this, that it takes a miracle for a person to be saved.

Let me ask you a question: How would you raise a dead man? Let's suppose that there is a dead man right up here, we put him in a coffin right here, and Mike and I are going to try to raise him from the dead. Now let me tell you four things that begin with the letter e that we might try.

First of all, you and I might give him an *example* of how a living man ought to live. I

mean, we'll do deep knee bends. We'll do push-ups. We'll walk around and see if that has any effect on him. Do you think that an example will save and raise a dead man? Not at all! Yet there are so many people that think that Jesus came as an example. Friend, listen. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ. Jesus is not primarily an example, because he is an example of those who are saved, but not to those who are dead. There's no way possible that you can raise a dead man by an example.

Well, that doesn't work. We'll try something else. We'll try *environment*. Let's just say if we keep him in a roomful of living people that will make him a live man—just environment. And there are a lot of folks that think they know the answer, don't they? That's the way they try to deal with the sin problem. You put a dead man in a room full of living people and see if it brings him to life. See, environment is not the answer. Ladies and gentleman, do you know where man got into trouble to begin with? In the best environment this world has ever known: in the Garden of Eden. And you'll never change a man by environment.

Well, I'll tell you something else we might do if we want to raise him. You guys can help us. Come on, fellow! Get up! You can do it! I know you've got it in you. Come on now! Open those eyes! Stretch! That's what a lot of folks do: *encourage*. I mean, a church service for a lot of people is a great big pep rally. They think they just encourage one another to do better, to live better. And people are coming down the aisles of churches, putting their hands in the hands of pastors, and saying, "I'm going to do better, Pastor. You've really encouraged me today. Man, you can't encourage a dead man and make him a living man. That's not the answer.

"Oh, well," you say, "I know what the answer is: it's *education*—education—just educate him. Give him 10 lessons on life. That ought to bring him to life. Here, read this book. Do you see the futility to that?"

But folks, I want to tell you, isn't that what this world is trying: *example, environment, encouragement* and *education*? Do you know what it takes for a man to be saved? A miracle—a miracle. Listen, folks. It took a miracle to save you, and your salvation is as big a miracle as the resurrection of Jesus Christ when he walked out of that grave, okay?

## **B. You Are Raised**

Now what is this grace? Well, first of all, dear friend, you were restored. But not only were you restored—thank God for that—but now look in verse 6—you were also raised: "*and hath raised us up together.*" You see, our Lord, when He saves us, when He gives us life, He doesn't leave us in the grave. I mean, when Jesus spoke to Lazarus, and Lazarus was in that grave, and Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," He meant for Lazarus

not only to have life, but to have liberty; to get out of that grave, to be raised up.

Our Lord gives us power to live the Christian life. That's a part of my testimony. It ought to be a part of yours.

He breaks the power of canceled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free. (Charles Wesley)

God gives me strength and power day by day. I know that I know that I know, without that power, friend, I'd be in the gutter. Thank God for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who not only has restored me, in verse 5, but he has raised me, in verse 6.

### C. You Are Resting

But not only are we restored, and not only are we raised, but hey, watch, we're also resting. Look in verse 6: "[He] hath raised us up together; and made us sit together in heavenly places." What a difference between the man who doesn't understand the grace of God and the man who understands the grace of God! Those who don't understand the grace of God are working feverishly, trying to earn a piece of real estate in heaven.

I think I told you about a man I had the joy of introducing to Jesus this past week. He's a cab driver. And I tried to tell him where I wanted to go, and he said, "I think you'd better go a different way." I said, "Well, you're the cab driver, but I can tell you how to get to heaven. Are you going to heaven?" He said, "Well, I'm trying as hard as I can." But I was able to tell him, it's not by trying; it's by trusting and resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was so saved he didn't even want me to pay the cab bill.

But now listen, folks. We are resting. The Bible says that we are seated right now in the heavenlies. Now folks, you don't have to wait until you die to go to heaven. I mean, right now we are seated in the heavenlies. Now *the heavenlies* is not a place that we visit from time to time; it is to be our permanent dwelling place. What are *the heavenlies*? There's a little difference between heaven and *the heavenlies*. The heavenlies is the sphere of victory, where every Christian lives day by day. The Lord Jesus, the Bible tells us in the Book of Ephesians, has been raised up, and He's sitting on the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies, in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20). And when He died, we died with Him. And when He came out of the grave, we came out with Him spiritually. And when He is seated, we're seated.

Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing right now? He is resting in His finished work. Do you know what I'm doing? I'm resting with Him in His finished work. Have you learned to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ? If you haven't, my friend, you do not understand what it's all about, just simply to lay back in the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in His arms.

Do you know where Paul was when he wrote this book? Folks, he was in prison.

This is a prison epistle. But when you open this book, you don't smell the air of a prison; you smell the air of heaven. I mean, here's the Apostle Paul who is just so full of peace and joy and all of these things because he's seated in the heavenlies. This is a great concept. And I'm tending here to want to just pull over and park, but I can't do it and get finished with the message. Maybe we need a full message here about what it means to be seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

I have a dear Christian friend, a dear buddy that I used to fish with back years ago when I used to fish—that's right, I've been here 15 years; the next six times I go fishing will be my first half dozen. But listen. I used to have a buddy that I fished with, his name was Dorman Peterson, an old sweetie; he loved God with all of his heart. I got a letter from him a while back, and this is what he said at the end of his letter: "Keep looking down." I love that, because I knew what he meant. Many times we tell folks, "Keep looking up," but folks, we're already up. I mean, all things are beneath us, and we are seated with the Lord Jesus in the heavenlies. The only one way you can look then is down, because friend, you can't get any higher than to be raised with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we have been restored, and then we've been raised, and then we've been rested.

### **III. What You Shall Be: Prospective Glory**

Now listen, folks. That's our present grace. Now let's talk for a few moments about your testimony: not only your past guilt; not only the present grace, that has raised you from the dead; but let's talk a little bit about your prospective glory, beginning in verse 7. Now why does God do this? Well, verse 7 begins with the word that means, "in order to": "*That*"—in order— "*in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*"

Now he talks about "*the ages to come.*" That speaks of eternity, "*the ages to come.*" He tells about His purpose for you in the ages to come. And here's His purpose for you in the ages to come: He's going to use you as a trophy of His grace.

I was in a man's house a while back. He was a hunter. All over his den were trophies, animals that he had bagged, that he had shot. Well, folks, we're going to be trophies one day, and in that celestial city we're going to be trophies of his grace. In eternity, we're going to be a part of a great, great exhibition that God has saved us by His grace. That's God's plan.

I have a friend, Peter Lord. Peter called me on the telephone last night. He said, "I was just thinking of you"—in the bedroom, wanted to talk. We talked and prayed. His

wife Johnnie got on the phone, Joyce got on the phone, and we just had a big visit and had some wonderful time fellowshiping in the Lord. And that reminded me of what Peter said to me one time. Many of you know Peter Lord. He has spoken here and he's a dear brother in the Lord. But Peter and I have kind of grown up in the Lord together, as he and I went through seminary together. And one time Peter was so discouraged and he said to me, "Adrian," he said, "when I get to heaven, I'm going to have to sneak in the back door, because I'm just such a failure." I said, "Oh no, Peter. When you get to heaven, God's going to bring you in the front door, because if I've ever seen a trophy of grace, you're it. God's going to show off with you. And if He could save you, He could save anybody." And I said, "He's going to march you right on in the front door as a trophy of His grace."

Now that's God's purpose: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace. You could almost say that God is proud of His grace. God wants to display His grace. Oh, how marvelous is the grace of God! Now you see, God's purpose and God's plan are linked together. Verses 8 and 9 tell of God's plan. God's plan so coincides with God's purpose.

#### **A. It Is Saving Grace**

Now what is his purpose? His purpose, in verse 7, is to display His grace. And therefore verse 8 says, "*For by grace are ye saved...and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*"—now watch this—"not of works, lest any man boast." Now God says He will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 48:11). Folks, if you could be saved by good works, then you could boast about it. But if you're saved by God's grace, then you've got to give God all of the glory. All of the glory, all of the praise, goes to Jesus.

Now there are a lot of people who believe that you are saved by grace plus works, but dear friend, it is grace, and grace alone. The minute you mix any kind of works in, you destroy grace. Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Romans 11:6—just put it in your margin and listen to it: "*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.*" Do you understand what that says? It also goes on to say, gives you the other side of the coin, "*But if it be by works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*"

Now make up your mind. Are you saved by grace, or are you saved by works? If you're saved by grace, then works don't have anything to do with it; not one scintilla of an iota of a minuscule part of your works helped saved you.

Listen. If there is a chain of 10,000 links, and you are suspended by that chain, and 9,999 of those chains are made of forged steel, and one link in that chain was made of crepe paper, how safe are you? Listen, folks. If one link in the chain of salvation

depends upon you, you'll never make it—you'll never make it.

These people have the idea, “Well, if I’m living just right when I die, I’ll go to heaven. Hey folks, you *ain’t* going, because even in your best, you’re imperfect. The Bible says, “*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (Romans 14:23). The Bible says, “*The thought of foolishness is sin*” (Proverbs 24:9). The Bible says, “*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*” (James 4:17). And I’m going to tell you something folks: *I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven, much less some of my bad ones*—not the best I ever lived.

Friend, it is totally, completely of grace—“and if by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.” You see, God is in this business of getting glory to Himself. If perchance I could work my way to heaven, then it would destroy God’s plan of getting glory to Himself. Friend, it is grace. The Bible says in Romans 4, verse 4, “*To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*” (Romans 4:4). If I worked for salvation, I’d say, “Okay, God, pay me. You owe it to me.” But God is no man’s debtor. That’s the reason it must be of grace. Romans 11:6: “And if by grace, it is no more of works.”

Friend, God is not keeping score on you to see if you make it. You’re not saved by the merit of man, but by the mercy of God; not by the goodness of man, but by the grace of God. And therefore God gets the glory. God’s purpose, in verse 7, is “*that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.*” And therefore God’s purpose is linked to God’s plan, and it must be by grace.

## **B. It Is Sanctifying Grace**

Let me tell you about this thing called *grace*. Other than *Jesus*, it is the most beautiful word in any language. This grace is saving grace. But not only is it saving grace; it’s sanctifying grace. Some people get the idea because we think that we’re saved by grace that it doesn’t make any difference how we live. Hey folks, you’ve got it wrong. Verse 10 says, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*” Titus says, “*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:11–12).

## **C. It Is Surviving Grace**

Saving grace is sanctifying grace, and that sanctifying grace is surviving grace. Notice what verse 7 says: that in the ages to come He’s going to show this grace. We sang it this morning:

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise

Than when we'd first begun. (John Newton)

Because that grace is surviving grace, that amazing grace, it never lets go of it.

That's the way that I know that I am kept; that's the reason I believe in eternal security. How did I get it? I got it by grace. How do I keep it? The grace that saved me is the grace that keeps me. If I got it by works, then if my works fail, I lose it. If I got it by grace, you're saved by grace and kept by grace. That's all there is to it.

#### **D. It Is Sure Grace**

Folks, listen. It is saving grace, it is sanctifying grace, it is surviving grace, and it is sure grace. If you were to ask me, "Adrian Rogers, are you saved?" I'd say, "yes." You'd say, "Well, you have a lot of confidence in yourself." I don't have any more confidence in me than I have in the devil himself. That is, in me and my flesh is no good thing. When I say, "I know I'm saved," my confidence is in God's grace. If any part of it depended upon me, I'd have to say, "Well, I think I'm saved," "Maybe I'm saved," "I hope I'm saved," "I'm doing the best I can." But when I know it's by grace, I can, yes, I know that I'm saved! Amen?

Now listen. It is by grace through faith—through faith. I hear people talking about the word *saving faith*. It's not saving faith. There's no such thing as saving faith. It's grace that saves you. Faith is the handle that gets hold of it. Faith is the hand that reaches out and takes hold of it. Oh, yes, it is faith that enables us to be saved—and in that sense you could call it saving faith—but dear friend, listen. It is grace that saves, through faith. Faith just simply reaches up and takes hold of God's grace. Grace is God's hand reaching down from heaven and saying, "I love you; I want to save you." And faith is your hand reaching up and saying, "I believe it, and I want to be saved." And when God's hand of grace meets your hand of faith, my friend, that's salvation—that's salvation. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith.*" We put our faith in God's grace. We trust the Lord.

And I want to tell you something else. Even the faith is a gift of God—even the faith is a gift of God. None of us, out of our depraved, devilish, disobedient dead hearts—do you think...?—where's that faith going to come from? God puts the faith in your heart. That's the reason anybody can be saved.

Don't tell me, "Well, I just can't be saved; I don't have what it takes." No, but God has what it takes. Your problem is your stubborn will. God's not going to force it on you. Listen. You say, "I need faith." God will give you faith. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" What is the gift of God? The grace and the faith is the gift of God.

Now listen. The Bible says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" There will be



no peacocks in heaven. And then it says this: “*For we are his workmanship...*”—listen—“*we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*”

This pulpit—and I love this pulpit—this pulpit is somebody’s workmanship. Now this pulpit did not cut itself down in the forest. It did not clean itself into boards. It did not saw itself into appropriate pieces. It did not glue itself together. Somebody did this. That is somebody’s workmanship. I don’t know who made this pulpit, but he did a good job. That is somebody’s workmanship. Why did he make it? What was his purpose in making it? He made it to be a pulpit.

Now why did God save me? What was God’s plan? What was God’s grace? God created me “unto good works, which he hath before ordained that I should walk in them.” The man who made this pulpit before ordained that it would be a pulpit. He had a pulpit in mind. He wanted a pulpit. But the pulpit didn’t make itself. It was made by another in order to be a pulpit. Why do we do good works? Not in order to be saved, but because we have been saved.

You’re not saved by faith and works, but you’re saved by faith that works. And as James said, “You show me your faith without your works, and I’ll show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). Friend, you couldn’t have faith without good works any more than you could have fire without heat. But you’re not saved by those good works. You’re saved by the grace that produces those good works.

Now if you keep three prepositions in mind, it will keep your theology just as straight as an arrow: *by*, *through*, and *unto*. Three prepositions: *by* grace, *through* faith, *unto* good works—you got it? You’re saved *by* the grace of God, *through* faith, *unto* good works.

Now it has to be this way—it has to be this way—so that God will get the glory, and not man. You see, in the ages to come, He’s going to show the riches of His grace. When you walk into heaven, they’ll say, “Oh, glory to Him! God saved this man by His marvelous matchless, wonderful grace.”

Now God’s purpose, God’s plan, results in God’s praise. Again, verse 9: “*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” Verse 7: In the ages to come He shows the riches of His grace.

## Conclusion

Now folks, that’s your spiritual biography: what you were—past guilt; what you are—present grace; what you shall be—prospective glory. That’s what makes Christianity different from any other religion. Thank God for the grace of God. Grace is such a wonderful word. I’m so grateful I can preach grace.

Let me illustrate and I’ll be finished. Let me show you the difference between

Christianity and the religions of this world. Let's suppose there's a man in a filthy, vile, slimy, deep pit. In that pit with him is a venomous serpent. And let's say that the man is in grave, mortal danger and needs to be delivered from that pit. Let's say that the animist who believes that the trees and the animals all have spirits, he's a very primitive religionist. He comes and sees the man in the pit, and when he sees the man in the pit, he just flees back into the jungle in fear of the snake. Let's suppose that a Confucianist comes, and a Confucianist sees the man in the pit, and the Confucianist who has this religion of ethics and morals says, "Ah so, man walk circumspectly not fall in pit. Next time, be more careful you'll not fall in pit." He's already in it. Well, let's suppose that a Buddhist comes along, and the Buddhist sees the man in the pit, and the Buddhist says to this man in the in the pit, "Well, the reason that you feel so uncomfortable in that pit is that you won't get out of the pit. Now what you need to do is to come to the cessation of any desire, and just realize you're in the pit, and just make peace with the pit." That's Buddhism. Well, the Hindu comes, and he says, "You just think you're in the pit. That's the error of your mortal mind. That's because you don't understand really there is no pit."

But now let's suppose that Jesus comes. He sees the man in the pit, and what he does is to leap into that pit with him down in the mire, stand between that man and that serpent; He takes the fangs into His own body and lifts the man out of the pit at the same time.

That's a crude illustration, friend, but that's what Jesus does for us. "Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He took the sting of death, and lifted us, and picked us up, and put us out.

From sinking sand He lifted me,

With [His own] hand He lifted me. (Charles H. Gabriel)

Now folks, I want you to take that little outline, and I want you to go home, and I want you to think about what Jesus Christ has done for you, and I want you to fill in those examples, and I want you to think what you were, and I want you to think what you are, and I want you to think what you're going to be, and then you're going to want to sing what we're going to sing right now: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me" (John Newton)

# Trophies of Grace

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 14, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 2:1–10

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”*

EPHESIANS 2:8

## Outline

Introduction

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- A. We Were Dead
- B. We Were Devilish
- C. We Were Depraved

II. What We Are

- A. We Are Resurrected
- B. We Are Raised
- C. We Are Rested

III. What We Shall Be

- A. God’s Purpose
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Open, please, to Ephesians chapter 2, as we continue to explore Ephesians, God’s guidebook for growth. This is the third in a series of messages on Ephesians, and today we’re thinking on this subject: “Trophies of Grace.” And I’m beginning the reading with chapter 2 and verse 1: *“And you hath he [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath [made us alive] together*

*with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*  
(Ephesians 2:1–10)

One day a while back, I was talking with Brother Peter Lord. Many of you know Brother Peter Lord, who, incidentally, was here in our last Deeper Life Conference and will be here in our next Deeper Life Conference. And Peter Lord had been having this particular day a hard time living the Christian life. He felt that he had failed the Lord in some particular way and he was dragging a little bit. And he said, “Adrian, when I get to heaven, the Lord’s going to have to sneak me in through the back door.” He said, “I’ve just failed the Lord so much.” And he said, “I’m just so unworthy of heaven. The Lord’s just going to have to bring me in through the back door.” I said, “No, He won’t do it, Peter. When you get to heaven, God is going to march you in through the front door, because you, more than anybody I know, are going to magnify the grace of God by ever getting there in the first place. And God is going to bring you in through the front door as a trophy of His grace.”

Now, in all seriousness, that is why God has saved us: that we might be trophies of His grace. Every now and then, you go into a man’s room, and he’s got a shelf full of trophies. Maybe he’s a bowler, you know, and all these things are there, and he’s got all of them up there, you know, to show what a great bowler he is. Sometimes I go in different churches, and you walk through the hallway, and there are the basketball trophies, and the bowling trophies, and this trophy, and that trophy. I’ve often wondered why they don’t have a case full of soul winner’s trophies, haven’t you? You know, people who are known for soul winning. But anyway, people like to have trophies. Sometimes you go into the home of a hunter, and there are some magnificent trophies of animals and so forth that they have killed and whatever. Well, God has His trophies also. And if you want to know what they’re like, just look around. We are trophies of the grace of God. And that’s the reason I have entitled this message this morning “Trophies of Grace.”

Notice chapter 2 and verse 7, and see what God is up to. The Bible says in chapter 2, verse 7, *“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:7) The Bible says that in the ages to come you and I are going to be on display; you and I are going to be prize exhibit number one of the grace of God; and He’s going to point to us and say, “There is a trophy of my grace.”

Now, this ought to excite you, because really, the scripture that we're dealing with today, as last week, speaks of your spiritual biography. We're continuing it, and I want you to listen very carefully. You know, we live in a generation that's come from "amen" to "so what?" Nothing seems to excite us much anymore, but there is much to excite us today about this scripture, if you'll listen.

## I. What We Were

Now, first of all, Paul describes what we were before we got saved—what we were—in the first three verses. And I want you to notice what we were before the dear Lord Jesus found us. The Bible says in chapter 2, verse 1, *"And you hath he [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins."* (Ephesians 2:1)

### A. We Were Dead

So, the first thing, if you want to write it down: We were dead. We were dead before the Lord Jesus Christ got hold of us. Do you know what an unsaved man needs? He doesn't need just forgiveness—not mere forgiveness. Suppose a man is dead, and you forgive him: he's still dead. What we need is not forgiveness; the lost man needs life. And if you're not a Christian, God's estimation of you, dear friend, is that you are dead.

Now we need to understand what the Bible definition of death is. Death in the Bible is not the separation of the soul from the body. One of these days my soul will leave my body, and they'll say, "The preacher is dead," because I won't be wiggling and kicking anymore. And you'll say, "He's dead." Friend, I won't be dead. I'll be more alive than ever before. Jesus Christ said that he that *"liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* (John 11:26) And don't you get in some dark room and pull down the shades when you come to my funeral. I want you to rejoice, because, friend, I'll be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory. And I tell you, we'll be leaping and dancing and praising God in the eternal kingdom. Paul said, *"[I have] a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."* (Philippians 1:23) We won't be dead—oh, no! We'll sing, "Thank God for the promise of springtime," or something like that, because that's what it's all about. But, dear friend, death is not the separation of your soul from your body; death is the separation of the soul from God. That's what death is. *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"* (1 John 5:12)—*"but the wrath of God abideth on him."* (John 3:36)

And so therefore, if that's what death is, think what eternal life is. Eternal life is not living forever. Some people would like to have eternal life. Friend, may I tell you that the people in hell live forever. That's not eternal life; that is eternal existence. That's not what I'm looking forward to. What is eternal life? The Bible tells us in John 17, verse 3, *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ,*

*whom thou hast sent.*” (John 17:3) Eternal life is knowing Jesus. Life is in Christ: knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus said, *“I am come that [you] might have life.”* (John 10:10) And it’s not just simply the length of life, but the quality of life. He doesn’t just add years to our life; He adds life to our years.

Did you know that Memphis has a big population of dead people? It really does: the walking dead. They are breathing; their brain waves are emanating, but these people are dead. Now, let me say that some people are worse sinners than others, but all sinners without Jesus Christ are dead. So, you know, if a man is dead, it doesn’t really matter what nice things you might say about him. I mean, if he has one thing wrong with him, then nothing else is right with him. I mean, if he’s dead, it doesn’t matter, you know. He might be a nice-looking corpse, but he’s dead.

Now, there are a lot of folks that are around the city of Memphis that don’t look quite as bad as some of the other dead folks. Do you remember Jesus Christ raised three dead people? Jesus Christ raised Jairus’s daughter, who had just died, and the bloom of life was still on her cheeks there, and her body, warm and supple. And do you remember, Jesus Christ said, *“Little maiden, arise,”* (Mark 5:41) and she came forth. And then, Jesus Christ raised another dead man in the village of Nain. This young man in his youth had died, and he had been dead, oh, a matter of hours. In the Middle East, they bury people immediately, but he was not like this little girl who had just died. But Jesus Christ broke up that funeral, and Jesus Christ raised him. And then, Jesus Christ raised Lazarus. And Lazarus had been in the grave for four days, and already, corruption had set in. But Jesus Christ raised all three: the little girl, the young man, and Lazarus, in whom corruption had already started—one who’d just died, one who’d been dead for a while, and one who’d been dead for four days. But I want to ask you a question: Which was the biggest miracle?

Well, to raise the dead is a miracle, and they don’t come in different degrees and sizes and shapes. And dead is dead. Which one was the most dead: Lazarus, because he’d been dead four days, or the little girl, because she’d been dead four hours? No, friend, dead is dead. Sometimes we see a young man or a young girl—just a teenager—and we say, *“Well, they’re not lost.”* But we see an old man over here who’s been living in debauchery and sin, and we say, *“Oh, look how terrible he is! Look how wicked and vile his life is!”* Well, I want to tell you, if that young teenager doesn’t have Jesus Christ, he’s just as dead as that old man. There are different degrees of corruption, but, dear friend, only one state of death. Either you have Jesus and have life, or you don’t have Jesus and you don’t have life. *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”* (1 John 5:12)—*“but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36)

## B. We Were Devilish

So, the first thing I want you to notice about the state of every man without Jesus Christ: He is dead. The second thing I want you to notice about him is that he is devilish. Look in verse 2: *“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”* (Ephesians 2:2) Who is the prince of the power of the air? Who is the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience? Of course, the devil. So, not only are men dead, but they are walking dead. The Bible talks about these dead folks walking around now. They walk on a doomed planet called Earth. They walk according to the course of the world, and they walk under the dictatorship of the devil himself.

Now, many of these dead folks talk about freedom; they talk about how much freedom they have. The deader a man is, the more he boasts about his freedom that he doesn't have. They talk about “free speech.” They talk about “free love.” They talk about being free—they're not going to surrender to Jesus Christ. But these people don't understand that the Bible says, *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin”* (John 8:34)—“the slave of sin.” Look at how the Scripture describes the unsaved man. The Bible says he *“walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2:2)—“slaves to the devil.” The devil says, “Jump,” and he says, “How far?” And the whole time he's talking about being free. Those who boast the most about freedom have the least of it. You see, Jesus said, *“If the Son of God therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36)

Now, there's an unsaved man who wants to argue with me right now. He says, “I'm free: I'm free to do whatever I want.” That's just the point, and I would agree with you: you are free to do whatever you want, but you're not free to do what you ought. And that's the difference. You see, you're free to do what you want, but you never really want the right things. You put a Bible and a bottle in front of an alcoholic: he's free to do what he wants. And you know what he wants, don't you? You see, he wants the bottle because he is a slave, a servant, of sin. And so the unsaved man has a free will, in a sense, but he's not free to do what he ought; he's only free to do what he wants. He has a depraved nature.

I heard about an old, soured prospector who came into town in a little mining town out west, and a cowboy out there thought he'd have some fun with the old prospector when he saw him coming. And this cowboy stepped out of the saloon with his six-shooters and looked at the old man there with his mule covered with dust, and he said, “Old man, have you ever danced?” He said, “No, don't believe I have.” He said, “Well, you're going to dance now,” and he started shooting the ground right under the feet of that old prospector who kind of lifted up his feet and did a little dance there. And

everybody thought it was real funny. And the cowboy was reaching into his belt to reload his six-gun, and when he looked up, he was looking down the barrel of a double-barreled shotgun that the old prospector had. No time to do anything: he was at the mercy of the prospector now. And the prospector said, “Cowboy, did you ever kiss a mule?” The cowboy said, “No, but I always wanted to.”

Now, you see, he was free to do what he wanted, but he was under strong compulsion. Now, this is what an unsaved man is: he does what he wants, but he always wants the wrong thing. He walks “*according to the course of this world*” and “*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*” (Ephesians 2:2) Not only is he dead; he is devilish.

### C. We Were Depraved

But the third thing I want you to notice about what we were: not only dead, and devilish, but depraved. Notice verse 3: “*Among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*”—“*and were by nature the children of wrath.*” (Ephesians 2:3) So, not only is the unsaved man dead without Christ, and not only is he under the domination of the devil; but he is also depraved in his own very nature.

You see, the thing that’s wrong with us is not really what the devil makes us do; the thing that’s wrong with us is our nature that we have that we have gotten by birth. You know, most people don’t want to believe they’re children of wrath. Most people don’t want to believe what the Bible says when it says, “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*” (Psalm 58:3) Most people don’t want to believe what the Bible says when it says, “*In sin did my mother conceive me*” (Psalm 51:5)—not that the act of conception was sin, but that when I was born into this world I came into this world with a sinful nature. Most people don’t want to believe that we are by nature children of wrath—that is, that we’re depraved. They don’t want to believe that. They believe that man is basically, inherently good.

And you’ll hear it—you’ll hear that philosophy. For example, have you ever heard this: “There’s no such thing as a bad boy”? Don’t you believe it—don’t you believe it! And it’s amazing how we get this philosophy: “Take the keys out of your car when you park it: don’t help a good boy go wrong.” That’s ridiculous. Do you know who they put the blame on? If your car gets stolen, it’s your fault. I mean, look what you did! You ought to be put in jail. You helped that boy steal your car. You left the keys in the car. Shame on you! Well now, listen, friend. He’s a bad boy, or he wouldn’t steal that car. If he were a good boy, you could leave the keys in it. Don’t tell me there’s no such thing as a bad boy. I tell you, there is no such thing as a good boy without Jesus Christ.



Jesus said, “There is none good—no, not one—but God.” (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18) God’s the only One that’s good, and there is none good but God. And so, we’re depraved. We don’t want to believe that, but we want to believe somehow that you can just take human nature, and you can just sort of develop human nature, and you can just cultivate human nature, and a little child won’t need to be saved.

Sometimes I talk to people, and I say, “Are you a Christian?” They say, “Yes.” I say, “When were you saved?” “Well, I never was really saved: I’ve always been a Christian.” Don’t you believe it, friend. Nobody has always been saved. Once you were lost, and then you got saved. And if there’s not been a time, a place, in your life when you repented of your sin and received Jesus Christ, you’ve never been saved.

I take a little baby rattlesnake—I take that rattlesnake, that baby rattlesnake, and keep him away from all other rattlesnakes and don’t let any of those other bad snakes influence this little baby rattlesnake. And I play nice music to him, and I see to it that he plays with nice children and so forth, and see what happens to that baby rattlesnake. I’ll guarantee you that baby rattlesnake will grow up to be a big rattlesnake, and there will be death in the strike, because he’s got an old rattlesnake nature. That’s all there is to it. You can’t cultivate it out of him. He’s a rattlesnake by nature; he was born that way.

And the Bible teaches in Jeremiah 17, verse 9, that *“the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”* (Jeremiah 17:9) For further information, consult any newspaper, amen? And I tell you, you want to know what’s wrong in the world today? *The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.* It is depraved. We are *“by nature the children of wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:3) And so, that’s how God describes you.

I know some of you are still arguing with me in your mind about this. You think that little grandchild of yours is a little angel; you know, just a little rosebud just about to unfold: “And don’t do anything to warp his little character; just let him unfold.” If you don’t give him discipline, if you don’t give him the training, that little rosebud will unfold to black your eye, I’ll guarantee you. The Bible says that *“foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”* (Proverbs 22:15) It’s by nature. Now, you know, we’ve got the child psychologists who say, “If little junior wants to cut the leg off the dining room table, you keep the saw sharp so it won’t frustrate him. And you just let him develop.” That’s not true, friend. We are *“by nature the children of wrath”—“the children of wrath.”*

Have you ever thought about the fact that you don’t have to teach a child to steal—you have to teach him not to steal? Have you ever thought about the fact that you don’t have to teach a child to lie—you have to teach him not to lie? Have you ever thought about the fact that you don’t have to teach a child to be selfish? Did you know we’re selfish by nature? I mean, you take a little newborn—well, not a newborn baby, but a

baby old enough to crawl around and play with toys—and let him be surrounded by toys in the middle of the floor, and there will be one toy over there on the other side of the room, and let some other baby come over there and start to play with that toy, and Throckmorton will leave all of these toys and go over there and bop him and take that one away from him. That’s right: selfish, ego. The Bible says we are “*by nature the children of wrath.*” And so, that’s a pretty bleak picture there: we are dead, devilish, and depraved. Those are the three *d*’s of what we were.

## II. What We Are

And thank God the Lord Jesus Christ has done something wonderful. And I’m glad for the next verse that says, “*But God*”—“*But God...*” (Ephesians 2:4) I’m glad that God stepped in—verse 4. And so in the next verses, I want you to notice not only what we were, but what we are. What we were is a story of guilt. What we are is a story of grace. Talking to those of us who are saved: “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath [made us alive] together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” (Ephesians 2:4–6)

Now I told you three things about what we were. Now, let me tell you three glorious things about what we are—that is, if we’re saved.

### A. We Are Resurrected

The first thing: We are resurrected—verses 4 and 5. Notice what it says: “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath [made us alive]*”—that is, He has resurrected us, made us alive—“*together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;).*” (Ephesians 2:4–5) And when you make a dead man alive, it has to be by grace. I mean, what can a dead man do? Somebody has to do it for him, and there’s nothing he can do for himself.

I’ve thought about these folks who want to get themselves frozen, you know, when they die. And they’re doing that now. They’ll put you on deep freeze. Of course, it’s not going to work, but there are some who do that. I’d always be afraid somebody would kick out the plug—you know, you’d defrost before time. But, you know, here’s this man frozen. Now, if you could bring a frozen man back to life, I’ll guarantee you somebody would have to do it for him, wouldn’t they? They’d have to start the process. There’s not much he could do. And an unsaved man—an unsaved man’s just as helpless. You see, God’s going to have to do it for you. When you’re dead, God’s going to have to step in.

That’s the reason that salvation, dear friend, is of grace. If God doesn’t do it, it won’t be done. Isn’t it better to be one of God’s chosen than one of the devil’s frozen? I mean, aren’t you glad that the Lord, by His grace, saves us? And the first thing I want you to

notice is that we are resurrected—resurrected.

Now, how do you give a dead man life? You think about it. Here's a dead man. How are you going to give him life? Are you going to do it by example? Are you going to sit in front of him and do deep knee bends, and say, "This is the way we live people do." No, a dead man's not going to be raised by example. "Oh, I'll tell you how we'll raise him: by education. We'll give him twenty lessons on life." Do you think that's going to raise a dead man? I tell you, no. Well, somebody else says, "We can't do it by example, and education; let's do it by environment. We'll put him in a room with a lot of lively folks, and we'll just get a lot of happy, lively folks in a room full of life, and that ought to give him life." No, you're not going to do it that way. "Well, if we can't do it by education, and we can't do it by environment, and we can't do it by example, we'll do it by encouragement. We'll go talk to him and say, 'Come on now. Get up. You can do it. Come on!'" No, you're not going to do it by encouragement.

But, you know, this is the way that some folks are trying to help other people to live the Christian life. Some think that the Christian life is a matter of environment. Some think the Christian life is a matter of example. Some think the Christian life is a matter of education. Some think the Christian life is a matter of encouragement. It is not, dear friend. The Christian life is a miracle life that Jesus Christ gives you. God takes the initiative. God comes in to these dead, depraved, devilish souls of ours; God moves in with His Holy Spirit. And that's the reason it has to be of grace: because what could a dead man do to save himself? You see, you need to understand what Christianity is: *Christianity is not a sick man getting well; Christianity is a dead man receiving life.* And so, the first thing the Lord did when He—when He—saved us is He resurrected us—not physically; spiritually. There's a spiritual resurrection from the land of the spiritual dead.

### **B. We Are Raised**

But not only are we resurrected; secondly, we've been raised, because notice in verse 6 now: "*And hath raised us up together*" (Ephesians 2:6)—resurrected; that is, made alive and now raised, because, you see, when I get new life, I also get new liberty. You see, it's not enough to be raised and stay in the grave. The grave of the old life is no place for the saint of God. We need to be raised up. We are put on a higher plane. He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free. A higher ground: that's the idea. Thank God I have been given life and I've been given a lift. I have been raised as well as resurrected. The Lord Jesus Christ not only has given me a new life, but also a new liberty. Just as He raised Jesus Christ, He has raised us spiritually.

### **C. We Are Rested**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice: Not only have we been resurrected, not

only have we been raised; but we're rested—and that's the beautiful thing. Notice in verse 6 also—the Bible says, “*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” (Ephesians 2:6) Resurrected, raised, and resting: there we are now, just sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now, if you don't understand what Paul is talking about, you're going to think he's talking about the heaven people go to when they die; but that's not what he's talking about. When he says, “*heavenly places,*” the literal translation is “the *heavenlies.*” Do you remember when we talked in our first message about where our riches are, and we said there's a realm called the *heavenlies*? Unsaved people who are dead are living in the *earthlies*, the *worldlies*; those of us who are saved are living in the *heavenlies*. And do you know where I am right now? You say, “Well, you're up there preaching.” No, I'm not; I'm seated in the *heavenlies* with Christ Jesus right now. Right now I am seated in the *heavenlies*. Every Christian who has been saved is now resting with the Lord Jesus Christ, seated in the *heavenlies*. You see, God resurrected Jesus; God raised Jesus. And Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and all things are under His feet. And I am in Christ, and Christ is in me. And if Christ is seated at the right hand of God, I'm seated at the right hand of God. You say, “I don't think I understand that, preacher.” Well, enjoy it anyway, because it's true—it is true, friend.

You know, the amazing thing is that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians from a Roman prison. Did you know that? But, brother, as you open the book of Ephesians, you don't smell the musty, damp odors of the prison; there's the fresh breath of heaven as you read through Ephesians, because while Paul's body may have been in a Roman dungeon, Paul's spirit was seated with Jesus in the *heavenlies*. And, oh, how we need to understand this, dear friend: that we are now living a resurrected life, and everything that is under Jesus's feet is under our feet, and that Jesus Christ has been lifted and exalted! And we need to understand there is a realm of life, a sphere of life, that every child of God ought to live in continually. The *heavenlies* are not some place that we go to, like we say, “Oh, we had a wonderful service; we were lifted up to the *heavenlies.*” No, friend, every Christian is seated in the *heavenlies*. Every one of us is seated with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you ever understand that, it will change your outlook.

You ask some folks, “Well, how are you doing?” They say, “Well, I'm doing pretty good under the circumstances.” How'd you ever get there? **Circumstances are like a mattress: you're not supposed to be under them; you'll suffocate. You're supposed to be resting on them.** You see, the Bible says that all things are under his feet. (Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:27 Ephesians 1:22)

Look here in chapter 1. Now, watch. Paul says, “Oh, I want your eyes to be opened.” Paul is praying for these saints at Ephesus, and notice he prays in verse 17, “*that the*

*God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him:*”—Paul says, “Oh, I hope that you can understand this.” O God, open the eyes of our people this morning—*“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”*—Paul is saying, “O God, help them to get this. Help them to understand how great His power is.” And then he describes that power in verse 20—*“which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this [age], but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet.”* (Ephesians 1:17–22)

Now, where is Jesus? Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God. All power, all authority, all—everything—is under Jesus’s feet. Now, that’s where Jesus is. Now, where are we? Go to chapter 2 now, and look and see where we are. And the Bible says in verse 6, *“...and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:6) Where He is, that’s where we are. And if everything is under His feet, everything’s under our feet. So you’ve got no business being under the circumstances, friend, if you’re seated in Christ and all things are under Christ.

I got a letter from a dear friend the other day, and do you know how he signed it? “Keep Lookin’ Down.” You know, most of us say, “Keep looking up.” Friend, oh, no—you keep looking down. I mean, we’re seated up there with Jesus now. We have been resurrected. We have been raised, and we are resting, seated. You know, that’s so wonderful when you understand that salvation is by grace. We’re not running around frantically, knocking things over, trying to buy a piece of real estate in heaven. Friend, we’re resting now in the finished work of Jesus. When Jesus Christ bowed His head on that cross, He said, *“It is finished,”* (John 19:30) and He sat down. And, brother, we’re seated with Him by faith—by faith: that’s salvation by grace.

### **III. What We Shall Be**

Oh, well, if I don’t go on, I won’t get on; so let’s move on. All right, so what we are: we are resurrected; we are raised; we are rested—we’re seated with Jesus in the *heavenlies*. All right now, thirdly and finally, what we shall be. And, beginning in verse 7: What shall we be?

#### **A. God’s Purpose**

Well, we’re going to be trophies of grace. Notice verse 7: *“That in the ages to*

come”—before, he’s been talking about what we are right now—seated with Jesus; but now—*“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:7) *“In the ages to come”*: that means eternity. In eternity, we’re going to be the part of a great exhibition. All created intelligences are going to look at us, and they’re going to marvel at the exceeding riches of the grace of God. For we’ve been saved by grace: (Ephesians 2:5, 8) that’s God’s purpose.

## B. God’s Plan

Now I want you to notice God’s plan—and please pay attention if you’re not a Christian. God’s purpose is that in the ages to come we would be demonstrations of His grace, we would be trophies of His grace. And God’s purpose and God’s plan are inseparably linked together. And when you understand the purpose of God in salvation, then you must understand the plan of God in salvation, because God’s plan and God’s purpose are so worked together. If God’s purpose is that God gets the glory, then God has to have a plan of salvation where no human being can ever boast. God’s plan of salvation must be such that God will always get the glory by saving men.

And so, notice God’s plan beginning in verse 8—and look at it. The Bible says, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Now, there are three little words, if you keep them in your mind, you’ll never get confused about the way of salvation. The first little word is *by*; the second little word is *through*; and the third little word is *unto*—right in these verses: *by*, *through*, and *unto*. *“By grace...through faith...unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) You got it? *“By grace...through faith...unto good works.”* How are we saved? We are saved by grace. And remember the little acrostic? We said that grace means grace—**G-R-A-C-E**—**G**od’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense. It’s what God does, not what you do. What can a dead man do?

### 1. By Grace

*“For by grace are ye saved”* (Ephesians 2:8)—what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. *“For by grace are ye saved.”* Now, remember this, dear friend: You’re not saved by good works. A dead man can’t do any good works. A slave to the devil can’t break those shackles. It is not by good works that you’re saved. You ask some folks, “Well, how do you get to heaven?” They say, “Be good.” No, friend. You don’t go to heaven by being good. God’s not keeping the score, writing down everything good you do on this side and everything bad you do on this side—and then when you die He balances the

scales. That idea is not taught in the Word of God. You're not saved by works. You're saved by grace.

The Bible says, *"For by grace are ye saved...and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works."* (Ephesians 2:8–9) The Bible says in Romans 4:4, *"To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."* (Romans 4:4) If you worked for your salvation, it wouldn't be grace. The Bible says in Romans 11:6, *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."* (Romans 11:6) The minute a man tries to work for his salvation, he destroys the whole idea. If you think that you can be kept by keeping the Ten Commandments, you commit a terrible sin.

Let me give you a verse that ought to shock you—it's Galatians chapter 2, verse 21. And the Bible says, *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* (Galatians 2:21) Do you know what that means? It means, dear friend, if you are trying to be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, you frustrate the grace of God. If you could be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments rather than being saved by the grace of God, then Calvary was the blunder of the ages. The Bible says, *"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* That means that the death of Jesus Christ was fruitless. God would have said, "Just be good and go to heaven."

Oh, I'm telling you, dear friend, that salvation is by grace. Jesus paid it all, and all to Him I owe. And with His blood at Calvary He bought your salvation. *Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty.* Salvation is not in the goodness of man, but in the grace of God; not in the merit of man, but in the mercy of God. *"For by grace are ye saved."* (Ephesians 2:8)

## 2. Through Faith

Now, *"by grace...through faith."* If grace is **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**, then what is faith? Faith—**Forsaking All I Trust Him**—that's what faith is. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith."* (Ephesians 2:8) Faith is just simply saying, "God, I believe your great plan. Lord, I'm just as helpless, just as hopeless, as a dead man. I am depraved. I'm devilish. I am dead. Lord, there's nothing I can do. The only thing that I can do is respond to your grace, and I respond by faith."

And you say, "Well, where did the dead man get the faith?" God will even give you that, friend, if you want it. God will give you the faith. It's all the gift of God. Some man is saying, "I can't believe." Well, friend, if you want to, God will give you the faith, I'll promise you. Faith is the gift of God just like salvation is the gift of God, and God will place this in your heart. And God's grace reaches down and says, "I love you; I want to save you." Man's faith reaches up and says, "I believe it, and I want to be saved." And when God's grace and man's faith meet, that, my friend, is salvation. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest*

any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

### 3. Unto Good Works

Now, *“For by grace...through faith...unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Notice verse 10. Where do good works come in? You say, “Brother Rogers, shouldn’t a Christian be different? Shouldn’t he live a good Christian life?” Of course he should, but not in order to be saved, but because he has been saved. Good works are the fruit and not the root. Notice verse 10: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10)

Now, good works follow faith just like heat follows fire. When I trust the Lord Jesus Christ, it’s going to show in my life. When a man says he believes in Jesus Christ, he’s going to want to confess Him. When a man says he believes in Jesus Christ, he’s going to want to follow Him in baptism. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he’s going to want to live right, and pray right, and all of it. But, dear friend, he can’t do any of it until, first of all, he’s saved. He’s not saved by doing good works; he’s saved by the grace of God. He lays hold of that grace by faith. And when God gives him a new life, then he starts to live the new life because he has been saved. He’s not created by good works; he’s created to do good works. *“By grace...through faith...unto good works.”* And why all of this? *“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace.”* (Ephesians 2:7) He’s going to get all the glory and all the praise.

## Conclusion

You know, the thing that is unique about Christianity is the grace of God. You think of the other religions of the world. In closing now, imagine here’s a man in a deep, vile pit, just a hideous pit full of filth and slime. And it’s very deep, and he can’t climb out of it. And in this slimy pit is a huge venomous serpent. How would you like to be in a pit like that, lady—in a pit with a poisonous snake? All right now, let’s look at the religions of the world.

And they come along. First of all, the animist, the man who worships things in nature, lives in the jungle, he comes along, and he looks in the pit. And he sees you in that pit. Do you know what the animist is going to do? He’s going to head for the hills, lest that serpent get him. So he’s just afraid, he gets away.

And then, the Confucianist comes along, and the Confucianist looks in that pit. And he’s a follower of Confucius, and he says, “Ah so, wise man ought not to walk where he fall in pit. So from now on, walk circumspectly: you no longer fall in pit.” And he goes on. Now, you see, that’s good advice; but people don’t need good advice, they need a new life.

And the Buddhist comes along, and the Buddhist looks down at that man in the pit.



And the Buddhist says, “Aha, you’re suffering in the pit, and you’re suffering greatly. And the reason that you’re suffering in that pit is that you want to get out of that pit.” And he says, “It’s your desire to get out of the pit that’s making you miserable; and so if you’ll just come to the place where you’ll quit wanting to get out, you’ll be happy. And just come to the place where you have the cessation of all desire, and you’ll be happy.”

And so, there you sit—in a pit. And about that time a Hindu comes along. And the Hindu looks at you in the pit, and the Hindu says, “Aha, you think you’re in a pit, but you’re not in a pit. That is the error of the mortal mind. There is no pit. There is no serpent. And if you get your thinking straightened out, you’ll find out you’re not in a pit at all.”

But then, dear friend, Jesus comes along. Do you know what Jesus does? Jesus looks down and sees you in that pit, and Jesus is moved with compassion. And Jesus Christ leaps into the pit, stands between you and the serpent, takes the fangs into His own body, and lifts you out of the pit while He Himself takes the poison into Himself. Friend, that’s grace. That’s the kind of Savior we have: oh, not someone who can give advice; not someone who tells us, “It doesn’t make any difference”; not someone who tells us, “Just settle down and live with your misery”—but from sinking sand He lifted me, and He gave me a new life, and a new liberty, and a new love, and a new hope, and a new home, and a new heart. Praise God! That’s what Christianity is all about. It’s the story of the grace of God, and that grace is abundant to you today.

# How to Intercede for Your Loved Ones

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 31, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 3:8–21**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 3:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Focus on God’s Unfailing Purpose for Them
- II. Focus on God’s Unfailing Provision for Them
- III. Focus on God’s Unrivaled Presence in Them
- IV. Focus on God’s Unending Preciousness to Them
- V. Focus on God’s Unlimited Possibilities for Them
- VI. Focus on God’s Unceasing Praise Because of Them

Conclusion

## Introduction

Tonight, I want you to open your Bible to Ephesians chapter 3, and in a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 8, and we’ll read verses 8 through 21.

I want to talk to you tonight on the subject of prayer and, specifically, I want to speak to you tonight on “How to Intercede for your Loved Ones.” There’s not a one of us tonight but what has a loved one or loved ones in great need, people that we’re concerned about; sometimes people that we have fears concerning, sometimes people that we’re brokenhearted over, sometimes loved ones who are out of the will of God, sometimes loved ones who are not saved. We really don’t know how to intercede for them and how to pray for them. So with this in mind, I want you to listen to the Scripture.

Ephesians 3:8: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with

confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen.”

Now the key verse here is verse 14. Look at it. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now this Ephesian letter was written by the apostle Paul when he was in prison. And I want you to get a mental picture now of the old apostle Paul. I want you to see that emaciated, scarred body wracked with pain, this body that had been marked, indeed, by shipwreck, stoning, beating, fasting, imprisonments, coldness, and the rest of it. I want you to see the old apostle. I want you to see him there bowing his knees, lifting his hands to God in prayer. Can you see him in that prison, in that Philippian prison? He’s saying to them, “For this cause I bow my knees...” Now, friend, he is in prison, but his spirit just soars right up to heaven. Somebody said that, “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” You can’t put Paul’s spirit in prison. Somebody else has said, “A man is never so tall as when he is on his knees.” And that ought to tell us something right now that here is a ministry everyone can have. I don’t care who you are. Friend, you can have the ministry of intercession.

Here is Paul praying for this church, and he’s saying to these saints, these wonderful people, “Listen, listen. I might be here in prison, but I have a ministry for you. I am praying for you.” Some who are in hospitals, and all of us will be, perhaps, sooner or later. From that hospital bed we can minister. Some who are, what we call, housewives. They are not really housewives. They’re not married to a house. They are homemakers, but they don’t get out, but they can, they have little children, but they can pray and they can intercede. Some who are elderly who say, “Pastor, what can I do? I used to teach or I used to work on committees, and I’m old now.” I’ll tell you one thing you can do, bless God. You can pray. You can pray. What a ministry this is. No matter whether you’re in prison or where you might be, you can pray. And how sinful it is that we don’t pray, that we don’t intercede more one for another. The more I read, the more I study, the more I look at what our world is, the condition our world is in today, the more I see that our great need is for intercession. Not eloquence, not enthusiasm, but for

intercession. We need to learn how to pray. And as we study the prayer of the apostle Paul here, as we study his prayer, then we're going to learn how we should pray, because Paul was the greatest Christian who ever lived. He was an apostle of our faith. He is an example. He said, "Be followers of me, as I am of Christ." So I want you to study the prayer of Paul as he was in this prison, as he prayed for his loved ones, and see how we can pray for our children so, how we can pray for our staff, how we can pray for our pastor, how we can pray for our husbands, how we can pray for our wives, how we can pray for our relatives and those who need prayer. Intercessory prayer is so important. And we need to learn how to focus our prayers. So many times we don't get our prayers answered because our focus is wrong.

Now I want to mention five things, therefore, that you ought to focus on as you pray for your loved ones.

## **I. Focus on God's Unfailing Purpose for Them**

First of all, you need to focus on God's unfailing purpose for them. You see, God has a purpose. Now look, if you will, in verses 8 through 12. Well, let's just skip on down to verse 11 for the sake of time. Paul says, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Now what is Paul saying? Paul is saying, "I am praying for you according to God's purpose for you." And he had mentioned God's purpose for them, that they might know the riches, the unsearchable riches of God. Look in verse 8: "Unto me, which am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." But Paul said, "I don't want to just preach it to you. I want to pray it in. I want you to see the purpose of God for your life." You see, so many of our prayers for our loved ones are problem-centered. We're praying, "O God, heal them," or, "O God, give them a job," or, "O God, make them return," or, "God, do this," or, "God, do that." And we're wondering, *Is my prayer in, in the will of God? Am I asking God for the right thing? Is this what God really wants?* And sometimes we're not sure. And, therefore, we equivocate in our prayer. But I want to tell you something, friend. Powerful prayer is prayer where you know that you know that you know that you're praying in the will of God.

Now, in order to pray in the will of God, you have to know God's purpose for your loved ones. Now you may not know God's purpose as to what job they should take, what girl they should marry, what school they should go to, but you can know God's purpose is, so far as His eternal purpose, that they not mix, miss the unsearchable riches of Christ. And so, listen. Don't focus on the problems. Focus on the purpose. Focus on the purpose. Say, "God, I know this is Your purpose for my loved ones, that they might know the unsearchable riches of Christ. O God, I don't want them to go to

heaven without knowing the unsearchable, the unfathomable riches of heaven. I don't want them to go to heaven second class. God, I want them to see Your purpose." Now when you pray that way, you can pray with great boldness. You can know that your prayer is going to be answered. You see, look, if you will, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Verse 12: "In whom we have boldness and access..." You see, when I know I'm praying according to the purpose of God, then I can be so bold. I don't have to say, "Lord, if this is Your will." I can say, "Lord, because this is Your will."

## **II. Focus on God's Unfailing Provision for Them**

All right. Now, first of all, look. Focus on God's unfailing purpose for them. How many times do you pray that way for your children? Number two: Focus on God's unfading provision for them. Look now in verse 16. Well, let's begin reading in verse 13: "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." He says, "Don't worry that I'm in prison. That's okay." "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Now not only did Paul focus on God's purpose for his loved ones, but he focused on God's provision for them. Notice. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory..." In verse 16. Now what does that mean? It means that God is exceedingly rich towards your children. God is exceedingly rich towards your husband. God is exceedingly rich towards your wife. God is exceedingly rich towards the ones that you're praying for. And what Paul said, "Listen. My prayer – I'm bowing my knee and I'm praying that God will bless you according to His riches." Not out of His riches, but according to His riches. You see, "My God shall supply all of your need according to His riches in glory." If a rich man were to give you a dollar, he would be giving you out of his riches, but not according to his riches. If he were to give you a million dollars, then he might be giving you according to his riches. Now God doesn't just give you out of His riches. God gives you according to His riches. Again, in verse 16: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Sometimes I think we are afraid to pray big prayers. We just pray little old prayers because we don't think that we have a right to come and, and just expect great things from God. But the Bible says we are to pray according to His riches.

Thou art coming to a King; great petitions with thee bring.

For His power and grace are such Thou canst do ask too much.

God is a big God. And bring big prayers to a big God and quit begging God for little things and begin to expect great things from God. God says, "Open thy mouth wide and

I will fill it.” God wants to do great things for you.

### **III. Focus on God’s Unrivaled Presence in Them**

So listen, dear friend. When you pray for your loved ones, first of all, pray according to God’s unfailing purpose. And then pray according to God’s unfading provision. And then focus on God’s unrivaled presence in them. Notice what God wants for your loved one. Look, if you will, in verse 16 and following again. What did Paul pray? “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory (watch it), to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

Now when you pray for your loved ones, if they need a job, it’s all right to pray for a job. If they need healing, it’s fine to pray for healing. But how many times do we pray for our loved ones and for our children, for our friends and our neighbors, for their spiritual needs, that God’s power might be manifest in them? Look. He wants to insure His power through us. Look in verse 16 again. “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” This is a prayer that I pray often for my children: “O God, strengthen them with might in the inner person.”

In our prayer meetings in our church, how many times do we hear people, or in prayer groups in a Sunday school class, how many times have you heard a prayer request like this: “Pray for John,” or, “Pray for Mary,” or, “Pray for Susie,” or, “Pray for Bill, that they might be mighty in the Spirit?” Most all of our prayers meetings, when we start asking for prayer requests, we get an organ recital. “So-and-so’s got a bad liver, a bad heart, a bad this or that and pray.” And that’s fine. We’re going to pray in a moment for the healing of the sick. I believe in that. And God cares for our bodies.

But when Paul prayed for this church and when Paul prayed for his loved ones, he said, “I bow my knees, that you might be filled with might in the Spirit, that you might be strengthened in the Spirit.” Why did he do this? Why did he want the presence of God, where he wanted that power in them? Now what’s Paul talking about when he’s talking about “his presence?” Look in verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...” You see, Paul is not talking here about salvation. These people already had Jesus as their Savior. What he’s talking here about is, is more than salvation. What he’s talking about here is that Christ wouldn’t just have a place, but that He would have prominence. The word here abide – look at it – or dwell in verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts...” that word means to have fixed control, to be the undisputed owner in a heart. You see, that the Holy Spirit in the inner man, verse 16, makes Christ so real in their hearts.

Years ago I read about a man named Sir John Ramston. Sir John Ramston lived in a place, an English village, called Hutterfield over in England. And he was very

wealthy, and he owned the entire village. I mean, it all belonged to him, except for one house right in the center of that village. And that was owned by a Quaker. And Sir John Ramston wanted to buy that house from this old Quaker. And he went to the Quaker and he said, "Put a price on your house and I'll buy it." The Quaker said, "I'm not interested in selling it." Well, he said, "I'll pay you, I'll pay you well for it." He said, "As a matter of fact, I want that piece of property so badly that," he said, "I will cover it with sovereigns (that's what they called their money at that time, sovereigns). He said, "I'll just cover it with sovereigns." And the old Quaker said, "If you'll put them on sideways (that is, on their ends, stacked that way)," he said, "we might consider it." Well, Sir John, Ramston left in disgust. And as he left, the old Quaker said, "Remember, Sir John, Huddersfield belongs to thee and me." I wonder if the devil could taunt Jesus that way and say, "Remember, Jesus, Adrian belongs to Thee and me." See, is there a part that hasn't been sold out completely to the Lord Jesus?

You see, what Paul prayed for his loved ones is, "O God, O God, You've got an eternal purpose. I pray for that eternal purpose. And O God, dear God, You have made an eternal provision. Lord, there's Your great riches. And O God, there's a presence, that Christ may dwell in their hearts. O God, this is my prayer. Lord, that he might be the undisputed rival." And that's the way he prayed.

#### **IV. Focus on God's Unending Preciousness to Them**

And then he, not only did he want them to see God's purpose and God's provision, to know God's presence, but oh, he wanted God's preciousness to be so real to them. Continue to read and see how he prayed. "That ye may be able to comprehend (this is verse 18) with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Sometimes I get this verse. I lay it on the chair. I kneel in front of it. And I put my children's' names in there. And I pray, "O, that Gayle will be filled with the knowledge to know the great love of God. That Steve, that Janice, that David," and just pray for them by name. And I know I'm praying in the will of God. I know I'm praying a good prayer because it comes right out of the Word of God. I want my children to see the preciousness of Jesus. And so I can pray for them that way, just putting the Bible right there and just praying God's words right back to them. I say, "God, according to Your purpose, Your eternal purpose, I pray. And O, dear God, according to Your eternal provision, I pray. Out of the great riches, Lord, that's in the Lord Jesus, I pray this way. And O God, I pray for Your presence in them, that Christ may dwell in them. And O God, I pray that He'll be precious to them." You see, dear friend, when they let Christ be the undisputed ruler in their heart, then they can know the unknowable. You see what he says here in verse 18, that they, "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is

the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge...”

They can know something that you can't know – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

Now what's he talking about here when he talks about the breadth of God's love? I want them to know the distribution of God's love, how wide God's love is, that God loved the world, not of angels and not of saints, but God loves the world of sinners – all colors, all conditions, all circumstances, all classes, all character, all companies. I want them to know, and I want everyone to know that a man may go to hell unsaved, but he can't go to hell unloved. The breadth of God's love. There's no one that God doesn't love.

And the duration of God's love, the length of God's love. It's everlasting love. Before a wave ever beat on an ocean shore, before an angel ever worshipped, before the stars ever shined in the sky, God loved you. God loved you before you were born. That's the length of God's love. It's love that never ends and really never ever began. You were in the heart of God in eternity past. I want them to know there's nothing they can do that would cause God to love them less than He loves them right now. And nothing they can do that'll make God love them more than He loves them. He loves them as He loves His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus.

And then, not only the distribution of God's love and the duration of God's love, but the depth of God's love. Look, if you will, here, to know the depth. I want them to know that they can never be so low, so depraved, so vile that He still doesn't love them; that God's love is greater than the deepest sin. That's the depth of God's love. O, thank God for the breadth of it and the length of it and the depth of it.

And then, I want them to know the height of God's love. I want them to know that God's love reaches to the very heavens; that it's lifting love, enabling love, ennobling love; that it has heaven for its source and heaven for its destination.

That's what Paul prayed for these saints at **Ephesus**. He said, “O God, I want them to know how wide Your love is. I want them to know how long Your love is. I want them to know how deep Your love is. I want them to know how high Your love is. O God, reveal it to them.”

You see, he prayed according to the purpose of God. He prayed according to the provision of God. He prayed that there would be the presence of God in their hearts. He prayed that there would be the preciousness of God in their lives.

## **V. Focus on God's Unlimited Possibilities for Them**

There's another thing I want you to see that he prayed and how he prayed. Not only did he focus on God's presence and God's preciousness, but he focused on God's



possibilities. Oh, listen. When you pray, don't pray little prayers for your children. Look, if you will, in verse 20: "Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Focus on God's unlimited possibilities through them.

You know, so many times we pray such small prayers. Your petitions can never exceed His power. Never exceed His power. But sometimes His plans exceed our petitions. You see, we need to look beyond the human possibilities in our children and in our loved ones. Look at that verse real carefully with me. The Bible says, "He's able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think..." Sometimes we may pray and our prayers seem unanswered because God is answering in ways that we don't have the ability to ask or think. I thank God for that. Sometimes we pray and we ask God to do one thing, and He does another. Romans 8:27 makes that plain. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." He's able to do above all we can ask or think. Sometimes we can't even dream what God really has in mind when we pray. But He just takes our prayer and He makes it adaptable, and then He answers, even when we didn't ask for a specific thing.

He asked for strength, that he might achieve;  
He was made weak, that he might obey.  
He asked for health, that he might do greater things;  
He was given infirmity, that he might do better things.  
He asked for riches, that he might be happy;  
Ha, he was given poverty, that he might be wise.  
He asked for power, that he might have the praise of men;  
He was given weakness, that he might feel his need of God.  
He asked for all things, that he might enjoy life;  
But he was given life, that he might enjoy all things.  
He received nothing that he asked for, or that he hoped for;  
Yet his prayer is answered, and he is, of all men, most blessed.

You see now, "Unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think..." O, my friend, when you, when you pray for your children, when you pray for loved ones, know that God is able to do far more than you ever even dreamed. ...exceedingly abundantly above all that you can ask or even think..." Just keep that in mind as you pray. And so, focus on God's unlimited possibilities through them.

## **VI. Focus on God's Unceasing Praise Because of Them**

One last thing. Focus on God's unceasing praise because of them. I know I came to a time in my own life when I said, "Dear God, I don't care whether my children are

important in the eyes of this world. I don't care whether they're rich or famous. But, God, my desire for them is that they'll bring You glory. That's my prayer.

Look at verse 21: "Unto him be glory in the church..." That's still part of his prayer. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen." "O God," he says, "let this church glorify You. That was his prayer. That was his prayer.

## **Conclusion**

Now, friend, if you want a good prayer to pray for people, you say, "God, I want You to bless them according to Your purpose. God, I want You to bless them according to Your provision. God, I want You to bless them according to Your presence in them and Your preciousness to them. O God, I want You to bless them according to Your possibilities with them. And, O God, so that You'll get praise through them." It's a wonderful prayer to pray, a great way to intercede, and you can be certain that you're in the will of God. Try it sometime. Just put the Bible before you, get on your knees, and put your loved ones names in this prayer, and you'll find a thrilling power. And the wonderful thing about it is you know that you're praying according to the will of God.

Now what I want us to do right now is to go to God in prayer and I want our church to pray. O, my friends, these are desperate days in which we live. The devil is having his way. And the Bible says, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, then will the LORD lift up a standard against him." I want you, if you're where you can, to get on your knees. I know not every one can. I know that physical conditions keep some from getting on their knees, and I know that others of you are just in a place too cramped to get on your knees there in the middle of the row. But those of you who can, some of you just come and gather around this platform here. Get on your knees here. Wherever we are, let's just slip down to our knees right now as we get ready to pray. And others of you who, who can't do that, I want you just to get on the knees of your heart. God sees your heart. That's the important thing. Just wherever you can, just get on your knees.

# How to Intercede for Loved Ones

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 9, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 3:8–21**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 3:8–21

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Selfless Motive of Paul’s Prayer
- II. The Sincere Manner of Paul’s Prayer
- III. The Specific Mentions of Paul’s Prayer
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Conclusion

## Introduction

We’re going to have some more prayer for our servicemen and ladies and our national leadership, but I want us to tune our hearts to that. And so, would you turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 3. I want to talk to you tonight about “How to Intercede for Loved Ones,” or how to intercede for anybody, for that matter. And I want to read an extended passage, beginning in verse 8 and reading right on through verse 21.

The apostle Paul says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Now here Paul begins to talk about his prayer. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the

fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen.”

Now, friend, you are never totally helpless in any situation when you can pray. Paul is in prison. And every door seems to be shut to the apostle Paul, but one, and that’s the door that goes straight up into heaven. What a picture we have here. Here’s the old apostle Paul and his creaky old bones. He’s down on his knees in prison. Look at verse 14: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now just get a mental picture of that. Imagine the apostle Paul. I see him kind of a bald-pated, humped-back, squinty-eyed old guy. And he’s there on his prayer bones in this dark prison and he is praying. Now we know the poet said, “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” You can’t shut the man in who knows how to pray. And so, here’s Paul in prayer in prison, but his spirit just goes all the way to heaven. His spirit just soars through that prison. You can always pray.

Some years ago, I shared with you a story about a woman whose name is Mrs. Harvey. I was preaching in Jacksonville, Florida as a young preacher; actually, a college student, something called a youth revival at the Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. And it was a great and a gracious meeting, not because I was the preacher. As a matter of fact, I found some of those old sermon notes and destroyed them (laughter). Joyce said, “Why did you do that? That’s history.” I said, “I don’t want anybody laughing at me after I’m dead.” And I tore up those old sermon notes. They were horrible, terrible, but God was there. And I found out that it’s not eloquence that God blesses. God blesses the truth. And I was preaching the truth and praying. It was just one of those great, great revival meetings. But the man that I was with, who later became a missionary, said, “Adrian, I want you to come by and meet my mother.” She lived in Jacksonville, Florida. And I said, “Well, sure, Ernie. I want to go by and meet your mother.” And we went to a poor section of town, up some narrow stairs, to a little apartment, and a threadbare apartment. And Ernie was a great athlete and big, broad-shouldered, big grin, very, very wonderful athlete. And so, I expected his mother to be sort of a hail and hearty person. And I saw this little creature. She was stooped. She could hardly stand up straight. And she had arthritis that her little hands were all puffy, elbows were swollen. And Ernie said, “Now don’t hold her hand very tight because it will be very painful.” I just kind of held my hand out and let her lay her hand in mine. And I learned that her husband was a merchant seaman and had just sort of abandoned her. And she was there making ends meet as best she could, trying to help her son get through college. And she asked me a question. She said, “Adrian, how did the meeting go last night?” I said, “Mrs. Harvey, it was wonderful, wonderful. God just blessed in an incredible way.” And when I said that, the tears popped out of her eyes. She said, “I

knew it. I knew it. I knew He would.” I said, “Well, how did you know?” She said, “Young man, the whole time you were preaching I was on my knees praying for you.” And I looked at that little old body, and I thought how painful it must have been for that woman to even get on her knees. And, you know, I’d been talking, think, boy, here’s a great youth evangelist. God’s using me. And, and at that time I was very much physically toned up. Gone to college on a football scholarship and didn’t have an ache or a pain in my body. And I looked at that emaciated little form and I felt like kicking myself all the way back home, thinking that I would even dare begin to congratulate myself on anything good that had happened in that meeting.

Friend, there are a lot of people who know how to pray, and we thank God for them. When anybody ever tells me that they pray for me, and I believe they mean it; they’re not just tossing it off, but they, they really mean it, not infrequently, the tears come to my eyes to think that somebody would pray for me. And I know you do. Many of you, if not most of you, pray for me.

Now, friend, I want to tell you that if you can pray, there is a ministry for you. You may be arthritic. You may be shut in. You may be in a hospital. You may be in a prison. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray one for another. We need to pray for our children. We need to pray for our church leaders, for our staff. We need to pray for our mates. We need to pray for our friends. We need to learn how to intercede.

Now I want to give you four principles, okay? Let’s write these upon your heart.

## **I. The Selfless Motive of Paul’s Prayer**

First of all, I want you to notice what I’m going to call the selfless, selfless (that’s the key), the selfless motive of Paul’s prayer. Look again in chapter 3 and verse 14: “For this cause I bow my knees...” Now Paul had a cause. He had a motive. “For this cause I bow my knees...” Now Paul was a prisoner. And in jail he had many physical and material needs. But in this prayer he’s not asking for any of his physical needs to be met. He’s not asking for better food. He’s not asking for better care. He’s not even asking for liberation. Now it’s not wrong to ask for material things, but that’s not what Paul is asking for here. Paul, I think, is practicing Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, which says, “Seek ye first, first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Now let’s go back to chapter 3, verse 1 and get a running start. He uses the phrase again, “For this cause....” Now we’re talking about the motive of his prayer. “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.” Now Paul said, “I’ve been put in prison because I preached to you Gentiles.” Now Paul is a Jew. And in this day a self-respecting Jew had very little to do with the Gentiles. They called them Gentile

dogs. Well, he was praying for the Gentiles, and what was he praying for the Gentiles? Well, go to verses 6 through 8 and we'll find out. "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints..." Now I want to tell you, Paul was a pedigreed, erudite scholar born into wealth and position. He had perhaps the equivalency of a triple Ph.D., yet he calls himself the least of the saints. "Unto me, the least of the saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He can't get over it.

Now he's praying for the building up of the church, and not just the local church. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verses 14 and 15: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." When we pray, we're to pray for more than Bellevue Baptist Church. We're to pray for every gospel-preaching church in our city and around the world.

Joyce and I on Sunday mornings pray for Christ United Methodist Church. On Sunday mornings we pray for Central Church. On Sunday mornings we pray for Independent Presbyterian Church. On Sunday mornings we pray for First Evangelical Church. On Sunday mornings we pray for First Assembly. On Sunday mornings we pray for Germantown Baptist Church. And we pray for those pastors by name. Yes, we pray for Bellevue, but we make it a habit, Sunday after Sunday, to pray for the whole family of God.

Friend, if you want to know whether you have revival or not, or whether you have religion or not, just ask yourself, do you rejoice when another church is blessed? Do you pray for the whole family of God?

We also endeavor to pray not only on Sundays for this city, but on Mondays we pray for the Caribbean and Central America and friends we know there. On Tuesdays we pray for South America. Today, we prayed for Africa. And the next day, if we're alive and have the ability to do it, we will pray for Europe. And the next day we'll pray, Friday, for the Middle East. And the next day we'll pray for the Far East. And the next day we'll be back to America again. You know, sometimes our prayers are not broad enough. Notice what he says here. Here he's in prison, but he says in verse 14, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Now that, friend, is the selfless motive of Paul's prayer. I want to be more selfless in my praying.

## **II. The Sincere Manner of Paul's Prayer**

Number two: I want you to notice the sincere manner of Paul's prayer. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He's on his knees before God.

Do you get on your knees before God? You don't have to pray on your knees. As a matter of fact, if you will look in the Bible, you'll find out that people prayed in different postures. The Bible records that Abraham stood and talked with the Lord. The Bible records that David sat and talked with the Lord. The Bible tells us that Solomon lifted both hands to God when he prayed. And the Bible says we're to lift holy hands to God in prayer. The Bible tells us that Jesus fell on His face and prayed. Do you ever fall on your face and pray? The first thing I did after I told this church I would come be your pastor was to go back and fall on my face and pray. Put my face in the rug. Very frankly, I wept when I realized the import of what I had said that Sunday morning.

Here is Paul on his knees. Now the posture is not the prayer, but when you see Paul on his knees, you see his sincerity. The picture is a child on its knees before his father. Look again in verse 14: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It's a combination of humility and expectancy. We come to the Father through Jesus Christ. God help us to have a sincere method of praying.

### **III. The Specific Mentions of Paul's Prayer**

Now, thirdly, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the specific mentions of Paul's prayer. Sometimes when we pray for people, we don't know what to pray for. We have a loved one who's sick. We don't know. "Lord, is it time for them to go to heaven or to stay here?" Children are dating someone. We don't know whether to say, "Lord, break them up," or, "Get them married." We just don't know. There are a lot of things we just don't know. But now, let me tell you how to pray and you can be absolutely certain that you're praying in the will of God. As Brother Paul has taught us many times, when you pray Scripture, you know you're praying in the will of God.

Now if you want to learn how to pray for your loved ones, if you've got a child or daughter or son or a husband or wife, aunt, uncle, friend, pastor, anybody, you want to pray for them, let me give you a way to pray for them, and you can say, "I'm praying in the will of God, and I'm praying for their welfare."

First of all, pray strength for their weakness. Look in verse **16**. Here's Paul's prayer. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Pray, "God, give them strength, not physical strength, not monetary strength, not intellectual strength; strengthen with His might in the inner man." Pray that God would give them His strength for their weakness.

Secondly, pray that God would give them His depth for their shallowness. Look, if you will, in verse 17: "That Christ (he's still praying), that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love." That's what my children need. I pray these kind of prayers for my own children, for my sons and my daughters, our sons

and our daughters. Notice, “That Christ may dwell...” That’s a term that means to be at home. Not just live in our heart, but settle down to be at home, that Jesus would feel welcome in their lives. Rooted. The first is a domestic term. This is a horticultural term. “...that they may be rooted...” You know, the most important part of a tree is the part that God alone sees, that part which is underground.

In our former house, before we moved, in our courtyard we used to have the most hawthorn tree. We looked forward to this time of the year, it would just be covered with white blossoms. In the fall, it would be covered with red berries. The birds loved it and we loved it. It was in a courtyard. One day we came out and it was on its side. It, it, and we loved the tree. It just, it, it’d just fallen. And we’d had a gentle wind that night, and that tree had fallen. I said, “Good night! How could the tree, such a beautiful tree fall?” And when I went out and looked at it, the roots were rotten and they didn’t go down in the ground. The tree’s so beautiful outwardly, but it had no root system to it. God says here, “You pray that Christ will be at home in their heart, that they will be rooted and grounded.” Now the word grounded here is not a horticultural term; it’s an architectural term. It literally means that, to have a foundation.

I don’t know what this world is going to bring. I don’t know what the next 20 years will be if we have as much radical change as we’ve had in the last 20 years. But I pray that Jesus will dwell in their hearts. I pray that they’ll be rooted in the Word of God. And I pray that they’ll have a foundation that nothing can shake.

Here’s the third thing now. We’re talking about what Paul mentions in his prayer. He mentions strength for weakness, depth for shallowness, and breadth for narrowness.

Notice in verses 18 and 19. That ye, “May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” He’s saying, “If you could just know how great God is. If you could see the height of His majesty, the depth of His love, the breadth of His compassion, the length of His patience.” Most of us don’t think about God enough. Most of us have a God that’s too small. We speak of God in such trite terms. Paul was saying, “I want you to know what a mighty God we serve.” Now we sing that song and we clap our hands and “What a mighty God...” Listen. We need to know what a mighty God we serve and not just be frivolous. I love the song, but oh, what a mighty God we serve.

And he says here that, “...for all saints...” Have you found out that God can bless people you don’t agree with? He certainly can. We need to pray for all kinds of people. I try to pray for people I don’t agree with. I try to pray for people that don’t like me. I especially try to pray for people that I might be tempted to be envious of. If I see somebody that, for whatever reason, I might tend to be envious of them, if they have something that I don’t have, can do something I can’t do, go somewhere I cannot go,



meet somebody I cannot meet, if I ever find out something that's very wicked called envy in my heart, I try to pray for that person, and it'll kill it dead every time. When you pray for an individual, you pray for these people, for all saints.

Now not only does he pray for breadth for their narrowness, but he prays for fullness for their emptiness. Notice again in verse 19: "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth all knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." You know, when you're filled, you'll overflow.

I think when Zig Ziglar was here about three years ago, he said, "There's nothing so sad as to see a full church of empty people." And I thought about that. You know, it is sad to see an empty Christian trying to overflow. But when you're filled with all the knowledge of God, then you're going to overflow. We're spiritually in danger when we're running on empty. We're irritable and short tempered. It's because we're not filled with all of God. Whatever you're filled of, with is what's going to spill out when you jostle.

#### **IV. The Strategic Might of Paul's Prayer**

Now, fourthly, and then we're going to go to God in prayer. I want you to see what I'm going to call the strategic might of Paul's prayer, the strategic might, because he kind of comes now to the climax and he begins to praise God. "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." That is a great, great, great verse. I think many of us have memorized that verse. An incredible description of power. And how does this power work? It works in us. You want God to answer your prayer? Are you willing to be the answer to prayer?

Moses is asking God to bring Israel out of Egypt, and God says, "All right, Moses, you're appointed to be My spokesman." Moses said, "Here am I, Lord, send Aaron." God says, "No, I'm going to send you." Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God said, "Okay, Nehemiah, you want to do that? I'll answer your prayer. Nehemiah, you go do it." Would you pray for the financial need of somebody who's in financial need when you have money and you're not willing to give them any? Would you pray for the lost, a lost brother, sister, neighbor, and you're not willing to witness to them, not willing to be a soul winner? Do you pray for someone's needs to be met, whatever the need is, and you're not willing to be a part of the answer? You know, there's something better than getting an answer to pray and it's being an answer to prayer. You see, he says this great exceeding abundant power that works in you. Paul is praying for the Gentiles, but he's also ministering and preaching to the Gentiles.

What's the secret of getting your prayer answered? It's verse 21. Look at it. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages..." When your motive for asking and God's motive for giving come together, you're going to get your prayer answered. God is in the business of getting glory to Himself. "Unto him be glory in the

church...” If you don’t have God’s glory in mind, you’re not going to get your prayers answered. Now if you have God’s glory in mind, you’re going to have man’s good in mind, because God’s glory and man’s good are always synonymous. But you can’t have man’s good in mind without having God’s glory in mind. Paul is praying for others, but he’s really praying for the glory of God.

## Conclusion

Now enough of that. I’ve been impressed, and I’ve told our church staff this, and we’ve discussed it, we’re going to change things on Wednesday nights. I’m going to do less preaching on Wednesday nights. We’re going to do more praying. When I say we’re going to do more praying, we’re going to just do more praying. I believe that some folks, when they find out that Wednesday nights is going to turn into more prayer, are not going to come. I’d rather have more power and less people than to have more people and less power. We’re going to pray. And not that Paul has not been leading us in prayer. He has. And not that you don’t pray in private. You do. And not that we don’t pray in staff, and not that we don’t pray in class. We do. But these are desperate days. And we need as a people to learn how to pray. Now it’s difficult to have prayer meeting sometimes in a big building like this and especially difficult to kneel. Paul said, “For this cause I bow my knee....” But some of you who are more nimble than others could get on your knees. But what we’re going to do tonight, and we’re going to spend tonight, a shorter time than we will in coming nights, we’re not going to do the same thing the whole time. But we’re going to try as a church to touch heaven with sincere prayer. Our nation right now is in crisis. You say, “Well, it looks like things are going well. The Iraqis are being liberated.” Friend, the, every Iraqi is in bondage till he knows Jesus. Our battle is not with flesh and blood. Our battle is with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. And there’s a world over there that’s closed to the gospel. And I don’t know how the gospel is going to get in unless we really just pray down walls of opposition and prayer power. Have you ever thought about the fact that error has such a head start over truth? What’s the correct answer to this? Two plus two? Four. What’s the wrong answer? Infinite. Just keep on talking, 17, 29, 9,003. You just.... The wrong answers are infinite. There’s only one right answer. Have you ever thought about what a head start error has over truth? But truth has a head start over error when it’s anointed by the Holy Ghost. And that’s where we have to depend. If we just depend upon logic argumentation, we’re going to lose the battle.

We have this list of service people that’s in your bulletin. I can’t even read your writing, son. Jerry Newland. Newland. Jerry Newland, is your son-in-law, was he in an F-15 that was shot down? Where is Jerry? Are you here tonight? Is that right, Jerry. Is your son-in-law Bill Watkins, is it? Was in an F-15 shot down Sunday. Do we know

where he is? Well, I mean, has he been recovered? No. All right. There it is, folks, right here. Now that's a prayer request, okay. Thank you. We're going to pray here. How many of you have a loved one that is somewhere connected in this battle and potentially, in a special way, in harm's way? Would you just stand. You have a loved one like this and you want special prayer for this loved one. May be a family member. May be a brother, sister. May be a close neighbor. Somebody that you know that you're especially concerned about. All right, just keep standing now for a moment. All right, I'm going to ask those of you who are around these people, if you can get near them, just to come and lay your hands on them. Rest of us, just come lay your hands on these who are standing and we're going to pray for them. Now I want, for just a moment, somebody in your group, in each of these groups, there's somebody there. I don't know who it is. You know who you are. I want you to pray for this individual. You don't even have to know their name, but just pray, "God, bless this loved one." You just say, "This loved one," if you want. Two or three of you can pray and then I'm going to pray. Just right now let's just pray for these right now. And if you're not near somebody, just bow your head and you just pray for all of them, or you take a name in the bulletin and pray.

Now, heavenly Father, thank You for hearing our prayer for these individuals. Oh God, please, Lord, first of all, strengthen them with might in the inner man; Lord, that they might be filled with Your strength; Lord, that they might be rooted and grounded in love, that they may know You. And, Father, we pray for their welfare and their safety in Jesus' name.

Now let's all stand. I'm going to ask you, if you will, to get in circles of about four or five if you can. If you don't feel like getting in a circle, you certainly don't have to. Not everybody can. I know the way we're seated, that's fine. But I want us now to pray, and I'm going to ask somebody in the circle to pray for our President and our Vice President, for Tom Ridge, for George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Tom Ridge, John Ashcroft, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Rumsfeld, and General Franks. Pray for any of these, all of these, in a circle. Two or three can pray. One can pray. As many as want to pray. If you don't want to pray, just stand there and say amen and don't be afraid to pray out loud. You're not going to disturb others. You just pray so those in your group can hear you, then I'm going to lead us in prayer.

Now, heavenly Father, we pray, we pray, we pray in the strong name of Jesus for our President, for our Vice President, for these his cabinet, his leaders, these generals. And, Father, we know that in some ways the harder task now is dealing with hearts and minds. And, Lord, we know by force we can take a city, but we cannot by force change a mind. And so, Lord God, how we pray in the name of Jesus, that You would give wisdom, Lord, as we come to a conclusion to this awful, horrible war, that, Lord, there might be really peace and righteousness. And, Lord, we would pray sincerely for an

open door for the gospel, amen.

Now look up here. Stay in your little group. We're going to have just a little time of thanksgiving. If you will just pray and thank God for what has happened. I've been traveling today. I was down in Texas for a meeting with other pastors and I have seen just little blips of that gigantic statue falling (applause). Praise God. I thank God for that, but there are a lot of people in great danger. The battle is not over. And we need to be grateful for what God has done. And I talked to my daughter tonight, and she said, "Daddy, you told us that we couldn't rejoice victory over an enemy, because the Bible says not to do that." I said, "Darling, we don't rejoice that an enemy has been vanquished, as such, because he, too, is a victim of Satan. And if Saddam Hussein dies without Jesus, he'll go to hell. And Jesus died for him. But we can celebrate a victory. We can celebrate the victory that God gives." So there's that thankfulness for what God has done. And we celebrate God's hand, but we don't exalt in the death, the demise, of any human being for whom Jesus died. But in your little groups, would you just voice a word of thanks for what God has done and pray for just a moment. Just get in a little group again and then we'll call this prayer meeting to a conclusion.

And now, our heavenly Father, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we profoundly thank You for the victories that we have seen. And we pray, Lord, for that ultimate victory. Lord, for the freedom of these people, and, Lord, that we as a nation would show compassion. And, Lord, that there might be a liberation not only politically, but spiritually, Lord. Oh God, how we pray that the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ would be made known to these people, for we pray in the strong name of Jesus, amen.

# How to Intercede for Your Loved Ones

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 28, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 3:8–21

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,”*  
EPHESIANS 3:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Spiritual Wealth for Their Neediness
  - II. God’s Strength for Their Weakness
  - III. Spiritual Depth for Their Shallowness
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  - V. Spiritual Fullness for Their Emptiness
- Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about how to intercede for your loved ones. I believe the most important people on this earth are those who can intercede and those who can pray. Somebody said that God never does anything apart from the prayers of His people. I don’t know whether that is true or whether it is not true, but I certainly know that if somebody would even make a statement like that, there must be a lot of importance in the matter of intercession. God wants, God desires, that we pray one for another. The Bible says that God marveled that there was no intercession God wonders, Why don’t they pray?

Now, look with me, beginning in verse 8. This is Ephesians 3, beginning in verse 8, and I’m breaking into a thought because of the length of the passage, but we’re going to read through the end of the chapter, verses 8 through 21. Paul says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”—now, that’s a key phrase: the unsearchable riches of Christ—and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose

which he purposed in Christ Jesus in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations, for you, which is your glory.” Now, notice here—it’s the key verse, verse 14: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is the old apostle Paul in prayer. Now, he wrote this in prison, and he’s in prison, and he is saying, I’m down on my knees, I’m praying, and this is why I’m praying. And, when I think of his spirit soaring out of that prison, it just tells me that stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage, that you cannot imprison, really, the man who’s in prison, if he knows how to pray. And, what a lesson that ought to be for all of us. Some of you who are listening to me right now, you’re not in prison but you’re shut in, in your house, and you can’t get out. Others of you may be invalids, or you may have restrictions, but you can pray. That’s something that all of us can do: we can intercede and we can pray. And just the very thought of this old man, in prison with his prayers just soaring up to heaven, is a great, great blessing to me. And, how sinful we are if we do not pray one for another, for Samuel said, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.”

Well, let’s go to verse 15. He says, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”—and now here’s his continuing prayer; here’s the prayer—“that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” And now, here’s the confidence of the prayers, and he closes it: “Now, unto him that is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages”—hat includes us—“world without end, amen.”

Now, folks, we need to learn how to pray one for another. We need to learn to intercede for our children. We need to learn to intercede for our pastors. We need to learn to intercede for our mates, for our neighbors. And most of us know that, but most of us wonder, How do I pray for them? What should I ask God for? There are so many needs, there are so many problems, and so we are a little bit spongy in our prayers, we’re walking around on Jell-O and eggshells because we’re not quite certain what we’re asking is what God wants to give. Well, there are times when we need to pray with specificity about a mate, or a college, or a career, or about health. But let me tell you something that’s been a great blessing to me, as I have prayed for my children through the years, and as Joyce and I have prayed for them together. If you will take the prayers in the Bible, and use those Bible prayers as models, and begin to ask for your

loved ones what people like the apostle Paul asked for those that he loved, you can be pretty well certain that you're asking in the will of God. And when you ask that kind of a prayer, then you can pray with great faith and great confidence, and one of the great, great blessings to my own life has been to learn to pray the prayers of the Bible. And, when you learn this, it just opens up a whole new world of praying for you, and praying with confidence.

I want to mention five things that Paul prayed for the Ephesians. If you will take these five things and write them down, and think of somebody that you love—think of a son, think of a grandson, think of a wife, think of a daughter, think of a neighbor, think of somebody that you love and you want God's best for—and begin to pray these five things. As a matter of fact, you might just get this passage of Scripture down, and just begin to pray it, and personalize it, as you pray it.

## **I. Spiritual Wealth for Their Neediness**

Now, here's what Paul prayed for these people. First of all, he prayed for spiritual wealth for their needfulness—spiritual wealth for their needfulness. Not financial wealth, not monetary wealth, but spiritual wealth. Look—this passage begins up in verse 8. He says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I may preach among the Gentiles,”—now here's the phrase—“the unsearchable riches of Christ and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Therefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations, for you, which is your glory, for this cause I bow my knees.”

Now, what is he saying? I know that's kind of convoluted, but he's saying, O God, O God, help these people in Ephesus to know how rich they are. They think they have need. Help them to understand the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, to know the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed. And, what is that eternal purpose found in verses 11 and 12? That you might know—that you might know—the manifold riches, the grace of God, that you might understand this. Pray—pray for your children; say, O God, help them to understand; help them to know what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know why your kids get into worldliness? Do you know why you come to church three times a week, sing in the choir, give your tithe, and your kids are out there dabbling in the world, and you don't understand why they do that? Well, I'll tell you why they do that. They don't know what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the reason that they want to be worldly is that they have never discovered the riches that they have

in the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he esteemed the riches of Christ a greater treasure than all the treasures of Egypt. Oh, if we could only understand. Our kids are not going to be sucked out into Egypt when they understand what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. If I've just had a wonderful meal, and then you offer me a plate full of stale crumbs, I'd say, No thank you; I'm already satisfied. And when you've been feasting on the Lord Jesus Christ, when you understand who He is and all that He has done for us, you've been feasting on Him, you don't have to be out in the back alley eating tin cans with the devil's billy goats, because you can say I'm satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many young people today have never found their true satisfaction in Jesus, and they may be saved, but they don't understand the riches that they have in Christ—God's wealth, God's riches for their needfulness. Help them to see, O God; help them to understand. Open their eyes to see just how rich they are.

A lot of folks are going to heaven, but they're going to heaven second-class. I was in Korea preaching a crusade, in Seoul, Korea, and so we decided to come back from Korea and there was a little snafu there at the ticket counter, and they said, We don't have reservations for as many as are in your group. And Bob and Buna Sorrell and others were with us, and they said, Well, you can't do that; you've got to let us go. We've got to get back to the United States. They said, Well, we'll just have to put one couple in first class. And guess who got to sit in first class. I want to tell you, folks, if you've never flown first-class—the only time I've ever flown first-class like that. I've flown business class; I'm talking about an overseas flight, that's one of those 747's when you go in the bubble up top. It was wonderful. Had a big recliner, and there weren't many people up there, and about seven hostesses to host us, and we have a seven-course meal. I mean, it was wonderful; they served, you could choose, you know whether you wanted roast or steak or lobster, and they had fruit, and they had cheese, and they even gave the men silk ties, and, oh, it was just wonderful, and then at the end, they served ice cream where you could make your own sundae, and I'm sitting up there, and Bob and Buna are down below in the steerage, you know, sitting down there all huddled up with their knees on their chin. And Joyce has this video, and I'm making an ice cream sundae, and I'm saying, Well, Buna doesn't like ice cream anyway, and just rubbing it in real good. That's a great trip. Now, folks, I want to tell you, there are a lot of folks that could be going to heaven first-class that are going second-class—do you know that? Why don't you go first-class? I'm talking about all the way to heaven. When I mean first-class, I'm not talking about physical wealth; I'm not talking about monetary wealth. Do you know what most of us are far too interested in? That our kids be wealthy and healthy and happy, rather than being holy.

I can remember a time where I came to a place—I have a son who is a very bright



son. I'm not all that smart, but I have a son who's really a bright son. I mean, when he was four, he was reading words like intercontinental ballistics missile out of the newspaper, and he just has an ability to learn. He's the one that played the piano here Sunday. He's very smart and just learns just like that. And I said to him, You know, Steve, you could be a doctor, you could be a lawyer, you could be this or that. And I felt a certain amount of human pride rising up in me. You know, we all want our sons and our daughters to succeed, to be somebody important. That's the reason we want to send them off to prestigious schools, so they can learn and earn, and then maybe later on burn in hell. I can remember my getting on my knees and saying, O God, I want my children to love you. If this boy is a plumber, if he's a laborer and nobody ever knows his name, if he just has to live from hand to mouth, that'll be fine with me, but I just want to deal with you, God. I want him to love you—I want him to love you. I want him to understand what he has in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's the reason rather than wanting him to go to MIT we sent him to Capernwray, Ian Thomas' school, sent him to a Christian college, because we wanted him to learn the things of God. I'm not saying it's wrong to send your kids to a prestigious school, if that's where God leads you. But what I am saying is you'd better get your values straight. You'd better begin to say, O God, help that son, help that daughter, help that neighbor, help them to understand what the riches are that they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, because that is true wealth.

## **II. God's Strength for Their Weakness**

Now, here's something else that Paul prayed for these. Not only did he pray for God's wealth for their needfulness, but he asked God's strength for their weakness. Look, if you will, in verse 16. He's praying, now, and he says, "Oh, that he—God—would grant you, according to the riches of his glory"—now, he's already talked about the riches—"to be strengthened with might be his spirit in the inner man." Now, what is the average prayer meeting about? Lord, bless Suzy, who's sick. God bless John, who's sick. God bless Richard, who's ill. Now, there's nothing wrong with praying for the sick, but we're so interested in our kids being healthy—and I want healthy kids; I'd be lying if I said I didn't—but, you know, the average prayer meeting in the average Baptist is an organ recital, about livers and lungs and hearts and spleens and gizzards; it's an organ recital. How many times do you hear parents say, Pray for my son, pray for my daughter, that they would be mighty in the Spirit? That's what Paul prayed for these people. He didn't pray, God, help them to be wealthy. He didn't pray, Lord, help them to be healthy. He said, Lord, help them to see true riches and, O God, may they be strengthened with might in the inner man. Now, you fasten your heart, your mind, upon that one you love, and say, O God, make them strong spiritually. Make them a giant for you; give them might in the inner man.

And, you see, how's he going to do that? Well, according to the riches of His glory. And God never has any overdrafts. God is sufficient to strengthen your child, your loved one, in the inner person. Notice it doesn't say out of His riches. A rich man might give you five dollars out of his riches, but that may not be according to his riches; but God wants to bless according to His riches. Sometimes we think that being Spirit-filled is for adults, but not for children. You know what I pray for my little grandchildren? Some of them may be here tonight, but I don't mind them hearing it because they know it is true. I pray they'll be Spirit-filled. You know, we think a lot of times, well, you know, the pastor needs to be Spirit-filled, Jim Whitmire needs to be Spirit-filled, the deacons need to be Spirit-filled. You'll have a lot better time around your house if you teach your children to be Spirit-filled, to walk in the Spirit, to be filled with the Holy Ghost. "The promise is unto you and your children and to as many as the Lord our God shall call." He's talking about being filled with the Holy Spirit, having might, having strength in the inner man. We just don't pray those things enough for our children that they might really be Spirit-filled. And, God wants to fill them with His Spirit.

### **III. Spiritual Depth for Their Shallowness**

Now, here's the third thing that you can pray. First of all, wealth for their needfulness. Number two: strength for their weakness—spiritual wealth and spiritual strength. Number three: spiritual depth for their shallowness. Look now in verses 17 and 18: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Paul said, I don't want you to be shallow Christians. I want you to be rooted; I want you to be solid, he says, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. The word dwelt, Christ was already in their hearts—"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"—but the word dwell is a Greek word which means to be at home, to settle down, to be welcome. I want my children to be at home with the Lord, and I want the Lord to be at home with my children, that Christ may dwell in their hearts. Dwell—that's a domestic term. And then he says rooted. That's a horticultural term. What he's saying is, I want the root to be deep. You know, the root is the part of the tree that only God sees. Sometimes we see our young people, they go off to college, and they get into drugs, or they get into fornication, or they get into yoga; they get into some things, and we say, What went wrong? Tell you what's wrong: they weren't rooted—they weren't rooted.

In the house, former house that we had, we had a beautiful Hawthorne tree. That Hawthorne tree, it was just beautiful. In the springtime, it'd be covered with white blossoms; in the fall, red berries. It was a beautiful shape, had a beautiful bark. One day, after a mild storm—not a big storm at all, just a little wind—our beautiful Hawthorne

tree was down, just filled the whole courtyard. I thought, Oh, no, what has happened to the tree? Looks like a chain saw murder. And I went out and looked at the tree, and I looked at the root of that tree, and the root of that tree was hollow and rotten. So beautiful on the outside, looked so good; but it fell. It fell in one hour, and it fell calamitously, and it had to be cut down and removed. And sometimes our kids come up there in the junior high school choir, there in the marching band, they go off on the youth retreats, they do this, and they do that, and we say, Oh, aren't our kids just wonderful? And then bang, down they go. We say, Dear God, what happened? Well, friend, maybe they just weren't rooted—maybe they just weren't rooted. And maybe one of the reasons they weren't rooted is because you weren't praying for them. Paul says, O God, that Jesus might dwell in their hearts, that they might be rooted. Dwell—that's a domestic term; rooted—that's an agricultural term. And then, he talks about grounded—and what he's talking about there, that's an architectural term—that they might have a foundation, something that they can stand on.

One preacher's church was being built, and he was like I was when this building was being built: he would visit every day, and look at it—it seemed to be going so slow. He asked the builder, said, Look, can't you go a little faster? When are we going to get out of this hole? Builder said, Preacher, if you don't go down deep, you can't go up high. If you don't go down deep, you can't go up high. We need to get our kids so that Christ will dwell in their hearts, that they'll be rooted in the Word of God, and that they will be grounded on solid ground.

#### **IV. Spiritual Perspective for Their Narrowness**

So, what do you pray? You pray spiritual wealth for their needfulness. You pray spiritual strength for their weakness, because we're all weak in the flesh. You pray, folks, for spiritual depth for the shallowness. Don't let them just be shallow; we want them to be grounded, we want them to be rooted. And then, pray for spiritual perspective for their narrowness. Look, if you will now, in verses 18 and 19 of this same thing. This is Paul's prayer, and he says, "That they may be rooted and grounded in love, and may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge." Now, what he's saying is, Look, I want you not to be narrow; I want you to be broad—not broad-minded in the sense that you jettison truth, because he's talking here about the broadness of God's truth. He mentions all saints, and he mentions love. Pray that your children will love the people of God. Pray that they will love the church. I'd be so disappointed if my children did not love the church, and my grandchildren love the church—and all saints. Do you know what I've found out, Brother Bobby? In life, God's going to bless some people you didn't think He ought to bless. And, and there are some people who are part of the family of

God—they may not be Baptists, and they may not worship just like we worship—but they're part of the family of God; they're part of God's saints. And I want my children to have a worldview. I was so blessed when my son David said, Daddy, are you a world Christian? I said, What do you mean, David? He said, Do you just love America, and just love Baptists, or are you a world Christian? I said, David, I want to be a world Christian. And so, we—Joyce and I—began to pray, and have done it for years, around the world every week. And we start out to pray for all saints and for all people. And, on Mondays, we'll pray for Mexico and the Caribbean and that area, and Central America. And, on Mondays, we pray for that. On Tuesday, we'll pray for South America. On Wednesdays, we will pray for Africa. On Thursdays, we will pray for Europe. On Friday, we'll pray for the Middle East. On Saturday, we'll pray for the Far East. And on Sunday, we'll pray for America, and pray for churches and pastors. We pray on Sunday morning, not just for Bellevue Baptist Church. We hold hands. We pray for First Evan. We pray for Second Pres. We pray for First Assembly. We pray for this Baptist church, and other Baptist churches. I want my people to love the people of God. I want them to love all saints, and to teach them to love all people.

And you know, I'll tell you what. There's a church in this town where the members don't like me particularly—did you know that? That's true, and it's a Baptist church. They don't particularly like Bellevue. And I make it a habit to pray regularly—I'm not boasting about this—but to pray regularly for that church, and pray regularly for that pastor. I want to love those who don't love me necessarily, and I don't want to have that bitterness. I want my children to be broad, not compromisingly broad, but Paul says, Oh, that they might know and have a love for all saints, and look at it here, at the breadth of it. He says, and "with all saints what is the breadth." Well, just imagine the dimensions of the cross, and look at Jesus' right hand, and think of the breadth of God's love. And then, the length of God's love. Look at His nail-pierced left hand, and then the depth of His love. Go down, and look at His nail-pierced feet. And the height of His love, look at His thorn-crowned brow, to say that's the love of God. You want your children to be world Christians, to love the people of God, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

## **V. Spiritual Fullness for Their Emptiness**

And then, here's the next thing he prayed for them. Not only that they might be filled with perspective for their narrowness, spiritual perspective, but watch this: that they might have spiritual fullness for their emptiness. Look at it in verse 19, the last part: "and that ye might be filled with the fullness of God." Spiritual fullness for their emptiness. Do you know where your children are going to get in trouble? When they're empty. That's when I get in trouble, when I'm empty. If I'm not full of Jesus, that's when I get in

trouble. When somebody jostles you, whatever you're full of is going to spill out. You're either going to be full of Jesus or you're going to be full of self. And, when self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When Christ is on the throne, self is on the cross. And he's praying, Lord, help them to be filled with all the fullness of God. Do you know when we're a blessing? I'll tell you when we're a blessing. We are a blessing not when we're trying to be a blessing, but when we're just overflowing. And nothing more pathetic to see a half-empty Christian trying to overflow. But when we're filled with the fullness of God, we'll bless people; we don't even know we're blessing them. I have people come to me sometimes say, Oh, I want to tell you what a blessing you were to me when you said thus and such, or when you did thus and such. I can't even remember it. I had no idea about it. Sometimes when I think I'm really cooking, I'm probably putting you to sleep. The truth of the matter is that it is the life of Jesus, that fullness that just overflows in us. And we pray, O God, Lord, may they have your fullness for their emptiness.

Now, this is just one of the prayers in the Bible. But I want you to think about an individual, and think, wouldn't it be fun to pray for that individual this way? O God, help them to see your riches for their needfulness. O God, help them to see your strength for their weakness. O God, help them to see your perspective for their narrowness. O God, help them to see and to have your fullness for their emptiness. To pray like that for those that you love and see, here's the wonderful thing about that kind of prayer. The things that I've mentioned are the will of God. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, if we ask him anything according to his will, he hears us." Sometimes we pray—we don't know whether we're praying in the will of God. We say, help so-and-so to get a job, or this job, or that job, or do this scholarship or—it may be God's will; it may not be God's will. Sometimes we ask God for things that God doesn't want us to have. Mrs. Billy Graham said, if God had answered her every prayer she'd prayed, she'd have married the wrong man on five different occasions. God had one person for her, and we need to thank God for unanswered prayer. But here is a prayer we know that God will answer.

Now, here's the final thing. And I know I need to wrap this up, but when you pray this kind of prayer, look at verses 20 and 21: "Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Keep your mind on God's mighty power, not upon the problems when you pray. Now, sometimes, you may think that you've prayed and your prayer was not answered. If your prayer is not answered, it's not because your prayer exceeded God's power, but because God's plan exceeded your prayer. "And, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you could even ask or think, for we know not what we should ask for as we ought but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us." So just, as you pray, glance at your problems, and gaze at God's power. And then, not only keep God's

power in mind, but keep God's praise in mind. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen." When your prayers are for the glory of God, you're going to see things begin to happen. Unto him be glory in the church. Look at your prayers in the light of God's power, and God's praise, and if you're having difficulty with prayer, try praise, and you'll have an ocean to swim in. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, amen."

## **Conclusion**

Try that. Just try it. Get your Bible out. Next time you pray for a loved one, just lay it out there, and begin to pray these prayers.

Father, teach us how to pray and intercede for our loved ones. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# How to Pray for Friends and Influence People

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 23, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 3:8–21**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 3:14

## Outline

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- I. God’s Unfailing Purpose for Them
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- V. God’s Unceasing Praise Through Them

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 3 tonight. Some years ago, there was a man named Dale Carnegie. He wrote a book, “How to Win Friends and Influence People.” And, I’ve not read the book. Many, perhaps, think I should. I’ve not. It’s probably a good book. Have nothing against it. I think that’s a good goal and a good aim to be friendly and influence people if you’re influencing them for the right. But I want to speak to you tonight on “How to Pray for Friends and Influence People.” How to pray for friends. I think that there is no greater ministry than the ministry of intercession. And I want you to look, if you will, please, in just a moment in Ephesians, the third chapter, as to what the apostle Paul said his life was like while he was in prison.

Look, if you will, in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 14, a very wonderful verse. The apostle Paul says, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the Ephesian epistle, many people believe, was written in prison, a prison epistle. So here’s the old apostle Paul down on his knees in prison. Now just, just imagine that now. I mean, he’s literally there. Prisons of that day were intolerable. The apostle Paul says there’s a reason. “For this cause I bow my knees...” There is the old man of God down on his knees praying. I guess there’s no better illustration of the

phrase, “walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” Because his body is in that prison, but his soul, his prayer is soaring to heaven. Somebody has well said that we’re never as tall as we are than we are on our knees. Now he’s in prison. He’s shut away from everybody else. But he said, “For this cause I bow my knees...”

Now before I get into the message tonight on “How to Pray for Friends and Influence People,” I want to say that this is a great encouragement to me, because there’s one ministry that we can all participate in, no matter where we are. That’s the ministry of intercession. There are some people who are shut ins. They’re in a prison. It may not be, they may not be locked into a federal prison or state prison or county prison, but they’re in prison. Maybe they’re imprisoned in a hospital room, not because of any crime they’ve done, but they are incarcerated. Maybe they’re sick, shut in at home. Maybe you’re a mother who’s at home with little children and you cannot get away. And you say, “What kind of a ministry can I have?” I don’t think you can have a better ministry than the ministry of intercession, praying for people.

When Charles Granison Finney, who was a great evangelist, used to travel and preach in revival meetings, there was an incredible power of God upon his life, upon his ministry. And there was an old man named Mr. Nash, Charles Nash. And Charles Nash would always try to get into a city about three weeks before, Charles Granison Finney would get to the city. And Charles Nash would go into that city and would intercede and pray for that city and pray for the ministry of Charles Finney. And I believe when, in heaven, when the rewards are given, surely, along with Finney, Charles Nash is going to share in the reward. They used to call him, “Father Nash”—he wasn’t a Roman Catholic priest or anything like that, just an old man. They called him “Father Nash,” and he was going to pray.

The same thing, in a way, happened to Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody was an effective church worker, but he had two ladies who told him, “Mr. Moody, we’re praying for you. We’re praying for you. We’re praying for you.” He later on said that it rankled him a little bit. He thought to himself, *Why don’t you pray for those who need it? I mean, why don’t you pray for the lost? Why don’t you pray for the sinners? Why don’t you pray for these or that? Why are you praying for me?* But they kept on saying, “We are praying for you. We are praying for you. We are praying for you.” And then, he tells the story of how one day he was walking down the streets of Chicago, and the power of God fell on him. He didn’t speak in tongues. He didn’t see a vision. But God’s presence, God’s joy so overwhelmed him that he had to go to a friend’s house and borrow a room just to be alone with God. And he finally said, “God, if you don’t stop pouring this joy into my life, I’m going to die. I’m going to die.” He had an infusion of Holy Spirit power. And as he looked back upon it, he said that he was satisfied that it was the result of the prayers of those who were interceding for him, those who were praying for him, and,



particularly, these two ladies.

I remember when I was a young preacher, not so very long ago. I was in college. And I preached, I think, the first revival crusade that I ever preached in Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. And it was an incredible crusade. As a matter of fact, the preaching was terrible. Now, really, it was. I was doing the preaching. It was terrible. You say, "How do you know it was terrible?" Well, not so long ago I got out the sermon notes that I had from those, that crusade and I looked at that. And I said, "Adrian, you didn't preach that, did you? Yes, I did. I tore up those notes lest, when I die, someone would find them. Destroyed them. It was truth. It was Bible truth, but it was a homiletical monstrosity and everything else. I looked. I was preaching the Word of God and God honored it. But as far as preaching is concerned, it was thin soup. And I looked at it. But I tell you, God, God came down in an incredible way. And I have preached in many revival crusades and have been in many services, but I want to confess that I don't believe I've ever been in a service since that time where the felt presence of God was more real than it was in that revival crusade that I was preaching as a kid preacher, not yet in my twenties, in Jacksonville, Florida.

And I had a friend with me. His name was Ernie Harvey. And Ernie and I were in college together, and we played a lot of football together and paled around together. He was a preacher, also. And we worked together in that revival, and it was his home church. Then he said to me, "Adrian, I want you to go meet my mother." I said, "Well, fine." So we went. I didn't know what kind of a background he came from. We went to one of the poorest sections of Jacksonville. And we went up to a little upstairs apartment. Seemed to me like it was kind of over a second-hand furniture store or something, up some narrow stairs, and went into a, a very thread-bare apartment, very, very plain, very Spartan. It was clean, but very, very plain. It had the look of poverty on it. And I met Ernie's mother. Now Ernie was a big, old strapping, big-grinning, broad shouldered athletic type. I wasn't prepared for what I was about to see, because his mother was very small and she was gnarled up with arthritis. And she had those puffy hands that come with extreme cases of arthritis and those swollen elbows, swollen knees. And it was, it, every, every step was painful. But she had such a sweet disposition. She asked me, she said, "Adrian, how did the revival go last night?" I said, "Mrs. Harvey, it was great. It was incredible. It's wonderful what God did." When I said that, the tears popped out of her eyes, and she said, "Oh, I knew God was going to bless. I knew He was going to bless." I said, "Well, how did you know? You weren't there." "Oh," she said, "young man, the whole time you were preaching, I was on my knees praying for you." And I looked at that little gnarled-up body, and I thought how difficult it would be for her to get on her knees, much less to stay on her knees and pray for me. And I looked at my strong, virile body, at that time, and I thought, *Oh Adrian,*

*what an unmitigated fool you are.* You know, people saying, “Oh, good sermon,” you know, and all this kind of stuff. Friend, I want to tell you, when we get to heaven, when we get to heaven, a lot of people we think are first are going to be last, and a lot of people we think were last are going to be first. And I believe, I really, honestly believe that those who are the intercessors, those who are the prayers are going to be God’s elite, God’s plutocrats, when we get to heaven.

Now the apostle Paul knew the ministry of intercession. Here’s the apostle Paul. He’s in prison. And yet, he says, “For this cause I bow my knee to God the Father.” Well, and then he prays. And, actually you have his prayer recorded.

Now, many times we don’t know what to pray for and we don’t know how to pray. One of the secrets that I have learned, and am learning, is to use the prayers of the Bible and make them my prayers. Now that doesn’t mean that I’m just giving rote memory or that I am just simply repeating with vain repetition. But I’m going to let you in on a secret. That when you find what the apostle Paul prayed and learn how he prayed, and then you begin to pray for others like he prayed for them, then you can have incredible power in your prayer because you can virtually certain that you’re praying a Bible kind of prayer, a prayer that God the Holy Spirit will honor, and let that prayer be your prayer. And that is especially true when you’re praying for your children, whether you’re praying for your husband, you’re praying for your wife, when you’re praying for your pastor, when you’re praying for your Sunday school class, when you’re praying for your friends that you want to influence for good, for God, and eternity; that you can take this kind of a prayer and use it as a guide. And let me just show you what I’m talking about now. And if you’ll stay with me, I think it’ll be a real blessing.

Now let me say this, also, that the secret of strong intercessory prayer is the focus of the prayer. You need to learn where to focus. Now so many of us are focusing on problems rather than on God when we pray. And that’s the reason we get discouraged, sometimes tired, and sometimes are filled with unbelief because our focus is wrong.

## **I. God’s Unfailing Purpose for Them**

Now you need to glance at your problem and gaze on God. Now let me show you what the apostle Paul did. Here is a record of his prayer. He’s praying for these folks in Ephesus. And, first of all, he focuses on God’s unfailing purpose for them. Do you have it? On God’s unfailing purpose for them.

Now back up to verse 8. You’re in verse 14. Now just go back up to verse 8. He says, “For this cause...” Well, let’s find out what the cause is. He says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of, of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,

who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent (now this is what God is up to), to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” That is, we are going to display God’s wisdom to all the created beings of the universe. “According...” Now look. Here’s the key in verse 11. “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Now God is up to something, folks. God is up to something. God has an eternal purpose. And that eternal purpose so far transcends the little things that bother us today that it almost makes them pale into insignificance. He speaks of the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, “In whom we have boldness and access by, with confidence by faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory, for this cause I bow my knees...” Now he’s....and I’m going to try to shorten it a little bit. But if I could just tell you in shorthand what he is praying for those folks in Ephesus. He is praying that they might be a part of the eternal purpose of Almighty God.

Now the reason we, we fail in so much of our prayer is that, that we don’t know the will of God. I mean, we’re praying, for example, if somebody is sick, “Lord, please make them well.” Or somebody needs a job. “God, give them a job.” Or somebody is looking for the right school. “Lord, guide me to the right school.” But many times we don’t really know. I mean, we really don’t know. Maybe it’s not God’s will that they have a job. Maybe God has blessed them with a job and they were unfaithful. Maybe they didn’t tithe. Maybe they weren’t good stewards. So maybe God’s withholding a job from them. Maybe our prayer is not, “God, give him a job,” but, “Lord, help him to be faithful.” We don’t know. Maybe they’re sick, and we’re praying, “Lord, heal them.” Maybe God doesn’t want to heal them. Maybe God wants them to go to heaven. We’re down here praying, “Lord, let them stay,” and Jesus is saying, “Father, let them be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” Many times we don’t know the will of God. And, my dear friend, there are certain things. When I pray for my children, and I try to do that every day, I pray and I can pray, “God, let them get in on your eternal purpose.” Now I know that’s the will of God. See, I don’t even have to guess about that. See, I can pray about that. I can pray about that with absolute assurance that it is God’s will that they get in on God’s eternal purpose. And that’s the reason that true prayer has to be linked with Bible study so that I can know what God’s eternal purpose for them is. And then, that’s what I can pray. Now I might not know how to pray about what school they need to go to, what job they need to have, what this or that, but I can pray with faith. I can say, “O my God, in the name of Jesus, I know it is Your will that they be a part of Your eternal purpose.” “For this cause I bow my knee....” All right.

## **II. God's Unfading Provision to Them**

Now, not only should you focus on God's unfailing purpose for them, but you need to focus on God's unfading provision to them. Look, if you will, in, continue to read in verse 14 now. He says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you (now this is what he's saying. This is what I'm asking for you), that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory...." Now I just want to stop right there because that, that speaks not only of God's purpose; it speaks of God's provision. And God's provision comes out of the riches of His glory. Now, you see, when God has a purpose, He's able to perform it because He's exceedingly rich. God's budget is always balanced. And, and, and when you pray for your children (cough) or when you pray for your husband, you pray for your wife, you pray for your pastor, don't focus on human resources. Focus on heaven's provision. Now I love this verse because it says that He'll do it out of His riches. I, I mean, He'll do it according to His riches. Ha. It doesn't say He'll do it out of His riches.

Now Ross Perot may give you \$5.00. That would be out of his riches, but that wouldn't be according to his riches. See, the Bible says that God is going to bless you according to His riches. We need to see just how great God is.

Someone has written these words:

Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring.

For His power and grace are such, thou canst not ask too much.

And so focus, focus, first of all, on God's eternal provision. Not the immediate need, but God's eternal provision. Focus not on your resources, but God's unfading provision. You see, He has an eternal purpose.

I heard a man say yesterday that to those who have eternal life, they never have a midlife crisis because there's no to eternal life. That's good. You never have midlife crisis, not when you have eternal life. And you never have any desperation of old age cause there is no old age in eternal life. You see, God has an eternal purpose and God has unfading provision. The Bible says that He would grant you out of His riches. And when you pray for your loved ones, get your eyes beyond today, even tomorrow, even ten years from now, and look into eternity. Get your eyes off of all human resources. And don't pray according to what you think is possible. But pray according to God's unfading provision.

## **III. God's Unrivaled Presence in Them**

Now here's the third thing? Not only God's eternal purpose, unfailing purpose, not only God's unfading provision, but God's unrivaled presence in them. That's what you should pray for. Look in verse 16 again. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his

glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Now that’s what he’s praying for the folks at Ephesus. That was his prayer. I mean, he’s down on his knees. And this is what he’s praying for them. Have you ever thought about praying that for your children, for your husband, for your wife, for your pastor, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith? Well, you say, “Now isn’t He already in us? Why would you pray that God would dwell in somebody’s heart if they’re already saved?” Well, the Ephesians were already saved. He’s writing this to the church. He’s not talking about salvation. He’s already there as Savior. But the word here *dwell* means to have fixed control. It actually has the idea of being the undisputed owner. You see, he’s saying, it, “I, I don’t want the Lord to be Savior. I want Him to be sovereign. I don’t want Him just to have a place. I want Him to have pre-eminence in your heart, that he may dwell, settle down, be in control.”

Years and years ago I read a story about a man over in England who name was Sir John Ramston. And Sir John Ramston was a very, very wealthy man. And there was a village named Huddersfield. And Sir John Ramston began to buy property in Huddersfield until he owned almost all of the town. He wanted to own every building in that town. It was an obsession with him, and he had plenty of money. There was an old Quaker that had a house in the middle of town and he didn’t want to sell it. And Sir John Ran, Ramston came to him and said, “I want to buy your property.” And the old Quaker said, “It is not for sale.” And Sir John Ramston said, “I want to buy it. Name your price.” He said, “It is not for sale.” Sir John Ramston said, “If you’ll sell it to me, I’ll cover it with sovereigns.” That was the name of their gold or their silver or whatever it is. “I’ll cover it with sovereigns if you’ll sell it to me.” And the old Quaker said, “If you’ll put them on sideways, I may consider it.”

It made, it made Ramston, Sir John Ramston so mad, according to the account that I read, that he turned and walked away. And when he did, the old Quaker said, “Remember, Sir John, that Huddersfield belongs to me and thee.” I don’t want the devil to be able to taunt Jesus that way and say, “Adrian, belongs to you and to me, because there’s a part in him that’s not yet under Your control.” I want to be completely, totally under control of the Lord Jesus. And that’s what the apostle Paul was praying for these folks at Ephesus, that, that Christ may dwell in your heart. The idea of dwell again has the idea of, of sovereign, of Lord. And why? Why did he want this?

Well, first of all, that his power would be man, made manifest in them. Look in verse 16: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” How many times do you pray that? Most of us

are praying for physical strength for those we love rather than praying for spiritual strength in the inner man. Most prayer meetings in churches, not this church, but a lot of churches, and sometimes in this church, most prayer meetings are only for physical needs. I mean, you go to prayer meeting and you get an organ recital. “Pray for this, pray for that.” How many times do you hear somebody say, “Would you pray for So-and-So, that they might be mighty in the Spirit?” I pray for my children, I guess, this far, far more than I pray for their health. I pray for my children, that my children will be mighty in Spirit, that they will be mighty in Spirit. This is what Paul is praying for these Ephesians. Now look. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts, excuse me, that he would grant you (verse 16), according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” Wouldn’t that be a wonderful prayer for you to pray for me? Wouldn’t that be a wonderful prayer for us to pray for one another? “O God, make him strong in the inner man.” Now look. I know that’s the will of God. I know that’s the will. I don’t have to ask is that the will of God. I don’t have to be guessing is this a good prayer. That’s a great prayer. And, and it gives such confidence to pray for something that you know is absolutely, totally the will of God for believers, that they would be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.

You see, he’s praying, look, he’s praying for God’s unfailing purpose. He’s praying in the light of God’s unfading provision. He’s praying for God’s unrivaled presence. “That Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith...” Number one: that they would have power, and number two: that Jesus would be very precious to them. Look in verse 17. He says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...” And this is a prayer. This is a prayer. “...that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend....”—“Lord, open their eyes,”—“that with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge...”

I read somewhere years ago that when they opened a prison in Spain during the Spanish Inquisition where a prisoner had been locked up. They opened that cell, and the skeleton of the prisoner was still in there. And he had scratched on the wall. You know, the inquisitors, many times, came against and incarcerated and killed those who would not relinquish their faith in Christ. Many of the French Huguenots and others who believed in Jesus were punished during the Inquisition for their love of Christ. And they found the bony old skeleton. But on the wall he had, with a rock or something, he had scratched out a cross, and at the top of the cross he put “height,” the bottom of the cross, he put “depth.” On one side he put “length.” On the other side, he put “breadth.” They, he had this verse. This was the verse that he had in his mind, no doubt about it. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth (that is, God’s love includes all), the length (God’s love never ends), the depth (God’s love reaches to the

lowest hell), the height (God's love lifts us to realms of glory). Paul said, "Look, Ephesians, I am on my knees. I am praying for you. I'm praying that Jesus, that, that He may dwell in your heart by faith, that you'll be strengthened with might in the inner man, and that your eyes will be open, that you might be able to see the incredible love of God." Isn't that a great way to pray for people? I mean, rather than just praying, "God, give them a job," or, "God, make them well," or, "God, help them to pass in school." There's nothing wrong with praying for that other stuff. I do that all the time. And, and, and that's a very practical prayer. Jesus said, you know, we're to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread, "and all that. That's, that's wonderful. But how great it is to let our prayers go into a realm that transcends all of that.

#### **IV. God's Unlimited Possibilities for Them**

See, you pray on the basis of God's unfailing purpose. Then you pray on the basis of God's unfading provision. Then you pray on the basis of God's unrivaled presence. Then you pray on the basis, my dear friend, of God's unlimited possibilities. This is the one that thrills me.

Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20. It's one of our favorite verses. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Oh, when we pray, how we need to focus on this, the unlimited possibilities. Not on the problems. Not on the difficulties. You see, listen. No prayer that you ever ask can exceed God's power, but many times His plans exceed our petitions. And we need to look beyond human possibilities.

Now we need to look at this verse very, very carefully, because, you know, if we don't look at it very carefully, we may, we may fail to see that God is answering prayer when we don't know that He is, because the Bible says He's able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think. So we might ask one thing and He may give us something else, 'cause we didn't have the mentality to ask for what we wanted to ask for. He's able to do exceedingly above all that we can ask or think.

Someone wrote these words:

He asked for strength, that he might achieve;

He was made weak, that he might obey.

He asked for health, that he might do greater things;

He was given infirmity, that he might do better things.

He asked for riches, that he might be happy;

He was given poverty, that he might be wise.

He asked for power, that he might have the praise of men;

He was given weakness, that he might feel his need of God.

He asked for all things, that he might enjoy life;

He was given life, that he might enjoy all things. Hm.  
He received nothing that he asked for, nor that he hoped for;  
Yet his prayer is answered. He is most blessed.

Whoever wrote that had a lot of wisdom. You see, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Now let me give you a corresponding verse to that. It's Romans 8, verse 27: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." See. You just pray, "God, I know, I know that You're able to do things I can't even, I can't even begin to understand. Not only are You able, but You're able to do exceeding. Not only exceeding, exceeding abundantly. Not only exceeding abundantly, above all that I can ask. Not only exceedingly abundantly above all that I can ask or even think. That's a big God, folks. And we, we get our, our eyes on these little puny problems rather than focusing on the unlimited possibilities of our great God.

Now I didn't put Ephesians 3, verse 20 in the Bible. God put it in there. And, friend, that's more than just something to put on your refrigerator with a magnet. That is a, that is a verse (cough) that we can stand on. And I believe this with all of my heart: If you pray, your heart is right, and you ask God for what you want, and God doesn't give you what you want, He'll give you something better than you want (amen). I believe that with all of my heart. He's able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. Focus on that, on God's unlimited possibilities.

## **V. God's Unceasing Praise Through Them**

Now here's the final thing. When you pray, you're praying for friends and want to influence people. Ha. Pray for God's unceasing praise through them. Now he's still praying here. This is still his prayer. And he ends his prayer, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen." Paul says, "You know what I want for you Ephesians? I want God to be glorified in your church." I wonder, is your main desire for your loved ones, for your children, that God would be given glory through them? Is that my main desire as the pastor of this church, that God will receive glory? You see, it is far more important when you pray to seek God's glory than it is even their good. To seek God's glory. Are you more, are you more concerned when you pray for your children for God's glory than you are for their good? You see, if you have God's glory, you will naturally have man's good. God's glory and man's good are not in competition. But many times we just want to plow around the glory of God, just get to man's good. And, and the great apostle Paul taught us always to link prayer and praise. Now he's asking God for things, but he ends up in praise. The difference between prayer and praise is this: the prayer goes into God's presence to carry something away. Praise goes into God's presence to remain there forever. Prayer says



please; praise says thank you. And *praise without prayer is presumption*. And prayer without praise is unbelief. But prayer and praise brings God's power to us and God's glory round about us.

## Conclusion

Now why don't you do this? Why don't you think of somebody that you really love and somebody that's in need, and why don't you just put your Bible out some day, get on your knees, and just start praying this prayer for them? Start praying. Just, just, just customize it a little bit and just pray for these folks. I've done it. And I want to tell you, I get such a joy because I, I don't have the idea that I'm guessing at something. "Lord, what do You want to do?" I know God has an unfailing purpose. So, "Lord, help them to get in on it." I know God has unfading riches, and I just focus on that. I know, I know that I know that God wants to live in them with an unrivaled presence, that He wants to strengthen them with might in the inner man, that He wants them to see the great panoply of the dimensions of His love. I know, I know that there are unlimited possibilities. He's able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that I can ask or think. And I know that, that He wants to be glorified in them. Isn't that a neat way to pray, to pray for people like that? Try it.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, I want to be a better practitioner of what I preach. And, Lord, I know that as I stand before these people that You've given me to pastor, that I personally need, and I confess it before my people, Your people, that I need to learn more and more and more about intercession and prayer. And I pray, Father, that you will be teaching me. And, Lord, what you need to do in my heart and life, please do it. And help me, Lord, to learn how to be an intercessor and how to be, Lord, a better prayer warrior, especially for my children, for my precious wife, and for the companions that I work with and the deacons that serve here, for our Sunday school teachers, and for the people of this church. Lord, we love you. We worship you and praise you tonight. In Jesus' name, amen.

# How to Intercede for Our Loved Ones

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 12, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 3:9**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 3:9

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Focus upon Eternal Purpose Rather Than Present Problems
- II. Focus on Heavenly Riches Rather Than Human Resources
- III. Focus on Spiritual Needs Rather Than Material Wants
- IV. Focus on God’s Supernatural Plan Rather Than Man’s Natural Programs

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Ephesians. Tonight we want to learn about intercession—how to intercede for our loved ones. I said this morning, if you have loved ones, then certainly you want to learn the art of intercession. There’s nothing we can do for our friends, our children, our parents, and our mates, any nobler, any higher, any more wonderful, or any more effective than to learn how to pray for them, how to intercede for them. When we intercede we’re like our Lord. For the Bible says, “He made intercession for the transgressors,” and the Bible says right now that “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” The finished work of Jesus is Calvary. The unfinished work of Jesus is intercession. Thank God He is interceding for me right now as I preach and as you pray.

But you see also the Holy Spirit is an intercessor. The Bible tells us in Romans chapter eight that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot even be uttered. The dear Spirit of God is taking my prayer and saying to the Father, “Father, this is what he says. This is what he thinks he needs, but Father, this is what he really needs. And Father, I know his heart, and his heart is really right, even if his prayer is wrong. So, Lord, don’t give him what he wants, but give him what he needs, and this is what he needs.” Isn’t it wonderful to have a Friend like that, and the Holy Spirit of God

is making intercession for me according to the will of God.

Now, Jesus intercedes, the Holy Spirit intercedes, and the Bible says that God looks down from heaven and God wonders that there's no intercessor. God is amazed. God is perplexed, God marvels that we don't pray more than we pray. I was in my study one day and there was a thought that hit me. It was so staggering that it almost consumed me. I mean, it almost drove me to my knees; it almost just overwhelmed me. I, I hesitate to tell you what the thought was because you'll say, "Well, I'm, I knew that. You mean you've been preaching and you just discovered that or you just thought about that. But I want to tell you what the thought was. Now don't laugh when I tell you. Here's what it was. It perhaps was the most staggering thought I've ever had in my life. God answers prayer. Well you say, "Well, what's the big deal?" Yeah, I knew it too, but then I got to thinking, "Is that true?" I mean, is that more than just talk? Does God answer prayer?

Now friend, if there is a God, and He answers prayer – you think about it, ha. That's staggering! That I can touch the One who made the universe and bring Him into action through prayer. It just overwhelmed me, and I thought, "My God, why don't I pray more?" Why don't I learn to pray if God answers pray? What unmitigated fools we are if we don't learn how to pray. And yet, as I told the deacons today, tonight, this afternoon, there's a constant battle in my heart to pray more and a constant confession, "Oh God, have mercy on me. I've failed again in my pray life." Is that true about you sometimes? Good. It makes me feel a little bit better, you know. And I do pray. Don't think that you have a pastor that doesn't pray. I pray. And I thank for answered prayer, and God hears my prayer and answers my prayer, but I'm constantly condemned and constantly amazed that I don't pray more and better than I do pray. And I believe when we get to heaven one of the things that's going to amaze us and chagrin us is that we prayed so poorly and prayed so little when God said, "Call upon me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not."

Well, we need to learn how to intercede. I want to show you a passage of scripture here in Ephesians, chapter 3, beginning in verse 8. The apostle Paul 4 says, "Unto me whom am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Underscore the phrase, unsearchable riches. The idea is of a man who's just stepped inside of a mine, and in that mine, the walls are just studded with rubies and diamonds and emeralds, and, and, and all topaz, and all of the most marvelous, glorious gems and gold and silver and platinum. And he's just inside the mine, and there's more than he can just gather right here, and there are miles and miles and miles of these riches – unsearchable riches.

Now, here Paul is talking about riches that are so great that his mind cannot even take it in – the unsearchable riches of Christ – "and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God

who created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent but now into the principalities and po, and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.” Now, on top of the unsearchable riches we have the manifold wisdom. Not just wisdom – manifold – it means variegated splendors of His wisdom.

And then look in verse eleven: “According unto the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Unsearchable riches. Manifold wisdom. Eternal purpose. Now, the apostle Paul is, eh, is getting, he’s, he, he’s really getting just carried away by what he has in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he goes on to say in verse twelve, “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” That is, I can come to God with boldness, by faith I have access. I can tap into God. Now, notice in verse thirteen: “Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you which is for your glory.” What tribulations did he mean? Ha, he was in prison when wrote this. You wouldn’t think he’s in prison. Brother, I’ll tell you, there’s nothing of the prison smell here. There’s nothing of the dark, dank, damp, dismal smell of the prison here. Why, you’d think he’s on the sunlit mountain peak in Switzerland writing. But he’s, he’s in prison! But the glory of revival is in heart. And then he says, “For this cause [now watch it] I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Do you get a picture? Do you see an old warrior in prison? Do you see an old man with humped shoulders? Do you see him with a sunken chest? A body that is scarred? Do you see him with sort of a white beard, uh, perhaps his eyes are glazed over a little bit? Can you see an old man down there in a prison on his knees praying, in a prison? Then if you can, you have a picture of the apostle Paul who wrote this book of Ephesians.

I want you to see him down on his knees in a Roman prison and never was it more true that stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage because this man is free! And his spirit is soaring to heaven, and while he’s on his knees, he’s reaching to the very throne of God on his knees. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” And now here’s the prayer. Listen to it. “That he would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.” This is the prayer now; he’s praying. This is his prayer: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye be rooted and ground in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breath and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we can ask for or think according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, through out all ages, world without end. Amen.” His prayer is over.

Now, friend, that is intercession, and I want us to look at this prayer. So many times we don’t know how to pray. Well, I’ll tell you one way to pray and make certain that

you're praying in the will of God, and that's just to pray the scripture, to pray what Paul prayed, to learn how to pray what Paul prayed for his loved ones, for your loved ones. And I will promise you that you will be in the will of God because what you have here is the will of God for everyone. I want to tell you, friend, the prayer of intercession is a, ah, the ministry of intercession is a wonderful ministry. Remember that Paul was in prison, and he is ministering. Some of you who are listening to me by radio are not in church tonight. The reason you're not in church tonight is not because you don't wish to be; you cannot come. Some of you are sick. Others of you are perpetually shut in, but I want to tell you, you may be in a prison called a sick room, but you can intercede. You can pray. Some of you may be in a literal prison, maybe there's somebody listening to me in the Shelby County Jail tonight, and you want a ministry there, and you're shut in. The apostle Paul was in prison, but he could pray. Thank God here's a ministry that reaches all people; it reaches everywhere, the whole family in heaven and in earth. Many times we are going to be amazed when we get to heaven and find out who the real victories belong to and who's going to get the prize.

When I was a young preacher, I preached my first revival crusade. I was a nineteen year old boy. I preached in Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and I want to tell you, it was one of the greatest revival crusades I've ever been in before or since that time. Heaven came down, and God blessed in a mighty revival. It was one of those weeping, reaping, praising, revivals where God just moved. I was with a friend. His name is Ernie Harvey. Ernie Harvey and I were college roommates, and it was his home church. And he was the Youth Week Pastor, and I was the Youth Week Evangelist. We had a wonderful time, and God blessed sometimes, some nights the meetings would go on to eleven o'clock at night. We were young. We didn't know you're supposed to let people go home, ha ha. People would just stay and praise the Lord. It was just, ah, just a wonderful, wonderful crusade.

Upon a time, Ernie said to me, "Adrian, I want you to meet my mother," and so I went over to Ernie's house. He lived in a poor part of Jacksonville, and ah, we went to his house; it was um, it was an apartment up over a store as I remember it. We went in, went up those narrow stairs; it was a thread-bear apartment. It was very clean and neat, but very poorly appointed. And I went in there to see Ernie's mother. I'd never met her. I, Ernie was a great athlete and I expected a, a robust and a strong lady, but I met a little lady. A little lady humped over, emaciated little lady, and she had an arthritic condition, so much that every joint in her hands was swollen. Have you seen that kind of arthritis? Where she could hardly touch anything, you could hardly touch her without pain? And her little hands and her elbows were swollen with arthritis and her knees were swollen with arthritis, and she could just hobble. And, uh, she was so sweet, and she said, "Boys, how did the revival go?" And I said, "Mrs. Harvey, it was wonderful.

God just so blessed!” And I began to tell her, and you know, people were telling me what a good preacher I was. Now, I know now that they weren’t bearing false witness against me, but bearing it for me because I realize they’re being nice to a young preacher now as I look back. But you know, I was feeling pretty good. I mean, nineteen and already a big time evangelist, and, and, ah, and God was blessing, and he was blessing! No doubt about it, God was blessing. And so, when she said, “Uh, boys, how’s the revival going?” I said, “Wonderful! Wonderful, God is truly blessing.” When I said that, the tears popped out of her eyes, and she said, “Oh thank God. I knew it. I knew it.” I said, “How did you know? You weren’t there.” She said, “Young man, the whole time you were praying, the whole time you were preaching rather, I was on my knees praying for you.” And I looked at that little emaciated body, and I looked at my strong virile body at that time, ha, ha, ha, and, and I thought, “Oh my God, Adrian, what a fool you are. What a fool you are to think that it was your preaching that was being blessed. As such it, well, it was my preaching that God was using, but oh, beyond that preaching, and behind that preaching, and through that preaching was the prayer of that little lady. I’ve never forgotten that folks. I’ll tell you, it’ll take another world to show who the real saints are and to whom the victory belongs. Thank God for the people who learn how to pray.

Charles Granderson Finney was mightily used of God. He was a, a great man of God, used so mightily of God, but he had a man that went with him to his crusades, and a lot of people don’t know about this man. His name was Charles Nash. They called him Father Nash. And when Charles Finney, the evangelist, the revivalist would go into a city to preach, Father Nash would go in two weeks ahead of time and would begin to pray and would pray for two solid weeks and then would pray through the crusade while Finney preached. And many people believe it was the prayer of that man, as much as the ministry of Charles Finney that caused revival under Charles Finney. A man who knew hol, how to get hold of God.

Dwight L. Moody, was saved and began to be used of the Lord and was an evangelist who had, uh, such power with God that he had a big following and many people would come and hear him preach and a number of people were saved. But in the church where Moody ministered, there were two ladies who used to say to him, “Mr. Moody, we’re praying for you. We’re interceding for you,” and he said at first it bothered him that they would say, “We’re praying for you,” because he thought, “Well, what’s wrong with me, they need to pray for me? Why don’t they pray for these old sinners and pray for these people who need to get saved? Why would they say, “We’re praying for you”? He felt almost like it was an incrimination upon his ministry, but then, of course, as wise as he was, he got over that in a hurry and thanked them for their prayer. And Moody testified that upon a day he was walking down the street, and the Spirit of God

so came upon his life, he had such a mighty effulgence of God that God touched upon his life so much that he had to stop what he was doing, go to a friend's house, and borrow a room and get alone with God. And he was so filled with joy he said, "God, if you don't stop I believe I'm going to die," just for joy of the power of God that came upon Moody's life, and Moody testified that he sincerely believed it was the prayer of these two people who interceded for him and prayed God's blessings down upon his life. And I believe when Moody receives his reward in the glory, they'll be two ladies there to receive their reward with him because they learned the secret of, of intercession. God wonders that there is no intercessor.

Many of you have loved ones that need prayer. Many of you have children. One of the great things I love about my darling wife is to hear her prayer for her children, our children, and I pray for them, but I, I really believe I come in second in intercession because Joyce knows how to intercede for our children. And I've seen her pray our children through so many things and to bring God's protection over them and to bring God's power upon them as she prays, and as we pray together, in the mornings, holding hands, and praying for our children, and interceding for our children. We need to learn how to pray for our mates, we need to learn how to pray for our parents, we need to learn how to pray for our pastors and our teachers and our staff, we need to learn the art of intercession and we have here – thank God – a model, a model. We have here in the Word of God a guide that will teach us how to intercede.

## **I. Focus upon Eternal Purpose Rather Than Present Problems**

I want to give you about four or five rules now for intercession taken from this passage of scripture. Number one: let your prayer focus upon eternal purpose rather than present problems. Now, look if you will in verse eleven, and this is a prayer passage here but Paul is doing all of this according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now, there are many things when you pray for your children or you pray for your loved ones that you don't know. For example, you might pray, "Lord, move them from, uh, Florida, ah, to Missouri," or, "Lord, move them from this job to that job," or, "Lord, let them marry this girl or not marry that boy." And, and we pray what we think is the will of God, but we may or may not know the will of God. But if we study the Bible and we know something of the unsearchable riches of Christ, we know something of the manifold wisdom of Christ, we know something of the eternal purpose of Christ, then we can say, "God, I want for my children, I want for my loved ones, this!" And we can always know that's God's will, and that's so very important because you see, it's not a job that they need. It's not a house that they need. It is not primarily help that they need. It is God's eternal purpose that they need. Are you understanding what I am saying? You need to get away from present problems and back to eternal purpose.

Now, when you are praying with eternal purpose rather than praying on the basis of present problems, then your prayer be, gets very body. I've tried this in my own life. I've prayed sometimes for people, and I've kind of meandered around in my prayer, and I've said, "Lord, if it's Your will do this. If it's Your will, heal. If it's Your will, help," and, you know, and I've prayed, have you ever prayed, "If it's Your will," and you kind of hope that you're getting through. But listen, folks. When I know that it's God's will, what boldness it gives me!

Now, Paul speaks in verse eleven of eternal purpose and in verse twelve he speaks of boldness, "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." You see, when you know what God wants to do eternally, then you can begin to bring that eternal purpose into your prayers and you can put the rainbow of God's overarching purpose, and you can say, "God, I may not know where he needs to work, I may not know whom she needs, n, needs to marry to marry, I may not know whether or not it's your will to heal, but God I know that you have an eternal purpose – and I don't have to guess about that – and therefore God, I'm praying with confidence, I am praying with boldness," and when you do that, dear friend, your prayer takes on a faith and a burning that is wonderful. I have tried it, and I can tell you I know that it works..... To be able to pray with faith.

You see, we don't want them to go to heaven second-class. I want my kids, not just to have things; I want them to know God. I want them to get in on God's eternal purpose. Some of our loved ones are going to heaven second-class. Hhh. We went to Korea, and – to preach – and on the way back we had a snafu on our tickets. So as a result, I got moved up to first-class, and I mean, first-first-class. I mean, up top in that bubble on that 747. And there were only about, ah, eight or so people up there, and about three or four stewardesses to work on us. They served us a meal that lasted about three hours up there, had a big chair you can, it only costs about ninety percent more to go that way, but, ah, they didn't charge us any more for it. And down below was ole Bob Sorrell and Buna suffering, and up, up top, I was just riding in class up there. Now, listen, we were all coming back to Memphis, but Joyce and I, we were going first-class, first-class. You know, I want my children to go to heaven first-class. I want them to go first-class. I want my church members to go to heaven first-class. I want my friends, I want you to go first-class, Ken. I want you to go and have God's best. I want you to know God's eternal purpose. And you see, when I pray for someone that way, I can pray with boldness. I can pray with confidence. I may not know one thing or I may not know another, but there're certain things I do know.

And so, listen to me. When you pray, if you want to pray with confidence, pray – listen, listen – pray with eternal purpose, not present problems. That means you only glance at the problem, you gaze at the purpose.



## **II. Focus on Heavenly Riches Rather Than Human Resources**

Now, secondly, focus on heavenly riches rather than human resources. Look in verse sixteen of this same chapter. He says in, in verse fourteen, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you [now watch this] according to the riches of His glory.” Now, you have to pray not according to your resources, but according to His riches. Now, you need therefore to see that God is able. So many times I find myself looking at possibilities rather than at God’s riches. You see, God never makes promises that He’s not able to perform. God’s budget is always balanced. Now, the Bible says that He’s going to do this according to His riches, not out of His riches. That is, that, that God is going to give you a checkbook with checks that are already signed, and all you have to do is to fill in the amount. Now, if God gave you out of His riches that would be one thing, but if God gives you according to His riches that’s something else. That means that everything that God has is at your disposal if you know how to tap into it.

And so, you need to focus on those heavenly riches, not upon that human resource. Don’t be afraid to ask God for big things, and don’t, an, and look at God’s riches. “Thou art coming to a king, large petitions with thee bring, for his power and grace are such, thou canst not ask too much.”

Years ago I read about a king who had a slave, and he brought that slave in and he said to him, “I love you, and I want to give you this present,” and he had a very valuable vase, a very valuable, encrusted with jewels and made of perhaps gold or whatever. And he said to the slave, “This is for you,” and the slave looked at it and said, “Ah, Sire, that is too great a gift for me to receive,” and the king said, “It is not too great a gift for me to give.” Hmm. Now sometimes we think that, that, that, that somehow because of our unworthiness that we can’t expect big things to God, from God, but you see, Paul is praying that God would grant according to the riches of his glory. I’m, ah, you need to focus on this. God is rich, believe God for great things. The Bible says, “Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.”

## **III. Focus on Spiritual Needs Rather Than Material Wants**

Number three – now listen – number three: you need to focus on spiritual needs rather than material wants. Now, what is, what did Paul pray for these, ah, Ephesians? “That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory [number one] to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man.” Do you know what you need to pray for your loved ones? First of all, pray dear God, release your power in them. Let them be strengthened with might in the inner man. Is that God’s will for your husband? Of course. Is that God’s will for your wife? Of course. Is that God’s will for your father, your mother? Of course. Is that God’s will for your children? Of course. Can you pray

that with faith? Of course. Can I pray for my son Steve, “God, I want Steve to be filled with might in the inner man!”? Yes! I can pray that, and I can know that I’m praying in the will of God. And folks, that’s what he needs. Most of the time we’re praying, “Lord, heal him,” or, “Lord, give him this or give...” Well, that, that m, may be God’s will; it may not, but I know that I know that God wants him filled with might in the inner man. Ha,ha. That’s what he needs, and that’s what I know that I can have, and I know that I can have it according to the riches of God’s grace. Your great need is not physical strength in the outer man. The great need is spiritual strength in the inner man. “The outward man perishes, but the inner man is to be renewed day by day.” In so many prayer meetings and so many churches when you ask for prayer requests, do you know what you get? An organ recital – my liver, my heart, my gizzard, something is wrong and, and, and, ah, we’re praying, “Oh God, heal this,” and “God, fix that.” How many people are saying, “You know, I just don’t believe my neighbor’s as strong spiritually as he ought to be. God strengthen him with might in the inner man. That’s where our prayers need to focus. Now, folks, I’m trying, I’m trying to tell you how to interceder for people so as to change their lives. Don’t tell me there weren’t a lot of sick people in this Ephesian church. Paul never even mentioned them, and I’m not saying that we ought not to pray for the sick because he mentions that somewhere else. But I’m saying in this particular prayer he never even mentions it. He’s praying that they might be strengthened with might in the inner man.

And so that’s the very first thing you need to do, pray that their power, that God’s power would be manifest in them and secondly, that God’s presence would be manifest to them. Look again if you will in verse seventeen. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Now, when he says that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith he’s already talking to Christians and Christ is already there, and so when he says this, the word dwell literally means to be at home. It speaks of fixed control, of one who is an disputed owner, not a renter, not a tenant, but someone who dwells there, it means somebody who has complete control. That where Jesus may not only be Savior, but Sovereign, not only have a place but have preeminence. That’s what your loved one needs. That you might pray for your loved one, “Oh God, Oh God, let Jesus have absolute preeminence there. I want him them to know your power, I want them to understand your presence in a very special way.

Many years ago I read the story of an old Quaker who had a piece of property in a, in a town in England called Huddersfield, and in this town there was a wealthy merchant. And this wealthy merchant was trying to buy all of the property in that town. He wanted to actually own the whole little town, but the Quaker had this piece of property in the middle. And the merchant had been buying property here and there and buying property here and there, and finally he came to the old Quaker and he said, uh,

“Name a price for your property,” and the Quaker said, “I don’t wish to sell my property.” Well, the merchant thought about it, and he decided he’d be generous, and he said, “Well,” he said, “I’ll tell you what. I will cover your property with sovereigns” – that’s the name of their coin – with sovereigns. That is, I’ll lay them side by side and just cover the property if you’ll sell it to me. The old Quaker smiled and said, “If you’ll put them on sideways we might have a deal.” And that made, ah, Sir John Ramsden so angry that he turned and walked away. And as he turned and walked away, the old Quaker said to him, “Remember, Sir John, that Huddersfield belongs to thee and me.”

I wonder if the devil can taunt to Jesus that same way, and say, “Remember that Adrian belongs to You and me. There’s a part in Adrian that hasn’t been given over to you, Jesus. He belongs to You, but he also belongs to me. There’s a unholy spot in his heart and in his life.”

Now, you see, the apostle Paul prayed for those Ephesians, he said, ‘Man, there’s the unsearchable riches of Christ. There’s the manifold wisdom of Christ. There’s the, the eternal purpose of Christ. Now, I want these people, now God, you’re going to do this out of the riches of your glory. Lord, you’re going to do this according to your eternal purpose. Now, God because of that, Lord, listen. God, I want that, these people to be strengthened with might in the inner person. And, God, I want them to know the undisputed Lordship of Christ, that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith.”

Then not only did he pray for that inner power and that inner presence, but he also prayed for these people that they might know that inner preciousness of Jesus. Now, notice what he said as we went on. He wanted, he wanted them to understand just who Jesus is and here’s what he prayed for them. “That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye [watch it] being rooted and grounded in love [isn’t that beautiful] may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.”

Paul’s prayer for, was, was for them, ‘Oh Lord, help them to know the unknowable. Lord God, I want them to know God’s love! I want them to know the distribution of God’s love! I want them to know how wide God’s love is! Oh God, I want them to know the breadth of God’s love! I want them to know that God loved the world, not just of angels and not just of saints, but He loves the world of sinners, all colors, all conditions, all circumstances, all classes, all characters, all companies. Oh God, let them know the breadth of your love. And then, dear God, let them know the length of your love, let them know not only the distribution of that love, but let them know the duration of that love. Let them know that that love never ever ends! It never, ever changes. Let them know that nothing they can do will cause You to love them less nor can make You love them more because You love them, You love them with an eternal love. You loved them ever before any wave beat on any shore. You loved them ever before an angel was

created. You loved them so much before the foundation of the world that You gave Your Son. Lord, help them to know the length of Your love. And then, Lord, help them to know the depth of Your love. Oh, help them to know the dimension and the declination of Your love. Help them to understand that Your love is so deep, that it is deeper than the deepest sin. Help them to know that Your love goes to the deepest hell. Help to know that no man is so low, so vile, so depraved that You don't reach down. Help them to know the depth of Your love. And then, God, help them to know not only the declination of Your love, but help them to know the destination of Your love. Help them to see the height of Your love. Help them to see Oh, God, that it is lifting love, enabling love, that it is ennobling love.'

I told you in a sermon sometime back that God doesn't change you so He can love you. Friend, He loves you so He can change you, and is, it is the love as we sang this morning that lifts us. Love lifted me. Somebody said that in the Spanish Inquisition, they found a prison. And this prison was more like a cave, and a man had been put in that prison for his faith, and when they unearthed the prison there was just a skeleton. And that man had gotten a rock, and on the wall of that cave he had made a cross. And at the top of it, he put height. At the bottom of the cross, he put depth. On one arm, he put breadth. On the other arm, he put length. He'd understood this passage of scripture. Paul was saying this is the dimensions of God's love.

Do you know what you need to pray for your loved ones? Not that they be famous. You need to pray, "Oh God, let them know your love." Do you know why they get in trouble? Do you know why they go after things of this world? They just don't know God's love. Everybody's seeking something. Right? They just don't know what they need. If people just knew how much God loved them. Hey folks, that's a prayer you can pray in faith. You can say, "God, I know it's your will for them to know your love! I know you want to reveal this to them!" And so, when you begin to pray this way, you pray, "Oh my God! Oh my God, here's what I want for them. I'm not asking, dear God, for ah, ah, physical things. I'm asking for spiritual things. Now, you can ask for the physical if you want, but you may or may not be in God's will. But, dear friend, if you ask for this, you'll know that you're praying and therefore you, oh, you're praying in, in, in God's will, and you can pray with confidence. You can pray, "Oh God, that your power will be in them! They'll be strengthened with might in the inner man! Oh God, I pray that your presence will be in them! That Christ will be enthroned in them! That He may dwell in them by faith, and Oh God, that they may be able to comprehend with all saints the dimension of your love." You pray for your loved ones that way, friend, you're just praying God's Words right after Him; He's honor bound to hear it! He must hear it, if you get on praying ground. That's what your loved ones need.

## **IV. Focus on God's Supernatural Plan Rather Than Man's Natural Programs**

Now, let me just go on, and say finally here that when you pray and when you intercede for your loved ones, you also need to focus on God's supernatural plan rather than on man's natural programs. Now, look if you will in verse twenty of this same chapter. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us." So many times we ask, and we don't know what we ask for. "For the Spirit says we know not what things we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Sometimes we pray, and we don't know what we're praying for. Now listen. Your prayer can never exceed His power, but sometimes God's plan is greater than your prayer. You see, your petition never exceeds His power, but sometimes His plan exceeds our petition. You see, He's able to do more than we can ask or think. Many times we don't think enough. We don't ask enough. So, so, we pray, and it seems like the prayer may be unanswered, but if we focus on God's supernatural plan we can leave it with God. Sometimes our prayers may seem to be unanswered when it is being answered.

Somebody wrote these words, "He ask for strength that he might achieve; he was made weak that he might obey. He ask for help that he might do greater things; he was given infirmity that he might do better things. He asked for riches that he might be happy; he was given poverty that he might be wise. He ask for power that he might have the praise of men; he was given weakness that he might feel his need of God. He ask for all things that he might enjoy life; he was given life that he might enjoy all things. He received nothing that he asked for, nor that he hoped for, yet his prayer is answered. He is most blessed." You see, God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or think. And so, just remember when you're praying for your loved one, remember that there is the Holy Spirit who makes intercession.

## **Conclusion**

We use to have a preacher down in Florida. He was at one time the editor of the Florida Baptist Witness; his name was Dr. Ed Solomon. He was a fine man, a wise man, but he lisped; he was a little tongue tied. And one time upon an occasion, he was in his college church, and he was preaching there in the campus church as I understand it, and he got up to preach and he said, "You know, God never did give me anyfing I ever wanted." Well, people thought that's strange for a preacher to say that. And then he said, "You know," he said, "God never let me go to the sthchool. I wanted to go to." Well, that's where he went to school right there. And then he said, "God never let me pasthtor the church I wanted to pasthtor," and he was pastoring that church right there. And he said,

“And God didn’t even let me marry the woman I wanted to marry.” His wife was sitting right there. He said, “You know,” he said, “God never did ever give me anything I ever wanted!” But then he smiled, and he said, “but God always gave me some-*em* better than I wanted.” Amen? Better than I wanted.

See, “now unto Him that is able to do abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” Sometimes, friend, you can’t even think what God wants, so you don’t ask what you need. But isn’t it wonderful that the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered?

Now, friend, you just take this place and you just get your loved one, you just put their name up there, and you just start praying this prayer. Start praying over and over again and believe God, and believe God. That’s what they need! These other things will come and fall in line; if God tells you to pray for this or that, you can pray for this and that. But this you can pray, and you can say I know that I know I’m in the will of God. Isn’t that right? And that’s what they really need.

Now, folks, God’s not going to do it unless you pray. Have you ever seen one of these lock boxes? Maybe you have one in the bank. You have a safety box, safety deposit box, and you’ve got all your goodies in there, you know? Your bubble gum cards and everything are in there, and you, you want to go in there and get it out. You have a key, and they have a key. And you can’t open it without them, and they won’t open it without you. It takes both keys together. You can’t do it without Him, and He won’t do it without you. But oh, when we pray, we’ll say with the apostle Paul in prison, “for this cause I bow my knees to the great God of glory.”

# Discovering Your Destiny

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 23, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 3:14–21

*“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

EPHESIANS 3:20–21

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 3, as we continue to explore Ephesians, God’s guidebook for growth. And we come to Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians. We are entitling our message this morning “Discover Your Destiny.” There are some thrilling, exciting things that appertain to the children of God. Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was that they might discover these things, and my prayer for you is that you might discover the very selfsame thing.

All right, beginning in verse 14—Ephesians 3, verse 14—the Apostle Paul says, *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of*

*his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:14–21)*

Now I remind you that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians from a Roman dungeon—from a Roman prison. And I don't think there's any more of a beautiful picture in all of the Bible, unless it is Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, than the old apostle bowing his knees in that Roman dungeon. He says in verse 14, *“For this cause I bow my knees.”* I want you to see Paul down there on the slimy floor of that vermin-infested prison with his hands folded in prayer, and his face turned upward to God, and the glory of God upon his face. Now you might have said Paul was in prison, but Paul would have said, “No, I'm in the *heavenlies*; I am seated with Christ right now in the *heavenlies*,” because stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage, if you know how to pray. And Paul knew how to pray; he knew how to intercede.

And I want to say this in the introduction to this message. I'm speaking to some dear people who are at home. You cannot be in this service today. You wish you could, but you're at home; you're shut in. Some of you dear friends are in the hospital. Others may be in prison. But I tell you, dear friend, there's one thing you can do: you can pray; you can intercede, and you can say, “God bless that ol' Baptist preacher as he's preaching.” And God will use you, and God will bless your ministry of prayer.

I remember when I first started preaching as a lad of nineteen years of age. I was preaching a revival meeting in Jacksonville, Florida—the first revival I ever had the opportunity to preach. And I tell you, the science of preaching is called homiletics, and I broke every rule that was written, and made up some new ones to break. And I know that I just didn't know much about preaching—still may not, for that matter—but, brother, you should have heard me then. And I just went to this church, though, and was with a dear friend of mine, Brother Ernie Harvey, and he and I were leading in that revival crusade as college students. And I tell you, dear friends, that heaven came down our souls to greet, and glory crowned the mercy seat, and God gave a wonderful revival meeting—the first revival meeting I ever had the privilege of being in. I mean, it was glorious! And do you know what that would do to a young nineteen-year-old preacher? I've got two young embryonic theologs sitting on the front row right here. You know, what would that do to a young preacher—to get in a church like that, and God just come down?

Well, you know, we were thinking, “Well, God's really using us”; you know, “Boy,



we're something." And I remember Ernie took me to see his mother. I had never met his mother. She lived in a rundown section of town in a little apartment flat there. We went up the stairs. Really, it was in a section of town I don't even think I'd have felt safe to live in. Everything was clean, but it was threadbare. It was a very impoverished home. And when I met his mother, I wasn't prepared for what I was to see. She was, I suppose, more gnarled with arthritis than most any person I'd ever seen—just a little woman—Ernie was a big, athletic man; strapping young man—just a little gnarled woman. And she said, "Boys, how did the service go last night?" I said, "Wonderful, Mom Harvey! Wonderful! God really blessed. Oh, He's blessing! We're having a great revival."

Her eyes brimmed with tears. She said, "I knew God would bless." I said, "Well, how did you know it?" She said, "Young man, the whole time you were preaching, I was down on my knees by the bathtub praying for you." And I looked at that little arthritic body, and I thought of the strength that God had given me as a young nineteen-year-old boy, and I thought of her down on her knees praying for me. I tell you, that put something in my heart I've never forgotten, friend.

I thank God for those who pray for us. I thank God for those who are in prisons of sickness, and those who are in prisons of pain, and those who are in prisons of circumstances like the old Apostle Paul there thinking of the Ephesians. There he is in a Roman dungeon, but he says, "*For this cause I bow my knees.*" (Ephesians 3:14) God, teach us the ministry of intercession.

I want you to notice five things about the prayer that Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

## **I. The Prompting of the Prayer**

First of all, I want you to notice the prompting of the prayer. What prompted Paul to pray this prayer? Well, Paul has been telling them about all of the glories that they have in Jesus Christ, all of the wonderful things that are in Jesus Christ. For example, in verse 8, he speaks of "*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" (Ephesians 3:8) In verse 10, he speaks of a "*manifold wisdom of God.*" (Ephesians 3:10) In verse 11, he speaks of "*the eternal purpose*" of God. (Ephesians 3:11) Think of it: unsearchable riches, manifold wisdom, eternal purpose. Paul is just so caught up with this thing. And then, he thinks of the Ephesians, and he knows they're saved, but Paul is afraid that they're going to go to heaven second-class. He's afraid that they're not going to discover their destiny. He's afraid that they're not going to understand all of the glorious, wonderful, holy, happy, ennobling things that belong to the people of God. And so Paul is praying for the Ephesians that God would open, as it were, their spiritual eyes, that they might discover their destiny.

How we ought to pray for one another that way! I want to just come back again and

talk about intercessory prayer. I do not believe that you and I realize how important prayer is.

Charles Grandison Finney was one of the greatest evangelists that God ever put on the American scene. He was a converted lawyer who was gloriously saved, and God used Finney in revival meetings across America. But what some people do not know is there was a gentleman named Charles Nash—Father Nash, they called him—and before Finney would ever come to a city to hold a revival crusade, Father Nash would always go at least three weeks ahead of time and begin to pray. And he spent hours on his knees in intercession praying and praying and praying and praying. And while Finney was preaching, Father Nash was praying; he was interceding. And I believe that was a part of the success of Finney's meetings, don't you? I really do.

The same thing with Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody was used of the Lord, dramatically converted, became a great servant of God. At one time, Dwight L. Moody pastored a church. But there were two ladies in Moody's congregation, and they were praying for Moody. And Moody used to say, "Why are you always praying for me? Why don't you pray for the lost?" But they just smiled and they kept on praying for Moody. They just kept praying that God would bless Moody and God would anoint Moody. And Moody thought he was anointed. It irked him a little bit that these ladies were always praying for Dwight Moody. But one day, Dwight Moody testified later, as he wrote in his biography, that he was walking down the streets of New York City, and the glory of the power of the Holy Spirit came upon him in such great fullness and such great power that he had to go to his hotel room and get down on his knees before God. And he said, "God, if you don't stop pouring on all this joy, you'll kill me." He was just so filled with the fullness of God. That's exactly what Paul was praying for these Ephesians: *"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."* (Ephesians 3:19)

We need to pray one for another. Paul was so afraid that these Ephesian Christians were going to heaven second-class, that they were going to be like Mr. Oh-so-bored over here—poor, wilted fellow. They were in the church, but they were not growing; they were not understanding; they were not discovering their destiny. All right, so that is the prompting of the prayer.

## **II. The Possibilities of the Prayer**

Now, secondly, I want you to notice the possibilities of the prayer. Notice in verse 16 Paul bases his prayer according to the riches of the glory of God. He says, *"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory."* (Ephesians 3:16) That is the possibilities of prayer. Prayer is as possible as God is possible. Prayer can do anything that God can do. Prayer is as rich as God is rich. If we could understand, dear friend, that prayer can do anything that God can do—and God can do anything; He's a rich

God—then we would pray more.

Now, notice God never promises to do anything that He's not able to perform. God's budget is always balanced. God is not broke. As we've said before, there's no recession in heaven. Oh, what possibilities there are in prayer, because we have a rich heavenly Father! Notice what verse 16 says. Paul doesn't ask God to bless the Ephesians *out* of God's riches, but Paul asked God to bless the Ephesians *according* to His riches.

Now, if there's a millionaire, and a millionaire gives you a dollar, he is blessing you out of his riches, but not necessarily according to his riches. But suppose that millionaire gives you his checkbook, and all of the checks are already signed, and he says, "Just fill it in according to your need." Then, that is according to his riches, right? And you think of the riches of the Lord. He's not blessing us out of His riches, but according to His riches. "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19) And some of us are just not cashing our checks, amen? That's right.

Oh, friend, let me tell you something: *The promises in the Bible are not mottos to be hung on the wall; they're checks to be carried to heaven's bank and cashed.* We're to believe the Lord and trust the Lord. There is possibility in prayer.

### III. The Purpose of the Prayer

And so, we've talked about the prompting of the prayer, and the possibilities of the praying. But now, let's talk about the purpose of the prayer. Now we're really getting to the heart of the thing. What is Paul praying for? That he might get out of prison? Nope. That the Ephesians might be healthy and wealthy? Nope. That they might not have any difficulty? No, those are the things we pray for for ourselves. But Paul knew what they really needed. And I want you to notice the purpose of this prayer.

Now, there's a threefold purpose in this prayer.

#### A. To Ensure His Power Through Us

First of all, Paul prayed for them that God's power would be made manifest through us to ensure His power through us. Notice verse 16—here's the first thing that Paul prayed for the Ephesians: "*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*" (Ephesians 3:16) This is the first purpose: that we might be strengthened with might in the inner man to ensure God's power through us.

You see, today, you may be sick of body. Your head may be throbbing. You may feel physically debilitated. And you say, "What I need is more physical strength." But if Paul were here, and Paul looked at you, Paul would not necessarily pray that you would have more physical strength; he would pray that you would have more spiritual

strength—not that you would be strengthened with might in the outer man, but that you would be strengthened by the spirit in the inner man, that the Holy Spirit of God would strengthen that inner man. Paul knew that his body was going to die—that’s going to happen to all of us—but he said, *“Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”* (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Aren’t you glad for the soul’s fountain of youth? Aren’t you glad that you don’t have to grow old spiritually? Aren’t you glad that you don’t have to wither spiritually? Aren’t you glad you don’t have to dry up spiritually? Aren’t you glad for the power that God gives to the children of God? So many Christians have not discovered their destiny. They have not discovered their dynamic, either. They have not discovered the power that is available to them.

You see, the devil doesn’t want you to discover this. General Wainwright, in World War II, was taken prisoner by the Japanese. And he was in a terrible, horrible, filthy concentration camp, and the Japanese abused him. They mocked him. They beat him. They whipped him. They starved him. Here was a general, but by the time the war had ended, he was a frail, emaciated, cowed, beat-down individual. But one day, a little airplane bearing a colonel came and landed on that island where that concentration camp was, and they brought a message. The Japanese already knew this, but they brought a message that the war had ended, and the allied forces had won, and the Japanese had been defeated, and that the prisoners—the American prisoners—were to be set free. And this colonel went in and told General Wainwright, “You’re a free man.”

Can you imagine what that did to the little general? It was a resurrection. He stood up straight and tall, and he’d understood that his side had won the victory. The next day when those Japanese guards, out of habit and out of months and months and months of training, came in to scorn General Wainwright and to abuse him and to put him down, he stood erect. And he said, “You listen to me. From now on, I’m giving the orders around here. I’m in charge”—and he was. They didn’t want him to know it, but when they found out he knew it, things changed.

Oh, let me tell you something, friend. The devil doesn’t want you to understand that Jesus has won the victory. Did you know that? He doesn’t want you to understand what happened at Calvary. He doesn’t want you to understand what happened at that empty tomb. He doesn’t want you to understand that Jesus Christ is not seated in the *heavenlies*, and we are seated with Him, and all things under His feet, and, spiritually, we’re in charge, if we’ll take charge.

*“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7) Isn’t that glorious? Isn’t that wonderful? But so many people don’t know that; they don’t understand that. And Paul, in that Roman dungeon, was praying and saying, “God, open their eyes. Help them to discover their destiny. Help them to be strengthened with might in the inner man by the

Spirit.” (Ephesians 3:16)

## **B. To Establish His Presence in Us**

But not only to ensure His power through us, but to establish His presence in us. Notice verse 17—here’s the second part of the purpose: *“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”* (Ephesians 3:17) Now he’s not praying that they’ll be saved. They were already saved. He’s not even praying that Christ would come into their hearts. He was already in their hearts. But this word *dwell* implies of a fixed control of one who not only has moved in, but one who is the undisputed owner of a piece of property. Now they had already received Him as Savior, but now Paul wants them to make Him sovereign. They have already given Him a place, but now Paul wants them to give Him preeminence. This is like Jesus saying, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abides in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7)

Have you enthroned Jesus Christ in your heart? Have you really? Oh, have you said, “Lord Jesus, I take myself off the throne; I enthrone you completely; I want your presence to be made manifest in my heart and in my life”? Oh, if you’ll do that, friend, there are three things that’ll take place the minute you establish His rulership, His Lordship.

### **1. The Realization of Christ’s Presence**

First of all, there will be a new realization of Christ’s presence. He’ll be real to you. He’ll not just be somebody the preacher preaches about. He’ll be real.

*He’s real to me, He’s real to me,  
My blessed Lord is real to me,  
A living bright reality,  
My blessed Lord is real to me.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

### **2. The Reproduction of Christ’s Purity**

The second thing: Not only will there be the realization of Christ’s presence; there will be the reproduction of Christ’s purity. We’re going to be living like Jesus lived. We’re going to be pure like Jesus was pure. He said, *“Be ye holy; for I am holy.”* (1 Peter 1:16) *“As he is, so are we.”* (1 John 4:17) We’re called to be a separate people, a holy people. But, friend, there is nothing in my flesh that’s going to make me holy. Oh, if Jesus doesn’t do it, it’s not going to be done. And the reason that many of us are failing our dear Lord is that Jesus Christ is not enthroned.

### **3. The Reenactment of His Power**

But not is there to be the realization of His presence, and the reproduction of His purity, but there’s going to be the reenactment of His power when He’s enthroned.

We're going to find the resurrected Christ working through us. The devil doesn't want you to do this, either. The devil does not want you to discover your authority, and he doesn't want you to enthrone Jesus Christ. He doesn't want you to do it.

I read something a long time ago about a Sir John Ramsden, who was a very wealthy merchant in England. And Sir John Ramsden wanted to control a little a township, a little village by the name of Huddersfield. And Sir John Ramsden bought all the property except one piece of property in the center of town—a very important piece of property for his purposes. And there was an old Quaker that owned this piece of property, and the Quaker wouldn't talk to Sir John Ramsden's agents. And so, Sir John himself got in his carriage and he went down to this little cottage where this Quaker lived and he said, "I've come, sir, to talk business with you. What price would you put on your property?" The old Quaker said, "I don't care to put a price on my property." "Well," he said, "sir, if you will sell me your property, I will cover it with sovereigns"—that is, the pieces of money that they used in that day. He said, "I'll just cover it." The old Quaker, with a twinkle in his eye, said, "If you put them on sideways, we might talk." That was too much for even Sir John Ramsden, and he turned and he started to walk away dejected, crestfallen. And the old Quaker called back to him and said, "Remember, Sir John, Huddersfield belongs to thee and me."

I wonder if Satan is not taunting Jesus the same way about me and about you. I wonder if he's not saying, "Yes, that person belongs to you, but there's a part that still belongs to me." You know, the Bible says, "Don't let the sun go down upon your wrath," (Ephesians 4:26) and, "Don't give a place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27) I wonder, have you given a place to the devil? Is there a hell's half-acre somewhere there in your life that Satan dwells? Or have you enthroned the Lord Jesus Christ? Does Christ dwell in your hearts by faith? Is Christ the sovereign, undisputed head of your life? Does Jesus Christ have all of your life?

### **C. To Enhance His Preciousness to Them**

Paul prayed for these Ephesian Christians, number one, that they might discover the might of the Holy Spirit; number two, that they might enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ; and, number three, that not only would they establish His presence in them, but that His preciousness would be enhanced to them. Notice verses 17 through 19—the Bible says, "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;*"—and now, here's the next request—"*that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.*" (Ephesians 3:17–19) He wanted not only for them to discover the presence of Jesus, and the power of the Spirit, but the preciousness of the Lord.

Oh, he's talking about the dimensions of the cross. Years ago, after the Spanish Inquisition, when Napoleon soldiers uncovered a dungeon, they went into that dungeon, and in that dungeon was the emaciated skeleton with the chains still on it. It had died of starvation, no doubt, but on the wall, that prisoner had taken a sharp piece of metal and made a cross—scratched it into the stone. And at the apex of the cross he had written the word *height*. At the foot of the cross he had written the word *depth*. On this side of the cross he had written the word *breadth*. On this side of the cross, this arm of the cross, he had written the word *length*. For to him, the cross of Jesus Christ epitomized the dimensions of God's love.

And Paul wants you to discover the dimensions of God's love.

### **1. The Distribution of God's Love**

For example, he wants you to know the distribution of God's love: oh, that you might know the breadth of God's love! What is the breadth of God's love? It's the wideness in His mercy. It means, folks, that God loves all of us. Isn't that great? God loves us all. "*For God so loved the world*": (John 3:16) all colors, conditions, circumstances, classes, characters, companies, and castes. He loves us all. "*God so loved the world*": that is the breadth of God's love. A sinner may go to hell unsaved, but he'll never go to hell unloved. God loves you, my sweet friend—He loves you. That's the breadth of God's love.

### **2. The Duration of God's Love**

And then, Paul said, "I want you to understand the length of God's love; not only the distribution of God's love, but the duration of God's love: everlasting love, never-ending love." He loves and He loves and He loves and He loves. Sometimes we tell little children, "Don't do that. If you do that, God won't love you any more." That's a lie. God loves the darkest sinner. The love of God reaches to the lowest hell. "*God is love*," (1 John 4:8) and He can never stop loving. Paul says, "Oh, that your eyes might be opened, that you might understand the wideness of God's love, that you might understand the length of God's love!" He's always loved; He always will love. Before ever a wave beat on a beach, before ever a star shone in the sky, before an angel ever worshipped before the throne, God loved us, even "*before the foundation of the world*," Ephesians tells us, that we were chosen in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:4)

### **3. The Descent of God's Love**

Now I want you to notice not only the distribution, and the duration, but the descent of God's love. Oh, how deep is God's love! No man ever gets so unlovely but what God can love him—no man so low, so depraved, so vile. It reaches to the deepest sin.

### **4. The Destination of God's Love**

I want to preach on the depth of God's love—and I'm having a battle with my heart

and a watch right now—but I’m going to move on and not only talk about the distribution of God’s love, and the duration of God’s love, and the depth of God’s love—that is, it condescends—but I want you to notice the destination of God’s love. That’s the height. Friend, God’s love started in heaven, and it goes to heaven, and it lifts us to the heavens. It is a lifting love, an enabling love. It is heavenly in its source, and it is heavenly in its destination.

*The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pin can ever tell.  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell.*

And somebody wrote the last stanza to that gospel song we used to sing, Brother Tommy, and wrote it on the walls of an insane asylum. But I tell you, whoever wrote these next words was not insane, in my estimation. He said,

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

—FREDERICK M. LEHMAN

Oh, the love of God!

And Paul is saying, “O Ephesians! Ephesians! I want your eyes to be opened, that you might discover the power of the Holy Spirit, that you might enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you might be able to know the unknowable, to see the unseeable, to comprehend the incomprehensible, to measure the immeasurable, which is the love of Jesus Christ.” That was the purpose of the prayer.

#### **IV. The Power of the Prayer**

Now I want you to notice the power of the prayer in verse 20. He thinks about these Ephesians, and he’s asked a big thing. Oh, he’s asked that they might know the unknowable, and so he has to appeal to power. And so he says in verse 20, “*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*” (Ephesians 3:20) He says, “We’ve asked it, and there’s a power to do it.”

Now he doesn’t just say, “Now unto him who is able,” but, “Now unto him who is able to do”; but not only able to do above, but abundantly above; and not only above and



abundantly above, but exceedingly, abundantly above; and not only able to do what we ask, but able to do more than we can ever think. You can't out-dream, out-pray, out-guess, out-plan God. If God is in your plans, you ought to plan big. We serve a great God. And, oh, so many times we don't understand how good, and how great, and how gracious, and how marvelous our God is! Think of it: *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."*

I think this is sometimes why we think God didn't answer our prayer: We weren't even able to conceive what all God was doing—more than we could think! You see, the Bible says, "We don't know what to pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans 8:26) God says, *"My thoughts are not your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8) Sometimes we pray for God to heal somebody, and God takes them to heaven. We think their prayer wasn't answered. Well, friend, I want to ask you a question: Were they ever more perfectly whole than they are right now? Were they ever more well than they are right now? Oh, He's able to do "exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think." And when we get to heaven, we're going to thank God for so many prayers we didn't even think were answered. They were answered in God's great way and in God's great time by the exceeding power of God. I would to God that our church could grasp the power of God through prayer! I want to grasp it in my own heart and in my own life.

America's at the crossroads. Memphis is at the crossroads. The communistic noose is tightened and tightening. Doesn't it break your heart to read the newspapers? We sit idly by and giggle, and gorge ourselves with food, and go to our little Bible conferences, and people are being slaughtered by godless anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-democratic government. We're afraid to move. I tell you, communism is an idea, and you can't kill an idea with a bullet. The only thing that will shoot down an idea is a better idea—and that's Jesus Christ. And, brother, we'd better learn how to pray. And rather than sending some airplanes, we'd better send some prayer planes—the power of God!

When the Nazis were marching at Dunkirk, and they were about to push the British into the sea, and Hitler was giggling because he knew that he was closing in on the British forces, and they were backed up, and the national line had failed, and they were backing up, and their backs were to the English Channel, and it looked like he was just going to move in and slaughter them, George VI of England said to the people of England, "For God's sake, if you know how to pray, pray!" And the English prayed with all of their heart, and Britons all over the empire prayed and interceded before God. As a result, God sent a storm over Germany that was so bad, so thick, that a finger could not move. But the English Channel was as smooth as a sheet of glass. And they took warships, and fishing boats, and vessels that ought not to even go across a pond, and

they went there and delivered hundreds of thousands of British soldiers. And it was the beginning of the end for Hitler. And soldiers all over got on their knees and thanked God for His mercy.

I tell you, that God is alive today. That God who delivered in that time can deliver in this time through the power of prayer. *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”* That’s the power of the prayer—the power of the prayer!

## V. The Praise of the Prayer

Now, let me say one last thing: the praise of the prayer. And I’m glad the Apostle Paul, when he prayed, didn’t forget to praise, like so many of us do. He says in verse 21, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* (Ephesians 3:21) He ended his prayer with praise. May I tell you, ladies and gentleman, that we need to learn how to praise. We need to learn to link our prayer with praise. Prayer goes into God’s presence to carry something away. Praise goes into God’s presence to remain there forever. Prayer says *please*. Praise says *thank you*. *Praise without prayer is presumption; but prayer without praise is unbelief.* But prayer and praise is mighty—mighty—when we thank God in everything.

## Conclusion

*“By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6–7)

*All hail the power of Jesus’ name! Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.*

—EDWARD PERRONET

*“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* (Ephesians 3:21)

# Give Him Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 5, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 3:21**

*“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

EPHESIANS 3:21

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Ephesians 3:21—find it in your Bibles, and, when you’ve found it, look up here. It says simply this: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” Now, notice that phrase, “Unto him be glory.”

Our Love Offering theme this year is, “Give Him Glory.” That is the undisputed purpose of any New Testament church, whether it be Bellevue or any other church—it is to give Him glory. And how do we give Him glory? By obeying His great commandment that has said, in Matthew chapter 28 and verses 19 and 20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the earth.”

Now, at Bellevue Baptist Church, we have a Missions Statement, and that Missions Statement is simply a restatement of the Great Commission, as we understand it.

How many of you know that we have a Missions Statement? Lift your hand. All right, I want to show it to you one more time, if you don’t understand what we’re all about as a church, because it’s so important that we be on the same page.

Two men—one man had a pickup truck, backed up to his kitchen door, and there was a stove on it, and the stove seemed to be wedged in the kitchen door, and the man was wrestling with it. A neighbor saw what was happening, jumped up in the back of the pickup truck, and said, “I’ll help you.” And they wrestled and wrestled and wrestled. And, after a while, the neighbor said, “I don’t believe we’ll ever get this stove in the kitchen.” The man said, “Get it in the kitchen. I was trying to put it on the truck.”

Now, we need to be on the same page. We need to understand what we are doing, so we can do it together.

Do you want to see our Missions Statement? All right, I want you to see what it is. “Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose—and here’s a three-fold purpose. Number one: Magnifying Jesus through Worship and the Word. Number two: Moving Believers in Jesus toward Maturity and Ministry. Number three: Making Jesus Known to Our Neighbors and the Nations. Now, central in all of that is who? Jesus—Jesus. That’s what we exist for: to give Him glory in the church. We are to magnify Jesus. We are to move believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry. We are to make Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations. It is so important, ladies and gentlemen, that we sign on to the Missions Statement, that we’ll all be going in the same direction, doing the same thing together in unity.

#### **A. The Fellowship Factor**

Let me tell you why a Missions Statement is so important. First of all is what I want to call the fellowship factor—the fellowship factor. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 10: “Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.” We’re to be on the same page together.

I told our deacons, last deacons’ meeting, “I’m an old has been quarterback. And the quarterback sometimes calls the plays. Sometimes they’re sent in from the bench, from the coach. But it’s so important that if you’re trying to do something, reach a goal, that you all run the same play. The fellowship factor. Did you know that churches that are trying to do the same thing are in fellowship? When you’re all trying to row the boat, you don’t have time to rock it, amen? And so, there’s the fellowship factor.

#### **B. The Focus Factor**

Let me give you another reason that we need a Missions Statement, and that is the focus factor. You know, when we get focused, we get very powerful. The Bible says, in James 1, verse 8, that “a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways.” Well, that would be certainly true of a church. A double-minded church is an unstable church. Think of the power of focused energy.

Do you know what a laser beam is? A laser beam is light that is focused. Now, this light, shining on me, just simply illumines. But if you take and intensify it, and focus it and intensity, it becomes a laser beam that can cut through steel. Have you ever thought of light being able to cut steel? It can do it when it's focused.

When we were little boys, you did the same thing as a little boy, you got a magnifying glass and caught the rays of the sun, and got that little round, white, burning dot there, and tried to set a newspaper on fire. How many boys did that one time? Okay, see? That's a boy thing. And you did some other things. You burned your brother with one of those things. Now, that is focused light.

You see, why do we have a Missions Statement? There's the fellowship factor. There is the focus factor. You know, it's so important. We need more than simple efficiency. Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right thing. We don't just want to be efficient; we want to be effective.

### **C. The Forcefulness Factor**

And then, there's the forcefulness factor, when we have a Missions Statement. You see, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 9: "We are labourers together with God." Oh, the force when all of us get on the same page.

You know, a little snowflake is not much, but a lot of them together can shut a city down—isn't that true? A brick is not much, but you put them together and make a big building like this. You can shove a brick around. It's hard to shove this building around. You see, when we get together, when we become laborers together, there is such force.

### **D. The Future Factor**

And then, there is the future factor. We have a Missions Statement; there's a future factor. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 24, and verses 3 and 4: "Through wisdom a house is built." Nobody sits down to build a house that doesn't first plan that house. It takes wisdom to build a house, whether we're talking about a household—men, women, boys and girls—or whether we're talking about mortar and brick, wood, whatever. It takes plans to do it. Now, if we don't plan, we really don't have a future at Bellevue Baptist Church.

One of the things that has made our church the wonderful church that it is, is that we have planned. And we're in a program right now that we call The Master's Plan. And so, our Missions Statement, again, is Magnifying Jesus through Worship and the Word, Moving Believers in Jesus toward Maturity and Ministry, and then, Making Jesus Known to our Neighbors and the Nations. So let's just break that down a little bit, and see what we're doing. And, by the way, if you're here for the very first time, never been to Bellevue before, the message today is different. And we're talking to our people. We're trying to say one time, let's understand how we give Him glory. "To Him be glory in the

church.” Our Missions Statement is just a way of doing it.

## **I. Magnify Jesus Through Worship and the Word**

Now, let’s think, first of all, about the very first part of that Missions Statement. Our purpose is to Magnify Jesus through Worship and the Word. Let’s put that up on the screen so we can remember it. Magnifying Jesus through Worship and the Word. You see, why are we here? We are here to magnify Jesus. The church is the body of Christ. We are the visible part of the invisible Jesus. And the Jesus in me is the invisible part of the visible Adrian. My job is to give Him glory, to magnify Him.

### **A. Through Worship**

And how do we magnify Him? Number one: through worship. There will always be, there must always be, at Bellevue Baptist Church massive praise. Say amen. There must be massive praise. “God occupies the praise of His people.” Praise is the chief occupation of the angels. It is the great privilege of the church. And praise and worship, magnifying Jesus, is the bottom line. Evangelism is not the bottom line. Evangelism is eminently important. It’s a part of our Missions Statement. But why do we win people to Jesus? So they can worship Him. See, we’re not just getting souls out of hell. We are getting people so they can worship Jesus. That is the bottom line. And our Music Department up here is not to entertain you. They’re not even to worship for you. They are to lead you in worship. And they don’t lead in worship; they lead by worship. And, in the choir, when they sing, they’re not just simply singing; they are worshipping, and they are leading us by worship. The worst thing that could be said about any musical rendition is not that it’s off beat or out of tune, but that it’s addressed to the wrong person. Our praise ought to rise up to God.

And then, we have in Bellevue Baptist Church literally thousands enrolled in the music program. Brother Jim, how many now enrolled in music? Four thousand two hundred in the music program. You saw all these boys and girls here with the violins today. Thank God they’re doing what the Bible commands—“Praise Him on the stringed instruments.” The Bible says, “Let everything that hath voice praise the Lord.” We do this in so many ways. The Performing Arts Center, the children’s musical, the marching band, the violins, the banners, the pageants, the congregational singing. And, by the way, you are to sing when we have a song service. Don’t sit there like a wooden Indian. You’re to sing, or you disobey your Lord, if you don’t sing. You’re to praise Him. And we magnify Jesus through worship. Praise is not optional.

### **B. Through the Word**

And then, not only through worship, but through the Word. The preaching of the Word of God will always be central in Bellevue Baptist Church—this book, the preaching of the

Word of God. That's right. But more than the preaching of the Word of God, we have Fellowship Bible Classes. When you're in this big Worship Center here, you don't need to know everybody's name. There's one name that's important, and that's Jesus. But you need to be in a Fellowship Bible Class where they know you by name, when they miss you when you're absent, where they pray for you when you have a problem, they visit you when you're in the hospital—that's the Fellowship Bible Class. And, if you're just simply a Sunday morning bench warmer here, you've missed what Bellevue is all about. We're making Jesus known in those Fellowship Bible Classes. That's the reason we have a bookstore ministry. The bookstore for us is not a business; it is a ministry. That's the reason we have conferences and seminars and special groups. That's the reason we have Vacation Bible School, and the best Vacation Bible School, I think, in the whole wide world is put on here at Bellevue Baptist Church. That's the reason that we teach our people not only to come and worship and sit in a Bible Class, but also privately to have a quiet time, to get alone with God, because we are worshiping Jesus, Magnifying Jesus Through Worship and the Word. That's what we are about. That's the first thing that we're here to do.

## **II. Move Believers in Jesus Toward Maturity and Ministry**

But what else are we here to do? Not only to Magnify Jesus Through Worship and the Word, but we're to give Him glory by Moving Believers in Jesus Toward Maturity and Ministry.

Now, you can be young only once, but you can be immature for a long time. What we want you to do is to be mature. The Bible gives a plan in Ephesians chapter 4. We were in chapter 3, but in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 13, Paul says, "Here's what we're going to do, and keep on doing it, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and unto the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man." The word perfect here doesn't mean sinless. The Bible says Jesus, the captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering. That certainly doesn't mean He was made sinless. He already was sinless. The word perfect means mature, like you see a rose in full bloom, you say, "That's a perfect rose." We're to be "...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

What is the standard for a member of Bellevue Baptist Church? Jesus—to be like Jesus. How do we measure our ministry—the size of these buildings, the number in Sunday School, the amount of the offering, baptism? No! Here's the way we measure our ministry: Are the members of this church becoming more like Jesus? If not, this church is one colossal failure; if we're not moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry. It is to be like Jesus. And, by the way, stop comparing yourself to other people, and even stop comparing yourself by yourself. The Bible says, when a man

measures himself by himself, he's not wise. Many of us will lie down in the gutter, stretch ourselves out along some old hypocrite, and say, "I'm longer than he is; I must be okay." No, you measure yourself by Jesus.

You know what sin is? Sin is just simply coming short of the glory of God. Who is the glory of God? Jesus Christ. We are to be like Jesus. That gap between who you are and what He is—that's the thing that we need to be working on. We need to become more and more like Jesus.

Now, we're moving believers toward maturity, and then moving believers toward ministry. You see, you have to be mature in order to minister. Little babies have to be served. We have a number of people here in this church who never do one blessed thing except get served, and some of them have been members of this church for a long time. Our job, our duty, our goal, our plan, is to help you to discover, to develop, and to deploy—put to use—your spiritual ministry. Now, how do we do this? Well, while we're here, we have some of our new members who are right across the street right now having breakfast together and in a study we call that the Discovery Class. And a part of that Discovery Class is to help our new members to understand their spiritual gift and what opportunities for ministry there are. We have Neighborhood Fellowships. All over this city, we have little enclaves that meet not by age group, but by neighborhoods, meeting every so often and fellowshiping together. We have Women's Ministry. Our ladies meet down here on Tuesdays and other times, incredible ministry to our women, meeting the needs of women, as women. We have Moms groups, helping these mothers to teach these little toddlers, and all this. We have a Men's Ministry, helping men to meet together as men, to learn how to overcome temptations, and how to love their children, and all of that. We have an Activities Ministry, the Grace Building. We call it GRACE—Giving Recreation A Christian Emphasis. A part of our Love Offering today is to help develop the Activities Building in a greater way. It is an incredible ministry. Thousands come to Christ through the Activities Ministry. More than 100,000 people will visit our Activities program, some of them the same people, but in a year 100,000 visits. We have a Prayer Ministry here at Bellevue Baptist Church, where there's prayer that goes on twenty-four hours a day, around the clock. I'm a part of that. My time is on Monday mornings, from 7:00 to 7:30 for my part of the Prayer Ministry. My wife is in a prayer chain from 6:30 to 7:00. She says, "Adrian, I'm turning the Prayer Ministry over to you." And I'm praying. I'm praying for you, praying for this church. And then, at 7:30, I call Pat Caldwell, and I say, "Pat, I'm turning the Prayer Ministry over to you." And that's the way the Prayer Ministry goes here at our church. We don't have to come down here. We just pick up the phone. We have that prayer link. We have a Campus Ministry. We're making Jesus known on the school campuses. The Bellevue Christian Fellowship is a recognized Campus Ministry at the University of Memphis. Our high school is



making inroads into hundreds of schools here across the Mid-South. And thank God for these young people from Arkansas who are here today, high schoolers not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, what we're doing is saying that every member is a minister. Now, if you believe that, say amen. All right now, if you're not ministering, ask yourself, Don't say amen, but say, "Oh me, why am I not doing what I ought to be doing?" We are here to be Moving Believers in Jesus Toward Maturity and Ministry.

### **III. Making Jesus Known to Our Neighbors and the Nations**

Now, let's go to the third and final thing that we're to be doing here at Bellevue Baptist Church. We're to be Making Jesus Known to our Neighbors and the Nations. Now, thank God for all of the things that we do, but, unless we share the gospel, we're not worthy of the dirt on which this building is built.

Now, how are we Making Jesus Known to our Neighbors and the Nations? Well, first of all, we have a Lighthouse Ministry. What is the Lighthouse Ministry? Remember, in our Missions Conference, we talked about the lighthouse. Joyce and I made our house a lighthouse. You make your house a lighthouse. That's just simply saying that I will take the neighbors to my right to pray for and minister; I'll take the neighbors to my left to pray for and minister to; I'll take the neighbors across the street and behind me to pray for and minister to, and meet their needs. Share Jesus with them. Share the love of Church. Make friends with them. Many of us don't even know our neighbors. So we're to soak our neighbors in prayer, and that is a wonderful ministry, making Jesus known to our neighbors. We teach our people another program that's called Making Friends Forever. We encourage you not only with your neighbors, but people in school, or people on the job, or people in the club, or people in the store, make a friend of those people. You say, "Well, I'm a Christian. I don't fellowship with unsaved people." You're a little better than Jesus, aren't you? Jesus was a friend of sinners—a friend of sinners. Making Friends Forever. Make friends of people. And then, share your testimony with those people. Invite them to the conferences. Invite them to the opportunities. Invite them, for example, to the Singing Christmas Tree that will be here before long. What a great opportunity to invite a friend who will hear of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rick Warren says that churches grow deeper through discipleship; churches grow stronger through worship; churches grow broader through ministry; churches grow larger through evangelism. And I was telling new members this morning, I met with them—people ask, "How big will Bellevue be when it's big enough?" Friend, Bellevue Baptist Church will be big enough when all 6 billion people on the earth know Jesus. If we're not making a dent on the population. We need a lot of Bellevues. And there's nothing wrong with a small church. But there's something wrong with a church that doesn't have a vision and a passion for reaching soul for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now,

we do this through Neighborhood Fellowships. We do this through the Lighthouse Ministry. We do this through Making Friends Forever. We do this through E. E.—Evangelism Explosion. I was just meeting one of our young deacons and newest deacons. I said, “How did you start coming to Bellevue?” They said an E. E. team came by and talked to us, and shared Jesus Christ with us, and now that person, that man and his wife, were gloriously saved. They’re in the church now serving as deacons in this church.

We’re beginning a new evangelism program at Bellevue called Faith. What’s the difference between E. E. and Faith? They’re not in competition, but Faith is a way of energizing Sunday School classes to use the Sunday School class as a base for evangelism and bring souls to Christ. We don’t call it Sunday School anymore. We call them Bible Fellowships.

But there ought to be an evangelistic note in every service. When I preach, I give an invitation. I say, “Come to Jesus.” And sometimes people will say, “Well, you know, I don’t like evangelism. I like worship.” Let me tell you something. You’re spiritually sick—spiritually sick. I never worship better than when souls are getting saved. I mean, to me, when I see people coming, giving their hearts, their lives, to Jesus Christ. If there is not an evangelistic note in your heart, there’s nothing wrong with you that a good dose of salvation, or an old-fashioned revival, wouldn’t cure. I mean, if you don’t love souls, that’s a clenched fist in the face of your Commander-in-Chief, who has commanded us to go and make disciples.

We are making Jesus known to our neighbors. That’s the reason we have the pageants. That’s the reason we have the Passion Play. That’s the reason we have Celebrate America. That’s the reason we have the Singing Tree. Why? To make Jesus known to our neighbors. Do you think we do all this work just for entertainment? Jim Whitmire says it is a gigantic, a colossal, fishhook, to make Jesus known. We get people here, and yes, we hope it will be entertaining, because we want to hold their attention, and tell them about Jesus. Since you’ve been putting on the pageants, how many people have made confessions of faith? Listen to this. Since we’ve been having the pageants—listen—78,000 people have said, “I have prayed to receive Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.” We’re talking about people who’ve heard the plan of salvation explained to them, who’ve check on the card “I’ve prayed to receive to Christ.” They don’t all join Bellevue Baptist Church, nor should they. Many people, who are members of churches, never really have understood how to be saved. Thank God for that.

We have here Making Jesus Known to our Neighbors; we have something known as Community Missions. It is a full activity. We have a fulltime staff headed up by Phil Weatherwax to work in our community and the inner city of our community to make

Jesus Christ known. We have what they call block parties. They'll go and have an area with a cookout and entertainment and clowns, and then finally bring the kids in, and the adults, and share Jesus Christ in a block party. We have 350 active volunteers who work in block parties in the inner city.

We have a prison ministry. People of our church are going into the prisons. We have 50 active volunteers that have a prison ministry here.

We have a ministry called I Care, going into the hospitals. We have 50 active volunteers going in the hospitals, sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

We have an Apartment Ministry. We're going into apartment complexes. We have 15 volunteers who are working in apartment complexes sharing Jesus Christ.

We have a Hispanic Ministry. We have many new Hispanics who are moving into this area, a great number of them. We're working now, together with Mario and others, to begin a Spanish church. And we have a great number of Hispanics who attend this service, and it's translated into Spanish, right as I am preaching.

We have an Adopt-a-School Ministry, where we adopt schools, go into that school, and help public school to do what we can. We have 17 active volunteers there.

We have a Truck Stop Ministry where we go into truck stops, and talk to truckers, and share with truckers the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We work in the Memphis Union Mission, to help there. What a wonderful ministry that is, and we have 10 active volunteers, who work there with the Memphis Union.

We have the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Thank God for these athletes. Next service, we'll have a whole football team here through the emphasis of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and I thank God for that. We have 25 volunteers who are working with these young athletes.

We have Vacation Bible School, not only here, but we have neighborhood Vacation Bible Schools with 200 active volunteers, going out into the neighborhoods putting on Vacation Bible Schools.

We have Assisted Care in ten facilities with 30 volunteers.

Right now—right now—we are building a Mission Center in Frayser for literacy classes, for distribution of food, for distribution of clothes, for job training, and also to evangelize and hope that will be the nucleus of several churches that will be spun off there, building a wonderful Community Missions Center.

Last year, there were 2,429 individuals who worked in Community Missions, and last year they saw of 1,400 give their hearts to Jesus Christ through these ministries. And that's just the nucleus. It's beginning.

So, what are we here for? We're making Jesus known to our neighbors. We're not just sitting here, drawing our breath, and saying, "Jesus is wonderful," but we're here as a church to make Jesus known to our neighbors.

And then, to make Jesus known to the nations. We're sharing Jesus Christ with the whole world. This ministry called Love Worth Finding goes out around the world to 120 nations. I was just down in Argentina. I met so many people who came up to me, and said, "Oh, we watch you on El Amor Que Vale." That's just Spanish for Love Worth Finding. "We watch you there." I was speaking to some people this morning from South Africa, and they said, "Oh, yes, thank God for the ministry of Love Worth Finding." We can be heard in the Middle East. Saddam Hussein can listen to Love Worth Finding, if he wants to listen to it. He needs to. And I thank God that, across America, tomorrow morning, more than 800 radio stations, almost 900 stations, in America will hear Love Worth Finding. There's not a state in the union where Love Worth Finding cannot be heard. There's not a province in Canada where Love Worth Finding cannot be heard. Love Worth Finding can be heard on the borders of our nation in Canada and Mexico, and so forth, as we're making Jesus known to the nations.

And then, we sent this past year 359 who have gone overseas—not just prayed for missions, but have gone overseas, sharing the gospel. These people paid their own way to go. They trained themselves. We have members of our church who've learned to speak and preach in Spanish. They've learned Spanish, just so they can go and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. These people are going. We've had, this past year, over 15 trips, mission trips, by Bellevue Baptist Church. These people shared Jesus through medical things, through business contacts, through governmental contacts. I just recently met with the Mayor of Mendoza, Argentina, and shared the gospel of Christ with him, talked to business people there. We have basketball teams that go. We have people who go with their own hands, and brick and mortar, and build church buildings, and we've done it this past year. There are actually church buildings that are standing because Bellevue members have built them. Last year, we gave out of our giving here—what you give—almost 3½ million dollars to missions. And then, on top of that, we had people, out of their own pockets, to pay their own way, raised about another 400,000 dollars to go and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm telling you that we must always have a missionary heart and an evangelistic heart. And a church that's not interested in making Jesus known to her neighbors and the nations is a religious farce. That's our job. That is the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And there are plenty of people who come and say, "Well, I don't know why we need more parking. I have a place to park. I don't know why we need more. I have a place to sit." What we're saying to the rest of the community and the rest of the world, "Well, you can just go to hell. I'm satisfied with what I am and where I am." No, we exist—we exist—we breathe, we live to make Jesus known. A church exists by evangelism like a fire exists by burning.

So, what is the mission of Bellevue Baptist Church? The mission of Bellevue Baptist

Church is Magnifying Jesus through Worship and the Word. What is the mission of Bellevue Baptist Church? It is Moving Believers in Jesus toward Maturity, helping us to grow up and be like Christ. And then, to find a job. And it is, then, Making Jesus Known to our Neighbors and the Nations.

Sometimes people say, “The church is on its way out.” No, sir. Well, it is, if you think about the right way. Friend, first of all, Jesus called the church out. Secondly, Jesus has sent the church out. And soon, He’s coming to take the church out. I’m telling you, the grandest organization on the face of this earth is a Spirit-filled, New Testament, Bible-believing, Christ-honoring, worshiping, praising church.

Now, the devil doesn’t like what’s happening. Have you ever thought right now we are in the greatest spiritual struggle that I’ve personally seen in all of my ministry? Right now, we see colossal forces colliding, and this is no time to be asleep.

There was a missionary in the jungle. True story. James Dobson shared it. That missionary opened the door of his hut, and he looked in there. There was a gigantic snake. I mean, like a boa constrictor, or a python. One of these that can swallow a whole pig had come in, and was inside there. And the missionary, then, he went out to his car, his truck. He had a revolver. He got his revolver. He had one shell. Kind of sounds like Barney, doesn’t it? Barney Fife. Had one shell. He went in there, and carefully aimed at the head of that monstrous snake, and pulled the trigger, and hit that snake in the head. That snake was mortally wounded, but he did not die right away. When he was shot in the head like that, he began to writhe and thrash and writhe, and his tail was going this way and that way. He literally tore up everything in that hut, just tore it up as he was dying

I want to tell you something. Jesus, at Calvary, put that bullet right in Satan’s head. Bang. And all what we’re seeing now are the death throes of someone who has been mortally wounded by the cross of Jesus Christ. And we’re in a battle—we’re in a battle. But, friend, it’s not that we’re going to win; we have won. There is victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that old serpent can twist and writhe and do all that he wants to do, but I thank God that we’re on the winning team.

Next Sunday—next Sunday—we’re coming with a Love Offering. You’re coming with a crown. You’ve received a crown in the mail. If you haven’t, you need to. If you don’t, call our office and let us know, because we’re going to come and lay those crowns at the feet of the cross. And we’re going to come with our Love Offering, a sacrificial Love Offering. We’re not going to just tip God. We are going to give Him honor. We’re going to give Him glory. We’re going to be a part of a church that’s doing something to reach the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Now, let me tell you again as you're praying this week about making your Love Offering, I want to give you some indisputable facts. Now, you listen, and see if I'm telling you anything that is not true.

God knows what the need is. Is that right? Okay, nobody can argue with that. Number two: God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through you. Anybody argue with that? No. Number three: God is able to reveal that to you, if you will ask Him, and open your heart. Can anybody disagree with that? Of course not. Number four: what God tells you to do, you're able to do. Can anybody argue with that? I mean, would God tell you to do something you can't do? No. Number five: what you're able to do when God tells you, you must depend on God to do. God's not going to tell you something you can do all by yourself. No, no. All right, you see? God will tell you something to do that you cannot do apart from Him. I'm not trying to set the amount for you. "Well," you say, "I could give something apart from God." You can't even really take a breath apart from Him. Have you ever stopped praying "Give us this day our daily bread," just because you've got a closet full? Be careful. You're going to have to depend upon God to do it. Now, watch this. God knows the need. He's able to make you to know the need. What He makes you to know, you're able to do. You depend upon Him. Last of all, when you do it that way, who gets the glory? God—God. God gets the glory. Who gets the joy? We get the joy. Love Offering for you can be a success, no matter what anyone else gives. You do what God tells you to do, and, friend, you've already had victory. Amen. You have given Him the glory.

Next Sunday's going to be a wonderful day. Don't you miss it. Oh, there'll be some folks who will stay away because it's Love Offering Sunday. Well, they'll just brighten up place by not being here. I'm telling you something, folks, next Sunday is going to be one of the most glorious times we've ever had in the life of our church.

What is the purpose of Bellevue Baptist Church? To Him be glory in the church, world without end. Amen." We are here to give Him glory. Jim, let's sing that chorus again, "Give Him Glory." Let's stand together as we sing it.

Song

Give Him glory;

Give Him Praise

Worship Him with all your heart,

In all your ways;

For He alone is worthy,

Of the best that we can give.

All the glory,

All the honor.

All the glory,  
Give Him glory.  
Give Him glory,  
Give Him praise.  
Worship Him with all your heart,  
In all your ways;  
For He alone is worthy,  
Of the best that we can give.  
All the glory,  
All the honor.  
All the glory,  
Give Him glory.

Now, if you want to be a part of something wonderful, you need to be a part of His kingdom. You need to be His child. You need to be saved. You need to be heaven-born, heaven-bound, not just existing. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life." If you want Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you may be saved today. I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that Jesus Christ will save you today, and keep you forever, if you will trust Him with a child-like faith. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." He has already paid for your sin with His blood on the cross. He is ready to save you. He extends His arms to you this morning. And I'm going to ask you to do something in just a moment. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister to welcome those of you who come. And I want you to say to that minister, "I'm trusting Jesus." Most of the people here have already done that. Don't worry about what they think. They will be thrilled. They're praying. You just come and say, "I'm trusting Jesus." We will rejoice. We'll give you some Scripture, answer any questions, and seal it with you in prayer. You can go home today a child of God. Don't wait to see what anyone else is going to do. If you've felt something stirring in your heart today, and you're saying, "I want to be a part of what God is doing, I want to be saved, I want to be a part of something wonderful," I'm going to ask you to say, "I'm trusting Jesus."

Others of you who are already members of some church somewhere, and you know that you're saved, but you live here now, you worship here, or you want to. I'm going to invite you to come at the same time and tell the minister, "I want to place my membership here."

Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful

that is. If you're in the balcony, just go to that banner up there that says REDEEMER, if you're on this side, or go to that banner that says MESSIAH on this side. Somebody is there to welcome you. And, all across the front, somebody is waiting for you. You start out and come on the very first stanza. If you're with this group of high schoolers, and you've really never been saved—some of our high school students, junior high school students, members of the church, never really been saved, got saved. Thank God for that. You want to come, you come. Any member of this church, you're not sure you're saved, let's get it settled today. And we're going to sing; and, as we sing, we're going to pray, and as soon as we begin, you step out and be down this aisle to say yes to Jesus Christ. Let's sing.



# A Unified Church (One in the Bond of Love)

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 2, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4

*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

EPHESIANS 4:3

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Ground of Our Unity
  - II. The Glory of Our Diversity
  - III. The Goal of Our Maturity
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 4. I'm beginning a series of messages that I'm going to be preaching, God willing, all this month and next month that is going to be a distillation of things that I want you to remember, things that I have tried to teach you for more than 32 blessed years.

Now, if you have Ephesians chapter 4, look up here. I want to tell you a story I heard about a man who was shipwrecked. He was on a desert island, and he was there by himself: single, all alone. He had to forage for himself. Finally, after years, someone came to rescue him. And there he had taken care of things pretty well. He had a nice house that he'd built, almost like a mansion. Next to the house he had constructed a church, and he even put a steeple on top of it. But next to that was another fine, magnificent building. Those who came to rescue him said, "What is that big place there?" He said, "Well, that's my house. That's where I live." "What is that next door? It looks like a church." He said, "It is a church. I built myself a church." They said, "Well, what is that other building?" "Oh," he said, "that's another church." He said, "I had an argument in the old one and moved my membership."

So many times the problem is on the inside, is it not? I want to talk to you about unity in the church—unity in the church. My prayer for Bellevue is that she will continue to be, and evermore be, a unified church. And so, this first message in this series of messages

is, “Unity in the Church.”

Now, I want you to look at a particular part of the Scripture here this morning, Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 3. Paul says we are to be “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Is that not beautiful—the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? What a beautiful concept. This is the desire of God for Bellevue Baptist Church, that we have the unity of the Spirit, that we have the bond of peace. Psalm 133, verse 1, says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” And the Bible also says that God hates him who sows discord among the brethren.

Now, this unity is a wonderful unity. We do not produce it. It is called the unity of the Spirit. But while we do not produce it, we are to preserve it. And that is my prayer for this dear church in the years to come.

Now, this unity is based on three basic concepts, and I want us to learn these concepts today because they’re very, very important.

## **I. The Ground of Our Unity**

The first concept that we’re going to learn is what I want to call the ground of our unity—the ground of our unity. Now, the ground of our unity is truth. It is doctrinal and spiritual. If you were to go out in the front of this building there at the portico, you would find seven magnificent pillars. And each of those pillars is named for seven basic truths that are found in the Word of God here in Ephesians chapter 4. They hold up the entire spiritual enterprise of our church. No one can call himself a Bible Christian who does not believe these seven basic truths, which are the foundation of our unity.

Now, look again in Ephesians chapter 4 this time, 3 through 6: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Now, again, I want to say that the basis of our unity, the ground of our unity, is doctrinal and spiritual. Now, don’t let anybody tell you that doctrine doesn’t matter. If our church ceases to hold these great truths, she will lose her unity.

Now, what do I mean by unity? Well, I don’t mean unison. Now, unison may be all right if you’re in the choir, but everybody doesn’t have to sing the same note. That would be boring. We can sing in harmony without singing in unison. And I’m not talking, secondly, about uniformity. We don’t have to be a congregation of clones. We don’t all have to look alike and dress alike. Somebody said to me, “Do you have to wear a coat and a tie at Bellevue?” Absolutely not! We on the platform do, but I may change my mind after a while. Look. It is not that we come along here in uniforms. Uniformity comes from without; unity comes from within. We’re not even talking about union. Union

and unity are not necessarily the same. You can be in the same church and not be in unity. Somebody has said you can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline—you have union, but you don't have unity. Now, if you're an animal lover, a cat lover, only an illustration. I'm not suggesting that at all.

What do we mean by unity? It is doctrinal and it is spiritual. That is the ground of our unity, these seven truths.

Now, let's think about these seven truths. And, Bellevue, I want you to get a bulldog grip on these seven truths.

Number one: There is one body. Do you see that there in Ephesians 4, verse 4? One body. Now, what is that one body? That one body is the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, it doesn't say one congregation. The body of Christ is bigger than Bellevue Baptist Church. But there is one body. The church is a spiritual body. The church is not a corporation with Jesus as the president; the church is a body with Jesus as the head. That's all of the difference in the world. Now, again, I want to say, not one denomination. Somebody said, "Are you one of those narrow-minded Baptists who think only Baptists are going to heaven?" I'm more narrow-minded than that. I think a lot of Baptists are not going to make it. But whether you're a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, if you have given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you have been twice-born, you are a part of the mystical body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, there is a local expression of that body. And the Bible speaks of the church here, and the church there, and the church here and there, because not only is there that great universal church, there is that local New Testament body. Now, look up here and let me tell you something. From my study of the Scriptures, I sincerely, honestly believe that every twice-born person ought to be a member of a local New Testament congregation. Do you believe that? Now, you ought to be a member of a local church. Now, you're welcome at Bellevue. But if not Bellevue, you need to be a member of some local New Testament church. That is the plan of God.

I've told Brother Whitmire about a man one time who came to the Minister of Music and said, "I'd like to sing in your choir." And the Minister of Music said, "Well, are you a member of this church?" He said, "No, sir." He said, "Well, what church are you a member of?" He said, "I'm a member of the invisible church." He said, "Well, I have a suggestion for you. You sing in the invisible choir."

No! You see, a church is a unified body here with pastor and deacons and servants, and you need to be a part of this church. There is one church. Now, that brings unity. And may I say, precious friend, that if you are a disunified person, if you sow discord in the church, number one, you dishonor the head, who is Jesus, and number two, you wound and mutilate yourself, because we are members of the same body.

Now, not only is there one body; there's also one Spirit. Do you see that in verse 4?

One Spirit. There He's talking about the Holy Spirit, who is the substance of our life, the secret of our strength, and the source of our unity. The Holy Spirit is the one who binds us together, who tells us that we belong one to another.

Now, most of us here don't know everybody's name. As a matter of fact, I doubt that anyone does. Matter of fact, I'm sure that no one does, except God. We don't know all the other names, but we know the one dear Holy Spirit that dwells in each of us, and that is the source of our unity: the Holy Spirit of God. Bellevue has a wonderful, glorious unity. Sometimes people can't understand it. How can you be so big and yet have a spirit of unity? Because the Holy Spirit that is in me is in you. And not only does God's Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we're children of God, but God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to one another.

I sat down on an airplane. A man sat down beside me. I made up my mind I was going to witness to him. I turned to him and raised the subject of spiritual things. "Oh," he said, "you're a believer, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "So am I." And he said, "Mister, I want to tell you something strange." He said, "I felt your spirit when I sat down beside you. When I sat beside you, something in me said, 'He's one of us. He is a believer.'" There is one Spirit.

Dr. Vance Havner has said this: "We're not to be wired together by organization, frozen together by formalism, rusted together by tradition, but melted together by one Spirit.

Now, there's a third basic truth here, and that is, we have one hope. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 4: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." What is that one hope? It is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls His coming the blessed hope. All true believers in Christ are waiting for Jesus Christ to come again. You cannot call yourself a Bible Christian if you do not believe in this one hope, the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, we have people have different views of the Second Coming of Jesus. They have technical terms, amillennial, premillennial, postmillennial. Some say, "I don't understand those terms." Well, let me tell you this, folks. You don't have to know the meaning of every detail to be expecting the Lord Jesus to come again. And the longer I've been on the trail, the more I have gotten humble about this matter of prophecy, and I've moved from the Program Committee to the Welcome Committee. And I want to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." There is one hope, and it is the Second Coming of our Lord. And I believe that we're getting very close.

Let's go back to this calamity that has happened there, this tsunami, where multiplied thousands of people were swept into eternity by a gigantic tidal wave traveling at 500 miles an hour. People lying there on the beach sunning themselves, drinking some cooling liquid, suddenly gone just like that.

I told Brother Mark this morning, I said, “You know, the Bible speaks in Matthew 24 about the signs of the ends of the time, and it talks about earthquakes and calamities and all of these things. And then Jesus said all of these are the beginning of sorrows.” And the word for sorrows is the word for birth pangs. When a woman is going to deliver a baby, she has what is called there in Matthew 24 sorrows. They are labor pains. Then I told Brother Mark, “You know, from my understanding of the thing—and I am a bona fide father and grandfather, though I’ve never given birth to a baby—that there comes a time when the contractions get especially severe, especially strong. Jesus said, when these things come to pass, then look up.” I believe sincerely, without being a sensationalist, we’re living in the closing shadows of an age, and our one hope, and the only hope, of this world is the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And then, Bellevue not only has one Spirit, and Bellevue not only has one hope, but Bellevue confesses one Lord. Now, notice what he says. “One Lord—in verse 5—One Lord.” Who is that one Lord? That one Lord is Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jim, for singing about the Lord Jesus. Jim said, “When I come to Bellevue, I expect to hear about Jesus.” And may it always be. And, by the way, did you know that the early church did not call Him Jesus nearly so much as they called Him the Lord Jesus—the Lord Jesus. I think we need to get in the habit of saying the Lord Jesus.

Now, He has not come to take my side, or your side, or to take Bellevue’s side against some other church, or over some other church, or even over Hollywood, or over the casinos, or whatever. When Joshua came against Jericho, Joshua went out one morning. Jericho was a pagan city. And Joshua, the general, went out to reconnoiter and to see what the situation was like. And while Joshua was out there, he was aware of a presence behind him. And he wheeled around and there he saw a man with a drawn sword. And Joshua was astounded. He said to this man, “Who are you? Are you for us or are you for them? Whose side are you on?” And the one, the angel with the drawn sword, said, “Neither. As the captain of the Lord’s host, I have come.” Do you know what he was saying? “Look. I’m not for them; I’m not for you. I haven’t come to take sides. I’ve come to take over.” And that’s what we want here at Bellevue Baptist Church—for the one Lord, the captain of the Lord’s host, Jesus Christ Himself, to be the head of this church. Jesus must always, must always, must always—always, always, always—be the Lord of our dear church.

And then, Bellevue has one faith. Look, if you will, in verse 5. He mentions there one faith. Now, what is that one faith? He’s talking about the unified body of truth that we call the Bible. Not a faith, not faith, but one faith. He’s talking about a body of truth. That’s what Jude was talking about there in Jude verse 3: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith—the faith; not a faith, the

faith—which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” There is one faith. It is God’s revealed Word. We’re to earnestly contend for it. Bellevue, you get a bulldog grip on this book and never let go. Never let go! There is one faith. We don’t need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. If it’s new, it’s not true. And if it’s not absolute, it’s obsolete. It is the one faith of this church. And may this sacred desk always have a man who stands behind it who will open the Word of God, analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it. Now, we can have all other kinds of programs, but we must have this one faith.

The dear old Apostle Paul, just before he stepped off the scene, said this: “I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.” He was faithful to the fight, faithful to the finish. He was faithful to the faith. Bellevue must never waiver.

Next, Bellevue shares one baptism. Look in verse 5: one baptism. Now, is He here talking about immersion or sprinkling? No. He’s talking about something that goes beyond that. When a person gives his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the mystical body of Christ. That is, you are placed, at the moment of your salvation, into the body of Christ. Remember, I said that the church is a body with Christ as the head? We are the members. When are you baptized? Before you were ever baptized in water, you were baptized with the Holy Spirit of God and into the body of Christ.

Put this verse down—1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This is the Holy Spirit of God putting us into the mystical body of Christ. And that’s what makes us one.

Now, we believe in water baptism, but water baptism only symbolizes that which takes place when one man or a woman gives his or her heart to Jesus. Sometimes we hear people talk about, “Well, you’ve been saved. Now, have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost?” Friend, if you’re saved, you’ve already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Nowhere in the New Testament is a believer told to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We’re told to be filled with the Spirit. The baptism takes place at the moment of your salvation. There is one baptism. There may be many fillings, but there is only one baptism.

And then, Bellevue worships one God. He is not Allah. He is Yahweh, Jehovah God. Ephesians 4, verse 6: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” His name is Jehovah, and you do not know Him apart from Jesus Christ. “No one comes to the Father, but by me,” the Lord Jesus has said.

Now, look up here. Those are seven basic foundational truths, and our unity is in these truths. That is the ground of our unity.

## II. The Glory of Our Diversity

But now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: not only the ground of our unity, but the glory of our diversity. Did you know that God made us one and God made us different all at the same time? Look now in verse 7—Ephesians 4, verse 7: “But...”—do you see the word but? He's changing direction. He's been talking about our sameness, doctrinally, but then He, in contradistinction, uses the word but—“But unto every one of us is given grace...”—the Greek word for grace is *charis*. It's the word we get charismatic from: “Unto every one of us is given *charisma*, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Now, God gave Mark gifts that He didn't give me. God gave Whitmire gifts that He didn't give to Mark. God gave you gifts that He didn't give to your husband or your wife. These are spiritual gifts. God made us different in this church. And so, not only do we have our unity; we have our diversity. I told you ahead of time that this is not to be a congregation of clones. What we have is unity in diversity.

Now, I'm not talking about diversity about doctrine. Romans chapter 16, verse 17, says, “Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” No, there's not room for every kind of belief, but there is room for people who have different gifts.

God gave us different gifts that He might make us one. And you have a grace gift. “Unto every one of us,” the Scripture says here, “is given grace, charisma.” And God gave you a gift to serve Him. And I've been saying now for 30 years and more, my heart just leaps out of my throat when I think what would happen if every member of our church were to discover, develop, and deploy his gift. A spiritual gift is not for your ecstasy. It's not a toy; it's a tool. And you have a spiritual gift. And there is a place of service for you here in Bellevue Baptist Church. And God gave us different gifts. God gave us gifts that are different to make us one.

You see, sameness is not unity. As a matter of fact, unity comes from diversity. I'll give you a perfect illustration of that. Joyce is a girl and I'm a boy. We have unity because she's different. It's the differences that draw us together. I'm glad Joyce is not like me. I'd just as soon hug a barrel of pickles as to hug another man. She's different. Viva la difference! God makes us different. God gifts you a gift, and you a gift, and you a gift, and these gifts, and we don't have to march in locked step.

Now, one of the difficulties of a church like Bellevue is we have different tastes also. One time, some years ago, we had a southern gospel quartet come in this church and sing. And, you know, I'm not as sophisticated as Whitmire; I like southern gospel, but I want to tell you about these people that came in here to sing. They were good. But, folks, I saw that night people in this church I've never seen before and haven't seen since. I mean, they were groupies going around for southern gospel. And I'm not

opposed to that. We had a good time that night. I was blessed.

Next Wednesday night, I preached a sermon. Before I got started, I asked, “How many of you like liver and onions?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “All right now, let me ask you another question. How many of you detest liver and onions, can’t stand liver and onions?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “Now, I want to ask you another question. How many of you like liver and onions, but only ever so often?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “Now, look, folks, we are hopelessly divided.” Here’s a congregation divided. What were we divided over? Not Jesus. We were divided over tastes, and those things don’t make any difference whatsoever.

Now, I hear people say, ‘Well, this is my style of music. That is my style of music.’ Friend, forget that stuff! We’re here to glorify the Lord Jesus. Your next pastor may have some different ideas about music than I have. Then you will love him and follow him and believe him. We’re going to be one body in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, there is the glory of our diversity. We are to celebrate. We are to conserve our diversity. We don’t all have to sing in unison.

### **III. The Goal of Our Maturity**

Now, here’s the third and final thing. I want you to see, friend, the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, but also the goal of our maturity. Now, why do we have this unity and this diversity? Well, verse 13 tells us. What’s the goal? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—the word perfect means mature—unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Peace comes with unity, diversity, and maturity. Little children squabble and fuss; mature adults learn how to get along with one another. Bickering comes from immaturity, and may God preserve this church ever from bickering. We’re to be mature. We’re to be mature in stature. Look in verse 13: “unto the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

You want to know whether you’re growing up or not? Don’t measure yourself by some other member of this church. Measure yourself by Jesus Christ. I’ve frequently told you, the measure of my ministry is this: not the size of these buildings, or our budget, or our Bible study attendance. Are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? We’re to be mature in stature.

We’re to be mature in stability. Look in verse 14: “That we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Get your feet on the rock. Paul told the Ephesian church, he said, “I know that after my departure there will come grievous wolves, not sparing the flock.”

Let me tell you about the false cults. The false cults do not produce converts nearly



so much as they try to siphon off Bible believers who don't understand. And so, because they're not rooted and grounded in the faith, they're drawn away into these things. They're like little sailboats blown this way and blown that way, "blown about by every wind of doctrine."

Look up here, church. You get a bulldog grip on the truth. You college students, you get a grip on the truth, these seven basic principles. Now, you can be different in a lot of things, but when you grow up, when you mature, you're going to be mature in stature, you're going to be mature in stability, you're going to be mature in speech. Look in verse 15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up." Speaking the truth in love. We're not to speak truthless love or loveless truth. We're to speak the truth—never stutter, never stammer, never apologize. Speak the truth, but in love. Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy.

Now, the Bible is a wonderful sword; it's a poor club. Don't you be a Bible bully, argumentative over the difference between tweedledee and tweedledum. Yes, we're never to jettison the truth, but we speak the truth in love. We're mature in stature, mature in stability, mature in speech.

And, listen—mature in service. Look in verse 16. He says, "For whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Now, if you're like I am, you say, "That's hard for me to understand. What is that talking about?" Well, let me give it to you paraphrased.

Each part, in its own special way, helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing, full of love. He speaks here of the joints. What makes my arm operate like this? There's a joint there. How come my fingers go like this? Because there's a joint. You see, look. The Greek word for joint is the word *harmos*. It's the word we get our word harmony from. Now, he's saying here that the body is to be flexible, and the body is to work together. The body is to be coordinated.

I was watching football yesterday, and I saw a man go down the field and leap 10,000 miles high, and with soft fingertips catch a ball. Now, ladies, you may not think that's beautiful, but to me that was a work of art, an absolute work of art! And I saw that man, his entire body cooperating to catch a bagful of air that really doesn't make much difference. When you get that bagful of air down a pasture, so what? I'm telling you something, folks, we're in business for Jesus, and don't you forget it. And if my ministry makes difficulty for your ministry, there's something wrong with what you're doing, or what I'm doing, or we're both doing. My desire, my prayer, my goal for this church is that we will be one in the bond of love. And God's people said amen.

## Conclusion

There's the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, and the goal of our maturity.

Now, bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, would you pray, "O God, bless this dear church. May it always be unified. May we be one in the bond of love." And if you've not yet received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, there is a blessing, a glory, a fellowship you know nothing of until you know Jesus. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that God, through the Holy Spirit, lives in you and He has baptized you into the body of Christ. And to be saved means, when that blessed hope comes, or when we die, we'll be caught up to meet our Lord in heaven.

You can be saved by trusting Christ. Christ purchased your salvation with His shed blood on the cross. It is your duty and your privilege by repentance and faith to receive Christ. Repentance means, I turn from the old way. Faith means, I put my trust in Jesus.

If you'd like to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me and save me, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here—look up here. The greatest thing you could do to begin a New Year would be to give your heart to Jesus Christ. This could be the beginning of a brand new life. This can be the first day of an eternal life. Are you willing to openly and publicly acknowledge Christ as your personal Savior?

We're going to sing an invitational hymn, and I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand here at the head of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who'll be coming forward. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner to my right that says Redeemer, and under this banner to my left that says Messiah, to welcome those of you who'll be moving that way. And if today you'll trust the dear Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord—remember, there's one Lord, one Lord—if you give your heart to Him, He'll save you. You leave your seat and come forward and tell the minister, "I want to be saved," or, "I'm trusting Jesus." Put it in your own words. I think you'll know why you've come.

"Well, what will happen, Pastor?" Well, we'll rejoice, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on, we'll answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. We'll treat you lovingly and kindly and courteously. You'll be so glad that you gave your heart to Jesus.

Now, others of you—remember I said that there's one body; that's the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's the local expression of that church. Everybody needs to be a member of that universal church and that local church. If you're not a member here, and you love our Lord, believe as we believe, I want to invite you to come forward and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how

you may become a member of this church.

Let's stand for prayer. Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, I pray now that You'll bless this invitational time and bring men, women, boys and girls to Jesus. O God, this is Your work, and we look to You. Amen.

Let's sing as you come.

# A Unified Church (One in the Bond of Love)

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 2, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4**

*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

EPHESIANS 4:3

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Ground of Our Unity

II. The Glory of Our Diversity

III. The Goal of Our Maturity

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 4. I'm beginning a series of messages that I'm going to be preaching, God willing, all this month and next month that is going to be a distillation of things that I want you to remember, things that I have tried to teach you for more than 32 blessed years.

Now, if you have Ephesians chapter 4, look up here. I want to tell you a story I heard about a man who was shipwrecked. He was on a desert island, and he was there by himself: single, all alone. He had to forage for himself. Finally, after years, someone came to rescue him. And there he had taken care of things pretty well. He had a nice house that he'd built, almost like a mansion. Next to the house he had constructed a church, and he even put a steeple on top of it. But next to that was another fine, magnificent building. Those who came to rescue him said, "What is that big place there?" He said, "Well, that's my house. That's where I live." "What is that next door? It looks like a church." He said, "It is a church. I built myself a church." They said, "Well, what is that other building?" "Oh," he said, "that's another church." He said, "I had an argument in the old one and moved my membership."

So many times the problem is on the inside, is it not? I want to talk to you about unity in the church—unity in the church. My prayer for Bellevue is that she will continue to be, and evermore be, a unified church. And so, this first message in this series of messages

is, “Unity in the Church.”

Now, I want you to look at a particular part of the Scripture here this morning, Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 3. Paul says we are to be “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Is that not beautiful—the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? What a beautiful concept. This is the desire of God for Bellevue Baptist Church, that we have the unity of the Spirit, that we have the bond of peace. Psalm 133, verse 1, says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” And the Bible also says that God hates him who sows discord among the brethren.

Now, this unity is a wonderful unity. We do not produce it. It is called the unity of the Spirit. But while we do not produce it, we are to preserve it. And that is my prayer for this dear church in the years to come.

Now, this unity is based on three basic concepts, and I want us to learn these concepts today because they’re very, very important.

## **I. The Ground of Our Unity**

The first concept that we’re going to learn is what I want to call the ground of our unity—the ground of our unity. Now, the ground of our unity is truth. It is doctrinal and spiritual. If you were to go out in the front of this building there at the portico, you would find seven magnificent pillars. And each of those pillars is named for seven basic truths that are found in the Word of God here in Ephesians chapter 4. They hold up the entire spiritual enterprise of our church. No one can call himself a Bible Christian who does not believe these seven basic truths, which are the foundation of our unity.

Now, look again in Ephesians chapter 4 this time, 3 through 6: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Now, again, I want to say that the basis of our unity, the ground of our unity, is doctrinal and spiritual. Now, don’t let anybody tell you that doctrine doesn’t matter. If our church ceases to hold these great truths, she will lose her unity.

Now, what do I mean by unity? Well, I don’t mean unison. Now, unison may be all right if you’re in the choir, but everybody doesn’t have to sing the same note. That would be boring. We can sing in harmony without singing in unison. And I’m not talking, secondly, about uniformity. We don’t have to be a congregation of clones. We don’t all have to look alike and dress alike. Somebody said to me, “Do you have to wear a coat and a tie at Bellevue?” Absolutely not! We on the platform do, but I may change my mind after a while. Look. It is not that we come along here in uniforms. Uniformity comes from without; unity comes from within. We’re not even talking about union. Union

and unity are not necessarily the same. You can be in the same church and not be in unity. Somebody has said you can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline—you have union, but you don't have unity. Now, if you're an animal lover, a cat lover, only an illustration. I'm not suggesting that at all.

What do we mean by unity? It is doctrinal and it is spiritual. That is the ground of our unity, these seven truths.

Now, let's think about these seven truths. And, Bellevue, I want you to get a bulldog grip on these seven truths.

Number one: There is one body. Do you see that there in Ephesians 4, verse 4? One body. Now, what is that one body? That one body is the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, it doesn't say one congregation. The body of Christ is bigger than Bellevue Baptist Church. But there is one body. The church is a spiritual body. The church is not a corporation with Jesus as the president; the church is a body with Jesus as the head. That's all of the difference in the world. Now, again, I want to say, not one denomination. Somebody said, "Are you one of those narrow-minded Baptists who think only Baptists are going to heaven?" I'm more narrow-minded than that. I think a lot of Baptists are not going to make it. But whether you're a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, if you have given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you have been twice-born, you are a part of the mystical body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, there is a local expression of that body. And the Bible speaks of the church here, and the church there, and the church here and there, because not only is there that great universal church, there is that local New Testament body. Now, look up here and let me tell you something. From my study of the Scriptures, I sincerely, honestly believe that every twice-born person ought to be a member of a local New Testament congregation. Do you believe that? Now, you ought to be a member of a local church. Now, you're welcome at Bellevue. But if not Bellevue, you need to be a member of some local New Testament church. That is the plan of God.

I've told Brother Whitmire about a man one time who came to the Minister of Music and said, "I'd like to sing in your choir." And the Minister of Music said, "Well, are you a member of this church?" He said, "No, sir." He said, "Well, what church are you a member of?" He said, "I'm a member of the invisible church." He said, "Well, I have a suggestion for you. You sing in the invisible choir."

No! You see, a church is a unified body here with pastor and deacons and servants, and you need to be a part of this church. There is one church. Now, that brings unity. And may I say, precious friend, that if you are a disunified person, if you sow discord in the church, number one, you dishonor the head, who is Jesus, and number two, you wound and mutilate yourself, because we are members of the same body.

Now, not only is there one body; there's also one Spirit. Do you see that in verse 4?

One Spirit. There He's talking about the Holy Spirit, who is the substance of our life, the secret of our strength, and the source of our unity. The Holy Spirit is the one who binds us together, who tells us that we belong one to another.

Now, most of us here don't know everybody's name. As a matter of fact, I doubt that anyone does. Matter of fact, I'm sure that no one does, except God. We don't know all the other names, but we know the one dear Holy Spirit that dwells in each of us, and that is the source of our unity: the Holy Spirit of God. Bellevue has a wonderful, glorious unity. Sometimes people can't understand it. How can you be so big and yet have a spirit of unity? Because the Holy Spirit that is in me is in you. And not only does God's Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we're children of God, but God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to one another.

I sat down on an airplane. A man sat down beside me. I made up my mind I was going to witness to him. I turned to him and raised the subject of spiritual things. "Oh," he said, "you're a believer, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "So am I." And he said, "Mister, I want to tell you something strange." He said, "I felt your spirit when I sat down beside you. When I sat beside you, something in me said, 'He's one of us. He is a believer.'" There is one Spirit.

Dr. Vance Havner has said this: "We're not to be wired together by organization, frozen together by formalism, rusted together by tradition, but melted together by one Spirit.

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I told Brother Mark this morning, I said, “You know, the Bible speaks in Matthew 24 about the signs of the ends of the time, and it talks about earthquakes and calamities and all of these things. And then Jesus said all of these are the beginning of sorrows.” And the word for sorrows is the word for birth pangs. When a woman is going to deliver a baby, she has what is called there in Matthew 24 sorrows. They are labor pains. Then I told Brother Mark, “You know, from my understanding of the thing—and I am a bona fide father and grandfather, though I’ve never given birth to a baby—that there comes a time when the contractions get especially severe, especially strong. Jesus said, when these things come to pass, then look up.” I believe sincerely, without being a sensationalist, we’re living in the closing shadows of an age, and our one hope, and the only hope, of this world is the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And then, Bellevue not only has one Spirit, and Bellevue not only has one hope, but Bellevue confesses one Lord. Now, notice what he says. “One Lord—in verse 5—One Lord.” Who is that one Lord? That one Lord is Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jim, for singing about the Lord Jesus. Jim said, “When I come to Bellevue, I expect to hear about Jesus.” And may it always be. And, by the way, did you know that the early church did not call Him Jesus nearly so much as they called Him the Lord Jesus—the Lord Jesus. I think we need to get in the habit of saying the Lord Jesus.

Now, He has not come to take my side, or your side, or to take Bellevue’s side against some other church, or over some other church, or even over Hollywood, or over the casinos, or whatever. When Joshua came against Jericho, Joshua went out one morning. Jericho was a pagan city. And Joshua, the general, went out to reconnoiter and to see what the situation was like. And while Joshua was out there, he was aware of a presence behind him. And he wheeled around and there he saw a man with a drawn sword. And Joshua was astounded. He said to this man, “Who are you? Are you for us or are you for them? Whose side are you on?” And the one, the angel with the drawn sword, said, “Neither. As the captain of the Lord’s host, I have come.” Do you know what he was saying? “Look. I’m not for them; I’m not for you. I haven’t come to take sides. I’ve come to take over.” And that’s what we want here at Bellevue Baptist Church—for the one Lord, the captain of the Lord’s host, Jesus Christ Himself, to be the head of this church. Jesus must always, must always, must always—always, always, always—be the Lord of our dear church.

And then, Bellevue has one faith. Look, if you will, in verse 5. He mentions there one faith. Now, what is that one faith? He’s talking about the unified body of truth that we call the Bible. Not a faith, not faith, but one faith. He’s talking about a body of truth. That’s what Jude was talking about there in Jude verse 3: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith—the faith; not a faith, the



faith—which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” There is one faith. It is God’s revealed Word. We’re to earnestly contend for it. Bellevue, you get a bulldog grip on this book and never let go. Never let go! There is one faith. We don’t need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. If it’s new, it’s not true. And if it’s not absolute, it’s obsolete. It is the one faith of this church. And may this sacred desk always have a man who stands behind it who will open the Word of God, analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it. Now, we can have all other kinds of programs, but we must have this one faith.

The dear old Apostle Paul, just before he stepped off the scene, said this: “I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.” He was faithful to the fight, faithful to the finish. He was faithful to the faith. Bellevue must never waiver.

Next, Bellevue shares one baptism. Look in verse 5: one baptism. Now, is He here talking about immersion or sprinkling? No. He’s talking about something that goes beyond that. When a person gives his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the mystical body of Christ. That is, you are placed, at the moment of your salvation, into the body of Christ. Remember, I said that the church is a body with Christ as the head? We are the members. When are you baptized? Before you were ever baptized in water, you were baptized with the Holy Spirit of God and into the body of Christ.

Put this verse down—1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.” This is the Holy Spirit of God putting us into the mystical body of Christ. And that’s what makes us one.

Now, we believe in water baptism, but water baptism only symbolizes that which takes place when one man or a woman gives his or her heart to Jesus. Sometimes we hear people talk about, “Well, you’ve been saved. Now, have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost?” Friend, if you’re saved, you’ve already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Nowhere in the New Testament is a believer told to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We’re told to be filled with the Spirit. The baptism takes place at the moment of your salvation. There is one baptism. There may be many fillings, but there is only one baptism.

And then, Bellevue worships one God. He is not Allah. He is Yahweh, Jehovah God. Ephesians 4, verse 6: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” His name is Jehovah, and you do not know Him apart from Jesus Christ. “No one comes to the Father, but by me,” the Lord Jesus has said.

Now, look up here. Those are seven basic foundational truths, and our unity is in these truths. That is the ground of our unity.

## II. The Glory of Our Diversity

But now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: not only the ground of our unity, but the glory of our diversity. Did you know that God made us one and God made us different all at the same time? Look now in verse 7—Ephesians 4, verse 7: “But...”—do you see the word but? He's changing direction. He's been talking about our sameness, doctrinally, but then He, in contradistinction, uses the word but—“But unto every one of us is given grace...”—the Greek word for grace is *charis*. It's the word we get charismatic from: “Unto every one of us is given *charisma*, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Now, God gave Mark gifts that He didn't give me. God gave Whitmire gifts that He didn't give to Mark. God gave you gifts that He didn't give to your husband or your wife. These are spiritual gifts. God made us different in this church. And so, not only do we have our unity; we have our diversity. I told you ahead of time that this is not to be a congregation of clones. What we have is unity in diversity.

Now, I'm not talking about diversity about doctrine. Romans chapter 16, verse 17, says, “Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” No, there's not room for every kind of belief, but there is room for people who have different gifts.

God gave us different gifts that He might make us one. And you have a grace gift. “Unto every one of us,” the Scripture says here, “is given grace, charisma.” And God gave you a gift to serve Him. And I've been saying now for 30 years and more, my heart just leaps out of my throat when I think what would happen if every member of our church were to discover, develop, and deploy his gift. A spiritual gift is not for your ecstasy. It's not a toy; it's a tool. And you have a spiritual gift. And there is a place of service for you here in Bellevue Baptist Church. And God gave us different gifts. God gave us gifts that are different to make us one.

You see, sameness is not unity. As a matter of fact, unity comes from diversity. I'll give you a perfect illustration of that. Joyce is a girl and I'm a boy. We have unity because she's different. It's the differences that draw us together. I'm glad Joyce is not like me. I'd just as soon hug a barrel of pickles as to hug another man. She's different. Viva la difference! God makes us different. God gifts you a gift, and you a gift, and you a gift, and these gifts, and we don't have to march in locked step.

Now, one of the difficulties of a church like Bellevue is we have different tastes also. One time, some years ago, we had a southern gospel quartet come in this church and sing. And, you know, I'm not as sophisticated as Whitmire; I like southern gospel, but I want to tell you about these people that came in here to sing. They were good. But, folks, I saw that night people in this church I've never seen before and haven't seen since. I mean, they were groupies going around for southern gospel. And I'm not

opposed to that. We had a good time that night. I was blessed.

Next Wednesday night, I preached a sermon. Before I got started, I asked, “How many of you like liver and onions?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “All right now, let me ask you another question. How many of you detest liver and onions, can’t stand liver and onions?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “Now, I want to ask you another question. How many of you like liver and onions, but only ever so often?” About a third lifted their hands. I said, “Now, look, folks, we are hopelessly divided.” Here’s a congregation divided. What were we divided over? Not Jesus. We were divided over tastes, and those things don’t make any difference whatsoever.

Now, I hear people say, ‘Well, this is my style of music. That is my style of music.’ Friend, forget that stuff! We’re here to glorify the Lord Jesus. Your next pastor may have some different ideas about music than I have. Then you will love him and follow him and believe him. We’re going to be one body in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, there is the glory of our diversity. We are to celebrate. We are to conserve our diversity. We don’t all have to sing in unison.

### **III. The Goal of Our Maturity**

Now, here’s the third and final thing. I want you to see, friend, the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, but also the goal of our maturity. Now, why do we have this unity and this diversity? Well, verse 13 tells us. What’s the goal? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—the word perfect means mature—unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Peace comes with unity, diversity, and maturity. Little children squabble and fuss; mature adults learn how to get along with one another. Bickering comes from immaturity, and may God preserve this church ever from bickering. We’re to be mature. We’re to be mature in stature. Look in verse 13: “unto the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

You want to know whether you’re growing up or not? Don’t measure yourself by some other member of this church. Measure yourself by Jesus Christ. I’ve frequently told you, the measure of my ministry is this: not the size of these buildings, or our budget, or our Bible study attendance. Are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? We’re to be mature in stature.

We’re to be mature in stability. Look in verse 14: “That we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Get your feet on the rock. Paul told the Ephesian church, he said, “I know that after my departure there will come grievous wolves, not sparing the flock.”

Let me tell you about the false cults. The false cults do not produce converts nearly

so much as they try to siphon off Bible believers who don't understand. And so, because they're not rooted and grounded in the faith, they're drawn away into these things. They're like little sailboats blown this way and blown that way, "blown about by every wind of doctrine."

Look up here, church. You get a bulldog grip on the truth. You college students, you get a grip on the truth, these seven basic principles. Now, you can be different in a lot of things, but when you grow up, when you mature, you're going to be mature in stature, you're going to be mature in stability, you're going to be mature in speech. Look in verse 15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up." Speaking the truth in love. We're not to speak truthless love or loveless truth. We're to speak the truth—never stutter, never stammer, never apologize. Speak the truth, but in love. Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy.

Now, the Bible is a wonderful sword; it's a poor club. Don't you be a Bible bully, argumentative over the difference between tweedledee and tweedledum. Yes, we're never to jettison the truth, but we speak the truth in love. We're mature in stature, mature in stability, mature in speech.

And, listen—mature in service. Look in verse 16. He says, "For whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Now, if you're like I am, you say, "That's hard for me to understand. What is that talking about?" Well, let me give it to you paraphrased.

Each part, in its own special way, helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing, full of love. He speaks here of the joints. What makes my arm operate like this? There's a joint there. How come my fingers go like this? Because there's a joint. You see, look. The Greek word for joint is the word *harmos*. It's the word we get our word harmony from. Now, he's saying here that the body is to be flexible, and the body is to work together. The body is to be coordinated.

I was watching football yesterday, and I saw a man go down the field and leap 10,000 miles high, and with soft fingertips catch a ball. Now, ladies, you may not think that's beautiful, but to me that was a work of art, an absolute work of art! And I saw that man, his entire body cooperating to catch a bagful of air that really doesn't make much difference. When you get that bagful of air down a pasture, so what? I'm telling you something, folks, we're in business for Jesus, and don't you forget it. And if my ministry makes difficulty for your ministry, there's something wrong with what you're doing, or what I'm doing, or we're both doing. My desire, my prayer, my goal for this church is that we will be one in the bond of love. And God's people said amen.

## Conclusion

There's the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, and the goal of our maturity.

Now, bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, would you pray, "O God, bless this dear church. May it always be unified. May we be one in the bond of love." And if you've not yet received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, there is a blessing, a glory, a fellowship you know nothing of until you know Jesus. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that God, through the Holy Spirit, lives in you and He has baptized you into the body of Christ. And to be saved means, when that blessed hope comes, or when we die, we'll be caught up to meet our Lord in heaven.

You can be saved by trusting Christ. Christ purchased your salvation with His shed blood on the cross. It is your duty and your privilege by repentance and faith to receive Christ. Repentance means, I turn from the old way. Faith means, I put my trust in Jesus.

If you'd like to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me and save me, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here—look up here. The greatest thing you could do to begin a New Year would be to give your heart to Jesus Christ. This could be the beginning of a brand new life. This can be the first day of an eternal life. Are you willing to openly and publicly acknowledge Christ as your personal Savior?

We're going to sing an invitational hymn, and I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand here at the head of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who'll be coming forward. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner to my right that says Redeemer, and under this banner to my left that says Messiah, to welcome those of you who'll be moving that way. And if today you'll trust the dear Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord—remember, there's one Lord, one Lord—if you give your heart to Him, He'll save you. You leave your seat and come forward and tell the minister, "I want to be saved," or, "I'm trusting Jesus." Put it in your own words. I think you'll know why you've come.

"Well, what will happen, Pastor?" Well, we'll rejoice, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on, we'll answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. We'll treat you lovingly and kindly and courteously. You'll be so glad that you gave your heart to Jesus.

Now, others of you—remember I said that there's one body; that's the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's the local expression of that church. Everybody needs to be a member of that universal church and that local church. If you're not a member here, and you love our Lord, believe as we believe, I want to invite you to come forward and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how

you may become a member of this church.

Let's stand for prayer. Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, I pray now that You'll bless this invitational time and bring men, women, boys and girls to Jesus. O God, this is Your work, and we look to You. Amen.

Let's sing as you come.

# The Basis of Our Unity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 19, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

EPHESIANS 4:3

## Outline

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## Introduction

Turn please to Ephesians chapter 4. We're going to have a Bible study tonight that I trust will prepare your heart in hearing it as much as it blessed me in preparing it for you. Ephesians chapter 4. And we're going to be talking tonight about the "Basis of Our Unity." Now I've told you before, and I want to tell you again, that the great thing that God desires for this church and any church is unity. You understand that, don't you? As a matter of fact, it is the great longing of every parent that that parent's children love one another. That's one of the great desires and prayer for our family is that our children love one another. And it is true with God above. He wants us to love one another. And I've said before, and I'll say again, the devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey or open a porno palace any day. Sure he had. And so the Bible says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Again,

the Bible says, “God hates him that sows discord among brethren.” That being true, we need to learn tonight again anew and afresh the basis of unity.

So I want to read to you here from Ephesians chapter 4. “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which ye are called,” or, “.to which ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Now the unity of the Spirit is based on four principle things. If these four things are true, there will be an unbreakable unity in the life of this church or any church. I want to name them for you.

## **I. There Must Be a Common Goal**

First of all, there must be a common goal. We must make it our aim, we must make it our goal to have unity. That’s what he’s talking about there... in verses 1 through 3: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which ye are called.” Notice verse 3: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Now notice this about the unity of the Spirit. It is the unity of the Spirit. It has to be the unity of the Spirit or it will fall apart. But that unity is produced by the Spirit (are you listening?); it is protected by the saints. Now, if it is not protected by the saints, why did the apostle Paul tell the church at Ephesus to guard it with everything they had? It is up to us. Even though the Holy Spirit has potentially given us that unity, that unity must be protected. It must be guarded. And, folks, I believe we ought to guard it down to the very point of our lives.

### **A. Unity is More Than Unison**

And we need to understand what we’re talking about when we’re talking about unity. We’re not talking about unison. This choir just sang a marvelous song, but they did not sing it in unison. Had they sung it in unison, it would not have been nearly as beautiful. And so, all of us don’t have to sing the same note. That would be boring. We’re all not alike. We can be brothers without being twin brothers. We can be sisters without being twin sisters. So unity is not unison.

### **B. Unity Is More Than Union**

Unity is more than union. You can be a member of this church and not be in, ah, unity. Ah, somebody a long time ago said you could take two tom cats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline. There would be union, but there wouldn’t be unity. And I can agree with this. So we’re not just talking about having union or even unison.

### **C. Unity Is More Than Uniformity**

Nor is, is, is unity uniformity. We’re not trying to make everybody lock step together. We’re not trying to say that everybody has to think alike, look alike, talk alike, and so



forth. That is not real unity. As a matter of fact, uniformity comes by pressure from without. Real unity comes from a power from within.

And so, we have to make this our goal, our aim. We just have to say, “Dear God, we will have today, tomorrow, until Jesus comes, the unity of the Spirit. It is produced by the Spirit. It is preserved and protected by the saints.

Now, Paul mentions five characteristics that are going to help preserve this unity. Look at them right here in verse 2. First of all, he mentions lowliness. Now you know you wrote this word? It was Paul. Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, yet Paul was such a, a lowly mind he called himself the chief of sinners. What humility was in, ah, the heart and mind of Paul.

Now the Bible says, “Only by pride cometh contention.” Somebody was asking me not long ago, “Have you ever been in a church fuss, a church fight?” And he was saying that, it, it’s a terrible thing to be in a church fuss. It’s a terrible thing to be in a family fuss. It’s a terrible thing to be in any kind of fuss, amen? (amen). I want to tell you, folks, you can’t have a fuss without pride. “Only by pride cometh contention.” So when Paul is speaking here about unity, first of all, he mentions lowliness.

And then he mentions, right on the heels of lowliness, meekness, which is a way, in a way result of this lowliness. Now meekness is not weakness. Of course, you know, the Bible says that Moses was the meekest man who ever lived, talking about mere mortals, and you know he was a great leader and a general and a commander. But what the word *meekness* means is a submissive spirit, the ability to be taught of God and controlled of God.

Do you have a submissive spirit or do you have an arrogant spirit? Do you have a spirit that cannot receive instruction from the Word of God? Some people will never be used mightily of the Lord because they will never be broken. Now meekness means that you have a broken, a Christ-controlled spirit.

Then he mentions the third of these characteristics, which is long-suffering. Now long-suffering is not long-facedness. You don’t have to go around looking like you’re an advertisement for a bottle of iodine. That’s not what we’re talking about. But what long-suffering is is slowness in revenging wrongs, that somebody hurts you, snubs you, ignores you, misuses you, ha, you don’t take offense. You’re just long-suffering. You endure it. You don’t want to revenge that wrong. The greatest victory that you can gain over an enemy is not to get even with him, but to turn him into a friend. (amen). That’s what Paul is talking about here.

And so, in this church or in any church, you should never ever, ever enter into a controversy, number one, without necessity; number two, without understanding; and number three, without love.

And then he mentions a fourth characteristic, which is forbearance. And forbearance

is the practical outworking of long-suffering. If I suffer along with you, then I've got to forebear you. That doesn't mean that I'm blind to your sins. That doesn't mean that you're blind to my faults and sins. We all have them. And, ah, no one, every now and then somebody will come up to me and tells me the fault of some person as if, ah, that's news. Hey, folks, we've been together long enough. You know my faults and I know yours. And, and, ah, to dwell there above with those that we love, that will be glory. But to live here below with those that we know, that's another story. But listen, folks, (laughter) we do it! We do it because the Bible teaches forbearance. We're not blind to the sins of others, but we are patient. We forebear.

And then he caps off this with love. Now, in a moment, we're going to see that Paul is going to talk about orthodoxy. But before he talks about orthodoxy, he talks about love, because I'm afraid that some people have preserved their orthodoxy in vinegar. And they're orthodox, but they have no love. And I want to tell you that love has won more souls to Jesus Christ than zeal and eloquence and learning put together. Now I'm not going to diminish orthodoxy, as you will see.

But, first of all, there must be a common goal. We make it our purpose with as much as in us is that we have that unity of the Spirit, that we protect that. It is provided by the Spirit, but it must be preserved by the saints.

## **II. There Must Be a Common Ground**

Now, not only is there a common goal, but secondly, there must be a common ground for this unity. Continue to read now in, in verse 4: "For there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

And in verses 4 through 6 he tells us the common ground of our unity. And in these short verses he gives us seven pillars of truth, seven basic, fundamental, theological concepts. These are not debatable. They're not up for vote. If anyone disagrees with any of these seven, he has no right to call himself a Bible Christian. If anybody will not submit to one of these seven basic truths, he is a wedge in the unity of any church. The unity of a church must be built upon certain theological presuppositions. This is the ground of our unity.

### **D. One Body**

First of all, he mentions one body. This one body is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he doesn't say one denomination. He says one body. The members of this body are from many denominations. They've been called out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. They may differ in nationality, they may differ in color, they may differ in language, they may differ in education, they may differ in training, they may differ in ability, they may differ in temperament, they may differ in outlook, but if they ar,

have been saved, they are one in the Spirit when they are added to that one body, which is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Colossians 3:11: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and in all." So, thank God for the church. Don't ever say, "Jesus, yes, but the church, no." That would be like saying, "I like Adrian's head, but I don't care for the rest of him." Ha, ha. No, friend, you can't separate me from my head and still have me, and you can't separate Jesus from His church and still have Jesus. The church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one body.

#### E. **One Spirit**

And then he mentions, secondly, one Spirit. And this is the dear Holy Spirit of God. The same Spirit that dwells in my heart dwells in your heart, and this is what brings us together. This is what makes us not just an organization; this is what makes us an organism. I may have told you that before Dr. Robert G. Lee went to heaven, I was talking to him one day. And I said to him, "Dr. Lee, isn't there some way before you go to heaven we can take your brain and put it in my head?" He smiled and he said, "My boy, that would be like putting a grand piano in a closet" (laughter). He laughed a little, and I'm glad he did (laughter). But I thought, *Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just capture the mind of people like that before they go on to heaven, and if there's some way that there could be a transfer.* But I'm going to tell you something even more wonderful than that. While I don't have the mind of Dr. R. G. Lee in my head, I've got the Spirit of the Lord Jesus in my heart (amen). And when He went to heaven, He left me a legacy greater than all of the knowledge that was wrapped up in the mind of that enormous giant of a man, Dr. Robert G. Lee. You see, dear friend, Jesus left us a legacy. He sent His Spirit and He didn't leave us orphans. And His Spirit is inside of us to testify us, ah, testify to us. And so that one Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, and that's the basis of our unity.

In this service, many of us don't even know the other person by name, and yet we love one another. That's the Holy Spirit of God that does that. I got on a plane not long ago, and I sat down beside a man. And I, I was going to witness him. And when I turned to witness to him, I had not said a few words. He said, "You're a brother, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "You're a Christian, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Praise God." He said, "I knew it before you said a word." He said, "I felt your Spirit when you sat down." Here was a man who was just so full of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit in him wanted to fellowship with the Holy Spirit in me. And the closer we are to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the more the Holy Spirit exalts the Lord Jesus, the closer we are to one another. There is one body, one Spirit.

## F. **One Hope**

And then there is one hope; the Bible mentions here, one hope of your calling. What does it, what does the Bible mean when it says one hope? It's talking about the second coming of Jesus Christ. In 1 John chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, the second coming of Jesus is called our hope. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself..." The Bible calls the second coming of Jesus that blessed hope.

Now, Christians have a lot of discussion about the second coming of Jesus. And many people in this congregation, if we were to give you a little test about the second coming of Jesus and ask you to give us a theology of the second coming of Jesus, some would say one thing and some would say another. But, friend, if you're a Bible Christian, you may disagree on the details, but you'd all say, "He's coming, and I'm looking forward to it." (amen). Isn't that right? "He's coming, and I'm looking forward to it."

You see, in theology there are a lot of different, ah, theological terms to describe the second coming of Jesus. Some people are premillennialists. Some people are aumillennialists. Some people are postmillennialists. You say, "Well, preacher, tell me what we are." Ha, ha. Well, I'm a premillennialist. I believe that Jesus Christ is coming back premillennially. That is, He's coming back before the millennial, the thousand year reign of Christ. I believe that. But you don't have to believe that to be saved. You don't have to believe that to go to heaven. When He comes, I'll just say, "I told you so" (laughter). But friend, you might be like the guy who said, "You know, I don't know about this pre, post, and a-. I'm a panmillennialist. I just believe it's all going to pan out somehow, and I'm looking forward to Jesus coming again." And if you can't be on the program committee, at least you can be on the welcome committee, amen? You can say with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But, folks, you can't be a Bible Christian, and there can be no real unity in any church if you don't believe, in my estimation, in the teaching of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one hope.

## G. **One Lord**

And then he mentions one Lord right in the middle of these. That one Lord is Jesus Christ. Early Christians did not call Him Jesus. They called Him the Lord Jesus. Very rarely in the Bible is He just simply called Jesus. He's called the Lord Jesus, which means He is absolute authority.

Have you ever wondered why the Romans, as I mentioned in my message this morning, persecuted the early Christians? They didn't persecute the other religions. Why did they persecute the Christians? You know, the Romans were very wise. They had vast territories. They didn't want any unnecessary difficulty. And so, when they were would conquer a territory, they did not try to expude that god or repel that religion.

They would incorporate that. They would say, “That’s very fine. You want to believe that? That will just simply enrich the Roman, en Empire. So you just bring your, ah, religion right on in.” As a matter of fact, you can go to Rome today and see a beautiful building that still stands called the Pantheon. The Pantheon, meaning many gods. And in that Pantheon, all around the walls they had niches, a little shrine for the various gods. They had one for Atriums, and one for Osiris, and, and one for Venus, and, and, and, and one for Jupiter, and, and for all of the various gods. And then they said to the Christians, “We’ll just give you a little nitch for Jesus over here. You just put Jesus in a nitch and He’ll be one of our many gods.” And had the Christians said, “That’ll be all right,” there would have been no trouble at all. But the Christians said, “No, no, no, no. He’s not one among many. There is one Lord. He’s not Caesar, and He’s not Jupiter. He’s Jesus, and we won’t bow before any other.” And that’s the reason those Christians got...they, they were put in jail and into prison and put to death as troublemakers because they would not set Jesus apart in any nitch. He, there is one Lord.

#### H. **One Faith**

And then he mentions one faith in verse 5. Now he’s not talking about our believing, not that kind of faith. He’s talking about the body of truth that we believe, what, what we call the faith, the faith that is revealed to us in the Bible, this book right now. Now, we have one faith. It is revealed to us in God’s Word. This is the sum total of God’s, ah, revelation to us that we can count on and say is, ah, without shadow of any doubt, impeccable, inerr, inerrant, infallible. And so, ah, Jude told us that we should earnestly contend for THE faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. And so, all true Bible Christians, if they want to have doctrine; I mean, if they want to have unity, they just simply build that unity on the Word of God. Now, again, we may differ on the interpretation of the Bible. And, ah, Joyce and I sometimes differ on interpretations of the Word of God. And I tell her, “This is America. She has a right to be wrong.” And, ah, (laughter), we, we differ sometimes on interpretations. You may differ with me sometime on interpretation, and, and I give you the right to do that. And, ah, I learn as I go along, and I certainly don’t try to speak as, ah, with papal infallibility, but I’ll tell you one thing. We all must bow before this Book as God’s Word (amen). It’s God’s Word. I mean, there’s the safety net. There is one faith. And, folks, if it’s new, it’s not true. God has given it to us right here in this Bible.

#### I. **One Baptism**

Then he mentions the next thing, one baptism, one baptism. Now, you say, “Ah, is, is it sprinkling, or is it immersion, or is it, ah, pouring? What’s he talking about?” Well, I believe that he’s talking about Spirit baptism, not water baptism at all. It is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which water baptism is a symbol. Listen to a corresponding

passage in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13 where the, where the Bible says, “For by one Spirit (remember, he’s already talked of one Spirit in this passage), have ye all been baptized into one body...” You can tell that these verses interlock now. “For by one Spirit have ye all been baptized into one body...” Every person who is saved has the baptism of the Holy Ghost (amen), every person. Ah, no Christian is ever told to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Christians are told to be filled with the Spirit. But, you see, when you get saved, you are placed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. He takes us out of this world and puts us into that mystical body of Christ, which is the church. And so there is one baptism. Water baptism, which should be by immersion because that’s what the Bible teaches, symbolizes this one true baptism, which is Spirit baptism.

And then he sums it up by saying one God. Look again, if you will, in verse 6: “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” And I’m glad for that last phrase, “..in you all,” because that “you all” makes me know that He was a Southern Baptist, “..in you all” (laughter).

#### **J. One God and Father**

All right, now look at this. One God and Father. Now His name is Jehovah. There is no other God. And He is the one God and Father of those who believe and adhere to these other six pillars of the faith.

Now here are seven pillars of truth. Now, you see, we’re to have a common goal. That common goal is unity. And then there’s a common ground. There are six basic doctrines which are the ground of our faith.

### **III. There Must Be a Common Grace**

Now, thirdly, there is a common grace. Begin to read now in verse 7: “Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Now he begins here in this passage to talk about our grace gifts, this charisma that all of us have. Did you know that God, when He saved you and He put you into the body of Christ, when that Holy Spirit baptized you into the body of Christ, He gave you a grace gift? The Greek word for grace is charis. It’s the word we get charisma from. And sometimes if, if a person asks you, “Are you charismatic?” you say, “Well, first of all, I

want you to define the term.” Now if they mean do I have a sparkling personality, I may not have that. Do they mean do you speak in tongues? You may not do that. But if you mean, according to the Bible word am I charismatic, you’d have to say yes if you’re a Christian because everyone has received a grace gift of God.

Now your grace gift, ah, may be the gift of mercies. It may be the gift of helps. It may be the gift of administration. It may be the gift of giving. It may be the gift of prophecy. But all of us have a grace gift. Now here’s something very important. I’ve been talking in the last part about the common ground. Now I’m talking about the common grace. I said on the common ground there are seven things that we all must hold to. But in the common grace, you’re going to find out that God doesn’t tell us that we’re all to be alike, but He tells us that we’re all to be different. Now pay attention. God makes us different so that He might make us one. God gave you gifts He didn’t give me, and God gave me gifts He didn’t give you, and God gave him gifts He didn’t give us. Why? So that none of us can live independently of the other. God has fixed it so that we need one another. I need you, and you need me. And, very frankly, dear friends, that’s the beauty of a church. These people talk about being a, ah, they say, “Christ, yes, but the church, no.” Jesus really is never ever displayed as He ought to be displayed until He’s displayed in a church where the spiritual gifts are working. Because if you just saw me, you might see one, I mean, I might just have one particular gift. Maybe my gift is, is, ah, the gift of spiritual sight, and up here just be a great, big, fat eyeball – that’s all. Well, that’s not too, that’s not too appetizing to just think about a big old eyeball up here rolling around. Or somebody else might have the gift of service, and just a big old hand dismembered from a.....now, that’s grotesque. That’s horrible. But, dear friend, it is together, when the body comes together, that we become one in the Lord Jesus Christ and we display the beauty of Christ.

Now it is God’s grace that determines these gifts. Notice verse 7: “Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God...” Don’t you insult God by saying that He can’t use you. If you’re a member of this church, God has graced you with a gift. And if you don’t get that, if you don’t discover that gift and develop that gift and deploy that gift, you are cheating yourself, you’re cheating this church, and you’re cheating Almighty God. God has given you a grace gift. It is my job, as I’m going to see in a moment and to show you in a moment, to help you to discover and to develop and put that gift to work. Sameness does not bring unity; it brings disunity. God doesn’t want us to be the same. He wants us to be different that we might be one. We are saved by grace, and we serve by grace.

What is a grace gift? A grace gift is a God-given (listen, I’m going to give you a definition). A grace gift is a God-given spiritual ability for service and ministry. It is not a talent. Now people in this choir have musical talent. But an unsaved person could get

up here and sing in this choir. A grace gift. I believe, for example, that Nan has a grace gift. Now she has musical talent, but I believe she has a grace gift. I believe a part of her gift, her spiritual gift, is exhortation. And I believe that God uses Nan when she sings to exhort. I believe my wife has that same gift of exhortation. When she sings, people are blessed by what she sings and how she sings because God the Holy Spirit gets in it. Other people sing, and you say, "My, that was beautiful. That was good." But some people sing, and you're exhorted. Now that's a grace gift that may be added to a talent. You see, talents are natural, but grace gifts are supernatural in source, in nature, and in purpose. And so, we have a common grace. I wish I had more time to talk about that, but let me tell you how it's grace that delivers the gifts. But let me tell you the guides that develop the gifts.

Notice, beginning in verse 11 and go on in this same chapter here and notice here. "And he gave some...." You know what I have done? You've caught me in it. And it's amazing how it worked out. Because verse 7 in chapter 3 speaks of grace and grace gifts and so does, ah, verse, ah, 7 in chapter 4. And I meant to be reading chapter 4, verse 7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." So, praise the Lord. It all came out all right anyway (laughter). All right.

Now let's go on and talk about how the, ah, let's go on and talk about how these gifts not only are given in verse 7, but how they're developed in verse 11. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastor and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Now here....it, it's grace that delivers the gifts. But God has given some guides to develop the gifts. Now he has given certain church leaders who are to guide the saints in developing their spiritual gift.

First of all, he mentions apostles and prophets. Now we don't have those anymore, except in a secondary sense. I mean, there's, there's no more apostle Peters and Pauls, and so forth. They've all gone to heaven. There are no more Elijahs and Isaiahs, and so forth. They've already gone to heaven. We have, ah, secondarily, we have something that are apostles, but not in the classic sense, not the office of an apostle, not the office of a prophet. These were the foundational ministries. Now they still speak to us because we have the Bible, and so we, we're still build upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. This is the foundation. We've been building on this foundation for nineteen hundred years. I think we're putting the shingles on the roof, don't you? I think it's not going to be long before the whole thing is going to be finished and Christ is going to come again.

Then he mentions evangelists. Now evangelists are God's gift to the church. And the evangelist is the bearer of good news. His is the outreach ministry. Thank God for that. I



used to think I wanted to be an evangelist. Maybe one day, ah, when I retire, Dr. Lane, you and I will team up and we'll hit the road, and you can handle the music and I'll be the evangelist, all right. Ah, evangelists.

And then he mentions pastors and teachers. Now that's what I am, a pastor and teacher. Now pastors and teachers are not two different people. The Greek construction here means that he is the pastor/teacher. I am to be pastor and teacher. The word *pastor* means shepherd. I am the shepherd. It is my job to feed the saints so that the saints can mature so that they can minister. Now I want you to notice something very, very carefully here in this, in this verse. Look at it. He says, "...and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints (now the word *perfecting* means the maturing of the saints) for the work of the ministry..." I want you to get it all real clear.

God gave you a pastor/teacher. The pastor/teacher is to feed you. He's to shepherd the flock. Why is he to feed you? So that you will be mature. Why does he want you to be mature? So you can do the work of the ministry. Who's to do the work of the ministry? You say, "You are, preacher." No, you are, you are. You're to do the work of the ministry. My job is to equip you to do the work of the ministry.

Now this church ought to have seventeen thousand ministers. Can you imagine that, a church of seventeen thousand ministers? Somebody gave me something the other day. It was a newspaper clipping. It's an amazing thing. Headlines: "Sheep Gives Birth to Human Baby" (laughter). There it is. See that. That's what it says. You know, you can get these right near the checkout counter in the grocery store (laughter). "Sheep Gives Birth to Human Baby. Healthy six-pound boy answer to lonely couple's dream. Doctors were stupefied when a sheep gave birth to a perfectly healthy baby boy. This, the six-pound, four-ounce boy was delivered in a barn while the sheep, farmer, and a veterinarian watched in disbelief." Well, I believe that part of it (laughter). Ha, ha. And it goes on. Well, I won't tell you the whole thing (laughter). But, folks, it's a beaten article, I'll tell you one thing. Now we laugh at that. That's ridiculous. It's ridiculous. But, I mean, it's written up here as a true story. But I'm going to tell you something even more ridiculous, and that would be to expect the shepherd to give birth to sheep, hum, to expect the shepherd to give birth to sheep. I just expect, I just as soon expect a sheep to give birth to a human baby as I would a, a human shepherd to give birth to sheep.

Now, see, the pastor is the shepherd. You know, in, in so many churches they think that if they can hire them some hired guns, a church staff, and the church staff is supposed to go out and visit all the sick, pray for all the, the, the, ah, ah, downcast, and win all the lost, and.... And our job is to come listen to them do their thing and put some money in the plate to keep them going (coughing). That's what the average church thinks, ah, average member thinks, isn't that right? Sure. But, see, I'm the shepherd. I'm not supposed to give birth to sheep. I'm supposed to feed the sheep. Healthy sheep will

reproduce (amen), right?

You know, ha, what I ought to be able to do here on Sunday morning. If I haven't prepared a sermon, I ought to just be able to stand up here and say, "Mary had a little lamb, it's fleece was white as snow," and give an invitation. She did have a little Lamb. His name was Jesus, amen. And give an invitation. And there ought to be hundreds of people on any given Sunday walk down this aisle to profess faith in Christ who've been won by you.

Now I have to admit that I also have a shepherd and, therefore, I also am a sheep, and so I must win souls, but I can't win yours. You can't hire me to win yours. You can't pay me to win yours. I'm not a hireling. The hireling fleeth; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am your shepherd. And so, it is my job as a pastor/teacher to mature you. And so, sometimes I, I have to almost cry myself to sleep when I think, *Dear God, I must not be much of a preacher. I must not be much of a pastor because my sheep are not very healthy. My sheep just want to browse, but they don't want to reproduce. They, they don't win souls. And some of them don't even want to come to the pasture.*

Now, folks, listen. The grace, the grace. We have a common grace. We have a spiritual gift. And, and no matter what else you do, God has called you to be a soul winner. And your gift is not for enjoyment; it is for employment. And it is my job as your pastor to put you to work.

#### **IV. There Must Be a Common Growth**

Now, last of all, of these four things that give us unity. Remember, there's a common goal, a common ground, a common grace. And then, last of all, there will be a common growth.

Now we get in trouble when we're not growing. But now begin with verse 12. Why does God do this? "For the perfecting of the saints (the word *perfecting* means the maturing of the saints, the growing of the saints), for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (the word *edifying* means building up of the body of Christ), till we all come to the unity of the faith (that is, we grow into unity), and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man (unto a mature man), unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cun, and cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love (now watch it), may grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." A common growth.

Now let me break this down quickly and we'll be finished. What does this growth

consist of? Number one: We are to be mature in stature, in stature, mature in stature. Look again in this verse. When he says here, "...till we come unto the, the knowledge of the Son of God (verse 13), unto the, a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of, stature, stature of the fullness of Christ." Do you want me to tell you when you're mature? When you're like Jesus. Don't lie down in the gutter and measure yourself by some other Baptist. Measure yourself by the Lord Jesus. You're to be mature in stature. You're to be like Christ in your deeds and actions.

And then, mature not only in stature, but you're to be mature in stability. Look in verse 14: "That we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness by which they lay in wait to deceive us."

Now a person who is immature, he's like a little sailboat. Any little puff of wind comes along and just blows him away. Let me tell you about those who lie in wait. Did you know that the cults do not try to make raw converts? Do you know what the cults do? They don't try to win the lost. They go after immature Christians in Baptist churches and Methodist churches and Presbyterian churches and siphon them off. And they lie in wait with cunning craftiness to get them because they're not mature.

Now you need to be mature in stature. You need to be mature in stability. You need to be mature in speech. Look in verse 15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up..." You listen to people talk and you can tell whether they're mature or not. Listen to little babies talk and you can tell they're not mature. Now, if you speak the truth without love, that's brutality. If you speak love without truth, that's hypocrisy. But if you speak the truth in love, that is fellowship. Immature people can't put together truth and love, but mature people can. And it is maturity that brings unity.

Now, finally, when all of these things are true, we'll be mature in service. Verse 16 is a very complicated verse. Let me tell you how The Living Bible puts it. "Each part in its own special way helps the other parts so the whole body is healthy." That's what it means. Each part in its own special way helps the other parts so the whole body is healthy. I'm to be a better person because of you, and you're to be a better person because of me. Now that's God's plan, folks, for unity.

## Conclusion

There is to be a common goal. We're to strive for it. There is a common ground - these seven pillars of the truth. There is a common grace. God has given every one of us a grace gift. God has made us different so that we need one another. He's made us different that He might make us one. And then, God says that results in a common growth. We become more and more like Jesus. We grow in stature. And when we grow in stature, we grow into the knowledge of the Son of God. Then we grow in stability.

We're not blown around. Then we grow in speech. We can speak the truth in love. And then we grow in service. And that's what God wants for Bellevue Church.

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Father, I thank You for this wonderful passage of Scripture. And, Lord, how it's spoken to my heart tonight. And I pray God if there are those here who don't have unity as a goal, oh God, I pray that You'd give to them that goal in the Holy Spirit. And, Father, if there are those here who believe wrongly and don't accept these seven basic, foundational truths, that You'd help them, Lord, to see the truth and to get hold of it and to believe it. And, Father, I would pray tonight that if there are those here who don't recognize their grace gift, and they haven't, ah, found a place of service, that You'd help me, Lord, to get into the, the fellowship of this church and to serve with all of their heart and mind. And then, dear Lord, help me and all of us to be more like Jesus, to grow in stature, to grow, dear Lord, in stability, in speech, and in service, that we might, dear Lord, be to the other what the other person needs. Thank You, Father, in Jesus' name, amen.

# Faith with Legs on It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 13, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:1–6

*“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”*

EPHESIANS 4:1

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 4. We’re thinking today on this subject: “Faith with Legs on It”—“Faith with Legs on It.” You’re going to find out as we study through Ephesians, “God’s guidebook to growth,” that Ephesians is roughly divided into two sections: the first section, the first three chapters, we call doctrinal; and the last three chapters we call practical. And in the first three chapters, we’ve been talking about the riches that we have in Christ and what it means to be seated in the *heavenlies* with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is our position. But now we’re

going to start to talk about our practice, because, you know, it could be possible that so many of us would get so excited about being seated in the *heavenlies* with Jesus that we would get so heavenly-minded we're no earthly good. And so we now need to come right down to the very practical day-by-day living out of what God has worked in. And while we spiritually are seated in the *heavenlies*, practically, we're living here on earth, and there's a life to be lived right here on earth.

And so we're going to be talking about that. Revelation is going to turn to realization. Doctrine is going to turn to doing. Precept is going to turn to practice. Sitting is going to turn to walking. The doctrinal is going to turn to the practical. And so I want you to see where we are now as we are starting to blossom in Christ-likeness. And as you see by your bulletin today, our study is under three headings.

## I. Our Purpose

And the first heading speaks of our purpose. Chapter 4, verse 1: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."* (Ephesians 4:1) Now we are called to a calling, a vocation, and the Bible says that vocation is a worthy walk. We are to walk worthy. That is, our faith is to have legs on it. It's not enough just simply to be seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the *heavenlies*. That is our faith, but we're interested in a faith with legs on it, a worthy walk.

Now I want you to notice something with me: how that the book of Ephesians starts with us sitting down and ends with us walking. Look, for example, in chapter 1 and verse 20: *"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand."* (Ephesians 1:20) There we see the Lord Jesus sitting down. And notice chapter 2 and verse 6: *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ."* (Ephesians 2:6) Christ is seated in the *heavenlies*, and mystically, we're seated with the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you will, please, at a contrast now, however, beginning in chapter 4, verse 1—no longer are we seated; now we're walking: *"that ye walk worthy."* (Ephesians 4:1) Notice in chapter 4 and verse 17: *"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind."* (Ephesians 4:17) Notice chapter 5, verse 2: *"Walk in love."* (Ephesians 5:2) Notice chapter 5 and verse 8: *"For ye were [once] darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord:"*—a light in the Lord—*"walk as children of light."* (Ephesians 5:8)

So I want you to see what Paul is doing. First of all, Christ is seated. Then, we're seated with Him, seated in the *heavenlies*. We're seated, but now we're walking. Now, that's unusual, because generally you take a walk, and then you have a rest, right? First of all, you walk, and then you sit down and say, "I'm tuckered out. I'm tired. I want to be seated." But, you see, man does things just opposite of the way the Lord would do

them. And in spiritual things, first we're seated, and then we walk; first we rest, and then we work.

You see, the Christian life begins with resting. The very first thing that you need to do in order to be saved is to quit trying and start trusting—to quit your struggling, to quit trying to be good by doing. Christianity is not spelled *do*; it's spelled *done*. It is already finished. You see, when God created the world, God worked for six days, and God rested on the seventh day. But man was created on the sixth day, and man's first day was a day of rest. God worked and then rested that man might rest and then work. Do you understand? You see, man starts by resting, and then he works. God works and then rests that man might rest and then work. You see, when Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He bowed His head and He said, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) And you and I by faith enter into the finished work of Calvary. I don't try to be saved by living a good life, keeping the Ten Commandments, getting baptized, going to church, and all of those things. They're all good, and they all have their place; but, friend, those things are works, and works can't save. The only thing that saves us is when we by faith appropriate the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you see, first of all, the Christian life begins with sitting, resting in Jesus.

But then, after we have come to the faith rest, then there's the practical outworking, where we start to walk. So, eight times in this book we're told to walk. And I'm glad that God chose the word *walk*. We're not told to leap. We're not told to run. We're not told to drift. We're not called to crawl or skedaddle. But we are called to walk.

Now, why did the Lord say walk? Because it's such a descriptive word.

#### **A. A Walk Implies a Decision**

A walk, first of all, implies a decision—that is, you're going somewhere. And the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. And the step in this walk of faith is when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 6, we are to walk as He walked. (1 John 2:6) And to be a Christian is a decision to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back—to walk as He walked. Not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved, I have decided to follow Jesus.

#### **B. A Walk Implies a Destination**

But not only is it a decision; a walk also implies a destination. We're going somewhere. You see, we're headed toward a goal. Are you headed somewhere? Are you growing in maturity? Are you growing in Christ-likeness? Are you progressing toward that goal that the Lord has for you? I'm not there yet. You're not there yet. But every day, we're walking closer and closer to the goal that our Lord has called us to. Now we need to be progressing in our knowledge and our likeness to the Lord Jesus

Christ.

### C. A Walk Implies a Determination

But not only does a walk imply decision, and not only does it imply a destination; it implies a determination. You see, you walk one step at a time. Oh, if we could only learn this! If we could only learn that when we serve the Lord Jesus Christ, we go a step at a time. We're to walk as He walked. One step—that's all. You know, the Bible says, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*" (Psalm 119:105) In these days, a man would carry a lamp, and the only thing the lamp would light is just a few steps. And when he would step in that light, there would be more light. He'd step in that light, and there would be more light. And that's the way we go: step by step, walking in the light a step at a time. There are some of you, you can't see your way ahead. Don't worry about it. "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) You don't have to see all the way down. When God called you, He didn't give you sealed beams; He gave you a lantern, a lamp. "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.*" (Psalm 119:105) And "*we walk in the light, as he is the light, [and] we have fellowship one with another.*" (1 John 1:7)

You know, the Bible says in Isaiah the fortieth chapter that "*they that wait upon the LORD shall...mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*" (Isaiah 40:31) When I first used to study that, I used to think, "You know, that's not very good writing." Of course, I knew it was all inspired. But I couldn't quite understand the way the Lord did that. It would seem like the Lord was starting with a climax and going on down; that God started with soaring like an eagle, and then He went to running like an athlete, and then finally walking. And what's so great about walking? "*They that wait upon the LORD shall...mount up with wings as eagles,*" then, "*they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*"

But, friend, that is not a descending order; that is an ascending order. Did you know that there are lots of folks who can soar like an eagle in the moment of inspiration? When the choir sang, they soared just a little while ago. Oh, that was beautiful! They were soaring. Sometimes a preacher can soar. Sometimes we can get in the Word of God, and, man, we can be lifted up to the *heavenlies*! All right, that's fine; that has its place. And other times there are times when we can run with a task. God gives us a job to do, God gives a commission, and God gives us a calling. And we run, and we're God's athlete, and we finish our course. But may I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, what the hardest thing to do is? It's to walk and not faint, just in the day-by-day, everyday things of life, in the little vicissitudes and problems of life, it is keeping on—keeping on. It is religion in shoe leather! It is walking and not fainting!

And there are some of you who want to throw in the towel; you're about ready to quit. I tell you, a walk implies a decision, it implies a destination, and it implies a



determination. We are to walk as He walked. We are to walk worthy. We are to walk a step at a time. And I pray God that you'll keep on, and I pray God that you'll not quit. I pray God that you'll be faithful and you'll understand the most important thing that you'll ever do is not when you soar like an eagle, not when you run like an athlete, but when you go step by step as a humble child of God tomorrow, doing those mundane tasks that Jesus has called you to do with a smile on your face. That is our purpose: to walk worthy.

## II. Our Partnership

Now, secondly, I want you to notice our partnership—our partnership. And that's in verse 2. Our purpose is in the first one, but our partnership is in verse 2. And verse 2 says, "*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*" (Ephesians 4:2) So we're not to walk alone. You see, we're in a pilgrimage. We're not in a race, we're in a pilgrimage, and we're to be good walking partners.

You know, there are some folks that are awfully fun to take a walk with; and then, there are some folks who are not to fun to walk with. And so, God lists five characteristics—five characteristics—of a good partner. And if you want to be the kind of a church member that we can all walk together in love with, then let's find out what five attributes God says should be true in every one of us.

### A. Lowliness

The first he mentions is lowliness: "*With all lowliness.*" (Ephesians 4:1) And, you know, this is un-American to want to be lowly. We Americans want to be first in everything; but Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, spoke of himself as the chiefest of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) And there's something about the grace of God that humbles a man without degrading him, and exalts him without inflating him. How wonderful is the grace of God! And it would be so wonderful if we could just have a lowly spirit, each one esteeming the other better than himself. (Philippians 2:3) Is that true in my life? Is that true in your life? We need to ask.

### B. Meekness

Now, the second characteristic is meekness. Notice in verse 2: meekness—"*with all lowliness and meekness.*" (Ephesians 4:2) And let me say that meekness is not weakness. To be meek doesn't mean that you have a dishrag sort of a character. Some folks, you know, they go around bent over, and they call it meekness. I call it poor posture. Jesus was meek and lowly. Moses, who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, was the meekest man who ever lived, the Bible says. (Numbers 12:3) Jesus said, "I'm meek and lowly of heart." (Matthew 11:29)

What does meekness mean? The word *meekness* means "the ability to be

controlled” and “the ability to be taught.” In ancient days, they would take a wild stallion—or, even today—and they would so break that stallion that a rider could ride him. And when that stallion was broken, they said he had been *meeked*. Now they didn’t cripple him; they did not want to wound him, but they wanted to make him where he could be controlled, where he could be taught. That’s exactly what God wants to do to you. God doesn’t want to take away your fire. God doesn’t want to take away your enthusiasm. God doesn’t want to stultify your intellect. God doesn’t want to do that. But God wants it all brought under His control with meekness. God cannot use some members of this church because, like a wild stallion, they have never been broken. And the Bible says that “*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*” (Psalm 51:17)

### C. Longsuffering

The third characteristic is longsuffering—in verse 2. (Ephesians 4:2) It doesn’t say long-facedness, but longsuffering. It doesn’t mean to go around looking like you had a gall bladder attack. That’s not the idea. As a matter of fact, this word is perhaps misunderstood more than any other. It doesn’t mean the ability to endure pain, but *longsuffering* means “slowness in avenging wrongs or retaliation.” Christians don’t need to have a get-back spirit; that is, they need to be sweet, even when people have wronged them. They suffer long with people who do wrong.

Do you want me to tell you how to get a victory over your enemies? The most glorious victory you’ll ever have over an enemy is to make a friend out of them. That’s the way to get rid of your enemies: to suffer long, to make friends of your enemies. And so we need this longsuffering. Never, as a Christian, enter into a controversy unless there is a necessity, unless you have understanding, and unless you have love. Never enter into a controversy without necessity, without understanding, and without love. If we’re going to walk together, we need lowliness; we need meekness; we need longsuffering.

### D. Forbearance

And then, the next quality that he mentions is forbearance. And what is forbearance? Forbearance is the practical outworking of longsuffering. That is, it is putting up with the faults and the foibles in the other person. And we all have them: you have them; I have them, because we’re humans. We’re not sanctified yet; we’re not like the Lord Jesus Christ yet.

*To dwell there above with those that we love:  
That will be glory,  
But to dwell here below with those that we know:*

*That's another story.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

We haven't been made like the Lord Jesus yet. The Bible says when He appears, then we're going to be made like Him. (1 John 3:2) But up until now, we need to bear and forbear with one another.

You know what we often do? When we see a person who has a fault, do you know what we do by human nature? We compare their weakness with our strengths. If you want to do something that will humble you a little bit, you start comparing their weakness with your weakness, not their weakness with your strength. You just compare their faults with your faults, and then measure their strengths by your strengths, and it will help all of us to be a little more forbearing. And unless, dear friend, you lovingly bear with the fault of your friends, you betray your own faults. That's the reason Jesus said, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what...measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" (Matthew 7:1–2) And that is forbearance.

### **E. Love**

Now, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance; and finally, he mentions love—the five characteristics that we're to have if we're to walk with our partner—love. And this isn't just sentimentality; it's not the kind of love that you can work up. It's the love that is "*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*" (Romans 5:5)

And let me tell you why Paul mentioned love right here. I'm just quite certain of it. In the next verses, he's going to start to talk about orthodoxy; he's going to start to talk about belief, what we ought to believe about the Word of God. And I believe with all of my heart we ought to be orthodox, but I know some folks that are orthodox who are not loving. They're just as straight as a gun barrel and just as empty. I mean, they can split a theological hair into sixteen equal sections, but they're not nice to be around. One little girl prayed, "O God, make all the bad people good, and all the good people nice." And it would be wonderful if all the good people were nice, if they were filled with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you see, I know some people who are orthodox, but I believe their orthodoxy has been pickled in vinegar: that's the way they preserve it; that's the way they keep it.

And so, Paul is talking about the attributes that are necessary if we're going to walk together. Our purpose is to walk worthy, a step at a time. Our partners, we're to love them. We are to have these five characteristics.

### **III. Our Peace**

Now, finally, I want you to notice—and I think most importantly—our peace, our peacefulness. Paul says in verse 3, "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the*

*bond of peace.*” (Ephesians 4:3) As we walk together, we are to walk in unity; we are to walk in love; we are walk in peace. Now, this unity is not artificial union; it is not some sort of an ecumenical movement where everybody throws away their distinctives, everybody jettisons their beliefs, and we homogenize everything and get together on nothing. That’s not the idea. It is not artificial union that Paul is talking about. Notice what Paul says: *“Endeavouring to keep the unity...”*—we don’t make the unity; friend, it’s there. It’s a supernatural unity—*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* The unity that we’re talking about is the unity of the Spirit of the Lord.

And then, Paul goes on, as we’re going to see in the next several verses, 5 and 6, Paul goes on to mention seven pillars of truth upon which the whole temple of truth rests—seven indispensable pillars of truth. There are things you may believe or not believe and still be a Christian. But, dear friend, if you fail to believe any one of these seven things, you cannot call yourself a Bible Christian. Any one of these seven pillars of truth, if you pull out any one of them, the whole house will collapse. You cannot—you cannot—be a New Testament Christian, you cannot walk in unity and peace, unless you cleave to these seven verities. And so, let’s see what they are.

#### **A. Our Peace Is Built Around One Body**

Verse 4 mentions, *“There is one body”* (Ephesians 4:4)—not two, one. And this one body is the Church of Jesus Christ; and it is not a denomination, but it is the Church of Jesus Christ, those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the mystical Body of Jesus Christ. *“There is one body.”*

Some people think that I’m a narrow-minded Baptist. They say, “You’re one of those narrow-minded Baptists who think only Baptists are going to heaven.” Well, friend, I want to tell you something. I’m more narrow-minded than that: I don’t think a lot of Baptists are going to make it. And I’m more broadminded than that: there are a lot of people who are not Baptist who are going to heaven, because salvation is not in the Baptist denomination; it’s in Jesus Christ. I’m a Baptist, and I’m a Baptist out of conviction, because so far as I know, the Baptist denomination is closer to the New Testament than any group I know. If I knew one that was closer, I’d be in it. But, friend, a denomination cannot save; we are saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is faith in Christ and Christ alone. And there is one body. It is His Church. It is heavenly in conception. It is divine in creation. It is supernatural in constitution. And, oh, how glorious this Church is!

You know, the Bible says in Colossians 3, verse 11, *“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian or Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”* (Colossians 3:11) And the living members of this Body have

been called out of every kindred, every tongue, every people, every nation. They may differ in nationality. They may differ in color. They may differ in language. They may differ in education. They may differ in training. They may differ in ability. They may differ in temperament. They may differ in outlook. And on some minor points, they may differ in doctrine. But they're all a part of the Body of Jesus if they have been placed by the Holy Spirit into that Body. *"There is one body,"* and that is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **B. Our Peace Is Built Around One Spirit**

Secondly, verse 4: *"There is...one Spirit,"* (Ephesians 4:4) and that is the dear Holy Spirit. He is the secret of our life. He is the source of our strength, for the Bible says in Zechariah 4, verse 6, it is *"not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD."* (Zechariah 4:6) One Spirit, the blessed Holy Spirit, and He bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God.

And when I meet another believer, and we're both members of the same Body, and we both share the same life, my spirit bears witness with that person's spirit that we both are members of that same Body. You don't have to be around a Christian long before, dear friend—if he knows Jesus and is not backslidden, and you know Jesus and you're not backslidden—it's going to start to click; you're going to find out. I don't care where you meet him.

I sat down on an airplane a while back by a man, and I sat there for a few moments, tried to be nice, said a few cordial things, and then turned to him to witness. "Oh!" he said, "You're a Christian, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Bless God, so am I." He said, "I knew you were a Christian." He said, "I felt your spirit when you sat down." Boy, what fellowship we had as we just flew on there and just praised the Lord together, as *"iron sharpeneth iron."* (Proverbs 27:17)

And there's the Spirit—there's the oneness of the Spirit. And, dear friend, the Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you, and the Jesus in you loves the Jesus in me. And your spirit bears witness with my spirit, and our spirit bear witness together, that we're children of God, because the dear, blessed Holy Spirit of God is the life of this one Body. *A body without a spirit is a corpse. A spirit without a body is a ghost. But a Spirit-filled Body is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm glad that I'm a part of it.*

## **C. Our Peace Is Built Around One Hope**

All right, listen. This is our peace. It's built around one Body, built around one Spirit, built around *"one hope"*—*"one hope"*—in verse 4. (Ephesians 4:4) And what is that hope? It is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls it the *"blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."* (Titus 2:13) And

the apostle said in 1 John chapter 3, *“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* (1 John 3:3)

Oh, when we talk about prophecy and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we get all kinds of ideas. There are all kinds of thoughts. Some folks are premillennial. Some folks are amillennial. Some folks are postmillennial. Some folks don't even know what I'm talking about. Some folks say, “I'm *panmillennial*: I just believe it will all pan out somehow.” They don't even know what you know. And we can have all kinds of shades of doctrine on the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “What are you?” Friend, I'm as premillennial as Patty's pig is Irish! I am a premillennial believer in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus is going to come again and set up His blessed kingdom, and reign here on this earth for a thousand blessed years. But let me tell you something, friend: My premillennialism is not a basis of fellowship; it's an opportunity for fellowship. But Jesus is the basis of fellowship: *“I am a companion of all them that fear thee.”* (Psalm 119:63) And you may not understand all these things, and you may not know enough to be on the program committee; but, bless God, you can be on the welcome committee, amen?

I tell you, every Christian, he may not understand it all, he may not know it all, but he has a longing in his heart for Jesus to come and for God's kingdom to be done on this earth as it is in heaven. And the blessed hope is that day when our Lord shall appear and we shall be with Him and we shall be like Him. And every true Christian's heart beats, and his being vibrates, and his bosom quivers with that *“blessed hope [of] the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (Titus 2:13)

#### **D. Our Peace Is Built around One Lord**

I tell you, there is one Body. There is one Spirit. There is one hope. But we're not finished yet. Oh, our unity is in one Lord. Notice verse 5: *“one Lord.”* (Ephesians 4:5) And who is that Lord? His sweet name is Jesus Christ. *“One Lord”*—not two, not three; one. His name is Jesus. And there are not several ways in order to go to heaven, just one way: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12)

And His name is Lord. You know, so often we speak of Him as Jesus. We say, “Jesus.” But did you know, if you'll study the Bible, they always said, “the Lord Jesus”—“the Lord Jesus.” He is risen from the grave, and He is Lord. You know, when we talk to people, we ought not to ask them, “Will you confess Jesus Christ as Lord?” We ought to ask them, “When will you confess Jesus Christ as Lord?” because everybody's going to confess Him as Lord. Did you know that? It's not a matter of if; it's just a matter of when. For the Bible says, “Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (Philippians 2:10–11) It will be too late to be saved; but I tell you, they're

still going to bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Have you ever wondered why the Roman government persecuted Christians? Have you ever wondered that? I mean, back in that early day—because there was never a more liberal government concerning religion than the Roman government. Do you know what the Romans would do? When the Romans would conquer a people—and they conquered the known world—then they just simply incorporated the religion of that people into the religion of Rome. That was the way they kept the *Pax Romana*, “the peace of the world.” They would just take that religion, and they’d say, “Well, we’ve got room. There’s plenty of room in the family.” And so they just took all these religions in.

And they even built a building. I’ve seen it. If you go to Rome, you can see it. It’s one of the most solid ruins left. It’s called the Pantheon; that is, the building of all the gods—*pan*, meaning “many”; *theos*, meaning “god”—the Pantheon. And they had a little niche, and all around this building there was a niche for their different gods. There was one for Jupiter, and one for Juno, and one for Artemis, and one for Osiris, and one for Venus, and one for Neptune—one for all the little gods. “Here’s a god here: you can worship him. Here’s a god here. Here’s a god here.” And you just worship all those little gods.

And do you know what they said? They said, “We want to show you what we believe, how we good we are: we’ll give you a niche for Jesus. Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Osiris, Artemis, Jesus.” What do you think those early Christians said? They said, “You won’t give us any niche for Jesus. Jesus is not one more of your little gods to set on a shelf. Jesus is Lord, and there is none other.” And they said, “Put them to death”—“Put them to death.” That’s why Christians were burned at the stake; that’s why Christians were fed to the lions—because they said, “Jesus is Lord. There is one Lord, and His name is Jesus”—“His name is Jesus.”

### **E. Our Peace Is Built Around One Faith**

And, oh, we want to go on and say there’s “*one faith*”—in verse 5. (Ephesians 4:5) And what is this one faith? He’s not talking about the ability to believe, but he’s talking about one revealed body of truth. As the Bible says in the book of Jude chapter 1 and verse 3 that we “*should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” (Jude 1:3) And when the Bible says, “*one faith*,” it’s talking about the revealed truth. There is but one body of revealed truth. It is embodied in this book that we call the Bible. “*One faith*”—not two, not three; just one. And a man who does not accept the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints cannot call himself a New Testament Christian.

We don’t need some other book; we don’t need some other revelation—we’ve got it. And anything that God is going to say to you through the Holy Spirit is going to be based upon this book. Now it doesn’t mean that God doesn’t speak anymore. You say,

“Lord, should I take a job in Huntsville, Alabama?” You pray. The Holy Spirit will guide you. But He will not contradict this book. And you don’t need a new Bible written or a new revelation written. And I want to tell you something, friend: *If it’s new, it’s not true.* We are to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints.” There is one faith—not two, not three; one.

#### **F. Our Peace Is Built Around One Baptism**

And then, there is one baptism. Notice in verse 5: “*one baptism.*” (Ephesians 4:5) Now, what is this one baptism? It is the baptism of the Holy Ghost—the baptism of the Holy Spirit—whereby He places us into the Body of Christ. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 13, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*” (1 Corinthians 12:13) And so it is Spirit baptism, not water baptism—Spirit baptism.

A person can be sprinkled—I started to say baptized—but a person can be sprinkled and go to heaven if he has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Jesus. He can have water poured on him and go to heaven if he has been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Jesus. But he can be baptized by immersion so many times that tadpoles know his Social Security number, and if he has not been placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Jesus, he’s not going to heaven, because *salvation is in Christ, not in the creek.* Now I believe in baptism by immersion—water baptism—but that is but a symbol of the one baptism that makes us all one. “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*” And that takes place, my dear friend, the moment you repent of your sin and trust Jesus Christ.

#### **G. Our Peace Is Built Around One God**

Then, I want to say, in verse 6, there is “*one God.*” His name is Jehovah. There is none other. And notice the way the Bible puts it: “*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Ephesians 4:6) —Paul talking to Christians, not to non-Christians. There’s no such thing as the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Only people who have been born again have God as their Father, only those who have been born into the family of God. The Bible says concerning Jesus, “*As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.*” (John 1:12) And only a Christian can pray, in the truest sense, “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*” (Matthew 6:9) His name is Jehovah, and all these other six truths bring us to Him, the “*one God and Father of all.*”

### **Conclusion**

Well, let me say in conclusion that our goal, our aim, is unity. Notice verse 3 again; look at it: “*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” (Ephesians 4:3)



Do you want me to tell you how you can know when the glory of God is on a church and when there's a revival? When there's unity; when there's peace; when there's oneness. Every impulse of the Holy Spirit is toward unity, toward peace. God is not the author of division. We are to love one another.

You know, they say over in the fishponds in certain areas in China that when the water is down each fish farmer has his own fish in his own pond. But there are certain seasons when it rains and the waters overflow the dikes, and you can't tell which pond is which. You know, I think that's really the way it's going to be when real revival comes, friend—when the seasons of refreshment. But you let the water get so low every little shrimp has a puddle of his own, and people can't get along with other people, and they divide. Any man who takes these seven pillars of truth and believes them is my brother, and I thank God for him.

# The Body of Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 18, 1981**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:1–8, 11–16**

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## Introduction

I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The Body of Christ.” Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Ephesians chapter 4. Oh, one of the exciting things about the Body of Christ is that there are some wonderful, wonderful scriptures that teach us this significant truth. So, we’re thinking today on this subject: “The Body of Christ.” I want to read the first six verses. Actually, we’re going to read many more before our study has

been completed. But, Paul says, *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ephesians 4:1–6)

In World War II, the Nazis bombed London and bombed England, and they destroyed a beautiful, old cathedral. After the war, some students and other volunteers volunteered to help rebuild the old cathedral. And, they did a good job, but they came to a statue. It was a statue of the Lord Jesus Christ, there—a huge statue—with His arms outstretched. And, they found pieces of that statue—the fragments of it—and they put it back together, but both hands in the statue had been destroyed. The statue had its arms outstretched, and beneath the statue were these words: “Come unto me.” The students did not feel qualified to restore the hands. They did not have the fragments or the artistry necessary to restore the hands, but they hit upon this idea: they changed the label beneath the statue that said, “Come unto me,” and they removed that and put another writing, which said, “Christ has no hands but ours”—“Christ has no hands but ours.” And, that is a marvelous truth, because, dear friends, we are the Body of Christ. He has no eyes on earth but our eyes. He has not tongues on earth but our tongues, no ears but our ears, no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet. *Jesus Christ is the invisible part of the visible Christian, and the Christian is the visible part of the invisible Christ.* And, Jesus Christ inhabits His Body on earth, which is His Church, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in the scripture that I read to you, there are many truths that are taught, but there are three truths that I’ll be happy today if you see these three wonderful truths. The first truth is the unity of the Body of Christ. The second truth: the diversity of the Body of Christ. The third truth: the maturity of the Body of Christ. Now, that’s a simple enough outline; I think we can all understand it.

## **I. The Unity of the Body of Christ**

But, let’s notice as to what Paul says about the unity of the Body of Christ. Look in verse 3. I’ve already read it, but you’ll see here the theme: *“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”—“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 4:3) Oh, my—how God loves unity, and how the devil hates unity!

On the Day of Pentecost, the Bible says, *“They were all [in one place in] one accord.”* (Acts 2:1) In the book of the Psalms, it says, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psalms 133:1) And, Jesus prayed in John chapter 17 for His Christian believers, for His disciples. He said, *“O Father, I*

*pray that they will be one, even as we are one, that the world might believe that you've sent me.*" (John 17:21) That is one of the great dynamic proofs of the incarnation of Christ and the deity of Christ—is the way that we love one another. Oh, dear friend, this world will take notice when they discover that we are one in the bonds of love. What a great testimony to the deity of Christ! Christ can take people like us from different races, different walks, different backgrounds, and He can make with us a new body, one in the bond of love. Only Jesus can do that, and, therefore, it is proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants us to be one. He wants us to have that unity.

But, notice when we're talking about unity, we're not talking about unison. There's a difference between unity and unison. *This choir sang in unity, but they didn't sing in unison. That is, they sang different parts—the same song but different parts. And, isn't it great that God doesn't demand that we all be exactly alike? The only thing God doesn't want us to do is sing off-key. We can even do that in the physical realm, but I'm talking about in the spiritual realm. We are to be one. We're all, at least, to be marching to the beat of the same drummer. We are all to be singing the same song, but we might sing different parts in that song.* And so, unity is not necessarily unison. It doesn't mean that we all have to walk in lockstep together, all have to look alike, talk alike, act alike, and desire the same outward thing.

I want to say also that unity is not necessarily union. You know, there are these egomaniacs trying to get everybody together in one great big organizational church. I don't think we necessarily have to be all together in union to have unity. I want to tell you something: I'm closer to a Bible-believing Presbyterian than I am to a liberal Baptist. Did you know that? Brother, I'm closer to a Methodist that is on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ than I am for one of our stripe that's as dead as and cold as last night's biscuits. I want you to know that there is a bond of love that ought to be between all Christians, and unity is not necessarily union. As a matter of fact, these people trying to get us all together in one great big thing, you know, they think if you put all the corpses in one graveyard, you can have a resurrection—but not necessarily so. *Somebody said that you can—and this is a classic illustration—you can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline: you have union, but you sure don't have unity.*

Now, this unity—what is...what is the difference between unity and uniformity? You see, uniformity comes by pressure from without. Unity comes from life from within. We share a common spirit, the Holy Spirit, and that's the reason verse 3 says we're to be *"endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* (Ephesians 4:3) Now, so many people think that we have to make unity. We don't have to make unity; it's already there. What we do is to keep the unity that is already there. It is the Holy Spirit's job to promote that unity, to make that unity, to produce that unity. It is our job

and duty to protect that unity and to preserve that unity.

#### A. **Five Attitudes We Are to Have**

Now, there are five characteristics that will help us to protect and preserve that unity. Look again, if you will, in verses 1 through 3: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”* (Ephesians 4:1) Now, how...what is a worthy walk? Well, beginning in verse 2, you’ll see.

##### **1. Lowliness**

Number one: *“With all lowliness and meekness.”* (Ephesians 4:2) The very first thing we need—the characteristic, if we’re to be one in the bond of love—is lowliness. We don’t need any big shots in Bellevue Baptist Church. You know, some of these big guns need to be fired, amen? Listen, *no big shots—the ground around the cross is all level.* And, you may hold an important office in this church, but you’re no more important than the least of the least in Jesus’ sight. You know, Paul, who, by grace, was the chief of the apostles (2 Corinthians 11:5), called himself the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) You know what I like about the grace of God when we talk about this lowliness? I’m not talking about being a doormat. I’m not talking about being scum. I’m not talking about having a poor self-image. Let me tell you what real humility is: real humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it’s just not thinking of yourself. That’s what real humility is. Do you know what the grace of God will do? The grace of God will humble a man without degrading him, and the grace of God will exalt a man without inflating him. That’s how wonderful the grace of God is. And so, first of all, one of the great characteristics that I want us all to develop around here is lowliness.

##### **2. Meekness**

And then, right after lowliness comes meekness. (Ephesians 4:2) Do you know what the word *meekness* means here? Meekness means the ability to be taught and controlled of the Lord, the ability to take instructions, the ability to say, “I’ll walk across the road and get inside the parameters of the Body of Christ so my picture can be made—not necessarily because I thought up the idea, not even necessarily because I think it’s a good idea, but because, for some reason, my pastor in my church wants to do it, and I’m going to be a part of it. I’m going to be a part of it. We’re one in the bonds of love. And, the quarterback has called the signals, and that’s what he’s called. And, maybe I want to do an end run. He called a pass, but that’s what we’re going to do. We’re one in the bonds of love.” It is this ability of meekness, this ability to be guided. You know, some people will never be blessed because they’ll never be broken and they cannot be controlled.

##### **3. Longsuffering**

And then, again, he mentions longsuffering. (Ephesians 4:2) My, how we need that! I f

you're a Baptist, you've got to suffer long; that is, when the preacher preaches, you got to suffer long. Longsuffering doesn't mean long-facedness. You know what it really means? It means you're slow to avenge wrong—you're slow to avenge wrong. You see, when we're one in the bonds of love, when we have this unity, we just...we just let our love cover a multitude of sins. You know, I can find fault with you if I wanted to; you could find fault with me if you wanted to, but we just are longsuffering with one another. And, we're so slow to enter into controversy. See if you can remember this: we should never, never, never enter into controversy with another brother or sister, number one, without necessity; number two, without understanding; and number three, without love. Amen. We ought to be longsuffering.

#### **4. Forbearance**

And then, he mentions forbearance, (Ephesians 4:2) and forbearance is just the fruit of longsuffering. That means we put up with one another, you know. And, we quote that little couplet, "To live there above with those that we love, that will be glory. But to dwell here below with those that we know, that's another story," isn't it? But, we need to forbear one another. It...this is just a practical outworking of longsuffering. It doesn't mean that we're blind to the faults of one another. You know what we have a habit of doing? We have a habit of comparing our strengths with somebody else's weaknesses. You know, if you want to be honest, if you were to compare your weaknesses with their weaknesses, you wouldn't look so good either. But, we forbear because we know that every member in the Body is important.

#### **5. Love**

So, he mentions here lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance; and then, the last of these is love. (Ephesians 4:2) You see, Paul is, in just a moment, as we're going to see, he's going to talk about doctrine. But, before he talks about affirmations, he talks about attitudes. Now, doctrine is important—very important. And, I'm going to show you in a moment seven doctrines that, if you don't believe these, you can't even call yourself a Christian. That's how important doctrine is. But, you know, while orthodoxy is so important, I know some people, I believe, who have preserved their orthodoxy in vinegar. I mean, they are, as Dr. Havner says, "just as straight as a gun barrel and just an empty." I mean, they have a...they have a warm nose, but they've got a cold heart. They're going around sniffing out heresy. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, Paul says, "Love, love, love." And, all through this passage he's going to be emphasizing that we're one in the bonds of love. And, love has won more people to Jesus Christ than learning and zeal. People are loved to the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **B. Seven Affirmations We Are to Make**

Now, these are five basic attitudes that we ought to have, and when we have these

attitudes, then there are seven basic affirmations that we're to make. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 4. Are you ready? Look at these affirmations. He mentions seven theological truths—seven things that are the lowest common denomination. What I mean is this: that you cannot fail to believe one of these seven things and still call yourself a Bible Christian. Now, there are many things that we might differ on, but here are the seven basic common denominators of all true Bible Christians. This is what makes us one. We're talking now about our unity, and there's a unity of spirit and a unity of doctrine.

### **1. There Is One Body**

Look in verse 4: the Bible says, “[*For*] *there is one body.*” (Ephesians 4:4) Now, what is the one body that he's talking about? The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, when he says, “one body,” he's not talking about the Southern Baptist Convention; he's not talking about Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians. He's talking about all true believers who have given their hearts to Jesus Christ. You know, somebody says, “Well, you Baptists are so narrow-minded you think only Baptists are going to heaven.” Well, I'm a lot more narrow-minded than that: I don't think a lot of Baptists are going to heaven. And, I'm a lot more broadminded than that: I think a lot of people who are not Baptists are going to heaven. If a person is saved, he's going to heaven, and he's only been saved through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31)

“*There is one body.*” (Ephesians 4:4) And, the members of this one body have been called from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation upon this earth, and, therefore, they differ in nationality, they differ in color, they differ in language. they differ in education, they differ in training, they differ in ability, they differ in temperament, they differ in outlook. But, they're all alike in that they have trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord and the Spirit of God has placed them into the Body of Christ. “*There is one body.*” (Ephesians 4:4) You must believe that in order to be a Christian. And, the Bible says in Colossians chapter 3, verse 11—it speaks of this body, “*where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, [Barbarians], Scythian, bond [or] free: but Christ is all, and in all.*” (Colossians 3:11) Hallelujah!

### **2. There Is One Spirit**

But, not only one body—there is one Spirit, mentioned in verse 4. (Ephesians 4:4) And, this one Spirit is the dear Holy Spirit who lives in us. The Holy Spirit is our strength—the source of our strength. He is the secret of our life. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us one—this commonality. You see, we're different members, but we all have the same Spirit—**just like my body has fingers, and my body has hands, and my body has arms, and my body has a torso, and legs, and feet, and ears, and eyes, and so on, but just one Spirit. One human spirit makes all of these members cohere, and one Holy Spirit**

makes all these members cohere. You see, that's what... The Holy Spirit is the glue that holds us together.

I got on an airplane a while back, sat down beside a young man—or, he sat down beside me. I turned to him and started to witness. He just smiled back at me with a broad smile and said, “You’re a Christian, aren’t you?” I said, “Yes, I am.” He said, “I knew you were”—“I knew you were.” He was a Christian, loved the Lord—filled with the Holy Spirit. He said, “Mister, I felt your spirit when I sat down beside you.” And, there was just something about the Holy Spirit in me and the Holy Spirit in that man that just recognized that we were brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We’re one in the bonds of love.

### **3. There Is One Hope**

There’s one body, one Spirit, and then the Bible speaks of one hope. (Ephesians 4:4) What is the hope that he’s talking about? And incidentally, when the Bible says, “hope,” it doesn’t mean “maybe so, if so, think so, wish so,” like, you know, a girl gets a hope chest—hope she’s going to get married one of these days. Oh, no, no, no, no. The word *hope* in the Bible stands for a truth, something that is coming that we know that we know that we know that we know is coming, and we can hardly wait for it to get here.

Now, what is the one hope of the Church? The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, that one, far-off, distant event—or maybe, perhaps, near event—that we’re all looking forward to. The Bible calls this in 1 John chapter 3 “the hope that is in us”: “[*he*] that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” (1 John 3:3) Again, Paul calls it “[*the*] blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13) Now, all Christians don’t believe alike about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Theologians have described their theology. We call it “eschatology,” concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There are some who are premillennial. There are some who are amillennial. There are some who are postmillennial, and there are some who don’t even know what I’m talking about, amen? All right, you know, those are different kinds of views concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The premillennialist believes that Jesus Christ is coming before the Millennium. A postmillennialist believes that Jesus Christ is coming after the Millennium. An amillennialist believes that He’s coming, but there will be no Millennium whatever. I want you to know what I am, in case there’s any doubt. I’m as premillennial as Patty’s pig is Irish. I believe in the premillennial coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, I’m a pretribulation premillennialist. I believe He’s coming before the Tribulation. But, a lot of people will say, “Brother Rogers, I just don’t even understand all of that. I can’t even comprehend it.” One man says, “I’m not pre-, post-, or a-. I am ‘panmillennial’: I just believe it’ll all pan out somehow.” Other guy says, “Well, I’m ‘promillennial’: I’m for it.” Well, whether you’re pre-, post-, pan-, a-, or whatever, you got



to believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And, bless God, if you can't be on the program committee, you can still be on the welcome committee, amen? You can say with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20)

There is one hope—that Jesus rose from the dead, ascended. He's coming back to receive His own. You can't call yourself a Christian if you don't believe, dear friend, in that one body. You can't call yourself a Christian if you're not indwelt by that one Spirit. You can't call yourself a Christian if you don't anticipate that one hope.

#### **4. There Is One Lord**

And then, the Bible says there is one Lord. (Ephesians 4:5) You'll notice that He's right in the middle of these seven things. Three of them are on one side and three are on the other side, and He is right in the middle—and that's His rightful place: Jesus in the midst. You want a Bible study sometime? You just go through the Bible and study the Bible—how many times it says, "Jesus in the midst"—"Jesus in the midst." And, it's not by accident that you have three of these things and then three others and Christ right there in the middle, the fourth of these things—three before and three after; one Lord. And, that one Lord refers to Jesus. It does not refer to God the Spirit; He's already been mentioned. It does not refer to God the Father; He will be mentioned. It refers to God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, notice they called Him "Lord." Now, you know, the Bible sometimes calls Jesus merely "Jesus," but seldom... Do you know how Bible Christians spoke of Jesus primarily? "The Lord Jesus," or "Jesus the Lord," or "the Lord Jesus Christ." And, I believe it would behoove us—and I'm trying to help myself—to say a little more "the Lord Jesus," or "Jesus the Lord," or "our Lord." You see, He is Lord. He's risen from the dead, and He is Lord. And, I believe it would help our children, when we go around to speak of our children, saying, rather than, "Honey, you ought to love Jesus," we ought to say, "You ought to love the Lord Jesus" or "Jesus is Lord." I tell you, we're living in a generation that thinks of Jesus as our friend—and He is, bless God. But oh, how we need to emphasize what these Bible Christians emphasized, and that is He is Lord. And, not two lords, not three lords—one Lord.

Have you ever wondered why Christians got so persecuted in the First Century by the Romans—the Roman Empire? You know, the Romans were very liberal people. They were not hard on other people's religions. As a matter of fact, when they would conquer a people and when they would subjugate a people, they would take the religion of that particular nation or people that they had subjugated and conquered and just include it in their list of religions. They were a very pluralistic society. They even built a building called the Pantheon. Some of you who have visited Rome have, as I have done, visited the Pantheon. It's still standing—a beautiful structure. And, in that Pantheon... The word *Pantheon* means "many gods"—*pan* meaning "many;" *theos*,

“gods”: “many gods.” They had a temple for all of their gods. And here, they’d have a niche for one god, and here’s a niche for another god, and here’s a niche for another god around the wall. They had one for Jupiter, one for Juno, one for Artemis, one for Osiris, one for Venus, one for Neptune—one for all of their gods. And then, the Christians came along, and they said, “Very fine. We’ll just build a little niche for Jesus. Put Him on the wall around with these other gods, and you Christians, that can be your religion.” “Oh,” they said, “oh, no. There’s no niche for Jesus. He’s not going to be in here with all these other gods. There is one Lord, and His name is Jesus—one Lord.” And, they said, “Oh, you’re a troublemaker. You’re going to have to be put to death. You’re troublemakers” Friend, the world resents the idea that we say there is one Lord. And, I want to tell you something: you cannot call yourself a Bible Christian if you think there are two lords, three lords, five lords, six lords. There’s one, and His name is Jesus.

### 5. There Is One Faith

There is one body. There is one Spirit. There is one hope. There is one Lord, and there is one faith. Look in verse 5, if you will, as he continues to speak: there is one faith. (Ephesians 4:5) Now, what is he talking about? He’s not talking about believing in Jesus when he says there’s one faith. This one faith results in our believing in Jesus, but he’s talking about one faith as a revealed body of truth. You know, the Bible says in the book of Jude that we are to “*earnestly contend for the faith [that] was once [for all] delivered [to] the saints.*” (Jude 1:3) The one faith that he’s talking about is the revealed body of truth coming from the apostles and the prophets. That is, we don’t need some new book. We don’t need the Book of Mormon. We don’t need *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* that our Christian Scientist friends and others have. We do not need somebody to come along and say, “We need to add another book to this Bible or take from this Bible.” The Bible says we’re to “*earnestly contend for the faith [that] was once [for all] delivered [to] the saints.*” (Jude 1:3) There is one faith. And, dear friend, *if it’s new, it’s not true.* Just put it down: *if it is new, it is not true.*

There is one faith—one faith, one faith. And, Christians may differ in the interpretation of this book. I mean, we don’t all—I mean, in our church, I’m sure that we don’t all—interpret the Bible alike. My wife, Joyce, and I don’t always interpret the Bible alike. I mean, this is America: she has a right to be wrong. But, I’ll tell you this: you cannot call yourself a Bible Christian unless you believe “*the faith [that] was once [for all] delivered [to] the saints,*” (Jude 1:3) unless you call... You cannot call yourself a Christian, in the New Testament sense of the word, if you do not accept the Bible as the Word of God. There is one faith.

### 6. There Is One Baptism

Then, I want to say there is one baptism. Look, if you will please, in verse 5: “*One Lord,*

*one faith, [and] one baptism.*” (Ephesians 4:5) Now, this, I don’t think, refers to water baptism at all. Now, we, as Baptists, baptize in water by immersion believers only, but I don’t think that you have to be baptized that way to go to heaven. As a matter of fact, I’m quite certain you don’t have to be baptized that way to go to heaven. There’ll be a lot of people who haven’t been baptized that way who are going to heaven. I believe that is the Bible way to be baptized. I believe that every true believer ought to be baptized that way—I believe it; I preach it; we practice it. But, the Bible says there is one baptism, (Ephesians 4:5) and it refers not to baptism by immersion in water but it refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit that places you into the Body of Christ.

Let me give you a verse to put by your margin here. Look, if you will please—or just write it down and I’ll read it to you—1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13. Now, listen to it. Remember, we’ve already talked about one Spirit and one body. Now, listen to this scripture: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:13) *“By one Spirit [have] we [been] baptized into one body.”* (1 Corinthians 12:13) Now, what does that mean? That means that when you, as an individual, repent of your sin, receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, God’s Holy Spirit comes into you. You drink into that Spirit. But, not only does God’s Holy Spirit come into you; the Holy Spirit puts you into the mystical Body of Christ.

Now, humanly speaking, people join the Church, but divinely speaking, they are added to the Church by the Lord. The Holy Spirit of God places you into the Body of Christ. And, when the Holy Spirit of God places you into the Body of Christ, He baptized you into the Body of Christ. Water baptism is the outward symbol and picture of the inward reality of the Spirit’s baptism. And, if you haven’t had the Spirit’s baptism, water baptism is absolutely, totally meaningless. It is the outward evidence, the outward sign, the outward token, the outward manifestation, the outward illustration of what took place in your heart when you repented of your sin, received Christ as your personal Savior, and were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. There is one baptism. All true believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. As a matter of fact, let me give it to you the way the Greek language literally says it: the Greek language says, *“For by one Spirit have ye all been baptized into one body”*—*“have ye all been baptized.”* (1 Corinthians 12:13) It’s already taken place that all true believers have already been baptized into the Body of Christ; therefore, no Christian’s ever told to seek the baptism of the Spirit. It’s already taken place.

## **7. There Is One God**

All right. Now, there is one faith. That is God’s revealed body of truth. There is one baptism. All right, and then there is one God. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ephesians 4:6)

Somebody said that's the way they know that Paul was a Southern Baptist—he said, “You all.” All right. *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ephesians 4:6) That is, He cannot be your God and Father if these other six things are not true.

Here's the sum total of the whole thing: we're in the family of God. We have a common Father because we have had a common birth by the Holy Spirit of God. We've been baptized into the Body of Christ, and, therefore, God is our Father. The Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. The Bible does not teach the universal brotherhood of men. You are—we are—not all universally the children of God; only those who've been born into the family of God are the children of God. The Bible says that *“as many as received him, to them gave he [the] power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe [in] his name.”* (John 1:12) Jesus looked at the unsaved Pharisees, and He said to them, *“[You] are of your father the devil, and the [lust] of your father [you] will do.”* (John 8:44) Dear friend, the only way to be a part of the family of God is to be born into the family of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, there is one Father, one God. His name is Jehovah, not Allah. His name is Jehovah. He is one God—not two, not three. You don't have a choice. There's one God. Now, this is our unity. Brothers and sisters, this is our unity. Paul mentions attitudes, and he mentions affirmations. And, nobody can call himself a Bible Christian who does not believe these things and does not tend to want to act this way.

## **II. The Diversity of the Body of Christ**

Now, that is, dear friend, our unity, but I want you to notice now, also, our diversity. Continue to read in verse 7: *“But”*—that is, he's going to turn it a little bit here. Whenever he says the word *but*, he's making a distinction, a contradistinction—*“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”* (Ephesians 4:7–8) Now, the Body, in order for it to be a body, must be unity in diversity. *My body has unity, but it also has diversity. It has eyes, nose, mouth, hands, fingers, and so forth. And so, the members of my body are not the same; they're different.* Now listen, friend, here is a great truth that we need to learn: sameness does not bring unity; it brings disunity. God makes us different, that He might make us one. And so, therefore, God has given us all different spiritual gifts.

Now, look again, if you will, in verse 7: *“[to] every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”* (Ephesians 4:7–8) Everybody here is not the same, but we're all the same to this degree: that if we are saved and if we're in the Body of Christ, we all have a spiritual gift. Now, if you... You may not think that you

have a spiritual gift, but you do have a spiritual gift. And, when God placed you into the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave you a spiritual gift when He placed you into the Body of Christ, and that's the purpose of today. Listen, friend, that's what it's all about. We're trying to teach you that, if you're a Christian and if you're saved, that *everybody is somebody in His Body*. Did you get it? *Everybody is somebody in His Body*. He gave you a gift. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "*But unto*"—what's those next two words? Say it out loud—"every one..." (Ephesians 4:7) Say it again: "every one." Say it again: "every one." Now, just say, "Me." Say it again. You've got a gift, friend. You've got a spiritual gift. That's the Word of God. "*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:7) To every one—every one! God gave you a spiritual gift.

#### **A. The Grace That Delivers the Gift**

I want you to see the grace that delivers the gifts in verse 7: "*every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:7) Your gift is a grace gift. That means it is a charismatic gift. That means it is a supernatural gift. A spiritual gift is a God-given spiritual ability for service and ministry. You cannot choose it. You cannot earn it. It is measured out by the Lord Jesus Christ as a grace gift. It is different from a talent: a talent is natural; grace gifts are supernatural. They're supernatural in source, they're supernatural in nature, and they are supernatural in purpose. Now, the grace that determines the gifts is in verse 7.

#### **B. The Glory That Delivers the Gift**

The glory that delivers the gift is in verse 8: "*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*" (Ephesians 4:8) Now, what does that mean? When Jesus Christ came to this earth, lived among us, suffered, bled, and died, was buried, ascended—arose from the grave and ascended, that is—He became Lord and conqueror. He subjugated everything, and to the victor goes the spoils. And, what Paul is using here is a figure of a Roman general coming back after a great victory. And, he walks and marches through Rome, through the Arch of Triumph, or through the triumphal arches that are there in Rome. And, I've seen them built there in the Forum, where he would go through these arches. He would have his prisoners chained to his chariot wheels. He would lead captivity captive. And then, he would come back, bringing the spoils of the battle, and he would give lavish gifts to those that he loved. That's what he's talking about here. Jesus is our conqueror. Jesus has conquered the devil. Jesus has conquered death. Jesus has conquered hell, and as a result, He has given spiritual gifts to His Church. And, how important it is, ladies and gentlemen, that we do not despise our spiritual gift! It is the glory gift of the conquering Christ. And so, we see the grace that determines it. We see the glory that delivers it.

### **C. The Guide That Develops the Gift**

Now, the guide that develops our gift. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 11: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:11–12) Now, there are different gifted men that God has given to the Church. Not only does God give individual members in the Church spiritual gifts, but God gives individual churches gifted men. For example, some man might have the gift of an apostle, some a gift of a prophet, some the gift of an evangelist, and some the gift of a pastor/teacher.

#### **1. Apostles and Prophets**

Now, we don’t have any more apostles and prophets with us—not in the classical sense. They are the foundational ministry. You don’t keep on laying the foundation when you’re building a building. You see, our building has been being built for nineteen hundred years, and the foundation—now, we’re still building on that foundation. I mean, we still have what the apostles and prophets spoke and taught, right? The Bible. We’re building on this. They are still a part of our ministry. We’re building on this, but, dear friend, we don’t keep laying the foundation. I believe we’re putting the shingles on the roof. I believe Jesus is about to come. I believe that our building is about finished. But, that is the foundation—the apostles and the prophets.

#### **2. Evangelists**

And then, an evangelist. Now, what is...what is the evangelist? The evangelist is the one that helps to bring people to Jesus Christ. And, thank God for the evangelists that God has given to the Church. Sometimes people accuse me of being too evangelistic, but the Apostle Paul said, *“Do the work of an evangelist”*—*“Do the work of an evangelist.”* (2 Timothy 4:5) I am not an evangelist; I’m a pastor. But, God said to the pastor, *“Do the work of an evangelist.”* But, there are some people who have been called and gifted of God to be an evangelist.

#### **3. Pastors and Teachers**

And then, he mentions—and here we’re getting to the point that I want today, the guide that develops the gift—*“he gave some...pastors and teachers.”* (Ephesians 4:11) Now, the word *pastor* and *teacher* is one designation. It’s not that there’s a pastor and then there’s a teacher. It is to be, as we would write it, *“pastor/teacher.”* That is, I am to be a pastor/teacher. That’s the reason I try to teach when I preach; that’s the reason I try to preach when I teach—because I believe my job is to be a pastor/teacher. I believe that’s what God has called me to do.

Now, why does God want me to be a pastor/teacher? Well, look, if you will: *“And he gave some”*—verse 11—*“pastors and teachers”*—why? Look in verse 12—*“For the*

*perfecting of the saints*” (Ephesians 4:11–12)—that is, to mature the saints. The word *perfect* doesn’t mean “sinless.” You already knew that, didn’t you? All right. It means “mature.” *We look at a flower, and we say, “Well, that’s a perfect gladiola” or, “That’s a perfect mum” or whatever. We don’t mean that that is a sinless flower. We mean it is mature; it is full-grown, in full bloom. It is in perfection.* Now, see, that’s what God wants—the saints to come to their fullness, to their maturity. They need to come to full bloom. What do Christians need in order to come that way? They need, they need, they need, more than anything else, pastor/teachers who will preach the Word of God to perfect or mature the saints.

Well, why do we want the saints perfect and mature? Look again in verse 12: *“for the work of the ministry.”* (Ephesians 4:12) You say, “Well, now wait a minute. That’s what we pay you to do.” Oh, no, no, no. That’s what I train you to do—that’s what I train you to do. You see, the problem in the modern church is that so many people think that we can get some professionals and give them a salary, and they do the work of the ministry, and we come listen to them and watch them do it. Oh, no! God calls a preacher. God gifts a preacher. God gives the preacher to the church. The preacher takes the Word of God. He pastor/teaches the church so that they can grow so that they can do the work of the ministry. Ladies and gentlemen, every Christian is called into the ministry. Say, “Amen.” Every Christian is called into the ministry—now, not called to be a pastor, not called to be an evangelist, not called to be a minister of music, but God wants this body to be the Body of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, and God wants us corporately to do what Jesus Christ would do individually if He were here. My job as pastor and teacher is to guide you, to develop your gift, to train you, to perfect you, to mature you so that you will go out in this community and do the work of the ministry.

Now, why does He want you to do the work of the ministry? Well, continue to read in verse 12: *“for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:12) He wants the Body of Christ to be built up, to be edified. And so, God gives you a spiritual gift, according to verse 7, not for your enjoyment, but for your employment. You know, there are people that say, “Well, I wish God would use me.” You get yourself useable—God will wear you out. That’s right! You say, “I want a job in Bellevue Church.” You do? Will you show yourself to be faithful? Will you show yourself to be cooperative? Will you study and learn the Word of God? Will you live a separated, godly life? Will you report for duty? And, will you obey and do as you’re directed to do and be a part of the team? We’re looking for people like that. And, if we’ve overlooked you, pardon us. Come and make yourself known, and don’t be bashful about it. There’s a place in the Body. There’s a job for you to do. It may not be the job that you want. Are you willing, with all lowliness and humility, to do what the pastor directs you to do, and what the church council prays for you to do, and what the staff would lead you to do? Are you willing to be a part of the

team that way? Oh, ladies and gentlemen, listen, there's a job to do, and it's a big job. And, *everybody is somebody in the Body of Christ*. And so, there's the diversity of the Body: we have different gifts; we're not all to be the same. God made us different, that He might make us one.

### III. The Maturity of the Body of Christ

Now, I must close this message and talk to you about the maturity of the Body—the maturity of the Body. Continue to read in verse 13 now. Well, let's go back to verse 12 and get the thought: *“For the perfecting of the saints”—that is, the maturing of the saints—“for the work of the ministry, for the edifying”—that means “the building up”—“of the body of Christ: Till we all come [to] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect”—that means “mature”—“man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we [be] henceforth...no more children”—just underscore that—“no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, [and] the sleight of men, [wherein they...they lie in] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”—let me get that right—“by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up”—now, just put it together. No more children—“may grow up into him in all things, which...the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body”—He's the head—“From whom [now] the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:12–16) Now, that's kind of a hard verse to understand, but let me just tell you what Paul is saying in these verses: he's saying we're to be mature.*

#### A. Mature In Stature

He's saying, number one, we're to be mature in stature. Look in verse 13: *“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and...the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) Do you want me to know...do you want me to tell you what the proof of my ministry is? Do you know what I have to test my ministry by? Not how many buildings we build, not how many dollars we raise, not how many people we baptize, not how many we have in Sunday School, not how well the choir sings, not how many sermons I preach, not how true to the doctrine I am. Do you know what the test of my ministry is—the bottom line? Are you becoming like Jesus? That's what I'm going to have to face God with. When I have to face God, I'm going to have to... He's going to say to me, “Adrian, did you make my people like Jesus?” See, God gave me to you as a pastor/teacher to perfect the saints, that you might come to the measure of the stature of Christ. The proof of a



ministry—the bottom line—is, folks, that you’re becoming like Jesus. And, sometimes that bothers me, because I wonder, “Are my people becoming like Jesus? Are they becoming like Jesus?” That’s what maturity is. Dear friend, we are to be mature in stature (verse 13).

### **B. Mature In Stability**

In verse 14, we are to be mature in stability. Look, if you will: *“That we [be] henceforth...no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”* (Ephesians 4:14) Do you know what the false cults will do? They will come to a Billy Graham meeting and lie in wait. They’ll even get in the line and go down to be counselors, if you don’t weed them out, trying to pick off these new babes in Christ. They do not know how to evangelize. They really don’t even care to evangelize. You don’t find them in rescue missions. You don’t find them out in the street primarily bringing people to Jesus Christ. But, what you find them doing in these false cults is finding baby Christians, immature Christians, untrained Christians and picking them off by their cunningness and by their slight of hand. *“They lie in wait to deceive.”* (Ephesians 4:14) And, these false cults are going up and down the streets of our city and every city, and they’re getting many Baptists who are not mature, who do not know the Word of God. Isn’t that right? Listen, we are to be mature in stability. We’re not to be like toy sailboats blown about by every wind of doctrine—somebody comes along and says this thing or that thing...

### **C. Mature In Speech**

Mature in stature—verse 13. Mature in stability—verse 14. Mature in speech, in verse 15: *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up...”* (Ephesians 4:15) You know, one of the marks of a mature person is that he can tell the truth, but he can do it in love. I want to say something to you preachers who are here and you preacher boys in the seminary: it is your job to stand on your hind legs behind that pulpit, and without fear of anything that walks, or without fear of anybody but Jesus Christ, without fear of any demon of hell, that you declare the whole council of God. You’re not intimidated by the newspapers, not intimidated by the television, not intimidated by the deacons. And, if they fire you today, so help you God, you’re going to preach the truth, and you’re not going to back up, let up, or shut up until you’re taken up. That’s the way you’ve got to preach. That’s what you’ve got to do. You’ve got to do it, but you’ve got to do it in love. And, your people will take almost anything from you if they know you love them, if you speak the truth in love. And, that’s what we’ve got to do—that’s what we’ve got to do as Christians.

You see, children can’t do this. Sometimes children are so blunt. Have you ever

heard a kid say, “You’ve got a big nose” or, “Your ears stick out like doors on a Model T Ford”? You know, they will say things. They just cut you. And, what they say sometimes is the truth, but we’ve got to... And, and then, sometimes they won’t tell the truth because they’re children. But, a mature person will speak the truth in love. You see, dear friend, we need to learn this: that *truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy, but speaking the truth in love is Christianity*. Let me give you a verse to put in your margin—now, I’m almost finished now—Proverbs chapter 27, verse 6: *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”* (Proverbs 27:6) That’s a good commentary on that verse.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s pray.

# The Spirit of St. Louis

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 21, 1987**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:1–13**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

EPHESIANS 4:3

## Outline

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## Introduction

I'm so glad that you're here today. For those of you who will be watching by television, I want to tell you that this is the first Sunday after the meeting, the convocation of the Southern Baptist Convention that met in St. Louis, Missouri, and I want to be speaking to you today on this subject, "The Spirit of St. Louis." And I would like for you please to open your Bibles to Ephesians, the fourth chapter, for a moment and then look back up here at me. Ephesians chapter 4. Just lay it open there in you lap and then look back up here at me. Six short decades ago, a young 25-year-old boy from the Midwestern cornfields stepped abruptly onto the pages of history. What was his claim to fame? I'll tell you what it was. This young man with a certain daring do took a little airplane that was only 27'5" long, had a cruising speed of 112 mph, and in a solo flight flew from New York to Paris. And that, my dear friend, was an unbelievable feat, almost like man going

to the moon, comparable to that, and in many ways beyond that, because this man was doing it almost all by himself. Now he named that little airplane, Charles A. Lindberg named his aircraft, that frail but sturdy craft in many ways, he called it “The Spirit of St. Louis.” And with it he broke a geographic and, ah, scientific and emotional frontier. In St. Louis last week there was a frontier, another frontier, and it was a spiritual frontier. It was what I would call the quest for peace in the Southern Baptist Convention. And that was the subject of my message to the Southern Baptist Convention as I spoke. And I’d like for you to look with me please in Ephesians 4, and I begin reading in verse 1. The apostle Paul says, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you (that is, I implore you, I beg you) that ye walk worthy of the vocation (or the calling) wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love (now here’s the phrase. Watch it); endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Underscore that phrase, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And then the apostle Paul in the rest of this chapter goes on to tell us how we can have the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And, ladies and gentlemen, that is not just what God was saying to Southern Baptists as they met in St. Louis. That’s what God is saying to Bellevue Baptist Church. And that is not just what God is saying to Bellevue Baptist Church. That’s what He’s saying to every church and to every family, that we have the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And then the apostle Paul goes on to tell us how that is done, and he mentions three things. He mentions, first of all, unity, and then he mentions diversity, and then he mentions maturity. This bond of peace is made of a three-fold cord. And as you know, the Bible says “A three-fold cord is not easily broken.” And so what the apostle does in Ephesians 4 is this: He speaks, first of all, of the ground of our unity. And then he speaks of the glory of our diversity. And then he speaks of the goal of our maturity. I want you to see that, all right.

## **I. The Ground of Our Unity**

Now, first of all, he speaks of the ground of our unity, and he tells us that the ground of our unity is doctrinal. Look at it. Listen. He says in verse 3: We’re “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And then notice how he begins in verse 4: There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” There he mentions seven pillars of truth, seven foundations that we would call the ground of our unity. These are doctrinal beliefs. Nobody has a right to call himself a New Testament Christian who does not believe and adhere to these seven things that bring us together and draw us together. Now listen. Our unity is doctrinal and spiritual. And when I talk about unity, I want you to understand what I’m talking about. I am talking about unity. When I say unity, I don’t mean unison –

everybody singing the same note. Thank God for diversity. This choir that just sang – they sang in unity, but they did not sing in unison. Had they sung in unison, how boring that would have been. But they were in unity. They were all singing the same song under the same director. When I speak of unity, I'm not talking about uniformity. Uniformity comes when everybody is squeezed into the same mold. Uniformity comes by pressure from without. Unity comes by life from within. When I speak about unity, I'm not necessarily speaking about union – everybody joining up in the same organization. It's well been said, "Putting all the corpses into one graveyard won't bring a resurrection." And it takes more than just, ah, union. We're talking about life that the Bible calls unity. And that unity, ladies and gentlemen, is based on seven wonderful truths. Now look there in the Word of God.

### A. **One Body**

And he says, first of all, there is one body. That one body is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ known as the church. He doesn't say one denomination, but one body. It is made up of all believers on the face of this earth from every nation, race, and, and, and, ah, background: red, yellow, black, white. People of all diverse backgrounds all over the face of this globe are part of the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now that one body expresses itself in local congregations. We believe in the local church. And the Bible teaches that that body is to be expressed in local congregations. I heard of a man one time who came to a choir director and said, "I'd like to sing in your choir." Well, the choir director had never seen him before, and he said, "Well, fine, but, first of all, let's find out a little bit about you. Are you a member of this church?" He said, "No." "Oh?" Well, he said, ah, "What church are you a member of?" "Oh," he said, "I'm a member of the invisible church." The choir director said, "Well, then why don't you sing in the invisible choir?" Amen. We believe in local New Testament churches and we believe that those no, local New Testament churches together comprise what we call the body of Christ here upon this earth. And thank God there is one body. Those of us who are in this congregation are members of one body. Christ is the head. We're members one of another. Therefore, we realize if we harm another member, actually we are harming our own body. We're mutilating ourselves and dishonoring the head. And so there is one body.

### B. **One Spirit**

And not only is there one body; there is, in verse 4, one Spirit. That one Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God is the substance of the Christian's life. That Holy Spirit is the, ah, the source of the Christians' strength. That Holy Spirit is the secret of the Christian's unity and fellowship with other Christians. Why? What is the Holy Spirit of God do? Well, the Holy Spirit of God, first of all, bears witness with our spirit

that we belong to God. The Holy Spirit in me tells me I'm a Christian. Now I can't explain it to you, and you can't explain it to me, but, friend, there's something in me that tells me I belong to Jesus. I know that I know that I know because His Spirit bears witness with my witness that I'm a child of God. But not only does the Holy Spirit of God bear witness with me that I belong to Him, but the Holy Spirit in me bears witness with the Holy Spirit in you that we belong to one another. You see, the same Holy Spirit that lives in me lives in you. There's one Spirit, and He is the glue that holds us together. That's the bond of love. There's a, a, a commonality of life. We share the same life. I was getting on an airplane a while back, and I, I was getting ready to witness to the fellow next to me. I sat down by him, I buckled myself in, and I turned to him and I started a conversation, and I turned the conversation to the things of the Lord. He said, "Wait a minute." He said, "You're a Christian, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You're saved, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Praise God, so am I." He said, listen, he said, "I knew you were saved when you got on this airplane and sat down beside me." He said, "I felt your spirit. I felt your spirit." The, the Holy Spirit in that man and the Holy Spirit in me just began to vibrate because we share a common life. Have you ever been with a brother or sister and in just a few moments you find out that you're so much alike because there's a common life that's in you? And that common life brings that wonderful unity that we're talking about. Thank God for the Holy Spirit that lives within us. I told them back a time when I was with dear, the great, late Dr. Robert G. Lee just before he stepped over to the other side into glory. I said to Dr. Lee, "Dr. Lee, before you die, isn't there some way that we could take your brain and put it in my head?" With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "My boy, that would be like putting a grand piano in a closet!" I'm glad he smiled a little when he said that. But, friend, I want to tell you, I have something better than Dr. Lee's brain in my head. I have the Spirit of Christ in my heart. When He left, He left His Spirit. He sent His Spirit who lives in us to reproduce His life through us. And so, thank God, there is one Spirit. And that one Spirit is the dear Holy Spirit of God. That's the reason, ah, Vance Havner said, "We're not wired together by organization. We're not rusted together by tradition. We're not frozen together by formalism. We are fused and melted together by the Holy Spirit." That's the ground of our unity.

### **C. One Hope of Our Calling**

And then he goes on to say there is one hope of your calling in verse 4. Do you see it? One hope. What is the one hope of the church? I'll tell you what it is. It is to be with Jesus and to be like Jesus. We call that the second coming, because when He comes, we will both be with Him and we'll be like Him. The Bible says, "Every man that has this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." The Bible calls this in Titus, "the blessed hope." Now Christians get in a lot of arguments about the second coming of Jesus Christ. And when it comes to prophecy and what the theologians call

eschatology, all of us ought to be a little humble, because, you see, there are many views that are held by equally, ah, godly people. Some people believe in, in what we call the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that Christ is coming prior to the millennium. Other people believe in a post-millennial return of the Lord Jesus. That is, the world is going to get better and better, and then after a thousand years of peace Jesus will come. There's not many of those left around. And then some people believe in an amillennial return of Jesus. A—the alpha prefix a- before the word means it just negates the word. They don't believe in a millennium at all. They believe it's all figurative, and so forth. I'm an unapologetic pre-millennialist. I believe in the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But you may say, "Preacher, I don't even know what you're talking about. A-, pre-, post-. I'm just pro. I'm for it." Well, that's all right. Fine. I am, too. And I want to tell you something, folks. We don't need to fall out with one another about different views of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Pre-millennialism is not a basis of, for fellowship; it's an opportunity for fellowship. But whether or not you understand all of those in, intricacies, you believe that the one hope of the world is the second coming of Jesus, you see. There is one hope – to be with Him and to be like Him. And if you can't be on the Program Committee, at least you can be on the Welcome Committee, amen. You can say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And, friend, it is that common hope, that thing toward which we're moving, that binds us together. There is one hope, and that one hope is the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

#### **D. One Lord**

And then he goes on to say there is one Lord. Do you see that in verse 5? Let me tell you this about the early Christian. The early Christians did not primarily call Jesus merely Jesus. Very few times in the Bible can you find where He is just called Jesus. They called Him The Lord Jesus. And, you know, I've been trying to make myself say that more, Brother Jim, when we talk about Jesus. Not just say Jesus, though that's all right. You haven't done wrong if you just say Jesus. But I want to tell you. You'll be more like the Bible Christians if you'll form the habit when you talk about Jesus as to say The Lord Jesus. There is one Lord. And do you know how we'll have peace in the Southern Baptist Convention, or in this church, or in any home or any place else? It's for all of us to bow at His feet and call Him Lord. Call Him Lord. I, I know that so many times we talk about "Who's side are you on? You on this side or you on that side?" I remember when Joshua went out before the battle of Jericho. Joshua was out one night just to reconnoiter and look at the situation there before the battle of Jericho. And as Joshua was out by himself, he was aware there was a presence somewhere, someone behind him. Instinctively, Joshua drew his sword and turned around. And there was a man with his sword already drawn. He was the angel of Jehovah. He was a pre-

incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. When Joshua looked at him, Joshua knew there was something different about this one. And Joshua asked him a question. Joshua said, "Are you for us or are you for our adversaries?" That is, "whose side are you on? Are you on our side or their side?" Do you know what his answer was? "No!" Just, "No, I'm not on either side." He said, "Nay, but as captain of the Lord's host have I come." And Joshua fell at his feet. Now do you know what the Lord said to Joshua that day? And I want you to listen to me very carefully. The Lord said to Joshua, "I haven't come to take sides. I have come to take over." Now you understand, dear friend, the Lord is not partisan. He is the Lord. He is not the moderate Jesus, and He's not the conservative Jesus. He is not the Nashville Jesus, nor the Memphis nor Dallas Jesus. He's the Lord Jesus! He is Lord! And when all of us bow at His feet, then, my dear friend, we are together. There is one Lord, and He is the source of our unity.

### **E. One Faith**

And then he goes on to say there is one faith in verse 5. When he says one faith, he means there is one revealed body of truth. It's the same thing that Jude was talking about when he says in Jude 3 that we "...should earnestly contend for the faith..." It's the same thing that the apostle Paul said in 1, in 11 Timothy 4:7, when he says, "...I've fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." The faith. Paul said, "I have been faithful to the fight. I have been faithful to the finish. I have been faithful to the faith." And the old apostle Paul died with a sword in his hand, and he refused to swap the faith once for all delivered to the saints for a pale-faced psychology that tells us how to win friends and influence people. Here's the apostle Paul. He said, "I have finished my course. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith." Jude says we're to earnestly contend for the faith. The Bible says there is one faith. There is one revealed body of truth. That one revealed body of truth has been given to us in the book that we call the Bible. Now I want to tell you, all of us will not interpret it the same way. Sometimes we'll get in, in discussions about interpretation. Joyce and I will have discussions about interpretations. Sometimes she'll see a verse differently that I will, and I, I tell her, "That's all right. This is America. You have a right to be wrong." And, ah, ah, we, we, we don't all interpret it the same way. But I'm going to tell you this, dear friend: All true Christians believe the Bible is the word of God, the word of God. There is one faith, and that one faith has been delivered to us in this book. It is unchanged. It is unchangeable. It is either absolute or it is obsolete. And, dear friend, it is not obsolete. It is absolute. It is the word of God!

### **F. One Baptism**

Then he goes on to say there is one baptism in verse 5. Now what's he talking about when he says that one baptism? Well, he's not talking about water baptism, although



water baptism is a symbol and an emblem of that one baptism. That one baptism is spirit baptism. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 12:13, where the, the Bible says, “For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body...” Now he’s already talking about the one body and the one Spirit, and now he talks about the one baptism. It’s obvious that’s the one baptism he’s talking about. When the Holy Spirit of God, by Holy Spirit conviction, convicts us of our sins and brings us to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God takes us out of this world and He places us into the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and we become part of the body of Christ called the church. That one baptism that all true Christians have experienced brings a unity. There is one baptism. Water baptism, which is very important, is a symbol, an emblem, an illustration of the one baptism of the Spirit that puts us into the body of Christ. Not all Christians may have been baptized properly by immersion, but I’ll tell you, if they’re saved, they’ve all had that one baptism of the Spirit, where they have been put into the body of Christ. All believers have that one baptism. “For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body.” There’s one baptism.

#### **G. One God and Father of All**

And then all of this climaxes. He says there is one God. Look at it in verse 6 here. This is the climax of all. “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Don’t you like the way that ends – “...in you all?” Makes you think old Paul was a Southern Baptist when he said you all, doesn’t it? In you all. What’s he saying? That one God. We don’t have unity by having two gods and three lords and four faiths and nine spirits. No, no, no, no. One God, just one God. Now to say we have two gods wouldn’t bring unity. That would bring division. But when we say there’s one God. He has no rival. Therefore, there should be no rebuttal and no refusal. We just simply say, “What saith the Lord to His church, to His people.” These things, dear friend, bring unity.

And that is the ground of our unity. There are seven pillars of truth. And when we say we believe these things, and these things are real and true in our lives, then we have that wonderful, wonderful unity that belongs to the people of God.

## **II. The Glory of Our Diversity**

Now, secondly, listen. Not only is there what I would call the ground of our unity, but also, the glory, the glory of our diversity. Notice, if you will, as we continue to read, that Paul abruptly changes gears here. And notice in verse 7: “But...” Do you see the “But?” Now the but is put there to say that he is, he is abruptly changing now. “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Now Paul is no longer talking about our unity. Now he’s talking about our diversity. He is showing how different we are. He’s saying that we’re not to be a convention of clones.

He's saying that everybody is not to walk in lock step. Everybody is not to wear a strait jacket. Everybody is not going to be alike. God doesn't want us to be alike. Listen to me, my dear friend. God purposely made us different. And you know why God made us so diverse? God made us different that He might make us one. It's very important. I want to tell you that, that diversity is as important to peace as unity is. You see, it's very important that we be different. If we were all alike, we wouldn't need one another. But when the, ah, He ascended up on high and He gave gifts to men. He gave me some gifts He didn't give Jim Whitmire. He gave Jim Whitmire some gifts He didn't give me. And I'll tell you, Bellevue would be in a mess if I had to direct the choir and he had to preach. Just put it down. We'd be in a royal mess. God....he's do a better job of preaching than I would directing the choir, I'll guarantee that is true, but he wouldn't do as good as I do! No brag, just facts. He wouldn't do as good..... God made us different that He might make us one. It's even true in marriage. Do you know why I love Joyce? I love her not necessarily because she's so much like me, but because she's so much unlike me. I mean, if she's like me, friend, I wouldn't get much of a thrill about rubbing my hairy cheek up against her hairy cheek, I'll guarantee you. God made her a female and He made me a male. He made us different that He might make us one. And I say, "Viva la difference," amen! You see, it is our differences that bring us together. We need one another to compliment one another. And so, so we're not trying to say to everybody, "Now you've all got to be alike." Oh, no, no, no, no. In our, in our Southern Baptist Convention, you'd be amazed at the diversity we have in our Southern Baptist Convention. We have, ah, Southern Baptist churches in all fifty states. It's a misnomer just to call us Southern Baptist. There, in all fifty states we have Southern Baptist churches. And, and, dear friend, they will, they will minister today in, in dozens of languages. And you'll have white and black and red and yellow and brown Southern Baptists. Some of them will be meeting in magnificent houses of worship that seat many thousands of people, but many of them will be meeting in little, ah, one-room church, churches that will hold only a few dozen. And, ah, many of them will have, ah, ah, a great choirs and thousands of members, but I want to tell you, did you know that 61% of our Southern Baptist churches have less than 300 members? Sixty-one percent have less than 300 members. You find such a variety of churches. Some of them will have names like Mt. Pizcah and, and Zion Baptist and New Hope Baptist and, and, ah, Last Hope Baptist and No Hope Baptist, and just all kinds of, of names out there. They'll, they'll be so different these churches. In some churches they'll have what they call a divided chancel. Over here will be a lectern and over here will be, ah, a pulpit. And they'll read the Scripture over here, and then he'll come over here and preach. I never have understood why he wants to get so far away from the Bible when he preaches. I just can't understand that. In, in, in most Baptist churches you'll have the pulpit, I think,

where it belongs – right in the middle. But if that’s their style, that’s all right with me. In some Baptist churches you’ll have a man dressed in a black robe preaching. Nothing wrong dressing in a black robe. He’s not a, a, a liberal because he wears a black robe. But he’ll just wear a black robe. He, he likes a black robe. And, and when, ah, when he says, “Amen, “the choir will sing a seven-fold amen. And, ah, ah, that’s right. They’ll sing seven times amen. And, ah, or some are a three-fold amen. That’s all right. Nothing wrong with that. Other churches, on a Sunday morning the pastor will be up there in a checkered sport coat and he will be pounding the pulpit. And he’ll shout so loud it will sound like a thunder clap in a phone booth as he, as he preaches. And, and, and, and, by he loves God. And he may not have, ah, all the erudition and all of the training of some of these others may have. And he’ll split infinitives and dangle participles and hang gerunds all over, but he, he will...he may not know English, but he’ll know God. And, brother, he will preach, and God will come down. And I really believe that some of the best preaching is done in some of those churches where those men with, ah, ah, a heart full of God will preach. And people will just be different. In some churches you’ll have Bach and Beethoven and Mozart. In other churches you’ll have Stamps Baxter, ah, or, or Bill Gaither or something different – different kinds of music. But, you see, God is glorified. The worst thing about music is not whether it’s, it’s Bach or, or, ah, rock; the worst thing is whether or not it is given to God as a praise and glory to Him and sung in the spirit. Now what I’m trying to say is there is an infinite variety in our Baptist churches. And nobody’s ever going to make all Baptists walk in lock step. You’re not going to have a convention of clones. You’re not going to put everybody in a strait jacket. God made us different. And there are some people, dear friend, who get turned off by the way I preach. And they’re not going to be reach by me. They’re going to be reached by somebody else. And, and, and, and not everybody is going to come to Bellevue. They’re not all going to like the way we do it here. But some folks are. And some are going to be blessed by what we do here. You see, there is a marvelously infinite variety of types and people and function. But now, listen to me, dear friend. The ground of our unity is doctrinal. The glory of our diversity is functional. The Bible never, never glorifies doctrinal diversity; only functional. Now get that down. The Bible says in Romans 16:17, “...mark them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that you have learned; and avoid them. Mark them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that you have learned; and avoid them.” The Bible never says that doctrinal divergency, diversity brings unity. Suppose someone were to stand up in this church, or any church, and say, “There’s more than one Lord more than Jesus”. Right away we’re going to have a division, amen. And they say, “We have some other book other than the Bible.” Right away we’re going to have a division. “Oh,” they say, “oh no, that’s diversity. That’ll bring unity.” No, it won’t. It’ll bring division right away. But functionally we can be

different. Doctrinally – that’s unity. Functionally – there’s diversity.

### **III. The Goal of Our Maturity**

Now the last thing I want you to see as we wrap up this message. I want you to see not only what I call the ground of our unity, and then the glory of our diversity, but all of this leads to the goal of our maturity. Why does God give us, on the one hand, this, this unity and on the other hand this diversity? Because those things in the crucible of His wisdom lead us to a goal, and that goal is our maturity. Now I want you to notice, ah, ah, why God does this. He says in verse 12 He does it “For the perfecting of the saints (the word *perfecting* means the maturing of the saints), for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (the word *edifying* means the building up of the body of Christ): till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man...” Now the word *perfect* here does not mean a sinless man, but it means perfect, like we say, ‘That’s a perfect flower.’ And isn’t that a gorgeous flower? To a mature flower. Till we come to a perfect person, a, a mature person. And then he tells us what that maturity is. “...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We grow up and become like Jesus. “That we be henceforth no more children...” You see, this is the goal of our maturity. And when we’re mature as a convention, as a church, or as an individual Christian, there are four marks of that maturity. And I’m going to give you those four marks and we’re going to be finished.

#### **H. Mature in Stature**

If you want to know whether you are mature or not, and if you want to know whether you have the kind of maturity that will lead to peace, then here is it. First of all, you are to be mature in stature, in stature. Notice again in verse 13: “Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto, ah, a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” If you want to measure yourself today, don’t you lie down in, in the gutter by some hypocrite and measure yourself by him. You measure yourself by the fullness of Christ, by the stature of the Lord Jesus Christ. The measure of my maturity is this: Am I like Jesus? And the measure of my ministry is this: Are you becoming like Jesus? That’s the measure of my ministry, not the number of people we have in Sunday school, not the size of our buildings or budget. If you want to know whether or not God is using me as a minister of Jesus Christ, just see are those people that I preach to, are they becoming like Jesus? That’s the measure, dear friend. We’re to be mature in stature. We are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. All of your Bible knowledge is splendid foolishness if it doesn’t make you more like Jesus.

#### **I. Mature in Stability**

Now we’re to be mature in stature. But not only are we to be mature in stature; we are

to be also mature, dear friend, in stability. I want you to notice here in, in God's word where he goes on to say, ah, in this wonderful passage of Scripture the, in, in, and look with me in verse 14: "That we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." There are some people who just get blown around. They're like little toy sailboats. The wind goes this way, they go this way. And the wind goes this way, and they go this way. He says don't be more, any more children. Grow up. Don't be blown about by these wordsmiths, these people with a slight of hand and cunning craftiness and with diabolically-inspired false theology blow you away. Get a bulldog grip on the truth and hold onto it. Let me tell you who Baptists are. Baptists are old-fashioned Bible-believing people who believe that hell is hot, heaven is sweet, sin is black, judgment is sure, and Jesus saves. And we'd better get a hold of that. And let the winds of doctrine blow. But when you grow up, you're not blown around. Little children are led this way. Little children are led that way. We are to be mature, my dear friend, in stature. We're to be mature in stability.

#### **J. Mature in Speech**

I'll tell you a third way we're to be mature. And we're to be mature in speech. We're to be mature in speech. Listen in verse 15. He says here that we're to be "...speaking the truth in love, and may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Speaking the truth in love. What does that mean? If you speak the truth and you don't have any love, that's brutality. But if you speak in love and you don't speak the truth, that's hypocrisy. But if you speak the truth and love, that is maturity. Now some people say, "Oh, you, you folks, you're just always in doctrine. You're just always bearing down on the truth. Where's your love?" Well, friend, let me tell you. There is no division between truth and love. We're to speak the truth in love.

#### **K. Mature in Service**

We're to be not only mature in speech; we're to be mature in service. Ephesians 4:16 says this: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increased of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Now what does that mean? That's a beautiful thought, but it's hard to understand in that King James English. Let me give it to you in the Living Bible translation or, at least, paraphrase. "Each part of the body in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." Now that's it, folks. That's it. You want to know whether you're mature or not? Can you work with other people? Can you see that you're part of the body, and every joint supplies that which the other part of the body needs? Do you know what the Greek word for, for joint is? It's hamos. It's the word we

get harmony from. You see, we are joined together. Our bodies are to be coordinated. Each part is to supply its own particular part, so that I can walk across the stage like this, so I can lift my hand like this, so I can point my fingers. Every part is supplying what it's supposed to supply. And every part of this body is to be lubricated. There is a synovial fluid in this body that keeps my joints working. Now the fluid that lubricates the body of Jesus is love. And we work together. We are mature in stature. We're like Jesus. We are mature in stability. We stand. We're not blown around. We are mature in speech. We speak the truth in love. And we're mature in service. We work together. We live together. We're not divided. All one body we. Let's don't get divided over little things that don't matter. In Tennessee, there is, in rural Tennessee there's a church called "Left Foot Baptist Church." Do you know how they got the name "Left Foot Baptist Church?" Well, that was a church that believed in foot washing. And there arose a great disputation in that church as to whether you should wash the right foot or the left foot first. And those who believed that you ought to wash the left foot first withdrew and started another Baptist church called "Left Foot Baptist Church." Warren Wiersby told that one time he was driving down the road in a little country town and he saw a sign that said, ah, "Harmony Baptist Church." He thought, *Isn't that beautiful*. He said he drove a little further and he saw a sign that said, ah, "New Harmony Baptist Church. And he said, "This is the truth." He drove a little further and he saw a sign that said, "New Harmony Baptist Church #2." May God help us. Oh listen, dear friend. We, we are one in the body of Christ. Let's don't quibble about the things that don't matter. In 1917 a group of Russian bishops were meeting in Convocation. And in this Convocation there was a great debate of these leaders of the church. They were debating furiously. A few blocks down the street the Bolsheviks were meeting. They were planning a bloody, ruthless overthrow of the Czar and the government. And out of that meeting down the street, a few blocks from those bishops, came the Communist Party that has enslaved and decimated our world. Oh yes, by the way, do you know what the bishops were debating about? Whether or not they should use 18 or 22" candles in the service. Friend, let me tell you something. We had better learn how to work together. There'll be times in our church somebody will say, "Well, I think the carpet ought to be green." Somebody else will say, "Well, I think it ought to be chartreuse." Somebody will say, "I think the flag ought to be on this side or that side. We ought to have this kind of organ or that kind of organ. We ought to have this kind of pew or that kind of seat. We ought to do this or that."

## Conclusion

Folks, those are not the kind of things that we're going to get divided about. We're not going to start a "Left Foot Baptist Church." The ground of our unity is doctrinal. The

glory of our diversity is functional. The goal of our maturity is spiritual to be like Jesus. That's what it's about. And when you have that, and when you see that, dear friend, you have the bond of peace. And that's what we need. Let's bow together in prayer. Father, I thank You for Your word today. It's spoken to my own heart. And, Lord, I pray that in this church there will be continually the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Father, I pray today for those who may not know Jesus, that today they will receive Him as their Lord and Savior. In His wonderful name, amen.

# Three Marks of a Great Church

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 27, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:1–18, 23

*“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 4:13

## Outline

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I. Unity

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2. Meekness
3. Longsuffering
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5. Love

B. Orthodoxy

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Tonight, as we think about our church—and how I thank God for this church, and how I love this church—as we think about our church, I want you to think with me tonight on “The Three Marks of a Great Church.” And, in case I don’t get finished, or in case I don’t



make myself clear, I want to tell you on the front end what the three marks of a great church are, in my estimation: number one, unity; number two, diversity; and number three, maturity.

## **I. Unity**

Now, I want you to see what the Apostle Paul has to say about the Church here in Ephesians 4: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit”*—now, that’s our first word, *unity*—*“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of [love]. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ephesians 4:1–6) So, here Paul is speaking of the unity of the faith. How God greatly desires that we, the people of Bellevue Baptist Church, maintain a spiritual unity!

Now, whose responsibility is it? Is it God’s responsibility that we have unity or ours? I want to tell you, friend, it is our responsibility. The Apostle Paul wrote to these people, and he admonished them that they keep the unity of the Spirit. And then, he tells us how to keep the unity of the Spirit, and he mentions, first of all, orthopraxy, and then he mentions orthodoxy. “Well,” you say, “what does that mean?” Orthopraxy speaks of how we behave, and orthodoxy speaks of what we believe.

### **A. Orthopraxy**

Now, not only should we believe the gospel; we ought to behave the gospel. And, not only should we do right; we ought to believe right. And, not only should we believe right; we ought to do right. And, there’s no quarrel between these two. Both are important. So, first of all, he speaks to us of the five characteristics of our orthopraxy—that is, of our behavior.

#### **1. Lowliness**

And, he says, for example, that we are to have lowliness. Look in verse 2. Now, what is this characteristic of lowliness? Well, that just means that we’re not puffed up with pride. Paul, who wrote this, was the chief of the apostles, and yet he spoke of himself as the chiefest of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) Now, this doesn’t mean that we’re going around all slumped over, beating our breasts. Remember, I told you the other day that the grace of God humbles a man without debasing him and it exalts a man without inflating him. But, when you see people who kind of swagger when they walk, when you see people who are too proud to condescend to other people, that person is an enemy of the unity of the Church. I have seen churches where people look like they’re strutting when they sit

down. They think that God is doing them a favor—or, they're doing God a favor when they even come to church. But, lowliness is one of the marks of orthopraxy.

## 2. Meekness

But, not only lowliness, but meekness. Now remember, verse 2 speaks of meekness. I spoke on this this morning when I talked to you about the might of meekness. And, I want to remind you that meekness is not weakness, but it is a submissive spirit. Any church that is filled with people who have learned the strength of submissiveness—real ability... The word *meekness* means “the ability to be taught and to be controlled by God.” There are some churches that will not be blessed because they will not be broken.

In olden days, when a horse was made ready for bit and bridle and saddle, they said, “That horse had been meeked”—“meeked.” That’s exactly what God wants to do to you. He doesn’t want to take your fire, your stamina, your speed, your strength, but He wants to bring you under control.

## 3. Longsuffering

Now, let me mention another thing that brings us into unity: not only lowliness and not only meekness, but longsuffering. Now, he’s not saying long-facedness. Dr. Lee used to talk about people who had a face so long that they could eat oatmeal out of a lead pipe. No, we’re not talking about that. But, what is longsuffering? Longsuffering is just simply slowness in avenging wrongs, not having a hair-trigger temper, not always going around trying to get even with people who wrong us—as our church covenants used to say, “Slow to take offense and always ready for reconciliation.” Do you know the most glorious victory that you can win over an enemy? It’s to turn him into a friend.

And, that’s exactly what the mark of a great church is. I believe that at Bellevue Baptist Church, we ought to be as afraid of a church fight as we would smallpox, amen? We ought to never ever enter into a controversy with any brother in Christ without necessity, without understanding, and without love. That’s what the Bible calls “longsuffering.” It’s one of the marks of a great church. It’s part of the glue that holds us together.

## 4. Forbearance

And then, he mentions forbearance. Now, forbearance is the practical outworking of longsuffering so you have to have longsuffering before you can have this forbearance. Now, what is forbearance? Forbearance does not mean that we’re blind to the sins of others, but it means that we’re patient with them. And, if we want to look at somebody else who has some faults, what can we do? Just go home and look in the mirror, amen? And so, it would behoove all of us, beginning with the pastor, to forebear. I have some weaknesses. I have some faults. I have some foibles. I have some failures. I don’t need

your criticism; I need your prayers. I need your forbearance, and you need mine.

## 5. Love

All right, and then, he mentions another mark, and that is love. Now, in just a moment, Paul is going to talk to us about orthodoxy. And, I cannot say enough for orthodoxy, but I want to tell you, I know some people whose orthodoxy, I believe, has been pickled in vinegar. And, it doesn't matter how much you believe the Bible—if you, my friend, are not filled with love, you have missed the message of the Bible. And, I want to tell you that love has brought more people to Jesus Christ than zeal and eloquence and learning put together. And, I want Bellevue Baptist Church to be marked by love, and when people come here, I want them to leave saying, "Behold how they love one another."

### B. Orthodoxy

Now, after Paul speaks of this orthopraxy, then he speaks of orthodoxy. And, he gives us the five characteristics of orthopraxy, and then he gives us the seven doctrines of orthodoxy. And, he lists seven things that you're to believe if you're a New Testament Christian. Now, let me tell you something: there are lots of variations in what people believe, but here are seven pillars of faith upon which rest the whole house of Christianity. You cannot fail to believe any one of these seven things and still call yourself a New Testament Christian. These are the seven indispensable fundamentals of the faith. What are they?

#### 1. There Is One Body

Verse 4 mentions one body, and that one body is the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:4) He is not speaking of a denomination. He is not speaking of some particular church, but he's speaking of that one Body of Christ that is made up of all real believers, those who have been born again and placed by the Holy Spirit into that mystical Body of Christ. The Church is the invisible—excuse me, *the Church is the visible expression of the invisible Christ, and Christ is the invisible part of the visible Church*. And, the Church is His Body. The members of that body have been called out of every kindred, every tongue, every people, every nation. They may differ in nationality. They may differ in language. They may differ in education. They may differ in training. They may differ in ability. They may differ in temperament. They may differ in outlook. But, if they're saved, they are part of His Body. And, you cannot be a New Testament Christian if you're not a part of that body and, in my estimation, if you do not believe in and love that body.

#### 2. There Is One Spirit

But, not only is there one body; there is also the Spirit, and that one Spirit is the dear

Holy Spirit. He is the source of our life. He is the secret of our life. He is the strength of our life. And, that one Holy Spirit makes this one body one body. That Holy Spirit bears witness with us that we are the children of God. I know that I'm saved not because you've told me so, not because I have some list of beliefs that I adhere to, though I thank God for those, but there is something down deep, deep, deep within me, the dear Holy Spirit of God, that bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God.

But, wait a minute. That same Holy Spirit is the basis of unity, because not only does He bear witness with me that I'm a child of God, but I can tell you that my spirit bears witness with the spirit of Dan Carter that he's a child of God. And, the Jesus in me loves the Jesus in him, and the Jesus in him loves the Jesus in me. And, that is the basis of our unity. How many of you people know everybody in this place tonight? Is there anybody who can call everybody by name, except Jim? Of course not! But, I want to tell you, we don't have to know everybody by name if God's dear Holy Spirit dwells in us. We are one in the bond of love. And, that dear Holy Spirit of God—that one Spirit, who belongs in the heart and life of every Christian—makes us one in the Lord.

One time I was overseas in the garden tomb in Jerusalem. And, in that garden tomb in Jerusalem—I was in it for the first time. I was in there with my wife and several other people from various parts across the globe. Different races and nationalities and denominations were in that tomb at the same time—God's Holy Spirit so moved upon us in a spirit of love and praise that we were weeping, and glorifying God, and praising God, and laughing all at the same time—our joy in the Lord. We were one having never seen one another, never met one another, but one in the bonds of love because of that one Spirit. You cannot claim to be a New Testament Christian if you do not believe in and have not partaken of that one Spirit.

### **3. There Is One Hope**

Not only that, but there is one hope. That one hope is the blessed Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls the Second Coming of Jesus Christ the "blessed hope." (Titus 2:13) The Bible speaks of that Second Coming in 1 John 3:3, verse 3 and following, with these words: "[he] that hath this hope in him"—speaking of the Second Coming of Christ—" [he] that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." (1 John 3:3) The hope of the Church is that Jesus is coming again.

Now, there's a lot of different discussion about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and people have all kinds of doctrines about the Second Coming of Jesus. Some people call themselves premillennialists; that is, they believe that Christ is coming in order that we might have a millennial reign. Other people call themselves postmillennialists; that is, they believe that we'll have a thousand years of peace and then Jesus will come after the Millennium. Some people call themselves amillennialists; that is, they don't believe there will be a Millennium. They believe that language is to be

taken figuratively and spiritually and there will not be literally one thousand years of peace here upon the earth. And so, they call themselves “amillennialists.” And, some people, who get all confused about all three, call themselves “panmillennialists.” They just say, “I believe it’ll all pan out somehow,” and they don’t know. It’s just too confusing to them.

I am a premillennialist. I believe in a premillennial return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But, I want to tell you, I am not going to fall out with some brother, some sister, because he’s not a premillennialist. Premillennialism is not a basis of fellowship; it is an opportunity for fellowship. Jesus is the basis of fellowship. And, I’m not going to split up with somebody because he’s not premillennial. That’s his mistake. When Jesus comes, I’ll say, “I told you so.” Amen. But friend, if I am wrong, I still know that Jesus is coming, amen? And, *I’m not nearly so interested in being on the Program Committee as I am the Welcome Committee*—that when Christ comes, I’ll see Him; I’ll know Him. As our song said tonight, “Face to face and no long distance rates to pay as we’re speaking with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Nobody has any right to call himself a New Testament Christian who does not believe in the actual, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ. That is the one hope of the Church.

#### **4. There Is One Lord**

Now, I want to say, he goes to speak of one Lord in verse 5, and that one Lord of the Church is Jesus. (Ephesians 4:5) Bible Christians did not call Him “Jesus”; they called Him “the Lord Jesus.” That is, they recognized His absolute authority. You have no right whatsoever to believe that you’re a Bible Christian if you do not say it and mean it: Jesus Christ—and Him only—is Lord.

Now, I spoke this morning about Christians being persecuted by the Roman government. Now, that’s very interesting because, you see, the Roman government was really a very liberal government when it came to religion. They were not against religion. As a matter of fact, they were in favor of it, and they did not mind people having their incidental religions. When they would subjugate a people or conquer a people, they just incorporated their religion. And, they said, “You want to believe this way? Fine. We’ll even help you to do it.” And, they built a religious building called the Pantheon—“many gods.” And, in that Pantheon, they made a little niche for the various gods. “Whatever your god was, we’ll just give him a little niche in that building.” And, you could just go into that building and worship your god. There was a niche for Jupiter. There was a niche for Juno. There was a niche for Artemis. There was a niche for Osiris. There was a niche for Venus. There was a niche for Neptune. And, they said, “Now, we’ll just make another niche, and that’ll be for Jesus.” You know what those early Christians said? “No, no. He is Jesus, the one and only. There is one Lord—not Jupiter, not Venus, not Artemis; Jesus, one Lord. Not two, not three—one Lord.” Many a

Christian could have saved his hide if he'd offered a pinch of incense to Caesar, had he just simply let Jesus be one of the many gods of that day. But, they would not do it. They said, "There is but one Lord, and His name is Jesus." And, that unity in Christ brought them together, but it also brought persecution down upon their heads.

### **5. There Is One Faith**

And then, they go on to say—or Paul goes on to say, "There is one faith," in verse 5. (Ephesians 4:5) Now, that one faith that he's talking about is not the faith that we have when we believe in Jesus, but what he means by "one faith" is there is one revealed body of truth. As the Bible says in the book of Jude, "*[We] should earnestly contend for the faith*"—not a faith, but *the* faith—"*[that] was once [for all] delivered [to] the saints.*" (Jude 1:3) A person who is a New Testament Christian says, "God has revealed Himself. There is one true faith."

Now, some people say, "Well, you can believe this or you can believe that, and you can both be right." No, dear friends. If they're not corresponding, they're not both right. Two things that are different cannot both be right. And so, we must bow before the truth found in the Scriptures. It is unchanged, and it is unchangeable. And, I've said before, *if it is new, it is not truth*. Now, we may differ in our interpretation of the Bible. And, Christians have that right to differ, and no one can superimpose his interpretation upon someone else. But, if he is a Bible Christian, a New Testament Christian, he is going to say, "This book is the Word of God—inerrant, infallible, one faith once for all delivered to the saints."

### **6. There Is One Baptism**

And then, he mentions in verse 5 one baptism. (Ephesians 4:5) Now, he's not talking, in my estimation, about water baptism. He is not talking about baptism by immersion, though I believe that. And, I don't believe there's one shred of scripture that can teach any other kind of baptism but baptism by immersion of believers only. You will never find sprinkling taught in the Bible for baptism. Find it, show it to me, prove I'm wrong, and I'll give you a vacation to Hawaii for a month—two, if you want it. Now listen, you're not going to find it. It's not in there. In the Bible, they baptized by immersion—water baptism. And, I believe in that with all of my heart. But, when Paul says, "There is one baptism," (Ephesians 4:5) I believe he is talking about that spirit baptism of which water baptism is an illustration and of which water baptism is a symbol. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says this: "*For by one Spirit are [ye] all baptized into one body.*" (1 Corinthians 12:13) And again, he's on the theme of one—one Spirit, one body, and one baptism. There, he's talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit, when you're saved, when you repent of your sins, the Holy Spirit takes you and places you into the mystical Body of Christ. And, that happens to all Christians.

Now, dear friend, no New Testament Christian should ever pray for the baptism of the Spirit. He already has it. And, there's no scripture anywhere that tells a New Testament Christian to seek to be baptized with the Spirit. Why? Because if he's saved, he's already been baptized with the Spirit. Again, 1 Corinthians 12:13: *"For by one Spirit are we all..."* (1 Corinthians 12:13) And, the language literally says, "Have we all been baptized by one Spirit into the Body of Christ." The Holy Spirit of God, if we're saved, takes us out of this world and puts us into that Body of Christ.

## 7. There Is One God

And then, he says in verse 6, "There is one God"—not two, but one God. (Ephesians 4:6) I like the way he says it. Listen to it in verse 6: he says, *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* (Ephesians 4:6) I like that "you all," because I know Paul was a Southern Baptist when he said that. "You all!"

Now, who is this one God? His name is Jehovah—not Allah or any other. He is God. But, His fatherhood—this God and Father of us all is the God and Father of those who believe in one faith. He is the God and Father of those who believe in one hope. He is the God and Father of those who believe in one Spirit. He is the God and Father of those who believe in one Lord. He is the God and Father of those who believe in one baptism. He's not just the God and Father of everybody. And, the Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. That may sound good and romanticized, but God is only the Father of those who have been born again. And, Jesus said in John 8:44 to the unsaved Pharisees, *"[You] are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."* (John 8:44) Oh, my friends, what is the unity of Bellevue Baptist Church? It is the unity of behaving the gospel and believing the gospel—orthopraxy and orthodoxy—and that's what makes us one in the Lord.

## II. Diversity

But, not only is a great church marked by her unity, but let's just turn it around: a great church is also marked by her diversity. Begin looking in verse 7: *"But"*—now, he's changing the figure. Look at that word *but*. That means "in contradistinction"—*"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now he that ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? [And] he that descended is the same [that] also...ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:7–12)

Now, here is the diversity of the Body. You see, a body, in order for it to be a body,

must be in unity, but it must be unity in diversity. Those of us who are saved have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, but each of us are members individual; and so, some of us have one part in the Body, another have another part, just as my body is made up of many members: I have hands, and I have arms, and I have organs, and I have eyes, and I have a head, and I have feet, and I have legs—all of these members of my body go up to make one body. And now, the Lord takes all of the different parts of us and all of the different characteristics of we all and He takes us and He fuses us with that diversity into a wonderful unity. Now listen, God does not want us to be alike; God wants us to be one. Sameness does not bring unity; it brings disunity. God made us different, that He might make us one. And, it is our difference that holds us together, as well as it is our likenesses—our likenesses—that hold us together. You see, when God saved you, God gave you a particular grace gift.

#### A. **The Grace That Determines the Gifts**

Now, I want you to notice the grace that determines those gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:7) Now, God has a gift for you. You are a gifted child. And, God’s grace determines that gift. The word *grace* is the word *charis*. It’s the word we get our word *charismatic* from. And, some people ask me, “Are you a charismatic?” Well, now, get ready for this, ’cause I’m going to surprise you: I am! I am! “You speak with tongues?” I do not, but I am a charismatic. I have received a grace gift, and God has given me a spiritual gift.

But, not only has God given me a spiritual gift; if you’re in the Body, God has given you a spiritual gift. Now, He hasn’t given us all the same gifts. Why? God makes us different, that He might make us one. God has not given me all the gifts. If God gave me all the gifts, I wouldn’t need you. And, if God gave you all the gifts, you wouldn’t need me. But, God saw to it that He gives to each person a particular measure of a particular gift so that we are not complete until we’re together. And, if you want to know what Jesus is really like, you’ll never know what Jesus is really like just by watching me, although all of Christ lives in me. But, if you want to see really what the Body of Christ is like, you need to be a part of a church—amen?—because Jesus Christ is displayed in a church in a way that He’s not displayed anywhere else. There’s a unique sense as to *“where two or three are gathered in [His] name, there [He is] in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20)

What is a grace gift? Not a natural talent. I’m not talking about the ability to sing or play the piano. I’m not talking about the ability even to teach with the ability that you might learn in school. The Bible teaches that a grace gift is a God-given spiritual ability. Listen to me again: it is a God-given spiritual ability for service and ministry. You see, you’re saved by grace; you’re secured by grace, but you also serve by grace. And, that



means that if you're in the Body, you have no room for a spiritual inferiority complex. Everybody is somebody in His Body. You are important. And, "*God [hath] set [every member] in the body, as it hath pleased him.*" (1 Corinthians 12:18) Talents are natural. Thank God for talented people. But, you may not be a talented person—that is, as the world counts talent. But, grace gifts are supernatural. They are supernatural in source, in nature, and in purpose; and so, they are gifts of God's grace.

### **B. The Glory That Delivers the Gifts**

But, I want you to see not only the grace that determines the gifts, but I want you to see the glory that delivered the gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 8 and following: "*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*" (Ephesians 4:8) In olden days, when a Roman general would go off to war, he would come back in a triumphal entry back into his home city, and as he came back into that home city, he came back bringing the spoils of war to divide with his people. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the ascended Lord. He is the victorious Lord. He is victorious over death, hell, sin, and the grave. And, He stripped Satan's kingdom; He laid it bare. And, in His great victory, He has given us gifts. And, the grace gift that we have is a gift of our ascended, risen Lord. Thank God for the grace that determines the gifts. Thank God for the glory that delivers the gifts.

### **C. The Guides That Develop the Gifts**

And, I want you to think about the guides that develop the gifts. For look in this scripture here, as we look for a moment. It's very important. Verse 11: "*And he gave some, apostles; and...prophets.*" (Ephesians 4:11)

#### **1. Apostles and Prophets**

Now, the apostles and prophets are the foundation ministry of the Church. We do not have apostles today, and we do not have prophets today in the true, full sense of the word. We have them in a secondary sense, like we might say that somebody has a gift of prophecy or is an apostle to a certain group. But, in the sense that he's using here of apostles and prophets, he's speaking of those who gave us the Bible. They're not with us any more, except as we have their word. They are the foundation, however, of all that we believe, and we have been building on these foundational ministries. We've been building the building on their foundation for nineteen hundred, almost two thousand years, and I believe we're getting ready to put the tile on the roof. I believe it's about all over. I believe the building is about built. But, they are the foundation ministry.

#### **2. Evangelists**

All right, and then, after that, he mentions evangelists. These are also some guides that develop the gift. Now, evangelists are those who are especially equipped to bring men

and women, boys and girls, to Jesus Christ. Never despise the ministry of evangelism. Now, God tells every pastor to do the work of an evangelist, but he is not necessarily an evangelist. And, we need to pray for and undergird and support God-called evangelists. Never, never, never despise the ministry of evangelism. And, pray for those, like Billy Graham and others, who are God's called evangelists.

### 3. Pastors and Teachers

And then, he mentions pastors and teachers, and pastors and teachers are to be spoken of together—not pastors and then teachers, but pastors and teachers. That is, a pastor is a pastor-teacher. Now, the word *pastor* means “shepherd.” Now, what is the job of a shepherd? The job of the shepherd is to see to it that the sheep are well fed. It is his job to mature the saints so that they can minister.

Now, I want you to look at this scripture very carefully here for just a moment. Look at it here in Ephesians 4—the last part of verse 11: “*pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints.*” (Ephesians 4:11–12) Now, you're the saints, right? I'm the pastor-teacher, right? Now, what am I here for? To perfect you. Now, that word *perfect* means to make you mature; it doesn't mean to make you sinless. In the Bible, the word *perfect* doesn't mean “sinless.” If you make it mean “sinless,” then you've got some real difficulty, for the Bible speaks of Jesus, “*the captain of [our] salvation [being made] perfect through [suffering].*” (Hebrews 2:10) Do you think He was made sinless by suffering? He was already sinless. It means that He completed that which He came to do, that His mission was mature. Now, my job as the pastor-teacher is to perfect, to mature you.

Now, what am I to mature you to do? All right, let's continue to read. I am to make you mature “*for the work of the ministry.*” (Ephesians 4:12) Who is to do the work of the ministry? You say, “You are, preacher.” Nope. You are, people. A good place for an “amen.” You are, people. My job is to mature you so that you can do the work of the ministry. Everybody has been called into the ministry—everybody has been called into the ministry. I have been called to be a pastor. Not everybody's been called to be a pastor. I have been given a gift as a pastor-teacher. But, as a pastor-teacher, if I am the kind of a pastor-teacher that I'm supposed to be, I will be maturing you and you will be doing the work of the ministry. And, our people will be being prayed for, and our people will be being visited. And, our people will be being nurtured, and our people will be being built up and loved, as this is a church with fourteen thousand ministers. Say, “I don't know how.” Then, I have failed because it's my job to mature you—that is, unless you refuse to be matured; then you have failed. But, my friend, my job is to equip you to do the work of the ministry.

You see, I mentioned before that God gave you a gift. Now, what do you think God gave you a gift for? Remember what I said that a spiritual gift is? A spiritual gift is a

God-given ability for service and ministry. Well, why did God give it to you? So that you could serve. God didn't give you gifts for enjoyment; He gave you gifts for employment. They're tools, not toys. And, there are a lot of people talking about their spiritual gift and what it means to them. Well, my dear friend, if your gift is operating right, you will be doing that gift in the work of the ministry as God has put you in the Body. Now, if you've not found what your place is in the Body, if you don't recognize your spiritual gift, it is time that you did. And, it is time that we, as a church, helped you to understand your spiritual gift.

Now, there are some people say, "Well, they just don't use me down here at the church." I'll tell you what we've said before: you get usable, and we'll wear you out. Amen. Now, if you hide behind a door, or if you're unfaithful, or if you're unprepared, or you're lackadaisical or you don't care, then that's your problem. But, if you prepare yourself, and get right with God, and get clean and pure and usable, there's a place for you in the Body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### III. Maturity

One last thing—and I'm going far too long here tonight so I'm going to bring this last point very quickly. But, not only must there be unity and not only must there be diversity, but when there is unity and when there is diversity, then, thirdly, there will be maturity. Continue to read now in verse 15 of this same chapter. Look at it now: *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up"*—do you know what most church members need to do? Grow up! Grow up! They're like little children; they've not become mature—*"may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"*—that is, the Body keeps increasing; it keeps building itself up in love. The more you love, the more mature you are. And so, Paul says in verse 17—*"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having [their] understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."* (Ephesians 4:15–18) But, he goes on to say that we are to *"be renewed in the spirit of [our] mind"* (Ephesians 4:23)—"that we are to grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ."

I wish I had time to speak of the maturity of the Body. In verse 13, he says we're to be mature in stature. (Ephesians 4:13) In verse 14, he says we're to be mature in stability. (Ephesians 4:14) In verse 15, he says we're to be mature in speech. (Ephesians 4:15) In verse 16, he says we're to be mature in service. (Ephesians 4:16) You go home and work it out. But oh, dear friend, our church will have unity when we

stop being babies and start being mature saints, when we grow up to the character of Christ, and when we reach out and let the Body make increase of itself through evangelism. We are to grow inwardly, we're to grow outwardly, we're to grow upwardly as we grow in the maturity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The three marks of a great church are unity, diversity, and maturity. God, give us those three marks. Now, let us pray. Father, thank you for your Word. Lord, how it has challenged my heart tonight. And, I pray, dear God, that you'll make this church the kind of a church that you want it to be. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

# Let's Take a Walk

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 20, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:1, 17, 5:2, 8, 15

*“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”*

EPHESIANS 5:8

## Outline

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- I. We Are to Walk in Unity
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- III. We Are to Walk in Love
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- IV. We Are to Walk in the Light
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- A. His Family
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- E. His Faith

## Introduction

Turn, please, to Ephesians, if you will: “God’s guidebook to growth.” And I want you to note with me this morning several scriptures, and our theme today is “Let’s Take a Walk.” I read in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 1: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy.”* That’s Ephesians 4, verse 1: *“that ye walk worthy.”* (Ephesians 4:1) And then, look in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 17: *“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles.”* (Ephesians 4:17) And then, notice, please, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 2: *“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a*

*sweet-smelling savour.*” (Ephesians 5:2) And then, notice in chapter 5 and verse 8: *“For ye were [once in] darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.”* (Ephesians 5:8) And then, in chapter 5 and verse 15: *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”* (Ephesians 5:15)

So, let’s talk a walk. That’s what our message is about today: “Let’s Take a Walk.” Man has learned to fly through the air in his airplanes like a bird. He’s learned to swim through the sea in his submarines like a fish. But he has yet learned how to walk on earth like a man, like God wanted him to walk. And so we’re going to be talking about the Christian’s walk, because the Christian life, being saved, is described in the Bible and characterized and illustrated as a walk. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus Christ died for us and He gave us an example that we should *“walk...as he walked.”* (1 John 2:6) And the Bible also says, *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”* (Colossians 2:6)

Now, why does the Bible describe the Christian life as a walk? Because it’s lived one step at a time. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, and so we walk one step at a time by faith. Step by step by step we serve the Lord, walking in sunlight. *“Leaning on the everlasting arms...what a joy divine...O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way.”* Now, Mrs. Rogers, who just sang, put it this way:

*Only a step—just one step at a time.  
Don’t let me walk ahead of you, nor linger far behind.  
I look out far ahead and cannot see.  
Jesus Christ, one step with you is quite enough for me.*

—JOYCE ROGERS

And that’s what it’s all about. We are to walk a step at a time with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there are five characteristics of the Christian’s walk. Let’s look at them.

## **I. We Are to Walk in Unity**

First of all, we are to walk in unity. That is chapter 4 and verse 1: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation.”* (Ephesians 4:1) And what is the worthy walk that he’s talking about? Verse 3: *“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* (Ephesians 4:3) Now we are to walk together. We’re to walk in unity. We’re to walk in fellowship one with the other.

And I see God doing a wonderful and a strange thing in these last days. As the days grow darker, the saints are growing brighter. And the saints of God—all true saints and all true denominations—are coming together in a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I am not talking about the erstwhile ecumenical movement. That, my dear friend, is union, but not unity. I’m talking not about some manmade organization, not some manmade union, but I’m talking about the blessed unity of the Holy Spirit. All Christians may not be

together in all things. There may not be unanimity in doctrine. There may not be unification of denomination. But, bless God, there is a unity of the Spirit that is built around one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I say, the sooner the better.

I read a long time ago a story of a young man and his wife who were very much in love, who lived in Alberta, Canada. And they went out one moonlit night in the time of harvesting to walk, and the golden moon was there shining upon the wheat fields. The wheat fields, like a golden ocean, were there waving in the breeze and in the moonlight. It was so beautiful. They had their little son with them. And this couple, in love, with the little boy, walking through the wheat fields, enjoying the beauty, forgot for a while where the little boy was. And he was just a little tot, not even old enough to go to school. And then suddenly they realized he was no longer with them. At that particular moment, the wife went in one direction and the husband in the other, and they started calling him, thinking they would find him immediately. But they got further and further away from the spot that they first missed him. And they realized they had misplaced him in thousands of acres, and they realized that before long the coldness of the Canadian night would be settling. And the little fellow was not heavily dressed, and they feared for his safety. And so, while the wife stayed there, the husband hurried back to the village and called the people and said, "Come help us. We've got to find our son." And so the people, as many as could, came there in Alberta to help them look through the wheat fields. And it seemed as though they literally threshed the wheat looking for this little fellow. And they prayed, and searched, and looked, and called.

And, finally, as the night grew on in its bitterness, one man said, "There must be a better way than this." He said, "Let's get organized." And he said, "Let us make a human chain. Let us stretch out, and let's join hand to hand." And then he said, "We'll sweep these fields. We'll go up one side, and then we'll turn around, and we'll come back the other—and if he's in here, we'll find him." Up and down they went until suddenly there was a cry: "I found him!" And everybody rushed together to the lifeless form of the little fellow who had died of exposure. Strong men wept, according to the story that I read, and one voice was heard to say, "O God, why didn't we join our hands together sooner?"

And I wonder if there are not people who are going to slip out through the jaws of death into a Christless eternity because of a church that has not joined hands soon enough. Our heavenly Father has said that we are to walk in the unity (Ephesians 4:3), and I tell you, dear friend, our Father's heart is made glad when He sees His children loving one another.

## **II. We Are to Walk in Holiness**

But not only are we to walk in unity; we are to walk in holiness. Look in chapter 4 and

verse 17, and that's what this verse means: *"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk..."* (Ephesians 4:17) And then he describes the walk of other Gentiles, those who are not saved. He describes them in verse 18 as being in mental darkness, *"having the understanding darkened."* He describes them in verse 18 as being in moral deadness, *"alienated from the life of God."* (Ephesians 4:18) He describes them as being in physical depravity in verse 19: *"Who being past feeling have given themselves unto lasciviousness."* (Ephesians 4:19) And he describes them as being without God—unholy, unclean creatures. And the Bible says we're not to walk as other Gentiles walk, but our walk is to be a walk of holiness—a walk of holiness. Notice the contrast of how a Christian is to walk. Notice verse 24: *"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* (Ephesians 4:24) We're not to walk as other Gentiles walk—in mental deadness, spiritual darkness, and moral degeneracy. We're not to walk that way, but we are to walk in true holiness.

### **A. Holy in Character**

And the only way that Adrian Rogers can walk in true holiness—the only way that you can walk in true holiness—is to put on the new man. That's what verse 24 says—look at it: *"that ye put on the new man."* (Ephesians 4:24) There is an old man, the old Adrian Rogers, a dirty, devilish old man. We're to put off the old man. We are to put on the new man. Putting on the new man is being born again; it is being saved. Have you put on the new man? Have you become a new man?

I tell you, there was a day when Adrian Rogers became a new man. As a matter of fact, the teachers in school talked about it and said, "What happened to Adrian Rogers?" They didn't understand, but I became a new person. And I want to tell you today that God can put a new man in your suit without even unbuttoning the coat. He can put a new man onto you. You will become a new man. And you will never walk in holiness until you have a holy character, until you have been born again. There is no way to live a holy life without the new birth, and you might as well quit your struggling, you might as well quit your trying, you might as well quit your turning over a new leaf.

### **B. Holy in Conversation**

We are to be holy in character—verse 24. (Ephesians 4:24) And then, we're to be holy in conversation. Notice verse 25—chapter 4, verse 25: *"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."* (Ephesians 4:25) Notice verse 29: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."* (Ephesians 4:29) Notice chapter 5 and verse 4: *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not [fitting]: but rather giving of thanks."* (Ephesians 5:4) When I am holy in character, I'm going to be holy in conversation, because *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth*



*speaketh.*” (Matthew 12:34)

And if you want to know what a man’s heart is like, listen to his lips. A doctor many times determine the diseases of the body by examining the tongue. You can determine the diseases of the spirit by examining the tongue. When a man becomes holy in character, when he puts on the new man, the very next thing that will become holy is his conversation. There’s an old proverb: “What is down in the well comes up in the bucket.” You listen to a man and hear what he talks about: If his continual conversation is on buying and selling and money, that is his god. If his conversation is continually upon sports, that’s his god. If his conversation is continually upon sex, that is his god. I say, what is in the well comes up in the bucket. You listen to a man talk. *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*

Do you want me to tell you why men curse and swear and tell dirty, filthy jokes? Because they have profane lips, because they have a profane heart, amen? They have dirty lips because they have a dirty heart. And God warns these lovers of lies and peddlers of profanity and fondlers of filth that we when we become saved are to become, first of all, holy in character—verse 24. (Ephesians 4:24) And then we’re to become holy in conversation—verses 25, 29, and chapter 5 and verse 4. (Ephesians 4:25, 29; 5:4)

### **C. Holy in Conduct**

But not only should we be holy in character; not only should we be holy in conversation; therefore, we’re going to be holy in conduct. Notice verse 26: *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”* (Ephesians 4:26) Notice verse 28: *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”* (Ephesians 4:28) Notice verse 31: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”* (Ephesians 4:31) When I become holy in character and holy in conversation, I must therefore, naturally, become holy in my conduct.

Let me tell you something, members of Bellevue: The thing that is going to impress Memphis, Tennessee, is not the preaching of Adrian Rogers; it’s going to be the way you walk this Monday morning—your walk! You see, talk is cheap. We’re not talking about talk; we’re talking about walk. We’re to walk as Jesus walks. And when there is a generation of people—when there’s a church full of people—who are holy in character, holy in conversation, and holy in conduct, the city is going to look around and say, “Jesus Christ is real,” amen? That’s right. Do you know what Gandhi said? The spiritual leader of so many Indians, he said, “I would have been a Christian, if it were not for the lives of the Christians”—“I would have been a Christian.” You think of it—here was a

man that had such a profound influence upon literally millions of lives: “I would have been a Christian, were it not for the lives of Christians.”

May I submit to you that the greatest argument for Christianity and the greatest argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian. The thing that will put the lie to what I am saying quicker than anything else is for us not to walk as Jesus Christ walked. The thing that will put the yea and amen, and the truth and the seal of God, upon what I am saying more than anything else is for the members of this church to walk in holiness. We’re to walk in unity. Then we’re to walk in holiness: holy in character, a new man; holy in conversation, putting away lying, profanity, filthy talk; and holy in conduct—we’re to go out tomorrow and live like the people that Jesus Christ wants us to live.

### **III. We Are to Walk in Love**

All right, but thirdly, not only are we to walk in unity, and not only are we to walk in holiness, but we’re also to walk in love. Notice chapter 5 and verses 1 and 2: *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us.”* (Ephesians 5:1–2)

Do you want to know whether you’re walking in love or not? Well, what are the expressions of hate? Just back up just a little bit in verse 31, and you’ll notice some of Satan’s brood that are hatched out of the nest of hate. Verse 31: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Are these things in your life? Bitterness? Are you bitter to anybody? Wrath? Are you trying to get even with somebody, hurting somebody? Anger? Are you smoldering? Clamor? Evil speaking? Malice? Then you’re not walking in love. He says, “Put these things away, and walk in love.”

And there are three marks that we’re walking in love. Do you want to know what they are? Look in verse 32: *“And be ye kind one to another,”*—two—*“tenderhearted,”*—three—*“forgiving one another...and walk in love.”* (Ephesians 4:32–5:2) That’s the way to walk in love: kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. And if these three qualities are not in your life, you are not walking in love.

#### **A. Kindness**

You see, first of all, kindness—and what is kindness? Don’t think that’s a small word. My friend, kindness is the thing that the world is looking for right now. That means courteousness. It means considerateness, being considerate. It means being appreciative. It means being thoughtful. There’s nothing more needed in your home than kindness. Do you remember when you were first dating your wife, and you used to go out, and you would sit there together and be having a sandwich and a coke, and

your foot would touch hers, and you'd say, "Oh, pardon me, honey. Did I hurt your little foot?" Today, you just say, "Why don't you get your big number fourteens out of the way?" What happened? You see, kindness is love in the little things. And, oh, it is needed! The world is looking for kindness.

You know, we Christians, we talk a lot. I heard about a man in Texas. He was a member of a very well known church in Texas, a very wealthy businessman, so prosperous that he bought his wife a brand-new car—he'd never even driven it. One day this man, who was the strong executive type, woke up in the morning, and he couldn't get his automobile started, and so he had to borrow his wife's automobile. And he got in his wife's automobile that he had never driven before—a brand-new automobile—and started out on the freeway in Dallas, Texas, and got into one of those traffic jams—a car in front of him, a car behind him, a car on this side, and a car on that side. And he was already a little steamed up because he was late to work and his automobile hadn't started. And the man behind him, after he sat there for a while, blew the horn at him.

"Well," he said, "what's the matter with that guy? Can't he see that I can't move?" And it irritated him. But he got over it. And then the man tapped the horn again, and his blood pressure went up again and came back down. Finally, the man blew the horn the third time, and this member of a Baptist church got out of his car, walked back to that other man; the man rolled the window down, and this man put his fist through the window, and he said, "If you blow that horn at me one more time, I'm going to spread your brains all over this asphalt! Can't you see that I can't move?"

And the man sitting behind the wheel looked flabbergasted. He said, "Man, what's wrong with you? Doesn't that bumper sticker say, 'Honk if you love Jesus'?" This Baptist deacon fell to his knees right there. He said, "Man, I do love Jesus, and I'm so ashamed I haven't been acting like it. Forgive me—forgive me."

I tell you, dear friend, don't blow your horn if you love Jesus. Live like a Christian. That's even better, isn't it? Man, you'll be having a horn that everybody can hear if you live like it. And, by the way, anybody can blow their horn. Tithe if you love Jesus, amen? All right, listen, friend. I'm not against blowing the horn. But I am saying this: that what our world needs is a little kindness, just in the small things.

Let me tell you another story. In an orphanage, the superintendent of the orphanage would pray like this; this is the way he would ask the blessing. He would bow his head, and with all the little children in the Christian orphanage he would say, "Lord Jesus, we thank you for the food that you have provided. Come thou and be our honored guest at this meal." And one little fellow heard that prayer so many times he said, "Why doesn't Jesus ever come? Will He ever come? You always invite Him to come and be our guest." And the superintendent said, "Well, He'll come if we really want Him to." And this

little fellow said, “Well, I’m going to put a chair out for Him.” And he put a chair right next to his chair, and he said, “This is for Jesus if He comes.”

That same day there was a knock. They went to the door, and there was an old man in rags—hungry, shivering, and cold. And the superintendent said, “Come in, sir, and share a meal with us. We’d be glad to have you. Warm yourself. Sit down. We have a chair for you. Sit right here.” He sat in the chair that had been set aside for Jesus. And after it was over, the little fellow looked up at the superintendent, and he said, “I see it all so clearly now. Jesus Christ Himself couldn’t come, but He sent this man to take His place.”

My friend, the Bible says, “*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*” (Matthew 25:40) This is what the world is looking for. It is kindness.

### **B. Tenderheartedness**

Those of us who are Christians are to walk in love—and that means kindness. And it means tenderheartedness. That’s the next thing: tenderheartedness. We’ve become a hardhearted people. God does not comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters. That’s the reason He gives us His comfort: that we might be tenderhearted, loving others as God for Christ’s sake hath loved us. (Ephesians 4:32)

### **C. Forgiveness**

But not only if we walked in love are we to walk in kindness, and tenderheartedness, but forgiveness. If you heard Brother Peter Lord speak, you understand that Peter Lord said, “There is no revenge as complete as forgiveness.” If you want to get even with somebody, forgive them. Do them good and not evil. I don’t care who you are or what they’ve done to you. Some of you may be listening on television: you’re holding a dirty grudge in your heart. Let me tell you something: When you refuse to forgive, you break down the bridge over which you yourself must travel. For he who will not forgive shall not be forgiven. That’s what Jesus Christ said. (Matthew 6:15; Mark 11:26) That is, an unforgiving spirit is unforgivable, and we are to forgive others even as God forgives us. And Jesus said, “If we forgive not men their trespasses against us, neither shall our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses against Him.”

## **IV. We Are to Walk in the Light**

And so, how are we to walk? We’re to walk in unity. We are to walk in holiness. We are to walk in love: kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Now, next, look in chapter 5 and verse 8: We’re to walk in the light. “*For ye were [once] darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of [the] light.*” (Ephesians 5:8) We’re to walk in the light. And what are the characteristics of a light walker? All right, there are three:

## A. There Will Be Godly Fruit

Verse 9 tells us there will be godly fruit. Look in verse 9: *“(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;).”* (Ephesians 5:9) The fruit of the Spirit grows in the light. Do you know what photosynthesis is? It literally means “put together with light”—*photo* meaning “light,” *synthesis* meaning “put together.” Plants grow by photosynthesis. These flowers, and also fruits, are developed by dwelling in the light. Now there are certain things that don’t live in the light: spiders don’t; roaches don’t; bats don’t. Owls go to sleep in the daytime but flutter around at night. Creeping, crawling, ugly, slimy, dirty, filthy things love darkness. But there are certain fruits that will not blossom unless they have the light. We need the light. If we dwell in the light, there is going to be godly fruitfulness in our life: goodness, righteousness, and truth are going to blossom on the stem of the Christian’s life.

## B. There Will Be Godly Fellowship

But not only will there be godly fruit, there will be godly fellowship, if we’re walking in the light. Notice verse 11: *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”* (Ephesians 5:11) You show me the crowd you run with—tell me who your best friends are—and I’ll tell you what kind of a person you are. A light-walker does not live in the twilight zone with unsaved people. We’re too chummy with this world.

Now, Jesus Christ was a friend of publicans and sinners, but He didn’t chum with them. He witnessed to them. He spoke to them. We’re the light of the world, and the light is not to be put under a bushel but on a lampstand. (Matthew 5:14–16; Luke 11:33) And Jesus Christ would let His light shine. But I’m telling you, friend, if your best friend is a dweller in darkness, and if you yourself are trying to live in the twilight zone, you’re never going to be fruitful as a Christian, because you’ve dimmed the light and the fruit is not going to blossom. The Bible says we’re to *“come out from among them, and be ye separate.”* (2 Corinthians 6:17)

There will be godly fruit if we walk in the light. There will be godly fellowship as we walk in the light. And you say, “Well, Brother Rogers, that doesn’t sound broadminded enough to me.” Well, you see, what some people call “broadmindedness” and “broadening their mind” is really just stretching their conscience.

## C. There Will Be Godly Faithfulness

We are to have godly fruit, godly fellowship, and then godly faithfulness. Notice verse 13—and we’re talking about walking in the light: *“But all things that are reprovved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”* (Ephesians 5:13) Now, what does that mean? It means that as the night grows darker the saints should grow brighter. And as our light shines, it shows up everything around us. When you turn on the light, it makes things manifest. Friend, we don’t have to go around

criticizing our friends. We don't have to go around judging them. We don't have to go around finding fault. How do we reprove the unfruitful works of darkness? Just turn on the light—man, just let your light shine.

Let me tell you something about darkness. Darkness knows only one enemy: not two, not three, but one. You can curse the darkness, and it will stay in your room. You can take a shovel, but you won't be able to shovel it out. You can take a broomstick and try and beat it out, but you can't beat it out. There's only one enemy that darkness knows. The darkness cannot stand before that enemy, and it is light—light! And when we're faithful, when I live as a Christian ought to live, everywhere I go, I'm making manifest the deeds of darkness simply because of my light, because of your light, as we let our light shine.

And therefore, Paul called for a great awakening. Notice in verse 14: *“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.”* (Ephesians 5:14) Now he's not telling Christians that they're dead and need to get life. The word is *ek*: “out from” among the dead. He's saying, “Quit sleeping in the graveyard! Don't have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Wake up!” Too many sermons are like bedtime stories when they ought to be like a reveille, to wake up. A sermon ought to be like an alarm clock to shake Sunday morning sanctuary slumberers who come to church and hang a little sign around their neck that says “Please don't disturb.” “Wake up!” Paul said. Too many Christians look like they've been chloroformed rather than transformed. He's saying that we're to wake up; we're to walk in the light.

## **V. We Are to Walk in Wisdom**

There is to be godly fruit. There's to be godly fellowship. There's to be godly faithfulness as *“we walk in the light, as he is in the light.”* (1 John 1:7) Now, next: Not only should we walk in light, but we're to walk in wisdom. Notice chapter 5 and verse 15: *“See then that ye walk circumspectly.”* (Ephesians 5:15) Do you know what the word *circumspectly* means? It literally is *circum*, meaning “around,” and *spectly*, meaning “to look.” Your spectacles are what you look through. The circumference of a circle is the roundness of the circle. So you walk looking around.

The best illustration I can think of is this. Down in New Orleans and other places I've seen where people will build a fence out of mortar, and on the top of that fence or that wall they don't want someone crawling over it, they take beer bottles, and soft drink bottles, and so forth, and put them down in the cement when the cement is wet. And when those bottles dry, then they come along with a crowbar or an iron bar and break the tops of those bottles. And then there's just jagged pieces of glass. Have you ever seen a wall built like that? It keeps folks from crawling over. But, you know, a cat will walk right on the top of that wall. But as he walks, he walks circumspectly. You know,

he's just looking, and he walks just looking along as he walks on top of that wall.

Now, that's the idea; that's what our Lord is saying: just as that cat walks on top of that wall, that's the way we're to walk in this world. You see, the Lord doesn't take us out of this world, but He says, "Keep your eyes open, friend—keep your eyes open. Walk in wisdom. Walk looking around."

And how does a fool walk? Notice—notice—He says in verse 15: "*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*" (Ephesians 5:15–17)

Years and years ago, I heard the story of a king who had in his court a jester called the court fool. And the court's fool, we'll call his name John. And the king one day was told by the royal physician that he was going to die. And so he was trying to give gifts to all of the people in his kingdom before he died. And the king brought old John in—the jester, the court fool, who took the place of a television in those days—and he brought him in and he said, "John, I'm going on a long trip." And he said, "Well, master, where are you going?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "When will you return?" He said, "Perhaps never." He said, "What preparation have you made?" He said, "I don't need to make any." The old fool couldn't figure that out, but he said, "John, before I go, I want to give you my scepter—my golden scepter. It's yours." And he said, "I want you to keep it to remember me with." He said, "Never give it to anyone unless you meet someone who's a bigger fool than you are, and then you can give it to them."

And John said, "Sire, let me ask you again: You're going on a long trip—you're certain you're going?" "Yes, I'm certain I'm going." "You don't know where you're going?" "No sir." "You don't know if you'll ever come back?" "No." "And you've made no preparation?" "That's right." "Here, sire, take it back. You're a bigger fool than I am. The man who knows that he must meet eternity and has not made preparation is the biggest fool." Now, the Bible says we're to "*walk circumspectly, not as fools.*" (Ephesians 5:15)

And then, notice the walk that we are to walk: it is a walk that is "*redeeming the time.*" (Ephesians 5:16) What does he mean by that? He means, dear friend, that you and I only have so many days, so many weeks, so many hours to walk the walk that we're walking. The hand of heaven is writing on the wall, and only the hand of the Holy Spirit is restraining the flood of ungodliness and the final flood of lawlessness that's going to be unleashed upon this world. You need to be buying up every hour. Prepare to meet God. Find out what the will of the Lord is. Don't be a fool. "*Walk circumspectly.*" Open your eyes.

Do you know that Jesus Christ is coming soon? Do you understand that the days are short and the days of evil? Friend, life is too short, eternity is too long, souls are too precious, the gospel is too wonderful for us to be walking any way except circumspectly.

## Conclusion

There was a man in the Old Testament—and I want to close with this—but there was a man in the Old Testament whose name was Enoch. And Enoch’s one claim to fame was that he walked with God. As you read in Genesis the fifth chapter, you read about So-and-so, and it says, “and he died”; “So-and-so, and he died”; “So-and-so, and he died”; “So-and-so, and he died”; “and he died”; “and he died”; “and he died.” And you read all those names that are hard to pronounce—sounds like a Hebrew telephone directory, and you can’t even pronounce them. “So-and-so begat So-and-so. And he died,” “and he died,” “and he died,” “and he died.” But then, you come to this man Enoch, and you find out that *“Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”* (Genesis 5:24) And that was his claim to fame: that he walked with God.

And do you know what caused Enoch to walk with God? Three things.

### A. His Family

Number one: his family. The Bible says he *“walked with God after he begat Methuselah.”* (Genesis 5:22) Did you know who Methuselah’s daddy was? The oldest man who ever lived—969 years he lived—his daddy was Enoch. And the Bible says that *“Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah.”* There are some of you who’ve got children, and, brother, you’d better start walking with God. Yesterday a man and his wife called me from Florida: they’re having trouble with their teenage girl. This man, who lived years and years and years and years without God while I prayed for him, finally has been saved, but his teenage girl now has gone deep into sin. And, oh, how wonderful it would have been if that man had been walking with God when that little girl was a little baby! Enoch walked with God. He walked with God when Methuselah came.

### D. His Fear

Now, not only his family, but I’ll tell you another reason that Enoch walked with God. Are you listening? Because of his fear. Do you know what the word *Methuselah* means? You’re going to learn something if you listen right now. It means “when he’s gone, it will be sent.” Methuselah was a sign that God gave. God knew He was going to destroy the world with a flood, and God gave Enoch a sign. He said, “Enoch, when Methuselah dies, the flood is going to be sent.” Do you know the year flood came? Do you know the day the flood came? The same day that Methuselah died. I can show it to you out of the Bible: the same day that Methuselah died. Why did Methuselah live for 969 years? Only one reason: the longsuffering of God.

### E. His Faith

But why did Enoch walk with God? Family. Fear—he knew that God was going to judge the world. And the third reason: faith. The Bible says, “By faith Enoch walked with



God”—“by faith.” (Hebrews 11:5) He loved God. Now, fear is a good motive. *I'd rather frighten people into heaven than lull them into hell.* But it's not the only motive. Faith—Enoch said, “*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.*” (Jude 1:14) He looked down through the time and saw Jesus coming.

And I believe, friend, if there were ever three motives for people to walk with God, they're still alive: family, fear, and faith. We're to walk as He walked.

# Let's Talk About God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:6

*"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

EPHESIANS 4:6

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God Is Above All: The Greatness of God
  - II. God Is Through All: The Goodness of God
    - A. He Is the God of Strength
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    - C. He Is the God of Superiority
    - D. He Is the God of Sufficiency
    - E. He Is the God of Supremacy
    - F. He Is the God of Stability
    - G. He Is the God of Sympathy
  - III. God Is in You: The Grace of God
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find the Book of Ephesians chapter 4? And tonight, we're going to look at one verse, but a lot of verses that will hinge to that one verse. Paul, in the Book of Ephesians, is talking about the basis of the unity of the church. And you're going to find seven truths that are seven pillars of faith, and those seven truths are delineated by the seven columns out in front of this building. And one of those great, great truths, and the climatic truth of all of them, is in verse 6, that says there is *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* (Ephesians 4:6) So, we know that Paul was a southerner, because he said, "You all." And look at it again: *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* (Ephesians 4:6) Let's just talk about God tonight a little bit. That's the biggest subject. And to talk about God would be like trying to bale out an ocean with a teacup. But there are some things that we can know about God, and we can know God without knowing everything about God.

† My father sold Buick automobiles when I was a little boy. And he worked for a place called East Coast Motors, and he was a good automobile salesman. And before I

started school, I stood in awe of my father; and I have all of my life, because he was truly a magnificent man. But he would say to my mother, “I’ll be home late tonight. I’m going to see a party.” I never could figure that out. I thought, first of all, “You don’t see parties; you go to parties.” And I thought, “How did he get to go to all these parties? He’s going to see a party.” And when I grew up a little older, I realized he was talking about an individual, and he was going to talk to an individual about an automobile or whatever. But I never did know exactly what my father did, but I knew my father. He was my own dear daddy.†

And, you know, you don’t have to know all that the Heavenly Father does when He administrates the universe to know God. But we can learn three things about God from this one verse that I want to speak with you about.

## **I. God Is Above All: The Greatness of God**

First of all, I want you to see that God is above all—God is above all. And that speaks to me of the greatness of God. Do you see that? God is above all. Now, there are some who do not even believe that there is a God who is above all. As a matter of fact, people tell us that it is difficult to believe. Friend, it is impossible, really, not to believe, if you’re thinking at all. If you don’t believe in God, then you believe that the universe is self-existing, that all matter came out of nothing. And then, once you believe that matter came out of nothing, then, you believe that unaided, dead matter produced life. There was this spontaneous combustion of life. And then you believe that by sheer accident, living matter produced mind. And then you take a step further, and you believe that mind produced conscience. And you believe that chaos became cosmos, that order came out of disorder, and chance just produced it all. Now, if you really believe that, I don’t think you’re an intellectual; I believe you’ve got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. To think—I mean, think about it—that matter—poof—came out of nothing. It’s self-existing. And then life—poof—came out of dead, inanimate matter. And mind came out of life, and conscience came out of mind. No. We know that there is a God above all.

George Gallup, we hear a lot about George Gallup, and he’s the great pollster. He said this—he’s the American statistician—he said, “I could prove God statistically. Take the human body alone. The chance that all of its functions could just happen is a statistical monstrosity.” And I know that you’ve been reading about the research done now on the human genome. And the scientists are in awe of the intricacies of the human body. Now, folks, where there is design there has to be a designer.

I wear a wristwatch. Now, suppose I told you at one time that there was not a watch at all, and then—poof—some existence came into matter. And first it was a blob, then it became a button, then it became a steam gauge, then it became a compass, and now it’s a watch. Well, you’d say, “Call for the people with the butterfly net.” Well, friend, this

watch is a tinker toy compared to one human cell. Do you believe all of that just happened by chance? No. Listen. Romans 1, verse 20: *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*

Now, again, I love Hebrews 3, verse 4: *“For every house is [built] by some man; but he that built all things is God.”* If you don’t accept that God is above all, do you know what you believe? You believe in a design without a designer; you believe in a creation without a Creator; you believe in an effect without a cause. Now, you see, we see the effect; therefore, we understand there has to be a cause. Electricity, to many of us, is an effect. We don’t understand electricity. And don’t tell me that you understand electricity, because Einstein said before he died, he hoped to understand electricity, but he confessed that he never did. But I love what Vance Havner, Baptist preacher said. He said, “I don’t understand electricity either, but I don’t intend to sit around in the dark until I do.” You don’t have to understand God to experience God. You can see the effect of God.

And I enjoyed reading about the late professor, Dr. Edwin Conklin. He was a noted biologist. And here’s what he said. He said, “The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of an unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing shop.” I say amen to that.

Well then, why do people refuse to believe in this God who is above all? Well, Psalm 14, verse 1: *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* Now, the phrase “there is” is supplied. And what it really says, supplied by the translator, what it really says is, “The fool hath said in his heart, no God.” (Psalm 14:1) That is, he just doesn’t want God. He refuses God, and it’s not a matter of the intellect; it is really a matter of the heart. The reason that people don’t want to believe in God is they don’t want to be accountable to God. *“When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God...but became vain in their imaginations...”* (Romans 1:21) and they just simply say, “No God.”

Joyce and I were talking about an old story that I read many years ago about an old Arab. He had come to the end of his journey, and the sun had already set. He got down off his camel, lighted his lamp, reached into his knapsack, and pulled out one of three dates that he had for his evening meal. He took the first date, and held it up to the lantern and looked at it, and it had a worm in it, so he threw it over his shoulder, into the sandy darkness. Reached in his knapsack and took out the other date, and held it up to the lantern. It had a worm in it. He threw it over his shoulder and into the darkness. Reached in the knapsack and pulled out the third date, blew out the lantern, and ate the date.

Now, that’s what the unbeliever in God does. He just says, “I don’t want the light to shine upon me, because I’m going to eat this date.” And he doesn’t want the truth, and,

therefore, he cannot find the truth. So the very first thing I want you to see is this: that God is above all. That speaks of the greatness of God. And I'm so glad God exists. Aren't you glad there's a God that you can praise?

One of the hobbies that Joyce and I have is watching sunsets. We love sunsets. And sometimes I'll be coming home in the car and get on the car phone and call Joyce and say, "Go outside and look at the sunset. It is so beautiful." I'd hate to be an atheist and see a sunset like that, and have no one to thank. So, the very first thing I want you to learn about our Heavenly Father is the greatness of God. He is above all.

## II. God Is Through All: The Goodness of God

But now, notice, here's the second thing that Paul says about God. God is through all, and that speaks of the goodness of God. That is, everything that we receive comes through God. God is through all things. Now, you could see that God is above all, as we said, by creation and design, but you wouldn't really know the heart of God. If you were to put a detective on my trail he could find out some things about me, but he would never know me until I revealed myself to him. And so, we can find out some things about God by objective observation, but we can really only know the heart of God, the goodness of God, by revelation. And how do we know the goodness of God? And what kind of a revelation has God given of Himself?

Did you know one of the greatest revelations that God has given of Himself is the names of God—the names of God. The Bible says, in Psalm 9 and verse 10: "*And they that know thy name shall put their trust in thee...*" To know the names of God is so great. Now, I'm going to put up here on the screen for you tonight the names of God. Now, not all of the names of God, but I've selected some of them, and we're going to have a little classroom here tonight. Are you ready? You might want to jot these down.

### A. He Is the God of Strength

First of all, there is the name *Elohim*—*Elohim*. And that tells us that God is the God of strength. Let me show you where the name *Elohim* is used in the Bible. In Genesis 1:1: "*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.*" And the word for God there is the word *Elohim*, and it's a combination of two words. *El* means "unlimited strength" and *allah*, that means "covenant keeper". So He is a God who can do anything, who always keeps His Word. That's in the very first verse of the Bible. And I'm so grateful for this God of infinite strength and absolutely, absolute faithfulness, the God with whom nothing is impossible, the God who always keeps His Word. Well, that's Genesis 1:1.

But listen to Colossians 1:16. It speaks of Jesus, and says, "*For by him were all things created...*" (Colossians 1:16) What does that mean? Jesus is *Elohim*. Say amen. Jesus is *Elohim*. You see, "*In the beginning [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) Colossians 1:16: "*By [Jesus] were all things created, that are in*

heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." So, God is through all. He is *Elohim*.

## B. He Is the God of Sovereignty

Now, I want to give you another name for God, and it is Jehovah. In your King James Version of the Bible, it's translated Lord God. And, not only does it speak of God's strength, but it speaks of the sovereignty of God. God through all, the goodness of God, and He is the God of sovereignty, Jehovah.

Now, the way to pronounce Jehovah is actually lost, because we don't have the vowels; we just have the consonants. One of the reasons for that is this: In Leviticus chapter 24 and verse 16, the Bible so clearly warned about using God's name in vain. It says this: "*And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death*"—boy, there'd be a lot of dead people around today if we lived under a theocracy—"*and all the congregation shall certainly stone him, as well as the stranger, as he that is born of the land, born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall be put to death.*" (Leviticus 24:16) Oh, we ought to be so very careful that we never, ever, ever, ever, ever use God's name irreverently. He is Yahweh. He is Jehovah. This name is used some six thousand times in the Bible, and the root of this name is Habah—H-A-B-A-H—and what it really means is "one who is self-existing", "one who never came into being", and "one who always will be".

When Moses asked God, "Who shall I tell Pharaoh has sent me?" here's what God said to him, in Exodus chapter 3, verse 14: "*And [the Lord] said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*" And *Jehovah* means that He is the great I AM. He is the self-existing God. To the Jews, Jehovah, Yahweh, the self-existing God, the great I AM, was the most sacred name. Many of the pious Jews would not even pronounce the name, and even today you will have Jews who will not use the name Yahweh.

Now, here's a very interesting thing. Just as Jesus is *Elohim*, Jesus is the great I AM—did you know that? : "*Jesus saith unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*" That is an incredible verse. That verse speaks so of the deity of Jesus Christ.

Do you know what Jehovah's Witnesses have done? They have mistranslated this verse because they cannot bear it. If you'll find one of their fraudulent translations of the Bible, what do they call it? The New World Edition or something like that. Turn to this scripture, and you'll read in John 8:58 it says something like this: "Before Abraham was, I have been." Oh, there's a great difference between "I have been" and "I AM". They believe that Jesus was created, but He wasn't created; He created everything.

And He is the great I AM. And it's always speaking of the self-existing one. Jesus did

not begin in Bethlehem. *“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.”* (John 1:1) And so, what is our God? Our God is the God of strength. And what is our God? Our God is the God of sovereignty.

### C. He Is the God of Superiority

But now, also, this God is the God of superiority. Again, you’re going to read about *Adonai*, and that’s translated “Lord” in your Bible. But, capital L and then—O-R-D—small caps, *Adonai*. And that’s always translated “Lord”, also. And let me read for you Exodus 4, verse 10: *“And Moses said unto the Lord”—that is, to Adonai—“O my [Adonai], I am not eloquent, neither [therefore], nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.”*

Now, what does the word mean? It means “one who is master”, “one who is your superior”, or “one who is Lord over you”. Well, is that Jesus? Is Jesus *Adonai* to us? Absolutely. In Acts chapter 10, verse 36, the Bible says, *“[Jesus] is Lord of all.”* (Acts 10:36) I hope you’re picking up that in the name of Jesus all of the attributes of the eternal God are compounded in one precious name, and that is the name of Jesus.

All right now, the next name I want to give you... Now, remember, the Bible says, “When you know His name, you’ll put your trust in Him.” (Psalm 9:10) And let me just say, parenthetically, before I go on, on my wall, before I come out to preach, I have a plaque that speaks of the name of Jesus and all of the attributes that are in His name. And then, just before the door opens on this wall, I have a plaque that speaks of the names of God. And these names that I’m giving to you tonight are on that plaque that speaks of the names of God. And I’ll take one of those names, and I’ll say, “Lord, that’s my name for today, or that’s my name for this morning.” Many times I will do that, not always. But these names are there to help me to understand how great our God is, and to put our trust in Him.

### D. He Is the God of Sufficiency

So the next name after *Adonai* is *El Shaddai—El Shaddai*. And that literally means, “God Almighty”. And that speaks of the sufficiency of God. Now, why do I call it the sufficiency of God? Well, again, you’ve learned the word *El*. *El* means “Almighty” or “powerful”, and *Shaddai* comes from a word which means “breast”, like a woman’s breast, and it speaks of sufficiency. And all that the baby needs for sustenance is in the mother’s breast. Sustenance and satisfaction are there for the baby.

And this is one of the most beautiful pictures of God in the Bible, because it is great strength mingled with complete sufficiency. And so, it speaks of our sufficient God. In the Bible, when Abraham was ninety and nine years old and his reproductive abilities were decimated, there was no way he could really father a child, and yet God had promised him a child in his old age. God appeared to him. And the name that God used

to reveal Himself to Abraham was *El Shaddai*. That is, the God who is sufficient. And you might read that in Genesis chapter 17, verse 1: “When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God”—and what that literally is in the Hebrew is *El Shaddai*—“walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

Well, is Jesus *El Shaddai*? You’d better believe it. We receive our life from Him. Jesus is the one that nurtures us. In John 15, verse 5, He said, “[I’m] the vine, [you] are the branches...” (John 15:5) That is, He is our sustenance; He is our strength. And we draw our life and our strength from Jesus who is our *El Shaddai*.

### E. He Is the God of Supremacy

The next name for God I want to give you is *El Elyon*, and it means “the Most High God”. And that speaks of the supremacy of God. He is above all. And Abraham met a man named Melchizedek in the Old Testament, and I want you to see how that’s described in Genesis 14, verse 18: “*And Melchizedek king of Salem*”—the word *Salem* means “peace”—“*brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God.*” That’s *El Elyon*. That’s what that means. *El Elyon* is the Most High God. “*And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.*” (Genesis 14:19) That is, the Most High God possesses the heaven and the earth. He’s above it all. “*And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he*”—that is, Abraham—“*gave him*”—Melchizedek—“*tithes of all.*” (Genesis 14:20) The first mention of tithing in the Old Testament is where Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. Well, if you read in the Book of Hebrews, the seventh chapter, you’re going to find out that Melchizedek was a picture and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what does *El Elyon* mean? It means, the word means “the strongest of the strong”, and it means “the highest of the high”. And that teaches us that God is not a part of this universe; God is above this universe. Now, Hinduism—and there’s a lot of Hinduism around today, and Pantheism, which is in the New Age movement—speaks of God as a part of the universe. But God is not a part of the universe. He is the transcendent God. He is above all. He is the Most High God.

And, when Abraham saw this Most High God, no wonder he wanted to pay tithes to Him. And, friend, I’ve never had any difficulty wanting to give my tithe to the Most High God. And, Jesus, however, is our *El Elyon*. Listen to Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17: “*For by him*”—that is, Jesus—“*were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.*” (Colossians 1:16) And in verse 17: “*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*” (Colossians 1:17) He is above all things. Jesus is our *El Elyon*.



## F. He Is the God of Stability

And then, here's another name for God, and that's *Ei Olam*—O-L-A-M—and that speaks of the everlasting God. He is a God of stability. The God of stability—He never changes. Psalm 90, verses 1 and 2: *“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”* What a wonderful, wonderful thing to know that in a changing world, God does not change.

Deuteronomy 33, verse 27: *“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them.”* Time does not alter God. Psalm 90, verse 4: *“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”* Well, what does that mean? It means there are no surprises to God. He's the everlasting God. There's no panic in heaven. And God knows the past and the future all at the same time.

Well, what about Jesus? He is our *Ei Olam*. He is the King of the Ages. Hebrews 1, verse 8: *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: and a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”*

## G. He Is the God of Sympathy

The last of these names I want to give you tonight is *Ei Roi*. And that is “the God who sees”. It's *Ei Roi*. And that speaks of that He is the God of sympathy. He sees. He knows. This name was first revealed in the Bible by Hagar. You remember Abraham, first of all, went in to Sarah's handmaiden, Hagar, an Egyptian slave woman, to try to help God out, but that was not God's plan. And so, Hagar was pregnant by Abraham, and, while she was pregnant, Sarah said, “You send her away.” And so, she's fleeing out in the wilderness. Poor Hagar is friendless, and she is homeless, and she is pregnant, not knowing what would become of her. God had compassion on her. And an angel appeared to Hagar to give her comfort and to speak of God's grace and mercy, and here's what the Bible says in Genesis 16, verse 13: *“And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me”—that's Ei Roi—“Thou God seest me, for she said, Have I also looked after him that seeth me?”*

Now, may I tell you tonight that God sees you? You don't have any heartache, you don't have any pain, you don't have any trouble, that He doesn't know of. In Psalm 33, verses 18 and 19, *“Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and upon them that hope in His mercy.”* (Psalm 33:18) Did you know that God sees you right now? God knows your very thoughts. God knows your heartache. God knows your imaginations right now. God is there, and Jesus is our *Ei Roi*, because what does the Bible teach us in the Book of Hebrews? We have a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows. He cares. “His eye is on the sparrow, and I

know He watches me.” (Civilla Martin)

Well, He is a God who is through all. Now, just think. He’s the God of strength, *Elohim*. He’s the God of sovereignty, *Jehovah*. He’s the God of superiority, *Adonai*. He’s the God of sufficiency, *El Shaddai*. He is the God of supremacy, *El Elyon*. He is the God of stability, *El Olam*. He is the God of sympathy, *El Roi*. And all of these names are wrapped up in one sweet name. Let’s say it together: Jesus—Jesus.

You see, God has given Him a name that is above every name—at the name of Jesus. You take all of the names of God and you compound them into one sweet name: Jesus. Isn’t that wonderful? You see, God is above all. That speaks of the greatness of God. But God is through all. That speaks of the goodness of God.

### **III. God Is in You: The Grace of God**

And then, come to the final phrase there in that passage in Ephesians 4, verse 6: God is in you all. And that speaks of the grace of God. Now, isn’t it something that this God who is above all, and this God who is through all, will come and live in us? God is in us. How wonderful that this great God and this good God will live in me. That is nothing short than amazing grace.

Now, remember, Paul is talking in this passage about the unity of the church, and, if there’s one thing that typifies Bellevue Baptist Church, it is unity. This church is a marvel to this community, and really to our denomination. They wonder, what holds us together? What gives us the sweet fellowship? What makes us one? Do you think we’re all lovely? We are not all lovely. Look on either side of you. What do you think binds us together? The same God that’s in Adrian is the God that’s in you. And the one God that is in us all is what makes us one body in Christ. You know, we’re all a little peculiar. I mean, we’re all a little different. If it weren’t for Jesus, we wouldn’t stay together; we couldn’t stay together.

*To dwell there above with those that we love,  
that will glory;  
but to live here below with those that we know,  
that’s another story.*

We’re so different—we’re so different. And yet, there is that wonderful unity. Why? Because we’re all a part of God’s wonderful family. And I’m so glad that I am a part of the family of God. Look at the verse again, in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 6, and see what it says: “*One God and Father of all...*” (Ephesians 4:6) And how does God get to be our Father? When we’re born into His family. Are you glad to be a part of that family? Now, I haven’t told our instrumentalists this, but we’re going to sing right now, “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God.” Let’s stand together and sing it, and see how quick they can find the right key. I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.

Congregation singing:

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.*

*I've been washed in the fountain,*

*Cleansed by His blood.*

*Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,*

*For I'm part of the family, the family of God.*

Forgive me for laughing. We're going to sing that again in a moment. But nobody knew we were going to do this. I didn't say anything to Jim or anything, and I said, now, I hope the instrumentalists can find the right key. Now, you tell me how those words appeared up on that screen just like that. When I tell you these people in technical services know what they're doing, folks, that is incredible to me. That's amazing; that is amazing. Let's sing it one more time. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.

Congregation singing:

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.*

*I've been washed in the fountain,*

*Cleansed by His blood.*

*Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,*

*For I'm part of the family, the family of God.*

Now, for just a few moments, I want us to just have some family fellowship, and what I want you to do, I want you to turn to two or three people—I hope you won't be embarrassed to do this—and tell them, “I love you, brother. I love you, sister. I love you brother. I love you, sister.” Just pass the peace. And you might want to just give them a blessing, and say, “God's peace be with you.” Can we just bless one another now for a little bit? We're part of the family. Can we do that?

All right, let's sing it one more time: I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.

Congregation singing:

*I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.*

*I've been washed in the fountain,*

*Cleansed by His blood.*

*Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,*

*For I'm part of the family, the family of God.*

## **Conclusion**

Now, there's one God and Father who's above all—that's the greatness of God. And through all—that's the goodness of God. And in us all—that is the grace of God. And it's

all summed up in one person—and that’s Jesus. Now, you’ll never know the Father until you receive the Son. *“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons”—the daughters—of God...*” (John 1:11–12) Would you bow your heads in prayer?

If you’ve never received Jesus, would you pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus. I receive you now by faith as my personal Savior and Lord. I turn from sin to you, and I give you my heart, my soul, my life now, forever and ever. And help me to make it public. In your name I pray. Amen.”

# Faithful in Ministry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 12, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:7–16

*“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 4:7

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## Introduction

Find Ephesians chapter 4, and then look up here.

¶ Many believe that Charles Spurgeon, outside of the Apostle Paul, was the greatest preacher who ever lived. Spurgeon told a story, a very interesting story. He told of a woman that had been a member of his congregation who was very poor, and she lived in the poor house—what they called “the poor house” in those days. And Spurgeon went to visit her to give her some comfort and some help. And when he was there in her room, he looked up on the wall, and there he saw framed a certificate, a piece of paper, sort of a legal document. And so, he went over and read it. And what it was was a document transferring great wealth to this woman. She didn’t know what it was. She had framed it and put it on her wall. What had happened is this: that she had served as a nurse and had taken care of an elderly man, and when he died, he left her his estate. She didn’t know what it was. She was untaught, unlearned. When, finally, the bank learned about it, they said, “We wondered who the old gentlemen left his estate to.”¶

Now, may I say this: that when the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He left you an incredible giftedness. It may be that you have not yet discovered what you have in the Lord Jesus. I want to talk to you today about your spiritual gift. Could it be that you have it framed as a motto on the wall rather than having carried it to the bank to cash it and use it? Or could it be that you have left your gift under the tree, wrapped and unopened and, therefore, unappreciated? Let me tell you something: when God saved you, God saved you by His grace, but *God did not save you to sit, soak, and sour; God saved you to serve*. And you are saved by grace, and you serve by grace. And you are a gifted child.

Now, look with me in verse 7. Look in God’s Word—Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 7: “*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:7) Now, if you don’t mind marking your Bible, would you underscore for me “every one”? Now, did that include you? Well indeed, it did, if you’re a child of God. Are you part of “every one”? Of course you are.

Now, God has given to you, precious friend, a spiritual gift. “*But unto every one of us is given grace.*” (Ephesians 4:7) Do you see the word *grace*? It’s the Greek word *charis*. It’s the word that we get our word *charismatic* from. You have a charismatic gift. Did you know that you’re a charismatic person? “Well,” you say, “I’m not charismatic.” Well, don’t think by *charismatic* that we mean somebody who has a ready smile, a firm handshake, and verbal ability. We say, “Well, that man is charismatic. He’d make a good politician.” That’s a corruption of the word *charismatic*. The word *charismatic*

merely means “a person who has been gifted by grace.” “[To] every one of us is given grace”—*charis*—“according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:7) You are a gifted child, but you may be like that poor woman, who does not understand what the gift is, and you don’t know how to use it. So, we’re going to be looking today at how you can discover and develop and deploy your spiritual gift and minister here in the body. Now, there are about four things I want you to see very quickly this morning.

## I. The Gifts Delivered

And the very first thing is how the gifts are delivered. Verse 7: “*But unto every one of us is given*”—underscore the word *given*—“*given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:7) Now, God has given you a grace gift; therefore, do not insult God by saying God cannot use you. In the church, there can be no inferiority; there can be no superiority. We are what we are by the gift of God.

Now, what is a charismatic gift? Remember that every one of us has a charismatic gift. Every one of us has a charismatic gift. What is a charismatic gift? Here’s the definition: a grace gift, a charismatic gift, is a God-given ability for service and ministry. Got it? Got it—a God-given gift for service and ministry; a God-given spiritual ability for service and ministry. Now, it goes beyond natural talent. Talent is natural; spiritual gifts are supernatural. They’re supernatural in source, supernatural in nature, and supernatural in purpose.

Now, you do not choose your spiritual gift any more than you could choose your natural gifts. Laurie, that just sang for us, has a natural gift of music. She also has a supernatural spiritual gift. But her natural gift is a natural talent. You can develop your natural talents, but you don’t choose them any more than you could choose the color of your eyes or the color of your skin. You get that genetically by your first birth, and your talents are encoded in you genetically by your first birth. Your spiritual gift is given to you at your new birth. And, as your natural talents are natural, your spiritual gift is supernatural.

Now, how did you get this gift? Well, it is the gift of your ascended Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 8: “*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high*”—who is that talking about? Jesus—“*he led captivity captive*”—who is that talking about? The devil—“*and gave gifts unto men*”—who is that talking about? You—“(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that hath ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:8–10)

Now, here’s what happened: The Lord Jesus descended. He came to this earth; lived a perfect life; suffered, bled, and died on the cross; was buried and rose again. When Jesus Christ died on that cross for us—when, with His blood, He purchased our

salvation—at the same time He broke Satan’s back. Satan’s kingdom came crashing down, and Satan and his malevolent forces were crushed by Calvary. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ, by His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, led captivity captive. Satan had taken the world captive, but Jesus took Satan captive. He led captivity captive.

Now, what the Apostle Paul is talking about here is a Roman triumph. When a Roman general would go off and fight the war for Rome, if he won the battle, he would come back to the city of Rome for a parade called “the triumph.” And in the triumph, the Roman general would come. The air would be filled with incense and perfume. He would be riding upon his white horse. There would be a parade. The priests would be there, swinging incense and perfume. And the people would be there, giving their praises to this general. Behind this general would come the conquered kings and generals behind him. They would have been stripped naked—absolutely naked. They would be chained to the conquering general’s chariot wheels, and they would be dragged along. The people would be praising the conquering general. They would be jeering and mocking these who’d been stripped and shamed and subdued, their power gone, their pride laid in the dust. And then, behind them would come servants bearing all of the spoils of the battle, the riches that had been conquered. They had been brought back to Rome to be given to the people of Rome.

Now, that’s the picture—that’s the picture that Paul is talking about here. The Lord Jesus ascended up on high. He led captivity captive. Satan’s kingdom is ruined, and the spoils of the battle are given to us. And the spoils of the battle, that is our grace gift to serve our great King. So, never despise or overlook your grace gift. It is a spiritual gift from our Conqueror, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Gifts Described**

Now, the second thing I want us to think about: not only the gifts as they are delivered, but the gifts as they’re described. What are these gifts? I would like for you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, would you, please? Just turn to that. You turn left to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and we’ll find a list of gifts. And then, in Romans chapter 12, we’ll find another list. I want you to listen very carefully because you’re going to hear your name called in one of these gifts. You’re going to discover one or more of these that are your spiritual gift, I believe.

Now, I begin in verse 4—1 Corinthians 12, verse 4: *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit”*—now, it’s the Holy Spirit who gives different gifts to the Church—*“And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord”*—that is, everything is not always done the same way, but it’s the Lord who’s doing it—*“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the*



*manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7) Now, what does that mean? In plain English, it means that God gave you a spiritual gift, not for your own enjoyment, but for your employment. Your spiritual gift is to bless the church, not to bless you. It is a tool, not a toy.

### **A. Wisdom**

And then, he says in verse 8: *“For [by] one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom.”* (1 Corinthians 12:8) Now, what is the word of wisdom? That is supernatural insight into the mind of God. He’s not talking here about common sense; he’s talking about uncommon sense. People who have a word of wisdom make wonderful counselors.

### **B. Knowledge**

*“...to another the word of knowledge.”* (1 Corinthians 12:8) This differs from wisdom in that it is the supernatural ability to know the things of God and apply the things of God. Knowledge puts wisdom to practical use. And there are people who have the gift of wisdom. Some will have the gift of knowledge. Some have these gifts combined, and they make wonderful, wonderful leaders and counselors.

### **C. Faith**

Verse 9: *“To another faith by the same Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:9) Now, all believers have faith or they could not be called a believer. You could not be saved without faith. But some people have a supernatural gift of faith. It’s described in the next chapter as mountain-moving faith. Thank God for these kinds of people. They are the visionaries. They are the pioneers. They are the people who are able to think big, to believe God for the big thing. And we have some of them in our church, and I thank God for them.

### **D. Healing**

And then, *“another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:9) In the Greek language, this is literally plural—“gifts of healings.” There are healings for the body, soul, and mind; physical healing, psychological healing, spiritual healing (healing for the spirit). And I believe in the gift of healing, and some have been given this gift. And I am grateful for the gifts of healing.

### **E. Miracles**

And then, he says, *“To another the working of miracles.”* (1 Corinthians 12:10) “Pastor Rogers, is the age of miracles past?” Absolutely not! “Well, do individuals have power to work miracles?” According to this, I believe that they do. I don’t think that is my gift. As a matter of fact, I’m quite certain that it is not my gift. But I am grateful for any who may have the gift to perform miracles. I remind you that Satan also has miraculous power so we need to be very, very careful. I also remind you that the gifts of healing generally came in clusters in the Bible. They were not normal in everyday Bible life. But we

cannot deny that God is a God of might and miracle.

### **F. Prophecy**

“...to another prophecy.” (1 Corinthians 12:10) The word *prophecy* means “the ability to foretell and forth-tell,” primarily, not to foretell the future, but, primarily, to tell forth the will of God in a particular matter. Now, we don’t have to guess about what the gift of prophecy is because he says over here in the fourteenth chapter, in verse 3: “*But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification*”—what does edification mean? That means “to build people up.” An edifice is a building—“*and exhortation*”—what is exhortation? That is to encourage, to fire people up; to exhort; to cheer. And then—“*[to] comfort*.” (1 Corinthians 14:3) What does *comfort* mean? That means “to hold up and shore up people.” A prophet is somebody who builds up, fires up, and shores up the people of God. The fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is given over to tell us how important the gift of prophecy is. Every church ought to pray that God will give prophets to the church, spokesmen who can speak for God. Maybe that is your gift, the gift of prophecy. And maybe God uses you to speak God’s Word.

### **G. Discernment**

“...to another *[the] discerning of spirits*.” (1 Corinthians 12:10) Now, what does that mean? There are a lot of wild and wicked spirits in the world today. The Apostle John says, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test*”—or, “try”—“*the spirits whether they [be] of God*.” (1 John 4:1) There’s a lot of spiritual wickedness, as well as spiritual righteousness, in the world today.

I was in the airport this past week. And I generally pray for those that I’m going to sit by and try to witness to them. A lady got on, sat by me, and I prayed, “O God, help me to find a way to talk to this woman about you.” She pulled out a book and began to read the book, and the book was about angels. And so, I’m looking over and kind of, with my eyes, eavesdropping on her reading, and I’m trying to find out what she’s reading. And I see the book is just full of New Age error, and there’s nothing in there based on the Bible or the Word of God. I said to this woman, “Tell me about angels.” “Oh,” she said, “well, angels are wonderful.” She said, “They’re all around, and,” she said, “they guide me.” I said, “They do?” She said, “Yes, they speak to me.” I said, “Oh.” She said, “And I speak to them, and I pray to them.” I said, “Well, that’s interesting.” I said, “What is that book based on?” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “What is the authority of that book? How do you know that book is true?” “Well,” she said, “the angels speak to me.” I said, “Did you know, lady, that the Bible says that Satan can be transformed as an angel of light?” She looked at me like I’d shot her. And then I began to share with her the Lord Jesus Christ. And to shorten the story, I believe she was gloriously saved right there on that airplane as she prayed, and asked Christ into her heart as her personal

Lord and Savior, and said to me, “Mister, God put you on this airplane beside me.” I’ve written her to give her some material to help her to grow in the Christian life. But here was a woman, I believe, making contact with demon spirits and believing that she was in contact with angels sent from God, or whatever, because she did not have the basis of God’s Word. And we, in this day and age, need the Spirit to discern spirits.

## H. Tongues

“...to another divers kinds of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:10) The word *tongues* here simply means “languages”—the ability to speak a language that you have never learned in school, to praise God. Tongues are not a sign to God’s people. Tongues are not for a sign to believers but to unbelievers. Now, tongues are not, primarily, a private prayer language. They are a tool of witnessing, primarily, to unsaved Jews.

How would the gift of tongues work today? Well, suppose, in this particular service, a busload of Russian tourists were to stop out here, and let’s suppose that they’re Jewish and they’ve never heard the gospel. They don’t know English—or maybe they do know English, but I don’t know Russian. They come and sit in this section right here. And God gives me, supernaturally, the charismatic gift of tongues. And I begin to praise God in fluent Russian, and they hear in the language where they were born. They say, “How does that man know Russian?” I don’t know Russian. God has supernaturally gifted me to speak to them in Russian. But most of you don’t know Russian. So, when I’m speaking in English, the Russians are not understanding. When I’m speaking in Russian, you’re not understanding. So, if God gives me the gift of tongues so I can praise God in their language, He has to give somebody else the gift of interpretation so you can understand what I’m saying when I’m speaking in Russian.

## I. Interpretation

So, continue to read in verse 10: “to another...interpretation of languages.” (1 Corinthians 12:10) So, let’s suppose that Brother Whitmire has the gift of interpretation. I am praising God to those Russians, saying that God is great and God is glorious. They’re being convinced, especially if they’re Russian Jews. Brother Whitmire says to the rest of us, “What the pastor is saying is this,” and he interprets, having never learned Russian either, supernaturally the gift of tongues. And he has the gift of interpretation so that nobody is in the dark. Remember what we said—that every gift is given to the entire Body to profit withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7) Nobody is to come in a service and sit there and say, “I wonder what that meant.” If he occupies the room of the unlearned and we’re speaking in things he can’t understand, the Bible says he’ll think we’re crazy; he’ll think we’ve gone mad. Everybody is to understand the Word of God. Now, that is a gift of God.

## **J. Outreach**

Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t believe you’ve mentioned my gift yet.” Well, just turn to Romans chapter 12, and let’s look at another gift right here. And maybe you’re in this list. And just turn left to Romans chapter 12, and I begin again in verse 6: *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy.”* (Romans 12:6) Now, we’ve already mentioned that, but it may be that God’s called you into preaching or jail services—missionary work to speak for God.

## **K. Ministry**

*“...or ministry, let us [minister].”* (Romans 12:7) Now, what is ministry? That’s acts of service. We could just call that “general church work.” Our ushers today have the gift of ministry—in our Activities Program; those who manage the Grace Building; our secretaries, typing; ushering; coaching. And here’s a wonderful gift of ministry—working in the nursery today. Many of you ought to do that, and many of you have been gifted of God to change diapers. I’m serious! You say, “Well, God didn’t give me any gifts.” Why, if, in the name of Jesus, you can care for these little ones, you cannot even give a cup of cold water to one of these little babies in the name of the disciple and lose your reward. (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:41) This is a gift that is so greatly needed. He mentions ministry.

## **L. Teaching**

And then, he mentions teaching. Why, we have now a Sunday school that is, on Sunday mornings around here, exceeding on big Sundays, and perhaps today, over seven thousand people in Bible study. Well, who teaches all of these people? People who have been first of all taught and anointed and gifted of God to teach the Bible. That’s the spiritual gift of teaching. Maybe in a missionary organization. Maybe you don’t teach a class, but you’re a mother and God anoints you to teach your children supernaturally.

## **M. Exhortation**

Then he mentions the gift of exhortation. What is the gift of exhortation? Gifted musicians who have not only vocal ability but the ability to move your heart often have the gift of exhortation. Those people who do visitation. Those people who do counseling that encourages—many times, they have the gift of exhortation. Is that your ability—just to cheer people on? Maybe you just have the ability to exhort your pastor and encourage me. I need it!

I heard about a little boy who wanted to be in a school play. He had his heart set on it, and his mother knew that he did not have the ability to be in that play. But she was afraid he’d be heartbroken if they didn’t give him a part. When he came home, the mother asked him, “How did it go? Did you get a part?” “Oh,” he said, “yes, I got a part.” She said, “What is it?” He said, “They gave me the job of clapping and cheering.” Well, I

like that. And he was so thrilled that that was his job to clap and to cheer. Maybe that's the gift that God has given you, and it is a needful gift in a church like this—the gift of exhortation.

#### **N. Giving**

Then he mentions the gift of giving right there. (Romans 12:8) What is that? That's the ability—the supernatural ability—to make and give money sacrificially and wisely. We have those.

#### **O. Ruling**

And then, he mentions the gift of ruling. (Romans 12:8) Those on our church staff, those who head committees, those who are in places of leadership, those who even coach teams in the Grace Building may have the gift of giving.

#### **P. Mercy**

Then he mentions the gift of mercy. (Romans 12:8) These are people who do hospital visitation. These are people who work, Brother Bernie, in our Benevolence Department. These are those, again, who counsel. These are those who go to the rest homes, and so forth.

### **III. The Gifts Developed**

The gifts described. Now, here's the third thing: not only the gifts delivered and the gifts described, but think with me about the gifts developed. How is the gift developed? Well, turn back to Ephesians chapter 4, would you, right back where we were, and let's find out how your gift is developed. I begin now in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:11–12)—that is, the building up, the developing, of the Body of Christ.

#### **A. Apostles and Prophets**

Now, not only does God give to every one of us spiritual gifts, but God also gives to the church spiritual leaders. And so, he mentions some apostles and some prophets. (Ephesians 4:11) Now, we don't have apostles and prophets today in the biblical sense. There were twelve apostles and the prophets who wrote the Old Testament, and so forth. They're already in heaven. And he tells us in the second chapter that the church is *“built upon the foundation of the apostles and [the] prophets.”* (Ephesians 2:20) Now, we don't have prophets today and apostles, except in the secondary sense, but did you know you're looking at a man who can preach with the authority of a prophet and the authority of an apostle if I preach what the prophets and the apostles preached? You see, as long as I preach what they preach, I have the authority that they had. That's the

reason we have the Word of God that has inscripturated the message of the apostles and the prophets.

## **B. Evangelists**

And then, he mentions evangelists. (Ephesians 4:11) These are the soul winners that bring people into the Body to help the Body to grow. And thank God that God gives to the church the evangelists, the soul winners, that bring people to Christ.

## **C. Pastor-Teachers**

And then, he mentions, “*and some, pastors and teachers*” (Ephesians 4:11)—not pastors and then teachers, but pastor-teachers. It’s grouped together in the Greek language. The job of a pastor-teacher is to guide and feed the flock. I believe that’s the assignment that God has given to me. Here is God’s job description for me: I am God’s gift to you. Like it or not, you’re stuck with me. I am the pastor-teacher of this church.

Now, why does God give you a pastor-teacher? Well, so the pastor-teacher can do the work of the ministry? Wrong! The pastor-teacher is to help you to do the work of the ministry. Look at it: “*and some pastors and teachers; for*”—verse 12—“*the perfecting*”—the maturing—“*of the saints, for the work of the ministry.*” (Ephesians 4:11–12) The pastor-teacher is to help you to be mature, to discover and develop your spiritual gift, so you can do the work of the ministry. You say, “Pastor, that’s your job.” No, my job is to help you to do your job. My job is to help you to be mature so that you can find your spiritual gift and you can put your spiritual gift to work. And God has a ministry for you; God has a job for you. God did not save you to be a member of Bellevue Anonymous. God put you here to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you’ve been called into the ministry. It is my job to put you to work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you say, “Well, I want God to use me.” Well, do you really? Do you really? Let me tell you something: *if you want God to use you, you need to stop praying for God to use you and get useable, and God will wear you out.* I mean, do you think that God doesn’t want to use you? “He hath set every member in the Body as it hath pleased Him.” (1 Corinthians 12:18) God has given you a spiritual gift.

Now, how can you know your spiritual gift? Let me give you about five principles to know your spiritual gift.

### **1. The Principle of Desire**

Number one: There’s the principle of desire. What do you enjoy doing? I would be dishonest if I did not tell you I feel fitted for doing what I’m doing right now. I desire to do it. I love to do it. I would be disappointed if I could not do it. What do you do naturally? What do you enjoy doing? What do you feel that you do well?

## 2. The Principle of Discovery

Secondly, the principle of discovery. You will discover your gift as you endeavor to do it. Other people will say, “You know, you blessed me when you did that,” or, “You’ve been such a comfort to me,” or, “You’ve given me such wisdom here,” or, “You have the ability to lead in this area.” As Dr. Ironside used to say, “It’s a sad thing to hear a man who thinks he has the gift of preaching when no one else has the gift of listening.” You will discover your spiritual gift, and others will help you to discover it.

## 3. The Principle of Development

The third principle: the principle of desire, the principle of discovery, the principle of development. You need to stir up the gift of God. That’s what Paul told Timothy. You need to “*study to shew [yourself] approved unto God.*” (2 Timothy 2:15) If you have a gift, no matter what it is, it’s like a natural talent. Again, Laurie Foster has the talent to sing, but she has to develop it. And you have a spiritual gift, but you have to develop it and study and work. It’s not just all honey and no bees.

## 4. The Principle of Dependence

Now, next is the principle of dependence. Your spiritual gift must operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. Your gifts are supernatural, and they operate with supernatural power. Depend upon the Holy Spirit of God.

## 5. The Principle of Deployment

And then, there’s the principle of deployment. Put it to work. Go to work with other saints. Where do you understand your gift? In the Body, in the Church. Your gift is significant as it relates to other gifted people. It’s in the fellowship of the Church that you’re going to discover your place in the Body.

# IV. The Gifts Displayed

Now, here’s the fourth thing and the final thing very quickly: I want you to see not only the gifts dispensed, and the gifts described, and the gifts developed, but I want you to think about the gifts displayed. What happens when all of us find our ministry? Well, look in verse 13: “*till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:13) Now, what he’s saying is that He’s given us gifts, and when these gifts work together, then the Body matures and the Body becomes like its head, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be mature. Look in verse 13: “*unto a perfect man.*” (Ephesians 4:13) The word *perfect* here does not mean “sinless”; it means “mature.” Now, let me mention some ways we’re going to be mature, and then I’m finished.

### A. Mature in Stature

First of all, you’re going to be mature in stature. That means you’re going to be like the

Lord Jesus Christ—*“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) You can tell when the gifts are working in a church when the church becomes like the Lord Jesus Christ. When the gifts are operating, we’re becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus.

### **B. Mature in Stability**

Mature in stature and mature in stability. Look in verse 14: *“that we [be] henceforth...no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about [by] every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”* (Ephesians 4:14) The false cults out there are getting Baptists and evangelical Christians going door to door. They do not evangelize. They don’t win souls. What they do is corrupt and deceive people who are immature who have not come to the measure of the stature of Christ. And people get *“[blown] about [by] every wind of doctrine.”* (Ephesians 4:14) But when the Body is healthy, when the gifts are operating, we become mature in stature, we become mature in stability. We’re not *“[blown] about [by] every wind of doctrine.”* (Ephesians 4:14)

### **C. Mature in Speech**

Number three: We become mature in speech. Look in verse 15, if you will: *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up.”* (Ephesians 4:15) Now, we’re to *“[speak] the truth in love.”* (Ephesians 4:15) If you speak the truth without love, that’s brutality. But if you speak in love without truth, that is hypocrisy. Immature people cannot blend the two. We have some people who are just already speaking the truth, but they have no love. Other people who talk about love, they have no truth. Truthless love and loveless truth are the signs of immature people.

### **D. Mature in Service**

But when the gifts are working, we’re mature in stature, we’re mature in stability, we are mature in speech, and we are mature in service. Look in verse 16; here’s how it all works together: *“from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16) Now, what does that mean? It speaks of flexible harmony. He talks about every joint. My elbow is a joint. You see that? It’s flexible. Now, what holds my forearm to my upper arm? My elbow. It’s a joint. It enables me to bend this arm. Now, it keeps me connected, but it’s flexible. And that’s the way the Body is: it is to be flexible harmony. My body works together because of the joints, and that’s the way God put the Body together. Every member has his ministry, and we’re held together by all of these joints.

Now, you know what happens to some people? We get stiff. We get spiritual arthritis. And rather than having this flexibility, we get rigid and firm because the Body is



not healthy. Oh, it's so wonderful to see a healthy Body—all of the joints just working together in harmony. The Greek word *joint* is *harmos*. It's the word we get *harmony* from. Now, when I studied human anatomy and physiology, I found out in college that we have synovial fluid that lubricates these joints. And when the cartilage gets dry, and the synovial fluid is not there, and it gets inflamed and swollen and it gets stiff and painful, then the body is not lubricated. What is the synovial fluid? It is love. When we love one another, then we don't inflame one another—we don't get stiff; we don't get rigid. We all have our gifts of God. And we become mature in stature: we become like Christ. We become mature in stability: we're not blown about. We become mature in speech: we know how to speak the truth in love. And we become mature, dear friend, in service: we serve one another, and the Body works together. Don't you want to be a part of a church like that? Say "amen." I know you do. And may God help us to find our place in the Body.

## Conclusion

Look up here. I'm telling you, you are a gifted child. And don't you leave that thing framed and hanging on the wall. Find out what God wants you to do and get busy doing it.

You say, "Pastor, I just don't have any joy." Well, what do you do? "Well, Pastor, I come hear you preach." Do you think you've done God a wild favor when you've done that? Friend, if you're not serving, you won't have joy. The Greek word *charis* means, not only "grace," but it also means "joy." When you serve the Lord, that's when the juices of joy begin to flow.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you pray that God would show you your ministry in this body? Will you accept yourself, discover yourself, be yourself, and give yourself for the glory of God?

And those of you who've not yet been saved, remember you must be saved by grace before you can serve by grace. And you need to receive Jesus Christ now as your Lord and Savior. And if you've never truly been saved, this is a wonderful moment for you to be saved. God brought you here today to be saved. Those of you who are saved, begin to pray for those who may be near you who may not know the Lord Jesus. Say, "Lord, if that man, that woman, does not yet know you, may they now receive you." Pray for the person to your right and the person to your left right now, even if you know them. Pray, "Lord, if they need a closer walk, bless them."

And, if you're not certain of your salvation, I'm going to guide you in a little prayer, and, right now, you can pray and receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Pray like this if you want to be saved: "Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, I believe you paid for my sins with your blood on the cross.

Thank you for paying my sin debt. Thank you for taking my place. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you, Lord, for your agony on the cross. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your resurrection. I believe that God raised you from the dead. Lord Jesus, you told me if I would trust you, you would save me. I do trust you, Lord Jesus”—would you tell Him that?—“I do trust you, Lord Jesus, right now, this moment. I open my heart. I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Then, pray this way: “I receive it by faith. I don’t look for a sign. I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. Thank you for saving me. Thank you for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, by your grace, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of you. You died for me. I will let it be known that I love you, and by your grace, I will live for you because you died for me. In your holy name I pray. Amen.”✠

# The Gift of the Risen Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 30, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:7–16**

*“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 4:7

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, turn to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, please. As you know, we have been preaching through Ephesians in our “Promise of Springtime” emphasis, and we’re calling Ephesians “God’s guidebook to growth.” And we’re really getting right down, really, to the matter of growth in a very special, special way today. And isn’t God good that He just worked it out, as we were preaching through Ephesians, that we came today to that part of Ephesians that deals with the Resurrection? Isn’t that great? The Lord just worked it out. We had to skip a few verses to make it work—but we did. But it’s glorious that we have come to that part that deals with the resurrection of our wonderful

Lord.

And I want us to begin reading in Ephesians chapter 4 and read just the first several verses to begin with: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now he that ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)”—this speaks of the death and burial of Jesus—“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”* (Ephesians 4:7–10)

Did you know that you are a gifted child? Now, many of you don’t understand that. You’re even wondering if you were a wanted child. But you are a gifted child, and you have been given a gift by the resurrected Savior. As we’ve said, at the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in conjunction with His birth, gifts were given unto Him. But at Easter, at His resurrection, on Resurrection Day, Jesus has given gifts to us. And how sad it would be if you were to let Easter pass without understanding that Jesus has given to you a resurrection gift, an Easter gift!

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a great preacher from London of yesteryear, visited a poor woman who was living in the Alms House, as they called it back then—literally, the care home or the poor house is really what it was. She had nothing, and she was being taken care of by the authorities. And while Mr. Spurgeon was there praying for this dear woman, he noticed a piece of paper upon the wall that was framed, and it had a signature on it. And he asked her what that was. And she said that it was a piece of paper given to her by an elderly gentleman that she had nursed, an invalid. And she had taken care of this gentleman, and he gave it to her and entrusted her with it. Spurgeon looked at it, and he couldn’t take his eyes off of it.

And, finally, after much persuasion, he got her to lend it to him. He carried it to the authorities, and as you have guessed, it was the gentleman’s will. And he had left thousands and thousands of dollars to this elderly woman who was living in poverty. The banker said, “We wondered who the old man had left his money to, and we’d not heard.”

Now, here she had a gift. It was hers, but she had not discovered, and therefore she had not appropriated, her gift. And I wonder how many gifted children there are here today—how many children of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who have not yet participated in all of the glories of Easter and all of the benefits of the Resurrection, because you have not yet discovered that *“when he ascended up on high, he...gave gifts unto men.”* (Ephesians 4:8)

And this message this morning is to help you to discover your gift, help you to develop your gift, and help you to deploy your gift, as our dear Lord wants you to do. Now, there are three or four things I want you to notice.

## I. The Grace That Determines the Gifts

First of all, I want you to notice the grace that determines the gifts—the grace that determines the gifts. And notice in verse 7: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:7) Now, this word *grace*, the Greek word is *charis*. If your name is Karen, that means “grace.” And so you could just as well be named Grace if your name is Karen. And the Greek word *charis* means “grace.” People talk about a “charismatic gift,” and we hear a lot about the Charismatic movement. Well, dear friend, all of the gifts of the ascended Christ are grace gifts; that is, they’re charismatic gifts. But there are many, many charismatic gifts, and every Christian has at least one grace gift—every Christian does. Notice verse 7: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”—“every one of us.”* Say, who does that include? Does it include you? Nod your head if it does. It really does.

Now, many Christians have no idea even what Paul is talking about, so they haven’t discovered their gift. But Paul says, *“Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”* You see, what is a grace gift? What is a charismatic gift? It is a spiritual ability that is supernaturally given to you to enable you to serve Jesus in a particular place or endeavor. You see, all of us have been saved to serve, but we’re saved by grace, and we serve by grace. We are not saved by grace and served in the flesh. But, you see, even when we serve, we serve by grace. And when we work for the Lord, “it is God that works in us both to will and do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13) So you don’t need to go around with a spiritual inferiority complex. You don’t need to say, “Well, when all the gifts were given out, I was behind the door.” No, you weren’t. The Bible says that to *“every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”*

Now, not all of us have the same gifts. Jesus measures the gifts out. Jesus is the One who determines what gift this person is to have and what gift that person is to have, but every one of us has a spiritual gift. Now I want you to understand I am not talking about natural talent. You’re saying, “Well, I’m not talented.” Talent has absolutely nothing to do with it. You can be as untalented as a doorknob and still have a spiritual gift, if you’re saved. Every saved person has a spiritual gift—that is, a God-given ability to serve Jesus Christ in a particular way. The gifts are not talents. The gifts are different in their source, in their nature, and in their purpose from talents. You do not choose your spiritual gift; it is measured out by the risen Christ. You do not earn your spiritual gift; it is a grace gift. And so, verse 7 speaks of the grace that determines the gifts: *“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”*

## II. The Glory That Delivers the Gifts

All right now, the second thing I want you to notice: Not only the grace that determines the gifts, but I want you to notice the glory that delivered the gifts, because these gifts were purchased by the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notice verses 8 through 10: *“Wherefore...”*—that is, in relation to the gifts—*“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”* (Ephesians 4:8) Now, when did the Lord Jesus Christ give these gifts? When He ascended; when He rose triumphantly, gloriously from the grave: that’s when the Lord Jesus Christ gave His ascension gifts to the Church. This is the glory that gave these gifts.

The Bible says, *“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive”*—that is, he turned tables on the devil. You see, the devil had this entire world in his grasp. He had captured the world and he was called by the Lord Jesus Christ “the prince of this world.” But Jesus Christ, speaking of His burial and resurrection, said, *“Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”* (John 12:31) And the Bible says that Jesus *“through death [destroyed] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* (Hebrews 2:14) And so, you see, on the cross and in the empty tomb, the Lord Jesus Christ led captivity captive. Satan was captivity, but Jesus captured him. And Satan, who had been doing all of the damage; and Satan, who looked like he was in the driver’s seat; Satan, who looked like he was the monarch, suddenly becomes the slave. And Jesus, who looked like He was defeated, is suddenly, gloriously the resurrected, glorious Christ.

One of the favorite illustrations that I think of so often when I think of Easter is perhaps one you’ve heard, but it so aptly illustrates what I’m saying that I want to share it with you again. Do you remember when Napoleon and Wellington were fighting there that decisive battle that was going to determine, really, whether or not that demon of war, Napoleon, would conquer the entire world? People really did not know how the battle was going to go at Waterloo, and there were some people off the coast of England, or near the coast of England, who were waiting for news of the battle. And a ship came into the harbor, and the ship could not anchor—at least, there was no wharf there. But at least they could send a message by a semaphore or by a lantern to tell how the battle went. And they started to send the message to the people on the shore to tell who had won—whether Napoleon had won or not. Wellington had won. And they started sending the message, spelling it out a letter at a time, and people were watching with anticipation: *“W-e-l-l-i-n-g-t-o-n—Wellington. It’s news about Wellington.”* The crowds gathered to see. Then, they started to spell the next word: *“d-e-f-e-a-t-e-d—Wellington defeated.”* Their hearts sank, and a London fog closed over the harbor. No more message, but that was enough. Gloom went out through the land: *“Wellington has been defeated.”* But then the fog lifted, and they continued the message: *“Wellington defeated the enemy at Waterloo.”* Oh, my friend, what a difference! It was not

Wellington defeated; it was Napoleon defeated.

And it looked for a while like Jesus was defeated. And all of the imps and the demons of hell said, “Jesus defeated” when He bowed His head and said, “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) But they misunderstood. Jesus didn’t say, “I am finished.” He said, “*It is finished*”—“what I have come to do is completed. I have died as an atonement for men’s sins.” And it seemed as though the fog of midnight settled upon that cross, and upon the land of Palestine, and upon the hearts of the disciples. But when the darkness and the gloom was lifted, it was not Jesus defeated, was it? But Jesus defeated the enemy at Calvary.

And, you see, this is what He did: “Jesus led captivity captive, and He gave gifts unto men.” (Ephesians 4:8) Do you know what is really the illustration that Paul is using? Paul used illustrations that people could understand. And remember that at this time the Roman Empire was ruling the world. And when a Roman general would go off to a battle, here’s what he would do. This Roman general, when he would win the battle, would come back to Rome, the eternal city, and he would ride through the arch of triumph in a great victorious display called the *triumphus* or the *triumph*. And he would have all the people that he’d conquered there—representatives, perhaps kings and princess—chained to his chariot wheels. And they would be drug along, chained to his chariot wheels. And he would have wagonloads of bootie and the spoils of the battle to give to people that he wanted to give to—things that he’d brought back. That is, he had been off to the foreign land; he had won the victory, and now he is leading captivity captive. He’s coming back glorious. That’s exactly what Paul is talking about here in this passage of Scripture.

And even more aptly, if you want to turn to it, in Colossians chapter 2, verse 15, you’ll see it. Listen to it. You can’t miss it in Colossians 2, verse 15. The Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, “*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*” (Colossians 2:15)

You see, He did three things to the devil at Calvary.

#### **A. Jesus Spoiled the Devil at Calvary**

First of all, He spoiled him. The word *spoiled* is a Greek word, *ekduo*. Literally, he stripped him. To be endued means to be clothed. *Ekduo* means he stripped Satan. All of Satan’s authority, and all of Satan’s regalia, and all of Satan’s pride—at the cross, Jesus stripped him. That’s the first thing He did: He spoiled him.

#### **B. Jesus Shamed the Devil at Calvary**

And then, the second thing He did: He shamed him. For Colossians 2:15 says, “*He made a shew of them openly.*” (Colossians 2:15) I tell you, dear friends, Satan has been put to shame by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### C. Jesus Subdued the Devil at Calvary

And the third thing He did: He subdued him. Satan has been stripped, shamed, and subdued. For the Bible says He triumphed over Satan. (Colossians 2:15) That's what Colossians 2, verse 15, speaks of. And here you find the Lord Jesus Christ riding into glory. Can't you imagine the angels cheered when Jesus ascended with Satan chained to His chariot wheels? And here's the Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone down into the regions of death and hell and has gotten for us the victory. And *"he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive."* (Ephesians 4:8)

I heard a song when I was at the Southern Baptist Convention. A boy stood up and sang the song and just strummed and played the guitar. And at first it started like a mediocre song to me, but before that boy was finished, I was waving my hand over my head and the tears were streaming down my cheeks. The title of that song—just a very simple country gospel song—was "The Little Boy from the Carpenter's Shop." And he talked about how this little boy was born as a slave and He didn't seem to have much promise in life, and His people were slaves, and so forth. And I can't read it all, but I want to read a few of the words of this song to you. It so well illustrates what I'm talking about here. And this young man strumming the guitar sang in a ballad way these words:

*He yielded His life to the death on the cross,  
Cried it's finished and then He died;  
In the regions of hell, the devil celebrated,  
We've destroyed the King, he cried.*

*In the midst of the celebration, footsteps were heard,  
Walking the corridors of hell;  
Then the shouting stopped, as a voice rang out;  
A voice as clear as a bell.*

*Satan then trembled as he recognized Him,  
Who came to deliver His own;  
Oh, shut and lock the gates he cried,  
Don't let Him ascend to His Throne.*

*Then the gates swung shut in the face of our King,  
To prove salvation untrue;  
But, He shook hell's gates, cried lift up your heads,  
The King is coming through.*



*Then out of the devil's prison house  
Came a procession led by our King;  
Crying out oh grave, where is thy victory,  
And death where is thy sting?*

—DWAYNE FRIEND

I tell you, that moved my heart when I think about it—when I think of Jesus, who “*led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*” (Ephesians 4:8) I want you to value your gift, for it is a glory gift of the risen Christ—it is a glory gift of the risen Christ.

### **III. The Guides That Develop the Gifts**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice: Not only the grace that determines the gifts, and the glory that delivers the gifts, but I want you to notice the guides that develop the gifts, because, you see, all of us need to have our gifts develop. The Bible says we’re to “*stir up the gift of God that is within us.*” (2 Timothy 1:6) We need people to help us, to encourage us, to know what our spiritual gift is. And so, the Lord knows this. And so, not only did He give to every one of us a spiritual gift, but then God gave us some spiritual leaders to guide us and help us to develop the gifts.

And so now, we begin reading in verse 11: “*And he gave some, apostles;*”—that is, He gave to some churches apostles—“*and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:11–12) Now, the word *edifying* means “to develop” or “to build up.” And so we’re talking about the guides that develop the gifts. And who are the guides that develop the gifts? Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers: these are the guides that God has given to you to help you to develop your gift.

Now, who are these guides that God has put in the Church?

#### **A. Apostles and Prophets**

First of all, we think of apostles and prophets. I want to lump them together because they are first. We don’t have any apostles or prophets with us today, in the strictest sense. In a minor sense, a person could, say, have the gift of prophecy or be an apostle spelled with a little *a*. But there were only twelve apostles, or prophets, who gave us the Word of God—twelve apostles and many prophets. But we do not have those today. These are foundational gifts that were given to the Church. Look, if you will, in Ephesians 2, verse 20, and that makes it very clear—Ephesians 2, verse 20. The Bible speaks of the Church, and it says, “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*” (Ephesians 2:20) So the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the Church.

Now you say, “Brother Rogers, why don’t we have apostles and prophets today?” Because we don’t need them. You don’t lay the foundation every few stories; you lay the foundation one time. The foundation has been laid. Now we have the truth that the apostles gave us: *“the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints.”* (Jude 1:3) We have the truth that the prophets gave us, the truths that were given once and for all. But now we are building upon that truth. And the apostles and the prophets are still speaking to us today, but how? Through the Bible, the Word of God. And they’re still speaking, and I can stand up here and say, “Thus saith the Lord.” And the Apostle Paul is this morning preaching, because we’re reading what Paul wrote. And so, we’re built upon the foundation of the apostles.

But we’ve been building that edifice, and building that edifice, and building that edifice for nineteen hundred years. That’s an awful tall building, isn’t it? Nineteen hundred stories tall. Do you know what I have a sneaking suspicion about? Friend, I believe we’re putting shingles on the roof right now—I really do. I believe that that building is about complete, and I believe, before long, Jesus Christ is coming again. And we ought to be living as though Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and were coming back tonight. Oh, we ought to be excited about it! There is the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. God gave them to the Church—guides to develop the gifts.

## **B. Evangelists**

And then, next, he mentions evangelists. Oh, I used to think I wanted to be an evangelist—I really did. And I believe that God, in a sense, has given me the gift of evangelism. And when I got out of seminary, I could have gone one of three ways just as easily: into foreign missions, into evangelism, or into the pastorate. And God has just simply guided my life. I think every young preacher feels that he wants to be an evangelist. And I love evangelism and I love to preach, but I tell you, I love to teach, too. I love to teach the Word of God. And I have received so much more joy being a pastor than I ever could have being an evangelist. And I’m just so grateful that God helped me to discover and find out what His will for my particular life is.

But an evangelist is one who bears glad tidings. He’s the one who brings people into the Body. So, you see, if the foundation layers are the apostles and the prophets, who are the evangelists? Those are the ones who go out into the quarry and get the stones for the building and bring them in.

## **C. Pastors and Teachers**

And then, the next guides he mentions are pastors and teachers, and these are together. Pastor/teacher is together. You can tell by the way it’s given in the original that he means for this to be one office—pastor/teacher—because a pastor, the Bible says, is to be *“apt to teach.”* (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24) I don’t care for frothy religious

dishwater that doesn't teach anything. Pastors ought to be able to feed the flock and teach them the Word of God. That's what the word *pastor* means: it means "shepherd." And so, if the apostles and the prophets laid the foundation, and the evangelists bring in the stones, it's the job of the pastor to shape them and fit them into the building until the entire building is framed up. And that's his job.

As we, each one of us, finds our niche in this building, we are discovering our spiritual gift. And my job as a pastor—oh, listen to it now; this is the preaching point now, so get ready—let me tell you what my job is as a pastor. And I've been so misunderstood about this, and I'm going to be misunderstood today, but I'm just going to take my lumps and I'm going to say it anyway, because if I don't say it, I'll fail God. But I'll guarantee you somebody's going to misunderstand what I say. God did not call me to do your ministry for you; God called me to equip you so you can do your ministry.

How many of you have been called into the ministry? Let me see your hands. Shame on you! Every Christian is called into the ministry. Now, let's see it again. How many of you are called into the ministry? Let's see your hands. Every Christian! See, that's what we don't understand. You think "called into the ministry" means "be a pastor of a church." See, the devil has really, really deceived us. The devil has gotten us to think, "Well, Brother Rogers has been called into the ministry, so we're going to hire him to do our ministry." Friend, you don't hire me. You say, "Well, we pay you." Well, in the strictest sense, you give your money to God; God pays me. Now, you see, when you hire somebody, you're saying, "I'm paying you to do this for me." You see, I can't do your praying for you. I can't do your witnessing for you. I can't do your loving for you. I can't do your ministering for you. That's not my job. Now, that doesn't mean I'm not supposed to pray, witness, minister, and love—I am, but that's not my job. But, you see, my job is to equip you so you can do your job. Oh, if we could ever learn that—if we could ever learn that! My God, what would this church be if we were to ever learn that—if we were to ever learn that when Jesus Christ ascended up on high He gave every member in this church a spiritual gift and then He gave us a pastor to help us to discover our spiritual gift and to get busy?

People are praying, "Lord, use me"—"Lord, use me." Friend, you get usable—God will wear you out when you find out what God has gifted you to do. And God has given you a spiritual gift. This doesn't mean that I'm not going to win souls. People say, "Well, he said he's not going to win souls." Sure, I am! But I can't win yours. I've got to do what God lays on my heart to do. Sometimes people come to me and they say, "Brother Rogers, God laid So-and-so on my heart so badly. Will you please go see him?" Now you get that: "God laid them on my heart. Will you go see them?" Well now, what am I supposed to do about that guy that God laid on my heart: forget him? Or, shouldn't you go see the ones God lays on your heart? But you say, "Well, I don't know how." Well,

isn't it about time we found out how? Isn't it about time we learned how? Isn't it about time we understood that *we're not saved to sit but saved to serve*, and we're saved by grace and we serve by grace, and that God has given every one of us a grace gift?

Now we can't all serve alike. These gifts are measured out by the resurrected Christ. But, oh, how wonderful it would be if we were to understand that Christianity is not a spectator's sport! We don't just come on Sunday to watch the pros perform. Do you know how somebody has described American football? Twenty-two men down on the field desperately in need of rest, and twenty-two thousand people up in the stands desperately in need of exercise. That's apt in the church, isn't it? Oh, wouldn't it be glorious, wouldn't it be wonderful, if we could learn to appropriate the gifts of the risen Christ? Well, okay, I'm prepared to be misunderstood. All right now, let's go on. I think you've understood.

#### **IV. The Goals That Direct the Gifts**

All right now, the fourth thing I want you to see is the goals that direct the gifts. God gave us these gifts to direct us in a certain purpose. And so I begin reading in verse 13 now: "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:13) Now, the words *till* and *unto* tell us that we're going in the direction. *Till* means "till we get there." *Unto* means, you see, He's aiming somewhere. Paul's saying, "Now, these gifts have been given, and these guides have been given, to get us somewhere until something happens, unto a particular thing."

Now, what is he talking about? What are the goals that direct the gifts? To what are these gifts to be aimed at? You see, the gifts are not given for enjoyment; they're given for employment. God, when He filled you with the Spirit, didn't fill you with the Spirit so you could blow the whistle, but get on down the track. And some of you have wasted all your steam on the whistle. You say, "*Whoo hoo!* I'm filled with the Spirit!" Well, friend, let me tell you something: I don't care how high you jump, as long as you're moving forward when you come back down.

Now, the spiritual gifts are given to lead us in a particular direction. God has a purpose in our spiritual gifts.

##### **A. Unity**

Now, the first purpose is unity—unity. Notice in verse 13 here: "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith.*" (Ephesians 4:13) Do you know there are lots of folks saying, "Oh, the church needs unity; let's all get together," and they call that *ecumenicity*. Friend, unless it's the unity of the faith, it's not going to work. He says, "*Till we all come in the unity of the faith.*" Unity for unity's sake won't do it any more than you could cause a

resurrection by putting all the corpses in one cemetery. Everybody just gets the idea, you know, “If we just all get together in one great big dead body...” Well, what good is that? Oh, friend, it is *“the unity of the faith.”*

And, you see, the true unity that we as believers have is beyond denominational lines. I am closer to a red-hot Presbyterian than I am an ice-cold Baptist. Did you know that? I really am! Now I have my Baptist convictions, and I’m not a Baptist just simply because I was born of Baptist or that sort of thing. I’m a Baptist out of conviction. But I tell you what: If I find a liberal, cold, indifferent Baptist, I’m a lot closer to a warm Methodist, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, or somebody like that, who really loves my Lord.

And, you know, a lot of times the world doesn’t understand the unity that belongs to real believers. Did you know that? Oh, we have our little differences. *Have you ever had the experience—maybe your neighbors got in a fight, a husband and a wife, and you went over there to break it up or to straighten it out, and you took sides with one of them and they both jumped on you? Isn’t that something? Yeah, that’s strange. You see, the unity was underneath; there was a unity of spirits—you didn’t see it. But I tell you, brother, all true believers in Jesus love one another—they really do.* But, oh, we’re coming more and more to that unity of the faith, and that’s why God gave us these gifts.

You see, look: Why did God make us all different? So we’d all be one. Isn’t that unique? See, He gave us different gifts. He didn’t want us to be alike so we could be together. You see, if you were just like me, I wouldn’t need you. Say, isn’t God good? But He made us all different so we could all be one. And the hand needs the foot, and the foot needs the eye, and the ear needs the nose, and so forth. And God has gifted us all differently that we might come to the unity of the faith.

### **B. Maturity**

Now, not only does He want us to have unity, but He wants us to have maturity. That’s another goal that we’re working toward. Look to verse 13: *“Till we all come in...the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.”* (Ephesians 4:13) Now, the word *perfect* here is not necessarily meaning “sinless” but “mature.”

### **C. Conformity**

*“Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:13) Unity, maturity, conformity: the fullness of Christ.

All right, these are the goals that direct the gifts. This is what our Lord wants in His Church. When He looks down at Bellevue Baptist Church and other Christians, friend, He wants to see us one in the Spirit, one in the faith. He wants to see us like the Lord Jesus Christ: mature, perfect, full-grown. And He wants to see us enjoying the fullness of God, being filled with the Spirit. Every now and then, a church will have long-range

goals, and they say, “Well, our long-range goals are to have three thousand in Sunday School, build a new building.” Say, that’s talking about us. But anyway, our long-range goal is not that. Man, it’s to be like Jesus, isn’t it? Oh, these are the goals that direct the gifts!

## **V. The Growth That Demonstrates the Gifts**

Now, let’s go on and, finally, talk about the growth that demonstrates the gifts, because if we want to know whether or not this gift of the risen Christ, the Easter gift, is growing and working, well, let’s measure it by the Word of God. Notice, beginning in verse 14 now: “...*that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*” (Ephesians 4:14) A lot of people haven’t grown because they haven’t discovered their gifts and used their gifts.

### **A. The Marks of a Childish Christian**

And do you know the marks of a child?

#### **1. Instability**

Number one is instability: “blown about by every wind of doctrine.” (Ephesians 4:14) Do you know there are folks who are members of our church who are like a little toy sailboat in a lake? The wind goes one way; they go that way. The wind goes another way, they go that way. Whichever way the wind blows, that’s where they go. They have not planted their feet firm on the Rock of Ages. They’ve not gotten down into the Word to understand what God says. And somebody comes and knocks on their door and says, “Guess what: there’s no hell.” And they say, “Oh?” They don’t know the Word! “Blown about by every wind of doctrine.”

#### **2. Indiscernibility**

All right, what are the marks? All right, instability, and indiscernibility. They are not able to discern; they’re not able to see danger. Notice here he talks about “*cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*” (Ephesians 4:14) Little children are kidnapped because they don’t know to run; they don’t know any better. And the cults and the charlatans and the false prophets get Christians who have not grown. And we have so many who are members of this very church who have been lost, strayed, or stolen. If they’re lost, it’s because they never were saved to begin with. But others have strayed away because they’ve been childlike.

### **B. The Marks of a Growing Christian**

All right then, we’re to be growing, expressing our love. Well, let me just very briefly comment on the measure of whether or not you’re growing. God gives us two tests in verse 15—look at it. We’re talking now about the growth that measures the gifts, or a

growth that demonstrates the gifts. Notice in verse 15: *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:15) The two tests of whether you’re grown or not are the tongue test and the throne test: the tongue test, speaking the truth in love; and the throne test, whether you’ve made Jesus Christ the head of all.

Those are the marks of a grown Christian. The marks of a childish Christian? Instability. But the marks of a grown Christian: the tongue test, the throne test.

Well, finally, verse 16, because I want to get finished with it. And I’m skipping some here, but notice verse 16. Paul here again talks about the growth that demonstrates the gifts, and he says, *“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* (Ephesians 4:16) Now, that’s a long sentence, but it says there ought to be balance in the body. We’re *“fitly joined together.”* It says there ought to be cooperation in the Bible: *“effectually working together.”* It says there ought to be growth in the body; there’s the *“increase of the body.”*

## Conclusion

The carpenter’s tools one day were having a convention, and there got to be a real stir in that convention, because Mr. Hammer was presiding over the convention. And somebody said, “I move that Mr. Hammer be thrown out of the convention: he’s making too much noise.” “Well,” Mr. Hammer said, “if I have to go, Mr. Screw has to go, too, because Mr. Screw won’t ever do anything unless you turn him around and around and around. That’s the only way he’ll work.” “Well,” Mr. Screw says, “you can’t throw me out unless you throw Mr. Plane out, too. Mr. Plane never does anything but surface work. He never ever really gets down deep. And so Mr. Plane has got to go.” And Mr. Plane said, “Well, you can’t get rid of me unless you get rid of Mr. Ruler. Mr. Ruler is always measuring people. He’s always judging everybody else. He thinks he’s always right and they’re always wrong, and he’s measuring everybody else by himself. And I say that if I go, Mr. Ruler has to go, too.” Mr. Ruler says, “Well, if you throw me out, you’re going to have to throw Mr. Sandpaper out, because a rougher guy you couldn’t find. And he’s always rubbing people the wrong way.”

Can you imagine what an argument there was going on in the toolbox until suddenly the Carpenter from Nazareth walked in. And He put on His apron, and He laid His hands upon His tools. And He built a pulpit from which to preach the Word. And when they saw what happened, when they were all in the hands of the Master Carpenter, they said one to another, “You know, we ought to stop arguing and start working together, for we are laborers together with God.”

Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all understand that God has put every one of us into the Church for this purpose: that we might find our gift from the resurrected Christ?



# How to Break Satan's Strongholds in Your Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 5, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 4:22–31**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Repentance

A. Lying

B. Stealing

C. Filthy Speech

D. Bitterness

E. Slandering

F. Malice

II. Resistance

III. Renewal

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**urn with me, please, to Ephesians chapter 4 tonight—Ephesians chapter 4. I want to talk to you about breaking Satanic strongholds. There are people that get strongholds in their lives, and I believe, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers, there are many people in this congregation tonight, who have in their heart, and in their mind, and in their life, a satanic stronghold. Not only is it harming them and wrecking their spiritual life, but they also, themselves, are contaminating the life of their family and the life of their church, because the devil has found an unclean place in that person, and the devil has made a campground—a foul nest, a beachhead, a citadel, a stronghold—there. And he uses that stronghold to war against God and against the work of God.

Now Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 27, is a frightening verse, *“Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:27). *“Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:27). And then, in verse 30: *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God”* (Ephesians 4:30). That is amazing, that is astounding, and that’s frightening. It ought to cause every one of us to sit up and take notice that we—children of God, saved ones, born-again ones—could either, on the one hand, give a place to the devil or could, on the other hand, grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Now either one should be unthinkable in the heart and mind of a child of God.

I’m going to have to ask for some information here, because I meant to get this

before I preached this message: But what kind of a bird is it that you build a special bird nest for and hope that he'll come? A special birdhouse? What is that? The Martins—the Purple Martins. We have some out here, on our parking lot—a Martin. Now once you've given place to the devil, then, he's going to work on it for the rest of your life.

Suppose you had a piece of property. Let's say there are 50 acres in that piece of property. And you sell me an acre right in the middle of your 50 acres, and you give me a deed to it. And I have ingress and egress across your property to get to my 1 acre there, in the middle of our 50 acres. And let's suppose all night long I'm playing loud music, and I'm throwing trash around. I'm just doing everything to desecrate your property, and, after a while, you say, "I want you out of there. Move out of there. You're bothering the rest of my property. You're desecrating my property. You're defiling the area. Get out." And I say, "I'm not going. I don't have to go, and you can't make me go. You gave me this piece of property. You sold this piece of property to me. I've got a legal right to it, and I am not moving. If you don't like it, then that is your tough luck. I am not moving."

Dear friend, you would not be able to move me out, because you gave me a place there. Now some of you have done, particularly or almost, the same thing to Satan. You have given a place to the devil, and you cannot dislodge him unless you legally dislodge him, because there are certain things in your life that become strongholds, and you have given a place to the devil.

Now in order to dislodge the devil, there are going to have to be three steps, in order to get him out.

Number one: There must be repentance. Look, if you will, in verse 22: "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*" (Ephesians 4:22). Now the words *put off* mean, "put away, be done with it." You have to confess it, forsake it, and deal with it—there's no other way. There's only one thing to do with sin, and that is to repent.

But not only must there be repentance; there must also be resistance. Notice, again, in verse 27: "*Neither give place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4:27). What you gave to him you must take back, but you can never take it back until you take away his legal authority. And his legal authority is sin in your life. Now if there is sin in your life, then every area where there is unconfessed sin in your life—as we're going to see in a moment—is legal ground for Satan. And until you confess that sin and cleanse that sin, Satan has every right to make a campground there. So first of all, there must be repentance; and then, after there is repentance, there will be resistance.

But that's not enough. Not only must you resist the devil—and we're going to talk to you more about how to resist him—there must finally be renewal. Notice, again, if you will, here, in verses 23 and 24: "*And be renewed in the spirit of your minds and that ye*

*put on the new man, which after God has created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:23–24). Now you’re never going to cease grieving the Holy Spirit—you’re never going to expunge Satan and get him out of your life—until you take those three steps: repentance, resistance and renewal.

## I. Repentance

Now I want us to look here, at the context, and especially dealing with the area of repentance and the sin that we need to repent of. Now a text without a context is but a pretext. And so let’s look at the verses surrounding verse 27, which warns about giving place to the devil. What kind of things give place to the devil?

### A. Lying

Well, back up to verse 25: *“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another”* (Ephesians 4:25). Now friend, if you are a liar, or if your life is not based on absolute, total, impeccable truth, then you have created a climate where the devil will feel welcome.

Now let me tell you what the devil’s nature is. In John, chapter 8, and verse 44, Jesus said that the devil *“is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). If you really wanted the devil to feel at home in your life, then, of course, you live a lie, love a lie, and believe a lie; and the devil will feel at home. He is the prince of darkness, and lying, of course, is in the realm of darkness. God’s Kingdom, on the other hand, is built on truth. John 14, verse 6—Jesus said that He is *“the truth”* (John 14:6). In John 17, verse 17, he says: *“Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). In 1 John 5, verse 6: *“The Spirit is truth”* (1 John 5:6).

Now dear friend, I want every member of this church—I want every deacon, I want every staff member, I want every choir member—to ask yourself this question: Is there any area of my life—any area—that is not impeccably, indisputably, completely honest? If there’s an area of dishonesty of your life, then that will be the devil’s campground, and I’m talking about so-called *white lies* also. Did you know that you can lie with the tone of your voice? Did you know that you can lie by just the arching of your eyebrows?

### B. Stealing

Now if there is thievery in your life, then there’s an affinity there—there’s a climate there—and there’s something that Satan loves. You see, he is a thief. You read in Mark 5... We’re preaching through the Gospel of Mark on Sunday mornings—most Sundays. In Mark 5, there’s that man, that demon-possessed man—and you think of what the devil had stolen from that man. You remember, the one that was living in the graveyard, the one who was crying and cutting himself with stones? (Mark 5:2–5). The devil had stolen from that man his sanity. He’d stolen from that man his liberty. He’d stolen from that man his family. He’d stolen from that man his joy. He’d stolen from that man his

health, and, from that man, his eternal life. The devil is a thief.

Now listen. I'm going to plow close to the corn right now. If you would steal so much as a 15-cent pencil and carry it home from the job—if it doesn't belong to you—then you've made a place for the devil. You say, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." All right now, let me give you a scripture—Luke, chapter 16, and verse 10: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much: and he that is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in that which is much" (Luke 16:10). Not *may be*, not *could be*, but *is*. A person who would steal a 15-cent pencil has the potential of stealing a \$150,000 payroll. When you are—listen—if you are unfaithful in that which is least, the Bible says you *are* unfaithful in that which is much—not *could be* (Luke 16:10).

That dawned on me the other day. I used to say, "Well, yeah, if I'm capable of stealing a little, then I'm capable of stealing a lot." That isn't what God says. God says, "If you are unfaithful in that which is least, then you're unfaithful in that which is much," because with God, thievery is thievery (Luke 16:10). It makes no difference. And so listen. Are you a thief? You kids, do you steal in school? I mean, do you steal answers off somebody else's paper? You're a thief. Do you gossip, and assassinate character, and steal somebody's reputation in order to make you feel better by trying to put them down? You're a thief.

I want to plow real close to the corn. Are you a tither? You say, "No." You're a thief. "Well," you say, "Preacher, I don't have to sit here and take that." No, you don't. But I'll tell you one thing I have to do: I have to preach the Word of God. "*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings*" (Malachi 3:8).

"Well," you say, "Pastor, that's Old Testament. That's for the Jews under the law." Yeah, that's right; that was for the Jews under the law. "We're not under law; we're under grace." Huh? Yes. Let me tell you something: *Anybody who let a Jew under law do more than we do under grace is a disgrace to grace*. You understand this, friend—I want to tell you that Jesus said: *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:20). Do you think I'd let a Jew under law do more than I can do under grace?

Somebody says, "Well, in the Old Testament, one-tenth belonged to God; in the New Testament, it all belongs to God." That sounds so pious. Friend, in the Old Testament, it all belonged to God. It always has all belonged to God, and I'm trying to tell you, dear friend, that many of us have robbed God with His tithe and our love gift. And when we do, we become like the devil who tries to steal from God—to steal, to kill and to destroy—and, when we do that, what we have done is made a foul nest for the devil. He's a thief, and you say, "Come on in, devil. I'll give you a place."

### C. Filthy Speech

Look, again, in verse 29. Filthy speech makes room for the devil. *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”* (Ephesians 4:29). Skip over, if you will, to chapter 5, and verse 4: *“Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks”* (Ephesians 5:4). Filthy speech. Not only is the devil a thief, but also, the devil is filthy.

I was reading, this afternoon, in the Word of God, in Mark, chapter 1, and verse 23, where the Bible says that Jesus took out of people unclean spirits, foul spirits, and dirty spirits (Mark 1:23). I’ve actually had people, sometimes, use this verse where the Bible says “nor jesting,” and they say, “Preacher, you ought not to use humor; you’re not to believe in humor” (Ephesians 5:4). Oh, no. That’s not what he’s talking about. It has nothing to do with humor. Jesus used humor. God gave us a gift of humor. He’s not talking about that humor, rightly used as a gift of God to renew, relax, and refresh us, but he’s talking, here, about that which tears people down.

Look at it again, if you will, here, in this passage of Scripture. He’s saying: *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying”* (Ephesians 4:29). There’s a certain kind of language, a certain kind of talk, certain kinds of stories, and certain kinds of things that are filthy things—they tear down. They do not build up, but they tear down; they destroy; and they desecrate. And if you have a foul mouth and a filthy mouth, and you tell these kinds of stories, I’ll tell you why you have a foul mouth and a filthy mouth: because you have a filthy heart. And I’ll tell you, dear friend, *“Of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaketh”* (Luke 6:45). And that filthy heart—that dirty place—is a place that Satan incubates and dwells in. It’s a foul mess. You’ve given it to him, and it is there. And he’s there, and he’s going to wreck and ruin your life and make a stronghold out of that thing.

### D. Bitterness

Let’s go on. Bitterness creates a climate for the devil. Look in verse 30, and following, *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice”* (Ephesians 4:30–31). Bitterness.

Do you know what I’ve seen lately? I’ve seen some Christians with bitterness in their hearts. I don’t know where they got that bitterness. I mean, evidently, somebody hurt them. Evidently, they got to looking at somebody and said, “You know, I don’t like that guy. I don’t like that woman. They’ve done me wrong. I don’t like the way they look, or stand, or talk. I don’t like the way they think.” But the real problem is there’s a root of bitterness down there, in your heart, and, you see, again, you’re like the devil.

Did you know the devil is bitter? In Revelation, chapter 12, and verse 12 through verse 17, you find the devil pursuing after the nation Israel. The dragon pursues after the woman. The devil has a bitterness—the devil has a vendetta—against God’s holy people, and he is pursuing. He’s on there. He’s trying, somehow, someway, to hurt (Revelation 12:12–17). Are you bitter? You’re like the devil. Are you bitter? If you’re not careful, then, before long, you’re going to be full of the devil.

I heard of an old couple. She had good eyes, but she could hardly hear. He could hear, but he could hardly see. So they got around. She’d drive the car; he’d do the talking. They were going from Memphis to Nashville, and they stopped in Jackson to get some gas. They pulled into the service station. The attendant came out and said, “Fill her up?” The man said, “Yes.” She said, “What did he say?” “He said, ‘Fill her up.’” I said, “Yes.” After a while, he said, “That’s a nice car. What kind is it?” He said, “It’s a Chrysler.” She said, “What did he say?” “He said he wanted to know what kind of car it was. I told him it was a Chrysler.” He said, “Are you going far?” He said, “Yeah, we’re going to Nashville.” She said, “What did he say?” He said, “They want to know where we’re going. I said, ‘We’re going to Nashville.’” He said, “Where are you from?” “Memphis.” “What did he say?” “He wanted to know where we’re from. I told him we’re from Memphis.” He said, “Memphis? I used to know a woman in Memphis.” He said, “Beyond a shadow of doubt, that was the meanest, hardest, bitterest, coldest woman I’ve ever known in all my life.” She said, “What did he say?” “He said he thinks he knows your sister.” Bitterness.

The devil loves to find that kind of a heart, that kind of a life. I’ll tell you, tonight, if you’re a bitter person, then you’ve got no joy in your heart. You can sit in church with a smile on your face. You can go through and sing these songs, but I’m going to tell you, lady, if there’s bitterness there, then you’ve got no joy; if there’s bitterness there, then you’ve got no victory; if there’s bitterness there, then your prayers are not getting through to God; and, if there’s bitterness there, then you’re contaminating the life ’round about you. And not only are you ruining your own life, but you’re also contaminating the life of your church. And you give a place to the devil.

### **E. Slandering**

But he’s not finished yet. Look again, in verse 31, and he speaks here of this, “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you*” (Ephesians 4:31). Bitterness often leads to slander, and, again, the devil is called “*the accuser of our brethren*”—Revelation, chapter 12, verse 10 (Revelation 12:10). Do you know what the word *devil* means? Do you know what the word *devil* literally means? It means “slanderer.” That’s actually what the word *devil* means. If you are a slanderer, if you are a gossip, or if you are speaking evil, then you’re literally doing the

devil's work. Slander—how terrible it is.

## F. Malice

And the last in these things that he mentions is malice. Look again, here, if you will, in verse 31: “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice*” (Ephesians 4:31).

Let me show you something; let me show you how the devil works. Now listen. Pay attention. First of all, there comes bitterness. Do you know what *bitterness* is? You feel wounded, as if somebody has done you wrong, and you feel that you have a right to be bitter. And so that bitterness, after a while, turns to wrath. Now look at it. You see, he says, “*Let all bitterness,*” and then, “*wrath*” (Ephesians 4:31). Look at the word *wrath*. The Greek word *wrath* has the idea of something that burns on the inside. It has the idea of the internal heat. It's like smoldering rags in an attic or in a closet. After you're bitter for a while, do you know what you begin to do, if you don't deal with that bitterness? You get a slow burn. Have you ever felt it? I've felt it. It's a slow burn. That's what the Bible calls *wrath*. And then, the next word is what? *Anger*. After a while, those moldering rags burst into flames, and it shows up as anger, and that which is internal becomes external.

But the devil is not finished yet. That anger then turns to clamor—that's the next word. Do you know what the word *clamor* means? It means, “to speak loudly.” Have you ever noticed a person—first of all, they get bitter; and then, they get that slow burn; and then, they get angry; and, they get hostile when you talk to them; and, they get louder and louder; and, they get red in the face. And you say, “Well, you don't have to shout.” “I'm not shouting.” That's that clamor.

And then, what happens to the clamor? Then, that clamor turns to evil speaking. You know, you're on a roll, and you start to say something. And the devil says, “Yeah, tell him this, too, and tell him that.” And then, you start to evil speak—that is, you say things you don't mean; you say things that you never even really thought of. But you're out of control now, and you say, “I hate you”; or, “You'll never amount to anything”; or, “I wish we had never gotten married. I wish I had never seen you. I wish you were dead.” We say these things, and we don't mean them. We'd give a million dollars, if we could take them back; but the devil is over there, and he's saying, “Yeah, that's right. Tell them this, too.” Oh, he feels good, the devil does.

And then, it ends up with malice. Do you know what the word *malice* means? That means, “a desire to hurt somebody.” I mean, after the evil speaking—I mean, after you're on the roll—then, you want to grab hold of him; you want to shake him; you want to kick him; you want to shove him; or, you want to cut the money off from them; or, you want to walk out and make them suffer. You want them to hurt. Bitterness, wrath, anger,

evil speaking, malice—and boy, have you done a good job. You’ve just let the devil come in. I mean, he’s wrecked it all, and who did it? You opened the door. The devil can take no place, except what you give him, my dear friend.

And the Holy Spirit is weeping. The Holy Spirit is heartbroken. Did you know that you can break the heart of God? Do you know what the word *grieve* means? Any of you parents ever grieve over your children? *“And grieve not”*—grieve not—*“the holy Spirit of God”* (Ephesians 4:30). Can you imagine being saved, redeemed, born again, and this purchased temple, bought with the blood of Jesus, has become a nest of Satan? And you open the door, and the dear Spirit of God is weeping, and Satan is laughing, making a mockery of the things of God? You just said, “Come on in devil. I open the door. I give you a place in my life.”

Now friend, let me tell you something: You’re not going to get that place back until you repent. There’s one thing God will not accept for sin, and that is an alibi or an excuse. You say, “Well, I’ve got my rights.” You don’t have any more right than a dead man has; you’re crucified with Christ. You don’t have any rights, mister; you belong to Him. You have no right to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. You have no right to give a place to the foul, filthy devil in your heart and in your life. You’re not your own; you’re bought with a price. You’re to glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:20). There must be repentance, and repentance is not just being broken *over* your sin—it is being broken *from* your sin. The Bible says to put it away and to be done with it (Ephesians 4:22).

## **II. Resistance**

After there is repentance, there can be resistance. Now even after you repent, the devil is not going to walk out. He’s not going to walk out. You’re going to have to run him out. The Bible says, in James chapter 4, verse 7: *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). If you don’t resist him, then he’s not going. I mean, even if you repent, you’ve still got to clean house. You have got to go in there, now, with a power of attorney, which is the name of Jesus—and He gives you power of attorney. I mean that when you take that land—when you say, “I clean it out. I repent of the sin. I cancel the debt. It’s all done, devil. You have no more right. You have no more legal authority”—then, you can take the blood of Jesus Christ as your authority and Christ as your attorney. And you can say to him, in no uncertain terms, “Satan, I have given you a place, but I take it back, in the name and the authority of Jesus. Satan, I don’t shout at you. I don’t plead with you. I don’t argue with you. I don’t beg you. I bring Jesus Christ against you. You have no right; you have no authority. This body of mine is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. You are trespassing on my Father’s property, and, in the name of Jesus, whose I am, and whom I serve, be gone. And he’ll flee from you. He will flee



from you. Do you ever think about the devil fleeing from you? That's biblical. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

But I'll tell you: You try to resist the devil with unconfessed sin in your heart and in your life, and he will laugh in your face. He'll make a mockery of you. You say, "Devil, leave me alone." He'll say, "Ha, who do you think you are? You gave me this piece of property, and I am not moving out." There must be repentance, and then, there can be resistance.

### III. Renewal

I'm not going to spend any more time there, because I've preached far too long, but let me get to the third and final point. And I promise you it will be very, very brief. Then, there may be renewal. Look, if you will, again, in verse 23 of this chapter. Look at it: *"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man"*—it's not enough to put off the old man, but—*"put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"* (Ephesians 4:23–24). Don't you love that phrase—*"true holiness?"* (Ephesians 4:24). God forgive us for this icky, gooey, syrupy kind of holiness—this pretense, which is not holiness at all. But *true holiness*. Look in verse 30: *"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption"* (Ephesians 4:30).

Look in chapter 5 and verse 18: *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). Now you've got a choice, folks: you can grieve the Spirit of God and be filled with the devil, or, you can put the devil out and be filled with the Spirit of God. *"Be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). There's no place for the devil when you're filled with the Spirit. I mean, if you're filled with the Spirit, then where can the devil go? He has no place.

You see, when the Bible says, *"Be filled with the Spirit,"* what does that mean? The Holy Spirit is not some sort of a liquid, and you're not a jug—that's not the idea. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit in person. "To be filled with the Spirit of God" means that there's not one room in this temple where He's off-bounds; there's not one closet he doesn't have a key to. You are filled with the Spirit. "In my sex life, in my business life, in my political life, in my church life, in my social life, in the big things and the little things, in my money, in my exercise, in my sleep, in my eating, in my lying down, in my waking up, Jesus, I give you the keys to it all. I am filled with the Spirit." Now when I'm filled with the Spirit, there's no more room for Satan. If there's room for Satan, then the Spirit is grieved and I am not filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30).

### Conclusion

Repentance, resistance, and renewal. Don't try to repent until you're honest and face

your sin. Don't try to resist until you've repented. And don't try to be filled until you resist—until you choose against Satan and yield to God's blessed Holy Spirit of God.

# Taking Back Lost Ground

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 24, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:23–31

*“Neither give place to the devil.”*

EPHESIANS 4:27

## Outline

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- A. Dishonesty
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Ephesians chapter 4, and what we want to do tonight is put an addendum on the message from Sunday night. As you can tell, I had difficulty getting finished Sunday night. And we're talking about how to keep your spiritual fire burning, and I think it fits in with the thanksgiving theme. But I want to talk to you tonight about something very, very important, and there's not a mother's child in this building who doesn't need to understand the truth that is here. And here is the title of the message: "Taking Back Lost Ground." Many of us have given ground to the devil. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 27 gives us a command. It says, *“Neither give place to the devil.”* (Ephesians 4:27) Now, many of us have unwittingly done just that. We have given a place to the devil; that is,

we have created an atmosphere that the devil feels at home in.

¶ Joyce and I have decided we wanted some birds in our backyard, and our neighbors told us about Purple Martins, and said, “They will eat mosquitoes, and you need some Purple Martins.”

“Well, how do you get Purple Martins?”

They said, “Well, you get a birdhouse.”

“What kind?”

“A particular type of birdhouse.”

“And what do you do?”

“Just put it up.”

“Well, you don’t have to go out and catch any Martins?”

“Nope.”

“You don’t have to stand in the backyard and say, ‘Here, Martins?’”

“No, just create an atmosphere; just create the right atmosphere conducive to Purple Martins, and they will come.”

So, that’s what we did. We got the birdhouse, we got a pole, and we put it up, and we now have Purple Martins. They nest in our yard because we put out a welcome mat for them.¶

I’m afraid that many Christians unwittingly—and some perhaps wittingly—have put out a welcome mat for Satan; they have given place to Satan—and these are Christians. Paul is talking here, in the book of Ephesians, to Christians, and they have given a place to the devil.

Now, I want to say something out loud, up front: Satan can never take any ground that you do not give him. Now, you have to understand that. You are not a helpless victim. Satan can never take any ground that you do not first give to him. So, the Bible says, “*Neither give place to the devil.*” (Ephesians 4:27) Once you give place to the devil, however, he can work all kinds of mayhem.

¶ Suppose you have fifty acres of property and you gave to a scurrilous person one acre in the middle of those fifty acres. Now, that would mean he would have to have ingress and egress to the one acre that you gave him in the middle of your fifty acres. And there, he could throw all kinds of wild parties, perhaps play loud music, throw trash over the border of his one acre into your fifty acres. And you’d come in and say, “You can’t do that. You need to get out of here.” He’d say, “No, you gave me this. I have a right to be here, and you cannot legally remove me.”¶

Now, there is a way, however, that you can remove Satan if you have given him place. There’s a way that you can take back lost ground. And many here may have given place to the devil and not even realize it. And Satan is there working all sorts of

malice and mayhem in your life, and you don't even know why you're getting buffeted. You don't know why you're getting hurt. You don't know what is happening. And it may be that you have simply given place to the devil.

Now, there are three steps. I'm going to give them to you first, and then we're going to talk about them. Step number one is the removal of sin. Step number two is the renewal of the Spirit. And step number three is the resistance of Satan. Now, those are easy to remember. And let's talk a little bit now about how we get rid of Satan. Now, remember that Satan wants an atmosphere in which he can live. You have to create a climate for him. You have to put out a welcome mat for him if you give him place, and that place is always sin. Now, listen to me carefully: unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life, or in my life, is the devil's legal territory; it is the devil's campground. And if you have any unconfessed, unrepented-of sin, you have given him a place.

For example, back up to verse 26: *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil."* (Ephesians 4:26–27) It's plain. If you have, for example, unresolved anger, and you go to bed with that anger, and you do not deal with it, what you've done is given the devil a beachhead, given the devil a foothold, given the devil a citadel, given the devil a campground, given the devil a welcome mat to come into your life. Sin—unconfessed, unresolved, unrepented-of sin; unremoved—is the devil's legal territory. He cannot take anything you don't give him.

## I. The Removal of Sin

But now, let's go back and look at all this in context. Go back, for example, to verse 25. Now, he starts here leading up to all of this, and then he says, *"[Don't] give place to the devil."* (Ephesians 4:27) Now, let's talk about the removal of sin.

### A. Dishonesty

Notice in verse 25: *"Wherefore putting away"*—that is, "removing"—*"lying"*—let's just stop right there: removing lying—*"speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."* (Ephesians 4:25) Now, why would the devil come into a person who's a liar? For the same reason a Purple Martin comes to the right kind of a birdhouse: he is very comfortable there. You see, Satan's kingdom thrives on lies and dishonesty. Put in your margin "John 8, verse 44." Jesus, speaking of Satan, said, and speaking to the unsaved, said, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do"*—now, the word *lust* means "strong desire." Are you going to be like your father?—*"He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him"*—now, who is He talking about here? Satan—*"When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* (John 8:44) *Every time you tell a lie, you are acting like the devil, who is the father of lies.* And any time there's dishonesty in your life—unresolved, unrepented of—what you've

done is you've opened yourself up and given a place to the devil.

Now, in contrast to Satan being the father of lies, Jesus is the truth. You're familiar with John 14, verse 6: "*Jesus [said]...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) And then, you know the Bible is truth. In John 17:17, Jesus said concerning the Word of God, "*Thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17) And then, the Holy Spirit is truth—1 John 5, verse 6. The Bible says, "*The Spirit is truth.*" (1 John 5:6) So, the Son is truth. The Scripture is truth. The Spirit is truth. Did you know that there's a crisis for truth in the United States today? I mean, people don't believe anything. The word *spin*—I'd never heard that word fifteen, twenty years ago. Now, everybody says, "What's the spin?" We're not interested in truth. Nobody expects a politician today really to tell the truth.

I read something this week. I subscribe to a news magazine, *U.S. News & World Report*. I read something: according to an exclusive *U.S. News* poll, eighty-four percent of college students believe they need to cheat to get ahead in the world today. Now, that's eighty-four percent. I mean, they feel that, not only should they cheat; they need to cheat. And the article goes on to say that academic fraud has never been easier. Students can tamper electronically with grade records; that is, they can break in and change their records, and they can actually hack the records and transmit quiz answers via pager or cell phone. You're sitting there in your class and can look down at your pager and get the answer. And you can lift term papers from hundreds of websites. Well, I can think of all the term papers I ever wrote—I would have been sorely tempted. Ninety percent of college students say cheaters never pay the price; that is, they cheat and get away with it. Ninety percent say that when people see someone cheating, they don't turn him in. You think about a nation, now, with the brightest and the best. An incredible percentage see nothing wrong with this. That's making a nest for Satan. If you're a student and you're cheating, you know who you're cheating? You're cheating you. Like cheating in solitaire—you're the only one playing the game. But you're dishonoring God, and you are making Satan feel welcome. You are to believe the truth, love the truth, live the truth, tell the truth always, or else you've given a place to the devil.

## **B. Anger**

Now, notice again in verse 26: "*Be...angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*" (Ephesians 4:26) Anger is another thing that gives place to the devil. Not only is the devil a liar, but the devil is one who is filled with anger. That's his stock and trade. Did you know that the devil is angry? Have you ever thought of Satan as angry? So many times we think of the devil as somehow with a sinister laugh, mocking. Well, listen to this scripture—Revelation 12 and verse 12: "*Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is*

*come down unto you, having great wrath.*” (Revelation 12:12) That’s just an old-fashioned word for “anger.” Satan is seething with rage. “Woe to the people who live on the earth. He has great wrath!” (Revelation 12:12) And then, Revelation 12, verse 17: *“And the dragon was wrath with the woman”* (Revelation 12:17)—that is, “angry with the woman,” the woman here being Israel. That’s the reason why the people of Israel today are suffering as they suffer—because Satan himself is angry with these. I’m saying that anger is something that Satan has an affinity for. If you are an angry person, a person given to anger, you have definitely given a place to the devil. Your anger is his beachhead in your life; it is his campground in your life.

You can tell the character of a man by what makes him angry. You know what makes some men angry? Missing the putt. They’ll wrap the golf club around the tree in anger and then go sit in the clubhouse and watch filthy television while they’re drinking their booze. Pornography doesn’t make them angry. Child abuse doesn’t make them angry. Racism doesn’t make them angry. But missing a putt will make them angry enough to bend a golf club sometime. Not all golfers are that way, just ninety-five percent of them. I just said that because Bob’s out there.

Listen, what makes you angry? If some things don’t make you angry, there’s something wrong with you. Jesus was moved with anger. The Bible doesn’t say it’s always a sin to be angry. The Bible says to *“be...angry, and sin not.”* (Ephesians 4:26) And the only way to be angry and sin not is to be angry at sin and express that anger in the right way.

### **C. Stealing**

Now, here’s another thing that makes the devil at home in your life, and that’s stealing. Look in verse 28: *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”* (Ephesians 4:28) Not only does he need to work to get it out for himself but to give to somebody who has a genuine need.

If you’re a thief, do you know what you’ve done? You’ve made a nest for Satan. Is Satan a liar? Yes. Is Satan given to anger? Yes. Is Satan a thief? Yes. Read what Jesus said in John 10, verse 10, speaking of Satan: *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and...have it...abundantly.”* (John 10:10) When he mentioned the thief there, he’s mentioning Satan. Satan is a thief. Read in Mark chapter 5 about that demon-possessed man. We see a picture of him in the Passion Play. Satan stole from that man: he stole his sanity; he stole his liberty; he stole his family; he stole his health; he stole his happiness. Satan is a thief.

By the way, it really doesn’t make a lot of difference whether you steal a little bit or a whole lot. You know, some of us think it’s okay to steal some things. We might cheat on

our taxes, but we wouldn't rob a bank. We might carry materials home from the job, but we wouldn't gerrymander the payroll. Let me give you a verse of Scripture if you feel that way. It's Luke 16, verse 10: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."* (Luke 16:10) I want you to listen to the verse here: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."* (Luke 16:10) Now, did you hear what He said? *"He that is unjust in [that which is] least is unjust [in that which is] much."* (Luke 16:10) He doesn't say he could be, might be. He's not saying, "If a man would steal a little bit, he might steal a whole lot." No, he just simply says, "If you are guilty of thievery, just a little bit, that makes no difference to God whether you spend \$15 or \$150,000—you are unjust; not that "you could be," that "you are"! Satan is a thief, and if there's a spirit of thievery in your heart and in your life, if you take that which does not belong to you, you've given him a nest; you've given him a beachhead.

#### **D. Destructive Speech**

And then, again, look, if you will, in verse 29—we're just talking about a climate for Satan: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."* (Ephesians 4:29) Everything that you say will build up or tear down. The word *edify* means "to build up." Don't let things come out of your mouth that tear people down rather than building people up. You are to be a builder, not one who tears down.

#### **E. Filthy Speech**

And then, look, if you will, over in chapter 5 and verse 4: *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."* (Ephesians 5:4) That's very apt tonight. What he's saying is that filthy speech is a nest for Satan. As a matter of fact, in Mark chapter 1, verse 23, the Bible talks about the demons that Jesus cast out of people, and this says, *"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit"* (Mark 1:23)—that is, "a filthy spirit." Now, profanity is taking God's name in vain, but there's another form of speech that's just filthy speech, gutter speech. Do you know what I'm told today? That boys and girls in grammar school are using words that I would not even begin to repeat here just for sake of illustration, and that it's a common thing. Do you know why that is? They're seeing it right in your living room. You've got "Hell's Box Office" pumping that stuff in through the living room—dirty, filthy, vile language. And it's not just the young men today—young women, teen girls. I've heard some heartbreaking reports of some of the teens that come to this church using that kind of language, some of them girls using filthy speech. It ought to break our heart. Do you know why it ought to break our heart? Because Jesus said, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,"* (Matthew 12:34) and filthy talk comes out



of a filthy heart. Don't you ever forget it. And when you use this filthy speech, the devil feels so much at home because the very demons are unclean spirits. Your words ought to build up, not tear down.

You know, sometimes I've seen people use chapter 5, verse 4, where it speaks against jesting. They say God doesn't believe in humor. No, you're very wrong about that. Chapter 5, verse 4: *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient..."* (Ephesians 5:4) What he means is, he's not talking against humor. Humor's one of the finest gifts of God. I know of a mission board that will not send a missionary overseas who doesn't have a sense of humor. Humor is a wonderful sign of intelligence. It's one of the gifts of God to lighten the load. But there is a type of humor that now has taken over the airwaves, and it is vile, obscene, dirty, degrading, and Satan loves it.

#### **F. Bitterness**

Now again, we're just saying that in order to take back lost ground, there has to be the removal of sin. And next, he's talking about here bitterness. Look, if you will, in verses 30 and 31: *"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."* (Ephesians 4:30–31) Few things will make the devil feel more at home than bitterness. What a foul nest that is.

Now, is the devil a bitter person? You know what I'm doing? I'm just showing you that everything he's mentioning here is a character attribute of Satan that Satan has an affinity for. For example, Revelation chapter 12 and verse 12: *"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil has come down unto you, having great wrath."* (Revelation 12:12) I've already mentioned that. Satan is a bitter person. He has old enemies. Satan is eaten up with bitterness.

How does bitterness show itself? You couldn't be a pastor without meeting some caustic Christians, and bitter brothers, and sour saints. Sometimes a bitter person is harsh and critical, has a judgmental spirit. Every church has them. But sometimes they're not harsh and critical; they're just sullen, and quiet, and morose. They mope around. They're filled with self-pity, but they're also filled with bitterness. Or sometimes they're just politely indifferent, cool and uninvolved in the things of God. Oh, I believe bitterness does as much harm to the cause of Christ as any sin that I could list.

I was looking, as I was preparing this message, in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 14 and 15. The Bible says, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."* (Hebrews 12:14–15) You see, you have to look diligently for bitterness because bitterness can

camouflage itself. Bitterness is a root, and the root is underground. What is the root of bitterness? It grows in the soil of some hurt. You've been hurt. Maybe the hurt was intentional, maybe the hurt was unintentional, or maybe it was imagined and the person you think did that thing really didn't even do it. But there's bitterness there, and it's underground. But there's the root of it, but there's also the fruit of it. When it springs up, it will defile many.

Now, all of us have been hurt. There's nobody here that hasn't been hurt. Now, you be honest: All of us have been angry, right? I mean, all of us have gotten hacked off. All of us have had somebody do something wrong to us, or we think they've done something wrong to us. But we've dealt with it. I mean, we've buried it in the grave of God's forgetfulness, drowned it in the river of love, gone to that person, made it right. But a bitter person is a person who's never dealt with it. They harbor that hostility. They keep it in. It's a root of bitterness. It's there. It could spring up at any time. And then, what happens is this: you know about giving the devil a place; you've really done that. That root of bitterness is there, and then these people, in order to justify the way they feel, begin to look for reasons to justify their feelings.

You know, if you're looking for something to find fault with, you can always find it, beginning with the man named Adrian Rogers standing in the pulpit. Hey, if you came in tonight looking for something to criticize, you'll find it before you get out of here. If you came tonight looking for a blessing, you'll find that. You'll find what you're looking for. The bitter person is looking for something to justify the way they feel. And, by the way, a bitter person knows exactly how to push the hot button in you. A bitter person will know how to get to you, to ride you to say the right thing, to push that hot button in you. And then, when you react the way that they're trying to get you to react, that justifies the way that they feel and makes them even worse. That is bitterness. And some people are eaten up with bitterness, and they don't even really realize how much bitterness there is. But bitterness causes a chain reaction; it defiles other people. If your heart is headquarters for hostility, I want to tell you something else: you've given Satan a campground, and he is doing devastatingly bad things in your heart and in your life.

### **G. Slander**

Next, look in verse 31—slander: *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Look at the word “evil speaking.” Are you a slanderer? Another word for that is a “gossip.” You know, anybody who gossips, generally—I'd say ninety-five percent of them—are out of their mind. I mean, it's a form of insanity. Every gossip says, “Now, you know me: I don't gossip,” and then they start. Well, anybody doing something they don't know they're doing, they must be crazy.

Now, slander—is Satan a slanderer? The very word *devil* means “slanderer.” That's

what the word *devil* means. I mean, that is an interpretation of the word *devil*. He is a slanderer. He's called, in Revelation chapter 12, verse 10, "*the accuser of [the] brethren.*" (Revelation 12:10) Slander's a vicious thing. Sometimes people say, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Just the opposite: words can hurt you more than sticks and stones. Proverbs 25, verse 18: "*A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul*"—a *maul*: that means a "club"—"*and a sword, and a sharp arrow.*" (Proverbs 25:18) That is, a person who's a slanderer can do all kinds of horrible things.

## **H. Malice**

And then, he mentions malice. Look in verse 31. Malice is the desire to hurt somebody, the desire to harm. Again, does that make Satan at home? Of course it does. "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*" (John 10:10) Is there somebody you want to get even with? By the way, look in verse 31, and notice the progression.

### **1. Bitterness**

Notice: "*Let all bitterness*" (Ephesians 4:31)—you're wounded, and you don't deal with it.

### **2. Wrath**

"*And wrath...*" (Ephesians 4:31) You know what the word *wrath* means? It comes from a word which means "to get hot." You begin to do a slow burn. You ever done that slow burn? Boy, I have. First the bitterness starts, then the slow burn. It's just like oily rags stuffed in a closet, maybe—just smoldering.

### **3. Anger**

And then, the next word is *anger*. Now, what's the difference between wrath and anger? Wrath is that which is subdued; it's smoldering. Anger is something that's outward and active. It's like somebody opens the closet door, and the oxygen gets to those oily rags, and it bursts out in flame. It's what we call "flying off the handle."

### **4. Clamor**

And then, clamor. What happens after anger? *Clamor* means "loud speaking." Ever notice a person who gets angry? They make it loud! You say, "You don't have to shout." "I'm not shouting!" Clamor. They begin to say things that loud.

### **5. Evil Speaking**

Then we get louder, and then we get out of control, and then, after clamor, what? Evil speaking. When a person lets bitterness turn to wrath, turn to anger, turn to clamor, he will say things he never dreamed that he would say. A parent may say to a child, "I wish you'd never been born." You'd give a thousand worlds like this to take those words back. A wife may say to her husband, "I hate you; I want a divorce." You know better

than that. Sometimes someone will say to someone who's precious to them, "I wish you were dead." Horrible things. And Satan will say, "Yes, and tell them thus-and-such. That was really good. Tell them more." Evil speaking.

## 6. Malice

And then, once you've verbalized those things, then the last step on the way down is malice. Malice is the desire to hurt. That's when you may strike somebody with your fists, with open hands; or you may hurt with words or with finances; or you may hurt them by embarrassment—anyway you can hurt them. And guess who's sitting in the corner smiling? The devil. And he's come into your home, into your family, into your business, into your church, and you have given a place to the devil, and you need to take it back.

Now, first of all, there has to be the removal of sin. You might as well be throwing snowballs at the Rock of Gibraltar, hoping to remove it, than to try to get Satan out of your life and off your back with unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life. The Bible says it clearly—go back to verse 25: "*Wherefore [put it] away.*" (Ephesians 4:25) God's not going to just bless you anyhow.

## II. The Renewal of the Spirit

Now, the next two points are much shorter. Number two: the renewal of the Spirit. Look now in verses 23 and 24: "*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*"

(Ephesians 4:23–24) And skip to verse 30: "*And grieve not the holy Spirit.*" (Ephesians 4:30) You see, all of these other things have grieved the Holy Spirit. So, while Satan feels at home, the Holy Spirit is grieved. Now, what you ought to do is put away those things that have caused the Holy Spirit to be grieved, that put out the spiritual fire we were talking about Sunday night; you put those things away so it is the Spirit of God that feels at home in your heart. Who is the Holy Spirit? He is just that: He is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, holiness makes Him feel at home; unholiness grieves Him. So, you are now to welcome the Holy Spirit of God, to be mastered by Him.

Now, we're in chapter 4. If you would turn to chapter 5, it goes on to say what I preached about Sunday night, and that is to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) Make Him a welcome guest. I'm going to pass that by because I've taken more time than I should.

## III. The Resistance of Satan

Number one: the removal of sin. Number two: the renewal of the spirit. Look again in verse 23: "*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*" (Ephesians 4:23) Number three: the resistance of Satan. Now, even though you remove that sin and even though you

invite the Holy Spirit to come and take you and fill you, make Him welcome, Satan has to be evicted. He's not going to walk out; you have to evict him. And so, notice in verse 27, it says, *"Neither give place to the devil."* (Ephesians 4:27)

Go to the next chapter—chapter 5 and verse 11: *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Ephesians 5:11)—not just cozy up to them; "reprove them." A corollary verse here is James chapter 4, verse 7: *"Submit yourselves therefore to God"*—that's what we're talking about: the renewal of the Spirit—*"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) Now, if you don't draw nigh to God, don't try to resist the devil. You haven't got what it takes, and he's not budging. But you have to resist him in the name of Jesus. Once you have put these things away, once you have invited the Holy Spirit to come in and take His rightful place—and Satan is there, and he's in his old nest, his old campground—you say, "That campground has been cleansed, sanitized, removed; you've got no right, you have no legal authority here, and get out of my life and be gone," that's resisting the devil. When your heart is clean and Christ is enthroned through the Holy Spirit, you don't have to take that stuff from the devil. I mean, if your heart is not clean, and Christ is not enthroned, you can speak to the devil all you want and go around and prance about, rebuking the devil, and he is just smirking; he is not going to leave. But if you *"draw nigh [unto] God...[God] will draw nigh [unto] you,"* (James 4:8) and you can resist the devil.

The devil comes and tries to pull that stuff on you, you just say, "Look, devil, I belong to Jesus Christ. My sin is under the blood. There is no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my life. I have enthroned Christ. I am filled with the Spirit. You are trespassing on my Father's property. And in the name of Jesus, whom I love and serve, and the authority of the Word of God, I command you to leave. Leave me alone. Be gone!" He'll flee from you. Most of us say, "I'm not afraid of the devil." He needs to be afraid of you. He will flee from you, and you take back the lost ground that you've given him. You don't have to take that. Jesus said, *"I give...you [authority]...over all the power of the enemy,"* (Luke 10:19) but you've got to learn how to use it.

† A lady invited a man—she wasn't married—but she invited a man to come stay in her apartment. She was an older lady; it wasn't a sexual thing. They just thought the two of them could share an apartment and save some money. And so, the old guy moved in with her. After a while, she found out he was a freeloader. He was foul-mouthed, dirty, selfish. She decided she wanted him out. She said, "It's time for you to go; you can't stay any more." He said, "I'm not leaving." She said, "It's my apartment. You go!" He said, "I am not leaving. You leave if you want to; I'm not going to leave." She didn't know what to do. She went and got a lawyer, who went to a judge. The judge gave an order that said this man had to leave, and it was signed and sealed, notarized, authorized by the law. She came back to him and said, "It's time for you to go." He said, "I'm not

going.” She said, “Look at this. You are going. Now, out!” And he left.†

Satan will do the same thing. Satan says, “I’m not going. I’m not ready to leave. I’m going to have my way.” And you can say, “No, you’re not. I have authority in the name of Jesus Christ, signed, sealed and delivered, and you are out of here.” It was listed in the name of Jesus. And it’s time God’s people took back lost ground. Don’t you agree? Amen. Praise the Lord.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s pray. Father God, seal the message to our hearts, and help us, this Thanksgiving Eve, to put away anything that grieves the Spirit of God and makes Satan feel welcome. And Lord, let us just fill our hearts and lives with things that grieve Satan and make the Holy Spirit feel welcome and, Lord, to take back lost ground and to walk on conquered territory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.†

# The Freedom of Forgiveness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 3, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 4:31–32

*“And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*

EPHESIANS 4:32

## Outline

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- D. The Gain Factor
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## Introduction

Find in your Bibles Ephesians chapter 4, if you will. And in just a moment, we’re going to look at verses 31 and 32. There are two problems that do great psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage to anyone, and perhaps to you: one is guilt, and the other is bitterness. Guilt imprisons us; bitterness poisons us. Forgiveness is the answer both to bitterness and to guilt. Guilt is the result of something we have done wrong. Bitterness is our reaction to someone else’s wrong, or our perception that someone else has wronged us. They both have us in a prison, and it is forgiveness—hallelujah—that

sets the prisoner free from guilt or from bitterness. God's forgiveness of us sets us free from the prison of guilt, and our forgiveness of others sets us free from the prison of bitterness. Look at it here in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 31. Do you have it? Okay. *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:31–32)

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something: when you forgive another—truly forgive from your heart—you set two people free: one, the person that you have forgiven; the other is yourself. Now, *to forgive* actually means "to pay a debt." There are no bargain pardons. That's the reason our Lord taught us to pray there in the Model Prayer: *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* (Matthew 6:12) Sin is a debt that we owe. We have sinned against heaven, against the kingdom. We have been sued for damages, and it's a debt we cannot pay. But God, in mercy and in love, has forgiven us and paid that debt. You see, there are no free pardons. When somebody is forgiven, somebody else has paid.

For example, if Mark owes me a thousand dollars—don't forget—if Mark owes me a thousand dollars, and Mark says, "Pastor, I can't pay," and I say, "All right, Mark, I forgive you," the moment I say that, it cost me what? A thousand dollars. You see, to forgive is to actually pay the debt. The word *forgive* literally comes from a word that means "to bear the burden."

When our Lord forgives us, does He pay a price? Put in your margin "Ephesians chapter 1, verse 7." The Bible says, *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* (Ephesians 1:7) Out of the riches of His grace, He paid the debt Himself and, therefore, cancelled that debt. That's the reason we call *salvation* "grace"—G-R-A-C-E: "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."

Now, when you come to our Lord and you say, "Lord, I'm a sinner. I need to be saved. Jesus died to save me. He paid for my sin with His blood on the cross. Forgive me; save me," God does, and you're forgiven of your sin. You're placed into the family of God. But you're not done with forgiveness then. From there on, you have to begin to forgive others. You receive mercy; you show mercy. And Jesus taught us to pray, *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive [those who are] our debtors"* (Matthew 6:12) — "forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." Now, once you're in the family—once you're saved, once you're born again—you must learn to practice forgiveness to all others, because if you don't, you're going to dam up the stream of God's mercy. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of forgiveness. First, forgiveness, when you get saved, puts you in the family. But then, if you fail to forgive others over some matter, then that, dear friend, destroys family fellowship.



## I. The Compelling Reasons for Forgiveness

So, three things I want us to notice today. I pray God He'll write them upon your heart. Get out a piece of paper and a pen, and I want you to write down, first of all, what I'm going to call "the compelling reasons for forgiveness." Why should you forgive? Let me give you some factors:

### A. The Grace Factor

The very first factor I want to give is what I'm going to call "the grace factor." Now, look at the scripture again: *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) Now, why should I forgive you if you sin against me? Because God has forgiven me when I sinned against Him. *"Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) God has willingly, lovingly, freely forgiven us. We call that *grace*.

¶ I read about a young employee in a business. That man, in a growing business, under temptation, misappropriated several hundred dollars. It was found out. He was summoned to the manager's office. He knew this was most likely the end of his job. As he went up the stairs, he had a very heavy heart. He walked into that executive's office. The man looked at him face to face and said, "Is it true that you have done thus and such?" The man bowed his head and said, "Yes, it is true. I am guilty." The man behind the desk said, "Let me ask you a question: If I were to forgive you and keep you in the position that you're in, could I trust you in the future to be absolutely honest?" The man said, "Sir, if you would forgive me and give me another chance, I'll be the best employee you ever had." The man behind the desk said, "Sir, you're forgiven. But before you go, I want you to know you're not the first man in this company that made such a mistake. Years ago, as a young employee, I did almost exactly the same thing that you did, and I was forgiven. And the mercy that was shown to me, I'm showing to you. And may God have mercy upon us both."¶

That's the spirit of this verse of Scripture: *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) Sam Jones was a great evangelist of yesteryear. He said something I liked. He said, "I made up my mind I'm never going to fall out with anybody until they treat me worse than I treated Jesus Christ." Amen? *"Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32) You see, we forgive because we've been forgiven.

I got a letter, Brother Mark, some time ago, but I've saved it because it's a treasure letter. It was written from a woman in Baptist Hospital. She said, "Pastor Rogers, I'm writing you because I don't know who to write. I'm from Rome, Georgia. I'm over here by myself. I needed surgery. I needed some extra blood." She said, "Two young men

from your church came over here and donated blood for me. They didn't know me, and I don't know them. I don't even know their names, but," she said, "I want to tell you the note they left to me." And here's what the note was: "We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us." Isn't that beautiful? She said, "I don't even know who to thank. I don't know who these young men are because they did not leave their names." "We gave our blood for you, because Jesus gave His blood for us." Friend, we forgive others because He has first forgiven us. One of the reasons that you and I need to forgive is the grace factor.

## **B. The Guilt Factor**

Second reason: not only the grace factor, but the guilt factor. Now, notice what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6, verses 14 and 15: "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matthew 6:14–15) Now, you think about that. *The person who refuses to forgive destroys the bridge over which he must travel.* An unforgiving spirit is unforgivable.

Forgiving and being forgiven go together. The only person who can afford not to forgive is the person who will never need forgiveness. Notice the prayer: "Father, forgive us, as we forgive those..." (Matthew 6:12) Now friend, if you don't intend to forgive that person who has wronged you, that's a very foolish—and even a stupid—prayer for you to pray: "Father, you treat me like I'm treating them. Father, forgive me as"—in the same manner—"I forgive others." Now, you think about what you're praying. You say, "Well, I'm not going to forgive the other person," then, "Father, don't forgive me." "Well, I'll forgive her, but I'll never have any more to do with her." God says, "Okay. I'll forgive you and never have any more to do with you." You see what you're asking? "Father, forgive us as"—in the same manner that—"we forgive those who sin against us." (Matthew 6:12)

May I tell you, friend—listen carefully—an unforgiving spirit is not merely you missing a blessing; it is a wicked, vile, gross sin, in the same category as stealing or blasphemy. Why? Because, what is God? God's nature, Brother Jim, is a nature to forgive. That is the nature of God. And aren't we glad that He is a forgiving God? We're so glad of that. Well, then, if you don't forgive, you're not like God. And if you're not like God, what is that? Ungodliness. An unforgiving spirit is ungodly. It is ungodly. It is a terrible thing.

Jesus illustrated this with a story. Take your Bibles, and turn to Matthew chapter 18 here, for just a moment, because we're going to be there for a second—Matthew chapter 18. Jesus, speaking about forgiveness, illustrates it this way; He gave a parable—Matthew 18, beginning in verse 23: "*Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants. And when he had*

*begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, who owed him ten thousand talents*—now, just underscore that: ten thousand talents. Here’s a man taking inventory; here is a man who’s having an audit done, and he finds out that a man owes the king ten thousand talents—*“But forasmuch as he had [nothing with which] to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made”*—that is, he’s to be put in debtor’s prison—*“The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all”*—but we’re going to see that was a vain boast because there was no way he could have done it—*“Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”* (Matthew 18:23–27) “Loosed him” means that he “set him free.”

Now, don’t miss what Jesus is saying in this parable. If you’re not careful, you’re going to miss it. When He said, “ten thousand talents,” He was talking about an enormous debt. A talent was the largest measure of money known in the Roman world. The research that I did said that it would be equal to the wages of ten thousand men for seventeen years. In today’s dollars, it would be billions of dollars. When Solomon built the temple, the wonderful temple that he built there, and overlaid it with gold, the Bible says there were five thousand talents of gold in that magnificent temple. (1 Chronicles 29:7) This man owes ten thousand talents. As a matter of fact, the word *talent* here literally means “without number.” It was used for that number. Sometimes the Bible translates it “myriads”—just “myriads.” It’s the Greek word we get our word *myriad* from. It means it’s just some astronomical amount of money. This man is in debt. There is no way possible that he can pay, and the king forgives him. At that moment, it cost the king ten thousand talents.

Now, what happened, according to this story? Well, you find out that that man who had been forgiven goes out and finds someone that owes him money. Look, if you will, in verse 28: *“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, [who] owed him an hundred [denarii]”*—now, a denarius is a day’s labor—*“and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what thou owest.”* (Matthew 18:28) “Pay what you owe.” Now, here’s a man who’d been forgiven myriads; here’s a man who’s been forgiven billions, and he has somebody that owes him a hundred days’ wages, takes him by the throat, and says, “Pay me.” And the man says, “I can’t pay you right now. Have mercy.” But Matthew 18, verse 30 says, *“And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.”* (Matthew 18:30)

Do you see it? Do you see the analogy that Jesus is making? And Jesus speaks of the wickedness of that man who had been forgiven and would not forgive. (Matthew 18:32) And so, here’s what Jesus said in verse 35. He talks about, then, the king, who is very wroth and has that man who had been forgiven taken and put in prison himself. And He says in Matthew 18, verse 35: *“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also*

*unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”* (Matthew 18:35) Now, what is our Lord saying? Our Lord is saying, “It is absolutely wicked for those of us who have been forgiven so much to refuse to forgive somebody else.”

Is there somebody who’s wronged you and you’re holding back forgiveness, and you have had our Lord, with the gold of His blood and the silver of His tears, to pay your sin debt? Do you know what James says in James 2, verse 13? *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath [shown] no mercy.”* (James 2:13) Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:7: *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* (Matthew 5:7)

Why should I forgive? Listen, friend, I need to forgive because of the grace factor: I have been forgiven. I need to forgive because of the guilt factor: I will still need to be forgiven day by day. And only a person who never sins can afford not to forgive, which is no one.

### **C. The Grief Factor**

Third reason: We’ve talked about the grace factor and the guilt factor. The grief factor is a reason we ought to forgive, because, you see, this man who failed to forgive endured the severest discipline. The Bible teaches here, in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 15, that we’re to be *“looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”*—that is, you fail to receive and give grace—*“lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and [by it] many be defiled.”* (Hebrews 12:15) If you don’t forgive, friend, you’re going to know unusual grief; you’re going to be troubled, and others around you are going to be troubled. An unforgiving spirit does you personal harm. It’s not just what your unforgiveness does to someone else; it’s what it does to you.

Now sometimes, somebody says, “He did me thus and such harm. I’m going to get even.” Have you ever thought about what that means? You’re going to get even? You’re up here. Here’s some miscreant who does something bad to you, and he harms you; and you say, “Look what he did to me. I’m going to get even.” That’s what you do—you come down to his level. “Well,” you say, “then I won’t get even; I’ll just continue to hate.” Well, if you continue to hate, what you’re doing is committing emotional suicide; what you’re doing is filling yourself with bitterness, which is an acid that will destroy you and hurt you as much, or more, than it does the person on whom it is poured. You say, “But now, wait a minute, Pastor. If you knew what they did to me, you wouldn’t let them off the hook.” What I’m trying to tell you is you’re on the hook with them. You need to forgive because of the grief factor—the grief that the bitterness, the unforgiving spirit, will do to you. You forgive them for their sake. You forgive them for Jesus’ sake. Forgive them for your sake. Remember, when you forgive, you set two people free, and one of

them is yourself.

#### **D. The Gain Factor**

Fourth reason you need to forgive: not only the grief factor, but the gain factor. Now, listen to Matthew chapter 5, verse 24. Our Lord talks about somebody coming to the temple to worship, and they're bringing a gift to the temple. And there, they remember that there's a problem between them and someone else. Here's what our Lord says you're to do: *"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* (Matthew 5:24)

If you're here this morning when the offering is given and you have bitterness in your heart, keep the offering. Don't spend it because it's tainted money: it t'ain't yours. Don't spend it. Before you make your offering—and there's somebody that you need to go make things right with and you know it—you go be reconciled to your brother. Then come and bring the offering. Listen again—in Matthew 18 and verse 15: *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* (Matthew 18:15) In both of these scriptures—one says, *"Be reconciled to thy brother,"* and the other says, *"Thou hast gained thy brother."* (Matthew 5:24; 18:15) A brother is a precious thing, a terrible thing to waste. When you forgive, you heal a broken relationship and you gain back a brother.

Think about it. Think about when people come to church with broken relationships. Think about when people who name the name of Jesus live with broken relationships. Do you know what that does?

##### **1. An Unforgiving Spirit Disgraces the Father**

Listen to me. If there is, in your heart today, bitterness, and grudge, and unforgiveness, first of all, you disgrace Almighty God. When your children fuss and fight, it disgraces the parents, does it not? It disgraces the Father.

##### **2. An Unforgiving Spirit Discourages the Saints**

I'll tell you what else it does: it discourages the saints. Have you ever been in a church where there's a church fuss or fight? The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey any day. Did you know that? It discourages the saints.

##### **3. An Unforgiving Spirit Drives Away the Lost**

I'll tell you what else it does: it drives away the lost. Do you know that the greatest evangelistic outreach Bellevue Baptist Church has is the love we have one for another? People come and say, "Behold, how they love one another. I sense the fellowship, the love of God, in that church." But an unforgiving spirit, and rancor, and division, and hostility drive away the lost.

#### 4. An Unforgiving Spirit Delights the Devil

I'll tell you what else it does: it delights the devil. It delights the devil when you fail to forgive.

There is the gain factor. Think what we gain when we gain a brother, when we gain a sister. I had a brother who did me wrong—not a brother in the flesh, but a brother in the Lord; a man that I dearly loved. He did wrong. Something rose up in me and said, “Well, that’s it. Cut him off.” The Lord said, “Don’t do that. Forgive. Restore.” And I did, and I don’t have a better friend on earth today than that person. That is the gain factor. Friend, there is somebody that you need to be reconciled with, and you bring them back into the fellowship and into the fold.

## II. The Costly Requirements for Forgiveness

Now, those are compelling reasons for forgiveness. Now, let me talk to you about the costly requirements for forgiveness because, see, there’s no bargain forgiveness. There are no bargain pardons.

What does our scripture say? *“Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32) Now, Jesus is the model of our forgiveness, and you’re going to see that Jesus paid the price. We talked about redemption through His blood. And friend, you’re going to have to know a little personal Gethsemane and Calvary if you truly forgive somebody who has deeply hurt you. Now how, therefore—if we’re to forgive as Jesus forgave—how did Jesus forgive? May I list some ways?

### A. Forgive Freely

First of all, we are to forgive freely. His forgiveness is free, spontaneous, and quick. Don’t forgive after you have collected your revenge. You know, sometimes people hurt us, and we say, “They don’t know how much they hurt us, and I’m going to teach them how much I’ve been hurt. And I’m going to excoriate them. I’m going to blame them. I’m going to castigate them. I’m going to make them suffer. And after they’ve suffered, after they’ve wept, after they’ve pled, after they’ve bled, after I’ve gotten my pound of flesh, then perhaps I’ll forgive.” Has anybody ever treated you that way and then finally said, “Well, I’ll forgive you”? What do you feel like saying? “Hey, I don’t need to be forgiven. I’ve already paid.” You forgive freely.

You should be so anxious to forgive a person that you chase them and catch them in order to forgive them. Isn’t that what God has done for us? *“We love him”—why?—“because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, God did not sit up there in heaven and say, “Well, I’m going to wait, and if, perhaps, they come to me, I might be persuaded to forgive them.” God came to

the garden, and God said, “Adam, Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) That wasn’t the voice of a detective. That was the voice of a brokenhearted God who was seeking someone who had sinned against Him, freely seeking to forgive. Matthew 18, verse 15—listen to it again: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”*—it doesn’t say to go and tell him off; go tell him secretly, privately, lovingly, and—*“if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* (Matthew 15:18) Freely.

Peter asked the Lord, “Lord, how many times if a person sins against me, shall I forgive him? Seven times?” (Matthew 18:21) That’s a perfect number. Jesus said, “No, seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22)—490. And by inference, He didn’t mean you stop at 491. What our Lord says is, “Get the mathematics out of it. Don’t keep score. Forgiveness has no limit. Forget the math.” Forgive freely, even if you have to chase somebody in order to forgive them.

### **B. Forgive Fully**

Number two—listen—not only should you forgive freely, but you forgive fully, totally. Make sure that you forgive. By the way, I had somebody come to me yesterday and say, “I want you to forgive me.” My first inclination was to say, “Don’t worry about it. That’s okay. Don’t worry about it.” But I realized that would have been wrong for me to do because that was not forgiveness. And what that individual needed, and what that individual deserved, was forgiveness. So, I didn’t just say, “Don’t worry about it. Forget it.” I said, “I forgive you.” That’s very important. You see, sometimes when we do wrong, we don’t go to another individual and say, “Forgive me.” We say, “If I have hurt your feelings, I’m sorry. I want to apologize.” Very tricky—“I want to apologize.” Let me tell you; let me explain to you why I did what I did. The word *apologize* comes from a Greek word, *apologia*, which means “to make a defense.” In apologetics, we’re defending the faith. So many of us want to apologize; what we’re doing is, really, defending ourselves. If you’ve wronged somebody, don’t apologize and say, “Would you forgive me? I was wrong.” It’s not an apology that I want. I want forgiveness. And if somebody has wronged you, don’t say, “Oh, forget it. Never mind.” Say, “I forgive you.” Do it fully. Then it’s buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. Forgive fully.

### **C. Forgive Finally**

Now, next, forgive finally; that is, don’t bring it up again. Isaiah 43, verse 25: *“I, even I, am he [who] blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins”* (Isaiah 43:25)—sins that are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. If you forgive, do it finally, once and for all. You say, “Well now, Pastor, that brings up a problem for me. God doesn’t remember our sins any more? I thought God was omniscient. How can God ever truly forget anything?” Well, intellectually, God cannot

forget. God doesn't lose His memory. When God says, "I will remember them no more," that means, "I will not bring them up. I will not use them against you. If I remember them, I remember them as forgiven sins. I don't continue to have that spirit of resentment that human beings tend to have. The sin is buried." Now, many times we say we have forgiven, but we've not forgiven finally.

¶ I read about a man whose office files were getting so full of extraneous papers. He was a man who couldn't bear to throw anything away. And the files got fuller and fuller and fuller. One day, his secretary said, "Sir, can I clean out the files?" He said, "Well, okay, clean them out. But before you throw anything away, make a copy of it."¶

Is that the way we forgive? You know, "I'm going to get rid of it, but I'm going to remember it." No, you forget it. Forgive finally.

#### D. Forgive Forcefully

Now, last of all, you forgive forcefully. What do I mean by *forcefully*? I'm telling you, folks, it is not natural to forgive. Our spirits demand justice: "They need to pay. They hurt us, and they need to understand just how badly they hurt us." It has well been said, "To err is human; to forgive is divine." You need Jesus to be forgiven, and friend, you need Jesus in order to forgive. "*Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.*" (Ephesians 4:32) Where do we get that kindness? Where do we get that tenderheartedness? It comes from Jesus. The same One who has forgiven us is the One who puts His Spirit in us and enables us to have the force and the power to forgive.

¶ Many of you have heard of, or read of, Corrie ten Boom, a precious Dutch girl back in World War II. She was taken by the Nazis and put in a Nazi concentration camp along with her sister. And the reason that Corrie ten Boom was incarcerated and put in that prison camp at Ravensbrück was because she had been hiding the Jews, as a Gentile, to keep the Nazis from their Holocaust and atrocities. Her hiding place was found out. Corrie ten Boom, with her sister, was put in a concentration camp. Corrie's sister died in the concentration camp. When she was there in that concentration camp, she was treated with unimaginable brutality—almost starved, hard work. But one of the things that happened to her was she was forced by a prison guard to strip naked and to take a shower while he watched her with his leering eyes and almost raped her with his eyes—humiliated this righteous and godly girl. Later, Corrie ten Boom got out of prison, and she was serving God and bringing a message on forgiveness. And after the message, up walked a man and put out his hand and said, "Corrie, isn't the grace of God something wonderful? Isn't forgiveness wonderful?" And when she looked into that man's face, she froze because it was that prison guard, the one who had humiliated her, the one who had abused her, the one who had misused her. And now, he saunters up to her, puts out his hand, and says, "Isn't the grace of God wonderful? Isn't forgiveness



wonderful?” She said, again, “I froze. I wanted to put out my hand because I had spoken on forgiveness, but,” she said, “I couldn’t. And I prayed, ‘O Jesus, help me to forgive.’” And she said, “I put out my hand and put my hand in his hand, and,” she said, “the grace of God and the love of God began to flow through my body.”<sup>†</sup>

Now friend, I want you to think about how Jesus Christ has forgiven us. And it is the power of Jesus Christ, who forgave us, that enables us to forgive somebody else. And don’t you insult the grace of God by saying, “I can’t forgive.” You forgive freely. You forgive finally. You forgive fully. And you forgive forcefully.

### **III. The Certain Results of Forgiveness**

Now, the time has gone. I wish I had more time to talk about the results of forgiveness. I want to put it up on the screen for just a moment, and I want you to think about the threefold results of forgiveness. What will be the certain results of forgiveness?

#### **A. Personal Emancipation**

Number one: When there is forgiveness, there is personal emancipation. You’re set free. Personal emancipation.

#### **B. Mutual Reconciliation**

Secondly, there is going to be reconciliation. There’s going to be a reconciliation between you and somebody else. You’re going to gain your brother.

#### **C. Spiritual Rejuvenation**

You’re going to set free. You’re going to gain your brother. And last of all, friend, there’s going to be spiritual rejuvenation. There’s going to be revival. Do you know what real revival is? *Real revival is not just getting the roof off and getting right with God. Real revival is getting the walls down and getting right with one another.*

### **Conclusion**

Is there somebody who has wronged us? Is there somebody, you say, “I owe them; they’re going to pay”? Friend, forget it. Bury it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and forgive.

“Pastor, can I forgive somebody who continues to do the same thing? Can I forgive somebody who hasn’t repented; someone who continues to hurt me, to withhold what they owe me; somebody who continues to abuse or to lie or to slander? Can I forgive them?” It’s a hard question because even God doesn’t forgive without repentance, does He? What if that person hasn’t repented? Then is it up to you to get ‘em? No, God says, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*” (Romans 12:19) And if you cannot forgive them because of their continuing practice, you can have the spirit of

forgiveness. What did Jesus do on the cross? He prayed, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Luke 23:34) While they’re nailing Him up, He’s praying for forgiveness.

I had somebody who sinned against me and those that I love horribly. I made up my mind I was not going to carry a load of resentment. The individual is still in an attitude and actions of sin. But one morning, about two in the morning, I wrote out a full, complete forgiveness, not only forgiving, but receiving back that individual. And before God, I signed my name to it, and I uploaded that forgiveness and put it in the drawer. Anytime that individual wants to download it, it’s there. It’s already on file. It’s already given. It’s done, so far as I’m concerned. I don’t bear that burden. Whether it’s ever received or not, it’s offered. Isn’t that what Jesus did on the cross? Not everybody is saved, but He bought salvation for us all; and all we have to do is receive it.

Friend, don’t carry around that load, even if you have to put forgiveness in escrow, waiting for that individual to come along and write the check of repentance and faith. You have uploaded it, and they can download it. But don’t you go around in the prison house of guilt, swallowing the poison of bitterness. How foolish!

Let’s bow our heads. Now friend, all true forgiveness begins with receiving forgiveness. And if you’ve never received forgiveness, this is the time for you to do it. God longs to forgive you. Jesus Christ died to forgive you. He wants to cleanse you, and He will cleanse you. If you’d like to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: “Dear God”—oh, pray it, friend—“Dear God, thank you for loving me. Thank you that you’re a forgiving God; that you’ve said if we confess our sin, you’re faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Lord Jesus, I need you. I want you. I open my heart right now, and I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus.” Pray it. Mean it. Ask Him. Believe Him. “Save me, Jesus.”

By faith, thank Him. Pray, “Thank you for doing it. I stand on your Word. I give myself to you. I receive you. You’re now my Lord and Savior. Now, give me the courage to make it public, and help me never to be ashamed of you. Amen.” And amen.†

# Preparing for the Battle

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 1, 2001

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:1

*“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;”*

EPHESIANS 5:1

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## Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians, if you would, chapter 5. Talking to you tonight about how to guard your heart and, therefore, protect your home. Now, we've talked to you about making a wise choice. We told you how Moses chose, because he had discerned. And, after he discerned, then he refused the things of the devil, and chose the things of God. And we talked to you about how to make a wise choice. And then, we talked to you next about how to have a clean thought life, a pure thought life. And God's Word is so clear about that.

But I want to remind you tonight that the chief pornographer is Satan. Satan is a pervert. And, actually, he is behind the whole pornographic industry. We're not wrestling

against flesh and blood. But we're wrestling against principalities and powers. Now, we're going to look in the book of Ephesians tonight, because that's exactly what the apostle Paul was wrestling against in Ephesus.

Now, Ephesus and Corinth were two twin cities. They were the cesspools of the first century. Unspeakable immorality, as we are going to see, took place in Ephesus. As a matter of fact, I have visited the ruins of Ephesus, and I have seen there in the ruins things I would not want to describe from this platform tonight. I would be embarrassed. I was somewhat embarrassed to walk through the city with other people. It was the slime pit of the first century. And yet, God raised up a colony of heaven there, an outpost of the kingdom of God. And the apostle Paul had some wonderful, Spirit-filled saints who came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and lived in victory. So don't tell me you can't live in victory today. Friend, if it won't work now, it was no good then, and it's no good now. And, if it won't work for you, it won't work for anybody. And, if it won't work with your situation, it won't work with any situation. There is victory for you and for me. When we were born again, we were born to win.

Now, look again in Ephesians 5, and here's what Paul says: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also that loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Now, he said, "Look. Walk in love. God loved you so much." The worst thing about pornography is that it wars on love. It is against love. It is the opposite of love. It is devastating to love. It is debilitating and destroying to love. Love and lust are direct opposites. A person who is into pornography has decimated his ability to love God, to love others, to love his wife, to love his children, to love one's parents. Pornography erodes love.

So notice what he says here in verses 1 and 2: "walk in love." And then, notice in verse 3—watch: "But..."—that is, in contradistinction—"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness..."—and covetousness; you say, "what does that have to do with in this list of things?" We're not to covet another man's wife, or a another person's physical attractiveness—"or covetousness, let it not be once be named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

Now, if this is your lifestyle, you're either terribly backslidden or altogether lost. Then skip down to verse 11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." And notice what Paul says in verse 12: "For it is a shame even to

speak of those things which are done of them in secret”—ashamed even to talk about them. I made up my mind, when I prepared this series of messages, that I would not try to describe pornography to you. I made up my mind that I, in preparing this series of messages, would not look at any pornography. And I don't ever intend to. There's no need to do it. Paul said, it's a shame to even speak of those things which are done of them in secret. And I am going to do what Paul did, however, and I'm going to warn you.

Now, just turn the page; in chapter 6, Paul is talking about the family, because pornography wars against love, and love wars against the family, and the family is where it's at. The family is the only part of the Garden of Eden that we have left. I would not take anything for the ability to love and have a family, where I can love and be loved. Satan wants to war against the family.

Now, I would be tempted just to pull over here and talk about the family, in chapter 5 and chapter 6, but let's go on to chapter 6, and begin in verse 10, for the heart of the message tonight. He's going to tell us how to overcome the chief pornographer, who is Satan himself.

Now, I talked to you about how to have a pure mind—that's wonderful. I talked to you about how to make the right kind of decisions—that's fine. But unless you learn something about spiritual warfare, you're still going to lose the battle in pornography.

Beginning in verse 10: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

Now, there is a guerilla war that Satan is waging against us. One of his chief tools—not his only tool, but one of his chief tools—is pornography. And what we need to do is to counterattack under our Commander-in-Chief, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a battle between light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell, Satan and the Savior. And, in a way, we're sort of pawns in a game of cosmic chess. And I just want to call you to battle, call you to battle for your family. I'm willing to battle for my family, and I will. I'm willing to battle for my grandchildren. You dads, I want you to guard your heart and protect your home.

## I. The Christian Warrior and His Adversary

Now, number one, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the Christian and his adversary—the Christian and his adversary. We must know our enemy. Our enemy is Satan. Let me give you some facts about him.

### A. Satan Is a Decided Fact

Number one: he is a decided fact—f-a-c-t. Notice in verse 11: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Now, never underestimate Satan. Never count him out. Never say that he doesn't exist, or perhaps he's just a figment of imagination, or a metaphor, or figure of speech. Satan has always wanted to pull the veil of darkness over his kingdom. Now, we live in an age—a sophisticated age—that perhaps laughs at the idea of Satan and demons, but in these days I think we've almost stopped laughing. You see, if there is no enemy, if we don't recognize that Satan is behind pornography, then we're not going to make any preparation; or, when we fight, we're going to fight in the wrong arena. Now, we sing something about Jesus: “He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own. He lives, He lives; Christ Jesus lives today.” But I want to tell you there's another song we could sing—and I thank God we don't have to sing it: He lives, he lives; Satan lives today. He wars on me, and he works on me, along life's narrow way. And, if you haven't met the devil, that's just because you and the devil have been going in the same direction.

### B. Satan Is a Destructive Force

Satan is a decided fact. He's also a destructive force. Now, let me tell you how Satan works.

#### 1. He Is Systematic

First of all, he's very systematic. Look, if you will, in verse 11 again: “Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Underscore the word “wiles.” It's the word *methodeia*. It speaks of Satan's methods. Satan has methodically gone about to seduce your children. He is very systematic. He is very clever. He is behind Hollywood. He is behind all of the networks. He is behind all of the sitcoms. If not all of them, 90% of them. Satan is working, working, working—very strategically. Paul said, “We're not ignorant of his devices.” He is systematic.

#### 2. He Is Spiritual

Number two: he is spiritual. You say, “Oh no, Satan is not spiritual.” Yes, Satan is very spiritual. Look in verse 12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against”—what kind of wickedness?—“spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Now, don't get the idea, therefore, that our real battle is with the pornographer. It is not. Our real battle is not with Hollywood. Our real battle is not with the X-rated movies. Our real battle is against a sinister enemy whose name is Satan. And he is very, very spiritual. That is, he is invisible. And, as long as you are fighting flesh and blood, you're not going to win the battle. I was reading this afternoon in the Scripture before I came to church where Paul said over there in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Good intentions is a carnal weapon. Philosophy is a carnal weapon. Psychology is a carnal weapon. Resolution is a carnal weapon. All of these things an unsaved person can do. We're not going to win a spiritual battle with carnal weapons. Satan is a decided fact. Satan is a destructive force. And, as a destructive force, he's systematic. He's spiritual. Third thing: he's very strong.

Look again in verse 12: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." You do not have what it takes to win this battle. You don't have what it takes. I don't care who you are. You say, "Well, pornography doesn't bother me." Well then, Satan will get you in another way. If you try to come against Satan, he knows where your weakness is. And, I mean, if you try to live for God any other way except by depending on the Holy Spirit of God, you're going down, because Satan is greater than you are. But greater is He that's in us than he that's in the world, who is the Lord. Satan is systematic. He's spiritual. He's strong. And he's also very sinister.

Look again: he speaks about spiritual wickedness. He speaks about darkness. Satan has a tyrannical control on this world. And he has no mercy upon your family. He has no mercy upon the ministry. He has no mercy upon your husband, your wife, your child, your daughter.

### **C. Satan Is a Defeated Foe**

Now, I've said he's a decided fact. He's a destructive force. Listen, friend. He is—listen—a defeated foe—a defeated foe. Look in verse 10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Satan had his back crushed, back broken, at Calvary. And soon his head is going to be crushed, when Jesus comes again. First John 4:4, Jesus said, "Ye are of God little children and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that's in the world." Satan hopes that you never learn that he is a defeated foe.

## **II. The Christian Warrior and His Armor**

Now, let's move to the second thing. We've talked about the Christian and his adversary. Let's talk about the Christian warrior and his armor. You need, when you go into battle, to take the whole armor, and to take holy armor. Now, what is the armor that

you're going to wear, if you're going to overcome the devil in this matter of salacious literature, pornography, or whatever?

### A. **The Girdle of Truth**

Number one: you put on the girdle of truth. Look, if you will, in verse 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Now, skip on down, if you will, to verse 13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."

The first piece that you need to put on is the girdle, or the belt, of truth. And that speaks of your integrity—your integrity. The one thing that I want in my life, one thing I need, one thing I will not leave home without, and that is integrity. Now, if you've ever seen a motorcyclist, he wears a big leather belt, many of them, to support their back, and their solar plexus, because of the bumps on the road. Sometimes, if you'll watch an Olympic weightlifter, he will wear a leather belt to protect his loins and his solar plexus. The early warriors would wear a leather belt cinched up tight. And, since the men of that day would wear a tunic, they would gather the tunic up, and then cinch the belt very tight, and then from that belt they would hang their weapons.

Now, God says the truth is very much like that belt. If that comes loose, everything else falls apart. And from that belt the weapons would be held. That belt speaks of truth. Not just facts, but truth. Not just a knowledge of truth, but integrity. Truth in the inner person.

Question: do you have integrity? I mean, if I could see your heart, if I could read your mind like God does, would I be disappointed? If you knew me, I mean, if you could see inside of me, if you knew the real Adrian, would you be disappointed? If I have integrity, you would not be. You would not be. If I am a man of truth, if I am a person of truth. Do you have on that belt of truth?

Now, the people in Ephesus were able to go to war, and win the war, because they had the belt of truth. But that's only one piece of the armor. Now, not only do you need integrity, but you need the breastplate of righteousness, which is the believer's purity. Look again in this scripture. He says here, "stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth,"—verse 14—"and having on the breastplate of righteousness." A soldier that day would have metal plates or chains that would cover his body from the chest to the waist. And the reason for this is to protect his vital organs. Because, of course, there would be swords, there would be spears, there would be arrows. And so, the heart, the organs, had to be protected. Now, if there's a crack in the armor, or that breastplate is not there, then, of course, the enemy has an advantage.



## **B. The Breastplate of Righteousness**

Second question I want to ask you tonight, if you want to win this war: Do you have on the breastplate of righteousness? I mean by that, not only integrity, but purity. Do you? Is there in your heart tonight any—I said, any—unconfessed, unrepented of sin? Any? You say, “Good night, Adrian. You mean, you just expect me to give up everything?” I want to tell you, who would not give up dirt for diamonds? Who would not give up hog swill for nectar?

I want to give you a testimony, and you may think I’m bragging, may think I’m boasting. I don’t have any unconfessed sin in my life—none. You say, “Oh, you think you’re a super Christian?” No, I’m normal Christian. That is the normal Christian life. I would be an unmitigated fool to stand up here and try and preach without the breastplate of righteousness.

Now, you’re not going to win the war with pornography, if that’s all you fight is pornography. What about honesty? What about pride? What about selfishness? You say, “Pastor Rogers, you mean to tell me you don’t have any problem fighting the devil?” I fight him all the time. “You mean to tell me you don’t fail?” I fail. I’m not saying I’m perfect. God knows I’m not. So does Joyce. But I’m telling you there’s no reason that any man, woman, boy or girl in this building tonight cannot be as pure, as clean, as the driven snow. “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Why would I want to drag around sin? Why would I want to start the day, in the morning, with the baggage of sin, when I can be clean? It’s so simple. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Not some—all. Thank God for that. You say, well, a little sin’s not so bad. Who is it knocks so loud? A lonely little sin. Slip through, I answered. And soon, all hell was in.

No, you treat sin like sin would treat you. Have no mercy on sin. Sin will have no mercy on you. Don’t have a crack in the armor. You need integrity. You need purity, when you go into this battle.

## **C. Feet Shod with the Gospel of Peace**

Now, next, I want you to look at the next piece of armor that you’re to have. Look, if you will, in verse 15: “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

Now, a soldier in this day, not only did he have a leather belt, not only did he have a breastplate to cover his chest and vital organs, but he had boots—hobnail boots. The NFL didn’t invent those. Those who run track with spikes, and those that play baseball with cleats, they didn’t invent those. Those go all the way back to Bible times, where a soldier would have cleats, spikes, on the shoes. Those shoes would be thick enough to help him on rocky soil where he might be bruised, or he might slip, to get his feet into the turf, so he can stand and fight. What is it that gives you standing? It is the gospel of

peace. Now, what is the gospel of peace? The gospel of peace is knowing there's nothing between my soul and the Savior. That I am His; He is mine. He satisfies me. I am at peace with God. Now, if the belt is integrity, and the breastplate is purity, the shoes are tranquility—tranquility—at peace.

Do you know why people get into sin? They're hungry. They're lonely. They're distraught. They are not satisfied. They're looking here. They're looking there. Perhaps it's here. Perhaps it's there. I'm missing something. I want something. I am not satisfied. Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for, by sin undermined. I have the secret. I know where 'tis found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound. Your heart will never rest until it rests in Jesus. You will never be satisfied. You will go from pornography to covetousness, to brutality, to arguments, to whatever, until you find your peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **D. The Shield of Faith**

Next, the next piece of armor is a shield. Look, if you will here, when he talks about the shield of faith—verse 16: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” A soldier of this day had a shield. It was about two feet wide, about four feet long. It was either covered with metal or leather. And he would put it, obviously, out in front of him. It would be strapped to his arm, as he would fight. Because, in this day, they would fight not only with arrows, but flaming arrows, fiery darts. And that shield is there to ward them off.

Well, what kind of a shield is it? It's the shield of faith. Faith is to you a shield. Faith is what keeps the devil's fiery darts of insinuation and lust from getting through to you. I call it the believer's certainty, as over against doubt. It's the believer's certainty. You see, I'm dressing up. I put on integrity. I put on purity. I put on tranquility. I take certainty. That's the reason I told you to begin with in the first of these lessons that, when you talk to your teens about living a pure life, or when you try to live a pure life, you had better get it plain in your heart that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong, because everybody else is doing it. And, if you if you try to say to your kids, Now, look, don't do this. And they say, “Why, Dad?” You say, “Well, I just don't think it's a good idea.” That's not enough. Dad doesn't want you to do it. That's not enough. Dad doesn't do it. That's not enough. Because I said so. That's not enough. Not in today's world anymore. You're going to have to get your boys and girls, your children, your grandchildren, in your own heart to settle that this book is the Word of God.

And, you know, I've heard people say just the opposite. I've heard people say, now, it's not enough to tell kids God said so. You've got to show them why. That is so wrong. But I've heard it. I think I've heard something like that from this pulpit with a guest preacher one time. That's so wrong. No, the only way—the only way—that you're going to have any real success is to get your kids to believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

And boy, once they believe that, you can just do wonders. You can say, Look, here's what God says—I mean, if you can just prove it. Just take the Bible, and say, Look, son; look, daughter, here's what God says. Take this book as the shield of faith. It's the Bible that inculcates faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And, in the battle, we're going to have to get our children so locked on the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. That's the reason there is such a battle against the Bible.

The very first thing in the Garden of Eden was an insinuation against the Word of God. And I want to tell you something: it's part of the wiles of the devil. It's continuing today. It's in the universities today. And any man, I don't care who he is, I don't care how many letters he has after his name, how many degrees he has, I don't care what pulpit he occupies, if he causes doubt concerning the Word of God, he's doing the work of the devil—he's doing the work of the devil. You've got to have certainty.

The thing that keeps me going is not how I feel. I've told you before, I'm not a very emotional person. I'm more emotional when I preach than probably any other time. I don't get real high. I don't get real low. I stay in a narrow band. I don't take credit for that; it's the way I'm wired. I don't know whether it's good or bad, but it's who I am. I'd be that way, probably, if I were not saved. I just don't go up and down all the time. It's just my psychological profile. That's who I am. The thing that keeps me going is not how I feel; it is what I know. It is what I know. My faith is rooted in the Word of God. And that gives me stability. It will give you stability. And you need—look—you need integrity. You need purity. You need tranquility. And you need certainty. When Satan comes with his fiery darts, you can take the Word of God—and we're going to show you more about this later on—but you can overcome Satan with the Word of God.

#### **E. The Helmet of Salvation**

Now, you take the shield of faith—that is, the believer's certainty. And then, next, you take the helmet of salvation. Look in verse 17: "And take the helmet of salvation." Because, as you've seen the pictures of the soldiers of that day, especially a Roman soldier—and I believe this is what Paul was talking about; we'll see plenty of them in the Passion Play—they're wearing a helmet. Now, of course, they decorate the helmet with that red plume and all of that, but the helmet is there to protect the head. And the head, of course, is what directs the whole body. And so, you take the helmet of salvation. The word "salvation" is *sozo*. It means, literally, deliverance. He's not just talking about getting saved. He's talking about keeping your mind protected, so that you can have deliverance. And what does this speak of? It speaks of the believer's sanity or the believer's liberty—either one.

You see, look: a person who is into pornography is devil-controlled. And a person who is devil-controlled is not in his right mind. In Mark chapter 5, there was a man who was demon-possessed. Jesus cast the devil out of him, and they come back and found

him sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind. Before this, he was given to nudity. And his mind was under control of the evil one.

Now, you need to put on every day sanity. What I mean is, you need to have your mind under the blood. You need to have your mind renewed. So, let's just look at all of these things that God wants you to have: integrity, purity, tranquility, certainty, sanity. That's what you put on.

Sometimes in the morning I'll just wake up and take this as a checklist, and I'll say: do I have on the belt of truth? Do I believe truth? Do I live truth? Do I tell truth? And then, I put on the breastplate of righteousness. Is my heart pure? Do I have purity? Then, put on the shoes of peace. Am I at peace? Am I envying something that somebody else has? Is there resentment? Is there bitterness or loneliness that I'm not letting Jesus fill? And then, I take the shield of faith. Is there anything I'm doubting God about? And then, put on the helmet of salvation. And I feel like I used to feel when I dress up to play a game of football—ready to go—ready to go. Don't leave off any piece of the armor in this battle.

Now, if you really think about it, each one of these pieces of armor is really the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus—Jesus is the truth. Jesus is righteousness. Jesus is our faith. Jesus is our salvation. You're just putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Christian Warrior and His Attack**

Now, let's move to the third thing. We've talked about the Christian warrior and his adversary. We've talked about the Christian warrior and his armor. Let's talk about the Christian warrior and his attack. Yes, I said, attack. Now, most of us have said, "Well, Satan, if you'll just leave me alone, I'll leave you alone." But you can't do that. You can't be neutral. You are to be in the battle, and you are to win the war.

#### **A. The Power of His Stance**

Now, there are three things that will help you in this battle. And you're going to face the battle tonight, tomorrow, next week. Three things. First of all is your stance. Look, if you will, in verse 10—he says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." And then, skip down in verse 14: "Stand therefore." Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Stand therefore.

Now, so many times, we're asking God to give us victory over Satan. I want to be very careful here. But stop asking God to give you victory over Satan. You have victory. You say, "Well, Pastor, if I have it, how come I don't have it?" Listen. Satan is defeated. Jesus said, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. God says, "Be strong..."—in verse 10—"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." O God, give me victory. Give me victory. God, help me. God says, "Adrian, I have given you the victory. I have given you authority. I have given you My Word. I have given you My

Truth. Now, stand.” I don’t have to say, “God, help me.” Not when I’m fighting Satan. I can say, “Satan, I stand in the name of Jesus against you. I have authority against you.” You say, “Pastor, that’s awfully arrogant, isn’t it?” No, no, because God has told me that: that I’m strong in the Lord. We need to stop asking God for what we already have, and start using what we have. Do you understand what I’m talking about? I mean, listen. God has given you authority. You can say, “Satan, you and your filth, and your lies, and your attack, and your temptations, No! Stand! Satan hopes you don’t do that. Satan hopes that you’ll go off somewhere again and say, Oh, I need help. I need help. I need help. Friend, stand. I’m not saying not to pray. I’ll talk about prayer in just a moment. You need prayer. But you don’t need to ask God to give you victory over Satan. You have victory, because you have the Victor. Greater is He that that’s in you than he that’s in the world.

### **B. The Power of His Sword**

First of all, there’s the power of your stance. Then, there’s the power of your sword. Look in verse 17: “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Now, when Satan came against Jesus when He was fasting and praying, what did Jesus do? How did Jesus overcome Satan? Well, you say that was easy for Jesus. Big deal. Jesus is God. Jesus did not defeat Satan because Jesus is God. Jesus defeated Satan not as God, but as a man He defeated Satan. I mean, Jesus is my example. How could Jesus be my example, if He overcame Satan by being God. He just pulled rank on me. I’m telling you that the weapons that were available to Jesus when Jesus was being tempted are the same weapons that are available to me: the sword of the Spirit, and the Spirit who handles the sword.

Now, what happened is Satan came to tempt Jesus. He tempted Jesus. Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are. It’s not a sin to be tempted. And, if you have temptations in the sexual way or pornography, it doesn’t mean you are wicked. If you’re a man, it probably means you’re normal. You say, “Well, I just look at all that stuff, Adrian; it doesn’t bother me.” I wouldn’t brag about it, if I were you. It just proves you’re no man, superman, or a liar. No, it will bother you. That’s the way you’re wired. It’s not a sin to be tempted. That’s humanity. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Why? Jesus went into that wilderness, the Bible says, full of the Holy Ghost, anointed with the Holy Spirit. And when the enemy came and tempted Him, He took the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12: “The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword.”

Did you know that Satan hopes you’ll not use this sword. Now, actually, the Bible, when the Bible says, the sword of the Spirit here in Ephesians chapter 6, it is not the word *logos*. It is the word *rhema*. What does that mean? It doesn’t mean the Bible *in*

*toto*. That's not what Jesus used. Jesus used a *rhema*, a word from the Word. You know, sometimes we're superstitious about the Bible. People put their hand on the Bible. They swear on the Bible. Hey, don't tell a lie, whether your hand is on the Bible or not, okay? Oh, I wouldn't swear on the Bible. Yeah, you have. Or, you know, sometimes in a B-grade Hollywood movie, there are vampires, or something like that. They say, go get the Bible: back, back. No, don't be superstitious about the Bible. A *rhema*, that is a word from the Word. When Satan would come with his temptations to Jesus, Jesus pulled out the sword and ran him right through. Thus it is written—take that. Thus it is written—take that. Thus it is written—take that. That's the reason we're going to give you these scriptures to memorize. We're working on those scriptures. Now, what's it going to cost you to memorize a hundred—I had mercy on you, caused you to memorize 50, and then I'll give you 50 more. I want you to learn some Scripture. And when Satan comes, you can say, "Hey Satan, take that—take that." The Word of God.

### C. **The Power of His Supplication**

You see, look. There's the power of your stance. Stand. And, by the way, don't join up with Ghostbusters, Satan-chasers. We're told to stand, not chase the devil. Just stand. You'll do enough business just by standing. There's the power of your stance. There's the power of your sword. And there's the power of your supplication. Now, that's the third thing. Look, if you will, in verse 18 and of this same chapter: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Praying always. You say, "Adrian, I thought you told me not to pray for power over Satan." That's what I told you. But I didn't tell you not to pray. The only way that you can stand, the only way that you can properly use the sword, is to pray, because it's the sword of the Spirit, and if it's the sword of the Spirit, then you pray in the Spirit. What is praying in the Spirit? It is letting the Holy Spirit energize your prayer, direct your prayer—not praying in the flesh. Why do you pray in the Spirit? For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. And the battle is a spiritual battle, so you pray in the Spirit.

If you don't pray, the devil will beat you. You can have all the authority in the world, but if you don't appropriate it through prayer, you're going down. When I told you a little bit ago, I was almost hesitant to say what I had to say about telling you not to ask God to give you authority. I didn't say, Don't pray. It's in prayer that you appropriate what God has given you—not to ask God to somehow defeat Satan. He is defeated. He is stripped, shamed, and subdued. Jesus has given you authority over Satan. And there's the power of your stance—you stand therefore. There is the power, the incredible power of your sword, which is the Word of God. And there is the incredible power of supplication. When you pray, you will be able to overcome Satan in this day of filth.

## **IV. The Christian Warrior and His Allies**

Now, here is the fourth and final thing, and I'll be very brief: I want you to notice the Christian warrior and his allies. Look again in verse 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,"—now, watch this—"and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me." And then, he goes on down to say in verse 24: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

We don't fight alone. I need you to pray for me. People tell me from time to time, Pastor, I'm praying for you. Sometimes people tell me something like this: "I pray for you every day." Many times, the tears will just come to my eyes when someone says that. There are 6 billion people on earth. Some people have never been prayed for one time. If you have anybody praying for you, you're blessed. We need to pray for one another. Husbands need to pray for wives. Wives need to pray for husbands. Parents need to pray for children. Pastors need to pray for their congregation. The congregation needs to pray for the people. Folks, we're in the battle together, and it's a real battle, isn't it? It's a real battle. Let's hold one another up in prayer. Let's be encouraging one another. I don't want us to lose this war.

## **Conclusion**

Do you know what I believe? I'm feeling this—more and more of this. I believe we may be on the verge of one of the greatest spiritual revivals the world has ever seen. Things are happening; there's a quickening. I speak to pastor friends; I say, "How's it going." They say, "I don't understand it, but God's just moving in our church—God's just moving. Things are happening. Souls are getting saved. "We're feeling it here at Bellevue. People ask me, "What's it like at Bellevue?" I say, "I don't know. It's kind of like we have a tailwind—kind of like there's a tailwind. God's just blessing." Listen. Guard your heart. Protect your home. Pray for me. I'll pray for you. Jim, let's stand and sing, "Victory in Jesus."

# The Time of Your Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 30, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:13–18**

*“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,  
redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*

EPHESIANS 5:15–16

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## Introduction

Take God’s Word, please, and turn, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 5. And I want to begin reading in verse 14 in just a moment.

Now, as I have said, we stand on the threshold of a new year. And, if you’re like I am, you make resolutions that go in one year and out the other. We determine we’re going to do this or that, or not do this or that. And then, we look back at the end of the year, and we see, to some degree, that we have failed to keep our resolution. But that does not mean that we should not resolve again, by the grace of God, because I have wonderful, wonderful news for you: the God that we serve is the God of grace, and He’s the God of forgiveness, and He’s the God of beginning again. Don’t forget it. He is the God of beginning again. He’s the God of a new start. He’s the God of the second



chance.

¶ One of the most memorable bowl games took place some years ago. It was the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, and the University of California was playing Georgia Tech. And it was quite a game because both of these schools, at that time, were undefeated. And it was late in the second quarter, and Tech had the ball; and they were pressing hard on the thirty-three-yard-line when a man named Thomason was hit. And the center for the University of California scooped up the ball, spun around, and began to run with it. And the crowd started to cheer. And he took this fumble and headed toward the goal. His eyes were watching—peripheral vision. He's moving to the right, the left. His knees are up high. His legs are spread apart. He's running brilliantly, but with one problem—he's headed toward the wrong goal. He has somehow gotten confused and spun around. He is literally headed for the wrong goal with this scooped-up fumble.

Now, the incredible thing is his own teammates are trying to tackle him, and the opposition is running interference for him. And finally, about on the one-yard line, after running almost sixty-seven yards in the wrong way, Roy Riegels is tackled by Benny Lom—one of his own teammates—on the one-yard line. Can you imagine the shame, the humiliation, as he walks back to the bench? The jeers, the catcalls, the hooting for Roy Riegels. They went into the half, and the coach put his arm on the shoulder of Roy Riegels and spoke to him words of admonition and encouragement. And he came out the second half and played brilliantly. ¶

I tell that story because not only is it one of the great epochs in football history, but it's such a parable of so many of us who, when we think we're doing so good, may be doing well, except for this one thing: we're headed toward the wrong goal. I mean, you're doing fine in your business, and you're doing fine in your health, and you're doing fine in your relationship, but the problem is you've lost sight of the right goal. And it seems that Satan himself is leading interference for you. I want to do the same thing for you today that Benny Lom did for Roy Riegels: I want to tackle you today, if I can. I want to stop you, if I can—God helping me—and to help you to find God's goal for your life, and to live life to its fullest, and to be all that you can be, and to please God all that you can this coming year.

Now look, if you will, here. The Bible says, *“But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time”*—now, if that phrase is not underscored in your Bible, I suggest that you may do so—*“because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:13–18)

Now, in the Bible, there are two words that are translated for *time*. Of course, we see one of His words right here in verse 16: “*redeeming the time.*” (Ephesians 5:16) One of the words for time is the word *chronos*. It’s the word we get *chronology* from. That’s not the word that is used here. *Chronos* just simply means “the passing of time,” like so many hours and so many minutes and so many seconds. And some people call their watches a “chronometer”; that is, it just keeps count of time as it passes—segments of time, *chronos*. But that’s not the word that is used here. The word that is used here is *kairos*, which means “time,” but it means like “seasons of time”; it literally means “opportunity.” Let me show you how that is used in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 10. The Bible says, “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*” (Galatians 6:10) Now, the word that is translated in Galatians 6:10 “opportunity” is the same word that is translated here in chapter 5, verse 16 as “time.” So, when the Bible says, “*Redeeming the time,*” (Ephesians 5:16) here in verse 16, it speaks of the days, the hours, the minutes; but, more than that, it really speaks of the opportunities that we have, because, you see, you need to see time, not just as something that is passing, but you need to see time as an incredible opportunity. And when you’re redeeming time, what you’re really redeeming is opportunity.

So, the Bible says, “*The days are evil,*” (Ephesians 5:16) but we are to be buying up the opportunity. What he is trying to tell us is how to live wise ways for evil days. The days are evil, so, therefore, take advantage of every opportunity that God has given us. And this coming year, my dear friend, is jam-packed with opportunity. And so, I want to talk to you today about the time of your life. If you’ve been going toward the wrong goal or if you’ve been sitting on the sidelines, either one, I want to show you from God’s Word how to take time, and use time, and maximize your time for God’s glory as we face a new year. Now, there are three or four things that I want you to notice with me.

## **I. Time Is a Provided Opportunity**

And, first of all, time is a provided opportunity. Now, what I mean by that is this. Look, if you will, in verse 14: “*Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest.*” (Ephesians 4:14) Now, we need to jolt some people awake. There is a day of opportunity that you dare not let pass by. We need to awaken from our stupor. Some of us have been chloroformed by these evil days, and somehow we need to be jolted awake. This morning, the alarm clock rang at six in our house, and it is the harshest thing. Our regular alarm clock broke, and we have one of these little travel alarms that we’ve been using. And I’m telling you, that thing will scare the daylights into you. It’s terrible. But I would to God that I could use that same kind of a stride of note this morning to cause you to awaken, awaken, awaken! God has provided for you an opportunity. You see, it

is God who is the creator of time. God's great gift to you, number one, is Jesus and, number two, is time—number one is Jesus; number two is time. God has given you time to work, time to serve, time to love, time to laugh, time to labor. But, like any gift, how you use it is really up to you. And we need to see every day—this day and every day—as a gift from God.

Has it ever occurred to you that for you to cease living, God would not have to take your life? All God would have to do is to stop giving you your life. You see what I'm saying? You see, the Bible says in Lamentations chapter 3, verse 22: *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."* (Lamentations 3:22) Every day is a gift from God. Time is something that God gave you today and God will give you tomorrow. It's not something that you own. God is the creator, the possessor, of time. And so, therefore, I am a steward of the time that God has given me. And one day I will have to answer to God for what I did with this day and every day that God has given me. Twenty-four hours in the day, 1,440 minutes in the day, 86,000 seconds in the day—and every one of them is a precious gift from God. I don't know who first wrote these words, but they're meaningful to me. I've heard them since I was a teenager:

*I have only just a minute, only sixty seconds in it;  
forced upon me; can't refuse it; didn't seek it, didn't chose it.  
But it's up to me just how I use it.  
I must suffer if I lose it, give account if I abuse it.  
Just a tiny little minute, but eternity is in it.*

My dear friend, God has given us time. Don't go around saying, "Well, thus and such a person has more time than I have." That's wrong. We all have the same amount of time. Everybody has twenty-four hours in the day. The difference between people is not that some people have more time than other people. The difference in people is how people use the time that God has given them.

## **II. Time Is a Present Opportunity**

So, I want you to see this opportunity—time—as a provided opportunity, something that God has given you and something that God wants you to awaken to. But secondly, I want you to see this time, not only as a provided opportunity, but as a present opportunity—something that is here right now. Notice in verse 15: *"See then that ye walk in circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* (Ephesians 5:15) Now, he speaks here of days: *"This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."* (Psalms 118:24) There are two days that can steal the joy from today; there are two days that can steal the productivity from today: one is yesterday, and the other is tomorrow.

## **A. Paul Had to Forget the Past**

Now, we have a lot of folks who live in yesterday. The Bible warns us about that. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians, chapter 3, beginning in verse 13: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended”*—that is, “I don’t think I have arrived. I don’t think I am already perfect”—*“but this one thing I do”*—now, Paul wasn’t a man of many ambitions. He narrowed everything to one focus—*“forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13–14) He said, “I forget the past.” Let me tell you some of the things that the Apostle Paul therefore had to forget.

### **1. He Had to Forget Past Guilt**

He had to forget past guilt. The Apostle Paul was one who was guilty, along with others, for the stoning of St. Stephen. He said of himself, “I am the chief of sinners,” (1 Timothy 1:15) but he buried that guilt in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. Maybe there’s somebody here today, you’ve done something so terrible, so horrible, your face would turn red if people in this congregation knew what happened. My dear friend, I want to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses you from that, if you’ll confess it. (1 John 1:17) And don’t be haunted by the ghost of guilt. Paul said, *“I...[forget] those things which are behind”* (Philippians 3:13) —past guilt.

### **2. He Had to Forget Past Glory**

Past glory—I mean, not only was this man guilty as a sinner, but as a saint he was the greatest Christian, I suppose, who ever lived. He was the greatest missionary, the greatest church planter. But Paul didn’t sit around and rest on his laurels.

### **3. He Had to Forget Past Grief**

Past grief—he suffered as few men suffer. You read the account of Paul’s suffering, but he just said, *“[That’s] our light affliction.”* (2 Corinthians 4:17) He said, *“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) He said, “I forget that.” (Philippians 3:13)

### **4. He Had to Forget Past Grudges**

And past grudges. I mean, there were many people who did Paul wrong. Paul was abused, lied on, mistreated, cheated, and overlooked. But Paul refused to feed a fever and nurse a grudge. And Paul said, “I take my past guilt, I take my past glory, I take my past grief, I take my past grudges, and I forget those things which are behind.” (Philippians 3:13) Now, I want to suggest that as we face a new year, that you do exactly the same thing—that you just bundle all of those things up and you just forget them. Paul said, *“I...[forget] those things which are behind.”* (Philippians 3:13)

## B. Paul Had to Not Worry about Tomorrow

One thing that can take the joy out of today is yesterday, as you carry along the load from yesterday. Something else that can take the joy out of today is tomorrow. You know, there was a psychologist whose name was William Marston, and he surveyed three thousand people and asked them what they were living for. And out of that survey of three thousand persons, an incredible thing: he found that ninety-four percent of the three thousand people that he surveyed were enduring today in order to get to tomorrow—ninety-four percent of them. Today was not the day that they were living. They were only anticipating tomorrow; they were waiting for tomorrow. Well, the problem with that, my dear friend, is that tomorrow never comes.

We're always looking forward to what's going to happen. We want friends; and so, we look forward to having friends, and when we get friends, we weep when we lose friends. But many times we fail to enjoy the friends while we have them. Women are strange creatures, aren't they? They look forward twenty years to getting married and having children, and after the children are grown and out of the house they spend twenty years looking back at the time when they used to have the children; but they can't stand them for the twenty years they have them. Friend, listen, enjoy—enjoy—what God has given you right now.

Some people are waiting for tomorrow; some people are worrying about tomorrow. Let me give you some advice—not advice, more than advice—oh, wonderful truth from the lips of the very Son of God. Matthew chapter 6, verse 34: Jesus said, *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself”*—and then, Jesus said something very interesting. He said—*“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) Don't worry about tomorrow. *“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) Now, think with me: What did He mean by that? *“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) That is, that God, in the crucible of His wisdom and in the ecology of His grace, has ordered some trouble for you today and every day of your life. The Bible calls it “evil.” It doesn't mean sin. It's like an evil smell. It means “something bad.” All of us have difficulties; we all need difficulties. We've been blessed with difficulties. God gives us enough difficulties to cause us to come to Him.

The worst thing that could happen to us would be not to have any difficulties: we'd never know our need of the Lord. Isn't that right? So God, every day, says, “I'm going to give you sufficient evil, sufficient difficulty.” But, you see, God gives us enough difficulty to bring us to Him, but then, God gives us enough grace to meet those difficulties every day. Don't worry about tomorrow. *“Sufficient unto the day”*—sufficient what? Sufficient grace for what? For the evil—*“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* (Matthew 6:34) So, there's that perfect balance. God gives you a certain amount of difficulty today, and

God gives you a certain amount of grace today. God gives you enough difficulty to draw you to Him, and then God gives you enough grace to live this day as you ought.

Now, what happens when you worry? Well, when you worry, you reach out into tomorrow and you take tomorrow's difficulty and bring it into today. Well, God didn't give you grace for tomorrow's difficulty. *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* (Matthew 6:34) And so, God says in His Word, *"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."* (Deuteronomy 33:25) Deuteronomy chapter 33 and verse 25: *"As [your] days [are], so shall [your] strength be."* (Deuteronomy 33:25)

Well, what happens is this: when you reach into tomorrow and you bring tomorrow's troubles, real or imaginary, and you cram them into today, you overload the circuit; you upset God's divine ecology. You see, *worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the strength out of today.* And then, when you meet tomorrow, you meet tomorrow out of breath because you're already overloaded from today and you're already run down when you meet tomorrow. Worry, therefore, does not make us ready for the future; it really makes us unready. And we've been fighting tomorrow's battles today, and, therefore, we meet tomorrow out of breath. Somebody put it well this way when they said, "Worry pulls tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine." And so true that is.

You see, listen, time is a provided opportunity. Time is a present opportunity. *Yesterday—that's just a canceled check. Tomorrow—that's just a promissory note. Today is all of the cash that you have. You'd better learn how to spend it wisely.* Thousands of years ago, a wise man said this: "Look well to this one day, for it and it alone is life." Are you listening? "Yesterday is only a dream, and tomorrow is but a vision, yet each day lived well makes yesterday a dream of happiness and tomorrow a vision of hope." That's great hope! Listen: Yesterday is but a dream. Tomorrow is but a vision. Life is today. And the Bible says in verse 15: *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time."* (Ephesians 5:15)

### **III. Time Is a Precious Opportunity**

Now, that brings me to a third thing I want to say: not only is time a provided opportunity, and not only is time a present opportunity, but oh, my dear friend, it is a precious, precious, precious opportunity. Look again. He says here that we are to redeem the opportunity. *Redeeming*—do you see it? *"Redeeming the time."* (Ephesians 5:15) What do you do when you redeem something? You pay for it. I mean, dear friend, there is something you must give in exchange if you would live up to the opportunities that God has given you. You see, you need to see how valuable time is. To waste time is to waste life because time is the stuff that life is made out of. *A person who is killing time is not killing time; he is killing himself. He's committing suicide by degrees.* A

murder, in the true sense, doesn't take someone's life. That person is going to die anyway. What he takes is that person's time. You understand what I am saying? He just causes that person to die sooner. You see, time is life—time is life. How precious it is. When I give you my time, when you give me your time, you're giving me a piece of yourself. When I give you time, I give you something that even heaven can't give. In heaven, time makes no difference. You see, time is so valuable; time is so important, and, therefore, we need to redeem the time.

Do you know what wisdom is? Wisdom is the art of spending time wisely. Or, the art of living is spending time wisely. Put this verse down—Psalms 90 and verse 12: “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*” (Psalms 90:12)

All right, listen. Let me tell you how to redeem the time. All right, we're talking about it being a precious time and a precious opportunity. Let me give you four principles as to how to take any day—and by the way, folks, if I've ever preached a sermon to myself, I'm doing it this morning. When that finger points out at you, there are three pointing right back at me this morning. And I am listening to what I've said, and I've tried to run this through the grist of my own experience before I try to unload it on you. And I'm certainly not standing up here as a man who has achieved; I'm standing up here as a struggling pilgrim just like you, but giving you some things that I know that I know that I know are true from the Word of God. All right, let me show you how to redeem the time. I'm saying it's a precious opportunity.

### **A. The Prayer Principle**

Principle number one is what I want to call “the prayer principle.” How important that you let prayer be the key that unlocks the door of the morning, that you begin your day with prayer. As the poet said, “Lean your arms upon the windowsill of heaven and gaze at the face of God.” As you greet the day, begin the day with prayer. Spend enough time every day, in the morning, to get God's will for your life. Prayer must be in the morning. You see, it's not a waste of time to wait on God any more than a woodchopper is wasting time when he sharpens his ax.

I've said this before from this pulpit, and I honestly believe it: *there's enough time in every day to do everything that God wants you to do and to do it gracefully.* It's an insult to God to say you don't have enough time. If you don't have enough time, you're doing something God did not intend for you to do—either something that you've imposed upon yourself or you've allowed others to impose upon you. So, what you must do in prayer every morning—the principle of prayer—is to get quiet before the Lord and let God speak to your heart.

## B. The Priority Principle

Now, after the prayer principle there comes the priority principle. I mean, after God speaks to you, it's very obvious that you've got some priorities. You see, life would be simple if life were a choice between good and bad. Very frankly, most of the choices that I have to make are not choices between good and bad; they are choices between good and best. Isn't that true? I mean, I don't have time to read good books, for I haven't read the best ones yet. I need to find out what God wants me to do. Most of the time, management books tell you how to do more things. How you can play and work, and how you can read, and how you can do all of those things are fine; they all have their place. But, you see, my dear friend, what you do is far more important than how you do it—I mean, to get your priorities correct.

Jesus, who lived only to the age of thirty-three in His humanity here on earth, said, when He bowed His head, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) And the Lord Jesus said to the Father, *"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."* (John 17:4) Now, notice it was the work that God gave Him to do. Now, there were many villages wanting Jesus to come and teach. There were many places that wanted Jesus to heal, and so forth. But Jesus didn't do everything; Jesus didn't go everywhere. Sometimes when the crowds were clamoring after Jesus He just got alone. But He could say at the end of His ministry, *"I have finished the work...thou gavest me to do."* (John 17:4)

You go to our bookstore, some bookstore, and buy the little book by Charles Hummel called *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. It's a great little book: *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Do you know what our problems are, dear friend? We're constantly having a battle between the important and the urgent. Now, what is more important—the plumbing in your house or your quiet time with God? "Well," you say, "my quiet time with God." What's more urgent—your quiet time or your toilet that's overflowing? You say, "That's more urgent; I've got to get that fixed." Your wife calls you and says, "Adrian, no matter what you're doing, you go in there. The thing is overflowing." Now that, my dear friend, is something that is urgent. And it is the urgent, so many times, that keeps us from the important. Isn't that true? I mean, in all of life, we have these things—that somebody calls and you've just got to do this; you've just got to do that. It takes such incredible willpower, such an incredible prioritizing of priorities, to see the difference between the urgent and the important. Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important things.

## C. The Promptness Principle

Third principle: Not only the prayer principle, not only the priority principle, but there is the promptness principle. Boy, am I speaking to me at this time! This deals with the sin of procrastination. The Bible says in James chapter 4 and verse 17: *"Therefore to him*



*that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*” (James 4:17) Sin is not just merely doing wrong; it is failing to do what you ought to do. Did you know that procrastination and disobedience are different shades of the same sin? Procrastination and disobedience are different kinds of the same sin. In my life, what I want to do is to cultivate the habit of instant obedience.

Now, where most of us fail is in this area of willpower. Isn't that correct? I heard a good definition of willpower; I copied it down, and I want you to listen to it: “When you have a job to do, begin this very hour. You supply the will; God supplies the power.” Isn't that great? “When you have a job to do, begin this very hour. You supply the will; God supplies the power.” And, my friend, that is willpower. When there is something you know you ought to do, do it—and do it now.

#### **D. The Power Principle**

There's the promptness principle, and, last of all, there's the power principle. Most of us think, “Oh boy, I'd just have it made if I did exactly what God wants me to do.” I've already talked to you about this willpower, which is really God's power. Listen. In verse 16, he says, “[Redeem] the time” (Ephesians 5:16)—that's the promptness principle. In verse 17, he says, “Be...not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17)—that's the prayer principle. Look in verse 18: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)—that's the power principle. You see, the power principle is to do God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit. Most of us don't need to learn to work harder. We need to work with more power. We need to learn to work with more effectiveness.

### **IV. Time Is a Passing Opportunity**

Now, let me move on to the final thing I want to say: not only is time a provided opportunity, and not only is it a present opportunity, and not only is it a precious opportunity, but, my dear friend—listen to me, and listen carefully—it is a passing opportunity. “*The days are evil.*” (Ephesians 5:16) Time is passing away. This day is passing. I must give an account for this day. I must give an account one day for this sermon that I have preached. Time is such a strange commodity. You can't save it. You can't borrow it. You can't loan it. You can't leave it. You can't take it. You can't give it. All you can do is use it or lose it.

Time can't be stopped. In a football game, you can call “timeout.” But you can't call “timeout” in life. Time can't be stored. You can put your money in the bank, but you can't put your time in the bank. Time can't be stretched. You can add another cup of water to the soup, but there's no way that you can stretch time. Time can't be shared. I can give you my books. I can give you my money. I can give you my automobile. But I can't give

you my time. I can give you a part of my time. But when I give you my time in that sense, I've not added anything to your time. So, in that sense, time can't even be shared. Someone wrote these words:

*When as a child, I laughed and wept, Time crept;  
When as a youth, I dreamed and talked, Time walked;  
When I became a full-grown man, Time ran;  
When older still I daily grew, Time flew;  
Soon I shall find in traveling on, Time gone.*

My dear friend, time is a passing opportunity. What do you intend to do? Do you intend to be a soul winner? When? Do you intend to be a good steward? When? Do you intend to make reconciliation with that estranged friend? When? Do you intend to call your mamma? When? Do you intend to write a letter to your daddy and tell him how much you love him and thank God for the sacrifices that he's made for you all these years? When are you going to do it? When are you going to do it? Time cannot be stopped. It cannot be stored. It cannot be saved. It cannot be shared. We are to "[redeem] the time, [for] the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16)

## **Conclusion**

It was Horace Mann who wrote these words: he said, "Lost—somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours studded with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered, for they are lost forever." Oh, my dear friend, if you could only see the preciousness of just one day. I've come to the end of my message, but listen to me now. I'm just going to wrap it up and lay it in your lap. And as I talk to you, I'm talking to me, on the threshold of a new year. Listen. Don't gather your books; just listen.

I would to God that I could get you and your pastor to live in the eternal now. Cut yourself loose from yesterday. Last year, with its heartaches and its failures, is gone. Forget those things which are behind. Confess them to the Lord, and bury them in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Tomorrow is a time nowhere but on the fool's calendar. Stop saying, "If I had the time..." You do have the time; use it. And if you've not accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, the Bible says, "*Behold, now is the day of salvation.*" (2 Corinthians 6:2) Now is the time to be saved. †

# The Hope for a Weary World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 17, 1974

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:17–18

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”*

EPHESIANS 5:18

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## Introduction

All right, turn, please, to the fifth chapter of Ephesians, if you will. I want to speak today on “The Hope for a Weary World.” Ephesians chapter 5—some Scripture that we’re familiar with, and I trust that we are not too familiar with, because if we are, we’ll lose the import. In Ephesians chapter 5, verse 17, the Bible says, *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”* (Ephesians 5:17)

We’re living in perilous times, and many are the problems that confront us. We are facing right now the threatening clouds of war in the Middle East that could erupt into a third world war. We are facing a world in which morals are descending at an alarming and increasing rate. We are facing a school system in America that is infiltrated and injected with atheism. And, by the way, not everything that is happening in the coal

country of Appalachia and West Virginia—as the newspaper people call them, “fundamentalist ministers”—is the fault of narrow-minded, bigoted people who don’t know their right hand from their left. And the high muckety-mucks and intelligentsia of this world would make it look like we are bumpkins, or are foolish, or stupid, if we do not want our children subjected to profanity and immorality and all of this in their regular classroom lesson. But school systems in many areas, and certainly not every area, are infected with liberalism and atheism and immorality. And pulpits are filled in many areas with contaminated men who do not believe any longer the miraculous in the Scripture. Church rolls are filled with men and women who have never repented of their sin. And if you’ll look out in a world in need, you will find out that the play palaces and the temples of sin are crowded with people, and many churches cannot even muster a corporal’s guard on Sunday night. Church rolls are padded, but pews are empty. We see a world that’s being baptized in tears, and yet very few souls are being baptized in water. And the sad part of it is this: that *while the world has forgotten to blush, the church has forgotten to weep.*

## **I. What Is the Answer?**

Now, what is the answer? What can be done about threatening war? What can be done about descending morals? What can be done about corruption in education, and corruption in politics, and corruption in religion? What can be done about the indifference of people? What will it take to turn our city around? What will it take to turn our nation around? What will it take to bless our world? I am convinced, as I’m standing here, we’re facing one of three things: revival, or ruin, or the return of Jesus; but one of those three things, one of those three—revival, ruin, or return—one of those three—nothing else but one of those three.

Now I pray God it will be a spiritual revival, or I pray God that it will be the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if it is a spiritual revival, how will this spiritual revival come about? Well, notice again in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 17: “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*” (Ephesians 5:17) And what is the will of the Lord? Read verse 18: “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18) The will of the Lord is, ladies and gentlemen, that the church of the living God be filled with the Spirit of the living God. “*Be filled with the Spirit*”: this alone is the answer.

### **A. Education Is Not the Answer**

People have tried everything. Some denominations believe that the answer is intellectual, and so they spend millions of dollars on teaching programs, and people go to class after class with their heads growing full and their hearts remaining empty. Do you know what Mahatma Gandhi’s son said? He said, “In India, the missionaries taught

our people how to read, and the Communists are now giving them the material to read.” Education is not the answer. Now I believe in education, but it is not the answer.

### **B. Activism Is Not the Answer**

And not only is there the answer of the so-called intellectual, there’s also the answer of the activist. The activist among us would say, “Well, we’d better all get busy. We’d better work harder: Work! Work! Work!” Somebody has said, “If Baptists had a patron saint, he’d be Saint Vitus.” We’re always working, working, doing this thing, doing that. You know, “Get busy; try harder. A busy Christian is a happy Christian, so get at it.” And that’s what some people feel, and so they work and they work and they work, and yet they do not find the answer. You might as well tell a sick man to get up off of his bed and do the work of a well man as to tell the church of the living God what she needs to do is to get busy. The church is sick, and there’s something that must come before activity. The answer is not intellectual. The answer is not the answer that the activist would give us.

### **C. Emotionalism Is Not the Answer**

And then, there’s the emotionalist. He says, “Well, I have the answer”—the emotionalist. And he says that we need to get everybody all stirred up, and so with rhythm, music, cheerleader-type enthusiasm, crocodile tears, and all of these kind of things we try to tell people that if you can just get that certain feeling, then everything will be fine. And so a man gets himself psyched up until he has a certain emotional feeling, and he goes home and he loses the enthusiasm of the moment. He loses that emotional feeling, and all he has is the memory of an emotion. And his latter state is worse than his first, because now he is depressed. He says, “I had it, but I lost it.”

Now, there’s nothing wrong with activity. There’s nothing wrong with study. There’s nothing wrong with emotion. Brother, I tell you, I get so excited I don’t know what to do. Last night in my prayer, I just simply wept before the Lord, the joy of knowing the Lord. Sometimes when I pray, I can’t kneel. I have to stand up and walk. I get so excited. And I’m excited today. But, friend, I’d hate to depend upon emotion. I really would. But there are those who say that the answer is emotional. No, that’s not the answer.

### **D. Phariseeism Is Not the Answer**

And then, there are the answers that are given by what I call the Pharisees. You say, “Well, the church is not separated enough, and what we need to do is to quit doing this, and quit doing that, and quit doing the other.” God knows there are some things we ought to quit, but, you see, the Pharisee has a negative religion. His religion lies in giving up things. And so he stops doing this, and he stops doing that, and he stops doing this. And while he prunes his limbs, he strengthens his root, and he becomes a

bitter, hard Pharisee.

### **E. A Spirit-filled Church Is the Answer**

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the answer is not in activity. The answer is not in emotionalism. The answer is not in Phariseeism. The answer is not in education. There is only one answer for a world that's in the need that our world is in—and that is for a Spirit-filled church. *“Be...understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:17–18)

## **II. What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit?**

Now, having said that, let me say that there are some misconceptions about what a Spirit-filled church is. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

### **A. Continuous Control by the Spirit**

May I say that to begin with, it implies continuous control by the Holy Spirit—continuous control. The emphasis is on the word *be* filled. *Be* filled, not *get* filled. The Bible doesn't say, *“Get filled with the Spirit.”* The Bible says, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18) You say, “Well, you're making an awful emphasis upon a little two-letter word: *be*.” Well, it's a very important word, because that word implies a continuous control by the Holy Spirit. *“Be filled.”*

What is the most important question: *“Were you married?”* or, *“Are you married?”* You see, the fact that you *got* married doesn't necessarily mean that you *are* married. The fact that you *were* filled with the Spirit doesn't necessarily mean that you *are* filled with the Spirit. And God's Word doesn't necessarily say, *“Get filled with the Spirit,”* but God's Word says, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* You see, *being* filled with the Spirit is not a crisis experience. There is a time when you're not filled with the Spirit, and you do *get* filled with the Spirit, but God's emphasis is not on *getting* filled, but upon the day-by-day experience of *being* filled. And yesterday's experience is no good for me today. I must *be* filled with the Spirit today.

Oswald Sanders said this: “There is no such thing”—and I'm quoting—“as a once-for-all fullness. We may, and should, be filled with the Spirit again and again. The experience of the disciples so soon after Pentecost is deeply significant.”

And I want you to read now. Just take your Bibles, keep one hand there in Ephesians 5 and turn to Acts chapter 2, and I want you to see how people were filled with the Spirit again and again. Look in Acts chapter 2 and verse 4. In Acts chapter 2 and verse 4, we read: *“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* (Acts 2:4) And of course you know that on that day Simon Peter was present. Now I want you to notice in Acts chapter 4 and verse 8: *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers*

*of the people, and elders of Israel...*—now, remember here Peter was filled in Acts chapter 2, and now we read in Acts chapter 4 where Peter is filled again with the Holy Spirit. And that is what the Bible means: not Peter having *been* filled with the Holy Spirit, but Peter *being* filled with the Holy Spirit—“*said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel...*” (Acts 4:8) Here Peter is filled, again, with the Holy Spirit. Then, look in Acts chapter 4 and verse 31: “*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*” (Acts 4:31)

Now, the point I’m trying to make is this: that Peter was present on all of these occasions, and here’s a man who *was* filled, who is *being* filled, who is *being* filled, who is *being* filled. It’s not just simply a matter of saying, “Whoopee! I had the experience! I’ve been filled with the Spirit!” But the Bible implies a continual control by the Holy Spirit: not *get* filled, but *be* filled. Are you this very moment filled with the Holy Spirit? I don’t care one whit about your experience in the past. I want to know right now, this very moment, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? If there was ever a time in your life when you were closer to God than you are at this moment, you, sir, are a backslider. “*Be filled.*” We are to keep a moment-by-moment account.

Finney, one of the greatest evangelists who ever lived, a man who had such spiritual power that he could walk into a factory and factory workers would fall under conviction of sin, Charles Grandison Finney, as a young man, filled with the Holy Spirit, was walking down the street when a prostitute approached him and looked him in the face about to make that proposition to him—and when she looked into the face of that holy man, she bowed her head and wept under conviction of sin. Charles Grandison Finney had more of the power of God upon him than most any man that’s ever lived, but Finney, in his autobiography, said that often he would feel the absence of the Lord’s power and withdraw himself for a day of fasting and prayer.

To be filled with the Spirit means to be continually, moment-by-moment, day-by-day-by-day, being filled with the Spirit. How does a man get drunk? He drinks. How does he stay drunk? He keeps drinking. “Be not drunk with wine, but be ye being filled,” is literally what the Greek says. Be ye being filled, day-by-day, moment-by-moment, letting God’s Holy Spirit fill you.

## **B. Subjection to the Spirit**

Now let me say, therefore, the second thing that it means is not only continuous control by the Spirit, but it means subjection to the Spirit. Now, here’s another erroneous idea that some people have. Some people have the idea that being filled with the Spirit is like being filled with a substance—maybe like being filled with electric power, or being filled with intelligence, or being filled with enthusiasm. And that’s the idea they have. They

have the idea that it's like a vessel being filled with water. God's Holy Spirit is poured into the vessel and the vessel is filled up. That's not quite the idea in the Bible. You see, the Holy Spirit is not a substance; the Holy Spirit is a person. And when the Bible uses the term *being filled with the Spirit*, the Bible is speaking in the terminology of our bodies being temples and the Holy Spirit as a person possessing every room and the key to every closet. And so it means subjection to the Spirit.

You see, some people don't understand this. They talk about getting the Holy Spirit, and they want more of the Holy Spirit. The problem, friend, is not for you to get more of the Holy Spirit, for the Bible says God doesn't give His Spirit by measure. (John 3:34) You have all the Holy Spirit you're ever going to get. You can't have a part of the Holy Spirit. You see, He doesn't say, "I'll give you a third of the Holy Spirit." He doesn't give the Spirit by measure. It's not getting more of the Spirit; it is letting the Holy Spirit have full sway in you. It is turning everything over to the Holy Spirit.

You see, when we get saved, we have Him in us; but when we're filled, He has us—all of us. When a man gets saved, the Holy Spirit comes in to abide, and if you don't have the Holy Spirit within you, you're not even saved. For the Bible says in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" (Romans 8:9) After that, we are saved; we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. And God sends forth His Spirit into our hearts, crying, "Abba Father." (Romans 8:15) That's one way we know we're saved: because of the witness of the Spirit within us.

*But while the Holy Spirit comes to abide in every person, He does not preside in every person. And while every person has Him as resident, not everyone has Him as president.* But the idea is to let Him be president, to let Him take over completely. It's not like filling a bottle with a substance, but it is more like turning the keys of a house over to a person. That's what the Bible means when it says, "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) It's talking about subjection to the Spirit, and very much in the way that a person is subjected to the evil spirit of alcohol.

Did you know that alcohol is the devil in liquid form? And alcohol, when a man drinks, it possesses him. You've seen people under the influence of wine, drunk with wine. And so God says, by way of comparison, and by way of illustration, and by way of contrast, "*Be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.*" That is, being drunk with wine is the devil's substitute and the devil's corruption of what being filled with the Spirit is positively. But also by way of analogy and illustration: what wine does in a bad way, being filled with the Holy Spirit will do, contrariwise, in a good way. When a man is drunk with wine, he cares not for his safety. When a man is drunk with wine, he cares not for his enjoyments, his benefits, his family, or his obligations. All of these things cannot keep him from obeying the wine. He just can't help it: he is controlled by that



wine.

I heard of a man who got up one time and said, “I don’t drink liquor, but it’s not because of religious convictions that I don’t drink liquor.” He said, “When I was a little boy, I saw an old drunk trying to get in his car, and he had one leg outside the car and he was slamming the door on his leg, and he couldn’t understand why he couldn’t get the door shut.” And that man said, “As a little boy, I made up my mind I’d never drink anything to make a man shut the car on his leg and not know the difference.” You see, when a man is drunk with wine, he is in subjection to that wine. The wine is controlling him.

You probably heard the story about the drunk who jumped out of a ten-story building, and somebody came along—there was another drunk in the room—and said, “Why did he jump out of the window?” He said, “Well, he said he was going to fly around the building.” He said, “Well, why didn’t you stop him?” He said, “Well, I thought he could do it.” Now, that’s being in subjection to wine, just being controlled by a substance.

Now we are to be in subjection to the Spirit. Do you know what’s wrong with most of us? We want the Holy Spirit to be in subjection to us. And that’s the reason that ninety-nine percent of Christians are not serious. Ninety-nine percent of Christians, if you’d ask them, “Do you want to be filled with the Spirit?” they’d say, “Yes.” But do you know what they have in mind? “Oh, I’m going to get a new power I can use.” And that’s exactly why they’re not filled with the Spirit. They want to bring the Holy Spirit in subjection to them. And all of us would like more power, and we get the idea, “If we could be filled with the Spirit, look how powerful we would be.”

### **1. Proud Self**

And so proud self wants the Spirit for his glory. He wants to be superior to the lesser brethren. And he wants everybody to say, “There goes a Spirit-filled man.” And God’s Spirit is not going to fill him. He wants the Spirit to be in subjection to him.

### **2. Lazy Self**

And lazy self thinks, “Boy, you know, if I could get filled with the Spirit, I wouldn’t have to fight any more battles; I could just coast on into glory.” Well, friend, if you think that, you don’t understand what the Spirit-filled life is. When the Israelites came out of Egypt and through the wilderness and into Canaan, it is a picture of an unsaved man coming out of the world of sin, through the wilderness of carnality, and into the blessings of the deeper Spirit-filled life. Egypt is a picture of the world, the wilderness is a picture of the carnal Christian, and Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life.

And I want to tell you it was not until those Israelites got into Canaan that they really got into warfare. Did you know that? In the wilderness, they just had a few skirmishes. And the carnal Christian doesn’t have many battles with the devil. It’s the Spirit-filled

Christian that has battles with the devil. But it was after Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost at His baptism that the Bible says that He met Satan head on. Don't you realize that? *When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil opens the doors of hell to blast us.* And when the Israelites got into Canaan, it was in Canaan that the Israelites came into conflict with the Canaanite demon-worshippers.

### 3. Ambitious Self

And so I'm saying that a lot of folks would say, "Well, I'd like to be filled with the Spirit." Proud self wants to be filled with the Spirit so he can lord it over his lesser brethren. Lazy self wants to be filled with the Spirit so he thinks he'll get out of conflict. Brother, if that's what you're wanting—if you're looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve God—no wonder you're not filled with the Spirit. And then, I'll tell you, old ambitious self would like to be filled with the Spirit. Did you know there are some evangelists and some preachers who would like to be filled with the Spirit so they'll be bigger evangelists and bigger preachers? That was the problem with old Simon the Sorcerer. Simon the Sorcerer, when he saw that through the apostles' laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was given, he said, "Give me this gift also. I'll pay you." (Acts 8:19) The apostles said, "Your money perish with you. You thought that the gift of God could be bought with money. If you think that, you can use the gift of God to further your ambitions." (Acts 8:20) But there are people who think that somehow when they are filled with the Holy Spirit they're going to get their hands on a power they can use. Friend, it is not you having the Spirit; it is the Spirit having you. And there's a big difference—a big difference.

So to be filled with the Spirit means a continual control by the Spirit: "*Be ye being filled.*" (Ephesians 5:18) And it means a subjection to the Spirit. Just as a man who is drunk is subjected to wine and controlled by wine, a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit does not use the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit uses him to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's not always going to elevate you up on a pedestal.

Some of us would like to be filled with the Spirit so on the Day of Pentecost, like Peter was, we could have three thousand souls—about as many people as are in this auditorium today. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see this many people saved in one service? That's what happened on the Day of Pentecost. Well, Peter was Spirit-filled: he got three thousand souls. Stephen was Spirit-filled: he got three thousand stones. He was stoned to death. Spirit-filled: it doesn't always mean that you're going to be in the place of honor, and the place of prestige, and so forth. Of course, you'll be honored by the Lord Jesus. You know, the Bible says that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. (Acts 2:33) But when Stephen looked up, he said, "I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:55–56) I believe that Jesus stood up to say, "Welcome

home, Stephen.” I believe He stood for a martyr like that. And, brother, I’d rather have honor with Jesus than honor with men.

### C. Possession by a Person

But let me say also that to be filled with the Spirit not only means that there must be a continuous control by the Spirit, and not only therefore must there be subjection to the Spirit, but to be filled with the Spirit therefore means to be possessed by a person.

Notice what the Bible says, and it’s so important that you understand: *“Be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18)

Now, notice: Not be filled *by* the Spirit, but be filled *with* the Spirit. Don’t get the idea that the Spirit is standing beside you filling you with love, filling you with power, filling you with peace, filling you with understanding, filling you with wisdom, or filling you with all you need. The emphasis is not on *getting* filled by the Spirit, but on *being* filled with the Spirit. Now, that’s so important that you understand that. It is not an influence, a force, or a power, but rather another person taking control of us. What you need is not power, peace, or joy, but Him. The Holy Spirit is a person.

I had some gentlemen come to my door here two weeks ago. They wanted to talk religion. I said, “Come in.” They sat down and I said, “Now I want to tell you right away that I’m saved and happy in Jesus, and I want to tell you I’m so happy in Jesus I can hardly stand it. I want to tell you furthermore, I know what you believe. And I want to tell you furthermore, I don’t believe it. And I want to tell you a few things you believe that I don’t believe, among many. One of them is you don’t believe the Holy Spirit is a person. You think that the doctrine of the Trinity is a pagan myth. But,” I said, “I believe that the Holy Spirit is not an *it*, not a thing, but a person.” They said, “Well, we don’t believe that’s biblical.” And I said, “Well, let me lay some Scripture on you.” And so I showed them some Scripture, and I want you to see these Scriptures.

Now, look, for example, in John chapter 14. Jesus Christ is talking here about the Holy Spirit who is going to come into the world, and He says in John chapter 14, verses 16 and 17, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;”—*who is the *he* referring to? Not Jesus, and not the Father, but the Comforter—*“even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not,”*—not seeth *it* not, but *“seeth him not”*—*“neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* (John 14:16–17)

Now, Jesus is interchanging the Holy Spirit with Himself right now, because He says, *“He dwelleth with you,”*—and He’s referring to Himself—*“and shall be in you.”* How do you know Jesus is referring to Himself? Verse 18 says, *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”* (John 14:18) So if you want a good definition of the Holy Spirit, it is Jesus in the Christian—Jesus in the Christian. *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will*

*come to you.*” The Holy Spirit is a person, not an influence, not a thing.

You see, the Bible teaches that the unpardonable sin is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Now as I asked these men, I want to ask you a question: How could I blaspheme a thing? How could I blaspheme a force, or a microphone, or an automobile, or an attribute? But I can blaspheme divinity. And only divinity can be blasphemed. And the unpardonable sin is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. If so, blaspheming an influence would be a greater sin than blaspheming God Himself—if the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost is the unpardonable sin, and the blasphemy of the Son is not. It’s ridiculous. But, you see, the Holy Spirit has all of the attributes of a person.

### **1. The Holy Spirit Has a Mind**

Now I just want to show you this, because it’s such an important point. Look in Romans 8 for a moment—Romans 8, verse 27. Maybe there are some who are listening who have been confused by this terrible cult. Romans chapter 8 and verse 27: *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit...”*—now, one of the marks of personality is intelligence—*“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”* (Romans 8:27)

Now, the Holy Spirit has intelligence. He is a person with intelligence. He has a mind. And influence doesn’t have a mind, but a person has a mind. There is the mind of the Spirit. This is the reason that when Simon Peter and the other apostle were there, and the magistrates came up and talked to them and commanded them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, they spoke again. And the Bible says, *“When they saw...they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”* (Acts 4:13) They spoke like Jesus spoke, and they said, “Never a man spoke like this man. Where did these ignorant fishermen get that knowledge?” The Holy Spirit gave it to them. He has a mind.

### **2. The Holy Spirit Has Emotions**

And not only does He have a mind; He has emotions. Look in Romans chapter 15 and verse 30, and you’ll read here where the Bible speaks of the love of the Spirit: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”*—the love of the Spirit. (Romans 15:30)

Then, look in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30, where the Bible speaks of grieving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be grieved. Now I can’t grieve an influence. I can only grieve a person. And in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30, the Bible says, *“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”* (Ephesians 4:30) And so, the Holy Spirit has emotion. He loves, and He can be grieved. He can be hurt.

### 3. The Holy Spirit Has a Will

The Holy Spirit has a will. Look in Acts 13 and verse 2—and, by the way, these are Scriptures that I shared with these men: “*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*” (Acts 13:2) And then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every man “*severally as he will.*” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

Now, you think about those three attributes that I’ve discussed with you—mind, emotion, and will—that’s what makes a personality: mind, emotion, and will—not a body. The Holy Spirit doesn’t have a body. God the Father doesn’t have a body. But God the Father is mind, emotion, and will. This is a person. And so what am I trying to say? I am simply saying that when the Bible says we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that is not that we’re to be filled *by* the Holy Spirit, but *with* the Holy Spirit. As a person, the Holy Spirit comes into me.

Now, what difference does it make whether I’m filled *by* the Spirit or *with* the Spirit? Now, if I’m filled *by* the Spirit, and the Spirit gives me love, and what I need is patience, then I’m lacking; or He gives me patience, and what I need is wisdom, then I’m lacking. But, friend, if I’m filled with a person, and that person is complete in Himself, then I’ve got everything I need, right? It’s so much better to be filled with a person. And so, the Holy Spirit is in me, and the Bible says in Him I’m complete. (Colossians 2:10) I don’t need anything. You say, “What a braggart!” No, you’ve got me wrong. What I’m trying to say is there is within me, when I am filled with the Spirit of God, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus, and Jesus dwells in me through His Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

And so I say that the need of Bellevue Baptist Church is to understand what the will of the Lord is, and it is to be filled with the Spirit—not *get* filled, *be* filled; not have Him, let Him have you; not get a substance, but let a person come in, move you off the throne, and take over. And, friend, when that happens, something glorious is going to follow in its train. You know, Brother Elmer Bailey, when I look at this place, and I think about those who watch on television, and I think, “O my God, my God, my God, what would happen if they all were Spirit-filled?” What would happen? “Like a mighty army moves the Church of God” God the Holy Spirit upon the throne of every man’s heart, upon every man’s life, directing, controlling, and supplying all, that Jesus might get the glory.

# How to Have a Spirit-Filled Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 5, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:18**

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”*

EPHESIANS 5:18

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 5 and a very familiar verse that we're going to look at in a moment, verse 18—Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18. Now, before we get into the passage, I want you to use your imagination. I'm going to give what may seem to you a ridiculous and silly episode.

¶ But I want you to imagine a man who buys an automobile. He's never owned an automobile before, and he doesn't understand an automobile. But finally, he gets enough money to buy a brand-new automobile. And so, he is very happy with this automobile. He shows it off to his friends. He shows them the beautiful paint job. He shows them the soft upholstery. He has them sit in there and listen to the stereo and the tape deck. He shows them all of the amenities of this automobile. But there's one thing he doesn't understand about it: he doesn't understand that it has an engine in it. And so, everywhere he goes, he has to push it. Now, every so often, he's going downhill so he can get in and coast, but that doesn't thrill him too much because he knows he's going to have to push it up the next hill. And this automobile that is supposed to be a blessing to him has become a burden to him. And rather than it carrying him, he is pushing it. He's very proud of it, very grateful to have it—most of the time. But sometimes he wishes he didn't have it at all. And then, somebody says to him, "You know, there's something you don't understand about this automobile," and they show him a thing called an ignition key and say, "Put that right in there and turn it." And he turns it and hears this surge of power. He says, "What is that?" "Huh? Well, that's the engine. That's the motor. Now put it in drive, and push that pedal down there." And when he does, it roars away in a surge of power. And he says, "Why, this is wonderful! This is glorious! Why didn't somebody tell me this sooner?" ¶

You say, "Pastor, really, that's kind of dumb. I mean, that's a stupid story. Nobody could be that dumb." And you're right, unless it is the Christian who does not understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now friend, when God saved you, God gave you a faith with an engine in it. And there are many people who are pushing their faith, rather than letting their faith carry them. And the faith—the salvation—that was meant to be a blessing, has almost become a burden to them. And they're grateful they're saved, but secretly, they think, "This is such a difficult thing, being a Christian."

Well, today, I want us to discover the ignition key to this thing called Christianity. Look, if you will, in verse 18: "*And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) Do you see that? "*Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) May I ask you a personal question? Now, it's not polite to ask personal questions, most of the time. For example: How much money do you make? Or, how much did that dress cost? You're not supposed to ask those kinds of questions. But I want to ask you a personal question: Are you being filled with the Spirit right now? Now, don't answer it out loud, but answer it. Are you being filled with the Spirit right now? Now, I did not ask, "Does the Holy Spirit indwell you?" He indwells all Christians. I did not ask, "Do you believe in the fullness of the Spirit?" I didn't ask that. I didn't even ask, "Have you been filled with the Spirit?" I

didn't ask that. The question that I asked you is a very personal question: Are you being filled with the Holy Spirit right now? That's a personal question, isn't it?

You see, our friend Stephen Olford said, "We ought to be consciously filled; we ought to be continuously filled; we ought to be conspicuously filled with the Holy Spirit." Actually, Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18 literally says, "Be ye being filled." (Ephesians 5:18) I want to talk to you about the fullness of the Spirit. And I hope that you can understand that being saved is not a matter of what you do for God, but it is a matter of what God does through you, by the fullness of the Holy Spirit. "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18)

## **I. The Reasons for Being Spirit Filled**

Now, our outline today is going to be very, very simple. And the first thing I want to give you, and I want us to think about, are the reasons for being Spirit filled. And under the heading of the reasons for being Spirit filled I want to give you three reasons why we ought to be Spirit filled.

### **A. Our Obedience**

The first reason is our obedience. God has commanded it. This verse—Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18—is not a suggestion. It is not a request. It is a command of Almighty God. Now, look, if you will, at the verse very carefully. "*Be filled.*" (Ephesians 5:18) That's what we call the imperative mood. Do you know that when something is imperative, that means it is necessary? I might say to you, "It is imperative that you do this thing." This is not optional equipment. This is not a suggestion. It is a command from God. And the Christian who is not Spirit filled is living in rebellion against God.

#### **1. The Command Is Present in Tense**

Now, it is in the present tense, so that's the reason I asked you, not, "Have you been filled?" but, "Are you filled?" Be filled, right now, in the present tense. "Be ye being filled." (Ephesians 5:18)

#### **2. The Command Is Plural in Number**

Now, it is plural in number. That means the command is not just simply to the pastor, or to the minister of music, or to the soloist, or to the missionary. "*The promise is unto you, and to your children, and... as many as the Lord, our God, shall call.*" (Acts 2:39) Every boy and girl who knows Jesus ought to be Spirit filled. Every evangelist ought to be Spirit filled. Every layman, every laywoman, ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit. "*Be [ye]*"—all of us—"*filled with the Holy Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) It is plural.

#### **3. The Command Is Passive in Voice**

It is plural in number. It is passive in voice. Now, what does that mean? He doesn't say,



“Get filled.” He says, “*Be filled.*” (Ephesians 5:18) It is not what we do; it is what He does in us and through us.

Now, it’s very interesting, this verse; look at it carefully. It says: “*Be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18) Now, you know, Baptists, we camp on the first part of that verse: “Don’t be drunk with wine.” And I don’t think a person ought to be drunk with wine. But I want to say something to you—that it is a greater sin not to be filled with the Spirit than to be drunk with wine.

Now, I know that most of you are disagreeing with me right now. I know that most of you are disagreeing. You’re saying, “No, no, no, no. Getting drunk—that’s far worse than not being filled with the Spirit.” But I will disagree with you. It is a greater sin not to be filled with the Spirit than it is to be drunk with wine. The Bible teaches that the sins of omission are greater than the sins of commission. It is a greater sin to fail to do what you ought to do than to do what you ought not to do. Why is that? Because if you’re doing what you ought to do, you cannot be doing what you ought not to do. But if you’re doing what you ought not to do, you will not be doing what you ought to do. I’ll never say that again so I hope that you heard it. The sin of omission is a greater sin than the sin of commission. For example, I’ve had far more difficulty in the churches that I’ve pastored with people who’ve not been filled with the Spirit than I have with people who’ve been drunk. Isn’t that true? Carnality—that’s the great issue in the Church.

Now, if Brother Whitmire were to come up to this platform this morning to lead the singing, and let’s suppose he staggers up here, and let’s suppose his eyes are red and blurry, and let’s suppose his tongue is thick, and let’s suppose he stumbles around a little bit, and we would say, “I believe Jim Whitmire is sick. Somebody help him.” And you get up close to him, and he reeks with alcohol. He’s skunk drunk. And we say, “Jim Whitmire is drunk.” Now, that’s never happened, and it will never happen. It will not happen, will it? No! It will not happen. Absolutely, beyond a shadow of any doubt, it will not happen. But how many times may a person come to the platform not filled with the Spirit? You see, listen, it would be more wrong for him to come up here not Spirit filled than it would for him to come up here drunk. And, you see, if he’s filled with the Spirit, he’s not going to get drunk—because being drunk is the devil’s substitute for being Spirit filled.

Friend, I’m not saying—believe me—I’m not putting a premium on getting drunk, or I’m not making light of getting drunk. The Bible says, “Don’t be drunk.” (Ephesians 5:18) I’m not putting a premium on drunkenness at all; I’m just simply saying that, why should we be Spirit filled? Number one: obedience. It is imperative. The Bible says that it is imperative that you be filled. It is a command to obey as well as a blessing to enjoy.

## B. Our Obligations

Now, here's a second reason: not only our obedience, but our obligations. Have you ever thought about the obligations that are yours as a Christian? Have you ever thought about what the Bible commands you to do? How are you going to do what the Bible commands you to do? You don't have the strength to do what the Bible commands you to do.

### 1. In Your Worship Life

For example, we're in chapter 5, verse 18. Let's just continue to read. Look in verse 19, and that speaks of our worship life. Verse 18 says: "*Be filled with the Spirit*"—and then, verse 19 says—"*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Ephesians 5:18–20) In our worship life, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Why? Because "*God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24)

Have you ever been in a worship service where people are trying to worship God in the flesh and it's just carnality, it's just some kind of a circus, and it's some kind of a program? How tedious and how tasteless that is. You've been in worship services where those who are leading the worship are filled with God's blessed Holy Spirit. And the congregation, the people, are singing praises to God, and they're worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. The only way you can truly worship God is to worship Him in the Spirit.

### 2. In Your Wedded Life

But, not only in your worship life, but in your wedded life. Look in verse 22: "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:22) Now, the Bible teaches that a wife is to respect and love and be submitted to her husband as if he were Jesus Christ. You say, "You mean that two-legged devil?" That's right. You are to submit unto him. Now, I didn't say that; God said it right here. Well, in this day of feminism and in this day of each person standing up for himself or herself, how's a person going to do that? Well, that's not human nature to do that. And I don't know a wife in the world who can submit to her husband without being Spirit filled—truly submit to her husband without being Spirit filled. She might do it grudgingly. But that's not the way we're to submit to the Lord Jesus. Gladly, wonderfully, happily, we're to submit.

This does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband. Many women are superior to their husbands. I know mine is superior to me. She says, "I don't want to be equal. I'm not coming down for anything." She didn't say that. She'll get me at home for saying that she said that. But friend, men and women before the Lord are all equal. And yet, the Bible says that wives are to submit to their own husbands. (Ephesians 5:22)

Well, it's not in human nature to do that.

And then, you say, "Well, why does the Bible always tell the hard things to the woman?" Well, it really doesn't. Continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 25: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" (Ephesians 5:25) Now, the wife is to submit to the husband as if the husband were Jesus Christ, but the husband is to love the wife as if he were Jesus Christ. And how does Christ love the Church? Well, He loves the Church sacrificially. He died for the Church. He gave Himself up for the Church. A husband ought to love his wife so much that he is willing to die for her and shows it by the way he lives for her. And, incidentally, most women wouldn't have any difficulty submitting to a husband who loved her enough to die for her and showed it by the way he lives for her.

I think Harry Ironside said that a man came to him one time for counseling, and Dr. Ironside said to him, "What is your problem?" He said, "My problem is my wife." He said, "Are you having difficulty?" He said, "No, no difficulty at all." He said, "I just love her so much I worship, I adore her. I just, I think about her all the time. I'm just afraid that maybe I love her so much it's a sin." Dr. Ironside said, "Well, do you love her as much as Jesus loved the Church?" "Oh," he said, "I wouldn't say that." He said, "Well, get with it. You haven't loved her enough."

"*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.*" (Ephesians 5:25) I can't do anything as Jesus did it. I don't have the ability to do anything Jesus did. The only way I can do what Jesus has done is for Jesus in me to do it—isn't that right?—for the Holy Spirit of God to love Joyce through me. That's the reason that Joyce doesn't mind being second in my life—because Joyce knows that when Jesus Christ is enthroned and I'm Spirit filled, I will love her better than I could if she were number one in my life. When she's number two, she receives far more love than if she were number one because God is loving her.

Every now and then, some man will come to me and say, "Well, you know, I just don't love my wife"—"I just don't love her," as if that's some excuse to separate or divorce. That's no excuse because everything that God commands you to do, you can do. What if God were to say to me, "Adrian, jump over this building"? Well, I can't jump over this building. What kind of a God would command me to do something I cannot do? When God says, "*Husbands, love your wives,*" (Ephesians 5:25) that means you can do it. But you can only do it through His power.

### **3. In Your Work Life**

What am I saying? Look, in your worship life, you need to be Spirit filled. In your wedded life, you need to be Spirit filled. And then, in your work life, you need to be Spirit filled. Just keep on going. Come on down to chapter 6, and look, if you will, in verse 5: "*Servants*"—the word, literally, is *slaves*—"be obedient to them that are your masters

*according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.*" (Ephesians 6:5) Do you know what that means in plain English? You serve your boss as if he were Jesus Christ.

You say, "I can't do it. Why, he's not a Christian. He's not right with God. How could I serve him as if he were Jesus Christ?" Continue to read verse 6. This is chapter 6, verse 6: "*Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.*" (Ephesians 6:6) You work for him as if he were Jesus Christ. And when you go to work tomorrow morning, and you walk through that door, you ought to come through with the same enthusiasm for that man and that business as you had for this church when you came in this door. That's what the Bible says. The Bible says, "You serve him as if he were Jesus Christ."

I want to let you in on a secret: *if our people would begin to live like that on Monday, people would start believing what I preach on Sunday.* Do you know that? They would. And what a better place could there be to witness for Jesus Christ than the job? Your job is your temple of devotion. It is your lampstand for witness. What better place to let your light shine? The boss would say, "You know, I don't understand these Christians. Why, they're here on time. They work with a smile on their face. They're very careful. They're honest. They wouldn't steal a thing. I can trust them with the entire business. Why, they seem to be devoted to the business as if they own the business. Why, you would think they think I am the Lord the way they serve here."

When a man goes to the employment agency and he needs somebody to work for him, he ought to say, "By the way, if you have any Spirit-filled Christians, send 'em over. Those are the kind of people I want." Well, that's not in human nature to do that. Human nature is to get by with as little as you can and get as much as you can. "Get all you can, and can all you get. Sit on the lid, and poison the rest," is the motto that most people have, rather than saying, "I am going to give myself; I'm going to serve." Well, how are you going to do that? I don't have what it takes to do that. That's not my nature. By nature I am selfish. But being Spirit filled, you can do that.

#### **4. In Your War Life**

And then, look in your war life. Skip on down to chapter 6 and verse 10: "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God.*" (Ephesians 6:10) Now, it's all still in the context of being filled with the Spirit. We're in a battle. We have an enemy. He is real. He is malevolent. He is cunning. He is sinister. He is active. He has marshaled all of the forces of hell against you and your family. He wants to sabotage your life. The bomb is in place; the fuse is laid out, and the match is struck. He wants to bring devastation to your home, to your health, to your happiness, to your future, and to your faith. You have an enemy, and you're no match

for him. He is stronger than you are. He is powerful. He is cunning and sinister beyond belief. But the Bible says, *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* (1 John 4:4) The only way you’re going to win in this warfare is to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

## 5. In Your Witness Life

And then, not only in your war life, but in your witness life. Notice, if you will, in verse 18; he says: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”—*he’s still on the theme of the Spirit—*“and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”* (Ephesians 6:18–19) How important it is that I be filled with the Spirit! All the way out here, this morning, driving in my automobile to this church, I’ve been praying, “O God, I want that anointing. I want your fullness.” Before I stepped out that door, I dropped down on my knees again and said, “O God, I want the anointing, I want the fullness, of the Holy Spirit of God.” Why is this? Why is this? Because all is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down. I have told you many, many times: *I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth.* And I am so dependent upon Him, and we all are. Whether we’re witnessing on the street, whether we’re witnessing in the business, whether we’re witnessing in the classroom, whether we’re witnessing in the home or from the pulpit or from the choir, oh, that we might be filled with the Spirit of God!

## C. Our Opportunities

I’ve given you two reasons to be Spirit filled. One is our obedience; number two is our obligations. Let me give you the third reason: our opportunities. Now, turn to Ephesians 5, again, and back up just a little bit. Look, if you will, in Ephesians 5, verse 14: *“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See, then, that ye walk circumspectly”—*that means “looking around.” *Circum* means “around”; *spectly* means “watching, looking”—*“not as fools but as wise”—*now, how many wise people are there here today? Well, if you’re not Spirit filled, you’re not wise. Continue to read—*“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is”—*what is the will of the Lord?—*“And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:14–18) Now, what’s he saying? Well, the key is in verse 16: *“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* (Ephesians 5:16)

Now, look up here. Is there anybody who would deny that these are evil days? Is there anybody? Now, if that was true in Paul’s day, how much more true it is in our day. We’re up against the organized, mobilized, demonized forces of hell. And it comes in every way. Sometimes it’s a frontal attack. Sometimes it is very subtle. But there is a

war. And if you don't know there is a war raging today, friend, you are deaf, dumb, and blind to spiritual things. Now, there is a war, but there has never been a greater day, a greater age, a greater opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus than right now. There is more hunger for the gospel now than ever before. There is more openness to the gospel than ever before. You say, "Pastor Rogers, I thought you said things were getting bad." They are. "Well," you say, "is the world getting better or worse?" Yes. I mean, friend, listen, as the night grows darker, the saints grow brighter, and the hungers are more intense. And there are people who are looking, waiting, wondering, "Can we find a way? Is there an answer?" And there is an answer. And the answer is in Christ. But oh, we need a generation of Spirit-filled people because of the opportunities today. We had better not let this opportunity slip through our hands like sand falling to the ground.

I heard old Dr. Charlie Howard say, years ago in Jacksonville, Florida, something that stabbed me in my heart. He was a great Bible teacher. He's in heaven now, I believe. But Dr. Charlie Howard said, "I'd rather be Peter, James, and John asleep in the garden of Gethsemane than to be a Christian asleep in these pregnant times in which we live." Oh friend, we need to wake up! You say, "Is there a chance to win this world to Jesus Christ?" We have about five thousand people in this auditorium this morning. If there were only five thousand, if we were all of the Christians there were—just five thousand right here—and each one of us got Spirit filled and became a witness, and suppose each of us won three people this coming year, next year there would be twenty thousand. Isn't that right? Is my arithmetic right? Twenty thousand—just three years. But now, let's suppose that we also taught them to win souls, to be Spirit filled. And not only were we makers of disciples, but we're makers of disciple makers. And so, the next year, each one of them wins three and teaches them to do the same thing. Did you know that by that simple progression, with Spirit-filled Christians just winning three a year, did you know that in twenty years every soul on Planet Earth would be saved? All of us would know the Lord Jesus Christ. That's an incredible thing. I mean, friend, just in such a short time, all five-and-a-half billion people would be saved if we were the only Christians that ever lived—I mean right here, just right here—only winning three a year and teaching our converts to win three a year.

You see, Christianity has not failed; it just hasn't been tried. When all fails, go back and read the directions. And the key to all of this is to be Spirit filled so that we might reproduce ourselves. What, then, are the reasons for being Spirit filled? Number one: obedience; number two, obligation; and number three, opportunities.

## **II. The Requirements for Being Spirit Filled**

All right. Now, let's talk a little bit about the requirements for being Spirit filled. Here's

the second point: the requirements. How are we to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Now, this is a command, and everything that God requires of us He teaches us what to do. Now, He says, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18) Do not think of the Holy Spirit as a substance. The Holy Spirit is a person. Don’t refer to the Holy Spirit as “It.” Refer to the Holy Spirit as “Him.” Jesus said, “When He is come, He will teach you all things.” (John 14:26) You wouldn’t say about me today, “It wore a maroon tie,” I hope; you’d say, “He did.” Or, “He did this” or “He did that.” Don’t depersonalize the Holy Spirit. Don’t think of being filled with the Spirit as if you are some kind of a vessel and the Holy Spirit is some kind of a liquid. Or, don’t think of you being a battery and the Holy Spirit an electrical charge. No, the Spirit is a person, and you are a temple. Let me give you a key verse here—1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 19: *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19) Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

### A. A Complete Commitment

Now, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, number one, means a complete commitment to Him. That is, you have opened up the door of the temple; you have welcomed Him in; and you have given Him the key to every closet and to every room.

† Every so often, we’ll have guests in our home, and we’ll say, “My house is your house. Make yourself at home. Here’s the key to the front door. Here’s a key to the second car”—if you have one—“there’s the refrigerator. Here are the linens. Here’s your room. You’ve got the run of the house. Make yourself at home.” You ever done something like that, you know? Suppose you were to come home some evening and your houseguest is not in the bedroom that you assigned to him, but he’s in your bedroom. He’s sitting there at your roll-down desk. He’s taken the key and unlocked the desk and rolled it back. And he’s going through your income tax returns, and he’s reading your old love letters that you wrote to your wife and reading your diary. You would say, “Excuse me. May I help you? Are you looking for something?” “No. But boy, these love letters are a hoot! And, you know, I really thought you made more money than that.” And boy, you feel the back of your neck getting hot, and you say, “Well, excuse me. I don’t know how to say this, but that’s really none of your business. What are you doing there? Those are my personal papers.” And he’d say, “Well, I don’t understand you. I thought you said this house was my house. I thought you told me to make myself at home. That’s just what I’m doing.” You’d say, “I didn’t mean that. I didn’t mean that.”†

I wonder if we’ve done the same thing with the Holy Spirit. I wonder if there are not some people in this very auditorium today who have said, “Holy Spirit, my body is your temple. Come in and bless me and fill me and take control.” But the question is, have

you given Him the key to every closet? I mean, is there any area in your life that is off-bounds to the Holy Spirit? Have you given Him the key to your business life? Have you given Him the key to your date life? Have you given Him the key to your social life? Have you given Him the key to your financial life? Have you given to Jesus Christ every key? Now, there must be a complete commitment to the Holy Spirit. He is a person. And to be filled with the Holy Spirit just simply means, “Lord, I am committed to you.”

Now, many times, we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit for the wrong motive. I mean, Proud Self can want to be filled with the Holy Spirit to be a superior Christian. Lazy Self thinks, “If I’m filled with the Holy Spirit, then I ride and I don’t push the car any more.” Ambitious Self says, “If I’m filled with the Holy Spirit, I’ll be a great Bible teacher, a great singer, a great preacher, a great evangelist.” But God is not interested in that. The Holy Spirit has one ministry, and that is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. When the burning ambition of your heart and your life is to exalt the Lord Jesus and you have given Him the key to every room, then you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

## **B. A Continual Control**

But now, listen, not only must there be a complete commitment, but there must be a continual control. This verse of Scripture literally says, “Be ye being filled.” (Ephesians 5:18) That’s the reason I asked you that personal question: “Is the Holy Spirit filling you right now?” I didn’t ask, “Have you been filled?” But, “Are you being filled?” Have you ever thought about it? Why did he say: “*Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit*”? (Ephesians 5:18) Why didn’t he say, “Don’t steal, but be filled with the Spirit”? Or, why didn’t he say, “Don’t commit adultery, but be filled with the Spirit”? Why did he take the particular sin of drunkenness and use that in contrast?

Well, I’ve already answered part of the question. He does it by contrast. As I’ve said, being filled with the Spirit and being drunk with wine are antithetical. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles were accused of being drunk with wine. And Peter said, “We’re not drunk as you suppose.” That is, they were drunk on the Holy Spirit. So, God is using the Holy Spirit’s fullness in comparison to drunkenness—not only in contrast, but also in comparison—because being filled with the Holy Spirit is a lot like being drunk.

Have you ever seen a man drunk, under the control of another substance? Everything about him has changed: the way he talks, the way he walks, and the way he thinks. Sometimes he may be given to incredible generosity: “I’ll buy everybody in the house a drink.” Sometimes he may be very vivacious: “I can whip any man in the house.” Sometimes his tongue is very loose. He will say things. He’ll tell his boss off. He’ll just do all kinds of things. He’s dominated by the influence of intoxication. Now, when a man is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is controlled by the Holy Spirit. His walk, his talk, his generosity, his courage—it’s all changed by the Holy Spirit of God.



But now, here is the question: How does a man get drunk? Well, he drinks. But the question is, how does he stay drunk? He has to keep drinking. Isn't that right? He has to keep drinking. That's the reason he says, "Don't be drunk with wine, but be being filled." (Ephesians 5:18) Now, do you get it? "Don't be drunk with wine, but be being filled." (Ephesians 5:18) And that's the problem with many folks who have been Spirit filled: they've sobered up. We need to continually be dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

### C. **A Conscious Claiming**

There is a complete commitment; a continual control, where you are saying, moment by moment, "Lord, I'm yours"; and then, thirdly, there's a conscious claiming. Actually, you must just claim this fullness just like you received the Lord Jesus: by faith. "*As ye received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him.*" (Colossians 2:6) How did you receive Him? By faith. How do you walk by faith? You just simply say, "Lord, I thank you. I open myself up, and I thank you that right now you are filling me. And I claim by faith—I don't look for a feeling—I am claiming the filling." Now, do that, and you will be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

## III. **The Results of Being Spirit Filled**

Now, here's the last thing—and very quickly. I've talked to you about the reasons. I've talked to you about the requirements. Let me talk to you about the results. This passage of Scripture gives three basic results of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and they show up in all of our relationships of life. It's very easy for you to tell whether or not you are being filled with the Holy Spirit of God because you'll see it in your relationship, number one, to God; number two, to circumstances; and number three, to other people.

### A. **In Your Relationship to God: A Spirit of Adoration**

Now, I want you to look, first of all, at your relationship to God. There will be a spirit of adoration. Look, if you will, in verse 19. In verse 18, he says, "*Be filled.*" (Ephesians 5:18) And then, in verse 19, he says, "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:19) Do you know how I can tell when I'm Spirit filled? I just constantly want to be praising God; constantly wanting to say, "Jesus, I love you"; and constantly singing and praising the Lord. Brother Jim, I get in the car and roll up the windows and go down the highway, just singing to the Lord. I sang my way out to church this morning, just singing to the Lord and saying:

*My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;  
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.*

—WILLIAM R. FEATHERSTONE

There is a burning, passionate, blazing emotional love in your heart for the Lord Jesus

Christ. And you cannot help but praise Him. I wonder how people can sit in a worship service and just sit there like a bump on a log—never sing; never praise; never say, “Amen”; never smile; never laugh; never weep. I say, “What’s wrong with these people?” I’ll tell you what’s wrong with them, friend: they are not filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And so, in your life, in your relationship to God, there’s a spirit of adoration.

### **B. In Your Relationship to Circumstances: A Spirit of Appreciation**

And then, look, if you will, in the next verse. In your relationship to circumstances, there’s a spirit of appreciation. *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Ephesians 5:20) *A Spirit-filled person is humbly grateful. A flesh-filled person is grumbly hateful.* That’s just the difference. Friend, when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you are just simply thanking God for what He is doing. That’s one of the reasons that you’re praising Him: because you are thanking Him for what He is doing in your heart and in your life. Now, he doesn’t say, “for some things”; he says, “for all things.” He doesn’t say, “sometimes”; he says, “at all times.” *“Giving thanks unto God always for all things.”* (Ephesians 5:20)

### **C. In Your Relationship to People: A Spirit of Accommodation**

Now, here’s the third mark. First of all, in your relationship to God, there’s a spirit of adoration. In your relationship to circumstances, there’s a spirit of appreciation. And then, in your relationship to other people—listen carefully—there is a spirit of accommodation. Look in verse 21: *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* (Ephesians 5:21) Wouldn’t life be wonderful if we could just learn how to do that? If I could just submit to you and you could just submit to me? You know, submission—that’s not for women; it’s for Christians. Every day, every place, we’re to learn to submit. *“Submitting...one to another in the fear of the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:21) Have you learned something of the spirit of submission? Let me tell you something, very quickly: you have about all of God that He can trust you with.

‡ You teach a child to drive—what’s the first thing you show that child? The brakes, not the accelerator. And if the child is not interested in the brakes, you just say, “Hand me the keys back.” Isn’t that right? If he doesn’t know how to make it stop, doesn’t want to learn how to make it stop, you don’t want to teach him how to make it go, right?‡

Now, let’s go back to that key, again. The key is the fullness of the Spirit, but the fullness of the Spirit is only to those who are under the control of the Spirit and submitted to the purpose of the Spirit. Submission. If you’re not interested in the brakes, God’s not going to show you the accelerator. But oh, my precious friend, if you will learn how to walk with God in faith—if you’ll do it, if you’ll do it—He will be filling you. And in

your relationship to God, there'll just be the spirit of adoration. In your relationship to circumstances, no matter what happens—how bad it is, how dark it is—you'll just be saying, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you." And when you meet your brothers and sisters in Christ, you are going to be saying, "How can I serve you? How can I love you? How can I accommodate myself to you?" Wouldn't this be just kind of like heaven on earth if we did that?

## **Conclusion**

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed—no one stirring; and no one looking around. Let me ask the question, again—the personal question: Is the Holy Spirit filling you right now? Is He? Is He? There must be complete commitment: give Him every key. There must be continual control: you just keep on receiving, keep on allowing Him to fill you. And there must be a conscious claiming, where you say, "Lord, by faith, I claim the promise that is mine. I claim it right now. Just as I trusted you to save me, I trust you right now to fill me." Father, I pray now that you'll help us, in these desperate days, to be a Spirit-filled church. In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.†

# The Spirit-Filled Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 19, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:18**

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”*

EPHESIANS 5:18

## Outline

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- I. The Motive for the Spirit-Filled Life
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## Introduction

Turn in God's Word to Ephesians chapter 5. I've been interviewed now three or four times in the last several days by television and radio media. After they talk about the building, they want to know how much it costs, how much we owe, and this and that. They may say, "How do you feel?" and then they ask this question, "What is next? What is next for Bellevue Baptist Church? What do you have in mind?" And, you want to know what I've told them and I mean this with all of my heart. You the Bible says, that we are to lengthen our cord, strengthen our stakes and enlarge the place of our habitation." (Isaiah 54:2)

Now, that's a figure that means when you pitch a tent, if you want a bigger tent, you have to have longer cords. And, when you get a bigger tent and longer cords, you have to have deeper tent pegs. As you go bigger, you have to go deeper. Isn't that right? So, I just told the folks, "Hey, we're not going to be putting a great emphasis upon numbers." Although I love numbers and I want to see us grow and if you're not interested in numbers, come see me after the service. I have some one-dollar bills I want to trade for some of your fives. Okay? Listen, we're all interested in numbers in a

certain way. But, I want to tell you dear friend that the emphasis is not going to be on more, but on better. And, when I'm talking about better, I'm talking about better spiritually. We have already spread out our tent. We've already lengthened our cords, but now I want us to drive down deep. Some spiritual roots. And, there's a truth—a vital truth—that I want to talk to you about tonight. And, I don't want you to think that it's old hat. And, I want you to listen with new ears. I want to talk to you about the Spirit-filled life. I want to talk to you about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit because all that we have here and all that we do here will be colossal nonsense unless God inhabits our humanity and displays his deity through us. That's what counts; is what God does in us and through us, not what we do for Him.

Now, look if you will in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18. The Bible says, "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 5:18) Choir, staff, deacons, members, guests, and radio audience, may I ask you a personal question. Nod your head this way. Thank you! It's going to be a great personal question. You may even think it's rude. You know it's rude to ask you a personal question sometimes, for example it might be rude to say, "How much money do you make?" or it might be rude to come up to someone and say, "How much did you pay for that dress?" or "Is that diamond real?" There are certain questions you know that are just a little rude. It sounds like a person's being nosy, that they're prying, and they're asking questions that they have no right to ask. But I'm going to ask you that kind of a question and here is the question, "Is the Holy Spirit filling you now?" That's the question. That's a very personal question. Is the Holy Spirit filling you now?

Now, I'm not asking is the Holy Spirit indwelling you. If you're saved I know he's indwelling you. That's not the question I'm asking. I am not asking you do you believe in the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I'm not asking you that either. Nor am I asking you, have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit. That is not the question. The question and listen my friend, answer it. Answer it not out loud, but answer it. Is the Holy Spirit filling you now? Are you consciously, conspicuously, and continuously being filled with the Holy Spirit of God? You know there are so many extremes about being filled with the Holy Spirit, we have so much excess, and so much false doctrine. You know why? The devil wants to give the Holy Spirit a bad name. So just to keep us away from the truth that we ought to have.

I preached in a church in another state and before I preached in that revival crusade, I want you to know that the pastor came to me and this is what he said—though you wouldn't believe it, but he literally said this—he said, "Adrian, we're glad to have you here. We hope that we have a wonderful revival but" he said, "Adrian, don't say anything about the Holy Spirit!" I mean this is a Baptist church. He said, "Don't say anything about the Holy Spirit" he said, "you we've had so excess. We've had a group in

our church that have gotten off into this thing and that thing, so, it'd be just better not to say anything about the Holy Spirit." That grieved me. That broke my heart. You see, listen that's the devil's plan, for people not to say anything about the Holy Spirit, because the devil knows that when a man gets hungry enough he'll eat bad bread. And, you see what we see that we call excesses are just the hunger pains of a starved people. People who have not learned the truth about the Holy Spirit of God. The late great doctor Vance Havner said, "We're afraid we're going to get out on a limb; we haven't even been up the tree." We need to learn what God says about the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, let me tell you something friend, that human kind, mankind, you are a Spiritual creature and you have Spiritual hunger and you're going to have Spiritual experiences. They'll either be good or bad and if you don't know the truth, then you're going to find some kind of substitute. If you're not filled with the Holy Spirit, I'm afraid many of you are going to be filled with the unHoly Spirit.

Now, to be filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't mean like you would fill a jug with water or a car with gasoline. Oh no no! The Holy Spirit is a person. Never call the Holy Spirit "it." You wouldn't say of me, "well it wore a gray suit Sunday Night," would you? You'd say "He"—the Holy Spirit is a person—and to be filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't mean to be filled with some substance or even to be energized by some power. But, it means that there is a dear person, as real as God the Father, as real as God the Son who comes to indwell you and to occupy every part of your personality.

Now, it doesn't mean that you get more of Him, for the Bible says, "*God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*" (John 3:34). You don't get half the Holy Spirit. You get all of the Holy Spirit. It literally means, actually not that you get more of Him, but that He gets all of you to be filled. Every area of your life is permeated with the Holy Spirit.

Now, when you got saved you received the Holy Spirit. Never get the idea that you get saved and later on you receive the Holy Spirit. That is not only false doctrine, it's close to blasphemy. The Bible says in Romans chapter 8: "*...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9). If you're not filled with the Holy Spirit, if you're not possessing the Holy Spirit, you're not saved at all. You don't even belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. So there, to be saved means the Holy Spirit of God has come into you. But, I'm not asking you tonight, is He resident? I'm asking tonight, is He president? I'm not asking has he come into abide? Has he come into preside? Now, sometimes I get excited—you know I get happy in the Lord—and some of our friends say, "Hey I think I understand about you; you've got the second blessing. Have you had the second blessing?" I say, "Oh yes! I've had the second blessing!" and they say, "Well, look tell me about it!" I say, "Well, the second blessing was really just understanding what I got when I got Jesus." That's all it is. I mean friend, it's not that

you get Jesus and get something more. You're never going to get any more than Jesus. I mean dear friend, the Holy Spirit is Christ in you; you don't graduate from Jesus.

I want to tell you something dear friend, not only do I have the second blessing, I've got the third one. And, the third blessing is understanding I didn't understand it all in the second one. And, no matter what, you just keep coming back to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-filled life. The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian. He said, "*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*" (John 14:18).

Now, tonight, let me talk to you about the Holy Spirit and the fullness of the Spirit. And, tonight on this inaugural Sunday evening message, I want to drive this tent peg down deep into the soil of our hearts.

## **I. The Motive for the Spirit-Filled Life**

First of all let me talk to about the motive for being filled with the Holy Spirit. Look if you will again in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18. Look at it. Now, notice what it says. It says, "*...be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18). Now, that's an imperative verb. Now, what is an imperative verb? Well, if I say to you, I want you to do this, it is imperative that you do this. That means that it is a command. It's not optional and being filled with the Holy Spirit is not something optional. It's not optional equipment. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not just something for evangelists, pastors, ministers of music, or missionaries. It's not something just for super saints. You see, look at that verse, it says, "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18). Now, most Baptists know the first part of that verse real well. "*And be not drunk with wine...*" (Ephesians 5:18). But, the Bible is not a cafeteria line, where you take part of it and don't take the rest of it. The same Bible that says, "*And be not drunk with wine...*" (Ephesians 5:18) says, "*...be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18).

Now, suppose, when I came in here tonight I opened that door and I tripped coming down those stairs. My tie was awry and I stumbled a little bit and I came up here and you noticed that I'm kind of thick tongued. And, I am kind of wobbly here and I'm saying things kind of nonsensical. Somebody would say, "What's the matter with the pastor? Is the pastor sick?" And, Brother Bob would come over here and put his hand on my shoulder and say, "Adrian, are you feeling alright?" And, he'd say, "Wow, he's got liquor on his breath!" The pastor is drunk. Adrian Rogers came to church skunk drunk. It ain't gonna happen. Okay, it ain't gonna happen. But, suppose it did. I mean suppose I stood up here tonight and tried to preach the Word of God and I was drunk. Oh, the tongues would wag. Oh, the people would talk, and they should! But, may I tell you, it would be a greater sin against God for me to stand up here and not be filled with the Holy Spirit than it would for me to stand up drunk. Most of you don't believe that. Most of you don't believe that. Oh, we would never ordain a drunkard for a deacon, but how many

churches have ordained men who are not Spirit filled?

The Bible say, "...seek ye out among you seven men full of the Holy Ghost, whom we may set over this " You say, "Why do you say it'd be a greater sin for you not to be filled with the Spirit, that it would be for you to be drunk?" Because my dear friend, sins of omission are greater than sins of commission. You do more damage by failing to do what you ought to do, than by doing what you ought not to do. And, if you're doing what you ought to do, you can't be doing what you ought not to do. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you're not going to get drunk. And, dear friend, the reason that people do get drunk is that they're not filled with the Holy Spirit and it's the devil's substitute for being filled with the Holy Spirit. And I've been a pastor long enough, I've been preaching long enough and I've seen more churches hurt and damaged by carnal people not filled with the Holy Spirit than I have by drunkards any day. Isn't that right? Oh God, deliver us from a business meeting, not when a drunk stands up, but when a man full of his own ego and full of his own self stands up to speak not being filled with the love of the Holy Spirit of God. So, there's a motive. The Bible doesn't request, it doesn't suggest, but the Bible commands: be filled with the Holy Spirit.

## **II. The Meaning of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Well, let's move on, what is the meaning? I've talked to you about the motive. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? I mean. Why? Some of you would say, "I feel better." No no no no no no! It's not the feeling that you need. It's the filling that you need. *God doesn't fill you with the Holy Spirit for enjoyment, but for employment.* Jesus said, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...*" (Acts 1:8). You want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, let me ask you this question; do you want to be controlled by someone who demands holy living? Answer that in your own heart. Do you honestly earnestly and sincerely want your life to be controlled by someone who demands holy living? If so, two things are necessary. Number one there must be the dethroning of yourself. Most of us don't want to dethrone ourselves. I, ego, me, self is upon the throne. In every man's heart, in every man's life, there's something that I call I throne. There's a control center. And, when self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. But, when Christ is on the throne, self is on the cross. We're to take up our cross; we are to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you something friend. Self is so slippery. Self—I'm talking about that old carnal nature—it's so deceiving. Did you know that even self can pretend to want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. For example, proud self wants to be filled with the Holy Spirit. How many young preachers would say, "Oh boy I'd like to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then I'd be a great preacher?" Well, dear friend, you're not going to be filled with the Holy Spirit if that's your motivation. I'll tell you who else, lazy self would like to be filled



with the Holy Spirit. You get the idea that well, you know if I get filled with the Holy Spirit it'll be all honey and no bees. Now, I'm going to Heaven first class, you know and I'm gonna escape all conflict. Dear friend I want to tell you, when you get filled with the Holy Spirit, you're going to know something about conflict. You've never met the devil because you and the devil been going in the same direction. You turn around, you'll have a head on collision with him. I'll tell you something else. Ambitious self can want to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Remember Simon the Sorcerer, he said, "...Give me also this power..." (Acts 8:19). Peter said this to him, "You and your money can go you know where." (Acts 8:19) That's really what he said, "...You and your your money perish with you, if you think the gift of God can be bought with power..." (Acts 8:19) There must be the dethroning of yourself. Even God can't fill that which is already full. And, the reason many of us are not filled with the Holy Spirit is we're so stuffed full of ourselves. We're so full of self-sufficiency, self-pride, and self-aggrandizement. There must be the dethroning of self. But, if that's all you do, you're still not going to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

My dear friend, secondly, there must be the enthroning of Jesus. Now, the Holy Spirit has but one desire, he has but one motive, he has but one chief aim, and that is to glorify Jesus. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He will not speak of himself; He will take the things of mine and He will show them unto you" The mark that a man is Spirit-filled is not that he's always talking about the Spirit, but that he is has a Christ consciousness in his life. And, so that's the meaning, it just simply means I dethrone myself, I enthrone the Lord Jesus and as the Holy Spirit of God inhabits my humanity, He makes known the life of the Lord Jesus. And, as I go about this life and as you go about this life, through our unique personality, we ought to remind others of the Lord Jesus.

### **III. The Maintenance of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Now, here's the third thing I want to talk to you about, not only the motive and the meaning, but the maintenance of the Spirit-filled life. Look again at Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18. Look at it, right there in The Word of God, it says, "...*be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18) But, literally the language says, "...be being filled, be being filled with the Spirit.." Now, you see why does he say don't be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit? Why didn't he say, don't steal, but be filled with the Spirit? Or why didn't he say, don't commit adultery, but be filled with the Spirit? Or why didn't he say, don't be proud, but be filled with the Spirit? Why did he say, "*be not drunk...but be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18). Well, first of all, he is speaking by contrast, because being drunk is being filled with a hellish spirit. He's speaking by contrast. But, I'll tell you what else he is speaking by. He's speaking by comparison, because being filled with the Holy Spirit is a lot like being drunk. As a matter of fact, on the day of Pentecost the

disciples were accused of being drunk. Peter said, "...they're not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine o'clock in the morning...of course he'd never been to America! He said, "...they're not drunk as you suppose, it's only nine in the morning..." but he didn't say they weren't drunk, he said they're just not drunk like you think. They were drunk on new wine. How does a man get drunk? Does anybody here know? Well, I'll tell you how, but not by experience because I've never been drunk, but I'll tell you how he gets drunk. He drinks! Smart preacher you got. All right now, how does a man get drunk? He drinks! Second question, how does he stay drunk? He has to keep drinking. See. Now, it doesn't say get filled with the Spirit. It says, "...be filled with the Spirit..." (Ephesians 5:18). It literally says, "...be being filled..." You what's wrong with some of us? We've sobered up. I mean some of us have said, "All right now that's done. Now what's next?" and dear friend, it is a crisis that is followed by a process as we continually—day by day—we're being filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And, whatever God tells us to do. We do it. We quench not the Spirit and we grieve not the Spirit. To grieve the Spirit is to allow sin in our hearts and in our lives. That grieves the Holy Spirit. There are two commands that you must keep in your mind and constantly, quench not and grieve not, but "...be being filled..."

#### **IV. The Manifestation of the Spirit-Filled Life**

Now, the next thing I want to talk to you about is not only the maintenance of the Spirit-filled life, but let me talk to you about the manifestation of it and we'll be finished.

What are going to be the marks? Oh, you say well you're going to speak in tongues if you're filled with the Holy Spirit. That's not the sign that you're filled with the Holy Spirit. The most carnal church that Paul had was the Corinthian church. And, they majored in tongues and Paul said, "you're carnal and not spiritual." That's not a sign that you're filled with the Holy Spirit, not that you speak in unknown tongues. I'd say, the main sign I know is that you control the tongue you got. I'm serious about that.

Dear friend, the law of kindness and the law of truth and the law of testimony be in that tongue that you have. But, we don't have to guess about what the manifestation is. Look at it here in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18: "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*"—and then look in verse 19—"*Speaking*"—underscore the word speaking—"*speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*"—and then verse 20—"*Giving*"—underscore the word giving—"*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*"—and then look in verse 21—"*submitting...*"—underscore the word submitting (Ephesians 5:18–21). These are three i n g words. You see them? Speaking, giving, submitting they are participles and they speak of the mark, the manifestation of the Spirit-filled life.

Now, look at the first one. You see, all of us have three relationships in life. There are three things, three areas that we have to relate to. First of all, we have to relate to God. Secondly, we have to relate to other circumstances. And, thirdly, we have to relate to people. Now, those are the things that you have to relate to. All of us, tomorrow, if we're filled with the Holy Spirit it's going to show in our relationship to God and that deals with the idea there of speaking. The next would be is our relationship to circumstances and that has the idea of giving. And, the third, with other people, that is submitting.

#### **A. There Will Be a Spirit of Adoration**

Now, look at these three marks. First of all, there must be what I call a spirit of adoration, verse 19. Write that down. A Spirit of adoration. Verse 19: *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and Spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19). When a person is Spirit-filled they're constantly, constantly, constantly praising the Lord. They're praising the Lord before others. They're praising the Lord in public and in private worship. They are praising the Lord. I know when I'm Spirit filled, because I'm going around all day long saying, "Jesus, you're so wonderful. Lord, I love you." I'll even get in the car, roll up the windows and sing. It's amazing. You know he says, first of all you'll sing Psalms. I want to tell these folks, The Word that was the first hymnal, this was the ancient hymnal and you begin to put The Word of God to music. That's the reason I'm so thrilled that you're singing the scripture, teaching us to sing the scripture, putting The Word of God to music. Psalms and that's The Word of God set to music. And, then hymns. A hymn is a song of praise that is sung directly to God. And, then Spiritual songs. This is spontaneous music that just wells up in the heart. That's the meaning of it dear friend, or the method of it.

And, then thinks of the means of it. He says, *"...making melody in your heart..."* (Ephesians 5:19). The word "making melody" has the idea of strumming an instrument. Now, it doesn't say, literally, "in your heart." It literally says "with your heart." That is your heart is to be an instrument of praise. Just like these musicians have instruments, God put an instrument of praise in you. And, you're to make melody with your heart. You don't have to be a musician to do that. Brother Whitmire says, Adrian said, "You're a prisoner singer, you're always behind a few bars and can't find the right key!" Well, that's alright! I've got a heart. And, the Bible says, that we use our hearts to praise God with.

Now, listen what is the motive? Listen, look at it again in verse 19. He says, *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart"—listen—"to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19) I want to say something to every musician and every person in this choir. Brother Jim, you know this, but I remind you of it though, as I remind our congregation; the worst thing that could be said about

music is not that it is off beat, not that it is in the wrong key, not that it's sharp or flat, but that it is sung to the wrong audience.

Dear friend, when we minister to the Lord, He ministers to us. Over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again we're told in the Bible to sing to the Lord. Isn't it amazing that He wants to hear us sing? We are to sing to the Lord and when it is sung to the Lord it'll speak to the Congregation. If you've been there, you know what I'm talking about.

Dear friend, the marks of a Spirit-filled church, the marks of a Spirit-filled man or woman, is that in his heart he is praising the great God. There is a spirit of adoration praising the Lord.

### **B. There Will Be a Spirit of Appreciation**

And, not only a spirit of adoration, there is a spirit of appreciation. Look in verse 20, *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Ephesians 5:20) and that speaks of our relationship to circumstances.

Do you know what the most common command in the Bible is? Do you? It's this one to give thanks. I can tell you whether you're Spirit-filled or not, by this one test. Are you grumbly hateful or humbly grateful? I mean dear friend, if there is in you a constant welling up of thanks, then you can say there must be the Holy Spirit of God in my heart that is prompting that Spirit of appreciation. It's the most common command in the Bible.

Now, listen, for you to do it, it must be correct. Correct in direction. You give thanks to God, not to friends, not to luck. I can't tell you how many people are, it just kind of irks me a little bit, but I know that they don't know better, poor benighted souls. They say, "How's your new church building coming?" "Oh fine, we're going to be open in a few weeks." "Well, good luck!" I don't want that! I know what they mean. But, they're just not informed.

Dear friend, I want them to say, God bless you, not good luck. Oh, my friend we don't depend upon luck. There's a God in the glory and we give Him praise and we give Him thanks. What happens is not happenstance even if we don't understand it. It's to be not only correct in direction, but it is to be continual in duration. *"Giving thanks always..."* (Ephesians 5:20). It'd be easy if he'd said, "Give thanks when you feel like it, wouldn't it? Or give thanks when everything is good. But, not only continual in duration, but it's complete in dimension. *"Giving thanks always for all things..."* (Ephesians 5:20).

Now, if he'd not said all things and all always, it would've been easy. But, we're to "give thanks always, for all things" (Ephesians 5:20). But, we don't understand everything. But, my dear friend, here's what I want you to do tonight on this thanksgiving Sunday, I want you to make a list of every place where you think you got a raw deal. And, everything in your life that you would change if you possibly could and then give God thanks. Every place where you think you got a raw deal, everything you would

change if you possibly could, but can't. And, say, "God I don't understand it, but you tell me to thank you and God by faith I thank you." We thank Him for the sun; do we thank Him for rain? We thank Him for joy; do we thank Him for pain we thank Him for gains; do we thank Him for losses? We thank Him for blessings; do we thank Him for crosses? To praise God in evil circumstances does not mean that we approve of evil. It means that we trust in God regardless. *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..."* (Job 13:15). I don't understand it, but God you're God and I thank you. That's the Spirit filled life!

### **C. There Will Be a Spirit of Accommodation**

In relationship, my dear friend, there is a Spirit of adoration. In relationship to circumstances, there's a Spirit of appreciation. And, in relationships to our brothers and sisters in Christ there is a Spirit of accommodation.

Look if you will in verse 21, *"Submitting"*—and there's the third i n g word—*"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God"* (Ephesians 5:21). I suppose this is the climax of them all. You want to know whether you're Spirit filled, do you have a Spirit of submission? When you hear a person say, "Well, I know my rights." You can be pretty well sure they're not Spirit-filled. Let me ask you a question, what rights does a dead man have? You're crucified with Christ, you're not your own. You're bought with a price, our rights belong to Him.

#### **1. There Will Be a Humbled Submission**

Let me tell you about that submission. It is a humbled submission. Do you know what the word submit means here? It's really a military word. Now, Colonel Tucker, you're sitting up here, you're in the military. There's Colonel Tucker right there, was in the military. Brute of a beast you! Great Big ol' hulking man! But, I'll tell you, if there's a man who knows anything about the Spirit of submission it's this man. I've watched him, Bob, on our staff. I've watched him when you would say, "Sunny do this or that." Boy, he does it! He's been in the military. Do you know what submission is? It's a military term. And, I'll tell you what it means. It is one equal, voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may therefore be glorified. That's what it is! It doesn't mean that you're inferior or somebody else is superior. That has nothing to do with it! *"Submitting yourselves one to another..."* (Ephesians 5:21). As I've told you before, submission is not for women, but for Christians, male or female. We're to submit to one another in the fear of God.

#### **2. There Will Be a Helpful Submission**

It's a humble submission and it is a helpful submission. Do you know why we submit? Dear friend when we're yielded to one another, then the body works as it ought to work. You see, the apostle Paul says, *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the*

*Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake"* (2 Corinthians 4:5). Would you say to me, "Pastor, I am your Servant for Jesus sake?" May I say to you Bob, I am your servant for Jesus sake? Margaret, would you say to Jim, I am your servant for Jesus sake? Jim, would you say to the choir, I'm your servant for Jesus sake? When we stop trying to stand up for our rights and start saying "O God use me, what will this church be?"

### **3. There Will Be a Holy Submission**

You see listen, my dear friend, it is to be a humble submission; it is to be a helpful submission and it is a holy submission. Look again in verse 21: "*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God*" (Ephesians 5:21). Now, let me tell you something. I don't submit to you, because of you, I submit to you because of Him. We submit to one another in the fear of God, in the fear of reverence of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Question, I come back to it and I'm finished! The question I asked you to begin with, are you ready to answer it? Are you now being filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, you say, "Pastor, I really hadn't thought about it and I really think that I've let my attention and my mind go somewhere else."

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. I want you now, as best you know how, to dethrone self. Say, "God, I'm sick and tired of my self-will, my arrogance, my pride, my selfishness, my self seeking. I'm letting my entire life just be wasted. Lord Jesus, I want to lose my life that I might find it. Lord Jesus, I dethrone self. Now with all of my heart, as much as in me is, Jesus, O Jesus! Jesus, I enthrone you. Holy Spirit, I yield all there is of me to all there is of you. Fill me now Lord and use me. And may there be in me a spirit of adoration, appreciation, and accommodation for my brothers and sisters in Christ."

Father God, hear our prayer, in Jesus' name, Amen.

# How to Be Thankful When You Don't Feel Like It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 8, 1995

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:18–20

*“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

EPHESIANS 5:20

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and find Ephesians chapter 5—a very familiar territory if you are a student of the New Testament, because these are verses that the child of God comes to often for strength, encouragement, and admonition. Ephesians chapter 5, beginning in verse 18: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:18–19) Now, we’ve been doing that, and that’s been wonderful. But now, notice the next injunction: *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Ephesians 5:20) *“Giving thanks always for all things...”* (Ephesians 5:20) Now, if he said, “Give thanks always,” that would be acceptable. We would find that, perhaps, easy. But when he says, “Giving thanks always in all things,” or, “For all things,” then that makes it a little difficult. You know, we’re supposed to thank God all times for all things. And, very frankly, sometimes I don’t feel very grateful or very thankful. And yet,

we, as God's children, are to thank Him all the time and to thank Him for everything. Well, that brings up some real questions. There are some very bad things—worse than bad, there are some horrific things—that happen to the child of God: sickness, sorrow, disappointment, death, divorce, abuse, murder, rape, mayhem. All of these things happen, and the child of God is not immune to being a victim in some of these things. Now, that brings up a very interesting question: Why does God allow these things, and how can we possibly give God thanks always and for all things, according to Ephesians 5 and verse 20? Let me suggest some factors that you need to take into consideration. Then, perhaps, you'll understand why God has given us this command.

## I. The Sin Factor

The very first factor that I want to mention is the Sin Factor. We ask ourselves this question: Why do things like this happen? And I want to tell you, very frankly, that we live in a world that is cursed with sin, and therefore, it is filled with sorrow. We might ask this question: Why would a child, for example, be born with a birth defect? Or why would, perhaps, a mother who wants a child so much miscarry? What about a person in the prime of life who is cut down with cancer? What about the ravages of nature, like the storm that just hit the coast of Florida there in the Gulf? How do we account for that? I mean, if God is a good God, if God is a righteous God, how do we account for that? Well, remember this. We live on Planet Earth, and Planet Earth bears a curse because of sin. And our bodies, our mortal bodies, bear a curse, because of Adam's sin.

Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, says that *"we [are] by nature the children of wrath."* That is, we are born into this world with the nature of Adam. The Bible says, in Romans 5:12, *"...by one man"*—that is, by Adam—*"sin entered into the world, and death by sin..."* And every one of us have in our hearts, in our lives, in our body, the seed of sin, and as a result, we're going to die. Every person sitting here tonight has a terminal illness. We're going to die, if Jesus does not come first. You read in your Bible about Adam. Adam lived to be 930 years, and then he died. And then, Seth lived to be 912 years, and he died. And then, we read that Enoch lived 905 years, and he died. And mankind begins to live less and less and less, because of the ravages of sin upon human nature, and upon this machine that God crafted so wonderfully. Now, today, if you live to be over one hundred years of age, you are a marvel, and people say, "Oh, this individual is over one hundred years of age." Now, folks, you are headed for trouble. Sooner or later, your body is going to wear out.

A pastor was visiting a woman who was very much up in age, and she was heaving the difficulties that come with age. And she was feeling sorry for herself. And she said to the pastor, "Pastor, can you tell me why I'm suffering so?" She was looking for a philosophical answer. He said, "Yes, ma'am, I can." She said, "Oh, please, Pastor, tell



me.” He said, “You’re getting old.” You’re getting old. And, folks, our bodies just simply wear out. Now, here’s what the Bible says in the Book of Job—Job chapter 14, verse 1: “*Man that is born of woman is [a] few days, and full of trouble.*” You’re not going to live a long time, and the days you live are going to be full of trouble. Now, if you got here any other way except being born of a woman, you’re excused. But, according to this verse, “*Man that is born of woman is [a] few days, and full of trouble.*” (Job 14:1)

And so we bear in our bodies—we bear in our bodies—the ravages of sin, brought about the failure of Adam. But it’s not only humankind that bears this, but all of the nature has a curse on it. Romans 8, verse 21, says this: “...*The [creation] itself...shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption...*” So creation, right now, is in the bondage of corruption. We see earthquakes—in Indonesia, horrific earthquake just a few days ago—floods—I was looking at the news this afternoon, the floods that are there in the southeastern part of the United States—volcanoes—I’ve been reading recently about Mount St. Helens; it’s beginning to quiver again, according to what I have read—and tornadoes. All of these things happen because nature itself has a curse upon it. And whether you’re saved or lost doesn’t make any difference. There were Christians who got caught down there in Panama Beach, because the Bible says that, “God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45) So when you see problems in nature, and when you have problems in your own body, you have to understand that this is not the world that God created it to be. This is a world that has been marred by sin.

M. R. DeHann II was watching television when there was an earthquake in Mexico. And they were showing the devastation of the earthquake, and down there in the bottom was the signature of the network that was showing the news, and it had this little label on the news. It said, “Courtesy SIN.” Now, that stood for Spanish International Network, but it said, “This earthquake is brought to you courtesy of sin.” And, that’s true. We need to understand that our world is cursed, and our bodies are cursed, but we can take hope, and we can thank God in the worst of circumstances. If we know the Lord, if we are saved, God is going, one day, to undo that. Romans 8, verse 21: “*Because the [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” It’s going to happen. One of these days, every vestige of disease will be gone from my body. One of these days, the lamb and the lion will lie down together. One of these days, the desert will blossom like a rose. One of these days, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea. That is a promise from Romans, chapter 8, that this creation is going to be delivered from corruption. So, in the midst of it all, I can thank God that one day He’s going to make it different.

## II. The Chastisement Factor

Now, here's the second factor you need to understand and think about when you suffer and when you don't feel thankful. Not only the sin factor, but the Chastisement Factor. If you're having difficulty, and if bad things are happening to you—what you assume to be bad things—it just may be that you're under the chastening hand of Almighty God. Put down this scripture—Hebrews chapter 12, beginning in verse 5—and it asks this question: *“[Have you] forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* (Hebrews 12:5–6) Now, the scourge was a very vicious whip, a cat of nine tails. It's not talking about light punishment here; he's talking about severe punishment. He goes on to say, *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? [For verily], For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present [time] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* (Hebrews 12:7–11) Now, if you're suffering, it may be because God is chastising you. That doesn't mean that He doesn't love you; it means that He does love you. He loves you too much to let you get away with sin, and He will therefore chastise you. He is dealing with you as with a son.

There are three kinds of judgment: God judges us as sinners, God judges us as sons, and God judges us as servants. He judges us as sinners at the cross, and Jesus took our judgment there. He judges us as sons with chastisement. He will judge us as servants, as stewards, at the judgment seat of Christ. But if God takes you to the woodshed, as it were, and God has to chastise you with the whip of chastisement, thank God. In this give Him thanks, because, number one, it proves that He loves you. Number two, it will exercise the *“...peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those that are exercised thereby.”* (Hebrews 12:11) So, obviously, you ought to thank Him.

## III. The Dependency Factor

Now, here's a third factor that you need to consider when you don't feel thankful. Not only the sin factor—that God, one day, is going to make right—not only the chastisement factor, but there is the Dependency Factor. God sometimes allows us to have problems to cause us to depend upon Him. There's a song we used to sing, “If I

never had a problem, I wouldn't know He could solve them." (Andrae Crouch) So God allows us to have problems to bring us to Him.

I read a book, some thirty years ago, by Dr. Eli Maxwell entitled *Crowded to Christ—Crowded to Christ*. And the premise of that book is that God gives us problems so as to crowd us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me give you a scripture that deals with that: 2 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 4. The apostle Paul tells *"how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."* (2 Corinthians 12:4) Paul went up to heaven, into paradise. God gave him a vision. He saw things there that God said, "It is a sacred secret. Don't tell anybody." I've often wondered why God didn't want it told. I think we'd get so homesick for heaven if we knew all that's in heaven; we'd get careless when we cross the street. God said, "Just keep it a secret." And then he goes on to say, *"Of such an one will I glory..."* (2 Corinthians 12:5) That is, he said, "I'm glorying in the vision that God gave me." But now, listen: *"...yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities."* (2 Corinthians 12:5) Now, Paul said, "I'm not going to glory in me. The only thing I'm going to glory in is the infirmity or the weakness that I have." *"For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth. But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."* (2 Corinthians 12:6) Paul said, "I don't want you to think that I am some sort of a spiritual plutocrat, some big shot." And then he goes on to say, *"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."* (2 Corinthians 12:7) Paul said, "I have a malady; I have an infirmity." He called it a thorn in the flesh. Now, it's not a thorn like roses have thorns. The Greek word is *estake*. Spiritually, he had a stake driven through his heart, something that was very painful. And he says, *"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."* (2 Corinthians 8) Now, he doesn't mean, "Lord, take it away; Lord, take it away; Lord, take it away." He means he had three extended sessions of fasting and prayer, seeking the face of God, "Lord, take this thing from me." *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my [infirmity], that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake..."* (2 Corinthians 12:9–10) Now, could you say that? Listen to that list again, when you don't feel thankful. Listen to this: *"Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities"*—that's sickness—*"in reproaches"*—that's people criticizing and carping—*"in necessities"*—that's doing without things—*"in persecutions"*—that's being harmed or put into prison, beaten—*"in distresses"*—that is where there is no way out—*"for Christ's sake..."* (2 Corinthians 12:10) He said, *"I take pleasure in [this]...for when I am weak, then [I am]*

*strong.*” (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Now, we have weaknesses, and we might as well admit our weaknesses—number one, because it’s a fact. And number two: it’s an asset. Your weakness is an asset when it brings you to Jesus Christ, when it helps you to depend upon Him. The thorn was given, ultimately, from God, even though Satan was the messenger. And where Satan rules, God overrules. And our place of weakness can be our place of strength. And when these things happen, if they bring us to Christ, then we thank God for them. If our troubles cause us greater dependency, then thank God for them.

#### **IV. The Maturity Factor**

Now, here’s the fourth factor. I said there’s the sin factor: we need to thank God, even in sin, because He’s going to overcome it. I said, secondly, there is the chastisement factor: if God is chastening us, it’s because He loves us and He wants to work out holiness in us. There’s the dependency factor: if God allows us to have difficulties and not to depend upon our own strength, but to show us our weakness that we might depend upon Him, then thank God for it. Now, here’s a fourth thing that ought to cause you to thank God in time of trouble, and it is the Maturity Factor, or the learning factor.

When you have difficulty, when bad things happen to good people, you will learn more during those times than you will learn in the good times. I want to ask you a question. Think of the best, happiest, and holiest time you had, when everything was just going wonderful. Let me ask you this question: How much did you learn? Now, think of the greatest, darkest night that you ever went through. How much did you learn? You learned so much more in those times of sorrow than you ever learned in times of joy. You know it is true. The Bible says, in Psalm 119, verse 67: *“Before I was afflicted, I went astray...now I have kept thy word.”* Psalm 119, verse 71: *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.”* Now, if affliction causes me to learn, then I’ve got to thank God for it.

You see, what are God’s priorities for me? Health? Not necessarily. Wealth? Not necessarily. Service? Not necessarily. Usefulness? Not necessarily. What is God’s plan for me? To be like Jesus—to be like Jesus. Romans 8, verses 28 and 29: *“And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them [that] are called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) Well, what is His purpose? Well, listen to it: *“For whom He did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...”* (Romans 8:29) That’s God’s purpose for you: to be like Jesus. And if affliction causes you to be like Jesus, if you learn through these things, if you’re made mature through these things, then you can thank God for it. The goal of God in my life is Christ’s likeness.

Someone wrote these words:

*“I walked a mile with Pleasure;  
she chatted all the way,  
but left me none the wiser  
for all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
and [not] a word said she.  
But, oh, the things I learned from [Sorrow],  
when sorrow walked with me.”*

—ROBERT BROWNING HAMILTON

And so, if there's a learning factor there, even though it's not good, we can thank God for it.

## **V. The Patience Factor**

Now here's the fifth factor I want you to think about when you don't feel like giving thanks, and it is the Patience Factor. When bad things happen to you, things that are inexplicable, could it be that God is just simply working patience in you? All of us need to learn the Christian grace of patience. Listen to Psalm 27 and verse 14: *“Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen [thy] heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.”* James chapter 1 and verse 4: *“...Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”* Now, you and I need to learn patience.

Now, the word *patience* here does not mean the ability to work an intricate puzzle or the thread a needle. The word *patience* here is a Greek word which means “to bear up under suffering and pain”. And God wants us to learn patience because patience is one of the Christian virtues, and you don't learn about patience by reading it in a book. Now, sometimes we say, when we're in difficulty, “Why doesn't God do something?” Has it ever dawned on you that God might be doing something, and that is, teaching you patience? And that's what God is doing by not doing anything else. You'll never learn anything worthwhile without patience. You'll not learn how to play the piano, if you're a pianist, without patience, without endurance. If you're a student of the languages, you're not going to learn Greek verbs without patience. You're not going to learn sainthood without patience. There is no such thing as instant maturity, and we need to learn patience. And so, if God is teaching us patience, and patience is a Christian virtue, should we not thank God when we're enduring trials? And *“tribulation worketh patience.”* (Romans 5:3) And so, when we have tribulation, it's working patience in us. And that's one of the things that God worked in my life, three or four years ago, that I had to learn. And I don't want to take the lesson again, but I've had to learn patience, to wait upon the Lord.

## VI. The Ministry Factor

Now, here's a sixth factor that you need to consider when you don't feel grateful, and it's the Ministry Factor. Has it ever dawned on you that the things that happen to you that don't seem good may happen to you to enable you to minister to other people? Let me give you this verse—2 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 3 and 4: *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* Now, God gives us comfort in order for us to comfort somebody else. Now, God can't give you comfort unless you need comfort, and you can't need comfort unless you have trouble. But, when you have trouble, God gives you comfort, God shows mercy, then you have learned a lesson that you can use and pass on to somebody else.

This verse tells us that God is the source of all comfort. It tells us that God comforts us in all our tribulation. It tells us that He comforts us to make us a comfort and a blessing to others with the same comfort *“wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* (2 Corinthians 1:4) I've seen Joyce comfort women time after time again who have lost a baby, because we've lost a baby. And I've seen pastors read verses and give little homilies and little outlines like I'm giving tonight, and that would not touch the heart. But I've seen Joyce share, put her arm around this person, and say, “I know how you feel, and I know the comfort that God has given me,” and to pass that comfort on to somebody else. There is the ministry factor. Men throw broken things away; I don't think God ever uses anything until He first breaks it. And so, that might be the reason that, if you're having difficulty and tribulation, you ought to give God thanks.

## VII. The Glory Factor

Now, here's the next reason, and I'm almost finished. But here's the next reason, and it is the Glory Factor. Somehow, in some strange way, when we suffer and yet keep praising God, it gives God glory. Now, let me give you the scripture—1 Peter chapter 4, verses 12 through 14: *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you”*—now, he called them beloved, and he told them they were going to have a fiery trial—*“as though some strange thing happened unto you.”* (1 Peter 4:12) Every so often, when we have difficulty, we say, “How could this happen to me? I'm a preacher. I'm a minister of music. I am a choir member. I am a deacon. I tithe. I live for God. How could this fiery trial happen to me?” Peter said, “Hey, don't think it's strange, as though some strange thing happened to you.” (1 Peter 4:12) *“But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* (1 Peter 4:13) And then, listen to verse 14: *“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. for the Spirit of glory and of God*

*resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”* (1 Peter 4:14) When you take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, it’s going to get you into trouble. I found that out. Now, if you want the Spirit of God and the Spirit of glory to rest upon you, then you’re going to have to be willing to have these troubles come your way.

I read in the Bible where Stephen was stoned for his faith. But I also read that his face shone like the face of an angel. That is, the glory of God was all over him. God did not deliver him from that trouble. God allowed him to go through that trouble. But we, tonight, are still talking about his faith and the glory of God was upon him. The glory of God was on those three Hebrew children when they went through the fiery furnace. And that king looked in, and he said, “Why, look. I put three in there, and now there’s a fourth man in the fire, and he looks like the Son of God.” God got glory when His people walked through a fiery furnace. Now, I like for God to deliver me when I’m in trouble. It’s one thing to be delivered and praise God for it; it’s another thing to be in a fiery furnace, and not be delivered, and to praise God for it. And, I tell you, that takes more faith and gives God more glory. And now, if God is being glorified in my life, even though I may be being persecuted, can I not thank God that He is being glorified in my life, even if I don’t feel thankful?

## **VIII. The Mystery Factor**

Now, here’s the final reason I want you to think about why sometimes bad things happen to good people, and why we ought to look at those “bad” things and give God praise—the things that we call bad. Now, I’ve mentioned many things. You say, “Pastor Rogers, none of those things satisfies me. You don’t know the heartache. You don’t know the trial. You don’t know the difficulties that I’m going through, and none of the things that you’ve mentioned satisfy my mind.” That may be true, so I put this last factor there. It’s the Mystery Factor—the mystery factor.

Friend, you may not know; you may not understand. None of these other seven factors that I have mentioned may apply to you at all; but we must understand that God is a sovereign God, and God is bigger than any of us can imagine. Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9, listen to these verses. God says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:8–9) Never make the mistake of saying, “If I were God, I would do thus and such.” You’re not God. You don’t even have a scintilla of an iota what God is up to and what God is about. The apostle Paul said, “Oh, how unsearchable is the way of God, the mind of God.” (Romans 11:33) And, again, Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29: *“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.” “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.”* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

Dr. Warren Wiersbe has rightly told us, “We do not live by explanations; we live by promises.” The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 7, “*We walk by faith, not by sight.*” And there are times when we say, “God, You owe me an explanation.” And it’s all right to ask for an explanation, but it is never right to doubt God’s wisdom, God’s love, or God’s goodness. If God loved you enough to send His Son to die for you on the cross, you never have to doubt His love again. There may be a mystery factor. You may not be able to understand why this thing is happening to you. But trust God, obey God; regardless of the circumstances, and regardless of the consequences, trust God. Real faith is not primarily receiving from God what we want, but it is accepting from God what He gives. And there may be a mystery factor. You may never in this world figure it out, but you know that God is sovereign. And someone has wisely said, “Where we cannot trace His hand, we can trust His heart.” (Charles Spurgeon) He is good and faithful, and so, thank Him and praise Him anyway.

¶ I mentioned those three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. They were told to bow down before that pagan idol or they would be cast into that fiery furnace. They said, “King, we don’t even have to think about it. We’re not careful to answer you. We’re not going to worship your idol. Our God is able to deliver us, and if not, we’re still not going to worship your idol.” Now, he didn’t say, “If He’s not able”—that is, “If He doesn’t deliver us.” They knew He was able. He is able. It already said that. “But even if He doesn’t deliver us, we’re not going to worship your idol. We may not understand it. He may let us, but He may turn us to bacon. He may just get us cremated here today, but that’s all right. We’ll go into that fire praising our great God.”¶

I’m telling you, folks, day by day, regardless of what happens, give Him thanks. It may be that you’re in a situation, and you’ll not get out of it until you begin to give thanks.

I’ll just close with this. I see my friend Morris Mills out here tonight. Some years ago, when I first came here, I needed to go to Florida. Morris Mills had a motor home. I wish he still had it, but the rascal sold it. But, anyway, he had a motor home, and he said to me, “Pastor, why don’t you just take the motor home, you and your family go on down there to Florida.” I said, “Well, Morris, that’s wonderful.” And then he said, “Here’s a credit card to buy gasoline with.” I said, “Well, that’s more than wonderful.” So, I’m going down there to Florida in this motor home. And I get, you know, two or three or four hundred miles away and that motor home begins to sputter and spark and burp and gurgle, and it got slower and slower and slower. We were losing power and losing power and losing power. Finally, it would just go about fifteen or twenty miles an hour. I said, “Well now, here I am with a motor home, and it’s not mine, and I can’t make it work; and I’m not a mechanic, and I don’t know what to do.” So I began to pull in different service stations and different automobile agencies, and they said, “We don’t



work on those things,” or, “We’re closed,” or, “We don’t have time,” or, “You’ll have to wait two or three days,” or whatever. I was getting more and more irritated and wondering what kind of a friend Morris was, anyway, to give me an old motor home like that. And so, anyway, I went from one place to another, and, finally, the thing, I felt it. I couldn’t drive it another half a block; it just wouldn’t move. And we pulled into a shopping center there, and I have the lid off that thing, looking down at the motor. I don’t know hardly a spark plug from a crankshaft. I’m looking down there at that thing, and my dear, sweet, precious wife said, “Have you thanked God?” Pow! I mean that’s the last thing I wanted to hear—“Have you thanked God?” I said, “No, I haven’t thanked God.” She said, “Why don’t you thank God.” I said, “That’s exactly what I need to do.” I bowed my head, and I said, “God, I want to thank you. I’m here in somebody else’s motor home. We’re stranded; it won’t run. I don’t know how to fix it. Nobody will fix it. I don’t know what to do. Thank you.” I just thanked Him. And then, I said, “No, that wasn’t right. Lord, I really do thank you.” And I thanked Him. Right after I thanked Him—I mean, immediately—I looked over there, and there was a tire changing place, and a couple of guys over there changing tires. It wasn’t a garage. It wasn’t a mechanic’s garage at all. They were just installing tires. And I said to those two men, I said, “Would you fellows come over here and start this motor home?” They walked over there. The guy looked in there. He took the thing apart. He did something. He did something. He took a screwdriver out of his back pocket and went “tttttttttttt.” He said, “That’ll do it.” I said, “No, you’ve gotta be—hmmmm.” “No,” he said, “That’s done it.” It began to roar, moving perfectly. I still don’t know exactly what he did. He may have been an angel, for all I know. But, I mean, I’d had mechanics from this garage and that garage look at it. Right after I thanked God, I mean, immediately after I thanked God. I took out my billfold, and I took out a wad of bills, and I said, “Here, man.” He said, “I don’t want you to pay me.” I said, “I don’t—listen, I want you to take it. You don’t know how happy you’ve made me.” He said, “Mister, I can’t take a cent from you.” And I said, “Sir, God bless you. Thank you for what you’ve done.”

## Conclusion

Now, I’d like to tell you that when you are in difficulty, if you’ll begin to praise God, that it will work out that way all the time. I can’t tell you that, but I can tell you this much: you will enjoy life a lot better if you learn to thank God, even when you don’t understand. And it just may be that God is not about to get you out of your circumstance until you have enough faith and enough love to sincerely say, “Thank you, Lord. I don’t know why, I don’t know how, but I know who—that you are sovereign God, and in the midst of this sorrow, in the midst of this difficulty, I give you thanks, even when I don’t feel like it.”

Let’s pray together. “Father, thank you for your Word. Lord, it’s such a blessing to

us. And help us, Lord, to give thanks always for all things, because you are such a wonderful God. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Now, look up here. The Bible says, "...*All things work together for good to [those] [who] love God...who are the called according to His purpose.*" (Romans 8:28) That's not a promise for everybody, just to those who love God. And you cannot love God without loving His Son, the Lord Jesus. You cannot know God without first knowing the Lord Jesus who said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. [And] no man [comes] [to] the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) Tonight, if you'd like to give your heart to Jesus Christ, I'm going to invite you to do so. Oh, if I could do it for you tonight, I would. If I could go out there and sit in your seat, and when the invitation is given, get up and come forward and confess Christ as my personal Savior and Lord on your behalf, I would. But I cannot. It's your decision. Nobody can make it; no one can keep you from making it. The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come." If you want Jesus, if you want Him as your personal Savior and Lord, if you want to know that your sin is forgiven, gone, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness, if you want a Master who's worthy of service, and if you want the power of the Holy Spirit to serve Him, if you want a hope that's steadfast and sure, you'll find it all in the Lord Jesus Christ. And tonight, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. And your coming forward will be your way of saying, "Before heaven, before these people, I believe He's the Son of God. I believe He paid my sin debt with His blood on the cross. And my coming forward is my way of acknowledging Him tonight as my Lord and my Savior." Just come to the front. There'll be a minister standing there. Just tell him—at the head of any of these aisles—just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." We want to answer any questions, give you some Scripture to stand on, and seal your decision in prayer. Maybe, tonight, you're already saved, and you need a church home. I want to invite you to come also down any of these aisles, and say, "I want to place my membership in this church."

Let's stand together as we sing.†

# The Marks of the Spirit-Filled Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 27, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:18–21

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”*

EPHESIANS 5:18

## Outline

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## Introduction

“The Marks of the Spirit-Filled Life.” Turn in your Bibles, if you will, to Ephesians 5, as we continue to make our way through the book of Ephesians, “God’s guidebook to growth.” And we take up our reading this morning in verse 18—Ephesians 5 and verse 18—not somehow, but triumphantly. Some of us are just trying to make it through. Where are the Christians who are meeting life with a smile on their face, with victory in their heart, walking as Jesus walked, living with the victory?

You know, dear friends, we’ve been praying for a glorious, wonderful, spiritual awakening; for an earth-moving, devil-defying, heaven-sent, God-breathed, Holy Ghost revival. And many times, we have been praying, “O God, pour out your Spirit.” Properly speaking, we should not be praying and asking God to pour out His Spirit. God has

already poured out His Spirit. God poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And so many times Christians are praying, “O God, send us another Pentecost.” Friend, we don’t need another Pentecost; we need to experience the Pentecost that we have. Suppose I were to stand before the Lord this morning and pray, “O God, O God, send your Son to die for lost people!” And the Lord would say, “Adrian, there’s no need for me to send my Son to die for lost people. He has already come and suffered and bled and died. It’s done. Believe it. Receive it.” Amen? We’re not trying to repeat Calvary, and we’re not trying to repeat Pentecost.

Let me tell you something, dear friend. Bethlehem was God with us: “*They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*” (Matthew 1:23) Calvary was God for us: “*Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.*” (1 Corinthians 15:3) “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) God with us. God for us. Pentecost is God in us. When we are saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes to live in us. And if you’ve been born again, you have become someone, and you contain someone, and that someone is the Holy Spirit of God. And what is a good definition of the Holy Spirit? Christ in the Christian. The Christian is the visible part of Christ, and Christ is the invisible part of the Christian. And Pentecost is God in us. And, friend, if we’re saved, God is in us. He has poured out His Spirit. We don’t need to be praying for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we act like we’re the heroes and God is the tyrant, and we pray, “O God, pour out your Spirit; O God, O God, if you only would.” Friend, it is not our job to persuade God to send revival; it is our job to permit Him to do so. God has already poured out His Holy Spirit. God has already “*blessed us with all spiritual blessings...in Christ.*” (Ephesians 1:3) That’s what the book of Ephesians is telling us about. We have already been made to sit in “*heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” (Ephesians 2:6)

Now we need to appropriate our blessings, and we need to move into Canaan. We need to live as Christ would have us live by the power that He has already provided for us. Therefore, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18) You see, it’s one thing for you to have the Holy Spirit; it is quite another for the Holy Spirit to have you. When you get saved, the Holy Spirit comes into you. He is then resident. But when you are filled with the Spirit, He becomes president. It is one thing for the Holy Spirit to abide; it is quite another for Him to preside, for Him to have control—not only for Him to be present, but for Him to be preeminent in your life. This is called being filled with the Spirit. And just as a drunk man is filled and dominated by wine, a Christian is to be filled and dominated by the Holy Spirit of God.

Now we have talked about that verse many times, and so I want to just lightly touch on that and go on, however, to speak of the next three verses. Verse 18 commands us

to “*be filled with the Spirit.*” (Ephesians 5:18) And then, verses 19 through 22 give us three verses that speak of the marks, the manifestation, and the maintenance of the Spirit-filled life. These three verses include three participles. Now, if a participle is a word ending in *-ing*, it speaks of continuing action. Notice verse 19—the first one: “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” (Ephesians 5:19) And so, that’s the first mark of the Spirit-filled life: speaking. And verse 20: “*Giving...*”—again, speaking of continual action—“*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Ephesians 5:20) *Giving* is our second word. The third word: “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*” (Ephesians 5:21) Here they are, dear friend—three marks of the Spirit-filled life: speaking, giving, submitting.

Now, let’s look at these three.

## **I. The Spirit of Adoration: Speaking**

First of all, the first one speaks of the spirit of adoration—verse 19: “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” (Ephesians 5:19) This deals with your relationship to God. It speaks of joyful worship. One of the marks that you’re filled with the Holy Spirit of God is that you speak and sing and worship in spontaneous, overflowing, God-filled joy.

### **A. The Method of Our Worship**

Notice the method of our worship.

#### **1. Psalms**

He says, “*in psalms.*” (Ephesians 5:19) What is he talking about when he says that we’re to speak in psalms one to another? Well, the psalms, just the same as our Psalms in our Bible, were the ancient hymnbook of the Jewish people. And no matter what your mood, no matter what your problem, no matter what your sorrow, or no matter what your joy, you will find a psalm that will be representative. You need to learn the book of Psalms. “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*” (Colossians 3:16) You ought to have a psalm for me; I ought to have a psalm for you, as we meet one another. We ought to worship the Lord by using His Word. We’re to speak to one another in psalms. Let the Word of God come alive.

#### **2. Hymns**

And then, hymns. What is a hymn? A hymn is a song of praise that is directed directly to God as we sing to the Lord. That’s what a hymn is. And our songs of praise need to go directly to the Lord.

#### **3. Spiritual Songs**

And then, he mentions spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19) What are spiritual songs?

Spiritual songs are little ditties of the Spirit. These are just little expressions of joy that just well up within a person—spontaneous music. Friend, you can't write it into the program, as we sing to the Lord, as the joy of the Lord just comes upon us.

## **B. The Means of Our Worship**

And so he speaks of the method of worship: the Word of God, hymns, and spiritual songs. And then, he speaks of the means of this worship. It says, "*Making melody in your heart*," (Ephesians 5:19) but literally, that's not what the Greek says. It doesn't say "making melody *in* your heart"; it is "making melody *with* your heart"—"*with* your heart"—and there's a difference. You see, this word "*making melody*" literally means "to strum an instrument." Your heart becomes the instrument by which you worship God, and God plays your emotions as they worship Him. Your heart, your mind—the center of your being—becomes an instrument of praise to the Lord. And that blesses my heart so much. I'm glad that the instrument is not the vocal cord, but the heart—the heart. That is the instrument. That is the means of our worship.

And do you know God had just as soon hear me sing as Bee Bixler? Did you know that? Isn't that wonderful? That's glorious. Now you say, "I'd rather hear Bee." I don't blame you, but God had just as soon hear me. Now I don't sing in public; but I sing in private, and the Lord enjoys it. The Lord is blessed by my singing, because the instrument is the heart and not the vocal cords. And my heart can make just as beautiful a music as anybody's heart on the face of this earth. And that's such a glorious thought.

I heard one day of a mother who was in the hospital, and she had several beautiful children, and one of her beautiful children was a little retarded girl who did not have the mental faculties that the others had. And as the other girls and children in the family were going to visit mother, the little retarded child came along also, the father bringing all the children to visit mother. And all of the other little children had brought presents for the mother. And one girl had brought a little bouquet. And when the little retarded girl saw the bouquet, she wanted to bring a bouquet. And do you know what she did? Before they went into the hospital, this little girl, not understanding as some would understand, reached down and got a handful of weeds and straw there by the hospital door—just a little handful: to her, those were flowers, and she brought them. And when the other children presented their gifts, this little girl presented to her mama that little handful of weeds and straw.

Now I want to ask you a question—I want to ask you, all you mothers out there, a question: Do you think that mother enjoyed that gift from that little girl? What do you think was the most precious to her of all the gifts? I'll tell you, as she took that little handful of straw and weeds and brought them up to her bosom, the tears filled her eyes as she thought, "Mother's precious little darling is expressing her love." And I tell you,

sometimes my music might sound in the ears of some people like a handful of weeds and straw. But I want you to know God knows my heart, dear friend. And I am so grateful that we, when we're filled with Spirit, can make melody in our heart to the Lord. Our heart—our heart—is the means of worship.

### C. The Motive of Our Worship

The method of worship: the Word of God, hymns, spiritual songs. The means of worship: making melody in our heart. The motive of worship: unto the Lord—unto the Lord. Oh, friend, when we come to worship, we minister unto the Lord. The worst thing that could be said about any solo is not that it was off key, but that it was sung to the audience. It is not to be sung to the audience; it is to be sung to the Lord. As we worship, as we praise, as we sing, our worship is not to be directed to the audience; it is to be directed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Well,” you say, “but, Brother Rogers, the Bible says we're to be speaking to one another.” Yes, I want you to look at it—notice: *“Speaking to yourselves”*—to one another—*“in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:19) When I sing to the Lord, or when a singer sings to the Lord, they speak to the congregation as never before. But when we sing to the congregation, we don't speak spiritually to the congregation; that is, the song falls flat.

Let me give you an illustration here. Look in Psalm 40 for just a moment. You see, if we could just learn to direct all of our music to the Lord Jesus Christ! What a difference it makes, choir, when you don't sing for the pastor, you don't sing for the people, but when you sing for Jesus and sing unto Jesus! The Bible says in Psalm 40, verse 3, *“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”* (Psalm 40:3) I tell you, when we sing to God and the very obvious marks of spiritual devotion are upon us, the hearts of the people are moved, because we're singing to the Lord.

While we're in the Psalms, I just want you to see how many psalms talk about singing to the Lord. You know, Brother Peter Lord said that worship was making love to God. You need to get off and just get your hymnal and just sing to Jesus—just sing to the Lord. Look in Psalm 59—and just keep your Bibles open to the Psalms for a moment. Let's just look at a few verses. Psalm 58, verses 16 and 17: *“I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence.”* (Psalm 59:16–17) *“Unto thee...will I sing”*—that's the emphasis.

Look in Psalm 63, verses 3 and 4: *“Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.”* (Psalm 63:3–4) Look in Psalm 95 and verse 1—these verses ought to be

marked in your Bible and you go over them: *“O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”* (Psalm 95:1) Notice Psalm 96 and verse 1: *“O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.”* (Psalm 96:1) Look in Psalm 98, verses 4 and 5: *“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.”* (Psalm 98:4–5) *“Unto the LORD”*; *“unto the LORD”*; *“unto the LORD”*: our music needs to be directed unto the Lord.

Look in the book of Colossians in the New Testament for just a moment, and see how Colossians puts it in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly”—that is, worshipping the Lord in psalms—“in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”—“to the Lord.”* (Colossians 3:16) How we need to let our music ascend to the Lord—not to the congregation, but to the Lord!

#### **D. The Manner of Our Worship**

The method of worship: psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. The means of worship: making melody with your heart. The motive of worship: unto the Lord. The manner of worship: making melody—making melody.

Bill Gothard showed me something that was such a blessing when I saw it. He said that all music—and Bee, I shouldn’t be talking about this while you’re here; you know, it’s like having a theologian when you’re trying to explain something theological—but all music is made up of melody and rhythm and harmony—three parts of music. And each has a particular appeal. Rhythm appeals to the body. That’s obvious, isn’t it? When the rhythm starts, we start patting our foot, when there’s a march or whatever. Harmony appeals to the soul. You see, the harmony, too much of it can become slushy and overly sentimental and so forth. Harmony appeals the soul. But melody appeals to the spirit—melody appeals to the spirit.

See, there are three parts to a man: body, soul, and spirit. And whatever you find predominant in any music will be where the predominant appeal is. If music has predominately a beat, like rock music, the appeal therefore is to the flesh, to the body. If it is overly syrupy and sentimental and overloaded with harmony, the appeal is to the soul or the self life. But pure melody has an appeal to the Lord. Now you must have some of all in order to have music. And there’s nothing wrong with body, soul, or spirit, for God made it all. But our music—our spiritual music—is to predominate in melody.

Did you know that the devil can’t stand it—I said, he can’t stand it—when you sing to the Lord? It drives him up the wall—it really does! Why is that? Well, the Bible says that God inhabits the praises of His people. Read that in Psalm 22: *“O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”* (Psalm 22:3) When we start to praise, God just moves in, in a



special way. God loves to live in praise. If you want the Lord to be especially near, start to praise. Did you know that when King Saul, who was possessed with an evil spirit, would get off on a tantrum, do you know what David would do? David would bring out his harp, and he'd start to play the harp, and the Bible says the evil spirit would leave Saul. (1 Samuel 16:23) Why? He can't stand it—to hear God praise. And, by the way, you don't get much of a beat out of a harp.

Oh, just playing this music, this glory to the Lord, and praising the Lord in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs! And if the devil seems especially close, and if the Lord seems especially far away, friend, you need to start singing—you need to start singing with a spiritual song in your heart, making melody to the Lord. Sing to the Lord. And I don't care whether you've got the vocal cords to do it or not, you've got an instrument—and a good one! It's your heart. Sing unto the Lord. One of the marks of a Spirit-filled person is the spirit of adoration—the spirit of adoration.

## **II. The Spirit of Appreciation: Giving**

Now, let's go on and think of another mark, the second participle: Not only speaking, but the second is giving. I call this the spirit of appreciation. Notice again in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20: *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20) Now, if the first of these participles speaks of our relationship to God, this one speaks of our relationship to circumstances, and it speaks of the spirit of thanksgiving. You see, not only joyfulness, but thankfulness will be a mark that we're filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, what kind of thanksgiving is this?

### **A. Correct in Its Direction**

It must be correct thanksgiving. First of all, it must be correct in its direction. It's unto God that you're to give thanks. You know, some people say, "I certainly was lucky." I always hate to hear Christians say, "I certainly was lucky." They ought to say, "I was blessed"—"I was blessed." It ought to be correct in direction.

### **B. Continual in Its Duration**

It ought to be continual in duration: *"giving thanks always"* (Ephesians 5:20)—always, continual in duration, never-ceasing.

### **C. Complete in Its Dimension**

And it ought to be complete in dimension: *"for all things"*—*"for all things."* Look: *"Giving thanks always for all things."* (Ephesians 5:20) Now I could do pretty good if it weren't for that last two: *"always,"* and *"all things."* Yeah, I can thank God for ice cream, and I can thank God for health, and those sort of things, but he says, "Always give thanks in

all things.” Did you know, dear friend, that everything that happens to you is to cause you to thank God for it? You give thanks for gifts, don’t you? When somebody gives you something, you thank them for it. You need to realize that every circumstance that has come into your life is a gift of God, and you need to thank God for all things.

Now, look in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 for just a moment. First Thessalonians chapter 5—here are some verses we need to mark. Verse 16: *“Rejoice evermore.”* Verse 17: *“Pray without ceasing.”* Verse 18: *“In every thing give thanks...”*—now, just underscore it. I didn’t write it; I’m just reading it—*“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18) We are to give thanks in everything. You see, no matter how bad the circumstance, no matter how terrible the sickness, no matter how deep the heartbreak, no matter how tragic the circumstances, no matter how unbelievable the development, we are to say, “Father, I thank you in this.” I begin, no matter where else I go, I begin by saying, “Thank you, Father. Thank you.” And when I thank God, I begin to release the power of God in my life, because my *thank you* is an acknowledgement that no matter what it is, my heavenly Father is bigger, and nothing has happened to me but what it has come through Him first and He has allowed it.

Let me give you some illustrations. Look in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 for just a moment. This is the story of King Jehoshaphat. You remember Jehoshaphat was a king, and he had an enemy that was coming against him now. And this enemy writes him a very threatening letter. Have you ever gotten a threatening letter? Here’s a king who has told Jehoshaphat just what he’s going to do to him, and the king had the power to do it. And Jehoshaphat is somewhat dismayed. But notice in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 15: *“And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.”* (2 Chronicles 20:15)

Now, that’s a good starting place, isn’t it? When a multitude comes against you, listen to God. Just sit back and say, “All right, number one, the battle is not mine, but it is God’s.” And then, notice verse 21: *“And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.”* (2 Chronicles 20:21) Now, the Lord said to Jehoshaphat, “Now, the battle is mine; but, Jehoshaphat, you’re going to have a part in it.” “Oh, yes? Well, if the battle is yours, what part is mine going to be?” “Your part is to have thankful praise.” “What’s that, Lord?” “That’s right. I want you to get some singers, Jehoshaphat, and when the battle starts tomorrow, I want you to put the choir in the front line.” That’s where they belong, isn’t it? “Put them right in the front line. I want you to put all the choir right out there in

the front line, and I want them to go forth—not a sword, not a hand grenade, not a bomb, but just go forth singing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who were and art and evermore shall be,’ just be praising the Lord.”

And Jehoshaphat says, “Well now, wait a minute, Lord. I haven’t got anything to praise you for right now. Lord, if you win the battle, we’ll praise you all over the place.” And the Lord says, “No, you’d better start to sing before I do a thing. You’d better have a thankful spirit before I move.” And Jehoshaphat says, “I can’t thank you for these problems.” God says, “All right, live with them.” But Jehoshaphat didn’t do that, did he? Jehoshaphat believed the Lord. Thank God that he did.

And notice in verse 23 what a wonderful thing it is that the Lord did in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 22. And the Bible says, “*And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.*” (2 Chronicles 20:22) You see, when Jehoshaphat started to praise the Lord, when he had a spirit of thanksgiving, when he realized that the battle was not his but God’s, it released the power of God.

So many times we look at things and we say, “How can I thank God for this situation?” Let me ask you a question: If somebody tried to kill you, and if your family turned against you, and if you had to spend time in prison, and if you were lied on and slandered and beaten and suffered, would you say, “Thank you, Lord, for this”? Most of us wouldn’t. We’d say, “Lord, I’m your servant. Why did you let this happen to me?” But I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20. Few men who’ve ever lived have been more like Jesus than Joseph was. And I want you to look in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20. Here’s Joseph, and he’s speaking to his brothers. After he’s been cast into a pit, after his family has turned against him, after he’s been double-crossed, after he’s been lied on, after all of these things have happened to him, Joseph says in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20, “*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*” (Genesis 50:20) God had a plan. Joseph thanked God. And God’s plan worked.

Now, friend, you might not be able to see God’s plan in your distress, but I want to tell you, God has a plan. Turn to the book of Habakkuk for a moment. That will give you something to look for. I’m just talking about thanking God in everything—thanking God in everything. Look: Have you thanked God for the world situation? Have you thanked God for what’s happened in Vietnam? You say, “That sounds blasphemous.” Have you thanked God for the situation in the Middle East? Have you thanked God for the communistic threat? Well, the Bible says, “*In every thing give thanks.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Well, Habakkuk had the same problem. Look in the book of Habakkuk, and beginning in verse 2, Habakkuk said, “*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me*

*iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.*” (Habakkuk 1:2–3) It seemed like Habakkuk lived in Memphis, Tennessee. “Lord, why do you let me see all of this? And, God, why don’t you do something about it?” Well, notice verses 5 and 6—the Lord’s answer: *“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their’s. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards.”* (Habakkuk 1:5–8) God says, “I’m going to bring it.” He says, “The Babylonians are coming.” That’s what He said: “They’re going to come against Israel, and not only am I going to allow it; I raise them up. They’re my army.”

“Do you mean to tell me, God, that all these wicked people, you’re allowing all this?” God says, “That’s right. I told you, you wouldn’t believe it. You wouldn’t believe it, though I told you.” You see, Habakkuk couldn’t figure that out. He says, “God, what on earth are you doing?” And God said, “Look, Habakkuk: My ways are not your ways. I’ve got a plan; I know what I am doing.” Look in chapter 2 and verse 3: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”* (Habakkuk 2:3) God said, “Habakkuk, you can’t understand all that I am doing; but I have a plan, and there is no panic in heaven. I know what I am doing.”

And do you know what Habakkuk did when God showed him that? He did something that I want every one of you depressed people in this congregation and those on television to do: He started to thank the Lord. He started to praise God in the midst of his problems. I want you to read chapter 3, verse 17. Habakkuk put a smile on his face and said, *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation”* (Habakkuk 3:17–18) —giving thanks in everything—giving thanks in everything. “I don’t understand it, God. I don’t have to understand it. Praise God! He knows what He’s doing. He’s running on schedule.”

You say, “Brother Rogers, when I give thanks for everything, does that mean that I approve evil, that I thank God for blasphemy and rape and arson and murder and war?” No, it doesn’t mean that you approve evil when you give thanks in everything; it means that you trust God and that you’re saying, “No matter what, God is sovereign.” There is no panic in heaven. I tell you, every rainstorm, every earthquake, every tornado, every war, every famine, every flower in the field, every sparrow, every hair on your head are numbered! God knows it all, and there is no panic in heaven. And it is time that we

started thanking God in everything and releasing the power of God in our lives as we thank God. *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6–7) And the next time you have trouble, don’t push the panic button; push the praise button. Praise the Lord. *“In every thing give thanks.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

*We thank Him for sun.  
Do we thank Him for rain?  
We thank Him for joy.  
Do we thank Him for pain?  
We thank Him for gains.  
Do we thank Him for losses?  
We thank Him for blessings.  
Do we thank Him for crosses?*

*“In every thing give thanks.”* That’s our relationship to circumstances.

### **III. The Spirit of Accommodation: Submitting**

Now, the third mark of a Spirit-filled life: not only a spirit of joyfulness, and not only a spirit of thankfulness; but, thirdly, a spirit of lowliness. This is the third mark: that we’re filled with the Holy Spirit and the manifestation and also the maintenance of staying filled with the Holy Spirit. The third participle is this. Go back, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 21: *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* (Ephesians 5:21) This deals with our relationship to other people.

What kind of submission is this to be?

#### **A. Humble Submission**

Number one: It’s humble submission. This word *submitting* is a military word, and it literally refers to one equal placing himself beneath another equal. You see, submission does not mean inferiority. God the Son submitted Himself to God the Father, and yet the Bible says, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation.”* (Philippians 2:5–7) And all of us are to learn to submit. It is humble submission.

Now, the Bible teaches that wives are to be in subjection to their husbands, but I want to clear the air right here: Submission is not for women; it is for Christians—for Christians! Every Christian—man or woman, boy or girl—is to have a submissive spirit.

And the reason that some people never get anywhere in the Christian life is they're standing up for their rights. And as long as you're fighting and working and standing for your rights, you'll never be Spirit-filled. What rights does a dead man have?

## **B. Helpful Submission**

We're to be submitting ourselves—humble submission. Secondly, helpful submission. You see, this word *submit* literally means “to serve, to place oneself under and put one at one's disposal.” There are a lot of people talking about being filled with the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, filled with the Spirit—and they're shouting and giggling and singing, but they're no good. They're no earthly good. They don't give a cup of cold water in Jesus's name. They don't warm and cheer and help. The Apostle Paul said, *“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”* (2 Corinthians 4:5) We're to serve one another in love. And if you're not having any joy, you're wandering around, digging around in your spiritual innards in morbid introspection, trying to figure out whether you're as happy as you ought to be as a Christian or not, forget it. Find somebody to serve and get at it. Get busy. Put yourself in a place of service and you'll have more joy than you know what to do with as you serve the Lord Jesus Christ and as He becomes your example.

## **C. Holy Submission**

It is humble submission. It is helpful submission. It is holy submission. Notice: *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* (Ephesians 5:21) Literally, that means “in the reverence of Christ”—“in the reverence of Christ”—holy submission. Friend, let me tell you about submission: I don't submit to you because of you; you don't submit to me because of me. I submit to you and you to submit to me because of Him—because of Jesus. It is a holy submission in the reverence of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

There it is, friend. What are the marks of the Spirit-filled life? Joyfulness, thankfulness, lowliness. There it is—those are the marks of the Spirit-filled life: the spirit of adoration, the spirit of appreciation, the spirit of accommodation; our relationship to God, our relationship to circumstances, our relationship to one another.

# Harmony in the Home

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 7, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:18–33

*“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

EPHESIANS 5:33

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Assume Responsibility
- II. Let Your Wife Know She Is Number One in Your Life
- III. Protect Your Wife from Emotional Trauma
- IV. Make Your Wife Feel Secure
- V. Take the Initiative to Love Your Wife

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 5, tonight, and we are continuing our message from this morning, talking about “Harmony in the Home.” And, Ephesians chapter 5 is a music chapter.

And, we begin in verse 18. The Bible says, *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his*

*father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband”* (Ephesians 5:18–33).

“Harmony in the Home”—we told you that in order for there to be music—and music that we like to listen to—there must melody. We sing the same song. There can be harmony; we sing different parts. There ought to be rhythm, where we sing it together. So what? An illustration of what marriage ought to be and the music of marriage. Now, we were talking about the fact that God made men and women different, that He might make us one, and how—that we sing the same song, but the man sings one part and takes the lead, and the woman sings the other part and harmonizes with her husband. And, that’s just simply God’s plan.

And, I talked to you a little bit about the differences between men and women and the things that I have given to you about the differences between men and women. These psychological and physiological and emotional differences—they vary in degrees, but these are tendencies. These are things that are not necessarily ironclad with every man and every woman. But, we talked to you about God’s divine design, how God made male and female. And then, we talked about the definite differences, and I’m just going to tick these off just to remind you that God teaches that the man is to be the provider, and the woman is to be his helper. Number two: the man is to be a protector; the woman is to be a nurturer. She’s the one who gives life. And, I talked to you, also, about the fact that the man is to take the lead, and the woman is there to give beauty and enhancement to the home. Therefore, the man is more physically strong; the woman is tenderer and more fragile in her nature.

We talked about the fact that the man, when he approaches a problem, generally approaches the problem headfirst. The woman will come at it emotionally and heart first. If the man is the head of the home, indeed, the woman is the heart of the home. Men, because it is their duty to provide, generally, are more success-oriented. Women, generally, are more security-oriented. Men tend to look at the big picture, to be goal-oriented. Women tend to see all of the obstacles between the goal and where they are; they look at the details. Men are sometimes characterized by being insensitive, too tough, a brick for emotions. Women are more sensitive and are sometimes are blamed for being too sensitive. Men, because they are the protectors and the defenders, tend to be more defensive. Women tend to be more trusting.

Now, God made us different, that He might make us one. You know, Peter says, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered”* (1 Peter 3:7). That is, together we inherit the blessing. I



don't believe that you can inherit the blessing of marriage, sir, without your wife, and she cannot inherit it without you. God wants us to inherit those blessings together. That's what we said, this morning. You say, "Well Pastor, why didn't you say it that fast this morning?" Well, anyway, that's what we said this morning, and now I want us to move to the third and final thing that I wanted to say. First of all, we talked about that divine design. Then, we talked about those definite differences.

And now, let me give you some dynamic directions. And, we leave the book of Genesis and we come, now, to the Apostle Paul. Let's see how Paul took what happened in Genesis, and brings it over into the New Testament, and tells us how this should apply to us right here, in the New Testament.

Now, may I say, dear friend, that we have a generation of kids, today, who are very mixed up. **They remind me of the rooster who saw a plate of scrambled eggs and said to the hen, "There goes our crazy, mixed up kids." We have a group of crazy, mixed up kids—not all kids, but we have a lot of them today.** They don't know whether they are being raised by a feminine man or a masculine woman. There has been a blurring, today, of the distinction between the sexes—most of it brought about by the radical feminists. But, the radical feminists are but a tribute to the failure of men to be the kind of masculine men that they ought to be. We have a generation of miniature men, rather than mature, masculine men. And, what we see today is really a tribute to the failure of men. The divorce epidemic, homosexuality, sexual abuse, promiscuity, social awkwardness, emotional distress, and suicide, I think, primarily, are laid at the feet of the men. And, as I pointed out this morning, when Eve failed, God did not primarily blame Eve; God blamed Adam for Eve's failure. And, men must resume responsibility.

Now, with that in mind, let me give you five things that we men must do. So many times, when we come to Ephesians chapter 5, the women wince, and they say, "Oh, he's going to talk about being in submission again." Well, dear friend, I want to tell you that Ephesians chapter 5 is a much tougher passage on the men (rightly interpreted). Now, let me tell you what you must do if you would be a masculine—not a midget, miniature—man. If you want to have mature masculinity; if you would like to be able to demonstrate to your son or daughter what God's original intent is, and what the divine design is, you are going to find it, right here.

## **I. Assume Responsibility**

Number one, sir, you must assume responsibility. Look, if you will, in verse 22: "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body*" (Ephesians 5:22). Now, we call that, sometimes, the *chain of command*. But, the chain of command is not the best way to describe that. What we're really talking about

here is the chain of *responsibility*.

To be the head literally means that you are responsible. It doesn't mean that you exist to have your needs met, because you are the head. It means that you exist to meet needs. Now, husbands, we cannot escape that responsibility. Put in your margin "1 Corinthians 11, verse 3"; the Apostle Paul says, "*Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, our problem is, today, is that we have so many men who have not assumed responsibility. They have wanted to have headship without responsibility.

Now, when your wife is told to be subject to you, it means she is to look to you. It doesn't mean that she is there to be your servant. But, she is there to have those basic needs met by you. The fact that she submits to you means that you have, therefore, the responsibility to take care of her; and, your leadership is to be servant leadership.

Wives, submission does not mean inferiority. Now, the devil would tell us that if you're in submission, you're inferior. But, that's a lie out of hell. May I tell you that Philippians chapter 2 tells us He "*did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death*" (Philippians 2:6–8). And, the Bible says, "*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place*" (Philippians 2:9). Jesus took the low way and God exalted Him. The devil took the high way, and God has brought Him down, and will bring him down, to the very pit. Now, what I am saying is this: *We are never more like Jesus when we have a submissive spirit. We are never more like the devil when we have a rebellious spirit.* Submission is not inferiority. The Bible teaches here, in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 3: "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God*" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, if God the Father is the head of Christ the Son, does that mean that Christ the Son is inferior to God the Father? Not at all. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal. It would be sheer blasphemy and a distortion of a basic Christian doctrine to say that there is inferiority in the Godhead. And yet, eternally, the Lord Jesus Christ is in submission to the eternal Father.

The woman is not at all inferior to the man, when she is in submission to the man. What Christian submission is is this: Simply and plainly, it is one equal voluntarily placing him or herself under another equal, that Jesus Christ may therefore be glorified. That's all it is: One equal voluntarily placing him or herself under another equal, that God may therefore be glorified.

Now, so many times, we talk about husband and wife as a partnership, but partnership is not the best way to describe it. David McLaughlin was here, and he gave

us a course—many of you men were here—“The Role of the Man in the Family.” And, one of the illustrations that he gave was tremendous. He said, “Don’t think of the family, with husband and wife as partners, because when you have a partnership, you don’t really have a head. What you have are decisions made all kinds of ways by votes and so forth, and whoever gets the most votes and all of that, then that’s the way the decisions are made for the corporation.”

What a husband and wife are more like—an analogy that we can fit in with—is not partnership, but a team. The husband and the wife are the team. Let’s take a football team. That’s a good analogy of the relationship between husband and wife. Now, a football team has a quarterback. I used to play football; and, once upon a time, I played quarterback. And, the quarterback directs the team. Now, who says that the quarterback is to call the plays? Well, the coach says that the quarterback is to call the plays. Does that mean that the quarterback is the best athlete on the team? Not necessarily so. There may be other people on the team who could run faster than the quarterback, have more agility, or more natural ability than the quarterback, but the quarterback called the play. Why? Simply because the coach said so.

Does that mean that the husband is superior to the wife? No, he’s just simply the quarterback of the team, because the coach says so. That’s all. Because the coach says so. It is teamwork. And, it doesn’t mean that he is more competent than his wife. My Joyce is more competent than I am in a lot of areas, and I just have to admit it. And now, I can do some things she can’t do. But, she, in some areas, is more competent than I am. Joyce takes care of details in our home that would be difficult for me to take care of. I suppose I could do it, but I am so grateful that she is competent in those areas. But God, the coach, has still said that I am to call the play.

Now, when I would call a play in football, many times, people would come back to the huddle; and, the guard would say, “I can move this fellow out.” A wide receiver might say, “I can put a move on that guy; I am free. Give the ball to me; I am free.” Or, somebody else would say, “I believe we can, if it’s only three yards, we can go right up the middle.” And, the quarterback has to listen to all of that. He also has to listen to the coach, who just simply may send in a play. And then, it’s all over. You just do what the coach says. Or, he just may make up his own mind: “This is the best play to run.” Now, but, he calls the play—not because he’s the best athlete, just simply because the coach says, “Somebody has to do it.” And, dear friend, it’s better for everybody to be going in one direction after you’ve come together.

Now, learn this, men: When we’re talking about assuming responsibility, the husband may delegate authority, but not responsibility. You may say, “My wife takes care of the finances, primarily, in our house. I hardly ever write a check. I don’t touch the books. She handles that. She takes the money, puts it in the bank, and writes the

checks—does all of these things. I have delegated that authority to her, and she has the authority to do that.” But, while she has the authority, she does not bear the responsibility. I want you to listen. You see, there’s no way that I can escape the responsibility. So, therefore, if it all works out good, she is to be praised. But, if it doesn’t work out good, I am to be blamed. You understand that?

You see, I can delegate the authority, but I cannot escape my responsibility. That doesn’t mean that a wife who is a member of a family, therefore, is inferior to her husband. In many ways, she may be superior. She says she doesn’t want to be equal with me; she’s not coming down for anything. There is, my dear friend, the failure of men to assume responsibility. Now, no husband, therefore, demands his headship.

Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ does not demand his headship? Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ does not force His Lordship on you? He doesn’t do it. I mean, if He forced His Lordship on us, we’d all be a little better, and we are, in some ways. But, we would be regimented and mechanical. We’re to love our wives as Christ loved the church. And, we don’t demand headship, you see; respect and trust are earned. And, the Lord Jesus Christ has definitely earned my respect, and He’s earned my trust.

And, so, if you are a husband, and you are having difficulty assuming headship in your home, don’t head for trust. Don’t shoot for trust; shoot for respect. Let your wife learn to respect you as a man of God, as a loving person. And, as we’re going to show—and I’m going to tell you—that trust will come automatically. We, as husbands, have to assume responsibility. It is a responsibility to assume.

Now, let’s go back to the quarterback analogy. Suppose, as a quarterback, I call a good play, and the team wins. Who gets the praise? The whole team gets the praise. But, suppose, as a quarterback, I call a bad play, and the team loses. Who gets the blame? The quarterback gets the blame. You see, my dear friend, it’s a safety net for the woman to respect the headship of the husband. He may delegate authority, but not responsibility. Sir, there is no way that you can sidestep your responsibility. So, number one, assume your responsibilities, sir. You are the head. That does not mean a chain of command, nearly as much as it means an assumption of responsibility.

## **II. Let Your Wife Know She Is Number One in Your Life**

Number two: This difference between the sexes means that you, as the husband, are to let your wife know that she is number one in your life. Now, notice here, as we continue to look here, in Ephesians 5: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). Your wife must know that she comes before the children. She comes before your own mother and your own father.

*“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:*

*and they shall be one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24).

Joyce knows that she is number one of all human beings, of five billion people on the face of this Earth, in my life. She is number one. I know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that I am number one in Joyce’s life. That gives me a sense of security to think that of all of the people who ever lived today and have ever lived, there’s one person who loves me more than any other person on the face of the Earth. What a feeling that is to my heart that she loves me that way; and, she is to know that I love her, that she is number one.

I need to treat her, therefore, as Christ treated the Church. “That Jesus gave Himself for the Church” (Ephesians 5:25). And, I am not going to bear on this point very long, but there’s some of you men who are not guilty of sexual adultery, but you are guilty of emotional adultery. You are sharing other things with other females that ought only to be shared with your wife. And, emotional adultery, before long, can lead to physical adultery. And, if it never leads to physical adultery, emotional adultery is a crime and a sin against your wife and a sin against God. There is a woman who needs to be absolutely number one in your life.

### **III. Protect Your Wife from Emotional Trauma**

Now, the third thing: Not only do you need to let your wife know that she is number one, but thirdly, you need to protect your wife from emotional trauma. Look, if you will, in this same chapter. The Bible says He “*gave himself for it*”—verse 26—“*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25–27). So ought men to love their own wives.

Now, this means that you are to protect her from emotional trauma and damage. That’s your job and your responsibility, sir. You see, the word *spot*—that the Lord presents the Church to Himself without *spot*—well, that word *spot* means “trash,” “refuse,” or “dirt” (Ephesians 5:27). It’s your job to keep things from being dumped on your wife—trash being dumped on her. You have to be careful that you’re not the guy that dumps on her, or that you come, in the evening, and just unload on your wife, saying things that maybe she cannot bear. Now, you have to be very careful here, because she does want you to share your hurts with her. She does want to know where you are hurting, so she can come in, and weep with you, and caress you, and care for you. But, you have to be careful the things that you unload on her. And especially, I would say, sir, that one of the things I’ve learned: The most important time that I spend in the day is the first five minutes at the end of the day.

If I go right through the house and go right to my study, or go right through the house

and go right to the news, or whatever, I have failed Joyce. I need to go right to Joyce. I need to put her in my arms. I need to hold her. I need to tell her that I love her. I need to call on the phone before I get there and tell her that I am coming and that I can hardly wait to see her. That's so very important—those five minutes that say to her, “You are number one. I've not come in here to dump trash, but I have come here, really, to take a load off of you, that I might present you to myself without spot.”

And then, the next word is *wrinkle*. Do you see that? And, the word *wrinkle* is an interesting word; it speaks sort of an internal wound, a trauma that shows itself literally, sometimes, on the face. I'm not talking about the normal wrinkles that all of us get—and the laugh lines and the crinkly places around the eyes—because we've laughed a lot through life. But, I'm talking about, sometimes, the trauma that comes to a woman who has lived with a man who has been a midget man, who has not really loved his wife as he ought. I can sometimes spot these women. You see them with their taut faces. You see them with their countenance, which is tense and drawn, because of these internal traumas. They've not been loved as they ought to be loved. And, you can see, sometimes, that pain just written on their face.

A preacher, Robert Burns, suggested that, at twenty, a woman has the face that God gave her. At thirty, she has the face made possible by cosmetics. At forty, she has the face that her masseuse and hairdresser has given her. At fifty, she has the face that reflects the way her husband treated her. From there on, she has the face she gave herself. But, a husband is to protect his wife. My assignment from God, sir, and your assignment from God, is to make your wife a more radiantly beautiful Christian. And so, that's what you're to do.

#### **IV. Make Your Wife Feel Secure**

Now, here's the next thing that you are to do, sir: Not only are you to assume responsibility, not only are you to let your wife know that she is number one, not only are you to protect your wife from emotional trauma, but also, you are to make your wife feel secure.

Now, look again, here; he says, here, that you are to nourish and cherish her. Verse 29: “*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church*” (Ephesians 5:29). Now, the word *nourish*—obviously, it means “to get nourishment.” When you are hungry, you want to eat. And, when you are thirsty, you want to drink. You want your needs met. And, as a husband, it is your responsibility to provide for your wife the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual nutriment that she needs to grow on. You are to nourish her. You are to help her to grow. But, not only are you to nourish her, but you are to cherish her. The word *cherish* actually means “to warm with body heat.” **An illustration of this is a hen setting on her eggs. And, if that hen**

is setting on those eggs, you can come along and kind of walk past, and she will peck at you, but she won't move. A snake will come by, and she will peck at that, but she won't move. She will set on those eggs until they are hatched. What she is doing is nourishing them with body heat, and that's really, friend, the way that you can get your wife, as it were, to hatch. You can't just break that shell. But, what you can do is to warm her with body heat. What you need to do is to take her into your bosom, and hold her, and nourish her, and cherish her.

I heard of a woman who got in almost a catatonic state. Nobody could bring her out of it. They took her to the psychiatrist. He couldn't get much response from her. And, finally, he had an idea. He left his desk, walked around, put her in his arms, held her up close to his chest, and gave her a big kiss. With that, she just gave a sigh and breathed. And, the light came back into her face, and a smile played across the corners of her cheeks. And, the psychiatrist turned to her husband and said, "See, that's what she needs every day of the week." He said, "Well, doctor, I can bring her in for six days, but I can't get her here on Thursday."

## **V. Take the Initiative to Love Your Wife**

You men need to understand what it means to cherish our wives. Now, last of all, let me say that it is the husband who is to take the initiative. The husband is to take the initiative. I would say, primarily, if the home is wrong, it is because the husband is wrong. The husband takes the initiative. How are we to love our wives? As Christ loved the Church. Now, who took the initiative? Jesus took the initiative. We love God because He loved us.

*Out of the ivory palaces,  
Into a world of woe,  
Only His great eternal love  
Made my Savior go (Barraclough, Henry).*

Jesus is pictured in the Bible as loving us first.

Revelation chapter 3, verse 20: "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock...*" (Revelation 3:20). The Bible says, "*There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one*" (Romans 3:11–12). And, the husband is to do the same. I've learned this: that the man is the initiator, and the woman is to be the responder. Turn with me for an illustration in Song of Solomon. Would you do that? Just turn with me, right there—Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Songs—if you would. It's right after the book of Proverbs. And, I want to show you something very interesting about how husbands are to love their wives. And, Ecclesiastes gets in there also, so skip Ecclesiastes and go right on to the Song of Solomon. And, I want you to see this, again, speaks of the "Music of Marriage."

Here is an entire love poem—actually, a song. It's called a *song*; that talks about

marriage as music. And, I want you to see how the male lover, who pictures Christ loving His Church, is pictured here, for example, in chapter 1 and verse 8. Here, he is speaking to his companion: *“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women...”* (Song of Solomon 1:8). Here, he’s pursuing her with beautiful language, and you’ll never find more beautiful language than this—verse 15: *“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes,”* and so forth (Song of Solomon 1:15). It’s incredible language. You say, “Well, why can’t I talk like that?” Well, maybe you need to work at it. I don’t think Solomon just did this overnight. And then, look, if you will, in chapter 4, for example, verse 1: *“Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks”* (Song of Solomon 4:1). He goes on to speak of his great love for her. And, look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 2: *“I sleep”—now, here, she’s talking; he’s been awake. And, she says—“I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night”* (Song of Solomon 5:2). “I’ve been up all night just trying to get to you sweetheart.” And so, he’s knocking on the door. Well, here’s what she says: She says to him, “Now, wait a minute. I’m already undressed, and I’m in the bed. I have put off my coat. How shall I put it on? I have washed my feet. How shall I defile them?” Maybe she lived in a house with a dirt floor, and she’s saying, “Look, I’m already in bed, and don’t bother me now.” And, she’s pretending she doesn’t want to go to the door.

Now, if you will, look in verse 4: *“My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him”* (Song of Solomon 5:4). That sure is a poor translation right there. What that says is, “My heart is stirred.” That’s literally what that means. That’s my inner most being. He’s out there, and he’s saying, “Would you open the door honey? I just want to get you in my arms.” And, she’s pretending to be hard to get. She said, “Oh, no.” She said, “I’m already in bed. I’ve already taken off my clothes and put on my negligee, and I’ve washed my feet.” And, he’s over there, knocking at the door; and, he’s trying to get in to see her, and he’s been traveling long through the night just to get to see her. And, what is happening is her heart is going thumpity-thump. And, notice in verse 5: *“I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock”* (Song of Solomon 5:5). All the time, she’s been putting on perfume saying, “I don’t want to go to the door.” I mean, listen, she wanted him to pursue her.

Guys, you have to learn, when she says “no” she doesn’t mean it. Sometimes, she wants to be pursued. It’s the husband who is to take the initiative. Did you know that if you don’t take the initiative in loving your wife that you are going to cause her a trauma, if she takes the initiative? Something in her very spirit will be wounded, because God did not make her to take the initiative; God made you to do it. If the woman initiates, she



doesn't feel right. Now, I'm not talking about the fact that she cannot be amorous to her husband and she cannot flirt with her husband. Of course she can. But, if the total import of the life is the woman taking the initiative, there's something vitally wrong.

I want you to turn—just turn—to the book of Proverbs here, chapter 7, for just a moment. Remember that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. And, Christ took the initiative. Do you know what the mark of a harlot is? The mark of a harlot is somebody, a female, who is brazen and who takes the initiative. Look, if you will, here, in chapter 7 and verse 10: *“And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart”* (Proverbs 7:10). Did you know there is the dress of a harlot? Now, you let Paris and some of these others design your dresses for you ladies. There are some women who go outside in things they ought not to have come downstairs in. The Bible calls it *“the attire of an harlot”* (Proverbs 7:10).

You say, “Well, I just want to be attractive.” Well, you better ask yourself, “What am I trying to attract?” You know that that's not for sale ought not to be advertised. Did you know that? The Bible speaks of “the attire of a harlot” (Proverbs 7:10). A woman ought to dress herself beautifully—you read Proverbs 31—but not with suggestiveness. The Bible calls that “the attire of a harlot” (Proverbs 7:10). Well, why does she address herself that way? Well, just continue to look in verse 11: *“(She is loud and stubborn”—woman, lady, God never made you to be a loud mouth or a mulish person in public. It is not feminine; it is a form of harlotry—“(She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets and lieth in wait at every corner)”—she's not a keeper at home. She is not under protection. She is out in public on the streets. And, notice how she is the aggressor—“So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt”* (Proverbs 7:11–18). That's all the mark of the harlot.

Fathers have confided in me that their sons, now, are having difficulty dating girls, because the girls say, “If you don't go to bed with me, we can't date anymore.” That's almost unthinkable. Now, God demands as much purity from a man as he does a woman. But, we live in a day, today, where the feminists have done such a job on us, that it is now the women who in the dress the manner of a harlot and are becoming the one who is the initiator. God never intended that.

The man is the one who is to initiate all of this. And, you know what the problem with

men is? Remember, I told you, this morning, that men are goal-oriented. And, men, if they're courting, their goal is to get married. And so, they court, and court, and court, until they get married; and then, now that they're married, they go off to another goal. And, she can hardly wait 'til they get married, because she thinks it's going to be one perpetual courtship, and she wonders what happened.

Just the other day, Joyce asked me—she said, “Adrian, remember how you used to come in, when we were courting, and would stand by me in the kitchen, and over at my mother's house, and you would help me to do the dishes?” And, you know, it wasn't the dishes. I was, when she had both hands in the sink, you know, I could just kind of hug her good, like that. And, I got to thinking about that. Because I was very goal-oriented, I wanted to marry this girl. But, a lot of guys say, “You know, you don't have to chase a streetcar if you've caught it.” And so, one girl said, “You know, I don't know what I'm going to do”—(talking to her mother) she said—“My sweetheart is just spending so much money on me.” She said, “I just don't know what to do about it.” She said, “Just get married. He'll stop.” No, my dear friend, the courtship should not end with the marriage ceremony. As a matter of fact, you need to turn up the heat and just continue in that courtship.

## Conclusion

Now, sirs, listen to me: God made us different, that he might make us one. But, God gave you one nature, and God gave your wife another nature. And, God gave you masculinity, and God gave you responsibility that you are to assume. And, in that responsibility that you are to assume, now, you may give your wife authority, but you can never get rid of your responsibility. Then, you let your wife know that she is number one. And, once you let your wife know that she is number one, you move in to protect your wife from those that trash and those internal traumas. You can present her to you without spot or wrinkle to make her a more radiantly beautiful Christian. And then, my dear friend, once you have done that, then you move in to encourage her—that is, to nourish her and to cherish her. And, it is up to you, sir, to take the initiative. All of us, including this preacher, are going to have to begin to practice what God's Word has said, that there might be harmony in the home.

Father God, I just pray that You would help us to understand what is important, Lord God, that we would not see money as a goal, but as a tool, and we will not sacrifice our families to gain money or time, but that we might sacrifice money, time, or anything else for the goal of a Christian home that glorifies You. Lord God, I pray, tonight, for any who may not be saved in this building, that, tonight, they might give their hearts, their lives, to Jesus Christ. And, Father God, You draw them out. And, Lord, I don't want to just try to persuade somebody to be a Christian; Lord, that's really Your work. Oh God, I want

to tell them about You, but, dear Holy Spirit of God, draw these people to Jesus. Lord God, I pray, tonight, that any who are lost, who may be listening by radio, or later by a tape, or later on television, or whatever, Lord God, that they might truly be saved. And, Father God, bless those, tonight, who need a church home, and lead them here, if it can be Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Spirit-Filled Husband

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 9, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:18, 22–23, 25–31**

*“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,  
and gave himself for it.”*

EPHESIANS 5:25

## Outline

Introduction

- I. His Position
- II. His Pattern
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to speak to you today on “The Spirit-Filled Husband”—what a husband is to be to his wife if he really wants to be what he ought to be, what God wants him to be, and what he ought to be on this Mother’s Day. Ephesians 5:18, 22-23: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit...Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”* (Ephesians 5:18, 22–23) And what a wonderful, wonderful passage this is on the Spirit-filled husband! Now mister, God did a good thing for you when He gave you a wife. Proverbs 18:22 says, *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing.”* (Proverbs 18:22) That’s a good place for an “amen,” fellows. Now, you’re trying to get in good on Mother’s Day, and you just sat there like a bump on a log. Now listen, you should have said “amen” and squeezed her hand a little. The Bible says, *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing.”* (Proverbs 18:22)

Now, you don’t have to get married, and it’s not God’s plan for everyone to be married. And God talks about the sanctity of the single life just as well as He talks about

the marvels and the wonder of the married life. And if you are single, and perhaps you have the gift of singleness, don't think that the message is not for you, because if you listen with a spiritual ear when I talk about how the husband is to love his wife, you're going to find out that Jesus loves you the way that I'm going to tell a husband to love his wife. And there will be a spiritual blessing here for all of us whether we're married, whether we're single, whether we're widowed, whether we are hoping to get married, whatever the situation is. I want you to listen because there is a lesson here and a message for everybody—and oh, that we could sound it again and again and again! The sanctity of the Christian home.

Aldous Huxley, in his volume *Brave New World*, suggested that before long, marriage licenses may be sold like dog licenses—good for twelve months with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time. And that, ladies and gentleman, is a world that we're moving into. And oh, what a crime and what a shame, because marriage, rightly understood, is so wonderful. Jeremy Taylor said this: he said, “A good mate”—he's talking about your wife, mister—“a good mate is heaven's last and best gift to man; her voice, his sweetest music; her smile, his brightest day; her lips, his faithful counselor; and her prayers the ablest advocate of heaven's blessings on his head.” *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing.”* (Proverbs 18:22)

Now, Paul was a great teacher, and, of course, the Holy Spirit inspired the words of Paul. And so, Paul, when he's telling the husband how to be a Spirit-filled husband, he teaches by the use of the object lesson. So, he says, “Husbands, you want me to tell you how to love your wives? You are to love your wife like Christ loves the Church.” Isn't that a beautiful object lesson? What a wonderful way to teach. And so, we're going to look at the Spirit-filled husband this morning, and we're going to see three things that the Lord says about the Spirit-filled husband: first of all, we're going to see his position; and then, we're going to see his pattern; and then, we're going to see his practice.

## I. His Position

Now, what is his position? The husband has the position of headship. Notice verses 22–23: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”* (Ephesians 5:22–23) Now, I said I wasn't going to speak to the women, but let me just talk to them a little bit. Okay? Nod your head. Fine. The Bible says here that a woman is to submit to her husband. (Ephesians 5:22) Now, this is so opposite from the ways of the world because the world tells us today, “Stand up for your rights, and don't submit to anybody for any reason.” But the Bible says that *“the husband is the head of the wife.”* (Ephesians 5:23) Now, why has God done this? God has done this that there might be a chain of command that would link a home to heaven, and God has done this that there

may be authority in the home.

Now friend, God wants the home to have a head. Anything without a head is dead. Anything with two heads is a freak. And God wants us to have a home with a head. Now, God—the sovereign God—has said that the husband is to be the head. Now, you say, “Why didn’t you say that the wife is to be the head?” I don’t know. You can ask Him when you get to heaven. But it just so happens that He said that the husband is to be the head of the home. Now, that doesn’t mean that the husband is better than the wife—not at all. You see, submission does not mean inferiority. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:3—Paul is speaking, and he said, “I would have you to know that the head of the woman is the man, and the head of the man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3) Now, that’s a wonderful verse because it tells us clearly and plainly that God has a chain of command: there’s God the Father, God the Son, the man, the woman.

Now, you may say, “If the woman is under the man, then that means that the woman is inferior to the man.” Well, Christ is under the Father—does that mean that the Son is inferior to the Father? Absolutely not! If you know anything about Christian theology, we know that we serve one God in three persons—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and these are co-equal and co-eternal. Amen? Sure. Paul said concerning Jesus, “*Let this mind be in you, which [is] also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.*” (Philippians 2:5–7) Jesus willingly submitted.

Ladies, listen to me: you’re never more like the devil than when you’re in rebellion, never more like Jesus when you’re in submission. Put it down; get it straight: submitting to your husband does not mean that you are inferior in any way. And the woman who will not submit to her husband is going to have some problems on several principles. First of all, she’s going to have her problem with God because when she rebels against her husband, she rebels against the God, who said He was to be the head. Secondly, she’s going to have problems with her husband. Rather than being his completer, she’s going to become his crippler. Thirdly, she’s going to have problems with her children because when she refuses to be under her head, she’s going to lose the power to be over her children. You see, you can’t be over unless you’re under, and she’s going to lose authority with her children. Fifthly, she’s going to have difficulty with her own best interest because she will never ever have her deepest needs fully met because she’ll be trying to operate in a realm and in a sphere that God did not create her to operate. And so, she’s just sinned against her welfare. So, the Bible says that the position of the husband is to be the head of the home.

Now, this doesn’t mean, mister, that you are some sort of a dictator—doesn’t mean that you’re little lord. You are to lead your wife lovingly. It’s very interesting—while the

Bible says that the husband is the head and the Bible tells the wife to submit, it doesn't tell the husband to boss. It tells the husband to love, as we're going to see in a moment. You see, you're not to go around with a Bible club, beating her over the head, saying, "Submit, submit, submit." That's not the way to get her to submit. How does Jesus lead the Church? It is loving leadership. He leads through love. And that's the way you are to lead—through love. Anybody in a marriage who stands up for his or her "rights" is headed for trouble. You see, marriage rights are not like traffic rights. You know,

*Here lies the body of Benjamin May,  
Who died defending the right of way.  
He was right, dead right, as he sped along,  
But just as dead, as if he was wrong.*

You see, you can stand up for your rights and ruin a marriage. "Now look," you say, "I know my rights." No, listen, Jesus leads through love, but the position of the husband is the head. The home needs a head; and so, that is his position.

## **II. His Pattern**

Now, let's move from there—not only to his position as head, but also his pattern. In what way is he the head of the home? Well, look, if you will, in verse 23—look at it: "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.*" (Ephesians 5:23) That is, like Jesus is the head of the Church, that's the way, mister, you're to be head of your home. That doesn't mean, therefore, that your wife is a dummy. Have you ever thought what Jesus has committed to the Church? Why, Jesus has committed to the Church the evangelization of the world. You think of the responsibilities—the awful, fearful, terrible, great responsibilities—that Jesus has given to the Church. In the same way, a husband can depend upon his wife and can lean upon his wife and his wife can have great responsibilities. Many times a woman is more gifted than a man in finances, and more gifted than a man at planning, and more gifted than a man in business, or so forth. Does that mean, therefore, because he's the head, that he's not going to depend upon her or let her give insight or wisdom in these areas? I think he's going to be a fool if he doesn't. Why, if there's strength there and resources there, he ought to depend upon those things. But he's still the head; he's still the leader. And happy is the husband, happy is the wife, that realizes this. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. All right. So, his pattern is Christ. He's not a top-shot sergeant, some sort of a tyrant.

## **III. His Practice**

All right. Now, the third thing—and we're really getting into the heart of the message—his position. The Spirit-filled husband is the head; his pattern, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the example for the way that the husband is to love his wife. Now, let's talk about his practice. And now, we're really going to zero in. His practice is to love. Look in verse 25: "*Husbands, love your wives.*" (Ephesians 5:25) Now fellows, just put a star by it right there. That's not a suggestion. That's not a request. That is a command from Almighty God.

You say, "I can't love her." Don't tell me you can't love her. God says, "Love her." And, you see, anything that God commands you to do you can do. What kind of a God is it that commands us to do something we cannot do? Suppose God said, "Adrian, jump over this building." I can't jump over this building, but I tell you, if God commanded me to jump over this building, I could jump over this building, because behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command. Every command of God is also a promise of God. Did you know that? Behind every command is the almighty power of God to carry out that command.

So, we are to love our wives, but the love that we're going to look at here is not romantic love but the different kind of love that this world knows so little about—Christ-like love. So, as we're going to think now for the next few moments how Christ loves the Church, I want those of you who are not even married to be rejoicing in Jesus' love for you in this area. But those of you who are married and those of you, in particular, who are husbands, I want you to pay attention and see exactly, now, how you are to love that dear lady that God gave to you as your wife. Are you ready for it? All right, let's go. How are you to love your wife? Well, you love her as Christ loved the Church. And how did He love the Church?

### **A. Love Her Selflessly**

Well, first of all, He loved the Church selflessly. Look in verse 25: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself.*" (Ephesians 5:25) He gave Himself. You are to love her, therefore, selflessly. You're to understand. And, by the way, a lot of men have not understood this: sir, you're no longer single. Now, you think about that before you get married: you are no longer single, and you can no longer just make a decision on the basis of what you want to do. You must live selflessly, now, and your wife must be taken into consideration in every decision you make. Jesus gave Himself. He emptied Himself, the Bible says in Philippians chapter 2, and He did it on our behalf. (Philippians 2:8) All right, that's the first way you are to love her. How do you check up so far? Okay, selflessly.

### **B. Love Her Sacrificially**

Well, I'm going to put it in a little more concrete terms, now, in the next word: not only are you to love her selflessly, but you are to love her sacrificially, because that's what selflessly means. Verse 25 says, "He gave Himself for the Church," (Ephesians 5:25)



and that literally means “He died for the Church.” You say, “Well, I don’t have to die for her.” Oh yes, you do. You die for your wife; that is, you die for the person you were. I’m not just talking about dying to your sins; you did that when you got saved. But, you die to your singleness when you get married. And, therefore, you live from a different perspective. You see, you live your individuality. Do you know what most homes in America need? They need two funerals and a wedding, really, where the wife says, “I’m going to die to that old way, that singleness,” and the husband says, “I’m going to die to that old way, that singleness,” and you come together in one unique, new relationship.

And so, since, sir, you love your wife so sacrificially, that means there’s nothing too precious to give up for her—even that hunting trip, if necessary; even that job in that other area where perhaps would not be best for her if you uprooted her and the family, right now, together—nothing too precious for you to give up for her. Likewise, there is nothing too precious for her to give up for you, because you love her—that you know. Sometimes we get people who don’t perhaps handle finances well. Husbands are always complaining about how the wife handles finances. And, you know, “their bank account was perfect but for one feminine flaw: he was fast on the deposit, but she was quicker on the draw.” Maybe your marriage is something like that. But friend, let me tell you something: it doesn’t matter what she costs; she’s worth it. Jesus gave Himself for the Church.

### **C. Love Her Sanctifyingly**

Now look, you’re to love selflessly. You’re no longer to live like you’re single. You can’t just think of what I want. You’re to love her sacrificially. Christ died for the Church. The third way that you’re to love her is sanctifyingly. Look, if you will, in verse 26. Why did He give Himself for the Church? The Bible says, *“That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”*—and then, the Bible says—*“So ought men to love their wives.”* (Ephesians 5:26–28) So, you’re to love your wife sanctifyingly. You say, “What does that mean?” It means, sir—are you listening?—it means, sir, that you are to be the spiritual leader in the home, not the wife.

You know, somehow, somewhere down the line, we got the idea that the women are supposed to be spiritual. Well, they are, but God demands and looks for more holiness and more spirituality, I believe, in a man than He does in a woman. You know, there’s one thing that hacks me a little bit—is for somebody to come in the room and say, “Hey, are there any women in the room? I’ve got a good story I want to tell.” You know, it’s as if you wouldn’t say something like that around a woman but it would be all right to say it around a man. I feel like saying, “Well, there might not be any women, but there’s a

Christian gentleman here who doesn't want to hear it." You ought to be holy, holy, holy men. God demands purity out of men, and the husband, therefore, in the home—here's what he's to be in the home; here's what he's to be to his wife: he's to be the same thing that Jesus is to the Church. We are to be prophets, we're to be priests, we're to be pastors in our home. We are to lead our wives. We're to say with Joshua, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" (Joshua 24:15) You're to love your wife sanctifyingly.

Your duty as a husband is to make your wife a radiantly beautiful Christian. That's what Jesus is doing with the Church: "*That he might sanctify...it [by] the washing of [the] water by [his] word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, [without] spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*" (Ephesians 5:26–27) And so, it's your job to help your wife in those spiritual spots, in those spiritual wrinkles, and those things that she hasn't gotten straightened out and those things that she hadn't gotten cleansed. You're to help her in that area. Well, how are you to do that, mister, if you're not right with God? You're to intercede for your wife. You're to lead for your wife. You're to teach your wife. You are to protect her spirituality. That, sir, is your responsibility as a Spirit-filled husband.

#### **D. Love Her Satisfyingly**

Now, I want to tell you another way that you are to love her—selflessly, yes; sacrificially, indeed you are; sanctifyingly, yes. You're to lead her and love her that way, but I want to tell you another way that you're to love her: you are to love her satisfyingly. Look, if you will now, in verse 28: "*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies*"—now, that's a very interesting thing—"*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh*"—I mean, have you ever said, "Boy, I hate that hand. Look at that elbow"? No, look, no man ever hated his own flesh; you may hate the way it looks, or you may think, "Boy, I wish it were stronger or better," but when it gets hurt, you try to take care of it. No man ever hated his own flesh, but contrariwise—"*but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.*" (Ephesians 5:28–29)

Now mister, let me ask you a question: When you get thirsty, don't you try to get a drink of water? Sure you do. When you get hungry, don't you try to eat? Of course you do. When your body is tired, don't you want to see that it is rested? And when your body is wounded, don't you want that wound cleansed and bandaged? And, when you hurt, don't you want something to help heal that hurt? That's the way you love your body. You love your body so that when your body has a need, whatever that need is, you want that need satisfied, and you want it satisfied as quickly as is possible. Now, the Bible says that you are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church; and then, you are to love your wife as you love your own body. (Ephesians 5:25–28) That is, you should

be as interested in seeing that her needs are met as you are in seeing that the needs of your very own body are met. Your life is to be given over, mister, on this Mother's Day and every Mother's Day 'til death do you part. And you have to work every day to see to it that her needs are met so that she is satisfied, just as you want to satisfy your own body when it has its own needs.

Do you know what so many husbands fail to do? They fail to see that their wife is, indeed, their body. You see, that's the reason he says here, "*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*" (Ephesians 5:30) And just as we're members of Jesus' body, and Jesus' flesh, and Jesus' bones, our wives are members of our flesh. So, verse 29 says, "*No man ever yet hated his own flesh.*" (Ephesians 5:29) But listen, friend, if you don't care for your body, you're mentally ill. There's something wrong with a person who doesn't care what happens to his body; you're sick. And if a person doesn't care for his wife, that marriage is sick. So listen, be good to yourself and love your wife, for the Bible says in these verses when a man loves his wife, he loves himself. Every blessing she receives is your blessing, and every need that you meet in her is a need that is somehow ultimately being met in your own heart and in your own life. And so, you are to live by satisfying her.

Now, in order to satisfy her, you're going to have to know what her needs are. And in order to know what her needs are, you're going to have to listen. How do I know what the needs of my body are? Well, I have a central nervous system, and I have certain little sensors in my body that cry out to me and tell me when I am thirsty, and when I need to rest, and so forth. You need to be that spiritually sensitive; you need to develop the spiritual sensitivity so that you can hear and feel and understand what the needs of your wife are. So, you are to love her—you are to love her satisfyingly.

### **E. Love Her Supremely**

Now, let me tell you another way that you are to love her: not only are you to love her satisfyingly; you are to love her supremely. Look, if you will, please, in verse 30: "*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*"—now, watch verse 31—"*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*" (Ephesians 5:30–31) Now, what does that tell us? It tells us that of all human relationships, the relationship of husband and wife is a uniquely supreme relationship. It is not said of any relationships that they two become one flesh; therefore, your relationship to your husband and your relationship to your wife is a deeper relationship, more supremely unique or supremely unique and different than any other human relationship—far deeper than the relationship of two friends, far different than the relationship of two business partners, far different even than the relationship of parent and child. For the Bible says—verse 31: "*For this cause shall a*

*man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”* (Ephesians 5:31)

Now, I love my mother, and I love my daddy. And I thank God for those dear folks. But my relationship to Joyce is to be a deeper relationship than my own mother and to my own father. I’m to leave father and mother; I am to cleave unto my wife. That doesn’t mean that I no longer love my mother—I do love her. It doesn’t mean that I’m to no longer honor and respect my dad—I do honor him, and I do respect him; and I intend to keep on doing that. But, dear friend, my relationship to my wife Joyce is a greater, deeper, fuller relationship than my relationship to my own mother, who bore me, and my own father, who sired me. And I want to say also that my relationship to my wife is a deeper relationship than to my darling daughter, who is here this morning, or a relationship to my other children, whether it be Janice, or whether it be Gayle, or whether it be David, or whether it be Stephen. My relationship to Joyce is a deeper, fuller relationship—it must be. It is a relationship so intimate and so mystical that the Bible describes it and illustrates it by the relationship of the Church to Christ. And, you know that when we get saved, we become one flesh with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, you are to love your wife. As far as all human earthly relationships are concerned, you are to love her supremely. And, you know, there’s a wonderful feeling that a woman has when she knows that she is number one, no higher relationship. Oh, of course, she knows that she’s number two as far as God is concerned, but we’re talking now about human relationships. You know, happy is the wife who knows she’s number two as far as God is concerned, and happy are the children that know they are number three as far as God and mamma are concerned. And the best thing you can do for your children is to love their mother. That doesn’t make them insecure; that makes them all the more secure as they see that love. And it doesn’t make a wife less secure when you say to her, “Honey, I love you more than anything or anybody except Jesus Christ.” That just makes her feel all the more secure. You see, we don’t love our wives less when we love God more. As a matter of fact, I’m going to show you in a moment that you can’t really love your wife until you love God as you ought to love. But, I’m talking now about that supreme relationship; I’m talking about earthly relationships. You understand that now—earthly relationships. We are to love our wives supremely.

#### **F. Love Her Steadfastly**

All right. Now, one last thing—and we’re coming to the close here—but not only should you love your wife satisfyingly and supremely; you ought to love your wife steadfastly. Now, look again in verse 31: *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”* (Ephesians 5:31) Look at that word *joined*: *“and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one*

*flesh.*” (Ephesians 5:31) *“What... God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) Divorce is a tragedy of tragedy of tragedies, and God’s plan is for one man to be married to one woman ’til death do them part.

Let me show you how Jesus loves the Church. I’m reading here in Romans 8:38–39: Paul says, *“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38–39) He is saying there is no love over Christ’s love for the Church, and that’s the love, mister, that you’re to have for your wife. Don’t get married with the idea, “Well, if it doesn’t work out, we can get a divorce.” When you get on that matrimonial airplane, you throw away your parachute—you just throw it away. Don’t think of divorce as an option. Dear friend, God’s original intention is that marriage is for keeps. You are to love her steadfastly.

Now, how are you going to do that? Well, go back again to the first verse I read—Ephesians 5:18—and look at it: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18) Now, how are you going to fulfill this kind of love to her, and how is a wife going to submit to her husband? Not in human strength, I’ll guarantee you. It’s not in me; it’s not in you. We don’t have what it takes; we might as well admit it. There’s not a man—not a two-legged man upon this earth—who has the power to love his wife or anybody the way I just described it: selflessly, sacrificially, satisfyingly, steadfastly.

I heard of some cows out in a field, one time, and they saw a truck go past. It was carrying milk, and it said, “Grade A, pasteurized, homogenized, vitamin D-enriched, sanitized.” One cow said to the other one, “It makes you feel inadequate, doesn’t it?” And it really does, when you look at all of this, and you see what God demands of us. “Oh,” you say, “I can’t do that.” Many of you just slink it down and say, “How can anybody do that? I can’t do that.” And you’re right—I can’t, and you can’t. And that’s the reason, before the Bible gives these admonitions, it tells us, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 5:18) You see, this kind of love is really the love of Jesus Christ in you. You need to love your wife with the love of Jesus. And in order to have that love of Jesus, you must first of all be saved, and then you must be Spirit-filled.

## **Conclusion**

Are you saved and Spirit-filled today? Has there been a time in your heart and in your life when you opened your heart and said, “Lord Jesus, come in”? And, are you yielding to the Holy Spirit moment by moment? To the degree I’m walking in the Spirit, to the degree that I’m a Spirit-filled husband, to that same degree I’ll be loving Joyce as I ought to love her. And, incidentally, I’ll be loving Jesus—not incidentally, but I’ll be

loving Jesus also as I ought to love Him. And to the degree that Joyce is filled with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, she will be submitting to her husband as the Church is to Christ in all things. There's no way to build a home except on the Lord, friend. The Bible says in Psalms 127: *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."* (Psalms 127:1) Is your home built on Jesus? Are you saved?†

# Giving Thanks Always

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 21, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:20**

## Outline

Introduction

I. When Should We Be Thankful?

II. For What Should We Be Thankful?

III. How Is It Possible to Give Thanks for All Things?

Conclusion

## Introduction

And turn to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20. There's not a better Thanksgiving text in all of the Bible than this one, and yet there's not a harder command to obey, I really and truly believe, than this one—perhaps the hardest in all of the Bible to practice: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, friend, that is the secret of a happy and productive life.

There are really four levels of life. There are those people who are constantly complaining and grumbling. Have you met any of these folks? I mean, they can brighten up a room just by leaving it. There are people like this, they're always complaining. That's the lowest level. Then there are other people who just live lives of ingratitude. They don't complain, but they never thank God for His obvious blessings. That's a little better, but not much better. Then there are people who do thank God for obvious blessings, and when something good happens, they're grateful. That's a better level. But let me tell you what the highest level is: is to be grateful for all things at all times. Now, folks when you get to that place, that where you're grateful for all things at all times, then you have learned the secret of joy. Learn this from your pastor and also from the Word of God: unthankful people are never happy people. Now, put that down in your heart. Unthankful people are never happy people. Unthankful people are filled with bitterness, fear, negativism, selfishness, and self-pity.

There was a preacher on a train, one of these trains where you sit across from people facing people. He looked over here and here was a well-dressed man, very kind looking gentlemen, and over here was a magnificently dressed woman with all kinds of jewelry and diamonds dripping from her fingers. But she was complaining. She was complaining about everything. Complaining about the train ride, complaining about the

weather, complaining about the news, complaining about the food, complaining about the service. This preacher decided he would engage this couple in a conversation. He asked the man, Sir, what is your business, and what do you do? And the man told the minister. And then he said, Is this your wife? He said, Yes. And said, What does she do? And he said, Oh, she's in the manufacturing business. He said, Oh, and what does she manufacture? He said, She manufactures her own unhappiness. Now, a lot of folks are like that. They manufacture their misery, because they fail to be grateful.

Now, I want us to look at this passage of Scripture, and there are several things I want us to notice about our Thanksgiving this Thanksgiving season.

## **I. When Should We Be Thankful?**

The very first thing is when should we be thankful. Look in verse 20: "Giving thanks always." Now, if he had said sometimes, then that wouldn't be so hard, but he says always. Now we're coming this Thursday to Thanksgiving Day, but you know, as I know, one day is not enough. Why? Well, Psalm 68 and verse 19: "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits." Every day you get a fresh load. Amen? Every day! Every day you get a fresh load. Lamentations chapter 3, verse 23, says, "They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." I try to develop in my heart with my waking thoughts the first thing out of the bed is to lift my heart to God in praise. That is the habit of my life, is just to say, Lord God I love you, I praise you. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. Thanksgiving day, when is it? 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. Giving thanks always! And you should never pray without thanking God. The Bible says in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

I want to ask you a question and see if you can answer it. Why should God give you anything else if you don't thank Him for what He's already given you? Think about it. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Do you know what many of us need to be with our prayers? We need to pull out some of the groans and shove in some hallelujahs. Begin to thank God; put some thank you's in our prayers. That's when we do it.

## **II. For What Should We Be Thankful?**

And what should we do? What should our thanks be for? For all things. Look at it, I didn't say it, God said it: "Giving thanks always for all things." Now what should you thank God for? Well thank Him for your faith. Thank Him that you're saved and on the way to heaven if for nothing else you ought to be able to thank God for this because the Bible says in verse 19: "Singing to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." If you're a child of God, I don't



care what your condition is, if you are saved, you ought to be able to thank God every moment of every day no matter what happens to you, if you're saved. Amen? If you're saved, thank Him for your faith.

Thank Him for your food. If you've got anything to eat, thank Him for it. Do you ever just thank God for the water that you drink? Think about it. Did you know that in India 75 to 80 percent of the population don't have reasonably pure drinking water? Two million die annually just from water-related diseases. You go home tonight before you go to bed, and brush your teeth, and you just put your mouth there, and get some fresh water in your mouth. Thank God for it. Thank God for the very simple things. Do you have to thank God for dirty dishes? A lot of people would like to have some dirty dishes; that means they had something to eat. Thank Him for your food.

Thank Him for your friends. That's one of the greatest things about being a Christian and a child of God and a member of a church like this, the friends we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a family of friends. So many times we fail to thank our friends for what they mean to us. William Stidger was a professor and a preacher, a minister; he got to thinking one day about some of the people who had been a blessing to him in his life. And he thought about a teacher that he had when he was a little boy, and that teacher had shown a little special care for this man who later became a professor and a minister. She taught him to love reading; she taught him to love the things of books and literary things and so forth. And, and so he wrote her a letter and said, I just want to thank you for the investment in my life. This pastor professor minister got back the letter. It was written in a shaky, feeble hand, and it began, Dear Willie. It had been a long time since anybody called this austere preacher who was now over 50 years of age Willie, but he liked it. That was what she called him when he was a little boy: Dear Willie. Made him feel younger right off. And she said this to him: I cannot tell you how much your note meant to me. I'm in my 80's, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and like the last leaf of autumn, lingering around. You will be interested to know that I taught in school for fifty years and yours is the first note of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue cold morning and it has cheered me as nothing has in many years. Stidger said, I'm not sentimental, but I wept over that note. Then he said I got to thinking of other friends, people, and he said I thought of an old bishop who had guided me as a young minister in, in the beginning of my ministry. I searched around to find out if he was still living. In his retirement I found out he was living, but he had recently lost his wife. Stidger wrote a belated note of thanks to the old bishop, and he got back this letter, and I want you to listen to it: My dear Will, your letter was so beautiful, so real that as I sat reading it in my study, tears fell from my eyes, tears of gratitude. Then, before I realized what I was doing, I rose from my chair and called her name to show it to her, forgetting for a moment that she was gone. You will

never know how much your letter has warmed my spirit. I have been walking about in the glow of it all day long. We ought to thank God for friends and we ought to thank our friends, shouldn't we? I mean every one of us ought to this Thanksgiving season sit down and write a note to those people. Be thankful for your faith, be thankful for your food, be thankful for your friends. But also, friend, just be thankful for your fortune, I mean the things that God has given you, done for you. You know, we, sometimes we get in an automobile accident and we come out alive and we say, Thank you God for sparing my life. But do you just thank God when you go home and you don't have an accident, isn't that even better? I mean, that's even better!

There was a family. They heard in the church where a person had given a significant love offering, an offering in honor to the memory of their son who died on the battlefield. It was a significant offering, and on the way home, a wife said to her husband, why don't we give an offering of an equal amount for our son? He said, Why, our son wasn't killed. She said, Don't you think that's a good reason to give an offering? I mean, isn't that a reason to thank God also? How blessed we are. All things we are to thank God for. Do you know why we thank God for all things? Go back to Ephesians chapter 1 and look at these verses that I looked at tonight just before I stepped out here—Ephesians chapter 1. I want you to notice the all's. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in" what "all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in us, that in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him," look at it, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Verse 8: "all wisdom." Verse 10: "all things." Verse 11: "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And may I submit to you, that is why we give thanks for all things. Whether you understand it or not. Romans 8 and verse 28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." And the preposition 'work together for,' that word for is a preposition, which means toward an object or toward an end or purpose. We don't have to understand it. I love the ocean. I was bred, as many of you know, grew up in Florida on the Atlantic seacoast; love to go watch the waves roll in. Therefore, these words are especially meaningful to me. On the far reef the waves recoil in shattered foam, yet still behind them the sea urges its forces home. Its mighty chant of triumph is heard through all the thunderous din, the wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win. O mighty sea, thy message in changing spray is cast, within God's plan for progress it matters not at last how wide the shore of evil, how strong the reefs of sin. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win. You see, that's God. That's God's providence. No matter what is happening, God is like

that mighty ocean, and a wave may break here and subside there, but God is moving history toward His purpose. And therefore one of the greatest acts of faith that you can ever perform is just simply to say, O God, no matter what, I will praise you. I will bless you for all things.

There's a fable about a man who discovered the devil's barn, where the devil kept his seeds, and he found one very large horde of seeds. And the man said to Satan, What are those seeds? He said, Oh, those are seeds of discouragement. He said, I love to sow the seeds of discouragement everywhere I go. The man said to the-Satan, Do they always sprout? And Satan said, Well, almost always. But he said, There's one place where they hardly ever sprout. He said, Where is that? He said, In a heart filled with gratitude.

### **III. How Is It Possible to Give Thanks for All Things?**

Oh, friend, what should we do? Give thanks always for all things. Now, how? How can we do it? How is it possible? Well, here in this verse I want you to go back to it and look. It is possible because of three things. First of all, we are to give thanks in the Spirit. Now back up to verse 18: "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks." Now this is inextricably interwoven with the phrase "be filled with the Spirit." You see, to be Spirit-filled is to be thankful. If you're not thankful, you're not Spirit-filled. There is no way you can be Spirit-filled and be unthankful. The mark of a Spirit-filled life is gratefulness. Why? Do you know what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is? The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart is to make Jesus Christ real to him. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

For example, in John chapter 16, beginning in verse 12, Jesus said, "I have many things to say unto you, but you're not able to bear them now. Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself," that is, he's not the originator of what he says, "but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and will showeth unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you. A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me because I go to my Father." Now, what does all of this mean? Or, "I go to the Father." What does all of this mean? It means that when you're Spirit-filled, the Holy Spirit of God is able to make Jesus real to you.

And I don't want to talk too much about myself, but my heart burned with joy tonight, Brother Jim, as we sang those songs about Jesus. I love the Lord Jesus. He's real in my heart. I wish He were more real, but He is real to me, and I love Jesus Christ. And I

know the only way that I can truly have that love is to have the Holy Spirit living in my heart. This kind of gratitude is supernatural, and it takes supernatural power. But when you're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, thanksgiving becomes inevitable and it becomes irresistible. Do you know that gratitude and grace come from the same root? And did you know that think and thank come from the same root word. Gratitude and grace are related, just as think and thank are related. And when the Holy Spirit of God fills you with the grace of God, gratitude flows out of your heart. And when the Holy Spirit of God causes you to think of Jesus, then you must thank God, and therefore no matter what your lot, you begin to thank the Lord.

Pastor Rittenhaus was going down the road one day and a car was coming in this direction. He was going in this direction and a suitcase flew off the roof of the car coming toward him. He put on his brakes, got the suitcase, turned around, and tried to catch the other car. It was impossible. He had a suitcase. He said, maybe I can find something inside that will help me to know just whose suitcase this is, so I can return the suitcase. So he opened the suitcase, and he rummaged through it. He couldn't find anything except a gold twenty-dollar piece, and on that gold twenty-dollar piece there was an inscription and it said this: Given to Otis Simpson at his retirement from Portland Cement Company—a twenty-dollar gold piece. He contacted the Portland Cement people, and after a long time he found out where Otis Sampson lived. And he contacted Otis Sampson, and he said, I've found your suitcase. I have it. If you would just tell me how to ship it to you, I'll ship it to you. Otis Sampson wrote Pastor Rittenhaus this letter. He said, "Look, throw the suitcase away. Throw what's in it away, it really doesn't make much difference. But please return the twenty-dollar gold piece. It is my most priceless possession. Pastor Rittenhaus sent the twenty-dollar gold piece back to the man, and wrote him a letter, said, Sir, if you're not a Christian, I want to tell you about Jesus Christ. Wrote a beautiful letter, and told him about Christ, and told him how to be saved, and urged on him. One year later, Pastor Rittenhaus got a letter from Otis Sampson, and in it was the twenty-dollar gold piece. He said, I'm returning this to you, and I want to give it to you and thank you for telling me about Jesus, who is now my most priceless possession. You see. Now, what made that real to him? Why was Jesus so priceless to this man? The Holy Spirit of God makes Jesus real to you. You cannot be Spirit-filled without being full of Jesus, and you cannot be full of Jesus without being grateful and thankful no matter what has happened to you.

Now, how do you give thanks? In the Spirit, unto the Father. Look in verse 20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father." Do you see it? Unto the Father. Well, why do you give thanks in the Spirit unto the Father? James 1, verse 17, says, "For every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above from the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." God is good.

Don't you think negatively about God. God is good. He is your Father. Shakespeare said, How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child. It's pagan not to thank God. Did you know that when God describes the pagans in Romans chapter 1, verse 21, you know how he describes them? "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." That's the mark of a pagan, not to thank God. Do you, do you look to God as the Father that's given you life and sustains your life?

How do you do this? In the Spirit, unto the Father, now watch, through the Son. Look in verse 20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." "In the name" may be translated through the name. Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what that means is you thank God in the name or with the authority of Christ. You don't have to understand all that God is doing. Even if you don't understand it, you just say, In the name of Jesus, I thank you. Through the name of Jesus I know that Romans 8:38 is true, it is in the Word of God. You may not understand all that God is doing. God may seem cruel to you.

A farmer had a pile of brush that he had put in a pile with his tractor; he was going to burn it. He came out to burn it; he noticed that a bird had built a bird nest and getting ready to put her eggs there in that nest, in that pile of brush, that he was going to burn. So he destroyed the nest. He came back the next day; the bird was rebuilding the nest. He destroyed it again. Three times he destroyed the nest, and then he burned that pile of brush. Now, I'd imagine the little bird, if a bird could think, said, Oh, this is terrible! I don't know why my nest is being destroyed like this. Terrible things are happening to me! But it was a hand of love—it was a hand of love—that was destroying that nest. The bird may not know; the bird didn't have to know.

A man was shipwrecked on an island. He hoped to be rescued from the wreckage of the boat. He had gathered a few things. He had built a crude hut. He was out foraging for food when he saw smoke. It was in the vicinity of the hut, and he had his cooking fire there in the hut, and he saw the entire thing going up in flames. He said, God, all I had, why have you deserted me? But before long a ship came, dropped anchor, and a rowboat came. Said, We saw your signal; we saw your fire; we have come to rescue you.

## **Conclusion**

Do you know what we do when we murmur and complain? We are murmuring and complaining against the providence of God. You don't have to understand it. Friend, the Bible says, "In all things give thanks." "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in and through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." That is what I want to lay on your heart right now. You say, Well, there you are telling me to be grateful. You don't

know the trouble I have. I probably don't. But I didn't write this. You know who wrote it? Paul. You know where? From prison. You know what had happened to him at Ephesus to the people that he wrote this letter? He had been lied on, he'd been cast out of the city, he had been mistreated, he'd been abused, and when he sat down to suffer that night, he didn't eat like you ate or will eat this evening, and he didn't sleep on a bed like you're going to sleep on tonight. Wasn't Adrian; it was Paul the Apostle who said, "Giving thanks always for all things unto the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And the way to do that, friend, is to be filled with the Spirit.

Father, thank you for your Word. Burn it into our hearts this Thanksgiving season. In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

# Giving Thanks in Tough Times

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 18, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:20**

*“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”*

EPHESIANS 5:20

## Outline

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## Introduction

As I said, perhaps tonight will be that night when the trumpet sounds, and that midnight cry, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! You say, Well, Pastor, I don't think it will be tonight. That's a good sign that it may, because Jesus said, "In such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes." Would you find Ephesians chapter 5, talking on this subject: Giving Thanks in Tough Times.

Now, what is the hardest thing to do? Is the hardest thing to do to try to climb a fence that's leaning toward you? Well, harder than that is to kiss a girl leaning away from you. But perhaps the most difficult thing is to give God thanks in difficult times, in hard times. Look at our scripture, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20—here is a command: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, if it simply said, Giving thanks always, we can do that. Or if it said, Giving thanks always for some things, we could do that. But that isn't what it says. It says, "Giving thanks always for all things." Now, is that possible? Shouldn't we do that? Can we do that?

May I suggest to you, there are four levels of life. First of all, there is the lowest level of life, those people who are constantly grumbling and complaining. Ever been around

people like that? Constantly grumbling and complaining—they ought to lock those people up in a room, and just let them grumble and complain one to another.

Now, the next level of life, not much higher than that: these are people who don't grumble, but neither do they thank. They just go through life, and never once thank God or thank others for the many, many magnificent blessings that we have.

Now, a notch higher than that are those who do thank God, but they thank God for the obvious blessings of life: for food, for health, for friends, for family, for joy, for victory, for the church, for the Bible, for all of the good things that God has given to us. Well, that's wonderful, but that's still not the highest level.

The highest level is those who thank God for all things, no matter what, at all times. Well, Pastor, are you trying to tell me that all things are good and therefore I'm to thank God for all things? No, friend, all things are not good, and for me to pretend that all things are good would mock God and us. Murder is not good. Rape is not good. Cancer is not good. Heartache is not good. Divorce is not good. Abandoned children is not good—is not good. No! These things are not good. So how can we thank God for these kinds of things? Well, let me say this. Things may not be good, but listen to me carefully: God is good—God is good. James 1, verse 17, says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of light."

Now, there's evil in the world, and I want you to understand this very clearly. When I say we're to give thanks for all things, don't get the idea that God is the author of evil, and therefore we should thank God for that. God is not, I say, God is not the author of evil. First John chapter 5 and verse 19 says, "The whole world lies in wickedness." It literally means, in the lap of wickedness, like a baby would lie in its mother's lap, in the cradle of wickedness. And God is not doing that; the wicked one, the devil, is the author of that kind of evil.

Well, that brings up a good question. Why does God allow evil? If you go to college, in your philosophy class, they'll give you a little syllogism like this. God, so say Christians, made all things. Evil is something, so God created evil. That's the little syllogism. And they say, since before God there was nothing, all things have come from God. Evil is a thing, therefore God is the author of evil. That's a faulty syllogism. Let me tell you what the truth of the matter is. God did make all things, but God made all things perfect, and when God made man, God gave man perfect freedom. Now, when God gave man perfect freedom, that means he can choose to do both good or evil, either one.

Now, why did God allow man to be able to choose evil? That he might have the ability to choose good. Had there been no choice, he could not have chosen anything; he could not have chosen to love God. And so, you must have a choice between good and evil, in order to choose good. You must have a choice between love and hate, in



order to choose love. Forced love is not love at all. God had to give man a choice, and so, the ability to choose is man's greatest blessing and man's greatest danger. But God made Adam and Eve, a pair, in the garden, absolutely perfect. God is not the author of evil; God is the author of perfection.

Well, somebody says, Yes, but He's all-powerful, and since there's evil here, why doesn't God just obliterate it? Why doesn't God just wipe it out? Because if God were to obliterate evil, just to step in and wipe it out, then again He would take away the choice. There would be no choice. And what is the highest good? It is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind; that's the highest good. So, if God were to destroy evil, that would take away the ability for the highest good, and, therefore, even to destroy evil would be an act of evil. No, God loves us enough, and wants to love us even more, or wants us to love Him even more. And so, God gives this choice.

Well, you say, All right, Adrian, so far, so good. But now, what about those people who don't choose evil? What about people who choose good? What about people who love God? What about people who serve God, and their hearts are broken, their lives are crushed, and there's sorrow and heartache and fear and pain and pang and moan and groan and woe? People who love God—how about evil in their heart and in their lives? How can we say to God-fearing people, "Giving thanks always to all things in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?" Well, it's a good question. May I say it's all right to ask questions. It's good to ask questions, but it is not all right to question the goodness of God. As for God, the Bible says, His way is perfect.

Now, what I want to show you from the Bible is how to take the rainbow of hope over all of your sorrows. That rainbow of hope is Romans 8:28, which says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose." It does not say all things are good. All things are not good, we've already settled that, and God is not the author of evil—He is not. But God is the sovereign God, and God is good, and God takes all things, good or bad, indifferent or whatever, and God puts these in the crucible of His love, and God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

Now, I want to give you seven things today that trouble may do to you and for you. Seven ways that trouble may minister to you as a child of God so that you can say, Thank you, Lord; thank you in the midst of my heartache; thank you in the midst of my pain; thank you in the midst of my deprivation; thank you, Lord, in the midst of a broken home; thank you, Lord, as I stand beside the grave of the dearest on earth to me. Thank you, Lord. "Giving thanks always for all things."

## **I. Trouble May Bring a Correcting Ministry**

Reason number one: trouble may bring a correcting ministry—a correcting ministry.

Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 6: “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” Hebrews 12, verse 11: “Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Whom the Father loves, He chastens.” How many of you ever had a dad to take you to the woodshed, as it were, and apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge, and say something like this to you: I do this because I love you? Did you ever have a parent like that? Let me see your hand. Most of us. I do this because I love you. I’ve often said, when my dad would say that to me, I would say, then I must be your favorite son. I do this because I love you. Now, why do our parents do that? Because, not that they don’t love us, but because they do love us. God loves us enough to patiently and lovingly correct us.

David, the sweet singer of Israel, Israel’s greatest king, wrote in the Psalms these words: “Before I was afflicted, I went astray.” And I think there are some of us who’ve gone astray, and God has had to chastise us, and, when we look back, we say, No chastening for the present time seems to be joyous, but grievous. I mean, not a one of us ever said, Now, you know, this is the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me; my dad is giving me a licking—thank you, Lord, this is just wonderful; how I praise you, God. Thank you, dad. I really needed this, father. No, most of us never did that, but most of us had parents who cared enough to chastise us by whatever means, when we grew up, looked back, and said, Thank you, thank you that I had a father; thank you that I had a mother who loved me enough. For whom the Lord loves He chastens.

## **II. Trouble May Bring a Deepening Dependency**

So, number one: trouble may bring a correcting ministry, and if it brings a correcting ministry, shouldn’t we thank God—should we not thank God? Nod your head, yes. All right, number two: suffering—also trouble—may bring a deepening dependency. It may bring a deepening dependency. Now, the apostle Paul was a highly gifted man. He was a man unto whom God had poured much grace; but, not only much grace—much intellect, and much influence; and Paul had a temptation to get away from God and to depend upon himself. Years and years ago, I read a book by L. E. Maxwell. The title of the book was this: Crowded to Christ—Crowded to Christ. That is, troubles crowd us to Jesus; they hedge us in, and they bring us to Jesus, so that we might depend more upon Him. And it is the difficulty and the heartaches that bring this deep dependency upon God.

Now, the apostle Paul had a vision. God so blessed Paul that he was caught up into the third heaven. He saw sacred secrets; he saw things there that are not even lawful for a man to utter. God pulled back the veil, and Paul just went to heaven. He said, I

don't know whether I was going in the spirit or whether my literal body went to heaven, which tells me something right there, that your literal body can go to heaven. We're going to be there in heaven in a literal body one of these days, in a resurrected body. He said, I don't know.

But then, he said this—and look at the scripture; put it back on the screen again—2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 7, and he says, “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.” And the word thorn in the flesh literally means, not a thorn like a rose thorn, but a stake. He was impaled upon a stake. “The messenger of Satan to buffet me, unless I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” That doesn't mean, Take it away, take it away, take it away. He had three long extended times of prayer, I believe, “that it might depart from me. And He”—God—“said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Then Paul said, Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities.” That is, I will thank God; I will thank God for a stake in my heart, in my body. “I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

What is your greatest strength? Your intellect? Your money? Your personality? No, your greatest strength is God. But you see, when we sail through life without any difficulties, we tend not to depend upon God. Oswald Chambers, whom Joyce and I read from almost every morning, as we did this morning, said, an unguarded strength is a double weakness. When we begin to depend upon ourselves, the difficulty and heartache and pain cause us to depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

God called me to the ministry as a youngster. This is the only thing I've ever done. I've been a pastor since I was nineteen years of age, but headed toward the ministry when I was in high school, because God laid His hand upon me, and I wanted God to use me. And I can remember going out and walking up and down at nighttime, lifting my heart and hands to God, and saying, O God, I want you to use me; I want you to anoint my life. I can remember praying, as I've told you before, lying prostrate on the ground, with my face down, and saying, O God, take control of my life; I want you to use me. And I would be disingenuous and less than honest, if I did not tell you that God blessed and that God anointed my life far beyond my own personal ability. I know that. I know that, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, the hand of God came upon me.

Then, I went to college and began to study theology. Then, I went beyond college to seminary, and continued to study theology, and I got more and more proficient. I was able then to articulate what I'd learned as a high school football player, but I didn't know how to articulate it. I didn't understand all of the theology, but I had a vital experience

with God. But then, I began to learn more and more about it, and, very frankly, I began to get more and more self-sufficient, and somewhat argumentative, and somewhat combative, with others who did not quite agree with the theology that I held. Now, at that time, you would never have convinced me that I was depending upon myself, because, from outward appearances, God was blessing the ministry. I compared myself to others, which is always a dangerous thing to do. I could perhaps say, Well, I'm doing all right.

Then, as you know, shortly after Joyce and I left seminary and went to Florida to pastor a church, we had a child to die. A precious baby named Philip, one of those sudden infant death things, where little babies die. They're still trying to figure out exactly why. And our hearts were crushed. We did the only thing we knew to do, and that was to turn to God, and look to God anew and afresh, and just simply say, O God, we need you; we want you; here we are, Lord; anything we have, everything we have, Lord, it belongs to you. And I can tell you that God anointed me with fresh oil in a way that perhaps I would not have been anointed, had we not gone through that excruciating experience. I never want to go through another one like that, but I would not take anything for what we learned.

You know, as you depend upon yourself, sometimes through the abundance of God's goodness, those blessings can become a curse, unless God allows us to have some trouble that brings us to a dependency—a dependency—upon Him. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Now, if your trouble, if your heartache, if your tears, if your difficulty, if your pain, if your anguish, if it causes you to depend more upon God, can't you thank Him for it? You just say, Lord, I just have to thank you, Lord, because this has caused me a dependency.

### **III. Trouble May Bring a Confirming Testimony**

Number three: trouble may bring a confirming testimony. Did you know that trouble in your life may help you to have a greater testimony than if you never had any trouble? It may be through deep sorrow and through deep pain that knowing God and praising God gives you the greatest testimony. Let me give you a scripture. The apostle Paul, who knew much sorrow, said this—2 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 3 and 4: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort,”—I love that, the God of all comfort—“who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Now, what does that verse tell us? It tells us that God is the source of comfort. It tells us also that God comforts us in tribulation. If you didn't have tribulation, you wouldn't need comfort. And it says that God comforts us in all—a-double-I—of our tribulation. And then it says that God takes that comfort that He gives us, and allows us to comfort others with that same comfort which we have

received of the Lord.

I mentioned just a few moments ago about the experience Joyce and I had, the loss of a child, and I've seen mothers, not just once, but many times, come to Joyce and receive comfort when they themselves had lost a child. And I have seen Joyce, not in the theoretical way, but in the very real way, share the comfort that she has received from the Lord, and that I have received, with others. And we're able to comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. You see, folks, don't get the idea that, if we just sail through life with no difficulties, it's going to make us a better witness. No, that's not so.

The apostle Paul—and we've referred to him several times—he learned this lesson when he was in prison. Here's a key verse; I want you to jot it down—Philippians 1, verse 12. Now, here's Paul in a rancid, dark, deep, dank, miserable prison, perhaps waiting to be executed, and here's what he said—Philippians 1, verse 12: “But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.” I'm in prison, I'm in prison, I'm in prison—in my imprisonment, my suffering, my pain, my toil, my deprivation has fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel.

My heart has been deeply moved by those young people who were there, kept in prison in Afghanistan, and as I watched those two beautiful, radiantly happy young ladies who had finally been delivered—and don't we thank God for that? Praise God, don't we thank God for that?—I thought to myself, What a testimony! Praise God! What a testament to the reality of Jesus Christ. Those girls have a testimony they would not have gained in Six Flags Over Georgia or something like that. Here, what they're saying is that Jesus Christ is real. Paul said, I'm in prison! But I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have happened for the furtherance of the gospel.

Now, if you can praise God in trouble and heartache and pain and tears and sorrow and deprivation, and shut the devil's mouth—the devil says, Well, the only reason they serve you is because they've never had any trouble. Say, No, you don't know my servant Job. No, he loves me, not because of what I've done for Him, but because of who I am. You see, friend, if trouble, if heartache, if pain can cause you to have a stronger testimony, if it can become a platform for the grace of God, if it can be the black velvet on which the diamond of God's grace is displayed, can you not thank Him for it? Yes, you can.

#### **IV. Trouble May Bring an Increasing Maturity**

Number four: trouble may bring an increasing maturity. Now, God's plan for you—what is God's plan for you? Well, God wants you to be mature. You say, Well, God's plan for me is health and wealth. Sorry about that. Well, you say, God's plan for me is service

and usefulness. Well, He wants that, but that's not God's plan for you. What is God's plan for you? The Bible tells us in Romans 8, verses 28 and 29: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,"—all right, we've already talked about that—"to them which are called according to His purpose." Okay, what is His purpose? "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." God's plan for you is not to make you healthy, wealthy, happy, or even influential. God's plan for you, for me, is to make me like the Lord Jesus Christ: Christ-likeness.

Now, God had only one Son without sin, but He's never had a Son without suffering. Somebody wrote these little words we often quote: I walked a mile with pleasure; she chatted all the way, but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. I walked a mile with sorrow; not a word said she, but oh, the things I learned from sorrow, when sorrow walked with me. God seems to take sorrow and massage our hearts. And, you know, one of the things that we learn when we're going through difficulty that moves us toward maturity? We learn patience.

James 1, verse 4—jot it down: "But let patience have her perfect work,"—the word perfect there means mature—"that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The word there perfect does not mean sinless. The Bible says the captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering; the captain of our faith, Jesus. That doesn't mean He was made sinless; He never did. The word perfect means mature, like you look at a rose and say, That's a perfect rose. A rose with the dew drops on it, in full bloom.

God wants you to come to maturity, and the Bible says—listen to this: "Let patience have her perfect work, that you may be mature." Now, the word patience here is not the ability to thread a needle or build a model airplane; it's literally a Greek word that means endurance. Now, you'll never learn anything, if you don't learn patience; you won't learn the piano, to play like Margaret. Well, you probably couldn't do it, no matter what you do, but anyway, still, you learn the scales. You're not going to learn Greek until you have enough patience to learn the verbs, and, friend, you're not going to learn to be a true child of God in true maturity until you learn patience. And so, the only way that you can learn endurance or patience, in order to have maturity, is to have something to endure.

Now, if you don't have anything to endure, how on earth are you going to learn endurance? You don't sharpen an axe on a pound of butter. So, if God is building maturity into you, if God is building Christ-likeness into you, even if these are things that are caused by the devil, even if these are things that wicked people have engineered, even then, can you not thank God? Yes, you can indeed.

## **V. Trouble May Bring and Excelling Glory**

Now, number five: trouble may bring excelling glory. First Peter chapter 4, verses 12 through 14: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...”—that word try you is to test you. A wise man said, The faith that can’t be tested can’t be trusted—“the fiery trial which is to [test] you, as though some strange thing happened unto you...”—don’t most of us, when we get into trouble, say, Why me, Lord? Why? Why this strange thing? He says, It’s not strange—“as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” Now, watch this: “For the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.”

How many of you would like the Spirit of glory and God to rest on you? Let me see your hand. Say, Oh, God, I want the Spirit of glory and God to rest on me. Now, I’m not going to ask the second question: How many of you want a fiery trial? I don’t want any fiery trial, no, but he says—listen—it’s the fiery trial that brings the Spirit of glory upon us, and I want the glory of God to be upon me.

Stephen—I have a son named Stephen, my eldest son, named after the preaching deacon in the New Testament—was stoned for the testimony of Jesus Christ, but while he was being stoned, the Bible says that his face shined like the face of an angel. The Spirit of glory and of God was upon him. When those three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were in the fiery furnace, and the old king looked in there, and said, We only threw three dudes in there; I see four, and the fourth is like the Son of God, the Spirit of glory was there with them.

Now, if your trouble, your heartache, your pain causes you to know this glory, then for God’s glory, can you not thank God for it?

## **VI. Trouble May Bring a Baffling Mystery**

Number six: trouble may bring baffling mystery. You say, Adrian, you’ve not mentioned what God’s doing in my heart and in my life. I mean, all of those things may be good, but they just don’t fit my case. Well, here’s one that will. There are some things you’ll never know. There are some things that some preachers may never be able to explain to you. Why? Well, very clearly, Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9, God says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth,”—how far is up, friend? You tell me—“so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Now, don’t come to me after the service, and say, Now, Pastor, why, because there are some why’s that I cannot answer.

Let me give you another verse—Deuteronomy 29, verse 29: “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the works of this law.” God will give you enough to know to obey Him. Warren Wiersbe said, we live by promises, not by explanations. And again, the Bible says, “We walk by faith, and not by sight.” You can go through the deepest anguish, you can look into the pit, you can look into the abyss, and nothing will make sense to you. Is that not what happens in Job? My sermon would not have satisfied Job, I can tell you, because Job said, Yep, yep, yep, but that doesn’t explain it. Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep, but... And Job said to God, I wish I could bring you into court; I wish there were a lawyer; I wish there were somebody who could argue that case! God, I don’t understand! God, you owe me some answers! His wife said, Why don’t you just curse God and die? He said, Woman, are you crazy? Are you crazy? You think I’m going to deny Him? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him—yet will I trust Him.

Friend, there are some things we may not understand, and we don’t have to understand them to thank God, because God is good. All things are not good, but God is good.

## **VII. Trouble Will Bring Eternal Victory**

Then number seven: trouble will bring eternal victory. Romans 8:18 says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Friend, it’s not over yet. Now, notice what he’s saying. He’s saying that the sufferings of this present time—you just fill in your suffering right now—he says, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory.”

Now, he’s not saying, over here are the sufferings, and they’re very bad, but over here is the glory, and the glory is very good. He’s not saying that therefore the glory offsets the sufferings. He’s not saying that this is just as good as that is bad. No, he says, precious friend, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory. Do you see what he’s saying? He’s not saying one offsets the other; he’s saying there’s no comparison. What a day that will be, at the midnight cry. What a day that will be, when He turns every hurt to a hallelujah, He turns every tear to a pearl, He turns every Calvary to an Easter, and then we understand that He has not forsaken us, that He loves us, that He’s with us. And there is, indeed, as the kids played today on the violins, victory in Jesus. Do you understand that? Friend, there is victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.



## Conclusion

Now, if all of these things are true—and every one is and far more—then can we not in everything give thanks? Giving thanks always for all things, giving thanks even in tough times. All right now, the Bible says, “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift”—and who is that? Jesus. Bow your heads in prayer, and I want you to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. I want you to be saved. I don’t want you to die and go to hell, when Jesus died for you, and you can be saved today.

Would you say, O God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost, and my good deeds can’t save me. I need you. I need you, Lord. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. Right now, I receive you, Lord Jesus; now, this moment, now, right now, I open my heart. I receive you, Jesus. Come into my heart. Come in right now. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Take control of my life. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then pray this way. Thank you for doing it, Lord Jesus. I receive it by faith. I don’t ask for a feeling. I don’t look for a sign. I stand on your Word. I receive it by faith. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, and my God, and I will live for you, because you died for me. Give me the courage now today to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

# How to Let the Attitude of Gratitude Change Your Life

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 25, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:20**

*“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”*

EPHESIANS 5:20

## Outline

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- I. The Principle of Proper Living
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- V. The Principle of Possible Living

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## Introduction

Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, would you find it? And, when you find it look up here, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20. A little boy was asked to give a definition of salt. And he said, “Salt is what makes potatoes taste bad when it’s left out.” I would say that gratitude is what spoils life when it’s left out. I want to talk to you today on this subject, and I mean it, How To Let The Attitude Of Gratitude Change Your Life. How to let the attitude of gratitude change your life.

Listen to this verse. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 20: *“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Now, I submit to you that is a great verse. Listen to it again, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That verse is worth typing out, taking a magnet, putting it on your refrigerator door, and reading it over and over again. What a great verse. It can literally transform your life if you take it to heart.

Let me ask you a question. Do you have difficulty with bitterness? Do you have difficulty with selfishness? Do you have difficulty with self-pity? Negativism? Pride? This verse is the cure for all of those things. It can literally transform your life. The attitude of

gratitude can change your life.

Now, there are four levels of living. The lowest level is to constantly complain. Have you ever been around anybody who does that? Constantly griping, constantly complaining. Rather than being humbly grateful, they're grumbly hateful. Everything. Just complain, complain. God deliver me from those kinds of people.

Now, there's a level of life just a tad higher. These are not people who are constantly complaining. These are just people who never give thanks for anything. They just take things for granted. They never express gratitude to God or to others for what they do. They're almost as bad as those who constantly complain. They are just a tad better. Then there's a next higher level of life. These are those who think. These are those who thank God for the obvious blessings and the good things—when things are going good and everything is fine, and the tornadoes are not coming—they thank God for those kind of things.

Do you ever read *Peanuts* in the funny papers? You know, Charlie Brown is the pitcher. He's always trying to get his team together. And, Charlie Brown was out there on the mound and Lucy came up. And Lucy says to Charlie Brown: "Don't you think we ought to pray that we could win?" Charlie Brown says: "Well, I don't know, would that be fair to pray to win?" Lucy said: "Well, when I'm out there in right field, I always pray." Charlie Brown said: "What do you pray?" Lucy said: "I pray they won't hit the ball to me." And at about that time, Peppermint Patty joins in and says: "Yeah, me too" Peppermint Patty said: "I always pray they won't hit the ball to me. I don't want to be the goat." Linus comes in and says: "Yeah, me too. I always pray, 'don't let it come to me.' "

Well, about that time Charlie Brown is still on the pitcher's mound, and he winds up. He doesn't pray. But he throws the ball right in there and it smashed right back at him, so much that it flattens him. And he's on the ground looking up, and behind him he hears this chorus, "Thank you, thank you, thank you. Amen."

It's easy to pray for the obvious blessings. But the highest level of life is to do what this verse says, giving thanks always for all things. Huh? My dear friend, that's the attitude that will change your life.

## I. The Principle of Proper Living

Let me give you five principles, or propositions, here that will help you. First of all, I want you to see that this kind of living is proper. It's proper. Look at what the verse says, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father. The Bible says in James chapter 1 verse 17: *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* Anything good that you have has come from God. You didn't get it by luck. You didn't get it by ingenuity. You didn't even get it by hard work or wit or wisdom.

You say, "I did that." Oh yes? Where did you do it? On God's earth. What did you do it with? The body that He created. Who gave you that mind? Who gave you that ambition? What do you have that you've not received? Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

There's an old story about a little boy who came home from the grocery store with a loaf of bread. And his father thought he would teach him a lesson. He asked: "Son, where did you get that bread?" His son replied: "Well, I got it from the grocer." The father asked: "Well, where did the grocer get it?" His son replied: "Well, he got it from the baker." The father asked: "Well, where did the baker get it?" The son replied: "Well, he made it from flour." The father asked: "Where did he get the flour?" The son replied: "Well, he got it from the miller." The father asked: "Where did the miller get the grain?" The son replied: "Well, he got it from the farmer." The father asked: "Where did the farmer get it?" The son replied: "Well, He got it from God." The father asked: "Where did you get that bread?" The son replied: "From God, from God."

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. There are two classes of people in the world, those that take things for granted, and those who take things with gratitude.

Did you know that the word *grace* and the word *gratitude* come from the same root? Did you know that? Did you know that the word *think* and the word *thank* come from the same root word in the English language? You see, dear friend, people who are grateful people have seen the grace of God. They are not thoughtless people they are thankful people. It is proper that we give thanks. Because it's unto God and the Father that we give thanks. What do we have that we've not received?

## **II. The Principle of Perpetual Living**

But I want you to notice not only the propriety of it. But I want you to notice, not only is it proper, but it's to be perpetual. Now, it says here that we are to be giving thanks always. I'm glad that we have one day that we call Thanksgiving Day. Frankly, I'm a little upset that some call it Turkey Day, or some other kind of day, rather than Thanksgiving. We're trying even to secularize the idea of giving thanks unto God. I have an idea that if the A.C.L.U. began around when Abraham Lincoln said what he said. They would have complained. When George Washington gave his Thanksgiving proclamation he said this, "Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, and to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection, aid, and favour." That's what George Washington had to say also about giving thanks.

But, dear friend, we're not just simply to do it one day a year and I'll tell you why. One day's not long enough to thank God for all that He has given us.

I'll tell you something else. We might be apt to forget his blessings. His blessings come daily. Let me give you a couple of verses to jot down in your margin alongside Ephesians chapter 5 verse 20. Try this one. Psalm 68 and verse 19: *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits."* God's got a load for you today. God's got a load for you today. *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits."* Let's try this one on for size, Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 23 speaks of God's mercies and it says, *"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."* Every day God has brand-new blessings for you.

So dear friend, we're to be giving thanks always. Every prayer that you pray ought to be salted with thanks. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul said in the book of Philippians? In Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6 he gives us a recipe for not worrying and this is what he says, *"Be careful for nothing"* That basically means, "Don't worry about anything." Huh. *"...But in every thing"*—every thing, now watch—*"but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* You see, in every prayer—in every prayer—there ought to be the salt of thanksgiving. Don't ever pray without thanking God. That's what Paul said, "Don't worry about anything. Pray about everything, but when you pray be certain to do it with thanksgiving."

We need to pull some of the groans out of our prayers, shove in more thanks, and thank God in everything. Now I've said dear friend, it's proper and I've said that it is to be perpetual. And now I want you to notice something else.

### **III. The Principle of Pervasive Living**

It is to saturate every thing. It is to be pervasive, pervasive. Now, listen to it. In everything give thanks. Look at it. Giving thanks always for all things. Not some things. For all things. Pervasive. In every thing, in every area of life is the subject of thanksgiving. There's so much to be thankful for. Be thankful, dear friend, for spiritual things. So many times when we're thanking God, we're thanking God for cars, clothes, automobiles, and thanking God for safety and health. Those are wonderful objects of thanksgiving. But you see, our verse says, we're to give thanks unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ. He, my friend, is the one we give thanks through and He is the one we give thanks for. We ought to say with the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 15: *"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."* If you didn't have anything else but Jesus, you've got enough to praise God for all eternity, right? I mean, I don't care where you are—on a deathbed—if

you've got Christ, you've got plenty to be thankful for.

You see, be thankful for spiritual things. Be thankful for simple things. Now, most of us are thankful for health, we're thankful for food, and all of these things. When you drink a glass of water, are you thankful for that glass of water? Did you know that India is the second most populated nation on the face of the earth, and yet seventy-five percent of the water in the nation of India is not fit to drink? We just turn on the tap to get a glass of water and just take it for granted. We have wonderful water here in our city.

Are you thankful for just the little simple things? When you bow your head and thank God for the food next time, why don't you thank him for the water? I dare say that most of us have never, or very seldom ever, just simply thanked God for that crystal clear water that we have that's so abundant. But, I'll tell you there are a lot of people in this world of dysentery and disease who would love to have the water that we have. Thank Him for the spiritual things. Thank him for the simple things.

Hey, thank him for the sorrowful things. The heartaches, the pains, and the sufferings. The Bible says, giving thanks always for all things. Wait a minute, Adrian Rogers. Wait a minute. You mean to tell me that I'm supposed to thank God for cancer? Do you mean to tell me that I'm to thank God for divorce? For child abuse? For crippled children? For war? For rape? For blasphemy? That I'm to thank God for these things? No. These things are bad, and God has set Himself against these things. All of the forces of Heaven are marshaled against these things. What does this mean? Giving thanks always for all things. Romans 8:28 can help you to understand that. Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* That's a wonderful verse.

Sometimes people ask me to autograph something—to autograph a Bible or whatever—Generally, I'll write down Psalm 34: *"I will bless the LORD at all times."* Or else I'll write down under my name, Romans 8:28. I was in another city having breakfast with an old high school college chum, who heard—he was a businessman—I was going to be in the city so we had breakfast together. We had a wonderful time. I said, "Richard, I'll pick up the check." I picked up the check. I was staying there in the hotel. I signed my name on the check. And, then I just wrote, not even thinking, just automatically: Adrian Rogers, Romans 8:28. Underneath that check I wrote R-O-M period, 8:28 and I went up and I handed it to the cashier. She looked at it and said, "Mister, we don't have a room eight, twenty-eight." I said, "Oh lady, I'm sorry. That's a verse out of the Bible that says, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'" And I put down my room number. But I reminded her of what I want to remind you, that Romans 8:28 is a good room to stay in. It's a good room to live in, dear friend. All things work

together for good. And that word *for* is a preposition, which means movement to a goal. That is, the thing itself is not good. But it is God who is working all things together for good. Where God does not rule, God overrules.

You see, we get our word *providence* from that idea. The word *providence* literally means pro video. That is to see ahead. And, we put those words together, we call it providence. God sees ahead and He makes arrangements. We can't see sometimes the working of God, and how God takes bad things and turns bad things into good things for our good and for His glory.

I read a story sometime ago about a farmer who was clearing up his land. He had a tremendous pile of brush, sticks, and so forth there. He was going to burn them. As he came up and he saw that a little bird had begun to build a nest in that pile of brush. So he destroyed the nest. He came back later and the bird had started again. He destroyed it again. He came back the third time and destroyed that nest. Finally the little bird went off and built somewhere else. Now, the bird didn't understand it, but the farmer understood it when he put the torch to that pile of brambles and so forth. Many times we don't see the working of God. Many times the things even that we think are tragedies, we know that God is still seeing ahead, and God is making provision for us in these things.

Dear friend, do you want to live on the highest level of life? You cultivate the attitude of gratitude always and in all things. I don't care how bad it gets. I care not how difficult it gets, how dark it gets, or how mysterious it gets. You take the ultimate step of faith and say, "God, You are greater than this. And, I thank You. I thank You." Just thank Him. Thank Him by faith.

You say, "Well, I don't feel like thanking him." Has nothing to do with it. Don't thank Him by feeling. Thank Him by faith. This doesn't say we're to feel thankful. It says we're to be thankful. Feelings come, feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. The Bible is the Word of God and naught else is worth believing. Just thank Him. Just thank Him, dear friend. And when you don't thank Him, do you know what you're really doing? When you murmur, you gripe, you complain about your circumstances, do you know what you're really doing? You're accusing God. You're saying, "Either God, you're not able, or God, you don't love me, or perhaps both."

When the children of Israel were out in the wilderness and they, came to a place of no water, the Bible tells us they began to murmur. My dear friend, God in the Bible ranks murmuring with idolatry. Did you know that? They began to murmur. They murmured against Moses. A little bit before that, they had been singing Moses' song and now they're criticizing him. Moses, in three days, had gone from hero to zero. And they're criticizing him now. Moses goes to God and here is what God told Moses (Exodus 15). God says, "Moses, they are not murmuring against you. They are

murmuring against me” (Exodus 16). Because it was God who gave them Moses, you understand? And, it’s God who gave you your parents. And, it’s God who gave you your boss. And, it’s God who put you in that situation or at least allowed you to be there. And what you’re saying when you murmur is that you’re really not just complaining against your circumstances. You’re really, ultimately complaining against God. There’s nothing that shows more lack of faith than murmuring and complaining. There’s nothing more that shows your faith in the absolute sovereignty of God than in any situation to just simply thank God. You do it. It’ll change your life.

#### **IV. The Principle of Pleasurable Living**

It is proper, my dear friend. It is to be perpetual. It is to be pervasive. It is to be in all of life. And when it becomes that, it will become pleasurable. Let me show you something now. Look at the context here. Verse 20 is there, but back up and look in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 18–19: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess”—That’s where most people go to get their pleasure, or many people—“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* Do you see it? Do you see how the Lord links praise, joy, and thankfulness all together? Do you see it? Do you see how a singing heart and praising lips are inseparably wed together?

I’m going to tell you something. Put it down big, put it down plain, and put it down straight. Thankful people are happy people. Unthankful people are unhappy people. It’s just that big. It’s just that plain. “Well,” you say, “If I had something to be thankful for, I’d be happy.” Now, wait a minute. You missed the point. You do have something to be thankful for—You have life—You have Christ. You say, but my circumstances are not good. But who wrote this? The apostle Paul. Where was he when he wrote it? In prison, in prison.

Now, we’re looking forward to having our family this Thanksgiving. And, God willing we’re going to have all of our children, all of our grandchildren—from Florida, from Texas, from Tennessee—all of us will be together at our house. That’s going to be great. If the planes run on time and God in His providence allows it, we’ll all be together. And, Mama’s going to cook. It’s going to be great. And, I’ll tell you when Paul wrote this, he wasn’t expecting his friends for a feast—in some vermin-filled prison, lonely, apart from others—talking about singing and making melody in his heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things.

Do you know what? Do you know when we started Thanksgiving in our country? I’ll tell you when. When people were thanking God for survival. Just for survival—just that they had gotten through this time. There was a harvest. They were still alive and there



was something to eat. Did you know something? The more people have, the less they tend to be grateful. Isn't that ironic? Isn't that ironic? It would be harder today to get a national day of Thanksgiving with the blessings we have in America than it would have been back yonder. Isn't that strange?

A preacher was sitting on a train. Sitting across from him on that train was a man and a woman, both of them were wonderfully, beautifully dressed. The man had an intelligent look on his face. You could tell he was one of these kinds of guys who just really had it all together, but the woman was constantly criticizing. She was criticizing the train. She was criticizing her husband. She was criticizing the service. She was criticizing the food. She was criticizing everything, just murmuring, griping, and complaining. She was elegantly dressed. She had diamonds dripping from her fingers. So this preacher thought he would engage them in a conversation. He asked the man, "What do you do?" The man said that he was a businessman. And they discussed the man's business for a while. Then the preacher said, "And what does your wife do?" And the man said, "Well, my wife is in the manufacturing business." "Well," Then the preacher said, "Oh? Say, what does she manufacture?" The man replied, "She manufactures her own unhappiness." A lot of people do that. I mean, they have everything but a grateful heart. And to people who don't have a grateful heart, it doesn't matter what else they have, they're not happy. But to people that have a grateful heart, it doesn't matter how little they have, they're happy.

And here's the apostle Paul in prison rejoicing in the Lord. Gratefulness turned his prison into a palace. And ungratefulness can turn your palace to a prison. I'm telling you, the attitude of gratitude will change your life. It is pleasurable.

## **V. The Principle of Possible Living**

One last thing I want to say about it. And, here's the wonderful part. It's possible. It's possible because you see, verse 18 says be filled with the Spirit. And then verse 20 says be giving thanks. See, this is not a human way to live. Not a natural way to live, it's a supernatural way to live. The grace of gratitude is just that. It is the grace of gratitude. And, gratitude and grace, I tell you, come from the same root word. And, this kind of supernatural thankfulness to God for always and all things comes out of a vital relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the substance of it, He is the source of it, and He is the strength of it. And, we are to be filled with the Spirit. We are to be giving thanks. That's the only way you can do it and do you know how to be filled with the Spirit? First of all, receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. No one can be filled with the Spirit without Christ. You see, the Bible says if any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.

That is, if you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not saved.

An unsaved man can't practice what Ephesians 5:20 teaches. First of all, be saved. And, then you come to a place where you say, "Lord, I desire you to have complete control over my life. I make a complete commitment and I allow continual control. I yield my life to you. Holy Spirit of God, You live in me as resident. Now, rule as president. Take over my life. I yield it to You." And, you know what you're going to find out? When you do that there's going to be a joy that's going to start bubbling up in you. You're going to speak to one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—singing and making joy—with a melody in your heart to the Lord.

And, then you're going to find out that everything takes on a different hue. You're going to be giving God praise and thanks always for all things. And, it'll be going to God the Father and it'll be in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because you will be in the Spirit and you'll be praying in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father saying, "Thank you." In the Spirit, through the Son, and to the Father. In the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. Always, for all things, every day saying thank you Jesus, I love you.

Whether it's a prison as Paul was, or your Thanksgiving Day dinner, you'll be praising God. And, I'm telling you—I am telling you—it will change your life. Bitterness and fear and self-pity and ungratefulness and negativism will go out of your life if you'll practice the grace of gratitude. And, it's possible when you let the Holy Spirit fill you.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you ask God today to help you to practice the grace of gratitude? If you've been one of those who's been grumbly hateful rather than humbly grateful, would you confess it not as a weakness, but as a sin, and repent of it right now? And, if you've only been thanking God when times are good, would you tell Him you want to move up to the next highest level, or the highest level and thank Him always for all things?

Father, I pray now that those who don't know the Lord Jesus will come to know Him as Lord and Savior. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me ask you this question. No one stirring. No one looking around. How many in this building would say, "Brother Rogers, I have received Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. I have repented of my sin. I've trusted Him. Jesus Christ has come into my heart and into my life. He has forgiven my sin. God's precious Holy Spirit tells me in my heart that I belong to Jesus Christ and I have the promise of the Word of God to know that I'm saved. And, therefore I know if I died right now, I would go to Heaven. If you could give me, a testimony like that, would you just simply slip up your hand? Hold it up for a moment. Take it down. Thank you. Thank you for not being ashamed of Christ. Now, those of you who couldn't lift your hands, thank you for being honest. May I ask you a question right now? How many of you would say, "Pastor, I couldn't lift my hand because I do not know for certain that I'm saved. But, I need to know. I want to know. I

want Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. Would you, Pastor, pray for me that I might know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord? I want peace with God. I want to know when I die I'm going to Heaven. And I want the peace of God in my heart right now."

## **Conclusion**

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you'll just simply say, "Pastor, remember me in prayer. I want to know that I'm saved." Would you slip up your hand and then take it down? Hold it up where I may see it. Yes, are there others? Just slip it up and take it down. Up in the balconies. Slip it up. Yes. Others? Pray for me. Yes, God bless you. Are there others? Hold it up and then take, it down. Yes, God bless you. I'll not embarrass you or point you out in any way whatever. I just want to pray for you. Someone else? Pray for me in the prayer that you're about to pray.

All right, now how many would say, "Brother Rogers, I am saved but I'm not a member of Bellevue Church. Would you pray with me that as a Christian I might know and do God's will about my church membership? May I see your hand? Slip it up. God bless you, and you, and you. And, others God bless you.

Now, Father, I pray for these who need to be saved that today—not tomorrow but today, now—the accepted time on your time table, Lord, that now they would say yes to Christ and be saved. Lord, give them the courage. Open their hearts. Help them Lord, not to say no to you. Lord, You just draw them to Christ, I pray. Holy Spirit, that's Your work. Please do it, Lord. We bind away from them the power of darkness. And, Lord we loose upon them. Dear Lord, Your gospel light. Now, Lord Jesus, I pray for these brothers and sisters who are searching for a church home that Lord, if it could be Your will that You would give them to us today in fellowship as members of the family here called Bellevue. In Your Holy Name I pray. Amen.

# What to Do When You Don't Feel Thankful

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: November 23, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:20**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Duration of Thanksgiving
- II. The Dimensions of Thanksgiving
- III. The Dynamics of Thanksgiving

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding please Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20. And, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20, there is a command, which many believe, and I think I do also, may be the hardest command in all of the Bible to obey. But, correspondingly, and at the same time, this command may bring the greatest blessing of all when it is obeyed. Let's look at it—Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20: "Giving thanks always for all things—now, just underscore the "all things"—unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, I say that may be the hardest commandment of all in the Bible to obey.

There are four levels of life when it comes to Thanksgiving. First of all, there are those people who are constantly complaining. Have you ever been around those people? They're just always complaining. They can't find good in anything. One woman was married to a man like that. He never could be pleased. One morning, she got out of the bed determined to please him. She said, "Sweetheart, what would you like for breakfast? I'll fix it any way that you would like, and anything that you'd like." He said, "All right." He said, "I want two pieces of toast. I want one whole wheat, and I want one white bread. I want the whole wheat bread lightly buttered, nothing on the white bread, and I want two eggs. I want one fried over easy, and I want the other scrambled. You got it?" She said, "Got it, sweetheart." And she fixed him breakfast just like that. And he still had a sour look on his face. She said, "Darling, what's wrong?" He said, "You scrambled the wrong egg." There are people like that. You can't please them. They're constantly complaining.

Then, a little higher than that are people who have simple ingratitude. They don't

complain; they just are not grateful, and they're like a hog under a tree eating acorns, never looking up to see where they come from. And many of us, though we may not be bitterly complaining, we are ungrateful.

But then, there is another level of life, and these are people who are grateful for the obvious blessing. If they have health, they thank God for health. If they have food, they thank God for food. And they just thank God for the obvious blessings of life.

But the highest level, the Bible level, the level of this verse that I have, is not the level of constantly complaining, or mere ingratitude, or being thankful for obvious blessings, but look at it: "Giving thanks always for all things." Now, that, friend, is the highest level of life, and that is the level that will get you through life.

There is a legend of a man who found the devil's seed barn, where the devil kept his seeds that he would sow in the hearts and lives of human beings. And he found there was a super abundance of one kind of seed, and it was the seed of discouragement. And the devil said, when he was asked about why he had so many of the seeds of discouragement, he said, "Well, if I can get discouragement into a person's life, then I can get almost anything else I want into their life." And he said, "I found that the seeds of discouragement will sprout almost anywhere except in the heart of a grateful person." "Giving thanks always for all things unto the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, let's break it down and look at it this morning, shall we? Okay.

## **I. The Duration of Thanksgiving**

First of all, I want you to notice the duration of this kind of thanks, the duration of thanksgiving. He says here that we're to be giving thanks always—always. Why always? Blessings never cease; therefore, thanksgiving should never cease. Ephesians 5, verse 20: "Giving thanks always." Now, we're to praise God always; therefore, folks, one day of thanksgiving on Thursday in November is not enough. We've got to give 365 days of thanksgiving. Let's me give you a Scripture—Psalms chapter 68, verse 19: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." And then, He says, "Selah." That means, think about that; meditate upon that. God daily loads us with blessings. God has given you today a wagonload of blessings. And then, Lamentations chapter 3, verse 23—speaking of God's mercies, the Bible says, "They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness—great is thy faithfulness." God has been faithful to you, precious friend, and He has been faithful with a great faithfulness. And so, every day—every day—ought to have a liberal portion of thanksgiving.

And every prayer ought to be mixed with thanksgiving. Put this verse in—Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6: "Be careful for nothing—that is, don't worry about anything—but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made

known unto God.” Now, look up here, and I want to tell you something. “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” If you ask God for more blessings, and don’t thank God for what He’s already done for you, you are wicked and foolish. If you come to God, and you say, “God, do this, and do that, give this, or give that,” and you don’t thank God, you are wicked and foolish. “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Now, most of us need to pull some of the groans out of our prayers, and shove in a few hallelujahs. Thanks is a wonderful thing.

Rudyard Kipling, the great poet of yesteryear, gained notoriety as a writer, and, as a matter of fact, he was being paid 10 shillings per word at the height of his career. That was a lot of money back in those days, 10 shillings a word. There were some college students who were also into writing and journalism, and they were a little jealous of Rudyard Kipling. And so, they thought they’d play a little joke on him. Ten shillings a word was preposterous to them. They gathered up 10 shillings, and put it in an envelope, and mailed it to Rudyard Kipling, and said, “Here are 10 shillings. Give us your best word.” He wrote back, “Thanks.” That’s a good word. Learning to thank God.

Now, what is the duration of thanksgiving? Giving thanks always, always, always; perpetually thanking God. Why? Thanks should never cease, because blessings never cease.

## **II. The Dimensions of Thanksgiving**

Now, here’s the second thing I want to lay on your heart: not only the duration of this thanksgiving, but we’re going to slow down here for a moment, and think about the dimensions of this thanksgiving—the dimensions of thanksgiving. We’re to be giving thanks for all things. Now, giving thanks always would not be difficult, if he had not put in here, “Giving thanks always for all things.” Now, why should we give thanks for all things? Because simply, God rules all things, and we should give thanks for all things. Now, go back and look in verse 19. We’re to be, “Speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jim Whitmire has already reminded us this morning that thankfulness comes before praise. If you cannot thank, you cannot truly sing this morning these great songs that we have sung. No matter what happens—listen—no matter what happens, according to Ephesians chapter 5, verses 19 and 20, you are to have a song in your heart.

Now, we need to thank God for the very rudimentary things, the simple things of life.

Thank God, for example, for water. Now, you go to the fountain, and drink fresh, sparkling water. You turn the tap on in your home, and thank God for water. Have you thanked God for the water that you have? Did you know in India 75 to 80% of the people do not have pure drinking water? And literally millions of die from diseases that are borne along in impure water. So when you bend over here at the church at the drinking fountain, and bow your head to get a drink, why don't you bow your head in thankfulness? Thank God for just simple things like water.

Thank God for simple things like dirty dishes. You say, "Now, wait a minute. I don't thank God for dirty dishes." You ought to, because it means you just had a meal. There are a number of people who would be grateful to thank God for some dirty dishes in this world, because they wouldn't have enjoyed the meal that you have enjoyed, or that kind of a meal.

It's the simple things we can thank God for, and the obvious things, but what about the sorrowful things? What about when we don't feel thankful? What about when we hurt? What about when there are problems that God alone knows how deep they are? Can you thank Him for heartache? Can you thank Him for sorrow? "Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, if you knew what I'm going through, you wouldn't be preaching with such a happy face this morning." Well, let me tell you something. I'm not the one who wrote this Scripture. It was written by divine inspiration. I'm not the author of it; I'm just the Western Union boy, or the newsboy, delivering the message. This was written by the apostle Paul. "Well," you say, "he never had any problems." Friend, he wrote this from prison. He is in Ephesus in prison. He's been unjustly accused of starting a riot, and a riot drove him out of town, and now he is languishing in prison, and he is saying, "Give thanks to God for all things." Now, why is this?

Well, let me talk to you a little bit about the overruling hand of God. I said, giving thanks, the dimensions are always, for all things, because of the overruling providence of God. Let's go down through some of the things that trouble and heartache and problems and sickness and death and tears may do for us.

Number one: when we have trouble, it may correct us. There is a correcting ministry. Put down Hebrews chapter 12, verse 11: "Now, no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Did your father ever chastise you and take a whip or a belt to you? Now, today, you know, they think you ought not to do that. My dad would have been put in the innermost prison. But he would say, as our fathers did, "Son, I do this because I love you." Now, I was convinced he loved me. As a matter of fact, he convinced me I was his favorite. He loved me more than he loved my brother. "No chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; but

afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” David said, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray.” Now, if suffering and pain sometimes corrects us, then thank God for it.

Now, not only may it correct us, but it may cause us to have a greatest dependency upon God. You know, if we don’t have difficulty, many times we do not depend. I mentioned here, a few weeks ago, or days ago, I cannot remember when, about a book by L. E. Maxwell entitled “Crowded to Christ.” And Dr. Maxwell said that troubles move us toward Christ. If we didn’t have troubles, we would stray away from Him. But we are crowded by our troubles to Christ. The classic passage that we often use is 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 7 through 10. Paul had a great vision. He was caught up into the third heaven, and saw sacred, secret things not lawful for a man to utter. He had a great revelation. And he says here in verse 7, “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” Three extended periods of prayer. Paul prayed, “God, please take away this excruciating thorn in the flesh from me.” And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That is, God said, “I’m not going to take it away. I’m going to give you added strength.” And then, Paul said, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul is saying, “God, in His love to me, gave me a thorn in the flesh, that I might see my weakness, depend upon Him, and learn His strength.” Paul didn’t say, what can’t be cured must be endured. Paul said, “What cannot be cured will be enlisted and enjoyed, and I will gladly rejoice in my infirmities.” “Giving thanks always for all things unto God, in the name of our Father.” Now, friend, sometimes this suffering causes us to have a greater dependence upon God. I’ve seen it happen many times.

I’ll tell you what else, friend, it will do. Besides giving you a deepening dependency upon God, it may confirm your testimony to other people—when you go through suffering. I spoke already this morning to a dear lady in this congregation. She’s had two children murdered—two children murdered—another died as a result of an operation. She is here in this auditorium this morning, praising God and giving God thanks. When I talked and prayed with that precious lady, I said to myself, there is faith—real faith, overcoming faith, sustaining faith—that she is here today in this building, praising our great God. That confirms her testimony, and she is now being a blessing to other people. You see, when we endure and keep praising, we shut the



devil's mouth. You know, there are some people who say, "Well, the only reason that Adrian serves God is because he's never known any trouble. The only reason this person or that person serves God, they've never known any difficulties." Well, friend, listen. When you go through suffering and pain and heartache, and come out on the other side still praising God, it shuts the devil's mouth. Put this over there in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 12. Paul is in another prison. When he went to a town, by the way, he never asked, "What kind of hotels you have there?" He said, "What kind of prisons you have there?" He figured that's where he'd end up. And here's what he said, in Philippians 1, verse 12: "But I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel." "Yes, I have suffered, but it caused the gospel to go further." And then, he says, in Philippians 1, verse 29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake"—to suffer for his sake. When we can go through heartache, tears, fears, disappointments and problems and still serve God, friend, it shuts the devil's mouth, and it confirms our testimony in the Lord. Now, Paul, who wrote this, before he had written this, had already endured almost every conceivable hardship and human affliction. He suffered shipwrecks. He suffered beatings. He suffered mocking, persecution, hunger, thirst, nakedness, and character assassination. And God used all of this as a platform for Paul to proclaim the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you something else that suffering will do. It will bring you to a deeper maturity and Christ-likeness. Affliction can be a wonderful teacher. Psalm 119, verse 67—the psalmist said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word. Before I was afflicted I went astray." Psalm 119, verse 71: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Many times, we never really look up till we get on our back. Many times, we never see until our eyes have been washed with tears. You see, God's priority for you is not health and wealth. God's priority for you is not primarily service and usefulness. God's priority for you is spiritual maturity, to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the reason the Bible says in James chapter 1, verse 4, "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect, entire, wanting nothing." And the word perfect means maturity—maturity. It doesn't mean sinlessness. We look at flowers. We say, "That's a perfect rose, or a perfect daisy." We don't mean it's sinless; we mean it's mature, it's in full bloom. God is aiming at maturity. That's His purpose: that you be mature. That's the perfection He's talking about. And, how is he going to do this? Through patience. As I've explained to you many times, patience doesn't mean the ability to build a model ship or to thread a needle. The word patience means endurance. It means bearing up under suffering and problems. And, when you

endure, you become perfected; you become mature. Now, if you want to be mature, you've got to endure. And, if you want to endure, you've got to have something to endure. So God allows us to have these things, that we might learn endurance. God is bringing you to maturity. And, if pain and suffering bring you to maturity, then you can thank God for it.

I'll tell you what else it will do. It will bring the excelling glory of God in your life. Listen to 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 12 through 14: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you..."—many of us say, "Oh, this is so strange. Why is this happening to me?" Peter said—"Don't think it's strange, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice—that means be thankful—inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings"—the word partaker means you're having fellowship with Christ—"that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

Brothers and sisters, as we get closer to the end time and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can expect increasing persecution. If you can't see it happening, you are blind and deaf. More and more Christians are going to be persecuted. And the more you give God the thanks for this persecution, the more the glory of God is going to rest upon you.

Some years ago we were in a battle in our denomination. Some of us believed that our denomination was moving away from her foundations, her root in the Word of God. We decided to do something about it. Well, when we did, the gates of hell opened on us, and all kinds of things were said. And I had people say things about me that were obviously untrue, unkind. And what I learned to do when somebody would say something like that because of the stand that I would take for the Word of God, I would take that thing and offer it to the Lord. It would be a praise offering. I would say, "Now, Lord, because of the position I've taken, and the stand I've taken, I'm receiving this. I am receiving it because of my friendship with You, Jesus. You're the one that got me into this trouble. And so, Lord, here I give that to You as a praise." The worse the criticism, the sweeter the praise. I almost felt like saying, "Thank you for that. You've given me something else to worship God with." You see, listen. When Stephen was being stoned, the Bible says his face shone like the face of an angel. When the three Hebrew children were in the fiery furnace, the Bible says there was a fourth one in there, and his form was like the Son of God.

God will never be more real, more near, more dear, to you than when you are thanking Him. It may bring excelling glory in your life. Listen: "If ye reproached for the

name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”

Now, these are some of the reasons that we ought to give God thanks, not only always, but for all things. Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, you didn’t explain mine.” Well, friend, I don’t have to explain it. We don’t live by explanations; we live by promises and commandments. And the Bible says, “Giving thanks always for all things.” God is God. He is a sovereign God. And you can arch the rainbow of Romans 8:28 over whatever it is: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose.” And His purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ. And sometimes when we’re in trouble, we say, “God, why don’t You do something?” He may be doing something—making you like Jesus. You say, “What are You doing?” He says, “I’m doing something. You just can’t see. You don’t understand what I am doing.”

### **III. The Dynamics of Thanksgiving**

Now, we have talked, friend, about the duration of thanksgiving—giving thanks always. We have talked about the dimensions of thanksgiving—giving thanks for all things. Now, let’s just think for just a few moments about the dynamics of thanksgiving—how do we do it? Look again at this verse: “Giving thanks always for all things—now, here’s the dynamic—unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s the dynamism there. You see, true thanks should be given to the Father through Jesus. That’s what true thanksgiving is about. Now, first of all, we give thanks unto the Father. Why do we give thanks unto the Father? Well, James chapter 1, verse 17, tells us clearly, “Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.” God daily loads us with benefits. Now, God is good. God is good. Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, are you trying to tell me that I’m to give thanks for rape, for murder? That I’m to give thanks for disease, and some greedy malady that’s gnawing away at my body? Am I to give God thanks for that?” No, no, no. “Are you telling me, Pastor, that these things are good?” No, you missed the point. I’m not telling you these things are good. These things are bad. I’m telling you that God is good—God is good. And where God does not rule, God overrules. And God, with the chemistry of the cross, takes all things, and He works them together for good to those who love Him. Therefore, we ought to be thankful to God. Unthankfulness is so sinful. It was Shakespeare who said, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.”

The Bible, over in Romans chapter 1, when it speaks of paganism, gives one of the marks of paganism as unthankfulness. Romans chapter 1, verse 21: “Because, that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became

vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Friend, if you fail to thank God, you’re going into deep, deep darkness.

Now, we give thanks unto the Father. And we give thanks through the Son. Look again in verse 20: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Actually, this word, ‘in the name,’ literally means through the name. That is, He is the dynamic. It is Jesus. And it is through Jesus that I give thanks. In my estimation, you cannot truly, in the New Testament way, the Bible way, give thanks to God unless you do it through Jesus. He is the dynamic. He is the power of it. If you ever doubt the love of God, look at the cross. See who Jesus Christ is. The word *His name* actually stands for authority—in the authority of Jesus. Through the name of Jesus, Father, I give you thanks.

## Conclusion

Pastor Rittenhouse and his family were on vacation. They were riding along in their automobile. They were going in this direction. A car was going in this direction, and it had a trunk on top. And the trunk fell off into the road. Pastor Rittenhouse stopped his car, went over, and picked up the trunk, and turned around to try to find the other car, but it was too late. So they opened the trunk, it was already somewhat broken, and went through it to try to find an address. They couldn’t find any address, but they found a gold medal. And this gold medal, this gold piece, was inscribed, and here’s what it said, “Given to Otis Simpson at his retirement by the Portland Cement Company”—Otis Simpson, Portland Cement. So they began to do some investigatory work, and they traced it down, and they found Otis Simpson’s address. And they wrote him, and told him, “We have your suitcase. We found it. We want to return it to you.” And he wrote them back, and said, “I don’t want the suitcase. What was in it was trivial. I want the gold piece. Would you please return it to me.” And here’s what he said several times in the letter: “that is my most precious possession”—a twenty-dollar gold piece given to Otis Simpson upon his retirement from Portland Cement Company. They sent it back to him, but Pastor Rittenhouse wrote him a letter. He said, “Dear Mr. Simpson, I’m sending you this, but you mentioned that it was your precious possession. May I be bold enough to tell you my most precious possession,” and he shared with Otis his relationship with Jesus Christ, and explained to this man how he could know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. One year later, on the anniversary of that day, Pastor Rittenhouse got a letter from Otis Simpson, and in it was a twenty-dollar gold piece, the same one. He said, “I’m giving you this back to keep, because,” he said, “no longer is it my most precious possession.” He said, “Now, we’re active members of a Bible-preaching church, and I want you to know, sir, that Jesus Christ is my most precious

possession.” Isn’t that wonderful?

Friend, listen. If you have Jesus, if you have the Lord Jesus Christ, you can say this thanksgiving season, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” What is the duration of thanksgiving? To give thanks always. What are the dimensions of thanksgiving? All things. What is the dynamic of thanksgiving? Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Him?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And, if you’re certain that you’re saved, I want you to begin to pray for those round about you who may not know Jesus. And, if you’re certain that you’re saved, thank Him that you know that you’re saved. Thank Him that Jesus is your most precious possession, because, if you’re saved, I can tell you He is. And those of you who are not saved, or those of you who don’t have a personal relationship with God through Christ, this is a wonderful moment for you. And, my precious friend, may I guide you in a decision time, where right now, where you are, you can say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, yield your life to Him, and invite Him to take control of your life. I invite you to pray a prayer like this: Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, this morning, with all of my heart, like a little child. I receive You into my life, as my Lord and Savior and Master. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. And now take control of my life, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. I just yield my life over to you right now. I’m weak, but You’re strong. So, begin now, Lord, from this moment on, as my Lord and Savior. Thank You for saving me. Thank You for your shed blood on the cross. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with your blood. Thank You that You were raised from the dead. Thank You, Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, I’m going to ask you to do something wonderful. I’m going to ask you to help settle it and seal it by coming forward. Walking an aisle doesn’t save anybody. Being greeted by a pastor doesn’t save anybody. What Jesus did on the cross is what saves. “Well, then, Pastor, why do you ask us to come forward?” Number one: it’s biblical. The Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Number two: there’s something about it that helps settle it and seal it in your heart. You see, if you don’t love Him enough to make it public, you have every reason to ask yourself, am I truly trusting Him? The Scripture says, when we believe on Him, we’ll not be ashamed of Him. And Jesus plainly said, “If you are ashamed of me and of my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, then I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” But now, listen. Jesus said, “If you’ll confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father.” You see, the belief that does not lead to confession won’t lead to heaven. If you’re ashamed of Jesus, He’s

ashamed of you.

So, here's what we're going to do. We're going to have the ministers of our church to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front here, at the head of every aisle for those of you who'll be coming forward from out here. And then, for you precious friends there in the balcony, there'll be someone to receive those of you on this side underneath that banner up there that says Redeemer; and those of you on this side, there'll be someone waiting to receive you under that banner that says Messiah over there. You just move that way. And, if you prayed that prayer with me today, or you need a little more help in praying that prayer, and you say, "I still don't understand. I need some guidance," you just come. We have an open Bible. We'll guide you in this decision. And I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that Jesus will save you, if you trust Him. He will.

# What to Do When You Don't Feel Thankful

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 23, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:20

*"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

EPHESIANS 5:20

## Outline

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## Introduction

Open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. Find chapter 5 and verse 20. And when you've found it, look up here. Let me tell you something: we're going to read in a moment perhaps the hardest commandment in all of the Bible to keep, to obey. And yet, we're going to read about a commandment that if we do obey it, it will bring perhaps the biggest blessing of all. And here it is; look at it—Ephesians chapter 5, verse 20. The Bible says we're to be *"giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20) Now, it would be relatively simple if that scripture said, "Giving thanks always," but it says, *"Giving thanks always for all things."* (Ephesians 5:20) What do you do when you don't feel thankful?

Now, basically, there are four levels of life when it comes to thanksgiving. First of all, there are those who are not thankful for anything but, to the contrary, they are constantly complaining, constantly bickering, constantly griping. Rather than being humbly grateful, they're grumbly hateful. And we've been around these kinds of people.

¶ I heard about a man who was so hard to please. He never thanked his wife for anything she did for him. One day, she made up her mind she was going to please him no matter what, so when he awoke in the morning, she said, “Sweetheart, what would you like for breakfast? Just tell me what you want. I’ll fix it for you any way you’d like it fixed.” He said, “All right.” He said, “I want toast. I want two pieces: I want one whole wheat and one white. I want the whole wheat buttered, the white not buttered at all.” She said, “Yes, darling, what else do you want?” He said, “I want two eggs.” He said, “I want one scrambled, and I want one fried. I want the fried egg over light. Got it?” She said, “Got it, darling.” She fixed the breakfast for him and sat down. Everything was perfect, but he still had that hateful look on his face. She said, “Sweetheart, what’s wrong?” He said, “You scrambled the wrong egg.”¶

There are people like that. They’re never happy. They’re always grumbling, always complaining. Now, that’s the lowest level. A little bit higher than that are people who just simply are filled with ingratitude. They just don’t give thanks. They may not grumble all the time, but they are basically ungrateful people. They’re like a hog under a tree eating acorns off the ground, never ever looking up to see from whence they have come. And many of us just consume the blessings of God without looking up to thank Him.

Now, there’s a third level. It’s a little higher than that, and these are the ones who are thankful for obvious blessings when they come. And so, if it’s an obvious blessing for health, for prosperity, for friends, for family, for church, we thank God. And that’s good; we ought to do that.

But the highest level of thanksgiving, the one I want to talk about, is giving thanks always, for all things, no matter what—continual, perpetual thanksgiving unto God. Now, that is a wonderful principle, I’m saying, that will transform life from monotonous to momentous, and I think we need to learn it today. So, let’s learn three basic things in this one verse. And we’ll stay, basically, with this verse, but we’ll bring some other verses to impinge upon it.

## I. The Duration of Thanksgiving

The very first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call “the duration of thanksgiving.” We’re to be “*giving thanks always.*” (Ephesians 5:20) That is, it’s never to end. Now, why do we give thanks always? We give thanks always because the blessings of God come to us always. Every day God blesses us. And if you don’t understand that, it’s because you’re blind to the blessings of God.

Now, Ephesians chapter 5, verse 20, says, “*Giving thanks always...*” (Ephesians 5:20) Well, let me add another verse to that—Psalms 68 and verse 19. It says, “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with [blessings].*” (Psalms 68:19) He daily loads us. Now, God has given you a load of blessings today. God has loaded your wagon today



with blessings. Now, you may be blind to them. You know the reason you're blind to them? Because you don't think about it. Listen to it again: *"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefiits, even the God of our salvation"*—and then, He says—*"Selah."* (Psalms 68:19) Do you know what *Selah* means? It means "think about it." Think of the blessings that God has given you. Don't be like that hog under the tree. Every day, God gives us a load of blessings. The Bible speaks in Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 23 about the mercies of God, and the Bible says the mercies of God *"are new every morning."* (Lamentations 3:23) When you wake up, out there is a daily load of blessings that God gives us because He's a faithful God. *"They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:23)

Now, we in America have a day we call Thanksgiving Day. But friend, for the child of God, Thanksgiving Day is to be 365 days a year, twenty-four hours a day, and seven days every week. We ought to thank God daily because His blessings come to us daily. And when you pray, every prayer should be crammed full of thanksgiving. If you're given over to worry, God has a recipe to help cure that, and it's found in the book of Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6; and it says, *"Be careful for nothing"*—that means, literally, "don't worry about anything"—*"but in every thing, by prayer and supplication"*—now, listen—*"with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep"*—literally, "guard"; and the word *guard* means, literally, "garrison"—*"your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:6–7) God will put a wall of protection around the individual who refuses to worry but, by prayer and supplication, with a great portion of thanksgiving mixed in, gives thanks to God.

Your pastor wants to tell you something right now: it is foolish and wicked to ask God for more blessings if you've not thanked Him for what He's already done. When you ask God to give you something or do something for you—may I ask you this question?—have you thanked Him? *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6) We need to pull some of the groans out of our prayers and shove in some "hallelujahs." And we need to take some of the "gimme" out of our prayers and add in some "thank you" into our prayers. We are to thank God always. That's the duration of thanksgiving. *"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."* (Psalms 103:1) And we're to bless Him continually.

† Rudyard Kipling, the author of *yesteryear*—many of us have read his poetry and his writing—Rudyard Kipling became so proficient and so famous that he was being paid ten shillings a word for what he wrote. Now, I really don't know how much a shilling is and, therefore, how much he was getting a word, but it was a pretty high price. And there were some students in the university who also were studying journalism and

writing, and they were a little envious of Rudyard Kipling and a little contentious of him. So, these students got together, and they collected ten shillings, and put them in an envelope, and mailed them to Rudyard Kipling, and said, “We understand you’re getting ten shillings per word. Send us your best word. Here are ten shillings.” He sent back a word: “Thanks.”<sup>†</sup>

*Thanks* is a great word, and we need to learn it. The duration of our thanksgiving—every day we’re to thank God. To be unthankful is a horrible sin against God, as we’re going to see a little later.

## II. The Dimensions of Thanksgiving

Now, number two: I want us to think not only about the duration of thanksgiving, but I want us to think about the dimensions of thanksgiving. How wide should our thanks be? Well, look at the verse again: “*Giving thanks always for all things.*” (Ephesians 5:20) That’s the dimension: “for all things.” Why do we do this? Because God rules over all things, and, therefore, we should give thanks for all things.

The sovereignty of God enables us, no matter what happens, to give God thanks for all things. The reason thankful people sing is because they see God over all things. Now, Ephesians chapter 5, verse 19, says, “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things.*” (Ephesians 5:19–20) Brother Whitmire has already reminded us that we come into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. You see, thankful people cannot help but sing. People who are not thankful are miserable people. There’s no song in their heart. No matter what happens, we’re to have a song. We’re to be giving thanks always. We’re to be giving thanks for all things.

Now, we’re to thank God for the simple things of life. Many of us don’t thank God for things that we ought to thank God for. Here in America, we turn a tap and sparkling water comes out, and we drink water. We go to a water fountain here in our beautiful worship center, and we bow down our head and we drink. Well, when we bow our head and drink that water, it ought to remind us to thank God for that water. Did you know in India seventy-five to eighty percent of the people in that great nation do not have decent drinking water, and millions die annually because of diseases that come through impure water? And we just take a glass of water in a restaurant, at home, and we drink it and just assume that we’re supposed to have it.

Simple things. Would you ever thank God for dirty dishes? You say, “No, sir. I don’t thank God for dirty dishes.” I’ll tell you, there are a lot of people in the world who’d like to have some dirty dishes, because that would mean they just had a meal. Think of the blessings that we have in America, the simple things.

Well, you say, “Yes, I suppose I can thank God for the simple things, but can I thank

God for the sorrowful things—when I hurt; when there’s disease, and death, and disagreements, and problems, and heartaches, and confusion, and sometimes even despair? How, Pastor, can I thank God for these things? Pastor, that would mock us to thank God for these things.” It would mock us if we did not know that God is a sovereign God and that God is over all—if we did not see the overruling hand of God. As the Bible teaches in Romans 8, chapter 28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to [those who] love God...who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) There is a God who is working all things together for good. Let’s think of some of the things that heartache and problems and sorrow can do for us.

### **A. Suffering Can Correct Us**

And we don’t like to think about it sometimes, but think, for example, about how God’s hand of discipline upon us corrects us. Put this verse down—Hebrews chapter 12, verse 11: *“Now no chastening for the present [time] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness [to] them [that] are exercised thereby.”* (Hebrews 12:11) Now, when you were a child and your father was whipping you, or paddling you, as mine did—not you, but me—I never did say, “You know, this is the most blessed thing that’s happened to me in a long time. This is wonderful.” *“No chastening for the present [time] seemeth to be joyous.”* (Hebrews 12:11) But, as I look back now, I am grateful that I had a father who loved me enough to correct me. And he used to say, as your father used to say to you, “Now Son, I’m doing this because I love you.” Well, if that were true, I was his favorite. “I’m doing this because I love you.” *“No chastening for the present [time] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: [but] afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them [that] are exercised thereby.”* (Hebrews 12:11) Now, if God brings chastisement into your heart—and that chastisement can come in many ways—it may be God’s way of showing His love to you. David, who wrote the psalms, or most of the psalms, said, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray.”* (Psalms 119:67) Now, if God’s chastening hand is drawing you closer to God, and if the peaceable fruit of righteousness is being produced in your life, can’t you thank God for it?

### **B. Suffering Can Increase Our Dependence on God**

Let me give you something else. Sometimes, problems, heartaches, tears, and sickness cause us to depend upon God in a greater way. I mentioned to you some days ago about L. E. Maxwell, who wrote a book that I read perhaps thirty or forty years ago called *Crowded to Christ*. Here are problems that just seem to drive us to the Lord and cause us to depend upon Him. That’s what happened to the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul, the Bible tells us, was caught up into the third heaven, and there he saw sacred secrets. He saw incredible revelations—things so wonderful, so glorious, that God

forbade him to share them; “unlawful,” he said, “for a man to utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:4) And he came back to earth. He said, “I don’t know whether I went in my body or out of my body to heaven. I don’t know, but I saw magnificent things there.” And then, here’s his testimony in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 7: and he says, “*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me*”—notice: “given to me”—“*a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure*”—that is, “to keep me from pride”—“*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*”—and I take that to mean extended periods of prayer—“*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*”—now, God says, “Paul, you asked me to take away this thing, this excruciating thorn in the flesh. I’m not going to do it. I’m not going to take away the thorn. I’m going to give you added grace to teach you to depend upon me.” Now, here’s what Paul said—“*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my [infirmity], that the power of Christ may rest upon me*”—Paul did not say, “What can’t be cured must be endured.” He said, “What can’t be cured will be enlisted and enjoyed. I will glory in my infirmity,” glorying in the thorn in the flesh. Why? “That the power of Christ might rest upon me”—“*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake*”—now, here’s the bottom line—“*for when I am weak, then [I’m] strong.*” (2 Corinthians 12:7–10) Now, if we sail through life without any difficulty, we never depend upon God; we’re not crowded to Christ. But, these heartaches, these problems, bring us to Jesus Christ and a deepening dependency upon Him. Now, if they bring a deepening dependency upon God, can we not thank God for them?

### **C. Suffering Can Bring a Confirming Testimony**

Now again, trouble may bring a confirming testimony. How do people know that your faith is real? How do people know that you’re not a cardboard Christian? Well, they watch you, and, when trouble comes, they see your reaction. And when you react to trouble, and heartache, and pain, and suffering, and depravation, and still serve God, they know that what you have is real.

The devil accused Job of serving God for the side benefits. The devil said to God the Father, in effect, “Why, no wonder your servant Job serves you. You’ve bribed him. You bought him off. He doesn’t really love you, God. He loves you for what he can get out of it,” or, “He serves you for what he can get out of it.” (Job 1:9–10) That same lie is told today: “Oh, that man only goes to church for business reasons,” or, “She only goes for appearances.” You see, the people who are full of the devil can’t believe we love God for just who God is. And so, the devil says, “Look, Job has got you fooled. He doesn’t really love you.” God said, “You don’t know my servant Job. He loves me, not for what I’ve done for him—He just loves me.” The devil says, “You let me at him. I’ll prove you

wrong.” And all hell broke loose on Job, but Job said triumphantly, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”* (Job 13:15) And that shut the devil’s mouth.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, you don’t know the trouble I’m having. You wouldn’t be preaching so glibly this morning if you knew what I’m going through.” Well, friend, I’m just the delivery boy. I didn’t write the message. I’m giving you the inspired Word of God from the Apostle Paul. And may I tell you where Paul wrote this, giving thanks always for all things? From prison. He had been falsely accused in Ephesus, and a riot began; and Paul, now, is in prison, and he’s writing this in prison. He wrote from another prison in Philippians chapter 1, verse 12: *“But I would [that] ye...understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”* (Philippians 1:12) Now, Paul said, “Look, I’m in prison, but that’s okay, because somehow my being in prison is causing the gospel to go forward.” What that meant was this: “that people really believe what I am because I am willing to suffer for it.” And then, he wrote in Philippians 1, verse 29: *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ”—*notice: “in the behalf of Christ”—*“not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”* (Philippians 1:29)

Read the biography of the Apostle Paul as given in the Bible, in the book of Acts. He had already endured almost every conceivable hardship and affliction. He suffered shipwrecks. He suffered beatings, mocking, persecution, hunger, thirst, character assassination. He suffered it all. Have you ever been beaten for Christ? Have you ever been stoned and left for dead? Listen. This is the man who said, *“Giving thanks always for all things”* (Ephesians 5:20)—I’m not the man who wrote this. This is God’s Word—inspired. Now, people believed Paul’s message because Paul was willing to endure these things in order to preach it. Are you willing to endure affliction for Jesus Christ? If you are, it will give authenticity to your testimony and it will shut the devil’s mouth. When you begin to thank God in these kinds of afflictions, it gives a confirming testimony.

#### **D. Suffering Can Increase Our Spiritual Maturity**

I’ll tell you what else it will do: it will deepen your life and give you an increasing maturity. Affliction and problems will deepen you in the Lord. Psalms 119, verse 67: *“Before I was afflicted I went astray.”* (Psalms 119:67) Is that not interesting? “Here I was going on my own merry way away from God until affliction came.” And then, he said in Psalms 119 and verse 71: *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”* (Psalms 119:71) Well, if affliction was good for him, then he could thank God for affliction. *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”* (Psalms 119:71) When did you grow the most? When heartaches and difficulty came.

Now, God’s aim for you is not health and wealth, not even usefulness. God’s aim for you is Christ-likeness. God’s aim for you is to be mature. And what is maturity? Well, listen to this—in James chapter 1, verse 4: *“But let patience have her perfect work, that*

*ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*” (James 1:4) Now, let’s break that down. The word *patience* literally means “endurance.” *“Let patience have her perfect work.”* (James 1:4) Endurance—patience—is not the ability to thread a needle, or to build a model airplane, or to work out an intricate pattern. *Patience* means “to bear up under pressure.” *“Let [endurance] have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect.”* (James 1:4) Perfection doesn’t mean sinlessness. We’ll not get that ’til we get to heaven. The word *perfect* here—*teleos*—means “mature, complete.” We say of a flower, “That’s a perfect rose,” or “a perfect daisy,” or “a perfect lily.” We don’t mean it’s a sinless plant. We mean it’s full blown; it’s in bloom. It’s reached its maturity. Well, what is our maturity? When we become like the Lord Jesus Christ. And what brings that to us is endurance.

Now, in order to have endurance—you’re a thinking people—you have to have something to endure. The Bible teaches that *“tribulation [works] patience,”* (Romans 5:3) endurance. And so, we have tribulation. It is in tribulation that we learn to endure, and it is through endurance that we become like the Lord Jesus Christ. Like it or not, that’s what the Bible teaches. Now, you’re not going to learn much about anything else if you don’t learn endurance. You want to learn piano—you have to learn the scales. You want to learn Greek—you have to learn the verbs. You want to learn sainthood—you have to learn endurance. And if endurance is making you more like the Lord Jesus Christ, can you not thank God for it? You may not like it, but you can thank God for it.

### **E. Suffering Can Give Glory to God**

Now, I’ll tell you something else it may do: it may give you a glory that you could have no other way. Here’s the scripture—1 Peter chapter 4, verses 12 and following: *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you”*—that means “to test you”—*“as though some strange thing happened unto you”*—you know, we think we’re God’s little darlings and it’s not going to happen to us. But he says—*“but rejoice”*—now, he’s talking about fiery trials, and he says—*“rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. [For] if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit”*—listen to this—*“the spirit of glory and of God resteth [on] you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”* (1 Peter 4:12–14) Now, this is talking about a particular kind of suffering that we get into, and that is, when we stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, we get persecuted; we suffer for Christ.

Now, I want you to get ready for this kind of suffering, because as night follows day, it is coming in the last days, and you can already see the clouds on the horizon. The Church in these last days—the true Church—is going to be persecuted in an unusual way, and I want you to be ready for it. And don’t think it’s strange, *“as though some strange thing happened unto you.”* (1 Peter 4:12) It’s normal. It’s there. There’s no fine print in the contract. And many who are not true Christians are going to fold up and go

away, or go over to the enemy's side. But those who are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, when it comes, they will say, "Thank you, Lord, for the Spirit of God, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of glory is resting upon me."

Some years ago, our denomination was in a battle. We were in a battle over the Word of God, and it reached a crescendo, a head, in 1979. And as a result of that, I was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, with the express intent to try to turn our denomination back to *"the faith...once [for all] delivered [to] the saints,"* (Jude 1:3) to the old-time religion, believing that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God. And a war broke out in our denomination, and I received all kinds of slings and arrows. All kinds of vile and untrue things were said about yours truly. And I learned something very wonderful about all of that. I learned that when somebody would say something about me that was untrue, unfair, mean-spirited, I could do one thing: I could get bitter and retaliate—tit for tat—and return evil for evil, or else I could take that thing and give God thanks for it. How could I give God thanks for it? Well, here's the way: I would take that thing, and I would bring it to the Lord; and I'd say, "Lord, here's what they're saying, and Lord, it's all your fault. It's because of you, Lord. I've taken a stand for you and for your Word, and now, Lord, I offer that to you as praise." And it was almost like these people were doing me a favor, because they were giving me something to offer to the Lord.

You think of the people who had the glory of God to rest upon them. When Stephen was being stoned for his faith, the Bible says that his face shone like the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15) When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the fiery furnace because they would not bow down to the king's filthy image, the king looked into the fiery furnace, and he said, "I thought I only put three men in there. There are four walking around in the fire, and the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:25) And the Lord will never be nearer or more precious to you than when you stand for Him. And if persecution comes—and we don't want to go around with a Messiah complex trying to bait persecution. There'll be enough; you don't have to go looking for it—but when it comes, if it brings Him praise and lets the glory of God rest upon you, can you not thank Him for it? *"Giving thanks always."* (Ephesians 5:20)

You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, those may be good reasons, but you haven't gotten to mine yet." Well, I'm not here to explain everything to you. That's not my business. *We don't live by explanations; we live by promises and commands.* And God has commanded us to *"[give] thanks always for all things."* (Ephesians 5:20) You say, "Well, these things that are happening to me, they're not good things." Of course they're not good things. I'm not saying that cancer is good, that the rape of a child is good. We had a lady I met here in the first service—sat right over there—I came out and talked to her for a while, sat down and prayed with her. She's had two children murdered. She told

me how her daughter's throat had been cut from side to side. Then another child died on the operating table with a simple appendix operation, and her child died. She's raising grandchildren. I looked at that dear, precious woman, whose first name is Edie, and I saw God on her. I sat and prayed with her. She's in church today, already in the first service, praising the Lord. Now, murder is not good, but she knows that God is good. If you have difficulty with that, don't ask me to explain it to you; just go look at Calvary. And when you see Calvary, you never have to doubt the love of God or the goodness of God. Now friend, that is the dimension of thanksgiving. The duration—*"giving thanks always."* (Ephesians 5:20) The dimension—*"for all things."* (Ephesians 5:20) Bookend to bookend, we serve a mighty God.

### III. The Dynamic of Thanksgiving

And here's the third thing: the dynamic of thanksgiving. *"Giving thanks always...unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20) What is the dynamic? We give praise to the Father. Why give praise to the Father? Because He is good. God is good, and *"every good gift and every perfect gift [cometh down] from above...from the Father of lights, with whom [there] is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17)—James 1, verse 17. I hope you give your Heavenly Father thanks. Shakespeare said, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." You thank your earthly parents, and you thank your Heavenly Father. Not to be thankful is pagan. In Romans chapter 1, verse 21, the Bible speaks of the pagans: *"Because...when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."* (Romans 1:21) If you don't have a thankful spirit, you're going deeper and deeper into darkness.

But what is the dynamic of thanksgiving? We *"[give] thanks...unto...the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20) And that literally means "through the name." Well, what does the name stand for? The name stands for authority. "Through the authority of Jesus Christ, we give thanks," because He is the One who rules over all. And He is our dear Savior, and when we have Him in our hearts, we can give thanks.

### Conclusion

† Pastor Bill Rittenhouse and his family were on a vacation trip, and they were going down the road in their car; and the car coming in this direction had some trunks on top of it, and some suitcases, and a suitcase fell off. They stopped, went and picked up the suitcase, but that car was far gone—no way to get it back. So, they took the suitcase and took it home and opened it, and in there were some clothes and some things. But they went through the suitcase to try to find the owner so they could get it back to him. They found no identification except a twenty-dollar gold piece, and it had an inscription



on it: “Given to Otis Simpson upon his retirement, Portland Cement Company”—a twenty-dollar gold piece. They began to investigate, wrote the Portland Cement Company, and so forth, and found Otis Simpson, and said, “Mr. Simpson, we have your suitcase, and here’s what we were able to retrieve; and we’d like to send it to you.” He sent them a letter back and said, “Please just discard the suitcase and the clothes. I don’t care about that. But,” he said, “would you please send me the twenty-dollar gold piece?” And he said this several times in the letter: “It is my most valuable possession.” So, they mailed it to him. But Pastor Rittenhouse also wrote a testimony. He said, “You mentioned your most valuable possession.” He said, “May I tell you my most valuable possession?” And he talked to this man about Jesus Christ and told this man how Jesus Christ had saved him and had given him everlasting life. And he said, “I want to commend Him to you, that you would receive Him as your Lord and Savior.”

A year later, on the anniversary of that letter, Pastor Rittenhouse got a letter from Otis Simpson. In it was the twenty-dollar gold piece. He said, “I’m returning this to you. I want you to keep it because,” he said, “I want you to know that my wife and I—she’s seventy-two and I’m seventy-four—my wife and I are now active members in our local church. We have given our hearts to Jesus Christ, and He is now our most precious possession.”<sup>f</sup>

Isn’t that wonderful? Friend, I don’t know what your most precious possession is right now, but compared to Jesus, it’s trash. Now, it may be family, friends, job—and if you have those things, I’m grateful—but you’re a pauper if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*” (2 Corinthians 9:15) How I wish I could receive Him on your behalf, but I cannot. I’ve preached as best I know how, but I’m telling you, friend, that Jesus is the dynamic of a grateful spirit. “*Giving thanks always for all things unto...the Father in the name*”—through the name, through the authority—“*of...Jesus Christ.*” (Ephesians 5:20)

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And if you’re not saved, I want you to receive Jesus Christ today. I want you to open your heart to Him and let Him come in, and cleanse you, and fill you, and guide you, and one day take you to heaven. Pray this prayer: “Dear God, I need you. I want you. Jesus, you died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you. Come into my heart now. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Thank you for your precious blood shed at Calvary that paid my sin debt. Thank you for your victorious resurrection. Thank you for your promise of everlasting life. And now, I lay hold of this gift by simple faith. I want you, Jesus, to be my most precious possession. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Father, I pray that many today will do just that. O God, draw the lost to Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. “Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer and asked Jesus Christ to

save me, did He do it?" Well, if you were sincere. "Well, Pastor, how will I know it? Will I get an emotional feeling?" Not necessarily. "Will I see a flashing light?" Not necessarily. "How do I know?" His Word. He cannot lie. If you're sincere, you know that He keeps His Word. "Well, Pastor, how can I know if I'm sincere?" Well, I think you'll know, but I'll tell you, one way that you can know is this: Are you willing to make it public? You see, if you're ashamed of Jesus, you're not really trusting Him, for the Bible says, "*Whosoever [believes] on him shall not be ashamed.*" (Romans 9:33; 10:11)

So, I'm going to ask you to do something wonderful today. If you prayed that prayer, or you still need some help in praying that prayer, when we stand and sing, I'm going to ask you to just make your way to any of these aisles and come right down here to the front. To welcome you will be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front, and there'll be one at the head of each of these aisles, a man of God. And if you prayed that prayer, or you need some more help in praying that prayer, I want you to come forward and say to that person, "I'm trusting Jesus," or, "I want to trust Jesus. I need some more help." We'll take an open Bible and guide you in this decision and seal it in prayer. Now, walking the aisle doesn't save you. It's Jesus that saves you. But the fact that you're not ashamed of Jesus, that you're trusting Jesus, is what you're demonstrating by coming forward. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a friend waiting to receive you under that banner to my right that says, "Redeemer," or this one to my left over here that says, "Messiah." You just make your way that way. Those of you on the ground floor, be coming right down here.

Now, there are others of you here today who've already been saved before this service, but if you've never made it public, you need to come and give Him the glory, to present yourself for believer's baptism. Or, there are others of you here today who are baptized believers in Christ, but your church membership is elsewhere. If this is where you worship, we invite you to come and place your membership here. Now, listen to me carefully: every New Testament Christian should be a member of a local New Testament church, if at all possible—if not this one, one somewhere. We invite you to Bellevue. If this is where God speaks to your heart, I want you, your family, whomever, to move out and come forward. And when you come, you say, "I want to place my membership here." If you've not had believer's baptism, we'd want the joy of baptizing you as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. Father God, I pray now that you'll bless the invitation and draw many souls to Jesus. In His dear name, O God, bless. Please, dear God. In your holy name. Amen.

Let's stand together. Step out and come.†

# Women Are from Venus, Men Are from Mars, Marriage Is from Heaven

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 21, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:21–33

*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”*

EPHESIANS 5:21

## Outline

Introduction

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  - C. The Purpose of Marriage

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles, and turn to Ephesians chapter 5. And when you’ve found it, look up here. As we’ve already said this morning, when the Southern Baptist Convention met recently in Salt Lake City, they caused quite a stir. It was a wonderful convention, and Christ was there. And wonderful plans were made to evangelize the entire world, to spread the gospel, to meet the needs of the helpless and the hurting. But the world paid little attention to that. One thing that the world did pay attention to, what did make news nationally and internationally, was a statement of what we generally believe as Baptists.

Now, I want to hasten to say about the only thing two Baptists can always agree on is what a third one ought to give. But I'm saying that this is a statement of generally held beliefs that we as Baptists hold. But I want to say this: that we don't really have any Baptist doctrine. If we do, we need to get rid of it. What we want is Bible doctrine, and what we asserted was what we believe that the Bible clearly and plainly teaches.

However, I've been reading the newspapers, as you've been reading the newspapers, and tearing out a few things. And I had a stack about that high, but I only brought one in. This is an editorial that was in this week's paper and is written by a Bonnie Erbe. The title is "Harking to the Past," and the subtitle, "It's hard to see how anyone could espouse the view of marriage being considered by Southern Baptists." She said, "How could anybody believe this?"

And then, here is the lead paragraph—it's a long article; I'm not going to read it: "Southern Baptists and other women unite. If there was ever a roaring cry for women of one faith to teach a lesson to their menfolk, it comes this week at the Southern Baptist Annual Convention in, of all places, Salt Lake City. The Baptist Faith and Message, the church's declaration of beliefs, was amended Tuesday at the convention to include a statement on marriage and family that reads, in part, a husband has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family, while a wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ." I'm going to skip a few paragraphs here. And she says, "Southern Baptists are clearly not the only religious group to treat women in a subservient manner, and there probably are plenty of Southern Baptist women who fall for the idealized version of a protective husband, and a sheltered home, and a child-centered existence. But this amendment is so degrading and anachronistic that it is hard to believe even a group of male devotees could suggest its approval in 1998." And then, she goes on to say, "If the convention wishes to become a very small and select group, it can continue along the path it has chosen."

Well, let me say two things about that. We're really more concerned about being true to the Bible than being big. Let me say something else: that the liberal churches are drying up and dying on the vine, and the Southern Baptist Convention is one of the few growing major denominations in the world. But that's not what it's settled on, whether it's going to make us big or little. I thought about that when I read that when Noah went into the ark, he went in a minority; when he came out, he was the majority. You know, we're not primarily concerned about whether everybody likes it or everybody's going to get on the bandwagon if we kind of water down what God's Word says.

Well, really, what was this resolution? I think I brought it here. Let me just read it to you. What was this horrendous thing, this proposal? Well, here's what it says: "God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of

persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption”—that’s very important because they’re telling us now that any two people that get together of any particular sex or sexual orientation, because they live under one roof, can call themselves a family. But we believe that a family are people related by marriage, by blood, or by adoption—“Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for the procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God. Both bear God’s image, but in differing ways. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church”—by the way, in today’s newspaper, if you’ll read it, there’s an editorial that shows two Neanderthals in a cave, and there is a man dragging a woman by the hair with a club in his hand; and it says, “Southern Baptists are discussing the family.” All right, but it says here, “A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church.” Friends, Christ died for the Church, as we’re going to see, and He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family—“A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God, as is her husband, and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing their household and nurturing the next generation.”

Now that, friend, is what has got some people all upset. Well, what does the Bible have to say? Now listen, we’re going to have to look at this thing and understand this thing from God’s point of view. I mean, it’s not going to be settled by feminist propaganda or by chauvinistic backlash but by the Word of God.

Now, the reason we have so many failed marriages today is that we have thrown away the original plan that God has given. Somebody has said that “the difference between courtship and marriage is the difference between what you see in the seed catalog and what comes up in the garden.” Well, what causes that, I think, is failure to cultivate the garden. Now, this is Father’s Day, and I want to speak primarily, therefore, to the husband and his responsibility to his wife in the light of all of this. That’s the reason why I’ve said that women are from Venus, men are from Mars, according to the popular book, but marriage is from heaven. And we’re going to understand what God has to say about marriage.

Now, Stu Weber, who, incidentally, was here and spoke to us, said something very interesting. He said, “The great problem in America is failure in the highest office of the land: the husband and father.” That’s the highest office in the land—to be a husband and a father.

Well, let's look at what God has to say here in Ephesians chapter 1. We're going to be talking here about the marriage covenant, not the marriage contract. If you look at marriage as a contract, you're going to be standing up for your rights. If you look at marriage as a covenant, you're going to be accepting your responsibilities. If you look at marriage as a contract, you're going to be looking for loopholes in the contract. But, if you look at marriage as a divine covenant, you're not going to be doing that.

According to this scripture that I'm going to read to you in a moment, the husband, the father, according to the Word of God, has three major responsibilities. And I hope by the time I'm finished, whatever else, if you're a husband and a father today, you will see your three major responsibilities. And, by the way, if what I say today doesn't come out of the Word of God, you have every right to come and argue with me. But if what I say today does come out of the Word of God, don't waste my time by arguing with me. Take it up with God, okay? Just say, "God, I don't like what you said," or, "I don't believe your Bible," or whatever. Don't come and argue with me about it because you'll be wasting your time and my time, too. As a matter of fact, you won't waste my time because I won't argue with you about it. You'll just be getting frustrated, I suppose. All right, so—and I don't say that arrogantly, but I just want to say, folks, the Bible is God's Word; it's not up for debate—at least not in my heart, and I trust not in yours. Here are the three things that a husband is responsible to his wife for.

## I. **Servant Leadership**

Now, first of all, he is responsible for servant leadership. Look in verse 21: "*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:21–22) Now look, folks, Southern Baptists didn't write the Bible. Look—just read it. Read that: "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*" (Ephesians 5:22–23) Now, the word *head* here speaks of leader. The husband is the head of the wife; that is, he is the leader, and he's not the dictator. The husband is not some sort of a top sergeant, beating his wife over the head with a Bible club. We hear a lot about the "chain of command." You might hear about the chain of command in the Army, but this doesn't speak primarily of a chain of command; this is a line of responsibility. That's a much better term. You see, to have headship is to have responsibility. That means, if a wife is to submit to her husband, she is to submit to her husband for loving leadership, and God gives the model. What is the model? Verse 23: "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.*" (Ephesians 5:23)

Now, Jesus Christ has never forced me to do anything. I have never ever in my marriage—and Joyce and I have been married for a long time—I have never forced

Joyce to do one blessed thing—never. Jesus has never forced me to do a thing. He hasn't forced me to be at church today. He didn't force me to put anything in the offering plate. He didn't force me to preach. He's never forced me to do anything, but He's led me and loved me to do many things. And, you see, *"the husband is the head of the wife...as Christ is the head of the church."* (Ephesians 5:23) That is the model.

Now, to be head means responsible leadership. Now, let me give you a verse of Scripture. This is a key verse. First Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3: *"But I would have you know"*—there's the Apostle Paul, the same one who wrote this passage, speaking—*"But I would have you [to] know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* (1 Corinthians 11:3) Now, let's take that last part of that phrase—*"the head of Christ is God."* (1 Corinthians 11:3) If you know anything about Christian theology, you know we don't worship three Gods; we worship one God: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a triune God. And in the Godhead, there's both Father and Son; and so, the Father and the Son are co-equal in worth, power, glory, majesty. Jesus could say, *"He [who] hath seen me hath seen [my] Father"; "I and [the] Father are one."* (John 14:9; 10:30) And yet, this passage of Scripture here, 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, says that the Father is the head of the Son. (1 Corinthians 11:3) Does that mean that the Son is inferior? Of course not! If you know Bible theology, you know that the Lord Jesus Christ *"thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* (Philippians 2:6) Therefore, the headship of one does not mean the inferiority of the other. Have you got the point? The headship of the one does not mean the inferiority of the other.

Now, the Son is in heaven at the right hand of the Father as an equal, and the Father has an eternal headship—not because the Son is inferior, but because of everlasting love. You see, *the home needs a head. Anything with no head is dead, and anything with two heads is abnormal.* This doesn't mean that the wife is inferior. Let me tell you what—let me tell you about the equality of the man and the woman: both bear God's image. Put this in your margin—Genesis 1:27: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* (Genesis 1:27) Both the male and the female, therefore, are in the image of God, and both the male and the female, therefore, are heirs of the grace of life. First Peter chapter 3 and verse 7: *"Husbands and wives are to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life."* (1 Peter 3:7) So, we are joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Both a man and a woman are equal in their standing before God if they've been saved.

Put this verse down—Galatians chapter 3 and verse 28: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28) So, when our Lord looks at us, He's *"no respecter of persons."* (Acts 10:34) He doesn't say, "Well, you're this race," or, "You're that race.

You're this socioeconomic status, and you're that socioeconomic status. You're a male, and you're a female. And I'm going to divide between you on that basis." He says, "Oh no, oh no, not in Christ." Friend, in Christ, we're all one. Say "amen." Every race, every socioeconomic background, each gender, male or female, we are all one in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now look, the male and the female both bear the image of God. The male and the female are both heirs of the grace of life. The male and the female are both one in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, learn that, and learn it well: they are equal before God. But now, listen, and listen carefully: while male and female are equal, God has given them different roles. It's the devil's attempt to make men and women alike under the guise of making them equal. The devil's slick. Did you know that? Friend, I want to tell you something: "*God made them male and female,*" (Mark 10:6) and the Bible is against he-women and she-men.

The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of maleness and femaleness. And you look around in society and you're going to see what has happened. The consequence is more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, more emotional distress, more suicide. Why? Because people have thrown away the God-given identity and the differences between the male and the female. Oneness and equality are not sameness. God is for oneness; God is not for sameness. God made us different that He might make us one. "*God made them male and female,*" (Mark 10:6) and for one to recognize the headship of the other does not mean the inferiority of the other.

If you work for a boss, you'd better be submissive to him or you'd better be looking for another job. That doesn't mean you're inferior to him. If you're on a team, you'd better be submissive to the coach. That doesn't mean you're inferior to the coach. If you're a student, you'd better be submissive to your professor or you're not going to learn and you're not going to get the grades. That doesn't mean you're inferior to your professor. If you are a citizen, you'd better be submissive to the policeman. That doesn't mean that you're inferior to the policemen; it just simply means that in all society God has put order. That's all it simply means.

† David McLaughlin, who was here one time, gave the best illustration of this. I've used it several times. He says that marriage is not primarily a partnership so much as it is a team, and the husband is the quarterback on the team. Every team—if you're a football fan, we're using the idiom of football—every team has to have a quarterback who, in the huddle, calls the plays. Whether he gets the plays from the bench, or whether he has them in his heart and mind, it makes no difference—he is the one who ultimately must call the play. Now, the quarterback may have a running back who is



stronger and better than the quarterback. Maybe the quarterback, when he gets out of school, will just take a regular job. The running back may go to the NFL, be a multimillionaire. But, in this situation, it is the quarterback who is calling the play. Now, he can get advice from the other players, but if the bench calls the play, he'll call that play regardless of what the other players say. But he may not even call the best play, but at least the team will all be going in the same direction. Now, the quarterback does not call the plays primarily because he's the best player; he calls the plays because somebody has to call the play. And who says that he's going to call the play? The coach says he's going to call the play.†

Who says that the man is the head of the home? Our Coach says so. I mean, that's all there is to it. You see, the wife may be superior to the husband in many ways. I know that Joyce is superior to me in some ways, and I'm superior to her in some ways. Now, if you're the head of the home, you can delegate duty, sir, but you cannot delegate responsibility. In our home, Joyce does the finances, and I'm so grateful for that. She writes all the checks, and she balances the books. She makes all deposits. She does all of that. God bless her for it. I'm so grateful that she does. Now, if she is right, when she does that, she is to be praised. But if she messes up, I'm the one to be blamed because it is not her responsibility; it is my responsibility. I have delegated that to her. Now, I am convinced that the problem in America today and in the world today is not primarily rebellious wives but it is slacker, shirker, quitter husbands who do not take their responsibility to love their wives and lead their wives as Christ loved the Church and led the Church. You see, if the home is wrong, it is primarily because the man is wrong.

Did you know that God held Adam responsible for Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden? Genesis 3, verse 17: *"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast harkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I have commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; [and] in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."* (Genesis 3:17) God held Adam responsible for leaving his home and not keeping his home as he should.

### **A. A Leader Serves**

We said that the husband is responsible for servant leadership. What is servant leadership? Sir, do you think you're Little Lord? Do you think you're the dictator in your home? Well, you've got a lot to learn if you do. A leader serves. Listen to what Jesus said. Now, remember that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Well, what did Jesus say? Listen; put this down—Luke 22, verses 25 through 26: *"And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as [him] that doth*

serve.” (Luke 22:25–26) You know what it means, sir, for you to be the head of the wife? It means you’re going to serve your wife. It doesn’t mean that she’s there to bring you your slippers and the paper. It means that you are to serve her. Jesus is the head of the Church, and yet I find in John chapter 13 Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. And He says in John 13, verse 13: *“Ye call me Master and Lord: and [you] say well; for so I am”*—Jesus never said He was not Master; Jesus never said He was not Lord. But now listen—*“[And] if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye...ought [also] to wash one another’s feet.”* (John 13:13–14) I want to suggest, sir, that you find ways to wash your wife’s feet. That’s the way you show your headship in the home. It is servant leadership. Jesus said, “I am the Lord and Master,” but a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. A leader serves. Your wife is not there to serve you; you’re there to serve her. That’s what this resolution says.

### **B. A Leader Is Gentle**

Number two: A leader is gentle. If you’re one of these tough guys, saying, “I’m the boss,” and all of that, there’s something wrong; you’re sick. Listen, the Apostle Paul was the great leader of the church; he was an apostle, but he said to the church in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 7, that *“we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”* (1 Thessalonians 2:7) How many husbands today are gentle with their wives? Do you know what you need to be, sir, if you think you’re the head of the home? You need to be a “gentle-man.” That’s leadership—to be gentle.

I’ve noticed children who love their daddies to death. Do you know why those children love those daddies? You watch—almost every time, the daddy will be a strong man that the little child looks up to, but he will be so gentle with that child. And when a man has that great strength and that great gentleness at the same time, that child will follow that father off a cliff. The Bible says that the Lord—*“[His] gentleness [has] made me great.”* (2 Samuel 22:36; Psalms 18:35) You want to have great kids? Be gentle with them. You want to have a great wife? Be gentle.

### **C. A Leader Guides by Example**

A leader serves. A leader is gentle. A leader guides by example. Listen to this. Peter, we think of him as the big fisherman. First Peter chapter 5, verses 1 through 3: He’s talking now to the church leaders, and he says, *“The eldest which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shalt be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof”—*that is, you can lead—*“not by constraint”—*not because you have to—*“but willingly; not for filthy lucre”—*not because they pay you—*“but of a ready mind”—*now, listen—*“neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”* (1 Peter 5:1–3) Peter says, “Look, if you’re going to be a pastor,

don't think that you're the dictator of the church, the way some people say, "You know, these pastors in big churches like Bellevue, they're dictators." Well, I hear that, and I always laugh. I think, "Good night! If I was the dictator, they'd all tithe; they'd all be here for prayer meeting." I just serve at your pleasure, not as a dictator. I'm not a lord.

But the Bible says you lead by example. Now, that's servant leadership. I have no right to ask you to do anything I'm not willing to do. Hard to believe anything I don't believe or live like I don't live—I'd be a hypocrite. And servant leadership, friend, is just that: it serves.

#### **D. A Leader Elicits the Strengths of Those Whom He Leads**

Servant leadership is gentle. Servant leadership leads by example. Sir, are you an example to your wife? Christ certainly is to the church. Do you know what servant leadership does? It elicits the strengths of those that it leads. Do you know why Bellevue is such a great church? You say, "Well, because Adrian does everything." No. Did you know that we have literally thousands of people in this church who have ability in areas that I would not begin to have ability in? And yet, God has given me the privilege of being the leader.

And a husband, when he looks at his family, when he looks at his wife, he's going to see that she has gifts that he does not have. Put this scripture down—Acts chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, [that] I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh*"—now, listen to this—"your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"—now, watch this—"and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17–18) Now, what does that mean? It means, friend, that children and wives, as well as husbands and males, have a touch from God; they have wisdom from God. And God has poured out His Spirit upon them.

You know whose advice and counsel I value more than anybody's on the face of the earth? The young lady I'm married to and in love with all of my heart. She's so wise. My life has been molded so very much by her counsel. And back in 1979, there were many people pressing me to run for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention. Very frankly, I did not wish to do it; I had responsibilities here at the church. To be the president of the Southern Baptist Convention is like having one entire job just superimposed upon another job. The only difficulty is—the only difference is—they don't pay you for the second job; it's just a great big mass of responsibility, and slings and arrows, and things that you have to learn. Joyce and I were wrestling with that in prayer because many people were saying, "Adrian, you ought to do this." Before the Southern Baptist Convention, we would discuss it, pray about it, and she said, "On a scale of one to ten, where are you?" I'd say, "Maybe a three. Maybe a two. Maybe a zero." I don't

think it ever got above a five. But on the morning when the nominations were to be made, past midnight, I was with two friends in a hotel room, down on my knees weeping and praying before God. My wife—it was so late—she put on a housecoat, was there in the bed. I looked over at Joyce, and Joyce held up ten fingers. Friend, that did it—that did it for me. Why? Because I so respect her walk with God—I so respect her wisdom—that I know that God has poured out upon her His Holy Spirit and given her a wisdom that, in many ways and in many times, is beyond my own.

And a servant—listen; let me tell you—a responsible leader serves. Responsible leadership is gentle, responsible leadership sets an example, responsible leadership elicits the help of those that it leads, or it is foolish leadership.

You know, the people in the world don't understand what I'm talking about. The lady who wrote this editorial, she hasn't got the foggiest. You might as well expect my dog to appreciate opera. They don't understand; they have not got a clue as to what it means for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church.

## II. Sacrificial Love

Now, I wish I had more time on that subject, but you're not listening very fast. Here's the number two thing. All right. Now, look. First of all, the husband is responsible for servant leadership. Secondly, the husband is responsible for sacrificial love. Did you get the second point? Sacrificial love. Now, look again in verse 25: "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" (Ephesians 5:25) The Greek literally is, "and gave Himself up for it." How many editorials have you seen written, how many letters to the editor, that say that Southern Baptists say that a husband ought to be willing to die for his wife—that's how much you ought to love her? Sacrificial love. Servant leadership. Sacrificial love. Now, he doesn't have to die physically to die to ego, and pride, and ambition, and all of these other things.

### A. Passionate Love

How is he to love his wife? Well, he's to love her passionately. And when I'm talking about passion here, I'm not talking about passion like sexual passion, though that is certainly one of the gifts of marriage, but I'm talking about a passion that says, "I am willing to die for you," saying, "I'd give myself up for you." Do you know what most marriages need? *Most marriages in America need two funerals and one wedding, where both the husband and the wife die to themselves and come alive to Jesus Christ.*

You see, when a man loves his wife passionately, there's nothing too precious for that man to give up for his wife, except his relationship to Almighty God. I want to tell the members of this church something—I told the members of the pulpit committee something when I came here twenty-five years ago, and I'll tell you this again: my relationship to my wife is more important to me than my relationship to you, and I'm not

going to sacrifice my home on the altar of this ministry. The Church is Jesus' bride, not mine. Joyce is my bride. You can get you another pastor, but I've got one wife. Nothing is too precious for a man to give up for his wife except his relationship to God. And most women don't mind being in submission to a man who loves her enough to die for her and shows it by the way he lives for her.

### **B. Purifying Love**

Now, not only is this sacrificial love passionate love; it is purifying love. Look in verses 26 and 27: *"[he] gave himself [up] for [her]; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* (Ephesians 5:25–27) The husband, therefore, his chief assignment from God is to make his wife a more radiantly beautiful Christian. He is to intercede for her. He is to lead her. He is to teach her. He's to love her and protect her spiritually. He can never encourage her in any impurity whatsoever—to drink anything that's wrong, to watch anything that's wrong, to do anything that's wrong. No!

### **C. Protecting Love**

His love is passionate love. It is purifying love. It is protecting love. Look in verse 28: *"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."* (Ephesians 5:28) That is, you want to protect your body when your body's in danger? Then you're to protect your wife. A man is sick who does not protect his own body, and a man is maritally sick who will not protect his wife; he is committing marital suicide. Friend, be good to yourself, and love your wife.

You're to protect her because, according to 1 Peter chapter 3, she's the weaker vessel. (1 Peter 3:7) That does not mean that she's the inferior vessel; she is the weaker vessel. What is weaker—silk or blue denim? Is silk inferior to blue denim? What is weaker—stainless steel or gold? Well, is gold inferior to stainless steel? What is weaker—porcelain or steel? Now, with porcelain you can make a beautiful cup; with steel you can make a sledgehammer to drive a spike. Which is weaker? The cup. Which is better? You can't drink tea out of a sledgehammer, and you can't drive a wedge with a porcelain cup. God made us different that He might make us one, and God gave the man, as a rule, a generally stronger frame and physiology. And if you don't believe that—you know, you want to say, "Well, we need women in combat"—you've got rooms to rent upstairs, unfurnished. Just take this auditorium and put all the women on one side, put all the men on the other side, and say, "Let's have a war." I mean, use your brains, folks.

### **D. Providing Love**

Listen: God gave men to protect—and as Jesus protects the Church. And, thank God,

we're under His protection. The husband, with his servant leadership, is to protect his wife with sacrificial love. I wish I had more time for that, but it's also providing love. Look, if you will, in verse 29: *"no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth [it] and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."* (Ephesians 5:29) *To cherish* means "to warm with body heat"; *to nurture* means "to feed and mature." So listen, folks, you owe to your wife protective love.

### III. Steadfast Loyalty

I had a lot of things I was going say about that, but here is the last thing; I just want to get this last point in: First one—who can remember it? Give yourself a B. Would you like to get an A? What's the second one? Good, sacrificial love. Now, here's the third one. And if you get this one down and walk out of here, you get an A plus. All right, sacrificial—what is it? Servant leadership, sacrificial love, and here's the last one: steadfast loyalty. Look, if you will, in verses 30 and 31: *"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."* (Ephesians 5:30–33)

Now folks, let me just tell you something here very plainly. Here's God's plan for marriage. All of marriage is just wrapped up in verse 31: *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and [his] mother, and [cleave] unto his wife."* (Ephesians 5:31)

#### A. The Priority of Marriage

You know what the highest relationship on this earth is? It is not parent-child and it is not child-parent. It is husband and wife. *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and [his] mother, and shall [cleave] unto his wife."* (Ephesians 5:31) And so, it's so important here that we see that the priority of marriage is the relationship between a man and his wife.

#### B. The Permanence of Marriage

And the permanence of marriage is *"shall be joined unto his wife."* (Ephesians 5:31) That word in the Greek and in the Hebrew in the Old Testament has the idea of being put together. And the Bible teaches, *"What...God hath [therefore] joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) That's the permanency of marriage.

#### C. The Purpose of Marriage

And the purpose of marriage is *"and they two shall be one flesh."* (Ephesians 5:31) Now, I'm going to tell you something else, folks: my heart breaks for our teenagers today, teenagers who are being taught "safe sex." Folks, it's not meant to be dangerous.

What we need to teach them is sanctified sex. *“They two shall be one flesh.”* (Ephesians 5:31) This speaks of a blending, not just of the body, but the soul and the spirit, until they become one.

You know what’s such a heartbreak? These kids talk about “going all the way.” Folks, that’s the one thing they don’t do; that’s what they don’t do. You don’t go all the way until you give yourself body, soul, and spirit, forever, to one woman ’til death do you part. That’s God’s plan. That’s God’s ideal. The devil is selling a generation today a bill of goods. Folks, I’m telling you, the husband owes to his wife a steadfast loyalty. May I remind you what I told Joyce? I said, “Sweetheart, if you ever leave me, I’m going with you.” I belong to Joyce; she belongs to me. We’re in it together, and we’re in it all the way.

## Conclusion

Now folks, that’s what Southern Baptists tried to say in Utah, and the world said, “Awww!” To me, if you know your Bible, what we said is just like saying water’s wet. I mean, that’s God’s plan, and I feel sorry for people who don’t get in on it. A home ought to be a little bit of the Garden of Eden—the only part we have left ’til Jesus comes.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just begin to pray for those round about you? If there’s anybody here who doesn’t know Jesus, today would be a wonderful, wonderful day for you, as we said earlier, to give your heart to Jesus Christ. Jesus loves you, He died for you, and He will, today, forgive your sin, come into your life, give you a new nature, begin to work inside of you to make you the person He wants you to be, and give you a hope for heaven.

You say, “You know, Pastor, I wish I’d heard the message on the home a long time ago. Is it too late for me? I’ve kind of done some things in some ways I wish I’d not done.” Well, friend, just give it all to Jesus. You see, that’s why we need a Savior. And if you’ve failed, just give Him all the broken pieces. He’ll put them back together His own way. With the gold of His grace He’ll put them all back together, in His own way.

If you don’t know Jesus, why don’t you pray this prayer right now: “Lord Jesus, I need you, and I want you. Thank you for paying for my sin with your blood on the cross. I turn from my sins, and I turn by faith to you. You told me if I would trust you that you would save me. I do trust you, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart, right now. Come into my heart”—ask Him that—“Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus”—would you pray that?—“Save me, Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then by faith—just by faith; don’t wait for a feeling—say, “Thank you for doing it. I receive it by faith. You’re now my Lord, and my Savior, and my God, and my friend forever. And now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. In

your name I pray. Amen.”<sup>4</sup>



# Maximum Marriage with Minimum Misery

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 4, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:22–33**

*“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”*

EPHESIANS 5:22–23

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Let’s take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 5, as we speak

today on this subject: “Maximum Marriage”—I might add—“with Minimum Misery.” Maximum marriage: the kind of marriage our Lord wants us to have, the kind that He has planned for His Church. You know, I always enjoy preaching on the home, because I know that when I preach on the home, I am really getting down to where the action is, because if you live for Jesus at the home and in your home, you can live for Jesus anywhere, amen? And, friend, if it won’t work at home, it just won’t work anywhere.

So, let’s see what the Word of God says here in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 22: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”* (Ephesians 5:22–33)

Now it goes without saying that if the home is the basic unit of society, and if Jesus Christ builds our homes, then Satan, in order to undo the work of Christ and to wreck society, has leveled his most fiery darts against the home. And Satan, I believe, has a five-fold plan.

### **1. Satan’s Plan Is to Dethrone God**

First of all, to dethrone God—to reveal God as a mere superstition. You see, the great question in the world is this: Did God create man, or did man create God? That’s the great question. Now, there are those today who would like to have us believe that God is simply the figment of man’s imagination.

### **2. Satan’s Plan Is to Debase Man**

And so Satan starts out, first of all, to dethrone God. And then, after he dethrones God, he debases man, because if there’s no God, there’s no creation, and then man is simply a happenstance, man is a mere animal: God, a mere superstition; then man becomes a mere animal.

### **3. Satan’s Plan Is to Deny Christian Morals**

And then, the next step of Satan is to deny Christian morals and the Ten

Commandments, which say, “Thou shalt,” and, “Thou shalt not.” For, you see, Satan knows that if we can get man to believe that he descended from animals, before long, he will begin to act like animals.

#### **4. Satan’s Plan Is to Destroy the Family**

And so, Satan dethrones God, debases man, denies Christian morals, and then he wants to destroy the family, because if there are no Christian morals, if there are no Ten Commandments, if there are no laws of God that govern marriage and society, then the family will disintegrate. And Satan wants our families to disintegrate, because he knows if he can hurt us as home, he can hurt us all over.

#### **5. Satan’s Plan Is to Dominate the World**

And then, after he destroys the family by immorality—and immorality is the archenemy of the family, and therefore of society—then the next thing he wants to do is dominate the world. This is Satan’s plan. He wants to do the same thing to America that he did to Ancient Rome. And Ancient Rome dug her grave with her teeth, killed herself with illicit sex, and embalmed herself with alcohol—and this is Satan’s plan to destroy our homes and dominate the world.

Well, the old ship of matrimony is sailing some troubled seas, and for every twelve families in the United States that get married—for every twelve couples—four will jump overboard. They’ll say, “We don’t want to sail the ship of matrimony anymore.” They’ll just jump out. Six will stay latched to the deck, but they won’t enjoy the trip: they will stay onboard and chain themselves to the mast. Because of family, or because of church, or because of business, or because of social pressure, they will stay married, and they grind it out to the bitter end. And there are only two families, according to sociologists, that out of the twelve call themselves happy families. And even many of those are not enjoying what I want to talk to you about today—what I would call a maximum marriage, the kind of marriage that God has intended.

And how are we going to learn about maximum marriage? Not from Gloria Steinem, not from Margaret Mead, not from Hugh Hefner. How are we going to learn about it? From the one book that can tell us: the Word of God. And what a wonderful outline God has given us right here in Ephesians chapter 5, beginning in verse 22!

Now I want to preach an unorthodox message this morning with only two points. First of all, I want us to see what God’s job is for the woman—God’s way for wives—which we’ll call faithful *followship*; and then, God’s headship for husbands, which we’ll call loving leadership—faithful *followship*, and loving leadership: God’s way for wives, and God’s headship for husbands.

### **I. God’s Way for Wives: Faithful Followship**

Now, let’s notice God’s way for wives. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 22: “Wives,

*submit yourselves.*” (Ephesians 5:22)

### **A. The Requirement**

So, first of all, we notice God’s requirement: *“Wives, submit yourselves.”* (Ephesians 5:22) This word *submit* means “to voluntarily place yourself under the authority of another person.” And I want to tell you right now that every person who is of a worldly mind, every person who is of a carnal nature, will rebel against this. Every wife who doesn’t understand the Word of God says, “I’m not going to submit myself to anybody or anything. I am a person. I’m going to have my way.” And the more a person thinks like the ways of this world, the more they’re going to refuse to submit.

But one of the marks of any Spirit-filled Christian, be he man or woman, is his willingness to submit to those whom God has placed over him. The verse just before this says we’re to submit ourselves *“one to another in the fear of God.”* (Ephesians 5:21) Submission is not just for women; it is for Christians. But in this particular instance, in verse 22, the Bible says that wives are to submit to their own husbands. (Ephesians 5:22) And the Bible makes it so clear and so plain. There is no equivocation. There is not a question for debate. It is a clear statement from the Word of God. And may I say, dear friend, that you have not submitted if you submit only in outward form. Submission, in order to be true submission, must be in outward form and inward attitude.

### **B. The Reason**

All right, that is the requirement. Now, what is the reason? Why has God said to do this? Well, notice verse 23: *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”* (Ephesians 5:23) And so, the reason is that God has placed the husband to be the head of the wife.

Now, wives, this is not for punishment, but for purpose. God has a purpose. God knows that no society can long exist without order. When we get away from order in government, in the schools, in the home, or wherever it might be, we have disorder, which turns to anarchy. And Satan wants us not to have order, but he wants us to have anarchy. And God knows that sinful human beings as we are need an order. And without this God-given order, society would come apart at the seams. And so, God said, in His wisdom, that the husband is to be the head of the family.

You find the same thing in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3. And this is a key passage, and I want you to check it, even though we’re leaving the Ephesians text. First Corinthians 11, verse 3—Paul said, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”* (1 Corinthians 11:3) Listen to it again—1 Corinthians 11:3: *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”*

Now, God has a chain of command: there is God the Father, God the Son, the husband, the wife. That is God's chain of command, and God has set this up. And I'm so glad for this scripture in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, because it clears up some things for us. There are some ladies who believe that if God wants them to be in subjection, that means they are inferior to their husband. No, dear lady, this is not true, and the Bible does not teach that subjection means inferiority. If you know anything about Christian doctrine, you know that God the Son is coequal with God the Father. You know that, don't you? The Bible says, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but*"—the Bible says—"*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.*" (Philippians 2:5–7) And God the Son is subject to God the Father not because there is a lack of equality, but because God has given a definite chain of command. And when God says that a wife is to be subject to her husband, lady, that doesn't mean you're inferior to your husband. Everybody knows that a woman is infinitely superior to a man... at being a woman; and a man is infinitely superior to a woman... at being a man. And in the sight of God, men and woman are complete equals.

Go back in Galatians chapter 3 for a moment. What a great verse this is—Galatians chapter 3, verse 28: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:28) It doesn't matter what your race. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter what sex you are. With God, there is no respect of persons. And so, therefore, God is not talking about lack of equality when God says that a woman is to be in subjection to her own husband. It's not a matter of superiority or inferiority.

You see, the devil is very clever, and the devil has twisted so many people's minds. And, you see, the devil is in favor of the unisex idea. You see, the Bible is against *he-women*, and the Bible is against *she-men*. The Bible says that men ought to dress and look like men. (Deuteronomy 22:5) And this is the reason why his hair is not to be so long. (1 Corinthians 11:14) And the Bible says that women are to dress and look like women. (Deuteronomy 22:5) This is the reason the Bible says she's to have long hair. (1 Corinthians 11:15) So, when you see a man or a woman going down the street, you ought to be able to say, "There goes a man," or, "There goes a woman," without looking for an Adam's apple to tell. You ought to be able to tell that "this is a man," or, "this is a woman."

But, you see, the devil wants to confuse our morals; the devil wants us to get into the the ungodly realm of homosexuality; and, therefore, he's doing all that he can do to diminish the distinction between the sexes. And it is the devil's attempt to make men and women alike under the guise of making them equal. Now, let me say that again: It is the devil's attempt to make men and women alike under the guise of making them

equal. May I tell you that men and women are equal, but they are not alike. And long live the difference! They're not alike. God doesn't want them to be alike. They're to be different. And God has a chain of command. It has nothing to do whatever with inferiority or superiority any more than God the Son is inferior to God the Father. But there is a chain of command that God has set up. The requirement: Submit. The reason: *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."* (Ephesians 5:23)

Now, an unsubmitive wife is going to have a lot of problems—I mean, serious problems.

### **1. Problems with God**

Number one: Really, she's going to have problems with God, because her problem is not with her husband when she will not submit; her problem is with God, who told her to submit. And so, therefore, she's going to have spiritual problems: problems in Bible understanding, problems in her prayer life, problems in her personal relationship with God.

### **2. Problems with Her Husband**

But not only is she going to have problems with God; she's going to have problems with her husband, because she's going to make her husband a warped creature. You see, God gave the man the need, the desire, to lead. It is a part of man's nature to be an initiator; it is a part of woman's nature to be a responder. And *the woman who will not be her husband's completer will be her husband's crippler*. You see, God made woman to fulfill man. Man without woman is not complete. And the woman who refuses to take her God-given place will become not her husband's completer but rather her husband's crippler.

### **3. Problems with Her Children**

She's going to have problems not only with God; she's going to have problems not only with her husband; but she's going to have problems with her children. The woman who refuses to be under her husband's headship will never be over her children. Do you know why we have so much juvenile delinquency in America? It's not by happenstance; it didn't just happen that way. The devil knew precisely what he was doing. You see, a woman is to have authority over her children. We're going to see in the next chapter where the Bible says, *"Children, obey your parents"* (Ephesians 6:1)—not just your father; children are to obey their mother. But what kind of a mother do children obey? The kind of mother who is in subjection to her husband, as chapter 5 has said. But when a woman refuses to be in subjection to her husband, she loses the authority that she has over her children.

This is so important. I want you to see this. Do you remember reading in Luke

chapter 7 and verse 8 where there was a certain centurion, who had a servant, and people said, “Jesus, you ought to heal this centurion’s servant, because this centurion is a wonderful man”? (Luke 7:4–5) And Jesus was on His way to heal the centurion’s servant, and the centurion sent a message, and he said to Jesus, “Jesus, you don’t need to come into my house to heal this servant. All you need to do, Jesus, is simply speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For,” he said, “Jesus, I, too, am a man set under authority.” (Luke 7:6–8) Now, some translations read “a man with authority,” but it literally means—and the best translation is—“set under authority.” He was saying, “I, too, am a man set under authority. Therefore, I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes. And I say to this man, ‘Come,’ and he comes.” (Luke 7:8) Now he said, in effect, “Jesus, all you have to do is say, ‘Go,’ and this disease will go, because I know how you operate.” And when Jesus heard this man speak, Jesus marveled, and Jesus said, “I have not seen such great faith among all the Jews, in all the land of Israel.” (Luke 7:9)

Here was a Gentile man, but this Gentile man had discovered a secret: he had discovered the way God’s principles work; he had discovered there was a chain of command. And just as he, a centurion and an officer in the army, was under those who were over him, as long as he stayed under his superior, then he had authority and power over all those who were beneath him. As long as he was rightly related to headquarters, he could say to any soldier, “Go,” and he’d go, and to any soldier, “Come,” and he’d come. And he was saying, in effect, “Jesus, I know how you’re doing what you’re doing. It’s because you’re subject to the Father that you can speak to diseases, and you can speak to demons, and you can speak to death. And you have control over all of this—you’re over this—because you’re under God. I know how you work, Jesus.” And Jesus just stepped back and said, “What faith!”—“What faith!” This centurion had understood that the kingdom of God works just like an army works, and you cannot be over unless you’re willing to be under.

And any woman who refuses to be under her husband forfeits her right to be over her children. It’s frightening, isn’t it? But this is the reason you can’t pray with power. This is the reason you cannot command the devil to leave your children alone. This is the reason you cannot teach them powerfully the Word of God. For you have a rebellious spirit; and when you have a rebellious spirit, you’re going to have trouble with God, you’re going to have trouble with your husband, and you’re going to have trouble with your children.

#### **4. Problems with Herself**

And you’re going to have trouble with yourself. You have certain needs that will never be met until you free your husband to meet those needs by being in subjection to your husband.

## C. The Results

Now, let's look at the results of this submission. What are the results? The Bible says in verse 24 that she is to be subject in everything: *"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."* (Ephesians 5:24) You say, "My, my! That means that I won't have much to do. He's going to get all the glory, and he's going to do it all." No, look at verse 24 again: *"as the church is subject unto Christ."* How does Jesus treat the Church? Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ has delegated to the Church? The job of evangelizing the world—the job of evangelizing the world. Listen. When a wife is subject to her husband, that doesn't mean that she doesn't have any responsibility. Friend, that means she has tremendous responsibility.

May I say this with all of my heart: Submission does not take away freedom; it gives true freedom. *When is a train more free: when it leaves the railroad tracks and starts to ramble over the hills, or when it stays on the tracks? A train is more free to be what a train ought to be when it stays on the tracks. It will accomplish far more on the tracks than it will ever be trying to go through the meadow. And I will guarantee you that a wife who stays on God's tracks will never be freer.* If she wants liberty and emancipation, she needs it God's way. For the Bible says, *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* (John 8:36)

## II. God's Headship for Husbands: Loving Leadership

Well, let's move on, because I know you ladies are saying, "Male chauvinist pastor." Okay, let's go on. If the place for the wife is faithful followship, what is the place for the husband? May I say, a harder place: it is loving leadership. Now, let's notice several things about the husband.

### A. His Position

First of all, notice his position—the husband's position—in verse 23: *"For the husband is the head of the wife."* (Ephesians 5:23) Now, what does this mean that he's *"the head of the wife"*? It certainly doesn't mean that he's to be the dictator; it means that he's to be the leader. And a husband who does not understand what his husband's rights are is headed for real trouble. Any husband who thinks he can browbeat his wife into being submissive needs to go back and find out how Jesus Christ made the Church submissive: He made the Church submissive by loving the Church and dying for the Church. If we could only understand that his position is not the position of a dictator but as a leader, even as Christ also leads the Church.

*You see, your rights in a home as a husband are very much like your rights in traffic. Did you know that you can have the right of way in traffic but you'd better not take it?*



Suppose you're driving a Volkswagen, and you come to an intersection, and you've got the right of way. The light is green on your side and red on the other side, where the semi is coming, but he doesn't slow down: What are you going to say? "Well, I know my rights." Huh?

*Here lies the body of Benjamin May,  
Who died defending the right of way.  
He was right—dead right—as he sped along,  
But just as dead as if he were wrong.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now there are a lot of husbands who are so wrong in standing for their rights—they're so wrong! They do it the wrong way, and they make a wreck of their marriage.

## **B. His Pattern**

All right, his position: he is to be a loving leader. His pattern—notice verse 23: how is he to be the head? *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."* (Ephesians 5:23) Notice verse 24: *"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ..."* (Ephesians 5:24) That little word *as*, what a magic word! *"As Christ," "as Christ"*: that's the key! A husband who is in charge of his home is not going to be using the Bible as a club, saying to his wife, "Submit! Submit! Submit! Submit!" beating his wife to death with the Bible. That's what some of these men are like: a top sergeant running around saying, "The Bible says you're supposed to be in subjection to me!"

Do you think that Jesus Christ ever crammed subjection down the Church's throat? If He did, most of us in here would be different, because many of us are not completely subject to Jesus, right? But Jesus leads us, and pleads with us, and loves us, and gives Himself for us. And the Bible says, *"As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."* (Ephesians 5:24) Husbands are to love their wives as Christ also loved the church. (Ephesians 5:25) This is to be our pattern.

## **C. His Practice**

All right, his place: he is the head. His pattern: as Christ loved the Church. And then, I want you to notice his practice: he is to love his wife. Look in Ephesians chapter 5 again and verse 25—Ephesians 5 and verse 25: *"Husbands, love your wives"*—now, lady, if you think that verse 22 is a hard command, verse 25 says, *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."* (Ephesians 5:25) All right now, how did Jesus Christ love the Church? This is the way, sir, you're to love your wife.

## **5. Love Her Selflessly**

May I say, first of all, verse 25 tells us that He loved the Church selflessly. For He

“gave himself for it.” (Ephesians 5:25) And, sir, when you got married, you gave up all rights to yourself and to your individuality. You were married to her, and no longer can you make any decision based simply upon what you want to do. Christ gave Himself for the Church, and you are to give yourself for your wife. And her welfare must be considered in every decision that you make. You are to love her selflessly.

## **6. Love Her Sacrificially**

And then, secondly, you are to love her sacrificially. For the Bible teaches that Christ died for the Church—Christ died for the Church. You do not love your wife as the Bible teaches unless you have died for her. Now you say, “Wait a minute: I’m willing to die for her.” Well, Jesus wasn’t just willing to die for the Church; He died for the Church. And you do not love your wife as Christ loved the Church unless you have died for your wife—that is, you die to yourself; you die to your individuality. And not only did Jesus die for the Church, but before the Church could become the Church, the Church had to die to itself to become alive to Christ, you see.

Do you know what most homes need? They need two funerals and one wedding—that’s what they need—where a wife dies to herself, where a husband dies to himself; where a husband is willing to love his wife sacrificially, where he would say, “There is nothing too precious for me to give up for my wife”—“nothing too precious.” You wouldn’t fuss much when she’s overdrawn at the bank, either.

*Theirs was a perfect marriage except for one feminine flaw:*

*He was quick on the deposit, but she was faster on the draw.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## **7. Love Her Sanctifyingly**

And Jesus not only loved the Church selflessly, and not only sacrificially—that is, He died for the Church—but Jesus loved the Church sanctifyingly. Notice in verse 26: “*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*” (Ephesians 5:26–27) What is Jesus Christ working to do? To beautify His bride. What is the job of a husband? Is to make his wife a radiantly beautiful person. That is your job: to make your wife a radiantly beautiful Christian. You’re to sanctify her. You are to build her up. You are to help her as Christ is building up His Body. I’m so thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ loves me not because of my faults but in spite of my faults, and He’s working with me to make me what I ought to be.

You’re to love your wife sanctifyingly. You are to be to the home what Christ is to the Church. And Christ is prophet and priest to the Church. Therefore, you’re to be prophet and priest in your home. And you’re to intercede for your wife. You’re to lead your wife.

You're to teach your wife. You are to protect your wife spiritually. You're to love her as Christ loved the Church, and Christ sanctified the Church.

### **8. Love Her Satisfyingly**

But now, let me say, you're to love her satisfyingly. Notice verse 28: "*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.*" (Ephesians 5:28) Now, what does a man try to do with his body? He tries to satisfy it. When his body itches, he scratches it. When his body is thirsty, he takes a drink of water. When his body is hungry, he gives it food. When his body is hurt, he nurses it. And that's the way you're to love your wife: you are to anticipate her needs, and you are to meet her needs and to make her satisfied. Your great aim in life is to try to please your wife as you please your own body. There are not many women would mind being in subjection to a man like that, whose entire life is built upon satisfying every need that his wife has.

Let me tell you something, friend: When you start to satisfy your wife, do you know who's going to be satisfied most of all? You. The more you give, the more you're going to get. So my suggestion to you is be good to yourself: love your wife—be good to yourself: love your wife—because when you love her, it's the same as loving your own body.

Do you know what most husbands do? They don't look at their wives as an extension of themselves, but as a possession, something like a new car to show off to their friends—that is, until her paint starts to fade, and her engine doesn't have the power it used to. And then, he wants to trade her in for a new model. No man ever did that with his own body. His body may get old and wrinkled; but it's his body, and he loves it and cares for it even more. And this is the way that a husband is to love his wife: satisfyingly.

### **9. Love Her Supremely**

May I say, lastly, he is to love her supremely—supremely. Notice in verses 30 and 31, the Bible says here, "*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*" (Ephesians 5:30–31) Above all earthly relationships, before business, and even before children, a man's wife should come—before father and before mother. The relationship between husband and wife is compared to the relationship of Christ and the Church. That is, the highest of all spiritual relationships and the highest of all human relationships is not mother and child, but husband and wife. "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother,*"—that's the mother/child relationship—"*and cleave to his wife; and they [two] shall be one flesh.*" (Mark 10:7–8) You should love your wife supremely.

One man came to Harry Ironside, a great preacher, and said, "I've got a problem." He said, "What is it?" He said, "I'm afraid I'm committing idolatry." He said, "Why?" He

said, “I love my wife.” He said, “I just love her so much, I’m just afraid that I love her too much.” Dr. Ironside said, “I want to ask you a question: Do you love her as much as Christ loved the Church?” He said, “No.” He said, “Then, don’t worry about loving her too much.”

## Conclusion

You see, as Christ loved the Church, a man is to love his wife. He’s to love her supremely. And I tell you, if we had those kinds of homes, things would be different in Memphis, Tennessee—wives who are faithful followers, husbands who are loving leaders.

Let’s pray. Father, we thank you so much for your Word today, and I pray, dear God, that you’d help me to be a better husband and to love Joyce better—to love her as Christ loved the Church. And I pray, dear God, that you’d bless the homes in our church, and help us, dear Lord, that we might be a testimony to our neighbors and to this lost and darkened world for Jesus’s sake. Amen.

Now, look up here. Our Lord loves us so much that He wants all of us to have three happy homes. The first happy home that God wants you to have is your family home. The second happy home that God wants you to have is a church home. The third happy home that God wants you to have is a heavenly home: *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:2) And they’re all centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. You won’t have a happy family home without Jesus; you’re not going to have a happy church home without Jesus; and you’re not going to have a heavenly home without Jesus. And if you don’t have Jesus, friend, you’ve missed it. And I want to tell you that all that I preached this morning and all that I teach is bound up in this man called Jesus Christ.

# Tuning Up Tired Marriages

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 21, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 5:22–33

*“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

EPHESIANS 5:33

## Outline

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## Introduction

Open please to Ephesians chapter 5. In a moment we are going to begin reading some very familiar passages. We cannot preach on the home, or the “music of marriage,” and ignore them, and so if they are not new to you I certainly pray that they will be fresh to you, because we are talking today about “Tuning up Tired Marriages.”

Now sometimes marriage starts out as an ideal then become an ordeal, and then we are looking for a new deal. And, what we need to do is not to look for something new, but to take something old and keep it fresh and wonderful. Peter Marshall, a great preacher of yesteryear, said, “Dearly beloved, the marriage relation, when rightly understood and properly appreciated, is the most delightful, as well as the most sacred and solemn of all human relations. It is the clasping of hands; it is the blending of lives; it is the union of hearts that two may walk together up the hill of life to meet the dawn together, bearing life’s burdens, discharging its duties, sharing its joys and sorrows.” And, then the great Doctor Marshall went on to say, “Marriage is more than moonlight

and roses; much more than the singing of love songs and the whispering of vows of undying affection. In our day, it is by many lightly regarded, and by many as lightly discarded, but marriage will ever remain in the sight of God an eternal union, made possible by the gift of love which God alone can bestow.”

I think that’s so wonderful; I think that’s beautiful, and I think that it is well put, but many do not have the “music of marriage.” Many do not have a magnificent marriage. Many do not even have a mediocre marriage. Many have a miserable marriage. Now, I want us to do something about that, because the devil knows that if he can hurt us at home, he can hurt us all over. He can hurt us everywhere. He can hurt us in the church, in the school, in society, in the nation, if he has hurt us at home. And, so Satan, and you know it is true, levels his biggest artillery at our homes. Isn’t that right? Indeed, that is true.

Now that doesn’t mean that you are doing something wrong, it may mean that you are doing something right, and that the devil is trying to stop it. Now, the apostle Paul, who wrote the Scripture that I am about to read to you, he’s a wonderful, wonderful teacher because he tells us not only what to do, but he explains where we are going to get the power to do what we need to do, and then he gives us an illustration that we cannot miss to show us exactly what it is that he wants us to do. And, he’s saying to “be filled with the Spirit” and that’s in verse 18, we’re not going to read that, but that’s the power to do what we ought to do. And, then he’s going to tell us to love our wives and love our husbands, etc. and that’s what we ought to do. And, then he’s going to give us an illustration of what it is like, and the perfect illustration so no one can miss it, is the illustration of the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the church. Now, what Christ is to the Church, the husband is to be to his wife; and what the Church is to Christ, then the wife is to be to her husband.

With that in mind, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 22–33: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even”—in the same way—“as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery:”—*that is, it’s difficult to understand,

but then he says—*“but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* I give you the illustration, he says, *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

## **I. What Does a Husband Owe His Wife?**

All right, are you ready? Gentlemen, let's start with you first. I'll start with me. What am I to do if I would tune up my marriage? Well, I am to be to Joyce what Jesus is to the Church. I am to give to Joyce what Jesus gives to the Church. Now, that means three major things.

### **A. Leadership**

First of all, it means leadership. Look if you will in verse 23: *“For the husband is the head of the wife...”* Do you see that, lady? Do you see that, sir? The husband is the head of the wife. How is he the head of the wife? As Christ is the head of the Church. Now, how is Christ the head of the Church? Well, he is the Lord of Church; He is the master of the Church; but He is not the dictator of the Church.

Did you know Jesus never makes me do anything? And, sir you are going to be in severe difficulty if you think that when the Bible says you are the head, you read that to say, “I am the boss.” “I am the dictator.” No, no, no, no. Jesus is not the dictator of the Church; He is the head of the Church. And, if the wife refuses to follow, then we are going to see that she is going to reap repercussions, but He never forces me to do anything, and any husband who takes that attitude of the dictator is going to see that his home is in severe trouble. He goes around using the Bible as a club rather than a sword saying, “I am the head. Submit.” Hah.

Marriage rights are a lot like traffic rights. I mean, yes, there are certain traffic rights, and if you obey them you get along fine, but suppose you come to an intersection, and you have the right of way and another car is coming this way. Don't you think you ought to stop anyway? Here lies the body of Benjamin May who died defending the right of way. He was right, dead right as he sped along, but just as dead as if he were wrong. Now, my dear friend, we can learn from that, that the husband is to lead the wife; you owe to your wife leadership.

We talk a lot about the chain of command in the home. It's not so much the chain of command as it is the chain of responsibility. To be the head means that you accept the responsibility. Sir, on your desk, as a husband, is a sign which says, “The buck stops here.” And, I want to tell you, mister, if your home is wrong it is probably because you are wrong.

The great problem in America, in spite of all the feminist movement and all of that, the great problem in America is not rebellious women; it is slacker, quitter, sissy husbands. That's the problem in America. Too many husbands who are weaklings and

slacker and quitters and shirkers, men who will not say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” You owe to your wife, my dear friend, leadership. But, now wait a minute, what kind of leadership? It is loving leadership.

## **B. Love**

That brings me to the second thing. Look at it here, if you will in verse 25, not only does he tell the husbands to lead, but he tells the husbands to love: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church...”* Now, what kind of love is this? Huh? We think of romance, he’s not talking about romance here at all. What kind of love is this?

### **1. A Passionate Love**

First of all, it is passionate love. Now, romance may be included, but he’s not talking about it here. The word for love here is not the word for erotic love; it is for sacrificial, self-giving love, passionate love. You see, Jesus loved the Church enough to die for the Church. You ought to love your wife enough to die for her. “Oh,” you say, “I do.” Well, do you? Well, I’ll tell you one way I can find out, do you live for her? Don’t come around here telling me you’d die for her if you don’t live for her. You see, a man willing to die for his wife shows it by the way that he lives for his wife, and you don’t have to die physically to die to your pride, ambition, ego, and your own particular proclivities, and put your wife first.

Do you know what most homes in Memphis, Tennessee need, and wherever you’re living? Do you know what they need? Huh? They need two funerals and a wedding. The husband dies to himself, and the wife dies to herself, and then they are wed one to another. Mister, when the Bible says that you are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church, what it literally means is, “nothing is too precious for you to give up for your wife and your home.” Nothing, except your relationship to God. I hope you agree to that. Nothing, is too precious for you to give up, except your relationship with God. And, I’m going to tell you something else, most women do not mind being in subjection to a husband who loves her enough to die for her and shows it by the way he lives for her. Isn’t that true?

### **2. A Purifying Love**

How are you to love her, passionately. But, not only a passionate love, but a purifying love. Look in verse 26. He loves the church this way, *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

Did you know, dear sir, that God expects more holiness out of a man than he does a woman? Did you know that God expects the man to be more spiritual than he does the



woman? He expects the man to be the leader. His love for his wife is to be not only passionate, it is to be purifying. Do you know what my chief assignment from God is? It is to make my wife, Joyce, an even more radiantly beautiful Christian. You see, I am to love her as Christ loves the Church. What is Jesus to the Church? He is both prophet and priest. A man in his home is to be both prophet and priest to his wife. And, as Jesus has forgiven the Church, husbands should always forgive their wives and not be bitter against them. And, as the Lord Jesus sanctifies the Church, the husband should ever see to it that his wife has every opportunity to live a pure life and should never ever encourage her in any impurity whatsoever.

### **3. A Protecting Love**

Third thing. I'm talking here about love, and I'm saying it is passionate love, it is purifying love, it is protecting love. Look in verse 28: *"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."* Now, listen to me, a man is sick who doesn't take care of his own body. And, he will soon be sicker. You see, you are to love your own body. You protect your own body. You keep your own body out of danger and so it is, dear friend, that you are to love your wife as your own body, because she is a part of you.

Who is closest, mother and child or mother and husband? One woman was asked, "If you had to choose between your husband and your son, which would you choose?" She said, "I'd choose my son, that husband is no relation of mine." Well, oh dear friend, the husband is not a relation of yours, he is a part of you and you are a part of him. You are one flesh. And, sir if you hurt your wife, you are hurting you. Be good to yourself and love your wife. Be good to yourself and love your wife.

You are to love her, dear friend, you are to love her with a protecting love. And, you need to protect her in many ways. You need to protect her emotionally. You need to protect her physically. She is not physically as strong as you. That doesn't mean that she is not worth as much as you are, because the Bible calls her the weaker vessel. Silk is worth more than denim, but it is more fragile, more beautiful, more delicate. But, you see dear friend, God has given the husband to protect. Many of you men are letting your wife work when you ought to come along side of her and help her. I'm not talking about outside the home, I'm just talking about inside the home. She's tired, you're sitting there reading, she's still in the kitchen, you need to go in and help her. Is Joyce here today? You need to do that.

A little boy was looking at an old album, and he looked back at a family album that was taken many, many years ago. It was a wedding album, and he saw his mama when she was a bride. He said, "Daddy, is that when mama came to work for us?" You owe her, my dear friend, protecting love.

And, listen, you owe her providing love. Look, if you will, in verse 29, because here

is the way you protect. *“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”* Now, “to cherish,” I told you already in this series, means to warm with body heat. And, “to nourish” means to nurture, it means to feed, to mature. You see, when you’re cold, don’t you want to be warmed? And, when you are hungry, don’t you want to be fed? What the Apostle Paul is saying, by divine inspiration, is see to it that her needs are met. Seek to satisfy her as you would want yourself satisfied and, strangely, you will be satisfied. You see, a man, I tell you, is sick who does not want to care for his own body. And, a man is committing suicide who does not care for his own body. And, a man is committing matrimonial suicide who does not care for the needs of his wife.

The problem is that, gentlemen, we fail to think of our wives as a part of us. I mean we think of them as apart from us. So many a man thinks of his wife as a possession, like his car. And when he gets a new car, he shows it off. Dear friend, your wife is a part of you, just like we’re a part of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in verse 30: *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* Friend, I want to tell you that when you hurt, Jesus hurts. He’s touched with the feeling of your infirmity. And, so it is that husbands are to love their wives.

### C. Loyalty

Now, here’s a third thing mister, that you owe your wife. Not only do you owe to her leadership, you’re the head, not only do you owe to her love, but oh, my friend, you owe to her loyalty, loyalty. Look at it in verse 30–31: *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife,”*—the word literally means welded, fused, to his wife.—*“and they two shall be one flesh.”* The word, “leave” speaks of the priority of marriage. The word, “be joined,” speaks of the permanence of marriage. “One flesh” speaks of the purpose of marriage. It’s all right there. Dear friend, that’s God’s plan. It is loyalty. Again, I want to say, the highest of all human relationships, contrary to popular opinion, is not mother-child, nor is it child-parent, it is husband and wife. I hope you understand that. There is no other human relationship like this. Never, ever is it said of anyone else that they are one flesh. And, so that speaks of the priority of marriage. And, to be joined speaks of the permanence of marriage.

Well, my dear friend, divorce is never the plan of God, never the plan of God. You show me a young married couple that get married with divorce as an option, and I’ll show you a home that has a great, great potential for disintegration. You just take the word divorce and cut it out of your dictionary, just cut it out of your mind. You say, “But if we have problems, maybe we ought to get a divorce and start all over again.” My dear friend, listen to me. Couples that get divorced, and couples that don’t get the divorce have basically the same kinds of problems, same kind of problems. The difference is

not in the problems that people have, the difference is in the word commitment, commitment.

It is not your love that sustains you marriage. Now, if you don't hear anything else, you listen to me. It is not your love that sustains your marriage, it is your marriage that sustains your love. Marriage is a commitment. The Bible says you are to be joined. You have the same kinds of problems. A "no fault" divorce is an impossibility. Now, what happens so many times is that ten percent of the marriage will be in trouble, of a wonderful marriage, and the ninety percent goes down the drain because of a lack of commitment.

Somebody says, well I owe it to myself to be happy. There's a good Greek word for that, it's called "baloney!" "I owe it to be happy, therefore I'm..." What do you mean you owe it to yourself to be happy? When you were in the marriage altar, you made a vow. You owe it to God to keep your vow. You owe it to your wife, you owe it to your children. The Bible says, "*What God hath therefore joined together, let not man put asunder.*" (Matthew 10:9)

You say, "Well, it's happened to me already." Well, take the broken pieces and give them to God, you can't unscramble eggs. I'm not trying to make you feel that I'm heaping more sorrow and more pain upon your head. I'm not trying to do that. But I'm trying to tell you couples that are married right now, that that you need to find a way to work it out in the grace of God. Do all that you can do to work it out in the grace of God.

There's only one higher commitment, it's not business, it's not your position, it's not your service. There's some men more committed to the company store, or to the business, than they are to their wives. All right, now, my dear friend, one flesh speaks of the purpose of marriage. We're not just talking about physically one flesh, if that's all one flesh means to you, just a sexual union. Oh, my friend, there's little difference in that than animals co-habiting together. That's not love, that's lust. I don't care how much moonlight and roses there may be.

What our Lord is saying here, "one flesh." How? Spiritually One flesh psychologically, one flesh physically. And, the marriage relationship, of coming together, where there is the blending of lives and the union of bodies is going to be either the nicest or the nastiest of all human relationships.

That lawn in front of your house, that beautiful sod that's so pretty there, but if somebody gets a shovel and takes part of it and throws it on the living room rug, it's just plain dirt. It all depends on where it is and what it is. Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled. But adulterers and whoremongers, God will judge. God is not trying to keep you from sex, God is trying to keep sex for you. And, every time God's saying "thou shalt not," He's just saying don't hurt yourself. And, every time God says "thou shalt," He's saying help yourself to happiness. When he Bible says, "flee fornication," "thou

shalt not commit adultery,”—God is not a prude. God loves you so much, he wants you to have the best.

You kids listen to this old preacher now. Save yourself for the one you marry. You’ll be so glad you did, so glad you did. *You eat your cake now, you’ll have a crummy tomorrow.* Brother, stay pure. The Bible teaches premarital chastity, post-marital fidelity and a man-woman relationship only, only. That’s God’s plan. You’re not going to improve on it, my dear friend, you’re not going to change it. God’s not going to bend His rules for you or any body else, one flesh.

All the kids today talk about “free love.” Friend, it’s not free, there’s no such thing as free love. Jesus loves the Church, it wasn’t free, he died for the Church. That’s what love is, it’s commitment, it is not free. And, these kids talk about going “all the way.” The sad thing is, that’s just what they don’t do. They don’t go all the way, all they do is to go a part of the way and disgrace and debauch and besmirch something that is so wonderful and so beautiful. *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother,”*—that’s the priority of marriage—*“and shall cleave unto his wife:”*—that’s the permanence of marriage—*“and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24)—that is the purpose of marriage. And therefore, a husband owes to his wife loyalty, loyalty, loyalty.

## **II. What Does a Wife Owe Her Husband?**

Let’s look and see what the relationship of a wife to her husband is, if you just tune up a tired marriage.

### **A. A Submissive Relationship**

First of all her relationship is to be as the Church is to Christ, a submissive relationship. We go back to Ephesians chapter 5 and look in verse 22, would you? *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”*

Oh boy, you know, how opposite this is to the ways of the world. Women say, “I’m going to submit to him, not me, not me. I’m not submitting to anybody, I know my rights.” Dear friend, when you talk about your rights, number one, you’re so foolish because, you see, as a Christian you don’t have any rights. What rights does a dead man have? We’re crucified with Christ. We belong to him, we are not our own. We are bought with a price.

But, the second thing is, when you refuse God’s plan, you don’t help yourself, you hurt yourself. I mean, for example, let’s look at feminism, the feminist movement. Now, they have many good arguments. I mean, much of feminism is a rebellion against men that have failed, and I admit that. But, we need to correct the problem and not throw away The Word of God. You see, listen, God loves you dearly. God loves you.

What has the wisdom of this world done for us? Are homes better today because of the feminist movement? I’m talking about the unwillingness to assume the God given

place in the home. Are homes better? Of course not, of course not.

You see, when a woman fails to submit according to God's plan, first of all, she's going to have problems with God. I mean with God, because friend, hey by the way, if you're a feminist here, I mean one of these radical feminist who don't accept what God has written here, don't come see me after this service. And, don't write me any letters. Just take the time, when you write the letter and just read Ephesians 5, and then write God a letter, if you want to. Okay? I am talking to you dear friend about the Word of God. "Wives submit to your own husbands." You'll have difficulty with God because you're in rebellion with God. You're going to have difficulty with your husband. You will never be to your husband what God made you to be, and God made you to be a "help meet." *You are to be his completer, not his competer.* And, you're going to have difficulty with your children, and I'll tell you why, because God only gives authority to those who are under authority. And, if you never learn to be under, God will never make you over. You'll never have authority in the home, you are building rebellion into the lives of your kids and you will pay dearly for failing to obey The Word of God. But, I'll tell you what else, not only are you going to have difficulty with God, not only are you going to have difficulty with you husband, not only are you going to have difficulty with your husband, but my dear friend, you're going to have personal difficulty, because you are never going to have your deepest needs truly met. Yours, number one my friend, is a submissive relationship, that does not mean that you are inferior, one wit. Submission does not mean inferiority any more than I'm inferior to a policeman when I turn right and he tells me to turn right. He's just simply in that case, the delegated, appointed authority.

### **B. A Supporting Relationship**

Secondly, not only do you owe to your husband a submissive relation, but you owe to him a supporting relationship. Jesus has given His work to us, to us. I mean, He has no hands but our hands. He has not feet but our feet. Jesus is not here preaching this morning, Adrian is, I'm the bride of Christ. And, I am here because I love my Lord; in submission to my Lord, but supporting my Lord. And, I am a part of Him, I want His name exalted, I want His cause to go us.

### **C. A Sharing Relationship**

Lady, that's your relationship, a supportive relationship and, oh listen, a sharing relationship. Look at it, look at it here in The Word of God. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones." What a wonderful, wonderful relationship Christ and the church share, the most intimate of all relationships. There is emotional sharing, there is financial sharing, there is responsibility sharing, He has given the Great Commission to me.

Mister, you've got rooms to rent, unfurnished, if you don't bring your wife in and share with your wife. There is nothing that Jesus doesn't share with the Church. He said, "I don't call you servants any more but friends," the servant doesn't know what his master does. How a Lord manifests himself to us. And, therefore, husbands and wives are to share together. You say, "Well, brother Rogers, I so don't want that. I'll tell you what I want pastor? I want to be free." You do? May I ask you a question? When is a train more free, when it's on the tracks or when it's off the tracks trying to go through a meadow?

You see, dear friend, God's plan, God's way, is not the way to stultify you, not the way to head you off. It is God's way to give you glorious, glorious liberty.

## **Conclusion**

What does the husband owe to the wife? He owes her love. He owes to her, dear friend, leadership, he owes to her loyalty.

What does the wife owe to the husband? A submissive relationship, a supporting relationship, a sharing relationship. Try it, I promise you on the authority of The Word of God it will put music in your marriage and it'll tune up a tired marriage.

Let's pray. "Father God, I pray Lord that you'd help us to learn, just to learn what your Word says. Lord I've not tried this morning to be cute or creative, but just dear Lord, to take your word and explain it. Lord I pray that husbands and wives together today, would just come to make the commitment, Lord, that you want us to make. In Jesus' holy name."

# A Magnificent Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 18, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:22–31**

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Conclusion

## Introduction

I wonder how many marriages could be entitled “A Magnificent Marriage?” I’m sure we have some miserable marriages. I’m reminded of what a woman told Winston Churchill one time when he was in a debate with her. You know, he had a quick wit. She became so exasperated—she put her hands on her hips and said, “If I were your wife, I would put arsenic in your tea.” He said, “Madam, I assure you that if you were my wife, I would gladly drink it.” Now, we have some marriages like that—that I would call “miserable marriages.” Then, we have some other marriages that are not quite miserable marriages. We’d call them “mediocre marriages”—just so-so. People are making it through, but there is certainly not the glow of God upon that marriage. But, the Bible teaches that we could have, should have, ought to have—and bless God, will have—what we’re going to call a “magnificent marriage.” Marriage is meant to be a very wonderful thing. The Bible says in the Book of Hebrews that *“marriage is honourable in*

*all*" (Hebrews 13:4). Solomon said in Proverbs, "*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour [from] the LORD*" (Proverbs 18:22). And so, the devil knows this, and the devil has worked to do all that he can do to destroy our homes.

And, he has a five-fold plan. First of all, he wants simply to dethrone God in the minds of men to a mere superstition. And then, after he dethrones God, he wants to debase man, because if there's no God, then man is nothing but an animal. They call it "humanism"; it ought to be called "animalism," because after all, if there is no God, then what is man but just a higher form of the creature? But, after he dethrones man and after he debases man, then he wants to deny Christian morals. I mean, if man is but a higher form of the animals, then why can he not live as animals live? And, animals live for self-gratification, self-propagation, self-preservation. That's what the average man is living for today; he has an animalistic desire. And then, of course, after he's done this, he wants to destroy homes, because, you see, friend, if there's no basic morality, there's no unit, there's no nucleus, there's nothing to hold the home together. And, after he has destroyed the home, he wants to dominate the world, because if the home goes, society goes. And, that's what the devil is up to, and it starts with just removing our belief in the Sovereign God.

Well, over against this, God has given us directions as to how to have a magnificent home—a magnificent marriage. Aldous Huxley the philosopher suggests this in his *Brave New World*. He said—and I quote: "In a few years, no doubt, marriage licenses will be sold like dog licenses: good for a period of twelve months with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time. As political and economic freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends, compensatingly, to increase." Well, dear friends, what a tragedy that is! We've seen in some ways what Aldous Huxley has said fulfilled before our very eyes.

Well, how can we have a magnificent marriage? As we've said before, when all else fails, read the directions. Now, Paul the apostle, like his Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, was a marvelous teacher. And, being a great teacher, he knew the power of an object lesson. So, Paul, in explaining to us what marriage is to be like, gave us an object lesson, and Paul the apostle said that marriage is analogous to—it is like—the relationship of Christ and the Church. Do you want to know how husbands and wives are to live? Do you want to know how they're to base their homes and their relationship to one another? Paul says it is like Christ and the Church.

Now, look in Ephesians chapter 5 and begin in verse 22: "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing*" (Ephesians 5:22–24). Now, we're going to read some more in just a moment.



## I. God's Pattern for an Ideal Wife

Well, let me just stop there and talk a few moments about God's pattern for an ideal wife.

### A. The Requirement of Submission

First of all, there's a requirement here placed upon the woman, and she is to submit to her own husband as unto the Lord. Now, right away, when you use that word *submit*, a red flag goes up, because we're told in this generation of "me-ism," "Don't you submit to any body for anything, because if you do, that takes away a part of your dignity—that takes away part of your personhood. You have made a doormat of yourself." My friend, that is so contrary to the Word of God. I want to tell you, Jesus Christ taught just the opposite. *We are never more like the Lord Jesus Christ than when we willingly submit.* What is submission in the Bible? Submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may therefore be glorified. And so, wives are told to submit. Now, that's the requirement.

### B. The Reason for Submission

Now, what is the reason? Well, look in verse 23: he says in verse 23, "*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23). Now, the reason for this is God knows in the home, as in the church, there needs to be authority. Now, *authority* today has almost become a dirty word, but friend, nothing can really function as it ought—no organization can function, or not even an organism can function—without a head. "*The husband is the head of the wife*" (Ephesians 5:23). That does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband—now, get it down big and plain and straight.

Would you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3? And, you're going to see something here that is very, very vital on this subject of submission. The Apostle Paul says, "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ*"—now, he's talking about headship—"*the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God*" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, here is God's chain of command: God the Father, God the Son (Christ), the man, the woman. "Well," you say, "that's a hierarchy. Up here's God the Father and down at the bottom of the totem pole is the woman." No, God here is not talking about a hierarchy in that sense of the word. God is not saying that God the Father is at the top and the woman is at the bottom of the totem pole, as it were. That's not what God is saying at all. Now, listen to it very carefully—1 Corinthians 11 and 3—listen: up here is God the Father and down here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I ask you this question: Is Jesus Christ inferior to God the Father? Absolutely not—absolutely not! As a matter of fact, the Bible says very clearly and very plainly in Philippians chapter 2, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also*

*in Christ Jesus: Who...thought it not robbery to be equal with God*—“*thought it not robbery to be equal with God*” (Philippians 2:5–6). Isn’t that right?

Jesus said, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). “*He that hath seen me [has] seen the Father*” (John 14:9)—Jesus Christ. You may know the basic tenet of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Now, Jesus Christ and God the Father are equal. Now, notice—he goes on to say, “*And the head of the woman is the man*” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, therefore, is the man superior to the woman? Not at all! Men and women before God are equal. We need to understand this. It’s so clear and so plain in the Bible. In Galatians chapter 3, verse 28, the Bible says, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). We’re all one in Christ! There’s no inferiority—there is no superiority—in the Lord Jesus Christ. But listen, while men and women are equal—are you listening?—men and women are not the same. God made us different, that He might make us one. And, it is the devil’s attempt to make men and women alike under the guise and the pretense of making them equal. God never wanted them to be alike. They just think different, and I’m glad they do. But, men and women are indeed equal in the sight of God.

Now, what is a woman’s requirement? To submit. What is the reason? The husband is the head. Well, why does God give headship? Obviously, for this reason—anything without a head is dead. “Well,” you say, “we’ll both be heads.” Anything with two heads is a freak. Now, God knows that there must be in the home a certain chain of command. The sovereign God could have made the woman the head of the home had He chosen to. He did not choose to do it that way.

### **C. The Realm of Submission**

Now, what is the realm of this submission? Well, notice in verse 24: the Bible says here in verse 24, “*Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing*” (Ephesians 5:24). Well, you say, “If I submit to him in everything, that’s going to head me off at the pass. I’m not going to be able to fulfill myself. I’m not going to be able to be the person that I ought to be.” No, it is at that time, dear friend, that you truly become the person God wants you to be. You see, submission never restrains; it always releases—it always releases. When I submit to the Lord Jesus Christ—when I say, “Here I am, Lord Jesus. I give myself to You totally, completely, 100%. I yield to you”—do you know what that does in me? That releases in me tremendous power. When I know how to submit to my Lord, then my Lord energizes me and releases in me tremendous power. Now, what I’m trying to say is this—is that submission does not restrict you; it liberates you.

Now, there’s the train who says, “Well, I’m just tired of being restricted to these

tracks. I think I'll take off through the meadow." Well, is that train liberated? No, that train is mired down in the mud and in the dirt. You see, God has given us certain tracks to run on. These things do not restrict us; they do not restrain us. They literally free us to be all that we ought to be.

## II. God's Pattern for an Ideal Husband

And oh, I could say so much more about that, but the problem with this particular passage of scripture is that generally, we bear down on what the woman is to do and how the woman is to submit, and we never really get to what the man is supposed to do.

### A. The Requirement of the Husband

And so, therefore, I want us to look on further in this passage of scripture and see not only God's requirement for the ideal wife, but God's requirement for the ideal husband. And, we're going to spend the rest of our message looking here at a way that a husband is to so love his wife, that if he does it—if he does it—she will not mind submitting to him whatsoever. As a matter of fact, if she's wise, she will gladly submit to him.

#### 1. The Position of a Husband

Now, what is the position of a husband? Look in verse 23: "*the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23). **One man confessed, and he said, "I lied on my income tax." "Where did you lie?" He said, "In that place where it said head of the house, I signed my name."** Listen, the husband is to be the head of the house. Now, it doesn't say he is the dictator of the house. He is the head of the house, and he is to be a loving leader. Now, so many husbands think that the Bible says he is the dictator of the house—he is the Hitler of the house. He's not the Hitler of the house; he's the Jesus of the house. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. I see so many men—they talk about their rights as the husband. Let me tell you that marriage rights are a lot like traffic rights. **Now, if you're driving a Volkswagen—you have the right of way—and there's a truck coming, hey folks, you'd better use some common sense. "Here lies the body of Benjamin May, who died defending the right of way. He was right—dead right—as he sped along, but just as dead as if were wrong."**

#### 2. The Pattern of a Husband

Now, it may be, indeed, that you, as a husband, say, "Well, I know my rights: I'm to be the head of the house." That's your position, but notice your pattern: "*the husband is the head of the wife...as Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23). This wonderful little word *as* means that the husband is not a top-sergeant, beating his wife over the head with a Bible-club, saying, "Submit! Submit! Submit!" Why does the Church submit to Jesus? Does He force us to submit? I'll tell you, if He did, we'd be a lot different,

wouldn't we? He doesn't force us; He loves us. Do you know why I love Him? Because He first loved me.

### **3. The Practice of a Husband**

Now, the husband is not to coerce his wife into submission; he is to love his wife into submission. He is to love her—that is his pattern. He is to love her. Now, you see, his pattern leads to his practice. His pattern is Christ; his practice is in verse 25: “[so ought] husbands [to] love [their] wives” (Ephesians 5:25)—“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:24–25). Now, I want to tell you what that word *love* means. Hollywood doesn't know anything about this word *love*. This is not the word for sexual love, nor is it even the word for friendship love. It is the word for God-like love. We call that *agape* love. Okay?

#### **B. How to Love Your Wife**

Now, the Bible says that you're to love your wife as Christ loved the Church. All right. Now, I want to tell you how Jesus loves the Church, and that's the way you are to love your wife.

##### **1. Selflessly**

First of all, you are to love your wife selflessly—selflessly. Look again in verse 25: the Bible says here in verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). Now, Jesus gave Himself. Jesus left the splendors of Heaven—“out of the ivory palaces / Into [this] world of woe” (Henry Barraclough). Jesus turned His back on His possessions, and He gave all to us. Jesus gave Himself to the Church. Mister, when you got married, you're no longer a single person. You have given yourself to another person, and her welfare is to be considered first of all in all of your decisions. Some of you men have a bass boat, but your wife doesn't have a washer and dryer. You know why? 'Cause you're selfish. Some of you stay out all hours of the night. You don't even let your wife know. She stays at home and worries. She doesn't know where you are. You say, “Well, I can take care of myself.” Your problem is you're rotten selfish; you don't think of her. Now, you are to love your wife selflessly. You're not to put your ambitions, your ideals, your desires first. You're to live for her welfare and in order to love her selflessly.

##### **2. Sacrificially**

Secondly, you're to love her sacrificially. You're to sacrifice for her, for the Bible says, “Christ...gave himself for [the church]” (Ephesians 5:25) right there in verse 25. And, you know that means that He died for the Church. You don't have to die physically to die to your ambitions. You don't have to die physically to die to your pride. Now, you know, I had to die before I got saved. I had to die to self to receive Christ as my

personal Savior. He had to die on the cross before He could save me. Do you know what marriages need—what most homes need—is two funerals and a wedding, where the husband dies and the wife dies to themselves, and then they are married to one another, and then they begin to live sacrificially, giving themselves one to another? So many people think when the Bible says that the wife is to submit to the husband that means that the husband is little Lord Ha-Ha and the wife is to wait on him: “Would you like some more tea, honey?” “May I bring you some slippers, honey?” That’s not what the Bible teaches. That’s not the way Christ loves the Church. He gave Himself to us to sacrifice for us.

A little boy was looking through the family picture album, and it came to a picture of his mother when she was a very young girl—just when they had gotten married. As he saw his beautiful mother, he said to his Dad, “Daddy, is that when mother came to work for us?” The husband, if he loves his wife as Christ loved the Church, he is going to love her selflessly. He is going to love her sacrificially.

### **3. Sanctifyingly**

He’s going to love her sanctifyingly. Look, if you will now, in verse 26: “[Jesus did this] that he might sanctify and cleanse”—that is, the Church—“it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26–27). Do know what Jesus Christ did for me when He saved me? Number one: He forgave all of my sins. Amen? I’ll tell you what else He did when He forgave me: He buried those sins in the grave of His forgetfulness, never to be brought up again. And then, He began to work on me and is working on me to make me more and more like Himself, to purify me. That’s the way He’s loving me. Now, how is a husband to love his wife? The same way—sanctifyingly.

Now, what is Jesus to the Church? Jesus is Priest and Prophet to the Church. What is a husband to be to his wife? If he loves his wife as Christ loved the Church, he is to be her priest—he is to be her prophet. He is to intercede for her. Christ intercedes for the Church. He is to lead her. Christ leads the Church. He is to teach her. Christ teaches the Church. He is to protect her. Christ protects the Church. He is to be her spiritual companion. Jesus is my spiritual companion. Somehow we’ve gotten the idea today that it is the woman who’s supposed to have the religion in the home. One man actually told me—he thought it was funny; I didn’t think it was funny—I invited him to church. He said, “Well, in our home, the little lady has the religion. The Bible says, ‘Watch and pray’ (Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33). She prays, and I watch her.” The husband is to be the head of the home as Christ is the head of the Church. You’re to love your wife sanctifyingly. No husband—listen, husbands—no husband should ever, ever do anything that would lead his wife into any kind of impurity. Are you listening? He

should protect her from any form of impurity. No husband should ever ask his wife to go see any kind of movie, go to any kind of club, read any kind of magazine or do anything that would degrade her or perform any kind of act that would degrade her. The duty of the husband is to sanctify his wife. He is to love her sanctifyingly.

#### 4. Satisfyingly

Now, next—not only is he to love her sanctifyingly, but the fourth way he is to love here is satisfyingly. Look, if you will, in verse 28: “*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself*” (Ephesians 5:28). Do you hear what God is saying? Do you hear it, sir? Be good to yourself and love your wife. “*He that [loves] his wife [loves] himself*”—“no man ever hated his own body,” he says. If a man hates his own flesh, he’s sick. Look in verse 29—“*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church*” (Ephesians 5:28–29). Do you know what this word *nourish* means? It means “to feed, to mature, to see to it that every need is met.” I know sometimes this is hard. “Their bank account’s insufficient for one feminine flaw: he was quick on the deposit, but she was faster on the draw.” And, I know that sometimes it seems hard for a man to nurture and to protect, but a man is sick who does not care for his wife.

Actually, if a man doesn’t care for his body, what’s he doing? He’s committing slow, physical suicide. If a man does not care for his wife, he is committing matrimonial suicide. I mean, after a while, that marriage will die. A man has to care for his wife. Do you know what is wrong with so many marriages? Husbands treat their wives as a possession, rather than a part of themselves—they treat their wives as a possession, rather than a part of themselves. They treat their wives like a man treats a new car. When it’s new, he shows it off; and then when it gets old—the paint fades a little bit—he trades her in for a new model. She, sir, is a part of you, and you are to love her satisfyingly. You’re to satisfy her need.

When your body is tired, what do you want to do? You want to rest it. When your body is hungry, what do you want to do? You want to feed it. When your body is thirsty, what do you want to do? You want to satisfy that thirst. You ought to live and you ought to think, “What are the needs of my wife?” And, as you would try to satisfy the needs of your own body... There are times when I think, “You know, I’d like a glass of water,” or, “I would like something to drink,” and rather than saying to Joyce, “Joyce, would you get me something to drink?” I think, “Well, if I would like something to drink, she probably does, too.” And so, that’s an impulse to me to get up and get her something, because I am to love her as I love my own body. It doesn’t mean that she’s there to wait on me. It really means just the opposite—as I would seek to meet my own needs that I ought to seek to meet the needs of my wife. And, how important it is that husbands learn to love their wives as they love their own bodies! Love her satisfyingly. Satisfy her needs.

## 5. Supremely

Now, next, you are to love your wife supremely. Notice in verses 30 and following: *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh”* (Ephesians 5:30–31). Now, notice what it says. It says here that a husband is to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. That goes all the way back to the Book of Genesis. What the Bible is saying here, when it says, *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother”* (Ephesians 5:31), it is saying that your relationship to your wife is the supreme physical earthly relationship. So many people think that the greatest tie is the tie between parent and child. And hey, folks, that is a wonderful tie between parent and child—and grandchildren, for that matter. Listen, that’s a beautiful tie between child and parent and parent and child, but the highest relationship of all earthly relationships is not the relationship between parent and child, because they move out on us. We were married before they came, and we’ll be married after they go, but we’re still together. And, for this reason *“shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife”* (Genesis 2:24). And so, what God is saying is that you are to love her supremely of all earthly relationships.

You remember the story of the man who went into see Dr. Harry Ironside at the Moody Church, and he said, “I want to counsel about my marriage.” He said he never heard a marriage problem like this one. He asked the man what his problem was. He said, “I’m afraid I love my wife too much.” He said, “What?” He said, “That’s right. I can’t get her off my mind. I go to work—she’s on my mind. I come home—I can hardly wait to get my arms around her and to embrace her. I just think about her all of the time. Is that a sin?” He said, “Well, I want to ask you a question: Do you love her as much as Christ loved the Church?” “Oh, I wouldn’t say that.” He said, “Well, you’d better get busy—you’d better get busy. You haven’t loved her enough!” Listen, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church; and so, that means that we are to love them supremely.

## 6. Sharingly

Now, let me mention another way that you are to love your wife—and you are to love your wife sharingly. Look again, if you will here, in this passage of scripture in verse 30: *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones”*—and then again, verse 31—*“and they two shall be one”—“one”—“flesh”* (Ephesians 5:30–31). God’s arithmetic is one plus one equals one. And, we’re to love our wives sharingly. There’s no part of our lives that we do not share. Mister, are you the strong, silent type? You’re not like Jesus. Jesus shares with the Church. You know what Jesus said to the Church—to His disciples? “I no longer call you servants, but friends. The servant doesn’t know what his master does” (John 15:15). Jesus shares His life with us, doesn’t He? That’s the reason we have the Holy Spirit in us—to commune with us. And, the Bible says... What will the

Holy Spirit of God do? Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit will take the things of Mine and show them unto you” (John 16:15).

One woman said, “My husband is like a mysterious island. I just keep circling round and round, trying to find a place to land. He doesn’t talk. He doesn’t communicate.” The Holy Spirit of God teaches us to share. There’s no part of our life that should be private. Joyce and I have set aside certain definite times where I put away all of the mail and the things that pertain to the church, and the ministry, and so forth, and we just talk. And, I hear her heart, and she hears my heart; and it doesn’t have to be about the big things. As a matter of fact, it really sometimes needs to be the little things. Joyce said to me, “I didn’t marry you for your looks; I married you for your brains.” It’s the little things that count—it’s the little things. It’s the little things they want to hear about—the little things that you need to share about. And, a husband will love his wife sharingly, because Christ shares His life with the Church. They become one flesh. Mister, do you love your wife that way?

## 7. Steadfastly

Last of all, you’re to love her steadfastly, for the Bible goes on to say in these verses (30 and 31): “*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife*” (Ephesians 5:31). And, what does the scripture say? “*What...God hath [therefore] joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Mark 10:9).

A national tragedy in America is the divorce situation. You say, “Well, she’s done me wrong, Pastor!” How many times have you done Jesus wrong? The Apostle Paul said, “*For [I’m] persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 3:38–39). Marriage is for keeps. When Jesus saves us, He gives us an eternal security. Now, I’ll tell you, some wives need that kind of security and some husbands need that security, because when you come to Jesus, you don’t come to Jesus with your fingers crossed behind your back, saying, “Well Jesus, I’ll take You for a while”—“He’s my Lord and Savior from now on. I belong to Him and He belongs to you.”

## Conclusion

And friend, that’s the way marriage is to be, for husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and the Bible says, “*As the church is subject unto Christ [in all things], so [should] wives be to their own husbands in [the Lord]*” (Ephesians 5:24). Isn’t that a beautiful object lesson of what marriage ought to be? And, when we look at Christ and the Church and apply that to husbands and wives, then we’re going to turn marriages that are miserable marriages into magnificent marriages. And, even



marriages that are mediocre marriages are going to become magnificent marriages.  
And, may it be so in your home.

# How to Cultivate a Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 13, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 5:23**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Serving Leadership

II. Sacrificial Love

III. Steadfast Loyalty

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find Ephesians chapter five, please. And in just a moment, we're going to look at verse 23, and then we're going to look at some more verses. But I want to talk to you about Kingdom Authority and the home, and literally, headship in the home.

Now, some of us are disappointed in our homes. Somebody has said that the difference between courtship and marriage is the difference between the pictures in the seed catalog and what comes up. Perhaps we need to learn a little bit more about how to cultivate a marriage.

Look, if you will, please, in verse 23. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he—Christ—is the Savior of the body." And the husband is to be like that to the home.

Now, we've been in this series on Kingdom Authority and we have taught you that you cannot function in any area, in the church or out of the church, if you don't believe in authority and don't understand authority. It's everywhere.

It's in the traffic laws. I heard of a man who was riding along with a friend and they were going at a good clip. They came to a red light, the light was red, the man went right on through. He said, hey man, be careful. You'll kill us. He said, oh, don't worry about it, said, I have a brother who is a wonderful driver, he never stops for red lights, never. The man said, well, all right. Then, later on, they came to a green light and the driver of the car slammed on his brakes. He said, man, you're crazy, that was green. He said, I know, but my brother might be coming the other way.

Can you imagine what life would be like without just the common ordinary laws that God has put into society? Now, we've been teaching you a principle these last weeks that God wants to give us Kingdom Authority, that God did not make us to be slaves to

the world, the flesh, and the devil. But there is a great principle that God does not give authority to those with a rebellious spirit. And the principle is, we can never be over those things that God wants to be under us until we get under those things that God has put over us. Now, we need to understand that. That is the basic key principle in Kingdom Authority.

May I tell you what the problem is in America today? The problem is in the family. And may I sharpen the focus? The problem is primarily with the husbands. Stu Weber has said, "The problem in America is failure in the highest office of the land, that office being husband and father." That's the problem in America. We want to point fingers somewhere else, but the problem is that we have not understood responsibilities and Kingdom Authority in the home.

And fathers and husbands, I'm glad we've got the Promise Keepers weekend here, because this will fit perfectly. We need to see as fathers, as husbands, as dads, our responsibilities, not our rights. When the Bible speaks of the husband being the head of the home, that's not speaking of his rights; it's speaking of his responsibility.

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. If you think of marriage as a contract, you're going to be looking for loopholes, ways to break that contract. But marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman, and God, and it brings with it awesome responsibilities.

There are three major responsibilities that deal with headship in the home. And I want to say to the husband, if you do not exercise the Kingdom Authority that God has given to you, your home is not going to be a wonderful home; your marriage will not be a magnificent marriage. I want to say to our ladies, if you do not understand your proper place, God's assigned responsibility in the home, you're going to miss an incredible blessing.

## **I. Serving Leadership**

Now, let me tell you what those three major responsibilities are that the husband has, as we're talking about Kingdom Authority and headship in the home. The first responsibility that the husband has is this: he is responsible for servant leadership.

Now, I've chosen to put those words together: servant leadership. Those words are not exclusive; they go together. When the Bible says that the husband is the head of the home, it does not say that he is the dictator. It says that he is the head. That does not mean therefore that he's a drill sergeant using the Bible as a club rather than a sword to beat his wife over the head with it. He is the one who is responsible.

Who is the head of the church? Jesus Christ. True. The husband is to be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Well, I want you to think about Jesus, who is the head of the Church, that is he is the Sovereign Lord of the church. He's your Lord.

I want to ask you a question. Has Jesus Christ ever forced you to do anything? Not one time. Not one time. Not one time. And yet Jesus is the head of the Church, and he is the Lord of my life, and if I know my heart, I would die for Jesus Christ. And yet, he is not the dictator of the Church; he is the head of the Church. And this is what a husband needs to be.

Now, you see, headship means to have responsibility. And so, if you as a husband say, I am the head of the home, then your wife who is to be submissive to you—listen—has every right to look to you to meet her every need that she has as a wife in the home. Doesn't mean she's to bow to you, it means you're responsible to meet her needs just as the Lord Jesus Christ is responsible to meet the needs of the church.

We hear so much of the chain of command—it's not primarily a chain of command, it is a line of responsibility to be the head of a corporation, as we have some here today, it means that you are responsible for that corporation. Now, here's a key verse—put it in your margin—1 Corinthians 11, verse 3—now, listen to it: “But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.” Now, if you'll put that verse right down along Ephesians 5, verse 23, you'll have it all figured out.

All right now, listen to what God says. Here's what headship means. Here He speaks of God the Father and God the Son. Do you know anything about Christian theology? If you do, you know that God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal. Is that not right? About Jesus, Philippians 2 says, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”

Just as husbands and wives are equal, God the Father and God the Son are equal. But the Bible says that the head of Christ is God. Does that mean the boss, the dictator? There's no need for dictatorship among equals. Where is the Lord Jesus Christ? He is at the right hand of the Father on the throne, and so it is in the home. We need to understand that the submission of the Savior, the Lord Jesus to the Father is not one that comes out of fear or dominion, but is one that is based in love because of love.

Let me give you another verse. Husbands, now, you're talking, you say, well, I'm the head of the home. Well, good you ought to be. We're going to explain that in a moment. But put these verses down—Luke chapter 22, and this is absolutely key to Kingdom Authority, and there are those of you who want authority; Luke 22, verses 25 and 26: “and he said unto them...”—now, Jesus is speaking—“and he said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...”—the Gentiles means the pagans—“and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.” Yeah, I'm from the government. I'm here to help you.

Now, they're called benefactors. Now, notice what Jesus says, “but ye shall not be

so, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger and he that is chief as he that doth serve". That's the authority: servant leadership. You want to be chief, learn to be a servant.

The Lord Jesus was a leader that served. John 13, verse 13, Jesus has washed His disciple's feet; I mean, He's their Lord and Master, and He says in verse 13, "You call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you." Mister, you want to be head of your home? Wash your wife's feet. That's the way to be the head of the home. Jesus, the Lord and Master, set the example for us.

You see, what is headship? Headship is responsibility assumed. Not primarily a chain of command; it is a line of responsibility. And you stick out your big chest, and you say, well, I am the head of the home, I know my rights, you may get in trouble.

Marriage rights are like traffic rights. Here lies the body of Benjamin May who died defending the right of way. He was right, dead right, as he sped along, but just as dead as if he was wrong. Mister, you can get in serious trouble just sticking out your chest, and saying, I am the head of the home.

Now, a home needs a head, and the Bible says that the husband is the head, he has responsibility. And I've told you before, that anything with no head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak. God has put headship in the home, and that is the husband's responsibility.

That does not mean at all that the wife is inferior to the husband. Everybody knows that a woman is superior to a man at being a woman. And the man is superior to a woman at being a man. But in Christ, we're equal. Galatians 3, verse 28: "there's neither Jew nor Greek, neither is there bond or free, neither is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, one in Christ."

But equality does not mean sameness. Friend, God made them male and female in the beginning. And why did God make us different? That He might make us one—that's why. And the devil, under the guise of making us equal, is trying to make us the same. But the Bible is against she-men and he-women. A man is a man. A woman is a woman. And God created that, and God made us different, but God did not make us unequal.

When the husband is the head of the home, it doesn't mean he's superior to his wife. His wife may be superior to him in many things. My wife is superior to me in many things. I freely confess it. She made much better grades than I made. Seriously. Of course, she's smart in everything, but her choice of men.

When I was a teenager, she beat me in a better speaker's tournament, and that's church history. Listen—listen, folks. It doesn't mean that one is inferior, and one is

superior, when God has put headship in the home. I watched some football yesterday. When the quarterback calls the play, it doesn't mean he's inferior to the running back. There just has to be somebody to call the plays so you're all going in the same direction. And who says who calls the play? The coach. Who says that the husband is the head of the home? Almighty God. Doesn't mean that the husband is superior, it doesn't mean the wife is inferior; but there must be authority.

Folks, do you know what we've having today? We're having some crazy thing called mutual submission. That is absolute nonsense. Now, there are times when you may submit to her, and she may submit to you on certain issues. That's not the point. But mutual submission on any point is not submission at all.

Let me tell you what Admiral Rickover had to say. Do you remember Admiral Rickover and the atomic submarine? I had read this many times. Bob, you and I talked about it one day on the trip. Listen to it. He says this concerning responsibility: "Responsibility is a unique concept. It can only reside and inhere in a single individual. You may share it with others, but your portion is not diminished. You may delegate it, but it's still with you. You may disclaim it, but you cannot divest yourself of it. If you do not recognize it or admit its presence, you cannot escape it. If responsibility is rightfully yours, no evasion, or ignorance, or passing the blame can shift the burden to someone else. Unless you can point your finger at the man who is responsible when something goes wrong, then you've never had anyone really responsible."

And I'm telling you, gentlemen, in the home, the responsibility is on the husband—on the husband. And you cannot dodge it. And I have been along around long enough to know that the major problem in America today is not feminism and rebellious wives; it is slacker husbands who are not doing what God called them to do. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, and that is loving, serving leadership, a leader who serves.

But now, remember, no man can be the head of his home, until he's under the headship of Christ. If he's not willing to be under, what right does he have, and what expectation does he have, to have the anointing and the power of God to be the husband that God wants him to be?

## **II. Sacrificial Love**

And here's the second thing he's responsible for. The first thing—serving leadership. Got it? Serving leadership. Okay, here's the second thing: sacrificial love.

Now, I didn't say just love; I said, sacrificial love. I didn't say just leadership; I said, serving leadership. What is sacrificial love? Well, how are you to love Christ? How are you to love your wives? Look, if you will, in verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" That's not mere love; that is

sacrificial love. How am I to love Joyce? I am to love Joyce as Jesus loved the church, and He died for the church.

What kind of love is sacrificial love? Well, number one, it is passionate love. It is passionate love. When I am talking about passion, I'm not talking here about sexual passion. That's a part of married love, but I'm talking about something far deeper than that. I'm talking about emotion and commitment that comes from the deepest part of your being.

You are to love sacrificially. That is, there's nothing—nothing—too precious for me to give up for my wife, except my relationship with God. Nothing. I'm the pastor of this church, and I've been the pastor of this church for 24 years. But I wouldn't have to think about it if I had to give up this church or give up Joyce. You can get another pastor. I am her husband. She is my highest love on this earth apart from the Lord Jesus. Jesus gave himself up for the church. What does a man owe his wife? Passionate love.

But not only passionate love, purifying love. Look, if you will, now, in verses 26 and following. Why did He do it? "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Jesus loves the church with a passionate love and with a purifying love. And how is a man to love his wife? What responsibility does he have? Well, as Christ, pastor, priest and prophet to the church, the husband is to be prophet, priest and pastor to his wife. He is to intercede for her. He is to teach her. He is to lead her. He is to protect her spiritually.

You know, there's something very interesting in the Bible. The Bible says that if a woman goes to church and she has some questions, some things about the Bible that she doesn't understand, do you know what the Bible says he is to do? She is to go home and ask her husband what it means. Let me give it to you. Put it in your margin.

First Corinthians 14, verse 35: "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." It doesn't mean they can't utter a peep, doesn't mean they can't sing in the song service, it doesn't mean that they cannot pray. But what he is saying is that God has put male authority in the church, and God has put male authority in the home.

That doesn't mean the man is little Lord Ha Ha. But I'll tell you what it does mean: it does mean that a man is to say with Joshua of old, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Why did God say, go ask your husband? What would happen today if the women in America kept asking their husbands, Darling, what does this mean? Tell me that. Teach me this. He'd have to learn, wouldn't he?

You think what a release that would be to pastoral counseling. And think how much difficulty that would solve. But you see, God wants to work on your husband, ma'am,

and when you go to somebody else to get the answers, or when you try to give him the answers, God is saying, get out of my line of fire. I'm working on him. I am working on him. He is the one who is to have leadership in the home. He has responsibility. He is to love her passionately. He is to love her purifying. My assignment from God is to make Joyce a more radiantly beautiful Christian, just as Jesus is purifying the church.

I'll tell you another way he is to love her: sacrificial love is protecting love. Look, if you will, in verse 28: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." What do you do with your body? You protect it.

A man is sick who does not care for his own body. And a home is sick when a husband does not protect his wife. Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7, that the wife is the weaker vessel. Doesn't mean she's inferior. Gold is weaker than steel. It's not inferior. Silk is weaker than blue denim. It's not inferior. It's more refined. It's more fragile. It's more intrinsically beautiful. God made you to be a man of steel. He made her to be an ornament of gold.

But he made here as the weaker vessel. And you need to protect the wife, not only physically. And I've told you before, I'm not the man I used to be, and I might not be able to do it, but if you touch my wife, if I can, I'll put you on the ground so quick you won't know what happened, because God has given me an instinct to protect her. But not only to protect her physically, my responsibility is to protect her emotionally, and to protect her spiritually.

Did you know, mister, that Satan can't get at your family, unless he has to come through you, because you're the head? You're the doorkeeper. God made you to keep the garden. That means to protect it. You can't rob a strong man's house except you first bind the strong man. And Satan wants to get at your wife and your children; but if he can go through you, he can get at them easily. But if you stand at your place where God has put you, then you're the protector.

You say, but wait a minute. I don't have what it takes. I'm glad you recognized that. That's all the more reason that you as you assume your responsibility must understand that you have to be under the one who is going to assume His responsibility to take care of you. See, you can't be over until you are under.

Now, here's the fourth thing: sacrificial love is providing love. Look, if you will, in verse 29 of this same chapter: "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but he nourisheth it..."—that means she feeds it—"...and cherisheth it"—that means to warm with body heat. That is, he wants to provide her needs—her emotional, physical, spiritual needs. It's providing love.

Now, when you're hungry, you want to eat. When you're cold, you want something over you. You're to love your wife as you're to love your own body, because she is a part of you. If you were wise, you would be good to yourself by taking care of your wife.



And the married man who does not meet his wife's needs is committing spiritual and matrimonial suicide.

You are to provide for her emotional needs. Now, how do you do that? You need to constantly praise her, constantly admire her. Do you know why we have so many women in the work force today? Some need to work, and my hat is off to them, my heart is out to them, my prayers are on them. But do you know why many are in the work force rather than taking care of their babies at home? Somebody is saying, I appreciate you. I mean, just when they get that paycheck, it says, I am worth something. Sir, it is your duty—your joy, your responsibility—to give to her that thank you, that emotional paycheck that says, Sweetheart, thank you. I appreciate what you do.

And it needs to be more than physical traits. Now, don't forget, you need to be wise about these physical traits. I mean, you need to say as many nice things as you can. I heard about a guy the other day at a banquet I was at—his wife came out, and said, Husband, does this dress make me look fat? He said, no, it's your hips that make you look fat. Now, don't be that way! Be smarter than that.

Now, I want to tell you something. You need to find those traits, that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit that God says makes her radiantly beautiful, and praise her for that. Sweetheart, thank you for your patience. Thank you for your prayer life. Thank you for the way you love our children. Thank you for the way that you provide for us and make our home beautiful. Thank her for things over which she can control, and encourage her. Meet her emotional needs. Meet her spiritual needs. That's what God has put you there for.

Now, sometimes it's hard to find out when she's talking because women are emotional creatures. I mean, you have to listen to figure out what they're saying. She transmits emotionally and you receive logically. You're in trouble. Don't figure out what she's saying; figure out what she means. That makes you a detective. Your job is to translate. Now, if you men who are Promise Keepers here are listening to me for just a few a few moments, now just listen to what I'm saying. I'm going to help you to understand a women 200% better—200 times zero is still zero. Don't try to figure them out. Love them! Love 'em. Your love is to be providing love.

### **III. Steadfast Loyalty**

Now, here's the last and final thing. What does responsibility mean? What does headship mean? What does the Bible mean, when it says, in Ephesians 5, verse 23, that the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church? It means, serving leadership. It means, sacrificial love. And it means, steadfast loyalty—steadfast loyalty.

Look, if you will, in verses 30 and 33: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh,

and of his bones.” He’s talking about the church in Christ. And you see, that’s the reason woman was made from Adam’s side, because he’s teaching us that she is a member of our body. Just as the church is taken out of the wounded side of Christ, woman was taken out of the wounded side of man. And so, the Bible says, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This is as great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” For this cause a man will leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife. Steadfast loyalty.

Now, if you’re the head of your wife as Christ is the head of the church, let me ask you a question. Are you ready for it? When is Jesus going to walk out on the church? When is Jesus ever going to walk out on the church? He will not, amen? What has he said? He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Today, we have men who stand at the marriage altar, make a covenant—not a contract, a covenant—and then they walk out. God have mercy on them. You say, well, I owe it to myself to be happy. You owe it to God to keep your promise. You owe it to your wife who came to be your wife. You owe it to your children. You say, well, it’ll be better for the children. Why don’t you ask your children about that? Why don’t you ask the children about that? You say, well, I have prayed about it, and God told me it was all right. You’re a liar. God does not transgress His Word. Don’t walk out of your wife. Love her as Christ loved the church. The husband is the head of the wife.

## Conclusion

Servant leadership. Sacrificial love. Steadfast loyalty. And when we begin to live that way and men get under the authority over them, they can have the authority that God has put under them, and wives can submit to a man who is willing to die for her, and shows it by the way he lives for her, and homes will be what God wants them to be one more time.

Now, folks, after this entire chapter, Ephesians chapter 5—listen—comes Ephesians chapter 6—5 and 6. These chapters come in the context that tells us to be filled with the Spirit. The only way that you can be that kind of a husband, the only way that I can be that kind of a husband, is to be filled with the Spirit. I don’t have what it takes. I don’t have what it takes, and neither do you. But I’m telling you this: when I give my heart to Jesus Christ and surrender to Him, the Holy Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit of God—comes into me and gives me the Spirit of Jesus so I can love like Jesus. Isn’t that the way it is? And so, to begin with, you’ve got to give your heart to Jesus so you can give your home to Jesus. Is that not right? That’s right.

And He wants to come into your heart right now. So, I want you to bow your heads.

Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you know already that you're saved—there's no ifs, ands, and doubts about it, you know that—then I want you to begin to pray for those who may be around you, the person to your right and your left. They may be a church member, but that that won't save them. Just say, Lord, if that individual is not truly saved, O God, open their heart. And, please, do this now, because I would like to believe that everybody in this building is being prayed for. And, if you say, well, Pastor, I need somebody to pray for me, I'm not saved, I'm going to pray for you right now, right now. Father, I pray that you will help these today who do not yet know you in reality, that today will be the day they will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, open their hearts, that they might receive the gospel, the good news. And, friend, if you want Jesus as your Lord and Savior and master and friend, and brother and guide and helper, if you want to go to heaven when you die, and you want heaven in your heart right now, let me help you to pray this prayer. Would you pray like this? Dear God, I'm a sinner and my sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. Tell Him that right now: I do trust you right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And help me never to be ashamed of you, because you died for me. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer today, and, as best you know how, you said, Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, here's what I want you to do: when we sing in a moment, I want you to leave your seat and come down one of these aisles. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister to welcome you, and I want you to say to him, I am trusting Jesus. Now, if you're in the balcony, there will be a minister all around in the balcony and the aisle up there; you need not to come down here. But just come to him, and say, I'm trusting Jesus. There's something about coming forward that settles it and seals it.

# Foundations for the Family

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 11, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:1–4**

*“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

EPHESIANS 6:4

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## Introduction

Turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 6—Ephesians chapter 6. Now we’re going to honor our mothers this morning by not preaching *to* them; we’re going to preach *for* them. We’re going to say some things they would like to say, because we’re going to speak today to children and to husbands on behalf of mothers everywhere and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our scripture, as we continue through the book of Ephesians,

brings us to Ephesians chapter 6, the first three verses. And I think it is most remarkable that we come to these verses on Mother's Day: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" (Ephesians 6:1–4)

May we pray one more time. Our Father, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ that thou shalt bless the preaching of your Word. And, Father, we pray that homes will be strengthened, that souls will be saved, and lives will be blessed. Father, I realize that I cannot speak or preach without your power or your unction, and I yield myself to you now to be your instrument of truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## **I. God's Command for Children**

Now I want to speak a little bit to the children, and more to the fathers; but, first of all, I want you to notice God's command for the children. And while there are more than three things said in these verses, three stand out to me.

### **A. The Subjection of Children**

First of all, the subjection of children: children are to be in subjection to their own parents. Verse 1 says, "*Children, obey your parents.*" (Ephesians 6:1) Now, that's never been taken from the Word of God. Verse 2 says that children are to honor their parents. (Ephesians 6:2) Now, notice it doesn't say, children, that you're to obey your parents when they're right. You know, a lot of kids have the idea, "Well, my dad doesn't know what he's talking about, so I don't have to obey him," or, "My mother is wrong. Since she's wrong, I'll do what I think is right." But notice what the Scripture says. The Scripture says, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*" (Ephesians 6:1)—not when they are right. It is right for you to obey them.

You say, "Brother Rogers, shall I obey them when they're wrong?" Friend, it's always right to obey your parents. You say, "Well, what if my parents tell me something that God says is wrong? What if my parents command me to do something that God says is wrong?" Well, in the first place, that's not your problem—that's not your problem. That's just a bugaboo. There may be some parents somewhere who command their children to do something that's contrary to the Word of God, but most of the time, that's not your problem at all. But if that so happens, God, I'm certain, is going to work it out where you can obey your parents and you can honor the Lord at the same time.

Now, if it just absolutely comes about that you're between the rock and the hard place—on the one hand is a command of God, and on the other hand is a command of your parents, and these two are in direct opposition—everyone knows that you must

*“obey God rather than men.”* (Acts 5:29) But I tell you, in 999 times out of every 1,000, when children disobey their parents, they are sinning against God. We are to obey our parents. We owe to them subjection. And you cannot be right with God if you’re wrong with Mom and Dad.

### **B. The Sufficiency of Children**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice is their sufficiency. You say, “Well, it’s awfully hard to obey Mom and Dad.” That’s right: it’s hard for husbands and wives to be in subjection one to another, as we heard just last week. But notice what the Bible says in verse 1: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord.”* (Ephesians 6:1) Did you know that children ought to be Spirit-filled, like Ephesians 5:18 teaches? Do you know, in my heart, I somehow had made a terrible mistake? I had not done it logically; I had not done it knowingly; but somehow I had the idea that the Spirit-filled life was for adults, and Sunday School teachers, and so forth, but little children ought not to be Spirit-filled. What a mistake that was! I never really verbalized it; I never really said it that way; but I just never really thought about children being Spirit-filled. But children ought to be Spirit-filled. We ought to teach little eight- and nine- and ten-year-old children how to walk in the Spirit—amen?—to be filled with the Spirit of God. And even little children before they’re even saved, so they can be Spirit-filled, are still to rely upon the strength that God gives them and will give them to obey their parents. And Jesus is their sufficiency.

### **C. The Survival of Children**

But not only their submission, and their sufficiency—and we’re just hurrying along now to get to the part where we’re going to give it to the papas pretty strong this morning—their survival. I want you to notice God tells us the reason that children ought to obey their parents: *“That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* (Ephesians 6:3)

Now, what is God talking about: national survival or personal survival? I think both. I believe that children who obey their parents live longer than children who don’t. I believe that you’re going to be healthy when you’re holy, and the judgment of God is going to come upon children who disobey parents. Did you know in the Old Testament that if a child were to curse his father and mother, they were to stone him to death? They’d stone him to death for being disrespectful to his parents. Why, in the Old Testament, if a child was just unruly and refused to work, the severe chastisement of God came upon that child—not from the parent, but from God and from the community. A child, in the Old Testament, could get wiped out in a hurry. He didn’t live too long on the earth if he didn’t obey his mom and his dad. And there’s a spiritual principle that still lingers long: that longevity and obedience to parents go side by side.

But not only personal longevity; national security. A nation is no stronger than its

home; and when children refuse to obey their parents, they're fulfilling the prophecy that says the last days will be perilous times, where children shall be disobedient to parents. (2 Timothy 3:1–2) And any nation is in grave peril whose children are disobedient to their parents; and, therefore, America is in bad shape.

## II. God's Formula for Fathers

But I must leave that point—I just simply wanted to touch on that—and I want to get not necessarily God's command for children, but I really want to zero in today on God's formula for fathers. And notice what the scripture says here in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 4: *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6:4) Dads, may I tell you that your most important task—your most important task—is being a husband and a father? Not being a churchman, not being a businessman, but your most important task is being a husband and a father. And every father here owes to his children three things: He owes to his children devotion. He owes to his children discipline. And he owes to his children direction. And that's what these verses are telling us. Look at it.

### A. Fathers Owe Children Devotion

He says, first of all, *"Fathers, provoke not your children."* (Ephesians 6:4) Now, what does he mean by that? Children are not to be provoked; children are to be loved. The opposite of provocation is love. Many children don't know what it is to be loved. All children know is nagging; all they know is perpetual faultfinding. All some children know is unreasonable demands, harsh criticism, and sharp language. One little boy said he was seven years old before he knew that "shut up" wasn't his name. Parents—fathers—who provoke their children to wrath. Home ought to be the happiest place on this earth, and it ought to be the father's job to see to it that the child knows beyond the shadow of any doubt that he's loved.

And love, dear friend, is manifested in one way: giving. *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16) And the way that you're going to show your children that you love them is by the way you give to them. But I'm not talking about giving your children things. Many parents are giving their children things, but they're not giving of themselves. And their giving of things is a substitute for the giving of themselves. You see, often, the cars, the clothes, the bicycles, the color televisions that some rich parents are giving to their children are nothing but conscience money. It's a guilt payment for not giving of themselves. They are feeding the children's greed in order to stifle the parents' guilt.

What must we give our children? Well, in the first place, you give yourself. Your child does not need your money so much as he needs you. And how do you give of yourself?

There's only one way—and that is to give of your time. Dads, let me tell you something: A hundred years from now, it's not going to make any difference whether you were the president of the corporation, whether you got that big raise, or all of these other things. A hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, a million years from now, you would say, "If I had it to do over again, I'd spend more time with my children that God gave me." Tomorrow, that baby won't be rocked. Tomorrow, that toddler will not be asking why. Tomorrow, that schoolboy is not going to need help with his lessons. Tomorrow, they're not going to want to bring their friends home for fun. Tomorrow, that teenager who's facing the issues of life will have those issues settled. And today is in your hands. And I say that the way to raise a child is with love, and that love takes time. And you owe it to your children. You owe them not a provocation, but you owe them love. Susanna Wesley, who raised some wonderful boys, said she spent one hour alone each week with each of her nineteen children.

## **B. Fathers Owe Children Discipline**

Now, not only do we owe to our children as fathers—yea, even as mothers—not only do we owe to them devotion—we need to love them and not provoke them—but we owe to them discipline. And I want to slow down a little more here. This Greek word here that is translated in your English Bible, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4)—that word *nurture* is a very interesting word. What does it mean? How many of you think you know what the word *nurture* means? Let's see your hands. All right, not very many. It's *paideia*. And do you know what it means? It means "discipline"—it means "discipline." It means "to whip"; it means "to chastise." In Hebrews the twelfth chapter, where the Bible says, "*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,*" (Hebrews 12:6) it's the same root word. Did you know in Luke 23, verse 22, where Pilate is talking about Jesus Christ, he uses this same word when he says, "*I will...chastise him, and let him go*" (Luke 23:22)—the same word. That is, he laid the rod on Jesus's back. The Bible teaches that not only do you fathers owe to your children—we fathers owe to our children—devotion; we owe to them discipline.

Now I want us to leave the book of Ephesians, and I want us to go to a book written by the wisest man other than Jesus who lived: his name was Solomon. And I want you to turn to the book of Proverbs, and I want you to see what the book of Proverbs has to say about child discipline, not what some old maid schoolteacher who never had any children had to say, and not what some fluffy-headed psychologist who doesn't know the Word of God has to say. But I want you to see what the Word of God itself has to say about discipline, because there is more abuse and misuse in this area and more neglect than perhaps any other area.



## 1. The Reasons for Disciplining a Child

First of all, let's speak of the reasons for child discipline, for nurturing a child.

### a. Love for the Child

Look in Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 24—Proverbs chapter 13 and verse 24. And jot these scriptures down on a sheet of paper, moms and dads. Proverbs 13, verse 24—the Bible says, *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him [early].”* (Proverbs 13:24) Listen to it again: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him [early].”*

Now, sometimes the parents will say, “You know, I just can't whip this little sweet thing, because I love him so much.” Well, the Bible doesn't call it love; the Bible calls it hate. That's what God says. If you refuse to chastise your child, if you refuse to use discipline, the Bible says it is because you hate that child. The Bible says if you love him, you're going to chastise him, and you're going to do it early. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6, *“whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.”* (Hebrews 12:6) God loves us, and that's why God chastises us. And if you love your children, you're going to chastise them. You've heard me say that my dad loved me more than he loved my brothers and sisters. I was his favorite, from this verse of Scripture—there's a perfect proof text.

### b. The Nature of Human Nature

All right now, I'm speaking of reasons for nurturing, and I'm saying number one is love for the child. Number two: the nature of human nature. Look in Proverbs 22 and verse 15. Proverbs 22 and verse 15—the Bible says, *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.”* (Proverbs 22:15) Now you wouldn't think—all these little babies we saw up here—would you think that? Would you think they were anything but little angels, little cherubs, just like the little rosebuds getting ready to unfold? Well, I know all the mamas feel that in their heart, but God's Word says, *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”* (Proverbs 22:15) David said in Psalm 51, verse 5, *“In sin did my mother conceive me.”* (Proverbs 51:5) *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* (Psalm 58:3) Every little child is a sinner by nature. What kind of rattlesnake do little rattlesnakes grow up to be? Big rattlesnakes. What kind of sinners do little sinners grow up to be? Big sinners.

Now, God doesn't hold a child accountable for his sin until he reaches the age of accountability. God classes that child with believers in the Lord Jesus Christ until that child reaches the age of accountability. But there is a principle in him that will cause him to choose wrong when he reaches the place of moral choice. And the Bible says, *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.” “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”* (Psalm 58:3) We are “by

*nature the children of wrath.*” (Ephesians 2:3) And so, therefore, when a parent chastises a child, the parent recognizes the nature of human nature.

There are two philosophies in the world: some believe that man is basically good; others believe that man is basically evil. Some believe that man needs a boost from below; others believe that he needs a birth from above. Some believe that since he’s good, he simply needs to be guided; others believe that since he’s inherently wrong, he needs to be chastised. Now I don’t know which of these two you believe, but I believe he is basically evil. I believe that with all of my heart. I believe it not only from personal experience; I believe it from parental experience, and I believe it from the Word of God. And for further information, read any newspaper: there is something wrong with mankind.

*“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.”* And, you see, when you chastise a child, you’re giving that child a moral lesson: you’re telling that child that he not a law unto himself, that there is a moral power over him. What you do is put the fear of God in him. You say, “Well, I don’t believe that people ought to fear God; I believe they ought to love God.” May I tell you, dear friend, that *the one who fears God the most loves Him the best*. Did you know that? *The one who fears God the most loves Him the best*. Now, when I’m talking about fear, I’m not talking about cringing in the presence of God, but I’m talking about a holy reverence. And children, because of the nature of human nature, need chastisement, nurture, fathers.

### **c. To Save Parents from Disgrace**

Now, let me give you another reason—Proverbs chapter 29, and read verse 15 with me—chastisement is the way to save parents from disgrace. Read Proverbs 29 and verse 15: *“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”* (Proverbs 29:15) And, oh, God help working mothers who don’t have to work but are simply working so they can have a bigger home, more of the luxuries of life, and are leaving the children to someone else—or worse, even to themselves! *“A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”* Children need mamas.

Notice verse 17: *“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”* (Proverbs 29:17) Parents, you’re going to be disgraced by your children if you do not chastise your children. You see, the Bible says, “The rod gives wisdom.” Did you know, for the first twelve years of a child’s life, he can learn quite a bit through the seat of his pants? It’s amazing. And he can learn certain things through the seat of his pants that he will only learn later in life at great cost and great suffering. You can give him a certain amount of wisdom.

### **d. To Save the Child from Hell**

All right now, let me give you another reason: The Bible teaches that if you chastise your child, you will save him from hell. Notice in Proverbs chapter 23, verses 13 and 14:

*“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die...”*—now I know I used to think, after my dad beat me, I was climbing the walls; I wished I could die. But—*“if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”* (Proverbs 23:13–14)

Now, let me say that a good spanking is not going to harm a child physically. God gave him a spanking place; God built it there. And somebody said, “A child ought to be raised with a pat on the back: high enough when he does good, and lower and firmer when he does wrong.” And both are necessary. And God says he’s not going to die. He may say, “Mama, you’re killing me.” He may say, “Daddy, I don’t think I’ll make it through the night.” But he’s not going to die. You will help him spiritually.

Now I want to say parenthetically that there is absolutely no excuse for child abuse; and anyone who does physically harm a child, as far as I’m concerned, ought to be tied to a wagon wheel and horsewhipped himself. I believe that with all of my heart. I’m not talking about beating up kids; I’m talking about using a judicious amount of physical discipline, as the Bible teaches. And so, don’t anyone over-interpret or misinterpret what I’m saying.

You’re going to save his soul from hell. The child that does not respect authority in the home is not going to respect authority in the schoolroom; he’s not going to respect authority in the church house; he’s not going to respect authority in government. You’re going to do something for that child: you’re going to teach him that there is a higher power; there’s a moral law over him; there’s a time that he must give account.

## **2. How to Discipline a Child**

### **a. Start Early**

And let me say, parents, that you need to start early enough. Thank God for these parents here this morning who brought these boys and these girls and dedicated them to Jesus Christ when they were children. Look in Proverbs 13 verse 24. We’re still talking under the subject of nurture—that is, discipline. Proverbs 13, verse 24, says, *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him [early].”* (Proverbs 13:24) And that doesn’t mean before eight in the morning; that means while he’s a little boy, while she is little girl. Look in Proverbs 19 and verse 18, and I hope you’re jotting these scriptures down: *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”* (Proverbs 19:18) Nobody likes to hear a child cry, but God says, “You’d better start early. You’re going to wait too late.”

Somebody asked a Texas evangelist, B. B. Crim, “Brother Crim, when should you first spank a child?” “Well,” he said with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, tongue in cheek, “little girls, after they’re two or three days old; but you ought to spank a little boy the day he’s born.” Well, of course, we know he was kidding. But when should a child be disciplined? When he knowingly disobeys you—when he knowingly disobeys

you. Some of you have teenage rebels and problem children, and you say, “Well, what should I do? Should I get the belt out and work him over?” Well, some of you have waited about sixteen years and two hundred pounds too late. The Bible says, “*Chasten thy son while there is hope*”—“*while there is hope.*” (Proverbs 19:18) Start early.

#### **b. Talk First**

And I don’t mean that you’re to pick up a belt, or a rod, or a switch, or a hairbrush the minute they do anything wrong. The belt is the last resort. First of all, you start early, and you talk. Try to do it with understanding. Try to do it with love. Try to do it with reason. Even our Lord says in Revelation 3, verse 19, “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*” (Revelation 3:19) Let the rebuke come first; let the understanding come first—speaking before spanking; the words before the whip. There are times for an explanation; there are times for a warning. Every child who disobeys certainly doesn’t need a spanking, but he needs to know the reserve power that’s there. He needs to understand that.

#### **c. Keep Your Word**

But let me say this: If you promise a spanking, keep your word—keep your word. You tell that child, “Look, I’m going to let you off this time; but if that happens one more time, I want you to know if the Rapture takes place before I get to you, I’m going to spank you on the way up.” That is, he knows beyond a shadow of any doubt that you’re going to keep your word.

#### **d. Administer It Promptly**

And administer it promptly when you do. The Bible says men’s hearts are set in them to do evil because judgment is far off. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) Well, you just let judgment be sure and swift. If we had more swift judgment in our community right here, we’d have less crime. Did you know that? Certainly. As soon as the offense, as soon as possible, if it is a punishable offense by chastisement, then that punishment should follow quickly. You mothers ought not to say, “Wait till your father gets home.” Now, father can reinforce it. When I was in school, we didn’t come running home saying “Look, I got a whipping in school.” We were smarter than that. Dad wasn’t going to go marching down and read some teacher the riot act; he’d just take us up to the bedroom and do it twice—that’s all. You know, but this ought to be administered right away.

#### **e. Present a United Front**

Let me say that—I’m talking to dads now; but, dads, you need Mom’s help—Mom ought not to say, “Wait till your daddy gets home.” You ought to present a united front; you ought to always agree. The Bible says, “*Two are better than one.*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9) Sometimes when a child has disobeyed and tries to play one parent against another, it will be good for Mama to do the holding while Daddy does the whipping—or Daddy do the holding while Mama does the whipping—and they won’t learn to play one

parent against another. “We’re in this thing together. Both your mother and I feel the same way about this.”

#### **f. Do a Good Job**

Let me say, when you do it, do a good job. The Bible says, “*Let not thy soul spare.*” (Proverbs 19:18) Now, again, I want to emphasize and reiterate, I am not talking about cruelty; I’m not talking about physical harm. But you know what I’m talking about. My dad used to tell me, “We’re going to have a business meeting.” He made the motions, and I carried them out. Listen. Most children only need about five all their life. That’s about right. Some of them only need one. You start early, and you do it right: a good spanking will last for years. Your spanking days will be over before he’s very old. But these little pecks, these little slaps, these little halfway issues, they don’t get the job done. If you’ve chastised a child, and he’s still rebellious, and that child is still sullen, you haven’t done the job yet.

Now it may be he’s so old now that there’s no way you’re going to break that rebellion, that sullenness; but a little child—you won’t have that problem. There’s no little child on earth who’s going to be rebellious and sullen if a parent lovingly, swiftly, fairly, rightly does not break his spirit but breaks his will. And when that child says, “Mom and Dad love me, but I did wrong, and they have chastised me,” when you see that that sullenness is gone, then it’s time to give them love and a hug and send them out to play.

But, you see, most parents don’t really do a good job: it’s too painful. I’ll confess, when I was a little boy, I didn’t mind my mom spanking me, because she couldn’t hurt me. At least, she *didn’t* hurt me; I guess she could have. My brother used to fake a cry and then go out and giggle. Now it wasn’t true with Daddy. And I’ll tell you what, folks: A child has a reasoning mind. He’ll make a bargain, and he’ll say to himself, “Well, I may get a spanking, but it won’t be that bad, and it will be worth it for what I want to do.” You let the pain of the spanking be greater than the pleasure of the sin so that nothing could induce him to buy another one. He’ll just say, “It *ain’t* worth it,” you see? That’s what we’re talking about: you just do a good job.

#### **g. Discipline in Love**

But may I say, discipline in love. Oh, it’s so important! We’re talking about bringing children up in devotion and discipline. The Bible says in Hebrews 12, verse 6, whom the Father loves He chastens. (Hebrews 12:6) The Bible says, “*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.*” (Ephesians 6:4) Anytime you spank a child and provoke that child to wrath, something is wrong. And do you know what it generally is? We provoke our children to wrath when we’re wrought up, amen? Wrath produces wrath. Bitterness produces bitterness. Anger produces anger. A parent ought to be Spirit-filled and prayerful. The Bible says in James 1, verse 20, that “the anger of man does not work

the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20) Chastisement is correction; it’s not revenge. We’re not trying to get even with our kids; we’re trying to correct them. And so, never ever, never ever, never ever withhold your love in order to discipline a child. You love them. You weep for them. You weep as you whip them. You’re never angry; you’re never full of wrath. “The anger of man will not work the righteousness of God.”

#### **h. Work for Repentance**

May I say, as you chastise that child, work not only for correction—that he won’t do it again—but work for repentance. If your child disobeyed you, your child really sinned against God. And if you have not told that child and taught that child that not only must he be punished but he also must be forgiven, then you have stopped short. No amount of spanking will take away sin; only Jesus Christ can do that. And therefore the child must be pointed to God. We must say, “Now, honey, we’ve had to whip you. I want you to know that I love you, but I want you to know that God’s heart is broken. And don’t you think we ought to get down here and ask God also to forgive and cleanse?” Now you can’t do the work of the Holy Spirit. You might have wait on the child to come to this place, but at least you ought to guide the child to where this child comes and says, “Father, I’m sorry I disobeyed my mama; I’m sorry I disobeyed my daddy. Father, I want you to forgive me.”

#### **C. Fathers Owe Their Children Direction**

Now, let me hasten on—and I must hasten. Go back to Ephesians for a moment, and look in Ephesians chapter 6. We have said that there are three things that a father owes his child. The first one is devotion. We talked on that under the heading of “provoke them not to wrath.” Then, we said the second thing is discipline. We’ve talked on that under the heading of nurture, and that’s what the word *nurture* means. But the third thing is direction. And all of the devotion, and all of the discipline, without the direction, falls flat. Notice what it says here in Ephesians chapter 6: “*Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4) Father, if your home is wrong, it’s because you’re wrong.

Now, a lot of you dads don’t like that. But a father is to be the spiritual leader of his house, and he is to say, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” (Joshua 24:15) And I want to enlarge that and say, parents, if your children are wrong, most likely it is because you’re wrong. Parents are handy scapegoats, and it’s easy to lay the blame at their feet; but do parents deserve it all? Do you know what Max Rafferty had to say, the outspoken California educator? He said—and I quote—“Many of today’s parents are society’s dropouts.” And he says, “You’re blaming everybody you can find for the mess we’re in: teachers, legislators, Supreme Court justices, movie producers, magazine publishers.” Terming drug abuse “just one more symptom of the nation’s

unraveling moral fiber,” he would tell parents—and listen to what Max Rafferty had to say—“Ride hard on your own kids. Know what they keep in their rooms. Know where they go when they aren’t home. Know who their friends are. Know what they’re doing when you’re not around.” Don’t be ashamed of interfering in your children’s private lives. That’s one of the things parents are for. The penitentiaries are full of people whose parents didn’t interfere when they were kids. That’s why God gave children parents. They are to give admonition; they are to teach.

And I wish that I had time to speak on this, but let me just show you an Old Testament text. Look in the book of Deuteronomy for a moment—Deuteronomy chapter 6. Here’s what God says to fathers and to parents. I want you to mark this verse and go home and study it out. Deuteronomy chapter 6: *“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”* (Deuteronomy 6:1–9)

Notice what God is saying. God is saying, “Parents, it’s up to you to teach these children.” If you’re depending upon Bellevue Baptist Sunday School to get it done, I feel sorry for you. I believe in Sunday School; but I tell you, the average child is in Sunday School forty—I’d say less than forty—out of fifty-two Sundays a year. And if, after we’ve taken the records, had the assembly, sung the songs, planned the parties, if we get down to open Bible teaching a half an hour a Sunday, that would be pretty good. And, friend, that’s twenty hours a year. And if you think they’re going to learn the truth of God’s Word in twenty hours a year, you’re just mistaken.

And they’re not getting it at school. They’re not getting it in the movies. They’re not getting it in television. Where are they going to get it? There’s only one place. God gave you these children, and God expects you to raise them. A child has 108,000 waking hours between infancy and maturity. He’ll spend about a thousand hours in Sunday School and church, seven thousand hours in public schools, and a hundred thousand

hours in the home. But most of it is sitting there watching the one-eyed monster. Frances Xavier, the noted Catholic, said, “Give me the children until they’re seven, and anyone can have them afterward.”

## **Conclusion**

May God help us so that we will take our children and give to them these things that we need to give them: number one, devotion—don’t provoke them to wrath; number two, discipline—bring them up in the nurture of the Lord; number three: admonition—teach them the Word of God. Oh, how wonderful it would be!



# Turning the Rat Race into a Pilgrimage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 8, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:5**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. See Your Job as an Opportunity, and Be Grateful
- II. See Your Job as a Responsibility, and Be Helpful
- III. See Your Job as a Ministry, and Be Faithful

Conclusion

- A. Don't Brag
- B. Don't Nag
- C. Don't Lag
- D. Don't Sag

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn, if you would, please, to Ephesians chapter 6. As I've already told the people who are watching through television, and told you, we're speaking today about, Turning the Rat Race into a Pilgrimage.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you have a job outside of the home? Let me see your hand. That's most of us. And those who are mothers who are inside the home, they have a job. You know, when they say, "Well, she's a mother. She doesn't have a job," that is so ridiculous. A working mother, it's true, whether she's outside the home or whether she's inside the home. I can tell you if she is a mama, she is working. But so many of us, there are so many people in the world today, frankly, they hate their job. When Friday comes, they say, "Thank God it's Friday." When Monday comes, they say, "Oh no, good night. It's Monday. I've got to go to work." And somehow there's a vast difference between our people on Sunday and our people on Monday. Somebody said, "They're praising on Sunday, but they'll be all right on Monday. It's just a little habit they've acquired."

Well, what is wrong with so many of us? We've come to think of work almost as a four-letter word. Well, I want to tell you, friend, that you can put joy and zest and dignity into the most mundane job. You can turn the monotony into a dignity and a job, if you'll take the principles that I'm going to give from the Word of God today. And this is especially needful not for those who have exotic jobs, but those who have what we

would call very ordinary jobs. You say, “Well, I’m a clerk,” or, “I work in a factory, and all I’m doing is just drawing my breath, and drawing my salary.” Well, I want you to see, friend, that God can take you this Monday morning and make you a thing of beauty and joy to Himself. You know, the Bible says—we’re going to get to our text in a moment—but in 1 Corinthians, Paul, talking to those folks at Corinth, he said, “You see your calling, brethren, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” And then he says, “God has chosen—God has chosen—the foolish things of the world to confound those things which are wise, and weak things, and base things.” These are just the ordinary people, and God literally chooses them. Now, if you’re a Ph.D., a movie star, a star athlete, a class president, a Phi Beta Kappa, well, God can use you too, but He’ll have to work harder to do it. I’m serious. Listen. I am serious. God’s plan—listen to me; don’t miss it—God’s plan is to take ordinary people, and take ordinary people and put them in ordinary places with ordinary jobs, and get extraordinary glory to Himself. That is God’s plan—to take ordinary people with ordinary talents, put them in ordinary places, and then get extraordinary glory to Himself. It’s just like God to do that. So, if you’re saying, “Well, I don’t count; nobody knows me; I didn’t make Who’s Who; I didn’t even make Who’s Not; they don’t even let me lead in silent prayer,” friend, if you’re one of those folks, you just say, “I don’t count for anything; I’m just going off to work tomorrow because I have to,” well, the message is for you. And it’s so very important because, you know, we spend about a 1/3 to 45% of our lives, our working lives, on the job. That’s where we spend our lives. And wouldn’t it be a shame just to spend that much time with something we feel really down in our heart doesn’t amount to much, or something really we despised?

Now, there are three principles I want to give you, but, first of all, let’s read the Scripture here. Ephesians chapter 6, beginning in verse 5: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh...”—now, he’s not talking about the church life now. When he says, “...your masters according to the flesh,” he’s talking about what we would call today your boss, in the secular occupation—“...be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.” You serve your boss, as if he were Jesus. You say, “Wait a minute, Pastor. Do you know my boss, that two-legged devil?” Well, that’s what he’s talking about here, “your masters according to the flesh.” Treat him as if he is Jesus. “And not with eye-service—that is, not just working when he’s watching—or as men-pleasers—not trying to butter him up to get a promotion—but as the servants of Christ—watch this—doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.” You’re not going to work tomorrow for your boss; you’re going to work tomorrow for Jesus Christ. I don’t care what you do, you do it as to the Lord and not to men. And then notice this—here’s the hidden paycheck, the hidden paycheck:

“Knowing that whatsoever good any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” God knows. I love the song that Bette sang, “His eye is on the Sparrow, and I know, I know that He watches me.” Are you ready for these three principles that can put a little grace in the rat race, that can turn the rat race into a pilgrimage?

## **I. See Your Job as an Opportunity, and Be Grateful**

Principle number one: See your job as an opportunity, and be grateful. If you have a job, be grateful. It is a God-given opportunity. Now, there are basically four ways to look at a job. Some people look at a job as a necessary evil. I mean, they have to do it. They're bored to tears. It's the same old grind. It's the same old drudgery, but they've got to do it. They have no sense of meaning, no real sense of accomplishment. As we say, it's just a rat race. As I've already said, drawing your breath, and drawing your salary. And it's not just the assembly line worker that sometimes feels this way. It's not just the clerk who feels this way. Sometimes the executive feels exactly the same way. One business executive said, “I kept having a recurring dream. It was like a nightmare.” He said, “I dreamed I was running in a marathon,” and he said, “all of my co-workers were the ones that I was running against.” And he said, “I was running and running,” and then, he said, “all of a sudden, I would, in this dream, “ he said, “I couldn't figure out why we were in the race, and where the finish line was. It was like a nightmare.” He was an executive. And you know, there are so many people like that. I'm not just talking about people that have what we consider the less glamorous jobs, but people who have what they consider to be glamorous jobs. You know what they like, they say, when they get their heart right? Well, at least not when they get their heart right, but when spiritual fervor begins to rise? They say, “Man, I would like to quit this job. I'd like to get into some ministry. I'd like to get into some service. I'd like to be a pastor, or a missionary, or a singer, or something that I could do for Jesus.” Now, that's the way some people feel. So to them, work is just a necessary evil; they have to do it to pay the bills. And to others, it's even worse. Work for them is a cruel master. I mean, it's like they're caught in a trap. They can't get out. They can't even stop working to look for another job, and they just feel that they are trapped, and sometimes they almost have a moral schizophrenia, because they're doing things on the job, or things are required of them, that they think are just not right. Have you ever felt that way, that your boss, your job, is a master? Some see it as a necessary evil. Some see it as a cruel master. I tell you, other people have made a god of their job, not so much that their job is their master, but it's almost their god. This, I think, is one of the most dangerous things. People make a god of their career, and they sacrifice everything. They go to these seminars, high-priced seminars, and there are always those there who'll tell you how to be successful.

Let me give you a little speech right now. Here's the typical thing, and they all begin with D. First of all, determination. Man, you've got to have determination. And they'll say, there are many starters, but there are few finishers. You've got to be determined. And number two is discipline. They'll tell you that creativity is 2% inspiration and 98% perspiration. And the next one is direction. And they'll tell you, man, you've got to have these goals, and if you don't know where you're going, if you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time. And the next is discernment. And they say that success in life comes, you know, not from being given a good hand, but by playing the hand that you have well. And then, last of all, they'll tell you, it's duration. They say hard times never last, but people do. And you know, people get this stuff down, and, "Man, I'm going to do it. I'm going to succeed." And so, their job, their career, is their god. And nothing is too good for a man's god, so he sacrifices his health, he sacrifices his family, he sacrifices his love for the Lord Jesus Christ for his job, and somebody will look at him, and say he's a success. He's got a peptic ulcer, he's already had a coronary, his second or third wife is about to walk out on him, his kids are on drugs, but the business is up here, and everybody says, "Man, isn't he successful?" No, he's an abject failure. He's an abject failure, but people think, because he is a wheeler-dealer, he's successful. You see, for some people, the work is a necessary evil. For some people, it's a cruel master. For some people, it is a demanding god. But what you need to see your work as is an opportunity, a God-given opportunity, and be grateful. It is a loving gift. You say, "My job?" If you have a job, be grateful. It is a gift from God. And the Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 23: "In all labor there is profit."

## **II. See Your Job as a Responsibility, and Be Helpful**

Now, here's the second principle. Not only see your job as an opportunity, and be grateful, but see your job as a responsibility—as a responsibility—and be helpful. Look, if you will now, in verses 6 and 7. Verse 5 speaks of the opportunity, but verses 6 and 7: Do your job, "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of God, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will—watch this—doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." Did you know that your job is really a partnership with God, even if it's what we call a secular job? Did you know that? Now, work—work—is not a punishment from God. Some people think, you know, if we got back to the Garden of Eden, we wouldn't have any work to do. You'd be wrong. Work did not come as a punishment for sin. Toil and sweat came as a punishment for sin, but not work in itself. Now, let me ask you a question: Do you know who the first farmer was? If you're not thinking, you're going to say, "Well, Adam was the first farmer," but he wasn't. God was the first farmer. Listen. Just put in your margin Genesis chapter 2, verse 8: "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden..." The Lord God planted a garden. Who was the first farmer?

It was God Himself. And then, what did God say to Adam? In Genesis chapter 2, verse 15: “And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” Now, God started it, and then God said, “Adam, I’m going to turn this over to you. I want you to dress it, and I want you to keep it.” So what was Adam doing? Well, farming is not preaching; it’s not missionary work; it’s not working in the temple. It is what some people would call secular work. But, friend, any work done for God is the work of God, is it not? Is it not? Yes, it is. It is the work of God. And so, put this down—put this verse down—Colossians 3, verses 23 and 24. I love this. Listen to it. If you’re one of those people that just kind of lag around on the job, you have no spiztoranctum, listen to this: “And whatsoever ye do—now notice he said, whatsoever ye do—do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.” And, friend, in those verses he’s talking about your so-called secular work. Friend, if you work in a factory, you’re working for God. If you work in an office, you’re working for God. Don’t get so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good. You know, some of the people who were carried away to Babylon in the captivity, in the Babylonian captivity, when they got over there to Babylon, they said, “Well, we’re in a pagan land. This is a pagan world. We’re only here as captives. We’re not going to work. We’re not going to work with all of our heart.” Now, this is very important; don’t you miss this. Jeremiah 29, beginning in verse 4: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon.” By the way, the Babylonian captivity was not a mistake. God engineered it. God engineered some trouble for Israel because they couldn’t handle their blessings, and that’s what frightens me about American right now. God carried them away to Babylon. And then, here’s what he says to these folks. Listen to it: “Build ye houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there, and not diminished—now watch this—and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for the peace thereof, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.” All right. Lets translate that.

You’re here in the City of Memphis. What does God say to you? God says, “Build houses.” God says, “Be busy.” God says, “Get into the work world, and do a good job, and seek the welfare of Memphis, Tennessee.” God told them, “You seek the welfare of Babylon, where I have carried you.” Don’t you think that your job is not important. Your job is a part of all of this. You are to be helpful to others, and you’re to help yourself. Look again in verse 7. We’re in chapter 6 of Ephesians, verse 7, and he says, “With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.” Be helpful. If you’re lazy, if you

refuse to work, there's something bad wrong with you. Now, Bob Sorrell is going to retire, but he's not going to stop working. I'm going to see to that. Do you know what a lot of folks think? They think, "Well, you know, man, if I just had enough money, if I could win the lottery, I wouldn't have to work anymore." Friend, you ought to work no matter how much money you have. And I want to say something else. If you don't have a job, get up your blessed assurance, and get out of that house, and go to somebody and say, "Look, would you hire me?" He says, "No, I can't hire." "All right. Would you let me work for you for nothing? Just let me work for you for nothing. You tell me what to do. I will work for you for nothing." And, before long, you'll have a job anyway. But if nothing else, you will have the joy of work. Get out and get busy doing something. The Bible says—listen to this—2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 10 and following: "For even when we were with you, we commanded you, that if any would not work—it doesn't say could not work; it says would not work—neither should he eat." It is a sin to feed a person who refuses to work—a sin. If he will not work, don't let him eat. And, by the way, he'll start working after a while, if you'll do that. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now, them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing." He's talking about your job—your job. And then, we're supposed to take care of our children, not somebody else. First Timothy chapter 5, verse 8: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially those for his own house, he hath denied the faith; he's worse than an infidel." And then, over in Ephesians chapter 4. We're in Ephesians chapter 6. Paul says this concerning the man who's gotten right with God. "Let him that stole steal no more but, rather, let him labor, working with his hands—he's not talking now about working in the temple; he's talking about what we call secular work—working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." You don't work just to meet your needs. You work to meet the needs of other people, that you have enough not only for yourself, but you have enough to give to others who need. He's not talking about those who will not work. He's talking about those who cannot work, and there are plenty of them. And, friend, when a person cannot work, it is our joy, our duty, it is our responsibility, to do enough work for ourselves, and to do enough work for them also, to help those who need help. Now, listen. You see your job as an opportunity, and be grateful. You see your job as a responsibility, and be helpful. The Lord Jesus was a carpenter. He knew what it was to work.

### **III. See Your Job as a Ministry, and Be Faithful**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. There are three principles here. See your job as a ministry, and be faithful. And I really want to pull off right here and park for

just a few moments. Yes, your job is an opportunity. Yes, your job is a responsibility. But, friend, your job is a ministry. Look at verses 5 through 7 again. Listen to it: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart—now underscore this—as unto Christ.” Verse 6: “Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ...” Underscore that. Now, he’s talking about secular work, doing the will of God from the heart. Look in verse 7: “With good will doing service as to the Lord...” Could it be anymore plain? That ought to put dignity in what you do. You are not going to work tomorrow morning for Fed Ex or for Kellogg’s or for Morgan Keegan. You’re going to work tomorrow morning for Jesus Christ—for Jesus Christ. You are serving God.

You know, so many people say, “Oh, man, I wish I could get out of this rat race and serve God.” Friend, that’s split-level living. As a matter of fact, when I’m on an airplane, I try to disguise the fact that I’m a minister; not that I’m a Christian, but that I’m a minister. You know why? I don’t want them to think I’m a hired gun. I want them to think I love Jesus because I love Jesus. You know, a little boy said, “Mama, would you give me a dollar?” She said, “What for?” She said, “Well, for being a good boy.” He said, “For being a good boy.” She said, “Why can’t you be good for nothing, like your dad?”. I want people to think I’m good for nothing. I mean, not that I’m being paid as a minister, as a professional. And sometime, they sniff it out. It must be something about the way I talk, but when I open my mouth, they say, “You’re a preacher, aren’t you?” I say, “No, I’ve just been sick.” I don’t want them to know that I’m just a sort of a hit man for Jesus. I want to be a child of God who loves Jesus and just serves Jesus because I love Him.

Don’t get the idea that you have to get into the “ministry” to serve God. You have a great opportunity to serve the Lord. You see, so many people come to church on Sunday like it’s a weekend hobby, and then they’re out there the rest of the week, or, on the other hand, they’re going to despise their job, and can hardly wait to get here on Sunday so they can “serve the Lord.” And there’s a bridge between their work life and their worship life, and we need to put a little spiritual dynamite under that bridge. You are serving God full-time, wherever you work, and no matter how mundane your job might be.

Let me ask you a question: Would you agree with this? One-tenth of your money and one-seventh of all of your time belongs to God? Be careful, it’s a trick question. Don’t answer it. That’s wrong. Friend, it’s not 1/10th of your money that belongs to God. All your money belongs to God. It’s not 1/7th of your time that belongs to God. All of your time belongs to God. Do you think your life is like a pie, and you say, “Well, I’m going to slice it, you know, and I’ll put all these slices. I’ll take 1/10th of this pie here, 1/10th of my financial pie, and I’ll take that and slice that, and I’ll give that to God, and then I’ve got 9/10th to do what I want with.” No. You say, “Well, I’m going to give God a

whole day on Sunday. That's the Lord's Day. Then I've got six days of my own." No, friend, every day is a holy day. Every place is a sacred place. And every duty is a divine duty. "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all—a double I, all—to the glory of God." Isn't that wonderful? Doesn't that put some dignity into it, and say, "Well, if it's drudgery, then that puts more dignity into it. Lord Jesus, I'm willing to endure drudgery for You." And if you're getting in difficulty, say, "Lord Jesus, look what I am doing for you." There is a delightfulness in even doing that which is undignified. Now, let me give you the classic example of this.

There was a man named Daniel, and Daniel was taken to Babylon not of his own free will. He did not go to some business counselor and say, "What do you think I'd be good at doing?" Nor did he choose, after getting a degree in business from some university, as to where to go. Daniel was what we would call a victim of circumstances. But it wasn't circumstances. Remember what I told you that those Jews were carried away captive into Babylon and God had caused it? See, God was over it. And so, here's Daniel. He is there in Babylon, and he has a job. Now, he got into the government service, and he became a governmental employee, a functionary in the government, but he served God while he was working for a pagan ruler. And when they threw old Daniel in the lions' den, Darius, the king, looked into the lions' den, and he said there in Daniel 6, verse 16: "Daniel, the God that you serve continually has delivered you." Even this pagan king knew that Daniel in his ordinary work was really serving God.

Now, I know some of you feel like, "Pastor, you just don't know. You poor, old, benighted soul, you don't have any idea. You've been in the ministry all your life. You don't know what is out there. Well, you don't know what I'm facing. You think Daniel lived in Babylon. Man, I live in Babylon. All around me God's name is taken in vain. All around there are dirty jokes and sexual innuendoes. All around there are people who are laughing and mocking at holy things. It's dog eat dog. They're stepping on one another. There are unfair business practices. Pastor, you just don't know what it's like. Materialism and greed and all of that." Well, I want to ask you a question: Do you think it's God's plan that you live in a monastery? That you just go off and get in some hole somewhere and pluck a harp or something? Listen to what Jesus prayed—John chapter 17, verse 15—for His saints: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Notice what Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 9 and 10: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then ye must needs go out of the world." He's saying, "Hey, you're going to live with fornicators, covetous, and idolatrous people." The only way that you could fail to do that would be just join Prince Mongo and go to Zambodia. Friend, I'm telling you that in this world—in this world—they are all around us. And



listen. The Bible says there in Romans chapter 12, verse 21: “Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.” And John tells us, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” We’ve been saved out of the world, sent back into the world to witness to the world, and that’s the only business in the world we have until we’re taken out of the world when Jesus comes. We’re in this world, but not of this world. And Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the light of the world.”

Now, I want to ask you a question: If you’re the light of the world, He doesn’t say you’re the light of the church. He says you’re the light of the world. He said you’re the salt of the earth. Do you know what we do on Sunday? We come to church, and we shine our flashlights on each other; and I’ll salt him, and he’ll salt me. We’re salting each other. No, this is the church. We are the light of the world. That’s the reason you’re in your job where you are. Where do you put a lighthouse—downtown Manhattan or out on some barren coast? Where is your light to shine? Listen to Philippians 2, verse 15: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst—in the middle—of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” That is why you are there in that place that you call Babylon. That is why Daniel was there. You say, “Well, I want to get out of there, so I can serve God.” Stay there, and serve God! That’s where the salt is needed. You don’t put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. That’s where the light is needed. Your job is an opportunity—be grateful. Your job is a responsibility—be helpful. Your job is a ministry—be faithful.

## Conclusion

Now, I’ve told you before about four things that I want you to do if tomorrow morning when you go to work—and they’re easy to remember, but jot them on a slip of paper—if you would be a witness, if you’d let your light shine. Here’s what it is.

### A. Don’t Brag

Number one: Do not brag—do not brag. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before them that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.” Now, if you go around there showing what a good boy you are, and you’re a self-righteous prig, your light is to glow, not to glare. They’re to see the light, not the lamp. Self-righteous people are the most obnoxious people on earth. You go in there, and you start telling this person, “aaaaaaahhhh, you ought not to go down to those casinos; aaaaaahhhh, you ought not to gamble for that coke; aaaaaahhhh, aaaaaahhhh.” They say, “Would you get out of here?” No, don’t brag.

### B. Don’t Nag

Number two: Don’t nag—don’t nag. Don’t always go around wagging your finger in

peoples' face. They don't want to hear it. Nobody's ever won to Jesus by being talked down to. The Bible says, in Colossians 4, verses 5 and 6, "Walk in wisdom toward them which are without, redeeming the time." Now, listen to this: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man." Isn't that great? Isn't that great? Listen. "Walk in wisdom toward those who are without." Well, you say, "Well, they're doing all these bad things, preacher." Of course they are. They're sinners. That's what sinners do—sin. Don't go in there and try to get billy goats not to butt. That is what they do. Don't you brag, and don't you nag.

### **C. Don't Lag**

And don't you lag. Don't do it. You carry your part of the load at the job. As a matter of fact, you work just a little harder than anybody else. It's a sin for a Christian to do less than his best. Remember that scripture in Colossians 3, verse 23? "Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord."

When a man goes down to the employment agency, he ought to say, "I need some work, because I need this and this and this. And, by the way, if you have any Christians, send them over. Man, I don't understand these people. They're the hardest working people. They get here on time. They do what is required of them. They do more than is required of them." Do you know, if people started living like that on Monday, they'd start believing what I preach on Sunday—did you know that? If we were to take what's in this place and just put it out into the community. Don't brag. Don't nag. Don't, dear friend, lag.

### **D. Don't Sag**

And here's the last one: Don't sag. Never let down in your Christian faith. I mean, they will remember one little malfeasance more than so much good that you do. Don't sag. Don't let down. Don't let down. Don't look at that dirty, obscene joke. Don't say, "Well, we're just matching for cokes." Or, don't join in some sort of petty gossip. Don't let down. Don't sag in your Christian witness. Well, you say, "Well, Pastor, I haven't got what it takes." That's right. You don't. There's only one person who has ever lived a Christian life. Do you know His name? Jesus. And if it's lived in that office where you work, it'll be Jesus in you. And that's the reason that you need to get up a little earlier tomorrow morning, and have that quiet time with the Lord, and load up on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be so filled with Him that when you walk into that office, God will be walking into that office, because Christ will be in you, and you will see your job as an opportunity, and you'll be thankful. And you'll see your job as a responsibility, and you'll be faithful. And you be helpful. And then, you'll see your job as a ministry, and you'll be faithful. And you know what will happen? I'll guarantee you, I'll just guarantee you, you do that long enough—Bob, you've been in the world of industry; you know this is true,

because I've talked to so many people who have talked about your witness in the world of industry—they will come to you. They'll say, "Hey, man, what makes you tick? How do you live this way? You're different." They will see the difference. They'll see the reality of Jesus Christ in you. Folks, I want to tell you this much: most people are not all that interested in going to heaven or hell; they want to know how to hack it on Monday. That's right. You just come into your job with victory—with victory—and let them see the light, the love, the joy, the peace that Jesus Christ gives you. I'm not talking about bragging. I'm just talking about reality. And I'm not saying that you never share Jesus. You do share Jesus, but you share Jesus in the right way. Don't go in the office and say, "I'm going to be like Pastor Rogers and preach to them." Hey, folks, I'm speaking to 6,000 in a big auditorium. You don't speak that way in the office. Let the grace of Jesus come out of your life. Share the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the people that you work with, at home, and on the job, who are your first responsibility, and God will bless you for it.

Tomorrow morning, when you go to work, tomorrow morning, get up and don't say, "Good Lord, it's morning"; say, "Good morning, Lord." "Good morning, Lord. O Lord God, here I am in the fulltime ministry. Thank God it's Monday. Thank God it's Monday. And I'm going off to serve my Lord and my Savior." Wouldn't that be wonderful? Amen.

Lets bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, you can't do this without Jesus. You can't do this unless you're saved. Remember I told you there's only one who's ever lived the Christian life; His name is Jesus. And if it's lived in your home, or in your office, or in your factory, in your place of business, it'll be Jesus Christ in you. And He will come into you, energize you, give you peace and purpose, if you'll trust Him. If you do not know Jesus, let me help you to be saved right now. You can be saved right now—I mean, right now, for all eternity, instantaneously and eternally, today, now, if you will receive Jesus Christ. He died for you. He paid for your sin with His blood on the cross. He proved to be the Son of God by the resurrection with many infallible proofs. He died to save you. He promised to save you. He lives to save you. He will save you, if you'll trust Him. Pray a prayer like this. Forget anybody else is here. Speak to God. Dear God...—pray right now: Dear God...—speak to Him: Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. Friend, tell Him that right now—right now. Do it for your sake. I do trust You, Jesus, with all of my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith. I don't look for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You're now my Lord, my Savior, and my God. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And help me never, ever, Jesus, to be ashamed of You. Because You died for me, I will live for you. Not in order to be

saved, but because I have been saved, I will live for You. I love You, Jesus. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# Lord of All Our Work

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 15, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:5–8**

*“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh,  
with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;”*

EPHESIANS 6:5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Perplexing Problem
- II. A Proper Perspective
- III. A Practical Program
  - A. See Your Job as a Partnership with God
  - B. See Your Job as a Place of Service
  - C. Use Your Job as a Place to Witness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word please and be finding Ephesians chapter six. Were in a series entitled "Lord Of All." And we've been thinking of our Lord Jesus Christ as Lord of all of our work, and Lord of all of our wealth, and Lord of all of our worship. Today, we're continuing the theme, "Lord of all our work." Lord of our work. And we begin reading in verse five. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ."

Now to whom is he speaking? Well, in this day, the word servant literally means slave. But it stands for all of those who work for and serve another. So, put your name in there. Let your name stand for servant, and your master according to the flesh. Let that be your boss. Let that be your employer, whomever he may be. And then look at the way you are to serve him in verse six. "Not with eye service." Now today we'd say, not a clock-watcher. "As men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will. Doing service as to the Lord and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

It makes no difference whether you are a slave, or free man. It's a way that you can please God in your work. I have a dear friend whose name is Peter Lord. He's a

preacher friend of mine. Many years ago, Peter said I'm going to buy a new bed. And I said why Peter. And he said, well, it's just very important. And he told me about a very expensive high priced bed he was going to buy, and I said, isn't that a little much? He said, not at all. He said do you realize that you spend a third of your life in bed? That's a pretty interesting point. He said your bed ought to be the most expensive piece of furniture in the house. He said you spend one third of your life in bed.

And I said, well, you know that makes a lot of sense if you spend a third of your life in bed, you ought to have a good bed to lie on if you can afford it. And then I got to thinking you know, not only do we spend a third of our life in bed, but you know what we spend a third of our life at our jobs. If you work a forty-hour week, well, that's a third of your life. Most Americans today are spending from forty to seventy five percent of their job or their time in their employment. My dear friend, if you ought to have a good bed because you spend a third of your life in bed, you certainly ought to have a good attitude toward your job.

Now, I want to ask you a question. Most of the people here who are listening to me, who are adults, have a job. You are employed. For those who don't have a job, we are praying that God will open a job for you and a very wonderful job. But is your job really meaningful to you? I mean, is it really meaningful? Or is it just something that is necessary, and perhaps very boring?

How would you like to have that boredom changed to blessing? How would you like to have that drudgery turn to delight? How would you like to have that monotony turned to something that is momentous and exhilarating and thrilling and meaningful? Well, you say, if I do that, I'll sure have to change jobs. Maybe not. I want to show you today how you can take your job, no matter what it is, if it's not immoral, and translate it from the secular to the savory; and how your job can become a ministry, how your job can become the temple of your devotion and the lampstand for your witness. I believe that's exactly what the Apostle Paul is talking about here when he's talking about slaves serving their masters for the glory of God.

Now you see, friend, I've told you before that God chooses ordinary people, gives them supernatural power, and does extraordinary things through ordinary people. Now, you understand that principle, don't you? That's found in 1 Corinthians chapter one. "You see your calling, brethren, not many mighty and noble are called." God takes ordinary folks. Now you know that God loves ordinary folks cause he made so many ordinary folks. Isn't that right? There are more of us than any other kind—just plain ordinary folks. God takes ordinary people, gives them extraordinary power and does extraordinary things with ordinary people.

But listen. Here's the secret. God does extraordinary things with ordinary people in ordinary places. That's the thing. Don't think that if you're an ordinary person, God's

going to take an ordinary person and make you a Billy Graham. No. He's going to take an ordinary person and put an ordinary person in an ordinary place. And then he's going to do an extraordinary thing with an ordinary person in an ordinary place. That's what this scripture's teaching us. And what a thrill it is!

Do you know what Martin Luther said—Martin Luther, the great reformer? Martin Luther said, A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God. A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God. Now the problem with many people is, that they see their boss over here and they see their job over here as one spear of work. Then they see the Lord over here and the church over here as another spear of work. So, forty hours, fifty hours a week they are serving over here. And then they take the leftovers, or the remainder, and try to serve over here. And they are sort of a split-level living, and is really an impossibility. For Jesus Christ said no man can serve two masters.

But I dare say that 80, 90% of those Christians that I know are endeavoring to serve two masters. They have a master over here—that's their boss. Then they have a master over here—that's the Lord. And they are always commuting back and forth, trying to be pleasing to the master over here and trying to be pleasing to God over here. But a Christian is a priest of God everywhere he goes and there is no such thing as the secular and the sacred if your true child of God.

Now, I know many of us don't believe that. But there is not. Dear friend, every day is a holy day, and every place is a sacred place, and every task is God-given, God-ordained task, if you're walking in the Spirit and obeying certain principles. And how wonderful it will be, what a freedom it will be, when we learn to make Jesus Christ the Lord of our work.

## **I. A Perplexing Problem**

Three thoughts. First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call a perplexing problem—a perplexing problem. Chapter six, verse five—look at it: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters." All of us have a master of some kind. All of us say, how are we going to relate ourselves to this master?

There are some people who see work as a necessary evil. They don't like it, but they've got to do it. They go day to day after day. They are bored to tears. The same old grind, the same old drudgery. No real meaning, no sense of accomplishment. We call it the rat race. Drawing our breath, drawing our salary. And all of us have seen that bumper sticker that says, I owe, I owe; it's off to work I go. And that's it. We just say, I've got to do it, cause I've got to pay these bills. You don't just have to work in an assembly line, or work with your hands, in order to feel that drudgery.

I was reading recently of a corporate executive. I mean a big shot. But he said he kept having a recurring dream. This is literal now. A recurring dream, and he said it was

more like a nightmare. He said he, in this dream, he would dream he was in a marathon race. And the people that he was running the race against were the workers in the office where he worked. But he said the problem was that in this dream he would keep thinking. He would say I would realize I can't figure out why were all in the race and I never can find the finish line.

Now there are a lot of people like that. I mean big shots. They're in a race. But they don't know why. And they really don't know where the finish line is. And there are so many people and not a few in this auditorium today. Say, you know, pastor, what I'd really like to do? What I'd really like to do is get out of this job that I'm in and get into Christian work. Tell me if that thought hasn't sneaked up on you. What I would really like to do is get rid of this job; I'd like to be minister. Missionary. Or minister of music. Or I'd like to even take my expertise and bring it down there and put it to work on a church staff somewhere. I'd like to do some Christian work—something for God.

And may I tell you, every now and then my heart just breaks when I see a position. It's not being in a position to go into "Christian work." Or a lawyer. Stop being a lawyer to go into "Christian work." Or even a carpenter. To stop being a carpenter to go into "Christian work." Now, if God calls him, that's fine. But so many times when I'm on an airplane or something, I'll pull out my Bible, you know, and begin to study my Bible. I would say nine out of ten times a person next to me will say, are you preparing a sermon? He doesn't know I'm a preacher. He just figures any dude that carries a Bible around, and really studies it, and makes notes, must be a preacher. Are you preparing a sermon? Or, if you begin to talk to him about the Lord, they say, are you a minister? I feel like saying, no, I've just been saved. Are you a minister?

I sometimes try to hide the fact that I'm a preacher. Not that I'm ashamed of being a preacher, I just want somebody to know I love Jesus not as a profession, I love Jesus as a man who loves Christ. Whether I be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a carpenter, I just love the Lord. What a thrill to see people in these professions and in these callings and in these mundane things. Just simply saying, I love the Lord Jesus Christ. In my profession where I am, I am serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some see work as a necessary evil. Wish they could get rid of it so they can serve God. Others see work as a cruel master. It's more than a necessary evil. I mean they are slaves. They're caught in a trap that's very little in their minds, as a little more than legal slavery, and they just absolutely hate what they are doing. But there's no way out of it. But yet there are others, my friend, who see work not as a necessary evil, or as a cruel master. But the last, and the lack.

There are those who see their job as their God—as their God. It's not that it's a necessary evil. Oh they love it. But they love it in a way that is an inordinate way. It has mastered them. It controls their lives; it consumes their lives. Their marriage sacrificed



on the altar of their job. Their friendships, sacrificed on the altar of their jobs. Their morals, sacrificed on the altar of their jobs. Their children, sacrificed on the altar of their jobs.

I may have told you about the corporate executive who was so immersed in his job that his wife had to take care of the fact that they were moving from one house to the other. She was the one who had to call the mover. She was the one who had to arrange everything. He, just as a delegator, delegated all that to her. And before he left for work that morning, she said, now, sweetheart, I know how much your job means to you and I know how busy you are at work, and I know how prone you are to forget the things that are important to the rest of us. But, sweetheart, I want to tell you, when you come home tonight, don't come to this house. Go to the new house. We will have moved. The movers are coming to the... hey some. Do you think I've lost my mind? Do you think I can't remember that we've moved? That you would have to remind me of that? Not to worry. So, he went off to work, and went through the routine, got in the routine, got in his car, drove back to the old address—had completely forgotten. When he saw the door open, he saw the house vacant. He said, oh, no. I've done it; I've forgotten it. We did move. And he said, now, where did we move? Oh, he said, this is embarrassing. He saw a little boy out there on a bicycle, and he said, Son, you remember the folks that used to live here in this house? Oh, yes sir. He said, son, they've moved. And he said, yes sir. He said, son, could you tell me where they moved? He said, Daddy, Mama said you'd forget that we were going to move. Now, obviously, just a story.

Jesus said, what should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What should it profit a man from gaining the whole world and lose his own soul? How many have made a god of that job? So if there is a perplexing problem, some see their job as a necessary evil. Some see their job as a cruel master. Others see their job as a demanding god, and nothing is too good for that job. These fellows fight their way to the top of the ladder only to find it leaning against the wrong wall.

## **II. A Proper Perspective**

Well, let's move to a second thing. Not only a perplexing problem, but a proper perspective. This is what Paul is saying here in Ephesians chapter six—that we should get a proper perspective and understand what our jobs, no matter what it is even if you have the most lowly, menial task. Even if you are called a slave. Look at it. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ."

Now, Paul is not approving slavery. It's the power of the gospel that broke the yoke of the bonds of the slavery. What he is saying is this. If you find yourself in a situation beyond your control, you can transform that situation and make something beautiful and

glorious out of it if you will do it. Look at it here: "You serve with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ not with eye service as men pleasers but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart with good will, doing service as to the Lord." Underscore that phrase, as to the Lord.

Now, don't make the mistake that so many make. They try a split-level living. Or if it's not split level, what they try to do is bridge the gap. Over here's the work; over here is the church and the things of God. And so, they are trying to bridge that gap, and they are just commuting back and forth between the two. And for the man who loves his job too much, his church is sort of a weekend hobby.

I know a lot of men like that. You're here today, but your heart is in that other world. As a matter of fact, you sit in church and figure up business meetings, when the sermon gets boring. And on Monday morning, you get all geared up to go back into that other world, and you take off the church hat, and you put on the business hat, and you're back into this world. And somebody said, they're praising God on Sunday, but they'll be all right on Monday. It's just a little habit they have acquired. And so, you're getting ready, just trying to get out of that world and get into this world—to get out of this world and get back into that world.

So, on the one hand your church may be a weekend hobby, or on the other hand, your church may be the consuming part of your life and you go back to work on Monday morning, hating it, dreading it, despising it—waiting until it gets over, so you can have some free time to serve the Lord. Well, friend, don't try to bridge the gap. We need to put some spiritual dynamite under that bridge, and blow that bridge up, because I want to tell you that it is not Adrian Rogers, but every person who is listening to me today—are you listening?—who is called into fulltime Christian service. Every now and then, I'll say something profound, and that was it. But, listen. Every person listening to me today is called into fulltime Christian service.

My fulltime Christian service I've been called into is to be a Pastor. Your fulltime Christian service that you've been called into may be to be a carpenter. But it is fulltime Christian service. Look at it. The Bible says in verse seven, "With good will, doing service as to the Lord." He is the Lord of our work. "As to the Lord and not to men." Listen, friend. Every Christian is a fulltime Christian servant.

But, you say, I work for a secular company. Who owns that company? You say, my boss owns it. No. God owns it. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. God owns the owner of your company. And God owns your company, and everything in this world is really the Lord's.

Now, let me give you an example of that. Daniel was a young man. I'm talking about the Daniel of the Bible—the prophet Daniel. You say, he was called into fulltime Christian service. Well, if you'll study the Bible, he was taken by circumstances beyond

his control out of the land of Israel, and carried to Babylon. Now, he didn't choose the job that he was in. The job chose him. I mean it was by circumstances beyond his control that he was in Babylon. You say, well, you know if I could just have the kind of a job, I could choose a good job where I could serve the Lord. Daniel didn't have that luxury. Daniel was a captive. And Daniel was taken to Babylon, and when he was in Babylon, my dear friend, he did not serve as the minister of education in the Baptist church. When he was in Babylon, he was impressed into governmental service. He was a governmental functionary. Because he had a mind that was a very fine mind Babylon saw this and put Daniel in that job. It was a very secular job.

Now, while he was in that job, he got in difficulty because there were certain things he would not do. He would not compromise on that job. And, as a result, Daniel was thrown in the lions' den. And the king, Darius, comes and looks at Daniel in the lions' den. Now, don't turn to it, but let me read to you what that man said to Daniel. Remember, Daniel is there by circumstances beyond his control. Daniel is there doing what the world would call secular work, but he was doing it in a godly way. And this king sees Daniel in the lions' den. Now, this king is a pagan. This king is Daniel's master according to the flesh. Daniel chapter six and verse twenty: "And when he came to the den, he"—the king, the boss, the master according to the flesh, "cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel. And the king spake and said to Daniel"—now, listen to this—"O Daniel, servant of the living God"—oh, I love that. Here was a pagan king who had seen something in this man's life that made him stand out like a gardenia in a desert—"...O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?"

Now, how could Daniel serve God continually? I thought Daniel had his regular work to do. I thought Daniel had to carry out all the affairs of the government. But that king said, wait a minute. This man is not just serving me; he is serving his God, and he is doing it continually. And I am telling you, my dear friend, that you may be in a place that is beyond your control, and your boss may be as pagan as King Darius was pagan, and you may get in difficulty on your job, you may get thrown into a den of lions, as it is, but I am telling you, my dear friend, it is there that you can serve God continually. Say Amen. You, there, can serve God continually.

Now, you say, now wait a minute. You don't know where I live. You don't know, preacher. You live such an isolated life. You poor dear boy. You don't know, preacher, where I work. You don't know the raw cartoons that have passed around in the office where I am. You don't know the filthy jokes that go on where I work. You don't know the dog-eat-dog business that I'm in. You don't know the character assassination and the gossip that goes on. You don't know the flirtation. You don't know the blasphemy. You don't know the wickedness where I live. Hey, maybe you work in Babylon. Daniel did.

When in Babylon, do as a Christian should. That's what Daniel did.

What I'm trying to say, my dear friend, is you need to get a proper perspective. God's plan for you is not to take you out of this world, and to take you out of your job, and put you into a monastery, or to squirrel you away in a seminary. You're not called to flee from this world in some little island of irrelevant piety. God has called you, my dear friend, to be a witness—to be a witness.

Let me give you some scriptures. You won't have time to turn to these, so I'm going to reference them, and I want you to write them down. Here they are—John chapter seventeen and verse fifteen—here's Jesus prayer for you: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." God's plan for you, my dear friend, is not isolation; it's insulation. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Here's the second verse—2 Corinthians chapter five, verses nine and ten—the Apostle Paul said, "I wrote you not to keep company with fornicators." Well, you say, well, I can't go to work. I can't go to work. But now, listen to the rest of it. "Yet not all together with the fornicators of this world or with the covetousness, or extortioners, or with idolaters. For then ye must needs go out of the world." There's no way that you're going to keep from having to rub shoulders with fornicators, and idolaters, and covetous people. You just live on some planet—Zambodia. And you'd find plenty up there.

Now, dear friend, what I'm trying to say is this: that there is no possible way that you can keep yourself separated from these people, in that sense. You're not to keep company with fornicators, that is, to have spiritual fellowship with those kinds of people. But the Bible teaches very plainly that God has put you into this world.

Look in Romans chapter twelve and verse twenty-one. Or don't look to it, but just listen to it: "Be not overcome with evil. Overcome evil with good." First John four and verses four and five: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

You see, that prophet Daniel was in the world, but he was not of the world. Yes, there were some things he refused to do. There ought to be some things you refuse to do. You don't look at those cartoons. No, you don't match dimes or fifty cents for a coke or whatever it cost. You don't do that. No, you don't take God's name in vain. No, you do not cut corners in a business deal. You say, I might lose my job. Well, you might. If you were in Daniel's time, you might lose your head. But that doesn't make any difference, dear friend—that is why you are there.

Listen to me. We have been saved out of the world, and then sent back into the world to witness to the world. And that's the only business in the world we have until we're taken out of the world at the rapture. That's why God put us there. You see, we

are salt and we are light. You don't put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. You don't put a light under a bushel.

Listen to this verse. Matthew chapter five, verses fourteen and fifteen: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid; neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel." Bushel here stands for business, the market place. You don't put it under a bushel, but on a candle stick and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Visibility is vital. What good is a candle, if it can't be seen?

You see, my dear friend, you have an incredible opportunity; your job is your lampstand to let your light shine. Where do you put a lighthouse? Do you put a lighthouse in downtown Manhattan? Or, do you put a lighthouse on some craggy rocky seacoast to guide the ships? Dear friend, the Bible teaches that we are to shine as lights in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation.

Understand this: that God wants you where you are, and He wants to be Lord of your work. And, when you understand that, my dear friend, it lends a sense of dignity. You may say there's no dignity digging a ditch. Friend, if you're digging it for Jesus, there's dignity. Amen? Not only does it give you a sense of dignity; it gives you a sense of destiny.

Listen, friend. You are going to receive a reward, if you drive that nail for Jesus. If you write that letter for Jesus, if you do that task for Jesus, it gives you, my friend, a sense of destiny, and it gives you a sense of devotion. You can say, I love the Lord Jesus Christ, and, Jesus, the worse the job is, the more honoring the job is, the more lowly the job is, the more deeming the job is. Lord, I'm willing to do it for you with a smile on my face, and with the glory of God in my heart. Wouldn't it be wonderful for you Monday morning, tomorrow morning, to go to work with a sense of dignity, a sense of destiny, a sense of devotion?

You say, Pastor, that doesn't even make sense. Friend, if what I'm saying doesn't come right out of this book, you come up to me after the service and tell me I'm not preaching the Word of God. It is right here. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to your flesh, with fear and trembling and singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye service as menpleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Oh, listen—listen with goodwill, doing services to the Lord. Oh, you see, friend, there is a perplexing problem. But oh, get a proper perspective.

### **III. A Practical Program**

Now, let me go with you, thirdly and finally. And I want you to see what I'm going to call a practical program. When you get a proper perspective, that's one thing. But why does God say this? Now, you know the Bible is deeply spiritual and intensely practical, and in

all spiritual things you need to be practical, and in all practical things you need to be spiritual. And you need to bring the secular and the sacred together, as I say that every day is a holy day and every place a sacred place. And your job can be your temple of devotion. It can be your lampstand of witness.

Now, let me give you three things that will help you tomorrow morning, okay?

#### A. **See Your Job as a Partnership with God**

As you go to work, no matter how mundane your job may be, even if you're there like Daniel, because circumstances have forced you there, number one, see your job as partnership with God—see your job as partnership with God. Look in verses six and seven: "Not with eye service, as men pleasers but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God." Well, you say, what does God have to do with this business? It's not preaching, praying, and singing.

A question: Who was the first farmer? Now, don't say Adam. Adam was not the first farmer; God was the first farmer. Who planted the first farm? God did. Genesis chapter two, verse eight: "and the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden." The first farmer was who? It was God. And then, what did God tell Adam to do? Genesis chapter two, verse fifteen: "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."

Now, is farming an honorable profession? You'd better believe it is. Partnership with God. God said, I have planted this thing, Adam—take care of it for me. Do you see—do you see how that is? Do you see how a secular job is partnership with God? Any work done for the Lord is the work of the Lord, and therefore every person who is saved is in fulltime Christian service.

Well, you say, does that include what I do? Listen to this scripture now—Colossians chapter three, verses twenty-three and twenty-four—listen to it: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men." Whatever you do—put your name in there. And whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto me. Isn't that thrilling? Am I the only person that gets turned on by this? Listen, friend. That, to me, is one of the most dynamic things. You see, you spend a third of your life or more. You ought to have a good attitude toward your job. I mean, this is it—this is it. Quit that split-level living. Whatever you do, do it as unto the Lord.

Now, does it pay? Well, listen to Colossians three, twenty-four: "Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ." You have a hidden paycheck. When you do this as a partnership with God, friend, you're putting money in heaven's bank. You're going to receive that hidden paycheck.

Now, if you don't do it as unto the Lord, you see, don't get so heavenly minded, and no earthly good. Somebody's got to build the automobiles. Somebody's got to type the letters. Somebody has to run the grocery stores. You say, well, that's of the world. Well,

folks, we have to live in this world.

Let me tell you again what happened. When God took Jewish people out of the land of Israel, they were exiles, and He put them down in a wicked place called Babylon. Now when the Bible wants to describe wickedness, the Bible uses Babylon as a symbolic name for wickedness. Now, here were these Jews there in Babylon, and many of them said, well, we're over here in Babylon; we're not going to cooperate with the Babylonians. We're not going to live here. We're not going to work here. We're not going to do anything here. I mean, after all, this is not Zion. This place is not perfect. Listen to Jeremiah twenty-nine—here's what Jeremiah the prophet said—verse four: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon."

By the way, you say, I'm in this situation, now; I'm out of the will of God. Maybe God put you in Babylon. God put them in Babylon. Now, listen. He says, "to those I've caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, build ye houses and dwell in them. Plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there and not diminished." If you are in Babylon, get to work, He says. "And seek the peace of the city, whether I have called you to be carried away captives and pray unto the Lord for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

What is your city? Some of you are listening to me in Los Angeles. That's your Babylon. Some of you are listening to me in New York City. That's your Babylon. You're listening to me in Memphis, Tennessee. God says, build houses, plant vineyards. Seek the peace of that city. Do good. Get in. Participate. You, my dear friend, are a partner with Almighty God.

### **B. See Your Job as a Place of Service**

Number one, you see your job as a partnership with God. Number two, see your job as a place of service to yourself and others. Are you so holy you don't think that you need to work? Second Thessalonians chapter three, verses ten and following—here's what the Apostle Paul said, very quickly: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: that if any would not work, neither should he eat." You see, you've got to eat.

First Timothy chapter five and verse eight: "But if any provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith." He is worse than an infidel. A lazy, do-nothing Christian is not truly a Christian. Ephesians chapter four, verse twenty-eight: "Let him that stole, steal no more. But rather let him labor. Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Not only do you work to get your needs met; you work to help meet the needs of

those who need. And there are plenty of needy people. We say, if a man won't work, neither shall he eat. There are a lot of people who can't work. Some of them can't find work. Others of them do not have the physical or mental ability to work. And if God has blessed you with a job, stay at it. Make enough to have your needs met, and then let God use you to meet the needs of others.

### **C. Use Your Job as a Place to Witness**

Last of all, take your job, and use your job, my dear friend, as a place to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. And let your light shine, because we shine an lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

I'm gonna tell you something, friend. Most of those people that you go to work with don't know Jesus Christ. They ought to know that you are a Christian. And, when you get to work on Monday morning, you ought to have already been up and had a quiet time with the Lord Jesus Christ. You ought to have the glow of God in your life. You ought to be so full of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, that when they walk in there dragging, you walk in there full of Jesus Christ.

I don't mean that you're pious; I don't mean that you're preachy; I don't mean that your always thumping a Bible and stuffing them with a tract. I just mean, dear friend, that you meet the work with the joy of the Lord, and you do it, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as unto Christ. There's a song in your heart. After a while, they are going to be wondering what makes you tick.

Most of the people that you go to work with are not all that interested in going to heaven or hell. They want to know how to hack it on Monday mornings. And, we are the only people who know, and the secret is Christ in the heart.

## **Conclusion**

And, you see your job, whatever your job is, my dear friend, you see your job as partnership with God. You see your job as service to yourself, and service to others, and see your job, my dear friend, as the lampstand of your devotion. And let your light shine for Jesus Christ there. We'll change this city; Christians will change this world. Christ is Lord of all our work, amen?

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed. Now, for Christ to be Lord of your work, and for Christ to be Lord of your wealth, and for Christ to be Lord of your worship, He simply has to be Lord of your life. You have to receive Him as Lord and Savior. No one moving; no one stirring. Bow your heads in prayer. Have you received Him as your Lord? Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for your sins. Your sin debt has been paid for. Every sin you've ever committed has been paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ. It's been atoned. The sacrifice has been made, and the judgment that your sin deserved has already been taken by the Lord Jesus Christ. But this does you no good; it only



increases your judgment, if you refuse it. But if you would receive what Christ did for you by faith, and receive Christ into your heart as Lord and Master, He will forgive your sin. He will cleanse you; He will save you; He will come into you and give you joy unspeakable and full of glory. And He will give you strength for living, hope in dying, and life that is eternal, if you will receive Christ.

You could receive Christ by praying a prayer like this: O God, I know that you love me. And I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. And you promised to save me. Jesus, you are the Son of God. You died for my sins. I believe that you rose from the grave. I receive you into my heart right now. Come in, cleanse me, forgive my sin, take control of my life, and begin to make me the person you want me to be. Do it now, Lord Jesus. And help me not to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Monday Morning Religion

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 6, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 6:5–8

*“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh,  
with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;”*

EPHESIANS 6:5

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Drudgery of Everyday Work

II. The Dignity of Everyday Work

III. The Duty of Everyday Work

Conclusion

## Introduction

Ephesians chapter 6. And, in a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 5. Somebody said, “They're praising God on Sunday, but they'll be all right on Monday, it's just a little habit they've acquired.” Well, my dear friend, I would say to God that we'll do something that Monday will be just as holy as Sunday.

You see, when you're a child of God, you don't just simply say that Sunday is a holy day, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are secular days. Not in the New Testament. In the New Testament, everyday is a holy day, every place is holy ground, and every deed is to be given over to the Lord.

I want to talk to you today, about Monday Morning Religion. When I use the word “religion,” I'm not using the word “religion” in being religious, but I'm talking about that old time religion. Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and living for Him.

There are three things that I want to say about what we call “The daily grind.” Ephesians chapter 6 and I begin in verse 5. He says here, in this wonderful passage, *“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.”* (Ephesians 6:5). The closest thing that we would have to that is, be obedient to your boss.

To your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. You're to obey your boss as if he were Jesus. You say, “I don't believe it.” Well, read that verse again, and see if you can get anything else out of it. That's what it says. “And in fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto

Christ.” You say, that two legged devil? That’s right. You’re to serve Him that way. Not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God, from the heart with good will, doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. That knowing that whatsoever good thing, any man doeth, the same shall have received of the Lord whether he be bond or whether he be free.

Now, having said that, let me talk to you about Monday Morning Religion. Let me talk to you about your job, what I call “Daily Work.”

## **I. The Drudgery of Everyday Work**

First of all, want to talk to you about the drudgery of it. You know, your work is not always supposed to be exciting. It’s not always supposed to be thrilling. It’s not always supposed to be fun. There’s a certain amount of work-to-work. And, God has engineered it that way. God has put some drudgery into all of our lives. God ordained it in the Garden of Eden after man fell. God said, by the sweat of his face, he’s going to earn his bread.

And yet, there’s a sense in which we can turn that boredom to blessing. We can turn that monotony to meaning. We can turn that drudgery to dignity. We can turn that grind to glory. We can turn the rat race to a pilgrimage.

You know, the problem with a lot of folks is that they feel insignificant. They say, “You know, if I were a minister of music, or a pastor, or a missionary, or if I were maybe wealthy, or if I were maybe a politician, or if I were one of the shakers and movers, but I’m an insignificant person. I don’t have a lot of gifts; I don’t have a lot of ability. And my job, very frankly, is an insignificant job. I trudge to work every day, I come back, I really don’t make a lot of difference. I am locked in to a job that I don’t like, and I despise it. But, I have to do it. It’s the only job that I can get. And so, my life is very unromantic and very unfulfilling. And, there’s no dignity to it. There’s no real rhyme or reason to it. I do it simply because I have to do it. It is my secular work and very frankly I don’t enjoy it at all.”

## **II. The Dignity of Everyday Work**

Well, I want us to think about that drudgery. And, I want you to see again how you can turn that to a delight, and that monotony to something that has great, great meaning. You say, “But, it’s secular work.” Not if you understand the Bible. In the Bible, there is no such thing as the secular and the sacred. Not in the New Testament. Not in the New Testament.

Now, some of you are going to misunderstand what I am saying unless you listen very carefully. But, the Bible tells us how we can take what some people call “The secular,” and we can transform it and make it a sacred task. And, your job can be your

ministry. Your place of employment can be the lamp stand from which you let your light shine.

You say, "But, I'm only an ordinary person." That's right. Do you know why you're an ordinary person? Because God made mostly ordinary people. And, God uses mostly ordinary people. You see, your calling brethren. Not many mighty, not many noble are called. Why does God choose ordinary people? Listen, God chooses ordinary people that He might give ordinary people, extraordinary power and therefore the doing of their work is a miracle and God is the one who gets the glory. You say, "But, I'm in an insignificant place." Yes, but God wants to take ordinary people, and put ordinary people in an insignificant place, and then for all the more reason, God wants to get glory to Himself.

Maybe you never made "Who's Who?" But, I want to tell you my friend, that you are a very important person to the Kingdom of God and that job that you call an ordinary job, a secular job, is the place that God has ordained for you to serve Him. The secular will become the sacred and your job can become your ministry and the temple of your devotion and the platform for your evangelism.

Do you know the problem with so many of us who are members of churches today? We've divided our lives up into what we call the "secular" and the "sacred." That is, we kind of live split-level lives. We have the idea that we serve God part of the time and we serve our boss part of the time. So, a guy is waiting till he can get off work. When he gets off work, then he can go down to the church and he can begin to serve God. So he's got a master over here, that's the guy he works for, and then he's got a master over here, that's God. And so, he's trying to serve two masters. Well, you can't do it mister. No man can serve two masters.

You need to understand that when you're on your job, you're not serving your boss, even though he is your boss. You serve him as if he were Jesus. And, on the job, you're not serving him. You're not just simply in an assembly line, you're not just simply checking out groceries. You're not just simply typing letters. You are doing a sacred task for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if that doesn't make sense to you, I want you to stay and listen to me and it will make sense to you after a while. I have seen so many men, especially men who are in about their thirties and forties, who really get a good dose of old fashioned salvation. And, then they come to the place where they make a full surrender to the Lord. They say, "God I want you to have me, every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, take control of my life." And, almost invariably when a man does that, he wonders, "Does God want me to be a pastor? Or does God want me to be a missionary? Or does God want me to be an Evangelist?" And they'll come in and they'll say, "You know, pastor, I just wonder if God is not calling me to be a preacher or something. I want to quit this job

that I'm in and I want to serve God full time."

Now, my dear friend, God may call you into the ministry. He called me into the ministry. Sometimes, when I'm witnessing, I try to hide the fact that I'm a preacher. You know, I sit on an airplane and read a Bible and somebody will say, "Hey, are you a preacher?" I mean, like nobody else has any business reading a Bible on an airplane but a preacher. I say, "Well, no, I'm not a preacher, I've just been sick." You know, I try to hide it sometimes. And, when some of these people who are in the business world say, "God's calling me into the ministry," in my heart sometimes I say, "I hope not." Boy, I'd love to have a man like you on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ, out there somewhere, not in the ministry. Now, if God calls you into the ministry, fine, that's wonderful. But, my dear friend, don't get the idea that some people are in full time Christian service and other people are not. There's no such thing as a Christian who's not in full time Christian service. And, you say "Amen" to that. No such thing as a Christian who's not in full time Christian service.

Your life cannot be divided into the secular and the sacred. You just can't do it. You see, if you're a child of God, everyday is a holy day. Every place is a hallowed place and every deed is spiritual service. Now, if that's not true, you think of the problems that we're in. For example, if you work more than a forty-hour week, and most people work more than a forty-hour week, if they earn their living by work. Well, if you work more than a forty hour week, and you're not serving the Lord in your work, did you realize that that one third of your time is given to an occupation and the prime hours of your time is given to an occupation that God is not honoring and God cannot bless, if you don't see God in what you are doing?

Those forty hours that you are working, fifty hours that you're working, is that evil? Is that wasted hours? Are we just simply working eight to five for some sort of an earthly master? And then, when we get off at five we begin to serve God and serve God on the weekends? No. Being a Christian is a full time occupation.

God doesn't have a duplex for a throne. You don't serve God when you get off work. You serve God when you go to work, when you get off work, when you wake up in the morning. Listen, the Bible makes it so plain and so clear in this passage. Chapter 6 and verse 5: "Servants be obedient to your them that are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling. In singleness of your heart as unto Christ, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart with good will, doing service as unto the Lord and not to men." The Bible says, "*...for ye serve the Lord Christ*" (Colossians 3:24).

Now, I've talked to men and some ladies, but mostly men who put it this way. They say, "You know pastor, I'm trying to be a good Christian, and I want you to know that I am giving a tenth of my money to God." I'm supposed to be impressed with that. I'm not

impressed with that at all. They're not giving God anything. They are returning a tenth of what God has given them. But, I'm going to give a tenth of my money to God. And then, he'll throw back his shoulders and he'll say, "I'm going to give a seventh of my time. Yes sir, one day out of seven is going to belong to God. Ten percent of what I have is going to belong to God." Mister, that's such a warped concept. Ten percent of what you have doesn't belong to God; all of what you have belongs to God. And, God doesn't ask for one seventh of your time. All of your time belongs to God.

Don't get the idea that your life is like a pie and you take the financial part and you take one tenth of that pie and you give it to God, and then you eat nine-tenths. Or, that your life somehow is—you time is like a pie and you take one seventh of that pie and give it to God and then what ever else you do, that God doesn't have anything to do with that.

That is what is wrong with modern day Christianity. My dear friend, every Christian works for God full time. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 5. You say, "But, I work for a secular company." Well my dear friend, God owns the company you work for. You see, the earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof. You say, "But, my job it doesn't do anything uplifting. If you're in the brewery business, the liquor business, if you're in the dope business or the porno business, get out. I don't mean tomorrow morning, I mean tonight. Just get out. You say, "A man's got to live." No, a man's got to die. And, not only that, he's got to face God at the judgment. But, if you're in job that's productive, then you see that job, not only the drudgery of it, but you see my dear friend, the dignity of that job. You see, work is a very necessary thing.

I want to ask you a question. Who was the first farmer? How many of you think you know? Let me see your hand. The first farmer? Oh, you chickens, come on. How many of you think you know who the first farmer was? Who was he? Now, I tricked you, he wasn't. Adam was not the first farmer. You say, "That's why I'm a chicken, because you're a trickster." Adam was not the first farmer. Genesis chapter 2 verse 8: "*And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed*" (Genesis 2:8). God was the first farmer, not Adam. And, after God made the farm, and planted the farm, He gave it to Adam to take care of. So, I tricked you didn't I? You see, what God did, God delegated that work to Adam. Now, if Adam was taking care of that farm for God, he was doing the work of the Lord. And, I want to tell you today, if you're a farmer, you're still doing God's work.

You see, look at Ephesians chapter 6, verses 7 and 8. "*With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free*" (Ephesians 6:7–8). You don't work for your boss; you work for Jesus Christ. And, knowing that what so ever anyone does he will receive the same from the Lord whether he be a slave or free. Now,

just put this verse in the margin along side of Ephesians chapter 6 and beginning in verse 5. Just put Colossians 3 verses 23 and 24. *“And whatsoever ye do...”*—Did you hear that? How many things did that leave out? Nothing. *“...do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”* (Colossians 3:23).

Friend, if you can't do it as unto the Lord, you've got no business doing it. *“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:24). Whatever you do.

Now, if you're in a factory that puts caps on toothpaste, everyone is for Jesus. This one's for you, Lord. This one's for you. This one's for you. Whatever you do, you serve the Lord Christ. Don't get so Heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. Don't think you have to be playing the piano in church or preaching a sermon in order to be serving God.

The Jews were taken into exile into Babylon. And, when they got into Babylon, many of them felt, well you know, “This Babylonian king is taken us over here.” And, by the way, Babylon is modern day Iraq and they were carried there. And, some of them were so spiritual that they were reluctant to put down roots and to go to work. I mean, they were not going to. I don't know what it was; lower themselves, to work in Babylon. The secular world out there. And, here's what God told those Jews, in Jeremiah chapter 29, beginning in verse 4. And, those of you who feel like you're working in Babylon, and some really are, I want you to listen to what God told them. Jeremiah 29 beginning in verse 4: *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace”* (Jeremiah 29:4–7).

That's an interesting thing. Here were people who were carried away to a secular, profane, ungodly place and God says, “You go to work there. Build you a house there. Plant you a vineyard there. Let your children get married there. Begin to live your life there and pray for the peace of that city.” Did you know, in Paul's time, in Thessalonica, there were some people there, some “super saints,” who were so spiritual they had quit their jobs? They were expecting the Lord to come, so they were going to sit around and wait for Jesus to come, and they refused to work. And, Paul wrote that church, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 10, and he says this: *“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Now, what I'm talking to you today about is not only the drudgery of everyday work, but the dignity of everyday work. I don't care what it is, if it is something that is not dishonoring to God. It has dignity; it has purpose. Now, let me move on and talk too finally about the duty of it. I've talked to you about the drudgery of it, there's a certain amount of drudgery and God has engineered that we have it by the sweat of our face; we eat our bread.

### **III. The Duty of Everyday Work**

But, not only the drudgery of it and the dignity of it, but I want you to think of the duty of it. Why has God intended that this church go out, scattered and permeate this community tomorrow in the work place? Well, I'll tell you why, my dear friend, it is one of the most extraordinary opportunities that we have to share the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, I don't have a better example of that than a man named Daniel, the man named Daniel.

If you don't mind, I'd like for you to turn to the book of Daniel for a moment, because we're going to be there mostly in the rest of this message. Because there's a wonderful, wonderful illustration in the man called Daniel.

Now, Daniel was a man, just like you. He loved God and God took Daniel against his will. Daniel was carried captive into Babylon, and there in Babylon, Daniel was given a secular job. Daniel didn't go to Babylon as a priest. He didn't go to Babylon as a pastor. He didn't go to Babylon as a music director or an educational director. He went to Babylon as a captive, forced to Babylon out of his own will, carried away captive, and there because of his extraordinary gifts, he found a place of government service. And, he was working for Darius. And, in the midst of this, somehow Darius, was misinformed about Daniel and Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. And, most of us know the story of Daniel in the lions' den since we were in Sunday school. But, look with me in Daniel chapter 6 and verse 20. I want you to see what Darius, the king of Babylon, said to Daniel. He looks into the den and there's old Daniel, he's puffed up a lion. He's leaning back on him and he's got his Bible out just reading between the lions, and Daniel is having a big time there.

Now, the king looks in there and the king sees Daniel in there. Daniel chapter 6 and verse 20: *"And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"* (Daniel 6:20).

That's very interesting, because Daniel got his paycheck from Darius. Daniel had those government jobs. I mean, he worked at a regular job. He was a government official. He didn't do this thing in a monastery; he had a very important job, a government job. And yet, the king said to him, "I know that you serve God continually."



It's so important that we understand this, ladies and gentlemen.

Now, you say, "But pastor, I don't even know that I'm in the will of God in my job. I mean that you say that God called you into the ministry. I don't have any sense of call. I'll tell you why I'm in my job pastor; it's the only job I could get. If I could get a better one I would. I hate it, I don't like it, I'm not paid well, and I'm not maximizing my gifts. The only reason that I'll go to work tomorrow, and I'll tell you very frankly, I won't like where I'm going, but I've got to go. I've got to eat; I've got to feed my family." Like that bumper sticker I saw the other day, you've seen it, "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go." And so, you may just feel the same way, I've just got to go.

And, you say, I have no sense at all that I'm where God wants me. Friend, that doesn't anything to do with what I'm preaching tonight. If you find yourself there and there's nothing you can do about it and there's no other job available to you, then you just take it that you're there by the will of God.

Let me give what the Scripture has to say about that. Jeremiah 29, verse 4. I read that to you again. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon." Who caused the Jews to be carried to Babylon? You say, "Well, the king of Babylon did." God said, "No he didn't. I let him do it, but I caused it."

Have you ever thought that you may be right where you are because God put you there? You didn't choose it any more than Daniel would have chosen to go to Babylon. Your call may not be the call, like the call to the ministry. Your call may be the call of captivity. And, maybe where you're living, you're in Babylon right now. And, you say, "Very frankly preacher, there's not much I can do about it. I mean, I've got to eat. I got a job. Boy, I wish I could get out of here so I could serve God. Boy, I wish I could get in some monastery where I wouldn't have to have all these sinners around me."

I mean, men most of us, we want to get in some sort of a secluded island of piety. We want to be isolated from all those ole sinners out there. Well friend, that's not God's plan. That's not God's plan. God brought Daniel to Babylon because God had a purpose for Daniel. It was God that brought Daniel to Babylon. Again, the Bible makes it plain. God brought those Jews to Babylon, even though the king of Babylon was the servant of God.

And, my dear friend, we're not to be an island of irrelevant piety, surrounded by an ocean of need. God's plan for you is not to flee the world. God's plan for you is to overcome the world. Let me give you some Scripture now. I'm talking about Monday morning religion mister. And, if you work in Babylon, let me give you some Scripture. John 17 and verse 15, Jesus said, he was praying for you and He said, "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*" (John 17:15).

God did not pray, my dear friend, for your isolation, He prayed for your insulation. “I do not pray, Father that you will take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the world.”

Let me give you another one. 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 9 and 10. Paul said, *“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.”* (1 Corinthians 5:9–10).

He’s saying, “Now, in the church, don’t fellowship with people who are living sexually immoral lives. But don’t get the idea that somehow you’re supposed to be isolated from sinners.” Friend, we’re the salt of the earth; you don’t put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. That’s the reason that God’s put you there.

Oh, Titus was complaining to Paul about the Cretians, and he said, “These Cretians are always slow bellies.” I’ve always wondered what the word “slow belly” means, but it sure sounds awful. As slow bellies, I take them to be indolent and sensual. And, the Apostle Paul says for this cause, left I then in Crete. I mean, that’s why you’re there. I mean that’s the reason. You don’t take a lighthouse and put it out in downtown Manhattan. You put it out on some barren, craggy, rocky shore, where it’s needed.

1 John chapter 5, verses 4: *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4). God put Daniel there in Babylon; he didn’t have what we would call “a full-time Christian service job.” He was a bureaucrat. Now, let me tell you something, friend, about who we are. And, this will add dignity to your job. We have been saved out of this world, we have been sent back into the world to witness to the world. And, that’s the only business in the world; we have in the world till Jesus takes us out of the world. We are the light of the world.

Matthew chapter 5, verse 14: *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house”* (Matthew 5:14–15).

Now, does our Lord want you to be light? Just nod your head, of course he does. You’re the light of the world, not the light of the church, but the world. As I come to church, let my light shine. No. You’re the light of the world. What is your job? Your job is your lamp stand, where you let your light shine. That’s what it is. It doesn’t matter that it’s a secular job. It doesn’t matter if you if your master is according to the flesh. That’s where you’re needed.

Let me give you another verse that that follows that one in Matthew chapter 5, verse 14. It doesn’t follow it in the Bible, but it links to it. Philippians chapter 2 and verse 15, the Apostle Paul says, *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as*

*lights in the world*" (Philippians 2:15). Where is your light to shine? In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in the midst of those obscene stories, in the midst of that pornography, in the midst of that blasphemy, in the midst of that materialism, in the midst of that gossip, in the midst of that undercutting. There, you let your light shine for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what Daniel did. I mean, Daniel was in Babylon, but even the kings had to say, "You're serving God continually." And, my dear friend, Daniel did not participate in the sins of the Babylonians. He didn't say, "When in Babylon do as the Babylonians do." There were certain things Daniel refused to do if it meant that he was put in the lions' den. He kept his testimony, and my dear friend, he did it in the midst of a crooked and perverse place. He was a light for our Lord.

Now, suppose the people where you work, see you go through hell sideways, see you suffer, see you abused and ridiculed, and as it were, put into a fiery furnace. And, they see you with the victory; they see that fourth man in the furnace, the Lord Jesus. My dear friend, when you begin to live like that on Monday, they're going to begin to believe what I preach on Sunday. Did you know that? That's God's plan. Let me give you another verse, here, just stay there in Daniel, but put this one down. 1 Peter chapter 2 and I begin in verse 11: "*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims...*"—that's what we are, this world is not our home—"*...abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles...*" (1 Peter 2:11–12). When He said "Gentiles," He meant in this day pagans.

You have your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evil doers, and they will, the straighter you walk, the more they'll speak against you. "*They may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*" (1 Peter 2:12).

My dear friend, if you just keep on walking the straight and narrow, and my dear friend, you'll begin to let your light shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and your job becomes number one; your temple of devotion. And then, number two, it becomes your lamp stand for witness. And, I want to give you now, very quickly, some rules for the way you ought to live on your job. If you want to reach those that you work with, if you want to let your light shine, let me tell you what to do. Do not brag when you go to work. For God's sake, don't be self-righteous. There's nothing more obnoxious than a self-righteous person at work, especially if he's a Baptist. Just don't do it. Jesus said, "Let your light shine." You don't make it shine, friend, you let it shine. It's to glow; it's not to glare. And, they're to see the light; they are not to see the candle. And, if you go around talking and bragging all the time about how good and righteous you are, you're going to make them vomit. Don't brag and don't nag. Don't nag. They'll hate to see you coming. Nobody in my estimation has ever been won to

Jesus by being talked down to.

Colossians chapter 4, verses 5, why don't you put this in your pocket and read it every now and then. *“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”* (Colossians 4:5). Isn't that beautiful? Your speech with grace, seasoned with salt. Don't nag at people. Hey, you ought not to be using God's name like that, what are you a heathen? You say, “Man, I was witnessing.” No, you weren't, you were nagging. Hey, you ought not to be gambling, matching for cokes like that, that's gambling, going to send you to hell. Friend, you don't know any more than he knew, you'd be gambling too. They got to do something for kicks. They don't have the joy of the Lord. That's not their problem; their problem is they need Jesus. They need Jesus. Don't brag and don't nag. If you witness, don't preach to people.

I mean, you say, “I've seen my pastor do it, Adrian Rogers. Boy, he gets a Bible and he walks around and he waves his finger.” Hey, folks, this is a pulpit. That's not a pulpit where you are. I mean, you're no preacher. I mean, if you want to preach at lunchtime, go out there in the stockyard somewhere and get a crate and stand on it. Somebody might come hear you, that's all right. But, the guy you're working with next to you, he he's not going to take it, I'll just guarantee you.

Don't, my dear friend, brag, don't nag, and don't lag. What I mean by that is, on the job tomorrow, you carry your part of the load. It's a sin for a Christian to do less than his best. The best workers in your factory, the best workers in your office, and the best workers in your institution ought to be children of God. When a man goes down to the employment agency, he ought to say, “Hey, I need thus and such and if you have any Christians over there, please send them over. I don't understand it, but they're on time, they don't gossip, they don't steal, they don't flirt around, and they treat me with such respect that you would think they think I'm God. I don't understand it, but they are the best people I have and I want more Christians.” That's the way we ought to live, isn't that right? By all means, that's the way we ought to live. Don't lag.

Listen to Ephesians chapter 6, verse 5: “Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling and sincerity of heart, as to Christ. Not with eye service,”—that means not just when the boss is watching—“as men pleasers”—not a boot licker—“but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” He can tell if you're doing it from your heart. And, again Colossians chapter 3, verse 23: “And whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men.”

Friend, that'll put a spring in your step tomorrow morning. You can be doing the most mundane task, and if you say, “Lord, I'm doing it for you,” is there anything you wouldn't do for Jesus? Of course not. Listen to 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 1: *“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the*

*name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed*" (1 Timothy 6:1).

God is blasphemed because of people who are Christians, who are taking the boss's time to witness. Now, let me tell you something friend; God does not need you to be dishonest in order to witness. If you have a job to do, do it. Don't be reading the Bible or talking religion when you're supposed to be doing something else. Don't do it.

I mean, when you're paid to do a job, do that job. If you do it on the coffee, your own time in the right way, that's fine, but don't you let that keep you from being the best worker on that job. You're not doing it for that boss, you're doing it for Jesus Christ. Don't brag, don't nag, don't lag, and my dear friend, don't sag. What I mean by that is don't let down in your Christian life. Never compromise. Even the smallest thing, they watch you like a hawk. Don't be self-righteous, but be righteous, be clean, be pure. Daniel refused to participate in their sin and to dissipate his body, and God use him mightily.

And, I'll say this, if you want people to believe in the religion you have, when you go to work tomorrow morning, you go there full of joy. Full of joy. You say, "Well, I don't have any joy." "Well, you better get some. You say, "Where do I get it?" Jesus is your joy and the Bible says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always*" (Philippians 4:4). I mean, always.

You say, "Well, I can't be happy all the time. I'm not talking about being happy. Jesus was a man of sorrows, but he was also a man of joy. He says, "My joy give I unto you." Now, my dear friend, listen, most of those people that you are going to go to work with tomorrow morning, they hate Mondays. Most people hate Mondays. Many of them are going to come to work Monday with a hangover. Some of them are just going to come from a fight with their wife. Others have been fighting traffic or can't find a parking place. Half of them hate their job, too. And, you walk in there and you'll be sunshine when you walk in that office. They're going to think, "What's the matter with him? He's been chewing lotus leaves or something." But, they're going to find out that after a while it's real. I'm not just talking about a gooney grin on your face. I'm talking about the joy of the Lord. And, I'm talking about you do it enough, consistently enough, and they're going to see that you're consistent and they're going to see that your life is a supernatural life and that's the only thing, dear friend, that really counts is a supernatural life. And, before long, they're going to want what you have. I'll guarantee you.

Listen to me. Most of the people that you work with are not all that interested in going to Heaven or Hell. They just want to know how to hack it on Monday. I mean, they just want to know how to get through this life. Many of them, they have all kinds of problems. And, don't sag, don't let down. We say, "Where do I get that joy? You've got to wake up and store up your life with Jesus and have that quiet time, that word from the Lord, and then you go off to work. And, after a while, they are going to watch you and

then they are going to ask you a question. 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 15. The Bible says, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15). They’re going to say, “Hey, what makes you tick?”

Man, I don’t understand you. And then, you’re going to be able to tell them, “Listen, I know just how you feel. If it weren’t for Jesus I’d hate this job too. But I believe that I’m here by the providence of God and the Lord is the one who gives me songs in the night. The Lord is the one, I I’ve got some heartaches, I’ve got some tears, I’ve got some problems. But Jesus has helped me. And that same Jesus can help you.”

## **Conclusion**

My dear friend, there’s the drudgery of everyday work, there’s the dignity of everyday work, and there’s the duty of everyday work. And, when we begin to practice Monday morning religion, I don’t believe we’ll be able to build churches big enough to put the people in. And, again, I want to say, like old Ben Franklin said, “Boy, what would happen, if I could harness that lightning?” What would happen if tomorrow, like a mighty army, we began to practice New Testament Christianity? Every day is a holy day, every place a hallowed place, and every deed, a sacred deed. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. Amen? Let’s bow in prayer.

Father God, I pray that you would just Lord, seal the message to my heart. And, Lord God, I pray that you would help me even in the tasks of the ministry. And, Lord, these who’ll be going, some of them to jobs that are not thrilling. Some are underpaid, some are mistreated, some have to live and work in blasphemy. And Lord, I just pray that what they do, they’ll do as unto you tomorrow. And Lord, receive your praise and your reward. Thank you for it Lord. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

# Spiritual Warfare, Part 1

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 25, 1975

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 6:10–20

*“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

EPHESIANS 6:11

## Outline

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## Introduction

Tonight, we're speaking on our spiritual warfare—spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6, verse 10 and following: *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the*

*shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”* (Ephesians 6:10–20) Our spiritual warfare.

Friend, I want to tell you, whether or not you know it, we’re in a war, and the war has not ended. It’s not a war that’s being fought in Indochina; it’s a world war. It’s being fought on America soil. It’s being fought in Memphis, Tennessee. It is a dirty war. It is a deadly war. It is against Satan, and it is a fight to the death. It is a very important battle, and there are no holds barred. And the reason that some of you are losing the war is you don’t even know that it’s going on. And you don’t understand why you are defeated in so many ways: You don’t understand why your prayers are not getting answered. You don’t understand why your children are lost. You don’t understand why you don’t have power in soul winning. You don’t understand why you don’t understand the Bible. You don’t understand so many things, because rather than winning the battle, you’re not even showing up for the war. You don’t even know that there’s a war going on.

And Satan knows there’s a war going on, and the Bible says, *“He knoweth that he hath but a short time.”* (Revelation 12:12) And he’s fighting like a cornered animal, right with his back in the corner, and he’s letting loose with all of the artillery of hell. And many Christians who ought to be warring are sleeping. Somehow the idea has gotten out that the old ship of Zion is a luxury liner. Friend, it’s not a luxury liner; it’s a battleship. It’s not a showboat; it’s a man-of-war. And we need to understand that we have been called to fight the good fight of faith.

I want you to notice with me tonight three things about this passage of Scripture: first of all, I want you to notice our adversary; secondly, I want you to notice our armor; and, thirdly, our attack.

## **I. Our Adversary**

Now, first of all, in any war, you’ve got to know your adversary; you’ve got to know your enemy. It is extremely important that we know our enemy. And, of course, our enemy has always wanted to deceive us concerning himself. It has always been the purpose of our enemy to pull the veil of darkness across his kingdom, and his cleverest ruse is to make people believe that he does not exist at all. And there are many people today, including one theology professor that I had when I was in college, who did not even believe in an actual, literal, personal devil. He said that the devil was the personification of evil, or some sort of a figure of speech, or simile, or whatever, but there was no such



thing as a real devil. Well, of course, the devil's behind that business, because if people don't believe in the devil, they're not going to make any preparation for defense, and therefore they're going to go by default.

But there is a devil, and I want you to notice how the Apostle Paul described our enemy.

### A. He Is Subtle

First of all, he's subtle. Notice in verse 11: "*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" (Ephesians 6:11) Underscore the word *wiles*, because it means that the devil is a very subtle person. He is clever. He uses devices; he uses all kinds of trickery. As I've already said, one form of trickery is to make men believe that he doesn't exist.

Now, how does he do that? Well, he has gotten out the idea that the devil is a little guy with horns and a suit of red underwear and a pitchfork. And so, there are people who say, "Well, I don't believe in that; therefore, I don't believe in the devil." But you never find that description of the devil in the Word of God. That's come from folklore and medieval literature, but not from the Word of God. Jesus called the devil "the god of this age," (2 Corinthians 4:4) and he is a clever counterfeiter. And he always appears not in a red suit with horns, but he appears in camouflage. He appears by counterfeit; he appears in disguise.

And he's in religion up to his ears. The Bible speaks of an unholy trinity in Revelation chapter 16 and verse 13: of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. (Revelation 16:13) Just as there's a Holy Trinity, there is an unholy trinity. Why, the devil even has his churches. The Bible describes them in Revelation 2, verse 9, as "synagogues of Satan." (Revelation 2:9) Many people today would call them churches, and they would be listed in the Yellow Pages and the church directory. But if the Lord Jesus were putting them in the Yellow Pages, He'd put them under the heading "synagogues of Satan." Now I'm not talking about Jewish houses of worship; I'm talking about erstwhile Christian places of worship that are not really churches at all.

Satan has his ministers. Satan has supplied many a pulpit. And I remember when I was preaching on the devil one time, and a little fellow told me after the service, "Brother Rogers, when you were up there preaching, I could see the devil just as plain." I never have quite figured out what he meant by that, but I will tell you that many times, if you're looking for the devil, you need to look right in the pulpit. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 15 that "*it is no great*"—or "strange"—"*thing if his ministers*"—Satan's ministers—"*be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.*" (2 Corinthians 11:15) He actually has his ministers.

He has his whole system of theology. The devil's not against theology; the devil is

for theology. You read in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1, of “doctrines of demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1) Now, you think about it. Satan is called a “god.” He has an unholy trinity. He has a church. He has ministers. He has doctrines. Why, there are even sacrifices offered to the devil. You read in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 20, about sacrifices that are offered to the devil. (1 Corinthians 10:20) You see, the devil never appears as the devil; he appears as an angel of light.

And so, the Bible says we’re to “*put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” (Ephesians 6:11) How wily—how deceptive—is the devil! When he came to Eve, he didn’t ask her to be devilish; he asked her to be godly. Do you remember that? Sure! The temptation wasn’t to fall down; it was to fall up. He said, “Eve, I’m going to tell you how to be like God.” Well, nothing wrong with that, is there? Well, there is if you try and do it the devil’s way rather than God’s way. He was trying to tell her—and she was stupid enough, silly enough, to believe it—that she could follow the devil’s way to be godly. So, the first thing I want you to notice about Satan is that he is subtle.

## **B. He Is Spiritual**

Now, the second thing I want you to notice about Satan is that he is spiritual. Notice in verse 12—he is spiritual: “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness*”—“*against spiritual wickedness*”—“*in high places.*” (Ephesians 6:12) Now, so many people don’t understand that the devil is a spiritual person. They think if a thing is “spiritual,” that’s good. They say, concerning a man, “He’s a very spiritual person”—and that means that he’s a good person. Not necessarily! It could mean that he’s a very wicked person. Some of the most wicked people I know are very spiritual people.

You see, there are all kinds of spirits. The Bible says, “*Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.*” (1 John 4:1) Satan is a spiritual person; that is, we’re not wrestling against flesh and blood. And so many of us can never really learn that we’re not wrestling against flesh and blood. We want to go out and we see some person that we think is doing wrong, and so we want to get in a war with him. We want to get in a war with pornographers. We want to get in a war with the gamblers. We want to get in a war with the liquor dealers. We want to get in a war with the booze-makers. We want to get in a war with the false prophets. And the devil just laughs. He loves to see us fighting flesh and blood. He loves to see us fighting other individuals—people, flesh and blood—because he knows as long as we’re fighting flesh and blood, we’re not really fighting the battle that needs to be fought. We’re fighting flesh and blood; and, dear friend, when we’re fighting flesh and blood, we’re not even showing up for the war.

*“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12)

So many people don't even understand where the realm of the battle is. You remember the Bible says the *“Lord Jesus Christ...hath blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:3) Do you remember that first message? We talked about the sphere of our blessing. Well, friend, it's also the sphere of our battle. The *heavenlies* are the sphere of our blessing, and they're the sphere of our battle.

You see, turn, please, for a moment, to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 16. I want to show you something. In Matthew chapter 16, let's look at about verse 21, and let me show you how much more perceptive Jesus Christ is than we are. In Matthew chapter 16, beginning in verse 21, the Bible says, *“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”* Now, may I say that right there, when Peter did that, he was 180 degrees wrong; he was just as wrong as he could be. Now, notice what Jesus does—verse 23: *“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* (Matthew 16:21–23)

Now, was Jesus calling Peter the devil? No, not at all! Jesus looked beyond Peter, and through Peter, and Jesus knew really where the source of Peter's statement was. Peter didn't originate that; the devil was using Peter to say that. And so, rather than rebuking Peter himself, Jesus Christ rebuked the devil. Now, most of us would have gone to war with Peter. We would have tried to beat Peter over the head with a Bible club and straighten Peter out, but Jesus Christ knew where the warfare was. Jesus Christ knew that the problem was not with Peter so much as it was with Satan, the power behind Peter's false statement. And Jesus went right to the source of the spiritual battle and rebuked the devil.

Say, I wonder, how many times has the devil gotten you in an argument with some flesh and blood, and sat over in the corner and laughed while you two fought it out, and he goes away unscathed? I think it's the devil's favorite trick to start an argument with this denomination and that denomination, let them get in debate and argue the Scriptures, and he sits over there in the corner and just laughs as one denomination argues with another denomination, or one Christian argues with another Christian, rather than going to the source of the problem, which is Satan himself. *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.”*

### C. He Is Strong

Now, let me say, therefore, that not only is Satan subtle—verse 11, “*the wiles of the devil*”; (Ephesians 6:11) not only is he spiritual—verse 12; but he’s also strong. Notice verse 12 again in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12—and the Bible says there, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.*” (Ephesians 6:12) Notice those words: *principalities*, *powers*, and then *rulers*. What does this emphasize? Friend, Satan has authority; he has great authority.

Now, don’t make light of the devil. I hear people make slighting remarks and jokes about the devil. Sometimes it makes my blood run cold, because I know they have underestimated the enemy. You know, the Bible says concerning Michael the archangel that he “dared not bring a railing accusation against the devil,”—I’m talking about a mighty archangel— “but he said, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan.’” (Jude 1:9) And you need not to sally forth to do battle against Satan saying, “Oh well, the devil, I know that the devil’s defeated, and I’m a Christian. I’ve got the power of Jesus in me.” That’s all well and true, dear friend; but don’t you underestimate your enemy.

You’ve heard me say before he never gives up anybody or anything without a fight. Satan is strong. We sang that song this morning, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” But Martin Luther wrote in that song these words concerning Satan. Puny man is no match for this mighty devil. Listen to the words of Martin Luther:

*His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

There is no man, no matter how strong he is, no matter powerful he is, who is equal to Satan. You need to understand this.

### D. He Is Sinister

He is subtle. He is spiritual. He is strong. And then, he is sinister. How wicked is Satan! Notice how the Bible describes him as “*the rulers of the darkness of this world...spiritual wickedness*”—“*wickedness.*” (Ephesians 6:12) Satan hates you. Do you know why he hates you? Because God has set His affection on you. Satan’s war is not really with you; Satan’s war is with God. The only reason Satan wishes to harm you is to get at the heart of God. Do you know people have known for a long time that when there’s someone, and you cannot hurt that one, the best way to get to them is to hurt someone they love? Isn’t that true? And so, Satan wants to harm you, because God has set His affection on you and God loves you.

But God has chosen to use you as the victory over Satan. If God wanted to, all God could do is just speak Satan out of existence. But He doesn’t want to do it that way. God wants to use people like us to defeat Satan. It’s a part of God’s master plan, and it’s just

so wonderful. I can think of the Lord Jesus Christ there being tempted of the devil in the wilderness, and Satan offers those temptations and those diabolical insinuations that He's not even the Son of God: *"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."* (Matthew 4:3) And it's as though Jesus Christ said, "Satan, I want you to know, as God of very God, who I am, I could just speak the word and obliterate you and devastate you. But, Satan, I'm going to beat you. And I'm not going to beat you as God; I'm going to beat you as man." And Jesus defeated Satan not as God—though Jesus is God—but Jesus defeated Satan as man.

And Jesus used only the resources that any other man would have available to him. Jesus didn't pull rank on us. Jesus faced Satan with the very resources that all of those of us who are here tonight have at our disposal. And with the same resources that Adrian Rogers has, Jesus met Satan and defeated him. And what an encouragement that is to me! And what an encouragement that ought to be to you! I'm telling you that Satan is sinister; Satan hates you. But *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4) And God has chosen to use man to defeat Satan. God is not going to defeat Satan; He's going to let us do it. I think that's so tremendous. And He used the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was very man, to win the first battle; and then He's going to allow us, through Him, to triumph.

## II. Our Armor

All right, so there is our adversary, the devil: he is real, he is our enemy, and we must not—we dare not—underestimate him or ignore him. Now, the second thing I want you to notice in this passage of Scripture in verses 13 through 17: our armor. Notice in verse 13: *"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God."* (Ephesians 6:13)

Now it must be the whole armor, and it must be holy armor. Sometimes we think we can put on most of the armor. Friend, wherever you leave off the armor is where Satan's going to get you. He's looking for that weak spot.

I remember when I was playing football a particular incident: I made up my mind that my name was going to be in the paper the next morning as a star, and so on the kickoff I went down under the ball. And the ball was kicked off, and I made up my mind that I was going to make the tackle. As a matter of fact, the fellow was kind of kicking the ball around on his toes, trying to pick it up, and I could see myself just knocking him into the middle of next week. And so I ran just as hard as I could and put my head down. There was just one blocker who lined himself up between me and that man trying to pick up the football. And I knew if I went around him that I wouldn't be able to make the tackle, so I decided I'd go through him—get him and the ball carrier at the same time. That's all I remember. And, finally, after I came to, and the coach was trying to get some air back in me, he said, "Rogers, where are you pads?" I said, "Well, coach, I left them off"—this

particular set of pads—“because I thought I could run faster.” And I’ve never forgotten that lesson.

You put on all the armor, friend—all the armor. Every piece has a particular purpose. It must be the whole armor of God, and it must be holy armor.

Now, in the armor that is prescribed, you can see the work of the devil. It’s very interesting. If you want to know how the devil is going to attack you, look at each piece of armor, because God has given you each particular piece of armor to ward off a particular attack of the enemy. And so, here we see the strategy of the enemy even by the armor that our Lord has prescribed.

#### **A. Satan Will Attack You with Error: The Girdle of Truth**

For example, how is Satan going to attack you? In the first place, he’s going to attack you with error, because if he can get you to believing wrong, he can get you to do anything. He’ll try to get some error, some untruth, in your mind. Error is a terrible thing. So, notice in verse 13: “*Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.*” (Ephesians 6:13–14)

Now, why do we have our loins girt with truth? Because the devil will attack with error, and truth is the armor against error. Now he says, “*Having your loins girt about with truth.*” Paul, when he wrote this, by the way, was in a dungeon guarded by a Roman soldier. And I’m sure this is what inspired him. He watched that soldier—of course, the Holy Spirit inspired him, but the Holy Spirit used this event—and Paul looked at that Roman soldier, and the first thing he saw was that that Roman soldier had a leather belt, a belt about eight or twelve inches wide and with hobnails on it—very thick leather. And it was the last piece that he would put on. He would just kind of bring everything together. All of his armor was tied together and cinched up by this girdle that he wore around his loins. Of course, it would protect him from swords. It also would hold the armor in place; it would gather everything together. It was a support for his back; it gave him strength in the solar plexus. And on it he would hang his weapons; he would hang his sword, and he would hang his armor on this particular belt—a very important thing. And so, Paul says, “Just as that soldier girds himself about with this girdle, you wear the girdle of truth.”

And what is the truth, dear friend? It’s the Word of God. Jesus said, “*Thy word is truth.*” (John 17:17) And when Satan comes to you to give you a jab in your spiritual solar plexus, you break his fist on the armor plate of the Word of God. He can’t stand it. Man, I tell you, when you know the truth, the error is not going to penetrate! But if you don’t have the girdle of truth, Satan is going to lead you down a primrose path with so many errors you won’t know which way is up.

And so, the first thing you do is you gird your loins about with truth, saturate your soul in the Word of God. You'd better get into this Bible and start studying it. Some of you are just playing around: about the only Bible you ever get is when you come and hear me preach on Sunday. And I give you a bottle, shake your hand, and burp you when you go out. That's all you get. That's not enough, friend. If you're depending on just what you get from the pulpit, you're not getting enough. You had better gird yourself about with the truth of the Word of God.

## **B. Satan Will Attack You with Sin: The Breastplate of Righteousness**

Now, secondly, not only will Satan attack with error, but Satan will also attack with unrighteousness, with sin. He'll try to get some sin in your life. And so, notice verse 14: "...and having on the breastplate of righteousness." (Ephesians 6:14) You say, "Brother Rogers, does this speak of our imputed righteousness, or does it speak of our personal righteousness?" And the answer is yes: it speaks of both.

### **1. There Must Be Imputed Righteousness**

First of all, that is the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, you've got to be saved. You've got to be under the blood of Jesus Christ. You've got to be born again. You have to be made righteous. Have you been made righteous? I mean, has God declared you righteous? Have you been saved? Do you know you're saved? Does God's Holy Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you're a child of God? Without that, you're a patsy for the devil. Man, he'll just wipe you out! You've got to have righteousness. You've got to be declared righteous by the Lord.

### **2. There Must Be Personal Righteousness**

But, secondly, not only must there be imputed righteousness; there must be personal righteousness—that is, the practical, personal outcropping of this imputed righteousness. Are you walking with the Lord day by day? Are you living clean? Are you living pure? You see, the breastplate covers the heart, the most vital organ. And Satan, of course, has his fiery darts. Satan has his sword. Satan has all of his devious weapons that he wants to get in with and wound you in the spiritual heart. But he can't get through if you have on the breastplate of righteousness.

But Satan is always looking for a crack in your armor. Satan is looking you back and forth right now. He's saying, "Does she have a grudge in her heart? If she does, I'm going to slip the knife in. Does he have lust in his heart? Is he reading those filthy magazines? If he does, I've got him. Is that man stealing from God? If he does, I can get him with the sword." Satan knows that. Satan knows that if you don't have the breastplate of righteousness on that any sin that's in your life is his legal territory. That's the reason Paul said in Ephesians 4, "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.*" (Ephesians 4:26–27) You see, if

there's a sin in your life, you're giving a place to the devil. And one little sin lets a lot of other sins get in.

*"Who is it that knocks so loud?"*

*"A lonely little sin."*

*"Slip through," I answered.*

*And soon all hell was in.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You see how clever Satan is—so you be pure and clean.

You know, I know that I sin—I know I sin. I'm so ashamed of the way I fail my Lord. Sometimes I just can't believe that Adrian Rogers, who's been preaching for so long, could fail the Lord in so many ways. But I'll tell you one thing, friends: If I know my heart, there's no unconfessed sin in my life—nothing that I cherish, nothing that I say I'm not going to give up, no place of contest with me in the Lord. Oh, I fail every day. I'm humiliated, and I say, "Lord, I'm sorry. I want you to forgive me, and cleanse me, and give me another start." But I would not for anything in the world say, "This is my sin, and I will not forsake it." Friend, there's nothing that would please me more than to know I'd never sin again—nothing! And I don't want to have anything to do with any kind of sin that nailed my Savior to the tree and that would be an opening for Satan to come in and harm me.

Take the breastplate of righteousness. *"Be ye clean,"*—"be pure"—*"that bear the vessels of the LORD."* (Isaiah 52:11) I tell you, if you go to war with sin in your heart, you're going to come out bloody and wounded. Be clean.

### **C. Satan Will Attack You with Discouragement: Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace**

All right, Satan is not only going to attack with error, and not only is he going attack with sin, but he's going to attack with discouragement. And so, you're to have, in verse 15, *"your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* (Ephesians 6:15) An army moves on its feet, and so a soldier has to take care of his feet.

Now, what is the idea? The Roman soldier wore some hobnail boots. It was very important that he wore these, because in order to fight, you had to stand. And Paul is talking about standing—not slipping, not falling, but standing. And so he says you have *"your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* And the word *preparation* implies readiness to move—just prepared to move. You're not to be footsore; you're not to be bruised on your feet. You're to be leaping; you're not to be limping. I know a lot of Christians who are limping when they ought to be leaping.

And, you see, what does Satan do? Why, he sows the battlefield with thorns. He sows the battlefield with briars. He sows the battlefield with sharp stones and stumbling



blocks—and all along the Christian’s pathway. Friend, it’s not an easy pathway. There are all kinds of things—stumbling stones, and thorns, and briars along the way—but you are to have *“the preparation of the gospel of peace”* upon your feet. That means, no matter what happens, no matter how many thorns in the pathway, no matter how many briars, no matter how many pitfalls that Satan plants for your feet, every one of them does not cause you to be discouraged; they cause you to shout and praise God. As Brother Peter Lord said, “Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations: just say, ‘Praise God!’” The peace that God gives.

One of our businessmen was telling me this week, “Pastor, since you’ve been here and you’ve been preaching about praising Jesus in everything, it’s just transformed my life. I’ve been praising Jesus. And something bad happens: I just praise Jesus.” He said, “It’s a wonderful way to live.” It is. Friend, that’s having *“your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”* And no matter what happens, you praise the Lord. The devil can’t stand it. Oh, he puts the thorns in the way. He puts the sharp rocks in the way. He puts the pitfalls in the way. Just praise the Lord!

I was telling God’s Invasion Army tonight that the other morning I had an appointment, an engagement, to go to a breakfast with some people, and I thought they were going to come by and pick me up at eight o’clock. I got up, got dressed. My wife got up, dressed: we were ready to go at eight o’clock. Eight o’clock—they didn’t come. I looked at the ticket, and the ticket said that the breakfast began at eight o’clock downtown. I was out at my house about fifteen minutes from where the breakfast was. I knew that I wouldn’t be on time. And the first thing I did was to say, “Thank you, Jesus, that I’m missing this breakfast. Just thank you. I don’t know why, but I just thank you by faith. Secondly, Lord, what is your plan in this? You must have a plan. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to go, or go somewhere else?” He said, “Take your wife—a good opportunity.” So I just took Joyce out to the Holiday Inn.

We sat down for breakfast, hadn’t been there but just a few moments, and a man—a handsome young man—came up to me and said, “Dr. Rogers, thank God I saw you this morning right here.” He said, “I need to see you more than anybody else, and I need your help desperately.” We talked for a few moments. I made an appointment to talk to that man some more. He brought his lovely wife to see me. They were in deep difficulty. But I thank God that she found Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. He found Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. They’ve united with a church out in East Memphis. They’re living for the Lord Jesus Christ. And what the devil tried to do just fell back on him.

And, friend, what I want to tell you is this: When you find yourself in a circumstance you can’t understand, just start praising God and saying, “Thank you, Lord. I don’t know what you have in mind, but I just thank you and I praise you.”

Oh, the enemy will attack with discouragement, but you have *“the preparation of the gospel of peace”* upon your heart. Don’t let anything disturb your peace—nothing! Nothing! When you lose your peace, you’ve sinned. Somebody can spit in my face, and I’ve not sinned until I lose my peace. They can slap me, and I’ve not sinned until I lose my peace. They can do all kinds of problems or things to me, and up until that time it’s their problem and not mine; it’s their sin and not mine. But no matter what they do to me, when I lose the peace of God on the inside, then I have sinned—and no longer is it just simply their problem; it’s my problem. Oh, friend, you keep *“your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”*

#### **D. Satan Will Attack You with Doubt: The Shield of Faith**

Now, not only is the enemy going to attack with error and sin and discouragement; he’s going to attack you with doubt. And so you’re going to have to take the shield of faith. Notice in verse 16: *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”* (Ephesians 6:16) Like fiery darts set on fire of hell, the doubts will be hurled towards you.

Have you ever been reading along and just read a sentence that suddenly just makes you doubt everything? Or you’ll be driving along and a thought will come into your mind: “You know, what if there’s no God? What if the Bible isn’t true? What if this is just all autosuggestion? What if we’re just all thinking this up—we’re all just trying to make ourselves feel better, getting psyched up?” The devil will do that. He’ll put doubts in your mind. All right, what are you going to do? Friend, take the shield of faith.

You will learn to be a victorious Christian if you’ll learn to feed your faith and starve your doubts. **Serving the Lord with doubt in your mind is like driving a car with the brakes on.** Learn to feed your faith; learn to starve your doubts. Build yourself up in the faith. Faith is like a shield that will protect you from the very fiery darts that have been dipped in the pit and hurled at you.

“Say, how can I have faith?” Get in the Word of God. First of all, put on the girdle of truth. You see, *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Put on the breastplate of righteousness: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* (Psalm 66:18) *“If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”* (1 John 3:21)

You see, if you get dressed, and you put the armor on a piece at a time, you’re going to also find that then you have the shield of faith. But if there’s sin in your life, you’re not going to have the shield of faith; not only is your breastplate going to be broken, but your shield is going to be lost. You cannot have faith when there’s sin in your life. Did you know that? And the reason that some people don’t have any more faith than they have is because there’s sin in their life and they’re not willing to get rid of it. And if you’re

having trouble with faith, try repentance. Repentance and faith is God's order. And when you get the sin out of your life, then you're going to be amazed at how much faith you have. When you get in the Word of God, you're going to be amazed at how your faith is growing. And so, the devil will attack with doubt: "Take the shield of faith."

#### **E. Satan Will Attack You with Condemnation: The Helmet of Salvation**

Now, next, the devil is going to attack you with condemnation—condemnation. You know, there are a lot of Christians who don't know the difference between satanic accusation and Holy Spirit conviction, and the devil is condemning them with past sins. He's trying to make them think they're not saved, they're not good enough to be saved, they don't feel right, they haven't had this ecstasy or that ecstasy, or they failed the Lord. Well, what are you going to do? You're to put on the helmet of salvation. Notice verse 16: "*Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation.*" (Ephesians 6:16–17) The helmet is to protect the head with: a very important piece of armor, because, of course, you know, if you lose your head, you're not going to be much good. So you put on the helmet of salvation.

Now he's not talking about getting saved. You've already been saved if you have on the breastplate of righteousness. But he's just simply saying you use your salvation now to protect you with. Understand just really what you have. Put on the helmet of salvation. That is, when the devil comes to you to attack you with condemnation, you refer him back to your glorious salvation.

Martin Luther, who we've already referred to three or four times today, was in bed one night, and Satan was so real that it seemed that he was in Martin's bedroom. You remember one time Martin Luther threw an inkwell at him. He ought to have known better than that, because you can't throw an inkwell at a spirit, and "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood.*" (Ephesians 6:12) But Martin Luther threw an inkwell at Satan. And then Martin Luther said, as he was writing later on in his memoirs, that it seemed as though Satan was right in the bedroom. And Satan was condemning Luther, and he had a long list. Luther said he woke up, and he couldn't tell whether it was a dream or whatever, but Satan was at the foot of the bed. And he had a long scroll, and on that scroll was a record of Martin Luther's sins—and it was a correct record. There they were: blasphemy, lust, pride—documented, dated, everything else. And Satan pointed the finger of accusation at Martin Luther and said, "You are a sinner. You're lost. You're not fit to be a preacher of the gospel. You're going to hell. You're condemned, you vile sinner!" And Luther said that he felt himself sinking into hell. And then the Holy Spirit said, "Luther, make him unroll the scroll all the way." Luther said, "Satan, unroll the scroll." And Satan looked like he didn't want to do it. And he said, "In the name of Jesus,

unroll the scroll!” And Lucifer continued to unroll the scroll, and down at the bottom it said, “This entire sin account of Martin Luther paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Oh, that’s what it is, friend: that’s taking the helmet of salvation! Oh, the devil will love to come to you with condemnation. You bring the Word of God against him—the Word of God! And so, Satan will attack with error, with sin, with discouragement, with doubt, with condemnation. You put on the whole armor of God.

#### **F. The Sword of the Spirit**

Now, notice in verse 17 there’s also an offensive weapon. Up until now, all of this has been defensive, to keep you from getting hurt. But, friend, the best defense is a good offense. And so you’re to take *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (Ephesians 6:17)

Every Roman soldier had a short sword. It wasn’t a long sword; it was a short sword—about fourteen inches long. And it was pointed at the end, and it cut both ways. You know what that refers to, don’t you? Hebrews 4:12: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.”* (Hebrews 4:12) Sometimes while these enemies of the Roman legion would come with their long swords, trying to swing them, the Roman soldier, who had been trained to fight a certain way behind his shield, would give such a quick thrust with that sword that he would run the enemy through. That’s exactly what Jesus did to Satan. Three times Satan came to Jesus to get Him to sin, and each time, Jesus gave him a thrust with the sword: *“It is written...” “It is written...” “It is written...”* (Luke 4:4, 8, 10) The devil can’t stand that.

You know, it was one of the great days in my life when I learned to use the Word against Satan. A young man talked to me a few nights ago and he said, “Pastor, I’ve been having trouble with doubts and discouragement, and the devil’s been on my trail.” And he said, “I have decided to quit living by my feelings and use the Word against Satan.” And he said, “I’ve tried it, and it works.” And, friend, you try it, and it will work. Jesus said, *“It is written...” “It is written...” “It is written...”*—right through, three times. What’s Satan going to do against that? Friend, he’ll argue about your emotions; he’ll argue your feelings. But he knows the Word of God is true, and he cannot stand it.

Hold the Word of God up against the devil. Hold it up to the Lord. Say, “Lord, these are not my promises; these are your promises. And the Bible says every promise in this Bible is yea and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) Friend, you’ve got an IOU from heaven, signed in the crimson blood of Jesus Christ. Learn to use the Word; learn to pray the Word of God back.

A while back in Florida, they were going to do a profile on me—the newspaper. They used to call me “the mayor of Merritt Island.” I don’t know why, but anyway, they called me that down there. And then the newspaper said, “We’re going to do a personal profile

on this fellow, Adrian Rogers.” And they assigned a man to do the profile who was an enemy of the Christian Church. His great delight was to take a preacher who was a fundamental, Bible-believing preacher apart a piece at a time. “Now,” they said, “we’re going to do this profile on you for the Sunday supplement. Your picture’s going to be on the front page. There will be three or four pages on you.”

Well, of course, at first, my heart quivered, because I knew how people can write things, and shade the meaning, and leave things out, and tell half-truths, and quote things out of context, and all of this. And I remember just going to the Lord and saying, “Lord, you know I’m not looking for any publicity. I don’t want any notoriety. I just want to be your servant. And, Lord, I know there’s a man coming that has malice in his heart. And, Father, I claim the promise, *‘No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.’* (Isaiah 54:17) You just don’t know how many times I quoted that scripture back.

That man wrote that article. A lady who worked at the newspaper said, “Pastor, I’ve read it. It’s bad—it’s bad. He’s out to do you in. He just hates Christ. He hates the Church. He hates the gospel.” I invited him over. Any question he asked me, I answered with all candor; anything he wanted to know about me, about our church, about our budget, about our life—you know, my background, my family, anything. I just told him the whole truth, nothing but the truth. So funny the way God works. The day he was there in church and he was there watching me, taking notes—everything I did, you know—on that particular Sunday, Johnny Unitas came to church. I don’t know that Johnny Unitas is in the habit of going to Baptist church at all, but he was in our church down there in Merritt Island—Johnny Unitas, the great quarterback, you know. Man, I tell you, I wanted to talk to Johnny Unitas so bad I could taste it. But I didn’t say a word about Johnny being there. I was on the steps of the church shaking hands as people came out, and among those who came out was Johnny Unitas. The great quarterback—one of the greatest who ever lived, in my estimation—walked past, and I said, “Hi, John. How are you doing?” I shook hands with him on the way out, you know.

That reporter standing there said, “Who was that?” He said, “Was that Johnny Unitas?” I said, “It sure was.” He said, “What was he doing here?” I said, “He came to worship.” And I shook hands with the next person, you know. He couldn’t get over that: there’s Johnny Unitas, you know, in church. I couldn’t get over it either. But I didn’t tell him. And, you know, the Lord was just doing these kinds of little things. But the amazing thing, you know, I just kept quoting that scripture: *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of*

*me, saith the LORD.”*

Well, the fellow wrote the article, submitted it to the editor; the editor read it, and said, “You’re fired,” fired him, rewrote the article, and gave us thousands of dollars worth of free publicity. I tell you, it was wonderful! We had people coming for many, many months—and even years—wanting to get saved because they read the article. It was just amazing what God had done. I just thank God. The author of the article, he said, “They turned what I considered an honest profile into a *puff job*, as we say in the trade.” And he said, “I’m no longer with the organization.”

Well, I just say, “Well, you know, isn’t God good?” How precious our great God is! What I’m trying to say is how wonderful it is just to hold the Word up to the Lord, hold the Word up against the devil!

### **III. Our Attack**

Listen—listen. Once you put on all of the armor, once you know who the enemy is, once you get all dressed up, you say, “Now, look. I’m all dressed up. I’ve got on the girdle of truth. I’ve got my feet shod with my hobnail boots. I’ve got on the breastplate of righteousness. I’ve got the shield of faith. I’ve got the helmet of salvation. I’ve got the sword of the Spirit. Now, show me where the battle is.” And then you know what the Lord says? It’s an amazing thing—verse 18—look at it: “*Praying always with all prayer.*” (Ephesians 6:18) May I tell you the battle is prayer. And when you’re putting on the armor, you’re just simply getting ready to do battle, and it’s the most amazing thing. Up until this time, you’re not ready to pray. The battle is prayer.

You say, “Oh, no, the battle is evangelism.” No, the battle is not evangelism. When I preach on Sunday morning and give the invitation, that’s not the battle; that’s just picking up the spoils of victory. The battle is won or lost before we ever get here; or, at least, it’s won and lost in prayer. We might be praying once we get here, but it’s kind of late to start. What I’m trying to say is the battle is prayer. And all of this is to show us where our warfare is.

Thus far, we have talked about our adversary, and we’ve talked about our armor. Next, we’re going to talk about the attack. Brother, if you want to learn how to hurt Satan, if you want to learn how to get Satan, Satan fears your prayers; he fears your prayers. Satan doesn’t mind you serving in the WMU. Satan doesn’t mind you preaching. Satan doesn’t mind you leading music. Satan doesn’t mind you trying to do soul winning. Satan doesn’t mind you teaching the Bible. He may encourage you to do all those things if he can get you to do it without praying, because he knows you are just encumbering the ground and keeping somebody else from doing it who will be a prayer warrior. He’ll even encourage you to do these things. He’ll say, “Go ahead and get in God’s Invasion Army.”

May I tell you, dear friend, that when you go out soul winning, if you don't have time to pray first, it would be far better off to pray and not go than it would be to go and not pray—to pray! There's where the battle is: it's prayer! I don't know what we think the battle is; but, friend, the only thing that Satan fears on this earth is a Christian who knows how to pray. And so, Paul says, after we've done all these other things, then our attack is prayer. And he says, "*Praying...in the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 6:18)

## **Conclusion**

Let us bow our heads in prayer. Father, we're so grateful for your Word tonight. Lord, how it's refreshed my heart just to teach it and to share it! Lord, I pray tonight that if there's somebody here who doesn't have on the breastplate of righteousness, who doesn't know about the gospel of peace, who doesn't have a helmet of salvation, O Lord, that tonight they might come to know Jesus Christ. Father, bring the lost to Jesus. Holy Spirit of God, convict them of their sin and help them to understand that Jesus is the only way. Lord, we know that we have a terrible, cruel enemy, but we're grateful that "greater is He that's in us than he that's in the world." (1 John 4:4) In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# The Christian's Warfare

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 29, 1980

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 6:10–24

*“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

EPHESIANS 6:11

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## Introduction

All right, take your Bibles, please, and turn to Ephesians, please—Ephesians chapter 6. Thank you, Mary Ann, and we pray that God will speak now through His Word as you've sung so beautifully and reminded us how important it is that we have a word from God.



Ephesians chapter 6, beginning in verse 10—we're going to be talking about the Christian's warfare. We've already sung "Onward Christian Soldiers." We've already sung, "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus." Everybody today is afraid about war; they're saying, "What is happening in the Middle East? What does the Russian invasion of Afghanistan mean to us? What about the President's call for the draft? What about the registration of women?" I'll speak about that tonight as I talk an the battle of the home, a continuation of this message, and I want you to be here tonight as we're thinking about the battle for the home, because that's one battlefield that's raging, fiercely raging, today; but friend, will America go to war?

What many Americans do not realize is we are already at war: It is an invisible war, an unseen war, that continuing war between light and darkness, between good and evil, between heaven and hell, between Christ and Antichrist, between God and Satan, and the Church and the world. There is a war, an invisible war, and Satan is our adversary, and he like a cornered animal has been wounded and frightened, is letting loose with everything that he has in these last days. And you cannot afford to be ignorant with this war, for to be ignorant is to be unprepared. You cannot afford to try to be neutral, for those who do that will suffer the most. And this message this morning is a call to arms. The church is not a showboat; it is a battleship. And we need to learn this morning some truths about "The Christian's Warfare."

And there are four basic truths I want us to see this morning. First of all, I want us to see our adversary; and secondly, I want us to see our armor; thirdly, I want us to see our attack; and fourthly, I want us to see our ally.

## **I. Our Adversary**

Look with me, if you will, first of all, at our adversary. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10: *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:10–11). Our adversary is the devil. He is real. He is not the figment of someone's imagination. Satan is a decided fact. Satan is a destructive force. But thank God, Satan is a defeated foe.

### **A. He Is a Decided Fact**

He is a decided fact. The fact of evil and Satan and demons and unholy powers are not the figment of our imagination; they're not some medieval superstition. This is not a metaphor. This is not a figure of speech. This is not a simile. When the Bible speaks of the devil, the Bible is speaking of a real, not an imaginary, foe, a malevolent person who has already lain plans to hurt you and to damage your family.

I want you to notice how this devil is described here. He's described as a real

person. Our sophisticated age today laughs and mocks at the idea of a devil and demons. And the devil is behind it. It has always been the devil's purpose to pull the veil of darkness over his nefarious kingdom. For if there is no enemy, as I have said, there is no need for preparation. But he's very real and he's very present. There's a song that we sing about Jesus:

*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.*

—ALFRED H. ACKLEY

But many could sing that same thing about Satan: "He lives! He lives! Satan lives today! He walks with me and he talks with me along life's narrow way."

## **B. He Is a Destructive Force**

He is a decided fact; there is a devil. But not only is he a decided fact; he is a destructive force. I want you to notice how he is described here. The Bible says in verse 11, "*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*"

### **1. He Is Systematic**

The first thing I want you to notice is that he is systematic. This word *wiles* is the word we get our word *method* from. It's even the word the Methodists get the name of their church from: The Methodists are Methodists because they're methodical in doing their work. That's where the name came—they had good methods, and they called themselves Methodists. And every Baptist church ought to be a Methodist church. Every Baptist Church ought to have methods and use methods; we ought to have plans. Somebody said, "To fail to plan is to plan to fail," and I believe that is true. But whether or not we are methodical, I can tell you that the devil is methodical. This word *methodeia* is the word that we get our word *methodical* from: "*the wiles of the devil.*"

### **2. He Is Strategic**

The devil has a plan; the devil has a strategy. Paul says, "*We are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Corinthians 2:11). In the third chapter of Genesis, "the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1), and there is a strategy already planned, already mapped out, that is being worked to destroy you, this nation, your home; all that is good, all that is holy, all that is godly: "*the wiles of the devil.*" He, dear friend, is strategic.

### **3. He Is Spiritual**

But not only is he strategic, does he have a strategy—or systematic, if you choose—but he's also spiritual. Look, if you will, please, in verse 12, for the Bible says, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness*" (Ephesians 6:12).

It'll be a great day in America when people learn that everything that is spiritual is not necessarily good. There is spiritual righteousness and there is spiritual wickedness, and the devil is an evil spirit. He is unseen, and therefore all the more dangerous.

Do you know what the devil loves to get us to do? He loves to get us to wrestle with flesh and blood. He wants us to believe that our enemy is flesh and blood. And as long as we're fighting with flesh and blood, we're not fighting with principalities and powers.

Do you remember when Peter tried to keep Jesus Christ from going to the cross, and Jesus told about how He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified, and Simon Peter stepped forth and he said, "Not so, this will never be to you, Lord"? And then do you remember what Jesus said to him—at least, what Jesus appeared to say to him? Jesus said, "*Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God*" (Matthew 16:23). Somebody says, "How terrible for Jesus to call Peter Satan!" Jesus did not call Simon Peter, Satan; Jesus called Satan, Satan. Jesus was wise enough to know that it was not really Peter but the devil who had prompted Peter to say that; and rather than fighting flesh and blood, Jesus went to the root of the matter.

So many times when we have a fall out with somebody else, we want to argue with that person and fight with that person rather than attacking the devil that causes that person to be that way. Would to God that we had the insight to see that our battle is not with flesh and blood! Even on a global sphere, our battle is not with flesh and blood. Our battle is not with the Red Chinese. Our battle is not with the Russians. Our battle is not with the Cubans. Our battle is with Satan. And if we don't see that, we'll surely lose the war.

Mister, communism is an idea. It is a spiritual force. It is an ungodly religion. And you can't kill an idea with a bullet. I'm not saying there should not be national preparedness—I believe in that; but I'm telling you, ladies and gentleman, that you can't shoot down an idea with a bullet. And the only thing that can kill an idea is a better idea, and the only better idea is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the only superior power is the power of the Holy Spirit against these principalities and powers that are leading the world rulers of this age.

#### **4. He Is Strong**

Satan is systematic; Satan is spiritual. I want to go on and say that he is strong. Notice again in verse 12: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.*" Satan is a powerful ruler. He is called the god of this age. He is "*the god of this world*" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Don't you laugh about the devil and make snickering jokes about the devil. Don't think of him as some little fellow in a red suit of underwear with horns and a forked tail and a pitchfork trying to catch someone bending over. That's not the idea of the devil,

not in the Bible: a lofty, exalted person, who has kingdoms and myriads of demons who do his bidding, principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Martin Luther wrote that great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” and he wrote these words about the devil:

*His craft and power are great,  
And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

There is no one that has the power, the authority, the craft, the majesty, the might that Satan has, except our dear Lord. And we need to understand that. God is almighty, but Satan is very mighty.

### **5. He Is Sinister**

Then I want you to notice, not only is he systematic, not only is he spiritual, not only is he strong, but I want you to notice that he is sinister. Look, if you will, please, in verse 12 again, and the Bible speaks of this devil in these words, and the Bible says, “*against the rulers of the darkness of this world,*”—underscore the word *darkness*—“*against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” Oh, what a dark, diabolical, devilish, death-dealing, wicked, wrathful spirit this devil has! We’re in a fight to the finish, with no holds barred, and as I’ve said before, Satan, like a wounded animal, has come down with wrath, for he knows that he has but a little time (Revelation 12:12).

### **C. He Is a Defeated Foe**

Now I don’t want to leave you on that dark note, because not only is Satan a decided fact, and not only is a Satan a destructive force, but bless God, Satan is a defeated foe. And if you don’t understand that, you won’t understand what this is all about. Go back to verse 10: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*” There is a greater power than the power of Satan, and Satan’s back has already been broken at the cross.

Put in your margin, please, these scriptures—1 John 4, verse 4—1 John 4, verse 4: “*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them.*”—that is, the powers of darkness—“*because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). Who is “*he that is in you*”? The Lord Jesus Christ, if you’ve been born again. Who is “*he that is in the world*”? The prince of darkness, the devil. And the Lord Jesus Christ is greater, far greater. The Bible says in Colossians chapter 2, verse 15: “*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them*” (Colossians 2:15). And remember the Bible says we wrestle against principalities and powers, in verse 12; but Colossians 2, verse 15, tells us that Jesus has spoiled those principalities and powers.

This word *spoiled* means that He has “rendered them inoperative,” that He has “stripped them.” Satan’s power was broken at the cross. When Jesus Christ prepared to go to that cross, in anticipation, Jesus said, “*Now [is] the prince of this world cast out*” (John 12:31). And as our youth choir so marvelously sang a while back, “It is finished; the victory is won.” Satan has already been defeated—not will be defeated. Oh, we as Christians need to learn that the devil hopes that you never learn that, “*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” The devil hopes that you’ll never learn that his power has been stripped from him, and that Jesus said, “I give you authority over all of the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19).

Satan is a defeated foe. And when you pray, you do not pray for the victory; you pray from the victory, you remind him of his defeat at Calvary. And when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again at the Second Coming, that will only be the mocking of the battle; the victory has already been one. Satan is a defeated foe. But if you do not act upon that victory, he can harm you, because he is a destructive force.

## **II. Our Armor**

Now the second thing I want us to notice—we have looked at our adversary, the devil; now I want you notice our armor, because we are in a battle, a fight to the finish, and no holds barred. As I’ve said before, to try and remain neutral is the most foolish thing that you could do. Now you must put on the whole armor of God; it must be the whole armor with not a piece left off. And it must be holy armor. It must be the armor of God, “*for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [spiritual and] mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

### **A. The Believer’s Integrity**

Now let’s notice therefore in verse 14: “*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth*” (Ephesians 6:14). The first piece of armor is a belt—“*your loins girt about*”—a girdle, a belt, a leather belt that was worn by the Roman soldiers. This was a figure of speech, and you’re to put on that belt. The Roman soldier put on all of his armor, and over that armor he buckled his belt, and it was his belt that held it all together. And on this belt he hung his weapons of war, his implements of war, his weapons; and they hung from that belt, and that belt was the thing that held it all together.

And the thing, dear friend, that causes it all to hold together for you is truth—truth. You put on the belt of truth, gird up your loins with truth. The devil is a liar. He cannot stand the truth; he cannot face the truth. And if you would overcome him, you must be people of truth; you must know the truth, you must live the truth, believe the truth, do the truth, and tell the truth. And so the first piece of armor is integrity—integrity—the believer’s integrity. Are you a man of truth? Do you tell the truth? Do you believe the

truth? Do you live the truth? Is truth the principle of your life? Satan is a liar. Christ is the truth. That's the first piece of armor: the believer's integrity.

### **B. The Believer's Purity**

Now I want you to look at the second piece of armor. There is the breastplate of righteousness. Look again, if you will, in verse 14: *"and having on the breastplate of righteousness"* (Ephesians 6:14). The Roman soldier in this time wore a breastplate that covered from his neck down to his waist, his chest, his lungs, his heart, his liver, his vital organs. It was—on the front, and on the back—sometimes it was made of a plate of armor, and sometimes it was made of woven chain that would hold down, but it would ward off, any blows. And God says that we are to have on this breastplate of righteousness.

Now if the belt is the belt of truth—that is, integrity—the breastplate of righteousness is purity—purity. Oh, dear friend, how important it is that we have the righteousness that only the Lord Jesus Christ could give us when we receive Him as our Lord and Savior, but then also our practical righteousness as we live day by day with no unconfessed, un-repented-of sin in our lives whatsoever!

Do you want to lose in this battle? Do you want the devil to be able to get at your heart? The Bible says, "Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). How are you going to keep it? You're to have over your heart the breastplate of righteousness. The devil is watching, searching; watching, searching; watching, searching—looking for what? A crack in the armor. The Bible says, "Don't give a place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). One little crack in the armor is all he needs—one little crack. "Oh," you say, "it's not much, Brother Rogers." It is much if it's a crack in the armor. Wouldn't it be sad for a man to be dressed head to foot with all of the armor, have it on, except for one little crack, and there is where the devil slips the knife in?

*"Who knocks so loud?" "A lonely little sin."*

*"Slip through," we answer, and all Hell is in. (Frederick Langbridge)*

A lonely little sin.

Do you have on that breastplate of righteousness? Are you pure—I say, pure? Is there any attitude, action, ambition of your life that is not absolutely pure? If so, you're a sitting duck for Satan. You are to have on the breastplate of righteousness.

### **C. The Believer's Tranquility**

And so there is the believer's integrity—that is, truth; there is the believer's purity—that is, righteousness. But I want you to continue to read in verse 15: *"and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* (Ephesians 6:15).

Now a Roman soldier in this day had to have sandals to wear, and on those sandals

were hobnails, very much like a golfer's spikes, or like a football player's cleats, on the bottom of his shoes to give him standing. You see, over and over again, he's talking about standing—standing—“*Stand therefore*”—“*Stand*”—and an army fights not on its stomach, but on its feet. And you've got to be able to stand. And the devil would love to trip you up, and so he says, “You put on your shoes.”

But what kind of shoes are these shoes? They are “*the preparation of the gospel of peace*.” You're to have peace, and it is peace that enables you to fight Satan: peace with God, the peace of God that is dwelling in your heart. Do you have this peace? Do you? If you don't, the devil will get you.

You see, some people he can get through error—they don't have the belt of truth; other people he can get through sin, because they don't have the breastplate of righteousness; but some of you he'll get through discouragement—you'll lose your peace. The devil will plant thorns and briars, and pitfalls, and stumbling blocks; and you don't have on your shoes, and your spiritual feet are bruised and bleeding; and rather than leaping, you're limping, because you don't have peace. Discouragement is one of the devil's great tools to cause a child of God who has a clean, pure heart, and the truth, to still stumble and fall. He's the one who puts the sharp rocks, the briars, the pitfalls, in your way.

Now you need this preparation of the gospel, the good news of peace, and let the peace of God rule in your heart. And only Jesus can give you that peace. And don't you leave your room in the morning without the peace of God on your feet.

#### **D. The Believer's Certainty**

Now let's go on. That speaks, incidentally, not of the believer's purity, or the believer's integrity, but it speaks of the believer's tranquility—the believer's tranquility, the peace of God. And so you're to have integrity, you're to have purity, you're to have tranquility; but now I want you to notice the next piece of armor, if you will, please. And in verse 16: “*Above all,*”—or over all this—“*taking the shield of faith*” (Ephesians 6:16).

Now what is the shield of faith? A Roman soldier would have a shield. It was generally made of wood, covered with leather, thick leather. It was about two feet wide, four feet tall. He would hold it, and he could move it around. It would protect his face, protect his side, his flank, wherever he moved it. But what kind of shield is this one? This is called “*the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [one]*” (Ephesians 6:16), for Satan puts his arrows in the flames of hell, and with doubts he pierces, when he can, some place that's unprotected.

And what protects us from doubt? You see, if the devil can't get us by dirt, and by discouragement, he'll try to get us by doubt, and he'll try to fill our hearts with doubt. And you see what a great matter a little fire kindles! That's the reason that people in the

olden days would take a flaming arrow, and all it had to have was a little flame in it, because that flame would start a fire that would consume the whole thing. You let that flame, you let that doubt, into your life—the devil has gotten inside the armor. And you are to have the shield of faith, which is the believer’s certainty.

You see, we’ve got the believer’s integrity, we’ve got the believers purity, we have got the believer’s tranquility, and now we have got to have the believer’s certainty—that is, the shield of faith. Do you want to overcome the devil? Then you’ve got to be great believers. *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

Learn to feed your faith and starve your doubts. You don’t come to church, you don’t read the Bible, you don’t spend time with God in prayer, you don’t open your heart, your life up, to the avenues of faith: you have no shield of faith. You college students, you go off and you let some ungodly, unbelieving man make fun of your faith, and you fall apart like a house of cards, because you don’t have a strong, rock-ribbed faith in God. Feed that faith—*“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17)—and it will be like a shield to you to protect you from all the fiery darts of the wicked—the believer’s certainty. Are you uncertain about some things? Are you walking on eggshells and jell-o theologically? Don’t do it. Gut a bulldog grip on the truth, and stand by it: the only way you’ll survive in these days.

### **E. The Believer’s Mentality**

And so there is the believer’s certainty, and thank God for that. But I want you to go on and look, if you will, please, at the next piece of armor—verse 17: *“And take the helmet of salvation”* (Ephesians 6:17). Now the helmet, as you know very well, covers the head and protects the head. And what is the head? That’s the mental processes; that’s where you think. This is the believer’s mentality—rationality, if you want—and that too is what you’re to wear. You see, if the devil can’t get you in all of these other ways, he’ll just try to mess up your thinking, your thought process, and so you’re to put on the helmet of salvation. That is, your mind, your thought processes, are to be given over to the Lord, because if the devil can get in your thought life, he’s got you. For the Bible says, *“As a man thinketh, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). *The thought is the father of the deed. You sow a thought, you reap a deed; you sow a deed, you reap a habit; you sow a habit, you reap a character; you sow a character, you reap a destiny. And it all begins with a thought.*

And so we’re to keep the helmet of salvation on. We’re to be thinking God’s thoughts after Him. We’re to say, “I have the mind of Christ.”

Now I want you to check up: Is your armor in place? You see, all you need is just one piece of armor out of place—just one piece.

*When I played football, on a particular play I made up my mind, on the first play of the game, on the kickoff, I went down under the kick and I made up my mind my name*



was going to be in the headlines the next day, I was going to be the star of that game. And when that ball was kicked, I was the first man down the field; not another person between me and the man who was picking up the ball, and he was stumbling over it. And I said this: “Hot-diggity-dog, I am going to knock him into the middle of next week.” That’s what I was thinking as I was going down the field. And he was bent over, not a person between me and him except one man that positioned himself between me and this man. And I said, “Well, I’ll just have to take them both at the same time.”

The next scene is the coach bending over me and some other people trying to get the air back into me. And the coach said, “Son, where are your pads?” And he mentioned a particular pad that I was supposed to have on. And I said, “Coach, I didn’t wear it tonight. I thought I could move better without it.” I had on all the rest of it, but one piece I needed I failed to put on.

And I want you to check up right now, friend. You’re headed for a fall. And listen. You’ve got an enemy. This is not some game I’m talking about. I’m talking about an enemy. Did you understand how I described him? Do you have integrity? Is your life a life of truth? Do you have purity? Or is there some unconfessed sin in your life? Dear friend, do you have tranquility? Is the peace of God ruling in your heart? Do you have certainty? Have you the shield of faith? Do you have mentality, rationality, the mind of Christ? If not, you’re headed for a fall.

And incidentally, all of this armor is just Jesus Christ. That’s all it is—that’s all. The belt of truth: Christ is the truth. The breastplate of righteousness: Christ is our righteousness. The shoes of peace: Christ is our peace. The helmet of salvation: Christ is our salvation; we have the mind of Christ. Faith: We have the faith of God, the Bible tells us. You see, all that we need, He supplies us. To put on the armor is just to put on Jesus.

This morning as I was meditating on this passage and thinking about it and getting ready to preach on it, I consciously said, “Now Lord Jesus, do I have on the belt of truth?” And I thought about it, and I said, “Yes, that’s in place. Now Lord, do I have on the breastplate of righteousness? Is there any unconfessed sin in my life?” And I searched and let the Holy Spirit search my heart. And each piece I put on I put on the gospel armor, each piece I put on with prayer. Have you done that? O God, help us to do it. There is our adversary. Therefore, there is our armor.

### **III. Our Attack**

Now thirdly, I want you to notice our attack. For it is not enough to have on the armor. There is an armor. You can’t just stay home; you can’t say, “I’m going to dress up in armor and lock the door.” No, no, you’re to go out into the battlefield. Some of us like to take sermon notes, but we don’t like to fight.

I heard about some little boys who were sitting around the room being unusually quiet. The mother came in and said, “What are you playing?” And they said, “We’re playing war.” She said, “I’ve never seen little boys play war this way before. You’re all so quiet.” One of them said, “Well, we’re all just generals.”

Well, I’m looking for some soldiers now, some people who get out there on the battlefield. The victory is to be sure, and your attack will be powerful if you’ll keep two things in mind. Are you ready? Here they are. Number one: the sharpness of your sword; number two: the source of your supply. Those are the two things that you need to understand for your attack.

### **A. The Sharpness of Your Sword**

First of all, look at the sharpness of your sword—the last part of verse 17: “*and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17). Everything else has been armor—that’s been for defense, that’s to keep you from getting hurt—but “*the sword is the weapon of offense, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” And what a mighty powerful sword God has given us! For you know the Bible teaches in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12: “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*” (Hebrews 4:12). You know the trouble with many of us? We’re not using our weapons.

Now it’s not enough to study the weapons. Many of us study the Bible. That’s fine, but that’s not enough—to study the weapons. When they put boys in the service, they give them an MI, and they tell them how to take it all apart and put it all together, and all of this. Study—that’s fine. And maybe they want to keep the enemy from getting their weapon. And so it’s not enough to defend your weapon. And there are people always fighting for the Bible and defending the Bible, and I think the Bible needs to be defended, because the Bible says that we “*should earnestly contend for the faith*” (Jude 1:3), but friend, you’d better learn how to use your weapon. Many of us are studying our weapon, and defending our weapon, but how many of us are really using it? It’s a sword, and a sword is meant to be used.

Do you want the classic example of how to use the sword? Do you remember there when the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted in the wilderness of Satan, 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13)? And Satan came to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Satan put the most diabolical temptations to the Lord Jesus. And they were real. They were not mock temptations. They were temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (1 John 2:16). And he came against the Lord Jesus. And how did Jesus deal with the devil? Jesus took a sword, the Word of God, a sharp two-edged sword, and when Satan came with Jesus, Jesus took His sword and He ran him through. And then again, Satan came

back, and again Jesus ran him through. And again He came back, and again with the sword. Again Jesus said, “It is written,” “It is written,” and right anywhere with a sword, the Word of God. How powerful is this book! Satan fears the Bible. Many of us don’t know enough about our weapon to use it, and some of us sometimes are afraid to use it.

Suppose someone was coming to do you harm, and you were on the battlefield, and you had a gun, and he’s coming your way, and you say, “Don’t come any further: I’ll shoot,” and he says, “I don’t believe in that gun.” That’s not going to keep you from pulling that trigger, is it? He says, “I don’t even believe in guns at all.” He will, when he’s air-conditioned.

I’m not telling you to go out and use guns; I’m telling you to use this book, the sword of the Spirit—that’s what I’m trying to tell you. But I’m trying to say, somebody says, “Well, I don’t believe the Bible.” It will cut him anyway—it will cut him anyway. You read there in Acts chapter 5 where those apostles preached the Bible, and the Bible says, “When the people heard it, they were cut to the heart” (Acts 5:33). Man, I think that’s good preaching: when the word cuts—cuts and slices. People say they don’t believe it. But man, I’ve preached it long enough to know that it will even cut an unbeliever. It’s a two-edged sword; it’s a “*savour of life unto life.*” It will cut to heal or it will cut to judge. It is a “*savour of death unto death*” (2 Corinthians 2:16). It will cut both ways, but mister, it cuts.

## **B. The Source of Your Supply**

And if you would understand your victory, and if you would understand your attack, number one, you must see the sharpness of your sword; and number two, you must see the source of your supply. Look in verse 18: “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*” (Ephesians 6:18). An army not only needs weapons and armor, but an army needs to stay in contact with its headquarters, and an army needs a constant source of supply. Without a constant source of supply, and without a system of communications, an army is destined to defeat. But thank God, through prayer we have what we need: a source of supply; we are in constant communication with our commander-in-chief. Isn’t that wonderful? And all that we need is a supply when we pray “*always with all prayer and supplication.*”

Do you know what some Christians have failed to understand? That a part of the warfare is prayer. You get all dressed up in your armor, you’ve got your sword, you’re ready to fight: then what’s the next thing you do? Go to your knees. That’s the battle. The battle is not won in the pulpit. The battle is not won in the Sunday School class. The battle is won in the prayer closet. Don’t you forget it. That is the warfare: praying.

Do you remember when the Israelites were coming out of the land of Egypt, and God was leading them out, and they were passing through the wilderness, and there was a man named Amalek, and a mighty army came to withstand the Israelites, and to keep them from inheriting the promised land, and they came with all of their army against the Israeli, and a battle was enjoined (Exodus 17:8–16)? And down there on the battlefield was Joshua, and the battle is going on, and Moses went up on the mountaintop, and Moses is up there on the mountaintop with a rod of God that symbolized sovereign power of God. And Moses is up there on the mountaintop praying, and he's lifting his hands to God in intercession. His hands got so tired sometimes that they would fall, and Aaron and Hur were holding his hands up.

And what a beautiful picture that is of holding up the hands of a man of God! He's up there on the mountaintop praying, and down in the valley is a war that's going on. And the Bible said that when Moses held up his hands and the rod of God, Israel prevailed, but when his hand would sag and droop, indicating that his spirit of prayer was flagging, then Amalek, this ungodly pagan king, would prevail. And here's the battle, back and forth. And as Moses held up his hands in intercession, the battle was won. I can imagine Joshua coming up there to the mountaintop and saying, "Moses, Moses, come down off that mountaintop and get into the valley. Can't you see there's a war going on, Moses? It's time for you to fight, not pray." And I can hear Moses as he says, "Brother, I am fighting."

I'm talking to some 80-year-old ladies this morning. You never thought of yourself as a soldier, did you? Back there sitting in your bedroom in your parlor, you can wage a battle; you can be a tremendous soldier, fighting the prayer of intercession—"*with all prayer and [intercession]*." Isn't it wonderful that little girls can fight on this battlefield? Isn't it wonderful that gray-headed men can fight on this battlefield? Isn't it wonderful that those of you who are sick and shut in and are watching me from a hospital bed can fight, because you can pray? What an awesome thing is prayer! It causes the man of God to take the Word of God and use the Word of God as it ought to be used. We're to pray in the Spirit. What is prayer in the Spirit?

### **1. Listening Prayer**

Friend, it's listening prayer. Have you ever thought of how the Christian is described? His relationship to God is like a father and a son. Shouldn't a son listen to his father? And the relationship of a Christian is described like a husband and a wife. Shouldn't there be communication?

Somebody asked a little boy what were his daddy's last words. He said, "He didn't have any: Mama was with him to the end."

Listen. When husbands and wives stop communicating, that marriage is in trouble. The Bible also speaks of the Christian in the metaphor of a boss and an employer. He's

our Lord; He's our master. Listen. When you come to work for him, you don't come for instructions; you report for duty. What I'm saying is prayer in the Spirit is listening prayer—it is listening prayer. The prayer that gets to heaven is a prayer that starts in heaven.

## 2. Lingering Prayer

And it is lingering prayer—that's what prayer in the Spirit is. Jesus said, "If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, then you'll ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

## 3. Loving Prayer

It is loving prayer; it is praying for others. Here the Bible says that prayer will be made for all saints—loving prayer. When Job prayed for his friends, then his captivity was turned.

## 4. Laboring Prayer

And friend, it is laboring prayer. Paul talks about wrestling with flesh and blood. And how do you wrestle? You wrestle in prayer. Listen to this verse, dear friend—Romans chapter 15, verse 30: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers*" (Romans 15:30)—"*that ye strive.*" Do you know what that word *strive* means? The root word is the word we get our word *agonize* from. You agonize in prayer. That's what prayer in the Spirit is.

That's where the battle is: listening prayer, lingering prayer, loving prayer, laboring prayer—not just, "Now I lay me down to sleep." That's where the battle is, my dear friend, that will make your life or break your life, that will make your home or break your home, that will make this church or break this church. You are no greater than your prayer life, no more victorious than your prayer life. *The* devil laughs *at our* organization. *He* sneers *at our* schemes. *He* fears *our* prayer. Paul is talking about warfare, and our tact is twofold, and we are assured victory because of the sharpness of our sword, and because of the source of our supply.

## IV. Our Allies

Now finally, I want you to notice not only our attack, but I want you to notice our allies. Notice how this chapter ends. Paul says, "*Praying...for all saints;*"—in verse 18—"*and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel*" (Ephesians 6:18–19). Paul said, as every preacher ought to say, "Please, pray for me."

Do you know, people all over the world tell me, "Adrian, I'm praying for you as President of the Southern Baptist Convention"? Pastor friends tell me, "Adrian, I pray for

you every day.” You don’t know how that blesses my heart, because of the responsibilities that I have, that people are praying for me. And they say, “What should I pray?” Oh, I pray more than anything else that you’ll pray that God will give me boldness to preach the Word, that God will unctionize me, that as I stand and preach I’ll not preach in my flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit of God, *“that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in...God”* (1 Corinthians 2:5).

And Paul was wise enough to know that he could not preach and he could not fight unless he had some allies and some people who were fighting by him. And Paul loved those people who were fighting with him. And he talks about his ambassadorship in bonds; he talks about his *“gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts”* (Ephesians 6:19–22).

Do you see it? Do you see it? Paul said, “We’re not in this thing alone.” We’re not in a Lone Ranger-type of Christianity. That’s why I believe in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, the battle, when the battle gets hot, and when it gets furious and thick, you need somebody by your side, somebody fighting with you. You don’t just go out to fight alone. God put us in this thing. And “Onward, Christian soldiers...like a mighty army moves the church of God” (Sabine Baring-Gould). And if one shall chase a thousand, two shall chase ten thousand. There’s power in unity: *“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20).

There are some people who say, “Well, I believe in Jesus; I just don’t believe in the church.” That’s ridiculous. It’s like saying, “I believe in football; I just don’t believe in stadiums, gridiron, and goalposts, and all of the rest of it.” “I love fishing, but I just don’t love boats and motors, rods and reels, and water.” No, listen. When you love Jesus, you ought to love what Jesus loves; and if you’re going to be victorious in this battle, you’re going to find out that you cannot—you cannot—you dare not, you ought not, and you will not fight alone. Therefore, if you are a soldier of the cross, you find this church or some church where the Bible is preached, and report for duty.

## Conclusion

Do you hear me? Some of you have moved here to the city of Memphis, Tennessee and your membership is in Mt. Beulah Church somewhere, Mt. Pisgah Church somewhere, Second Baptist somewhere, and you are here, and you’re just coasting; you are A-W-O-L. You need to report for duty. Sign up. We’re to fight together. There’s a battle.

# Christian Warfare

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 15, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:10–26**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Christian Warrior and His Adversary

II. The Christian Warrior and His Armor

III. The Christian Warrior and His Attack

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word, and find Ephesians chapter 6—Ephesians chapter 6. We're going to talk about a warfare today, because there is a dark, diabolical, deadly, dirty war that is being fought in America. It is a form of guerilla warfare—sabotage, subversion, innuendo, sniping. It is a deadly war. It is a war between light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell, Christ and Satan. And whether you realize it or not, you are a part of that war. You cannot afford to be ignorant, and you cannot possibly be neutral. If you try to be neutral you're going to find yourself in the crossfire, and in the most dangerous place of all. You dare not, I say, be ignorant. You must not endeavor to be neutral.

I want us to read about that warfare—Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins gird about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shot with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints and for me, that utterance may be given to me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in bonds

that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.”

Now, the church is not a showboat; it is a battleship. We are at war. This message is a warning, a call to arms, but a declaration of victory. I want to say again, when you were born again, you were born from above, and you, being heaven-born, are heaven-bound. But you were also born for a battle. You were born for the battle. But again, when you were born again, you were born to win. That is what you must understand. And this is a wonderful passage of Scripture that talks about the Christian warrior. Now, it's not merely talking about the pastor, or the evangelist, or the missionary; it is talking about Mr. and Mrs. Man, Woman in the pew. It is talking about you, sir; it is talking about you, lady. So let's learn what God's Word is saying, not just in general, or not long ago, but what God is saying with specificity to you this morning. Are you with me? I want you to listen now.

## **I. The Christian Warrior and His Adversary**

There are several things I want you to notice. First of all, the Christian warrior and his adversary—we must know our enemy. The Christian warrior and his adversary—we must know our enemy. Look, if you will again, in verse 11—he says, “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” That's your adversary. You must know your enemy. He is called the devil.

Now, the devil today is sort of a laughable character. We think of the devil as some medieval superstition. Today, we make light of the devil, we call football teams devils and demons, and we talk about deviled ham, and devil's food cake, and it's sort of a joke. We think of the devil as some sort of a guy in long red underwear with a pitchfork trying to catch someone bending over. I mean, that's the idea; that is the caricature we have of the devil. Our sophisticated age today makes the idea of a real and a personal devil more or less laughable. But you have an enemy. He is very real. The Bible does not speak of him as some figment of the imagination, but it has always been his purpose to pull the veil of darkness over his kingdom, and either have his very existence denied for a while. But he really doesn't want that. He wants worship. And he will only use this disguise for so long before he removes the veil himself, and says, Bow down and worship me.

Now, it's important that we understand who the devil is in our warfare, because if there is no enemy, there's going to be no preparation for war. We used to sing a song about the Lord Jesus,; we sing it sometimes in this church: He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today; He walks with me, and He talks with me along life's narrow way. You could sing about Satan: He lives, he lives, Satan lives today; he wars on me, and works on me along life's narrow way. You have an enemy, and you must understand this.

Now, how is this enemy described? Well, I want you to see, first of all, he is a



decided fact—f-a-c-t—verse 11, “the devil.” I hope you believe in the devil. If you don’t believe that the devil exists, you are in a very precarious situation.

Not only is he a decided fact; he is a destructive foe. Notice how he’s described. Look in verse 11: “that you might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Look at that word wiles. Do you know the Greek word for wiles is *methodia*; it’s the word we get methodical from. It’s the word we get method from. Satan is very methodical. In Satan’s warfare, he is very strategic. He may even step back two steps in order to go forward three steps. He may let you think that you’re getting away with your sin. He may even seem to be blessing you and helping you along your way. He is very strategic. He has made a plan to sabotage your plan and your home; the dynamite is in place, the fuse is laid, the match is struck, and Satan is working on you. He is wily; he is subtle. Apart from the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God, he would deceive the very elect.

He is, first of all, strategic—verse 11. Also, he is spiritual. Look in verse 12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this, of the darkness of this world,”—now watch this—“against spiritual wickedness.” Boy, there’s a lot of that going on today—spiritual wickedness. You see, sometimes people think that because something is spiritual, it is good. No, there’s spiritual goodness and there’s spiritual wickedness. The Bible says, “Believe not every spirit. Test the spirits, whether they are of God.” Sometimes people get into séances, necromancy, Ouija boards, horoscopes, clairvoyance, visions, Hindu mysticism. They say, Oh, but Pastor, there’s really something to it. Yes, there is something to it. That’s what I’m trying to get you to understand. There is something to it. There is spiritual wickedness.

Now, your enemy is strategic, he is spiritual, and Martin Luther said, his power and craft are great, but armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal. Because not only is he strategic and spiritual; he is strong. Look again, if you will, in verse 12. There he talks about principalities and powers. In your flesh, you are no match for your adversary. You are puny and weak if you come against Satan in your own strength. You might as well be throwing snowballs at the Rock of Gibraltar than to come against Satan in your own strength. He is powerful. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, authorities.

And then again, he’s also sinister. Look, if you will, in verse 12. There the Bible talks of darkness, and there the Bible talks of wickedness. Satan has dark, devilish, tyrannical power, and he’s in a fight to the finish, and there’s nothing that dirty devil will not do to wreck, to ruin, to destroy your life. And I believe that he knows that he has but a little while, and he is like a cornered animal. He is fighting with no holds barred.

Now, he is a decided fact, he is a destructive force, but he is—listen to me—a defeated foe. He is a defeated foe. Look again, if you will, in verse 10—here’s what the

apostle Paul said: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” because our God has already defeated Satan. It’s not that Satan shall be defeated; he is already defeated. He is a defeated foe. And, Jesus said, facing the cross, “Now, is the prince of this world cast out.” Put in your margin 1 John chapter 4, verse 4: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you”—who is that? the Holy Spirit—“than he that’s in the world”—who is that? the devil. You see, Satan is strong. Satan is sinister. Satan is strategic. Satan is spiritual. But God is almighty, and greater is he that’s in you than he that is in the world. And so, if you don’t ever learn these truths, you’re not going to understand victory.

Now, Pastor, if Satan is a defeated foe, then why do I have to be warned? Because, while Satan’s back was broken at Calvary, God still allows Satan to have power on this earth. It is limited power, and it is power that we as Christians can and shall overcome in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is a part of God’s plan to make overcomers of us, and to give greater glory to Himself.

I was reading in the newspaper last week about rattlesnakes, and I clipped the article. Here’s what it said: Doctors in Arizona have a warning for the public. A rattlesnake can bite, even if his head has been cut off. That’s an interesting article. A rattlesnake can bite you, even if his head has been cut off. And I copied out a part of that article. Five of thirty-four rattlesnake bites that Jeffrey Succard and Frank Leveggio of the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center at Phoenix treated between June 1997 and April 1998 involved snakes that the victims thought were dead. The rattlesnake had been killed. In some instances, his head had been cut off, but even that severed head had bitten the individual. So here’s a snake whose head is still biting. That’s a good description of Satan—that is a good description of Satan. He has been defeated, his head was severed at Calvary, and yet he still has dark, diabolical power.

## **II. The Christian Warrior and His Armor**

Now, that’s the very first thing you need to understand. That is, the Christian warrior, and his adversary, the devil. Now, here’s the second thing—how important it is that you understand this—and that is the Christian warrior and his armor. We need not only to recognize our enemy; we need to prepare for the battle. Now, if you don’t prepare for the battle, you’re going to lose it. You’re to put on the whole armor of God, and it is to be holy armor. Notice verse 13: “Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God.” That is so very important—that you take the whole armor, that you don’t leave off a piece.

I can remember the game well—I was feeling good. My ankles were taped—I was ready, it was the kick-off—we were kicking to the opposing team. I was on the team that would go down to try to make the tackle. I found myself, after the whistle, out ahead of the pack. I saw the man who was trying to pick up the ball—he was fumbling the ball. It

was down there, and there he was, almost on his own goal line. I thought, if I can just hit him while he's trying to pick up that ball, there'll be a fumble, we'll score—and I was going full speed. And then, I saw one other individual—I can remember it like yesterday. He lined up with that ball carrier behind him, and he was between myself and the ball carrier. I said, Well, if I go to the right, I'll miss the ball carrier. If I go to the left, I miss the ball carrier. There's only one thing to do, and that is to go through this man to that man. So, I'm going full speed. This man is coming at me full speed. The man is back there still trying to pick up the ball. I'm trying to look over this man who's bound to block me at the ball carrier, to keep my eye on the ball carrier, never slowing down a bit. We collided like two locomotives. Next thing, I'm on the bench opening my eyes, trying to figure out what on earth happened. I'll tell you what happened. I thought I could go a little faster if I left off one part of the protective armor that a football player is supposed to wear, just one piece. I said, if I leave that off, if I leave that one piece off, I will be faster. Friend, I was o-u-t—out. Put on the whole armor of God. Don't leave off one piece.

Now, let's look at that armor. And God describes that armor. First of all, look at it—look at it. He says here, “Stand, therefore, having your loins gird about with truth.” First of all, you put on the girdle of truth, which is the believer's integrity. Truth stands for integrity. You see, a soldier in that day wore a tunic, and he had a leather belt. Sometimes you see motorcycle riders with a leather belt around him. Sometimes you see weightlifters with a big strong leather belt around them, because that is to hold their loins together; it is to hold the center strength together. And a warrior, in that day, had a leather belt, a girdle that was cinched up tight, to prepare him for the battle, to protect his loins. And on that belt, he would hand his weapons of warfare. His dagger would be there; his sword might be there. This belt was very important, and it held his tunic together, because he didn't want his long-flowing tunic to be out in the wind, to be snagged, or to be caught. And so, he is to wear a girdle, a belt of truth.

Now, that belt, my friend, is integrity. It is integrity that holds everything else together. Truth and integrity are synonymous. You are to believe the truth. You are to know the truth. You're to love the truth. You're to tell the truth. You are to live the truth. You are to preach the truth. And if you don't, your life is going to come apart. You cannot—I say, you cannot—get into this battle unless you have the belt of truth. Satan is a liar, and Satan will come against you with lies. Jesus is the truth. Satan's attack is untrue. His attack is lying. His attack on you is to bring a lack of integrity into your life.

Are you wearing at this moment the girdle of truth or are you living a lie? If you are not wearing truth, if you do not have the girdle of truth, if you do not have integrity in your life, in the big things and in the small things, you are going to lose the battle. It is truth that holds everything together, and without truth everything falls apart.

Here's the second piece of armor—that is the breastplate of righteousness. Now, righteousness is the believer's purity. Not only do you need integrity, truth; but you need purity. That is, there's to be no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life. A warrior at this time had a breastplate. It would be made of woven chain, sometimes. It would cover his heart; it would cover his lungs; it would cover his intestines, his vital organs. And, it would be there, and without that breastplate, of course, he was very vulnerable to any sword thrust, to any arrow. And so, he has to have a breastplate, and that breastplate is righteousness.

And, what is righteousness? It is purity. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now, what the enemy wants to do is to attack you, not only with lies, but he wants to attack you with impurity. He wants to get you to read some filthy men's magazine, some Playboy, some Penthouse. He wants you to watch, stay up late on the Saturday night, and watch some filthy movie, and then come to church on Sunday morning. He wants to get that into your heart, into your mind. He wants to get you doing some dirty crooked business deal. Oh, you say, it's no big sin. That's right, but it's a crack in the armor. It is a crack in the armor, and Satan knows where that crack in the armor is. Who is it knocked so loud? A lonely little sin. Come in, I answered, and soon all hell was in.

Put on now, have not only integrity, but have purity. "Keep your heart with all diligence." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now, I'm asking you a question. Don't answer it out loud, but answer it: Is your heart pure? I mean, is your heart pure before God? If not, you cannot win in the warfare. There's a piece of your armor that is missing. Now, Satan fears a holy Christian.

Thirdly, you put on the shoes of peace. Look, if you will also, in verse 15: "and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." The believer's integrity, the believer's purity, and the believer's tranquility. Put on the shoes of peace, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. A Roman soldier needed good shoes to fight with. A Roman soldier would have hobnails on the bottom of his shoes, very much like football cleats, because when you're fighting, you need a place to stand. And you need to have good footing. In this passage, Paul is going to tell us to stand—to stand—and therefore your feet need to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That is tranquility.

He's talking about peace now. He's talking about peace with God, and he's talking about peace with one another, and he's talking about the peace of God in our heart. You see, Jesus gives peace, and unless you have peace, you can never make war. Sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? But you've got to have that peace of God in your heart. You see, how does Satan attack? Well, he comes against your integrity with lies. He comes against your purity with lust. But how does he come against your tranquility?

Well, he puts stones and briars and doubts and discouragement, whatever he can do to destroy your peace.

Do you have peace right now? Or, are you just churning on the inside? Well, if you don't have peace right now, I'll tell you why you don't have peace right now. It's not because of circumstances. Peace in the Bible is not the subtraction of problems from life. Peace is the addition of power to meet those problems. The Bible says, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Now, the only way that you can live that way is to put on the shoes of peace. That is the preparation of the good news of peace. Jesus made peace with the blood of His cross, and if you don't have this—if you don't have this—you're going to slip and fall in the battle. So many people, I've seen them fall, not because of a lack of integrity, and not because of a lack of purity, but because of a lack of tranquility. Something will happen, some sickness, some disappointment, some financial reverse, some wayward child—and they lose their peace. You put on those shoes of peace so you can have a firm place to stand, because, if you don't, you may slip, and you may fall.

Then there's the next piece of armor here is the shield of face. By the way, when Paul wrote this, he was chained to a Roman soldier. Paul's just looking that guy up and down, said, You know, I can get a spiritual lesson out of that. And so, the Roman soldier also had a shield. It was about two by four feet; it was made of wood covered with leather, because, in that day, they would take flaming arrows, dip them in oil and shoot them, perhaps, to inflict a horrible pain when a flaming arrow would hit, or, perhaps, to set somebody's house or whatever on fire. These flaming arrows were flying back and forth. And so, Paul says, "Take the shield of faith, so you can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Well, if I take the shield of faith, why do I need the shield of faith? What's Satan's attack? Satan's attack is going to be doubt. Now, against the Christian he uses lies, so I put on integrity. Against the Christian he uses lust, so I put on purity. Against the Christian he uses discouragement, so I put on tranquility. And now I take the shield of faith, and what is the shield of faith? It is certainty. It is certainty. I need integrity. I need purity. I need tranquility. And, friend, I need certainty. I take the shield of faith because Satan is always shooting at me and shooting at you those fiery arrows of doubt—of doubt, trying to place in your heart and in your mind those subtle doubts, darts of doubt. But you know that a small fire can start a big fire. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles. And so, Satan wants to get into your heart, into your mind, with some doubt.

And, if you're a college student, get ready. Some of you are going off to college in a few days. And you're going to find out that Satan, sometimes in the form of a professor, is going to be sitting up there, and he's just going to be shooting at you those fiery darts—just shooting at you those fiery darts, just shooting at you. Put on the shield of

faith. Take that shield of faith, and quench every fiery dart of the devil. Feed your faith, starve your doubts; and when you get off to college wherever you go, don't forget what you've learned, don't forget those who taught you, and remember the Word of God, and carry your doubts to Jesus, and say, Dear Lord Jesus, give me the shield of faith, and He'll do it. I promise you that He will.

That's the believer's certainty. And then, next of all, he says, Put on the helmet of salvation. Do you see that here? Look at it. He says here in verse 17, "And take the helmet of salvation." A warrior would use a helmet to protect his head. Why would he do that? Obviously, if the head is wounded, nothing else works. And what is this helmet of salvation? It literally means a helmet of deliverance. It's talking about salvation, and going to heaven, but more than that. It is talking about a mind under the control of Almighty God. So, when you have the mind of Christ, because a believer needs to keep his head so he can fight, and this speaks of the believer's sanity—the believer's sanity.

When a person gets saved, for the first time he has his right mind. I remember reading there in Matthew 5 about that demoniac who had been filled with the devil, and Jesus saved him, and the people came back and found him seated and clothed and in his right mind. A person, really, without the Lord Jesus Christ has a form of insanity. They are not with the mind that God made them to have. So you put on the helmet of salvation—that is your sanity, that is the covering for your mind.

Now, see how you're to be dressed up for the battle. We've talked about your adversary—we've said that he's strategic; we've said that he's strong; we've said that he's sinister—he's all of these things. "Wherefore," he says, "take the whole armor of God." Put on the belt of truth. What is that? Integrity. Put on the breastplate of righteousness. What is that? Friend, that is purity. Put on the shoes of peace. What is that? That is tranquility. Take the shield of faith. What is that? That is certainty. Put on the helmet of salvation. What is that? That is sanity, thinking with the mind of Christ. Now, you're ready for the battle.

Now, let me tell you something. If you'll look at each one of these pieces of armor, and think about it, they really represent Jesus. You just put on Jesus. Sometimes when I go out for a walk or whatever, just by myself, and I want a good thing to meditate on, I just keep dressing myself up in this armor; I just check myself out. Adrian, do you have integrity? Adrian, do you have purity? Adrian, do you have tranquility? Adrian, do you have certainty? Adrian, do you have sanity? Each piece put on with prayer, because what you're really doing is simply putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Christian Warrior and His Attack**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice. We have talked about the warrior and his adversary, the devil. We've talked about the warrior and his armor. Now, let's

talk about the Christian warrior and his attack—his attack. We must join the battle. It's not enough simply to put on the armor; we've got to get into the fight. And so many of us want to dress up in the armor and sit at home. Some little boys were sitting around just talking and laughing, and the mother came and said, What are you doing? And they said, Well, we're playing war. And she said, Well, you don't look like you're at war. And they said, Well, we're all generals. I think a lot of us want to be generals rather than foot soldiers. We want to play war.

Now, what will guarantee our victory? What is it that will guarantee our victory in the battle? Three things. Number one is the place of our stance. Now, look, if you will, in verse 13: "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand,"—underscore that—"and having done all, to stand." And notice in verse 14: "stand therefore." Withstand, stand, stand. Now, what does this mean? Friend, we have a place to fight from. We stand in the victory that Jesus has won. Notice what he says in verse 10: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." When you get into this battle, you stand at the victory that Jesus has already won. This is the reason that I say to people, we do not fight for victory; we fight from victory. This is the place of our stance. Do you understand that? If you don't understand that, you're not going to stand. You have to stand in the victory that has been won at Calvary. They overcame him, the Bible says, in Revelation 12, by the blood of the Lamb; they overcame Satan that way.

Second thing: not only the place of our stance, but the power of our sword—the power of our sword. Look again, if you will, in verse 17: "And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Now, we've talked to you about all of the protective armor. Fine! It's good to have on a helmet, it's good to have on a breastplate, it's good to have a shield; but folks, you need a sword. You need to get into the battle. And God has given you a place to stand, and then He's given you a sword to fight with. Take the sword of the Spirit. Now, I'm talking about the power of our sword, because ours is a very powerful sword. It's not like any other sword. It's not the sword of Adrian; it is the sword of the Spirit. I love it—I love it. You see, the Bible says, in Hebrews 4, verse 12, "For the word of God..."—that's the Bible—"the word of God is quick and powerful,"—quick means it's alive; powerful means it's full of energy—"and is sharper than a two-edged sword." So, I love the Bible because I know there's incredible power in the Bible.

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, and the devil came, and the devil said, Well, if you're the Son of God, why don't you turn these swords into bread? And Jesus pulled out His sword, and said, "It is written." Stchk! "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again Satan comes to Him to tempt Him. Again Jesus said, "It is written"—"it is written." Three times Jesus ran Satan through with that blessed blade.

Now, there's the place of your stance, and there is the power of your sword, and then, there's the provision of the Spirit. Once you take your place to stand, you're dressed up in the armor, you're standing in the finished work of Calvary, you take the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, and then you look to heaven for your supply. So he says, Pray—now, look at it, look at it; he says here—“Praying...”—verse 18—“praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Now, the prayer in the Spirit is where your supply comes from. Every warrior needs a supply, and every warrior needs a commander-in-chief to guide him and direct him. And when you go to the battlefield, you stand in the finished work of Calvary. You take the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, and you offer your prayer to your heavenly commander, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, not just mumbling some mumbo jumbo. It is the Spirit that directs your prayer; it is the Spirit that understands what Satan is up to. You don't understand what Satan is up to, but he does.

I was out in Colorado. I have a General friend out there who helps lead America in the strategic space command. They keep those satellites up there high above the earth in synchronous orbit—spy satellites, military satellites, the space command. I went into a very small room there for a briefing. It was an amazing thing. They said, What part of the world do you want to see? Well, show us Libya because, Muammar Gaddafi was making some noises about that time. Show us Libya. A big screen, Libya comes up, and we just see the streets and the houses in Libya. You could just see the lights that were twinkling at that very moment in all of Libya. They said, if a missile is fired from here, we'll know it the minute it's fired. Sitting in Colorado, they're watching Libya. It's an amazing thing.

I said, How can you tell it's a missile or something else? He said, You don't want to know. I said, Why not? He said, If I told you, I'd have to kill you. I said, I don't want to know. And I thought, here, from outer space, they're watching. I want to tell you something, friend: we have a commander who lives up yonder, and He knows what is going on; He knows what the enemy's doing. Therefore, we stay in contact with our space command, praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit.

Now, it's so important we understand this, and I wish I had more time on this point, but the three things that assure your victory, number one, is the place of your stance, the power of your sword, and the provision of the Spirit. We're praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit—in the Spirit. The sword is the sword of the Spirit. He's the one who knows how to wield that sword, and to use that sword.

#### **IV. The Christian Warrior and His Allies**

Now, here's the final thing I want you to see, and that's the Christian warrior and his



allies. We must unite forces. So Paul says, pray. And then, notice what he says in verse 18: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for me, that others may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly.” Paul was a warrior, but he knew that he did not fight alone. He knew that we need to pray for one another, because we fight with one another. We are not a one-man army; you are not a one-man army. Oh, if you’re by yourself, then you’ve got to fight by yourself, but you know what the Bible says? The Bible says one should chase a thousand; two will chase ten thousand. There’s a synergy that brings a divine energy when we fight together. We are in this battle together. I need you, and you need me, and therefore we must lock arms, join forces, and fight together.

And, do you know what this church is? Do you know what this church is? This church is just a big battle station—that’s all it is. It’s just a place where we come to reinforce ourselves. It’s a place where we come to get spiritual intuition, and spiritual power, and spiritual encouragement to go out into the fight, because we fight, not against one another, but with one another, against a common enemy. And I’m going to tell you, I’m heart-broken that many of our soldiers are A-W-O-L—they’re just A-W-O-L. There are people who think that sometimes when they come on Sunday they’ve done God a wild favor. I mean really. They just come sit, soak, and sour. They never fight; they think that somehow they can be neutral.

Now, if you couldn’t lift your hand, let me speak lovingly to you. Some people may not have lifted their hand because they’ve never received Christ; they’ve never been saved. Others, perhaps you’ve received Christ, but you have doubts, you don’t have that full assurance. Others, perhaps you’ve been saved, but for some reason you’ve not been obedient about baptism. Now, baptism doesn’t save you, but if you’re saved, you ought to be obedient. If you’re not obedient, you’ll never have the victory that you need. And some have been baptized, but you’re not now serving Jesus in a local New Testament church; somehow your heart’s gotten cold, and somehow you’ve kind of been misplaced, you haven’t found your niche of service. Well, if any of these things are true about you, I want to pray for you right now.

Father God, I pray for those who today need to make decisions, some perhaps who need to be saved, some who need the assurance of their salvation, some who need to present themselves for believer’s baptism, some how need to present themselves for church membership, whatever, dear Lord, I lift these, and I pray, dear Holy Spirit, that you will open those hearts, Lord, that people might come to say Yes to you.

And, friend, if you’re not saved, right now would you pray this prayer. Forget anyone else is here now, just close everything else out, and just turn your heart to God, and pray this prayer. Dear God...— just pray it silently—Dear God, I know that you love me,

and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. I believe you paid for my sin with your precious blood on the cross. Thank you for doing that. I believe that God raised you from the dead; I truly believe it. And I now receive you by faith into my heart as my Lord and my Savior. Take control of my life. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. And Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you, not in order to be saved, but because you have saved me. And, Lord, give me the courage now to make it public, not to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

## **Conclusion**

Folks, this is a battle, and I want to say several things to you. Number one: you choose sides carefully, because if you don't follow Jesus, you're on the losing side—I can tell you that much. You choose sides carefully. Number two: you examine your heart, and make sure that you've got all the armor of God on. Number three: don't try to be neutral. You can't do it. This is a fight to the finish, and Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me." Number four—number four: rejoice in the victory, and live victoriously every day—day after day after day after day. Thank God you can be walking in victory.

I want heads bowed and eyes closed, no one stirring, no one looking around. How many today in this building would say, Pastor Rogers, I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, God has forgiven me of my sin, God has saved me, the Holy Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God, I have made an open and public confession of my faith in Christ, I have followed Jesus in believer's baptism, and I am now living for Jesus victoriously in the fellowship of a local New Testament Bible-believing church? If you could give me that testimony, would you lift up your hand right now? Thank God for that.

# Spiritual Warfare, Part Two

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 1, 1975**

**Main Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:11–18**

*“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”*

EPHESIANS 6:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Our Adversary
- II. Our Armor
- III. Our Attack
  - A. Praying in the Spirit Is Listening Prayer
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  - C. Praying in the Spirit Is Loving Prayer
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn, please, to Ephesians chapter 6. We are looking in Ephesians chapter 6, beginning in verse 11, and we’re speaking of the spiritual warfare. For, ladies and gentlemen, we’re in a battle. Whether you know it or not, we are in a battle. And Satan is like a caged and a cornered animal, and he’s letting loose with everything he has. And all the artillery of hell is being let loose upon our earth in these last days. And I have said for a long time that the seventies could be described as a decade of demons, and there is an invasion from hell set loose on our earth.

And the church needs to wake up. We’re hearing too many lullabies. We need to hear a call—a reveille call, a call to arms. *We have too many Christians who are interested in milk bottles rather than mighty battles.* They just want to come and get a little milk from the Word and go home. But as we said last Sunday night, the old ship of Zion is not a luxury liner; it’s a man-of-war. It’s not a showboat; it’s a warship. And we’re onboard, and we need to learn how to be good soldiers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I say, in this battle, if you’re not careful, you’re going to lose your part of it on your front because you won’t know how to fight.

So we’re speaking again today on spiritual warfare. The Bible says in verse 11, “Put

*on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” (Ephesians 6:11–18)*

## **I. Our Adversary**

Now you will remember last Sunday night we spoke of our adversary, who is Satan, and we described Satan under these headings: We said he was subtle, because this verse says, *“the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) We said he was spiritual, because the Bible says, *“spiritual wickedness in high places.”* We said he was strong, because the Bible mentions principalities and powers. We said that he was sinister, because the Bible mentions darkness and wickedness. (Ephesians 6:12) So you think, therefore, about our enemy, our adversary, the devil. He is subtle, spiritual, strong, and sinister, and he is your enemy.

Don't think that you can stay out of the fight. There's no possible way you can stay out of the fight. Now, Satan can harm you, and you'll not fight back. But there's no possible way that you can escape unscathed, unscarred, unless you're willing to get into the battle. Unless you get Satan, he'll get you. That's just the way it is, friend. You can't just say, “Now, Satan, let's have a standoff here. You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone.”

Now, a lot of us would like to do that. We don't want to get in the battle. I heard about a man out bear hunting one time, and a great big bear stepped out of the woods, and the man raised his gun; he had a bead on the bear, but the bear, who happened to be able to talk, said, “Now, hold it—hold it. Don't pull the trigger. Let's sit down and talk this thing over. After all, let's be reasonable. I'm just out looking for a meal. You're just out looking for a fur coat. Come out in the middle of the road, lay the gun down, and let's talk it over.” And so, the hunter laid his gun down. They went out in the middle of the road to talk it over. And surely enough, when it was finished, the bear had a good meal, and the man had a fur coat.

Now, Satan would like to say, “Ah, there's no such thing as a war going on. You don't have to worry about that”; but, friend, I tell you, if you don't get him, he's going to

get you. You can't be neutral with a bear, and you can't be neutral with Satan, our adversary.

## II. Our Armor

And then, last Sunday night, we spoke not only about our adversary, but we spoke about our armor—verses 13 through 17 (Ephesians 6:13–17)—and we said we're to have on the belt of truth, which is the Word of God. We're to have on the breastplate of righteousness, which is a pure life. We're to have our feet with the hobnail boots of the gospel of peace; that is, no matter how many thorny briars in our way, no matter how many sharp rocks, the child of God will not be able to be discouraged, but onward he'll go for the Lord Jesus Christ with the gospel of peace on his feet. He's to have on the helmet of salvation. He's to have the shield of faith that will *"quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."* (Ephesians 6:16) He's to have the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God in his hand. And we spoke about those things last Sunday night, so I'll not speak about them again this morning.

## III. Our Attack

But, first of all, our adversary, the devil. Secondly, our armor. Now we've come down to the third thing: our attack—our attack—because after we see our adversary, after we put on the armor, then we're ready for the war. The war hasn't started yet, and the third thing now is our attack. You know, so many times, here's a Christian. He says, "Okay, I know who the enemy is. He's the devil. And now I'm going to put on my armor. I put on my boots. I put on my belt. I put on my breastplate. I put on my helmet. I take my shield. I take my sword. Show me where the fight is; show me where the battle is. I'm ready to fight, Lord!" He says, "Okay. Start to pray." You say, "No. Wait a minute. I'm ready to fight!" He says, "That's right. Get on your knees." The battle is fought on your knees.

Now I want you to see this. I want you to see it so clearly, so plainly, that you'll never forget it. The battle is prayer—the battle is fought in prayer. Never forget it. After Paul tells them who the enemy is, after he tells them the armor they're going to have to wear, then he tells them about the warfare. The warfare is prayer. "Show me the battle, Lord." He says, "Okay. Here it is." Verse 18: *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."* (Ephesians 6:18) The battle is prayer—the battle is prayer. If you don't understand this, you're going to lose every time. Do you know the reason that some of you are not winning? You're not even showing up for the war—you're not even showing up. The battle is prayer, and you're fighting somewhere else. You're wrestling with flesh and blood. You think that your problem is you need more money. You think that your problem is you need more training. You think your problem is you need more

intelligence. You think your problem is what this person is doing or that person. And you're wrestling against flesh and blood. And the weapons of your warfare are carnal. But the Bible teaches, friend, that the battle is prayer—*"praying always."* (Ephesians 6:18)

Now I want to give you a couple of biblical illustrations of this to help you never to forget it. Turn to Exodus chapter 17 for a moment. You will remember, by way of background, that the children of Israel, God's chosen people, are coming out of Egypt, and they're headed toward that land that flows with milk and honey, the Promised Land. But on their way to the Promised Land, there is an enemy who would keep them from entering in. His name is Amalek. He was a cruel and a wicked king, and he stood in the pathway before the children of God to keep them from going into the Promised Land.

Now I want to read in Exodus chapter 17, beginning in verse 8: *"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed."* (Exodus 17:8–11)

Now, here's the battle. Here's Amalek, this wicked person, this ungodly, cruel king who stands against the children of Israel and their journey through the wilderness. And Moses says, "Now, Joshua, you go down in the valley. I'm going up on the mountaintop." And Moses has in his hand a rod, and Moses stands there before the Lord. And he looks up to heaven, and he lifts up the rod to heaven. And as Moses holds the rod up to heaven, Joshua down in the valley is seeing the battle progress. And Joshua prevails. But when Moses' arms get tired, and the rod starts to droop, then Amalek prevails. I imagine one of those times when Amalek was coming on hard and Joshua was down there in the battle fighting, he said, "Moses!" "Yes?" "Moses, come on down and fight! We need you!" Moses says, "Joshua, I am fighting"—"I am fighting." Oh, if we could only learn that. You see, friend, the battle is not won in the battle; the battle is won on the mountaintop. There is where the real war is.

What did that rod stand for that Moses had in his hand? You will remember that, first of all, it was called Moses' rod. But after Moses surrendered it to the Lord, it became the rod of God. And it was that rod that led them out of barrenness, and it was that rod that led them out of bondage, and it was that rod that led them into battle. It was the rod of God, and it symbolized the power of God committed to the hand of a man—the power of God committed to the hand of a man. What is the New Testament counterpart of that? It is praying in Jesus's name—praying in Jesus's name—the power of God committed to the hand of a man. Friend, when you and I can learn to stand on the mountaintop and

look to God in prayer, and offer up to God the name of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, then we're going to see the battles in the valley won or lost according to the way that you and I learn to intercede in prayer.

May I tell you, on Sunday morning, the battle is not won right here while I'm preaching; it's won before I ever preach in my study, and it's won before you ever teach: on your knees and on your face. Friend, we don't pray for victory; we pray from victory. Did you know that? The victory was won at Calvary. Jesus Christ defeated the devil at Calvary. And if you and I could ever learn to take the rod of God, the name of Jesus, and bring it against the devil to that degree, we're going to have victory. How wonderful it is if we could only understand that: where the real battle is!

You see, Satan fears your prayers. Satan hopes you'll never learn how to pray. He doesn't even mind you putting on the armor, if you don't show up for the war; and he doesn't mind how much work you do. He doesn't mind if you attend church on Sunday morning—he really doesn't! He doesn't even mind if you preach, or if you sing, or if you teach. He doesn't care. He'll even encourage you to do these things, if they can become a substitute for prayer. If he can keep you so busy that you don't have time to pray, he will encourage you to teach a class. He will encourage you to come to class. Friend, if you only had time to come to church or to pray, did you know you ought to stay home and pray? Now I'm not saying that's all the time you have; because if you arrange your time, you'll be able to do both. But Satan will encourage you even to take religious activities so that you will not pray. Oh, Satan fears your prayers. He doesn't want you to pray; because when you pray, you defeat him.

You see, Satan must say to his demons, "There's Adrian Rogers down there. Now we want to defeat him. We don't want him to be a good pastor of Bellevue Church; so you keep him so busy that, no matter what he does, he will not have time to pray—because no matter how hard he studies, and no matter how much how he does, and no matter how clean he lives, and no matter how much he witnesses, if we could keep him from praying, we can beat him every time. So, keep him from praying." That's what the devil says to his demons. But also, I know that if I can pray, I can beat the devil every time—every time! Every time!

Oh, if we could only understand that the battle is prayer! "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" (Ephesians 6:12) And how are we to wrestle? "*Praying always*"—"*praying always.*" (Ephesians 6:18) Once you put on the armor, don't forget to show up for the war. The battle is prayer. When Moses held up his hand, Joshua prevailed. And our church, dear friend, will prevail and go forth in this city, and win the battles in the valley, as much as you and I are alone in that secret place of prayer, lifting our hands in the sweet name of Jesus and praying in the name of Jesus—the power of God

committed to the hand of a man.

Let me give you another example of where the warfare is. Look in the book of Daniel the tenth chapter, if you will, for a moment—chapter 10. I love to study this book of Daniel. Incidentally, before long, we're going to start a series of studies on Wednesday night in the book of Daniel if the Lord continues to lead. And look, if you will, in the book of Daniel, beginning in Daniel chapter 10 and verse 10. Daniel has been fasting and praying for twenty-one days. Daniel is wanting understanding; he's wanting God to speak to him. The understanding man prays, and the praying man gets understanding—and Daniel knew this.

And so now, look in Daniel chapter 10 and verse 10: *“And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.”* (Daniel 10:10–14)

Now, what does this mean? What does this mean? Daniel has been praying. He's been fasting and praying, chastising his soul, bombarding heaven, saying, “O God, I want to know your way. I want to understand your will. I want to hear your word. Speak to me, God.” For twenty-one days Daniel was praying. And an angel comes to Daniel and says, “Daniel, I want you to know, from the day that you set your heart, your words were heard in heaven. But, Daniel, there was a war going on—there was a war going on. The prince of Persia stood in the way. He tried to hinder the prayer from getting through.”

Now, who on earth is the prince of Persia? Friend, the prince of Persia was no human being; the prince of Persia is an ancient allusion to Satan. In another place, Satan is called the king of Tyre. And the Lord looks beyond these earthly rulers to the power beyond the throne. You see, when God said “the prince of Persia,” He might have said “the prince of America” or “the prince of Memphis.”

You see, the Bible says, *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against [principedoms]”—*you see—*“against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) What was happening when Daniel was praying is that there was a war going on in the *heavenlies*. There was Michael the archangel, and there was the prince of Persia. And the prince of Persia, the evil spirits



of this world, are saying, “We don’t want the man of God to get the answer. We don’t want the man of God to know the way of God. We don’t want the prophecies to be revealed.” And here in the cosmic realm is a terrible battle being raised. Nowhere in the Bible, in my estimation, do you get a clearer picture of what Paul was talking about when he said, *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* *“The prince of...Persia withstood me.”* (Daniel 10:13) And, finally, Michael, the mighty archangel, came in, that Daniel might get the answer to his prayer.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, don’t you see in these two passages where the warfare is? Don’t you understand that the warfare in the spiritual realm? Don’t you understand that when you and I put on the armor, we’re just getting ready to do battle? And when we start to pray, oh, how Satan fears our prayers! Do you know what your prayer does? Friend, your prayer puts angels to work, just like Michael the archangel came.

Did you know that you and I have angels that are supposed to attend to our need? Did you know that God wants to send His wonderful angel? Well, you remember when Jesus was fasting and praying there in the wilderness? The Bible tells us in Mark chapter 1, verse 13, that the angels came and ministered unto Him. (Mark 1:13) Do you remember when Peter was in prison and the church prayed for Peter in Acts the twelfth chapter? Do you remember there in verse 7 where the angel of the Lord came into the prison and set Peter free? (Acts 12:7) Don’t you remember that? Why, listen, friend: you read in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 14, the Bible says that angels are ministering spirits to serve those of us who are heirs of salvation. (Hebrews 1:14) When we pray, the forces of darkness are driven back. God’s dear, sweet, beautiful holy angels are set free to watch over us.

When I get on an airplane, I put an angel on each wing. I say, “Lord, you just take care.” I ask angels to watch over my children when they go out at night. I do. You know, the Bible speaks of their angels always beholding the face of the Father. (Matthew 18:10) I believe that God has sent these beautiful creatures to take care of us. Oh, they’re unseen so many times. Sometimes in Bible times the angels took bodily form and appeared unto men; but most of the time we don’t see angels, because they’re spirit beings. But what I’m trying to tell you, friend, is that there is a whole realm—a whole realm—of possibilities all around us.

Do you remember when Elisha was at Dothan, and the armies of the Syrians were all around Elisha, and his servant said, “Alas, my master, what are we going to do”? (2 Kings 6:15) And Elisha said, *“Lord...open his eyes, that he may see.”* And God opened the eyes of this man, and the Bible says, *“And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”* (2 Kings 6:17) Oh, friend, an innumerable host of angels encamp around those who love the Lord. This is where the warfare is! This is

the where the battle is. We're wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12) This is where the war is. First, see the adversary; then, put on the armor; and then, attack—and you do that by *“praying always with all prayer and supplication.”* (Ephesians 6:18)

Now, let me say that the Bible teaches that not all prayer is effective prayer, because not all prayer is in the Spirit. Go back and look again at Ephesians chapter 6. You say, “I don't seem to have much victory over the devil.” It's because you're not praying in the Spirit. Notice again in Ephesians chapter 6 now, and verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 6:18) Now, just mark that down: *“in the Spirit.”* We need to learn how to pray in the Spirit.

Many times our prayers are not answered. The Bible says in Isaiah 1, verse 15, *“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.”* (Isaiah 1:15) Why? Because there was sin in their life. You spread forth your hands—God says, “I don't pay any attention to that.” You pray—God says, “I won't hear,” because that prayer is in the flesh. You see, there are two kinds of prayer: there's prayer in the flesh, and there's prayer in the Spirit. Prayer in the flesh doesn't get any higher than the light bulb; but when you pray in the Spirit, then God hears your prayer. Our warfare is not simply prayer; it is prayer in the Spirit.

And I'm going to teach you in just a moment what prayer in the Spirit is, because this makes all the difference in prayer. You see, God has a definite pattern for prayer. We are to pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Understand that now: to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. We are to pray in the Spirit. So often, we do not pray in the Spirit; therefore, we do not win the battle—the battle is not won.

Now, if I were to go into my home this afternoon and flick the light switch, and the lights didn't come on, I wouldn't say, “Well, Thomas Edison and Benjamin Franklin are liars; it doesn't work; it's not true.” I wouldn't say, “Electricity has failed.” I would say, probably, “There's something wrong on our end of the line. We have a blown fuse, a burned bulb, or a burned-out bulb. Or, maybe we didn't pay the bill.” Isn't that right? We wouldn't say, “Well, electricity has failed.” No!

And sometimes, when you pray, and the prayer does not get through, don't say, “Well, the prophets were liars, and prayer has failed.” No. God has certain laws—God has certain plans—for prayer to work. We're to pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. And our battle, our warfare, is spiritual prayer: *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”*—*“in the Spirit.”*

May I tell you what the four marks of praying in the Spirit are? Praying in the Spirit—first of all—praying in the Spirit is listening prayer. Secondly, it is lingering prayer. Thirdly, it is loving prayer. And fourthly, it is laboring prayer.

## A. Praying in the Spirit Is Listening Prayer

Now, let me show you this. First of all, it is listening prayer. Turn, please, to Romans chapter 8, and look in Romans chapter 8 and verse 26: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) Now, there are two things there that you want to learn. Number one: We sometimes don’t know what to pray for as we ought to pray, and so the Spirit shows us what to pray for. That’s prayer in the Spirit: where we listen to the Lord, and the Lord says, “Adrian, here’s what I want you to pray for; here’s what I want.” It is listening prayer.

The other day in my study I had the joy of praying with a sweet little girl. I believe that little girl is here this morning. And she prayed, and she was giving her heart to Jesus and confirming her faith in the Lord. And I said to this little girl, “Come and kneel with me and let’s pray. And we’re going to pray together. And I’m going to say some words, and I want you to say them after me.” And I said some words. And then she said some words. And then I said some words. And she said the words. Now, who was praying? We both were. But, you see, because of her youngness, and because of the sweetness and the littleness of her life, she didn’t quite know how to pray. So I was helping her to pray. Do you understand? And so, she was praying, but I was kind of giving her the words to say.

Now, friend, that’s what the Holy Spirit does for us who are grownups, you see. *“We know not what we should pray for as we ought.”* And the Lord says, “Pray for this.” I say, “Lord, this is what I want.” He says, “Now, pray for that.” And He says, “Pray for this.” And I say, “Lord, this is what I want.” And, you see, He directs our prayers; He tells us what to pray for. Hallelujah! That’s the secret of getting your prayers answered. *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* How wonderful it is to be in the Holy Spirit! For we know not what we ought to pray for, but He knows our weakness and He knows our infirmities. He becomes our helper, and He helps us.

And then the Bible says in this verse He also *“maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* A pastor was speaking last Monday here at Bellevue Church down in the dining room where we have our Monday morning meetings, and this pastor just blessed my heart as he was preaching to the preachers. And he was talking about a revival that was going on in his church. And this pastor has a boy that was called to preach, and for the first time the boy was going to preach in the home church. And the pastor was off, and he asked his son to fill the pulpit. And the pastor said, as he was up preaching, about like I’m preaching now, he looked at his watch, and he realized that his dear son was preaching his first sermon in his home church. He said his heart got so full he didn’t know what to say. He just stopped in the middle of the sermon and said, “Oh,” and couldn’t say anything else. “And then,” he

said, “it seemed like maybe three minutes.” He said, “Of course, I imagine it was only thirty seconds or less.” He said, “I just said, ‘Oh.’” People thought maybe he was having a heart attack, but he just was so full: groanings that could not be uttered. “But, oh,” he said, “there in that home church, as that dear young man was holding forth the Word, the power of God came down, and God blessed in such a way.”

As the Holy Spirit of God teaches us how to pray sometimes with groanings that cannot even be uttered, oh, I tell you, sometimes, friend, prayer is too heavy for human words. But thank God for the blessed Holy Spirit of God who makes intercession for us when we’re in the Spirit, when we’re listening to the Lord. It is listening prayer—listening prayer.

Do you know the relationships that we’re described as having? Listen. When I’m saved, it’s like a father-son relationship: God is my Father, and I’m His son. Don’t you think a son ought to listen to his father? And you know another way that the Bible describes our relationship? As husband and wife. Don’t you think that a wife ought to listen to her husband? **Somebody asked a little boy, “What were your daddy’s last words?” He said, “He didn’t have any. Mama was with him right up to the end.”** Well, don’t you think that it ought to be more than a one-sided conversation? Don’t you think that there ought to be a listening relationship there? The Bible describes our relationship not only as father and son, husband and wife, but master and servant. Don’t you think that the servant ought to listen to know what the boss wants?

Friend, you know, your prayers would be a lot better if rather than giving God instructions, you’d just report for duty, amen? Just say, “Lord, speak: thy servant heareth. You’re the master; I’m the slave. What do you want?” The Bible describes us as friend and friend. Jesus said, “I no longer call you servants. This time, I call you friends.” (John 15:15) Friends love to talk and listen. That’s what makes a good friend: a good listener, amen?

## **B. Praying in the Spirit Is Lingerin Prayer**

Oh, friend, listen. Prayer in the Spirit is listening prayer. That’s what it is. But it’s more than that: It is lingerin prayer. Go back again to Ephesians chapter 6, and notice verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer.”* (Ephesians 6:18) Linger in the presence of the Lord. Many of us never pray in the Spirit, because we don’t take time to be holy; we don’t linger in the presence of the Lord. Jesus Christ said in John 15, verse 7, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7) Do you know what the word *abide* means? It means “to dwell permanently.” Prayer in the Spirit is lingerin prayer—*“always...all prayer.”* Spend much time with the Lord. Linger in His presence, if you would pray in the Spirit. Too many of us run in and out of the presence of God in our prayers, and therefore our prayers don’t

get answered. Do you know that Jesus said we were to abide in Him just like a branch does to the vine? (John 15:5) Did you know that the wood of a grapevine is not good for anything? You can't make furniture out of it. You can't build houses out of it. Did you know that rabbinical law says that the wood of the vine was not even to be used as fire in the temple sacrifices? You see, a vine branch is good for just one thing. What? To abide in the vine; to bear fruit—see?

Now, prayer in the Spirit is lingering prayer—just to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, to stay in Jesus, to walk in Jesus a moment at a time. Too many of us want to use the Lord as a first aid kit. When we get in trouble, we run and take Him down, and say, “O Lord, *blblblbl*,” and that's it, rather than taking time to be holy. “Speak oft with thy Lord.” It is listening prayer: “*Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.*” (1 Samuel 3:9) It is lingering prayer.

*I come to the garden alone,  
While the dew is still on the roses,  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear,  
The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own.*

—C. AUSTIN MILES

A little girl went up to her bedroom, and she stayed up there so long that when she came back down, her mother said, “Honey, what were you doing up there?” She said, “I was praying.” Her mother said, “What would a little girl like you have so much to pray about?” “Oh,” she said, “I wasn't praying about a lot of things. But I was just telling Jesus I love Him, and He was just telling me He loves me, and we were just loving each other.”

That's good, isn't it, friend? That's it! Oh, lingering in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ—that is prayer in the Spirit: “abiding in me, and my word abiding in you.”

### **C. Praying in the Spirit Is Loving Prayer**

But, friend, listen. Not only is it listening prayer; not only is it lingering prayer; it is loving prayer. Notice verse 18 again: “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*” (Ephesians 6:18) Now, underscore that: “*all saints.*” Prayer in the Spirit can never be egocentric; it must be for others. May I suggest that's another reason that many of us don't have power in prayer: most of our prayers are, “Lord, bless me.” *I, myself, and me* are our three favorite words. *We're like that girl who prayed, “Lord, you know I'm not selfish. I'm praying for my mother. She'd like to have son-in-law.”* And that's the way so

many of us are.

Now, friend, we can pray for personal needs but not for selfish needs. Do you know the Bible tells us that Job was set free, that Job was released from his captivity, when he prayed for his friends—when he prayed for his friends? Prayer in the Spirit is loving prayer: it is for others. When you learn how to give in prayer, friend, you'll learn how to get in prayer.

#### **D. Praying in the Spirit Is Laboring Prayer**

And I want to say it's also laboring prayer—prayer in the Spirit. You say, "Oh, if I could pray in the Spirit, it would just be juicy and fun to pray the Spirit." No, friend, not necessarily. Jesus prayed in the Spirit in the Garden of Gethsemane. Notice this word again in verse 12: "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.*" (Ephesians 6:12) Did you know that prayer is wrestling? Did you know that's what Jacob did when he wrestled with the angel of Yahweh? All night long he wrestled in prayer.

Do you know what Paul said in Romans chapter 15, verse 30? "*Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*" (Romans 15:30) Listen: "*that ye strive together with me.*" Do you know that the word *strive together* comes from a Greek word that we get the word *agony* from? The Greeks had an athletic contest they called the *agon*, and it was the most severe of athletic contests. It's the word we get our word *agony* from. Can you see a man, a wrestler, as he's wrestling, as he's straining? There's an agony; there's perspiration. He's holding on; he will not let go. According to the Greeks, that was the *agon*. Now, that's the same word that Paul uses here when he says, "*You [agonized] with me in your prayers.*"

### **Conclusion**

Listen. Prayer in the Spirit is sometimes the kind of prayer that Jesus Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is listening prayer, yes, because the Spirit directs our prayer. It is lingering prayer, because we abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is loving prayer, for God wants to intercede through us. And it is laboring prayer: "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood.*" (Ephesians 6:12) I tell you, there is a war. There's a battle to be fought. There's a victory to be won. And when we have some prayer warriors who will go forth taking the battleaxe of the Word of God, putting their hands upon the prayer altar and saying, "O God, I will not let go until thou dost bless me," we're going to see some mighty things happen in this city, in this church, and in our world. May God teach us to pray.

I feel sorry for people who don't know how to pray. You're familiar with Ernest

Hemingway, aren't you? Ernest Hemingway died of suicide. Some of the most tragic words ever written were written by Ernest Hemingway. Here's what he said—with this I close: "Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life. Man's destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants living on a burning log." No wonder he committed suicide: "from nothingness to nothingness"; "our destiny like a colony of ants alive on a burning log." I'm so glad I know Jesus and I've got a God who says, "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*" (Jeremiah 33:3) What a privilege to pray!

# The Weapons of Our Warfare

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 8, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Ephesians 6:11–22

*“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

EPHESIANS 6:11

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## Introduction

Now tonight, I want you to turn to Nehemiah chapter 4 for just a moment, and I want to reread a verse that we read this morning; and then, we're going to the New Testament. But, look here in Nehemiah chapter 4, and we begin reading in verse 7: *“But it came to pass...when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, [that] they were very wroth, And conspired all of them together to come and...fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”*



(Nehemiah 4:7–9) To “watch and pray” is what our Lord said in the New Testament. This is what Nehemiah did in the Old Testament. And then, notice verse 13: *“Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.”* (Nehemiah 4:13)

Now, Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls, and if you’ve been following along the morning messages, you know that God called him to a task of construction. And, when Nehemiah and the people said, “Let us arise and build,” all of the hosts of hell said, “Let us arise and stop them.” When God’s people have a mind to work, the devil’s crowd has a mind to wreck. And so, Nehemiah said, “I made a prayer to God. Not only did I make a prayer, but I set a watch.” You see, if we pray without watching, dear friend, that’s laziness. If we watch without praying, that is presumption. Now, Oliver Cromwell said on one occasion, I believe, “Trust the Lord, and keep your powder dry.” Now, that’s what old Nehemiah did. He lived a marvelously balanced life.

And, as I read this fourth chapter of Nehemiah, my mind goes again and again to the sixth chapter of Ephesians. So, turn to Ephesians chapter 6, and that’s really the basis of our study tonight—Ephesians chapter 6. And, I begin reading in verse 11. Now, remember that Nehemiah had an adversary—many adversaries—and he armed his people. Now, look in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11: *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.”* (Ephesians 6:11–19) And, we’ll stop right there.

But, let me tell you that Nehemiah wasn’t the only one who had a battle on his hands. If you’re living for God, you have a battle on your hands. And, if you don’t have a battle on your hands, shame on you. It doesn’t speak well of you; it speaks poorly of you, because the servant is not better than his master. And, he who stands nearest to the captain in any battle is going to find the most darts aimed at him. And, I just wonder if you’re not standing near your Lord—if your life is so easy and you’re not knowing what it is to do battle. We’re in a battle with no holds barred. It’s a battle between light and darkness, between death and life, between heaven and hell, and every Christian is

called to be a part of it. I want you to notice several things here in the scripture that I read.

## I. Our Adversary

First of all, I want you to notice our adversary in verse 11: *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”*—and then, verse 12—*“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:11–12) What do we learn about our adversary, the devil?

### A. He Is Subtle

Well, first of all, we learn that he’s subtle. For the Bible says, *“to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) Do you remember in Nehemiah’s time when they said, “You won’t know where we’re coming from. We’re coming suddenly, swiftly, secretly”? That’s the way the devil is. He’s very wily; he’s very subtle. And, your imagination, and your ingenuity, and your intellect is no match for the subtlety of the devil.

### B. He Is Spiritual

Not only is he subtle, but look at this scripture—he’s also spiritual, for it says, *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood”* in verse 12. (Ephesians 6:12) You... Have you ever thought about the devil being spiritual? It’ll be a great day in America when we learn that everything that is spiritual is not righteous. The Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they [be] of God...many [spirits] are gone out into the world.”* (1 John 4:1) The devil is spiritual. Everything spiritual is not righteous.

### C. He Is Strong

Not only is he subtle and not only is he spiritual, but he is strong. Look in verse 12: *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers...[and] against the rulers of darkness.”* (Ephesians 6:12) That word powers means “authorities.” Here is Satan, who has great power. And, as Martin Luther said in “A Mighty Fortress,” “His power and craft are great.” Don’t you ever make the mistake of underestimating the devil. I see some people who try to laugh the devil away. They try to act like the devil is some sort of a joke, some medieval superstition, some little fellow in a suit of red underwear with horns and a pitchfork trying to catch somebody bending over. Oh, no—he is powerful, and he is malevolent, and he has great authority and great power. And, the Bible says that he *“deceiveth the whole world.”* (Revelation 12:9)

### D. He Is Sinister

But, not only is he subtle, and spiritual, and strong; he is sinister—he is sinister. Look in verse 12: *“we wrestle...against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual*

*wickedness in high places.*” (Ephesians 6:12)

Now, that’s the kind of an enemy you have, and it would be tragic if you underestimated him. Satan’s real war, however, is not with you; it is with God. Evil persons have always known that, if you cannot harm someone directly, harm someone that that someone loves and you harm that one anyway. And so, Satan is trying to get at God. His real warfare is with God, but his attack is upon you, because God has set His affection upon you. So, we notice, first of all, our adversary.

## **II. Our Armor**

And then, I want you to notice, secondly, our armor, beginning in verse 13 and reading through verse 17: *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (Ephesians 6:13–17) And, I want us to think very quickly now about our armor.

### **A. The Belt of Truth**

First of all, he says, “You take the belt of truth.” (Ephesians 6:14) The warriors in this day wore a leather girdle that would fasten around the waist; it would gird up their loins. And, on that belt was hung all of their weapons and implements of war, and it was the thing that held everything together. Oh, how important is truth! Jesus said, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* (John 17:17) *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalm 119:11) I’ve said it before and I’ll say again: the thing that keeps me going is not how I feel; it is what I know. And, the devil will attack you with error, and the only way that you’re going to be able to discern between right and wrong is to get in this book, feed upon this book, saturate your soul with this book, ask the Holy Spirit of God to interpret this book to you. Many of you are set up for the devil, and he moves in and takes over because you do not know truth—truth. Oh, the very first weapon that you must have is the girdle of truth, the belt of truth.

### **B. The Breastplate of Righteousness**

And then, he speaks of the breastplate of righteousness. Every soldier in this day would wear an armored, brazen breastplate, and it was to keep the darts and the arrows from coming through. Now look, folks, what—what—is the breastplate of righteousness? It is a pure life, because not only will the devil attack with arrows (and you need the belt of truth), but he will also attack with impurity.

Do you know the thing that I want to do? Oh, I want to keep my life pure—pure. As I

stand before you tonight, there's no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my life. Now, you say, "You braggart." No, that's not bragging; that's not arrogance. I would be a sheer stupid fool to stand up here and try to minister the Word of God with sin in my life. I would be a fool to try to go against the devil with sin in my life. Don't you know that the Bible says, "[Don't] let the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give [a] place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:26–27) You see, if I don't have on the breastplate of righteousness, the devil can get into me. And, once he gets into me, I have given him a place and he can do all sorts of wicked, nefarious work, because he has gotten through in the crack in the armor. Oh, "*be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.*" (Isaiah 52:11) How pure we ought to be! How righteous we ought to be! How holy we ought to be! How afraid of sin we ought to be! Oh, dear friend, I want you to deal ruthlessly with your sin, for your sin will deal ruthlessly with you. You are to take the breastplate of righteousness.

### C. The Boots of Peace

And then, he says, "Go on and take the"—"*[have] your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*" (Ephesians 6:15)—that is, the boots of peace. You see, the devil wants to discourage you. And, the devil has put all kinds of briars in your way; the devil has put all kinds of pitfalls in your way—all sorts of rocks for you to stumble over. And, an army moves not only on its stomach but on its feet. And, these were foot soldiers, and these soldiers had hobnail boots that they would wear that would equip them to keep them from being...to keep them leaping rather than limping. Oh, do you have the peace of God? Are "*your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*"? (Ephesians 6:15) Oh, you can walk through any circumstance, through any thorny pathway, through any briars, if your feet have on the peace of God—not your peace, but "*the peace of God, [that passes] all understanding*" and all misunderstanding, too. (Philippians 4:7)

### D. The Shield of Faith

And then, he says, "*the shield of faith.*" (Ephesians 6:16) Now folks, the devil will attack not only with error, where you'll need the belt of truth; and not only will he attack with impurity, where you'll need the breastplate of righteousness; and not only will he attack with discouragement, where you'll need your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; but—you listen to me right now—he's going to attack you with doubts. The devil will put doubts in your heart, in your mind, that will blow out every light in your soul. The devil wants you not to believe God, The devil is the author of all doubt. And, he crawled his slimy, corroding pathway into the pages of history in the third chapter of Genesis, and put a doubt in Eve's mind, and said, "*Yea, hath God said...?*" (Genesis 3:1)

Well, how are you going to overcome those doubts? The shield of faith. And, where are you going to get faith? God gives it, dear friend, if you will allow Him to do it. You can't make yourself believe. You can't work up faith. Faith is the gift of God, and "*God [had] dealt to every man [a] measure of faith.*" (Romans 12:3) And, if you'll get the sin out of your life, and wait before the Lord, and ask God for it, and look for Jesus, "*the author and finisher of [your] faith,*" (Hebrews 12:2) you'll have faith. And, every fiery dart that comes from the very pit of hell will be quenched in that shield of faith.

#### **E. The Helmet of Salvation**

And then, put on the helmet of salvation. Oh, dear friend, that means not simply being saved from hell, but the helmet of salvation means the constant deliverance that God gives us. And, enemies, so many times, will go to crush the skull. But oh, dear friend, if you're wearing God's helmet, the helmet of salvation, Satan will break his arms on that strong helmet. Are you saved? Do you know that you're saved? Are you trusting the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you have the full assurance? Oh, if you're not sure that you're saved, you'll be no match for Satan.

#### **F. The Sword of the Spirit**

And then, "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the [Bible]*"—"the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

### **III. Our Attack**

This is our armor, and I wish I had more time to talk about that. But, I want to move on and speak not only about our adversary and about our armor, but I want to get to the very heart of the message and speak about our attack—our attack—because, you see, look, folks, we're not to be on the defensive; we're to be on the offensive. And, we're not to overcome with evil, but we're to overcome evil with good. And so, there's a war, and we're to be in it. And so, now, Paul tells us how to make our attack in verse 18. Read verse 18 now: "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*" (Ephesians 6:18)

Now, I can just hear somebody—he's put on all the armor; he's got on the belt of truth; he's got on the breastplate of righteousness; he's got on the boots of peace; he's got on the shield of faith; he's got the helmet of salvation; he's got the sword of the Spirit—and he says, "Now Lord, I'm all ready. Show me the battle. I'm all ready to fight." And, he's not prepared for what God says. God says, "Now that you're all dressed up, here's the battle"—verse 18: "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" (Ephesians 6:18) Now folks, get this in your heart, and get it down big and get it down straight: prayer is not getting ready to fight. That's where the fight is. Right there—

that is the battle. That is the warfare—right there. That’s the way to wrestle against the enemy. Once you’ve dressed up for the fight, once you’ve seen your adversary, once you’ve seen your ally, once you put on your armor, then you’re ready for the attack. And, the army of the Lord Jesus Christ marches forth on its knees. The reason that some of us are not winning is we’re not even showing up for the war. We don’t even know where the battle is. The battle is in prayer. That’s what Paul is saying here. After we get dressed up to fight, then he tells us how to fight.

Let me give you some illustrations of what I am talking about. For example, turn to Exodus chapter 17 for a moment—Exodus chapter 17. Remember the Israelites were coming out of the land of Egypt, going into the Promised Land, and there was someone who withstood them and tried to keep them from having the fulfillment of God’s promise in their life. And, that someone was a wicked man named Amalek, and I want you to notice how Moses dealt with Amalek. I’m reading Exodus chapter 17, beginning in verse 9. This is one of the most remarkable battles in all of the Bible. Now, here is Amalek, this wicked king. Well, let’s begin in verse 8: *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim”—that’s the name of a place, Rephidim—“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, [and] fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. [And] so Joshua did as Moses had said [unto] him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill”—now, notice specially verse 11—“And it came to pass, [that as] Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua”—this was very important to God. This wasn’t incidental; this was fundamental—“for I will utterly put out [of] the remembrance of Amalek”—“out the remembrance of Amalek”—“from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exodus 17:8–16)*

Now, here is the question: Where was the real war with Amalek fought? Was it fought on the hill or was it fought in the valley? Well, if you’ll read this story, you’ll find out that it was fought on the hill. It was when Moses held up his hands that Israel prevailed—hands lifted to God, holy hands in prayer. It was when Moses tired in intercession and his hands drooped that Amalek prevailed. I can imagine that Joshua, down there in the valley with his soldiers, would say to Moses, “Moses, don’t you know there’s a war going on? Moses, come down off that mountain and fight.” And, I can

imagine Moses answering back and saying, “Friend, I am fighting.”

Oh, the battle is prayer. Don’t you forget it. Dear friend, the devil wants to keep us from praying. He doesn’t care what else we do. He doesn’t care how much money we raise. He cares not how many buildings we build. He cares not how many songs we sing, nor how many sermons we preach. The devil mocks our schemes; he laughs at our toilings, but he fears our prayers. The battle is prayer. I am no greater than my prayer life. You are no stronger than your prayer life. This church is no better than the prayers of its people. I remember, when Sidlow Baxter was here, he said this: he said, “The devil surely must say to his demons, ‘Boys, keep him from praying. For if you can keep him from praying, we can beat him every time. But, if he prays, he will beat us every time.’” The battle is prayer. The battle is prayer. The battle is prayer! And, when you put on the whole armor of God, all you’re doing is bringing yourself into a stance where you can pray, where you can lift holy hands to God and stand against the wicked one. Oh, what a power this congregation can be in the hand of God if we learn how to pray!

Let me give you another example of what I’m talking about (doing battle through prayer). Turn to the book of Daniel, chapter 10, for a moment, and let’s look at another passage of Scripture. I want to read now beginning in verse 10. Daniel has been seeking knowledge from God; Daniel is wanting understanding. And, I want to say this, dear friend: that *the understanding man prays, and the praying man gets understanding*. And, Daniel has been seeking understanding. He wanted to know what’s what. He wanted to know what God was up to so he could get in on it, and he’s praying, “O Lord, give me a revelation. God, give me wisdom. Lord, I want to know.” And, a strange thing happened when Daniel, this mighty man, began to pray—and I’m reading here in Daniel 10, beginning in verse 10: *“And, behold, [a] hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before... God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. [And] now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.”*

(Daniel 10:10–16) And then, he goes on to tell how he received a message from this angel of the Lord.

Now, this is indeed a deep and mysterious passage of Scripture, but I want you to learn something here tonight, if you don't learn anything else about this passage of Scripture—that prayer is real warfare. Here Daniel had been praying. He'd been fasting. He'd been seeking the face of God for twenty-one days of humiliation and fasting, and no answer had Daniel received. He prayed, and he prayed, and he prayed, and he fasted, and he cried, and he prayed, but there was no answer. And finally, an angel came, and the angel said, "I was on my way with the answer, but the prince of Persia withstood me."

Now, who is the prince of Persia? That is an allusion to the devil himself. Often—often—the power behind the throne of wicked kingdoms is the devil. Remember when Jesus said to Peter, "*Get thee behind me, Satan*"? (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33; Luke 4:8) He wasn't talking to Peter; he was talking to Satan, who was motivating Peter. Remember there in Ezekiel 28, when the devil is called the prince of Tyre? (Ezekiel 28:2) You see, here's the power behind the throne. And, when the Bible says, "the prince of Persia," it literally means the chief demon who ruled over Persia. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11: "*For we wrestle not against*"—and verse 12—"*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities*"—that's what he's talking about—"*against principalities, [and kingdoms, and] powers...[and] spiritual wickedness in high places.*" (Ephesians 6:12) And, here Daniel was praying. But, the point I want you to see is that there was a warfare—a great warfare—that was going on, and while Daniel was praying and interceding, there were those who were trying to keep the prayer from being answered. And, if you don't understand that, you just don't understand that prayer is war—prayer is real warfare.

But, I'll tell you something else that's very wonderful about this. This doesn't discourage me; it encourages me, because it also tells me, friend, that when I pray as Daniel did, and when I pray through, that God even puts angels to work for me. Did you know that we all have ministering angels that want to take care of us, just as Daniel had angels that came and ministered to him? Jot these scriptures down in the margin there. Mark 1, verse 13—speaking of the Lord Jesus: "*the angels [came and] ministered unto him.*" (Mark 1:13) Acts 12, verse 7—and you're gonna find out there, where Peter's delivered by an angel, an angel who takes Simon Peter out of prison. (Acts 12:7) And then, in Hebrews chapter 1, verses 13 and 14: the Bible tells us that angels are ministering spirits that God has given us. (Hebrews 1:14)

Did you know all around us there are unseen angels? Did you know that? All around us. Elisha was at Dothan, and the Syrian army was surrounding Elisha. And, Elisha's servant said, "*Alas, my master! [what] shall we do?*" (2 Kings 6:15) And, Elisha prayed,



*“[O] Lord...open his eyes.”* (2 Kings 6:17) And, the Lord opened the eyes of the servants, and the Bible says, “Lo, the mountains were filled with horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:17) Oh, I just believe that God encamps His holy angels all around us and all about us. I tell you, when I get in an airplane, sometimes, and that thing gets to bouncing around, I say, “Lord, put an angel on this wing. Lord, put an angel on that wing. And Lord, just put an angel up there in that cockpit.” And, I’m not being silly; I just believe that God has His angels to bear us up, lest we dash our feet upon a stone. (Psalm 91:12; Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:11) He gives His angels—holy angels—charge over us. And, and, it’s such a remarkable thing to see how Daniel, when he started to pray, that all kinds of strident forces started to work. And, here was Michael—and here was the archangel—and over here is the prince of Persia. And, there’s a war—a holy war—that goes on when we pray. I want you to learn this, friend: that prayer is warfare.

Now, let’s go back, if we can, for just a moment, to Ephesians chapter 6. And, I was just making the point with those two illustrations to show you that, when we put on the armor, that we’re just simply getting ready to fight the battle. And, I’ll say goodbye to our radio audience; I didn’t realize that it’s getting so late. Y’all not listening very fast at all. And, since we’ve already gone past eight o’clock, it doesn’t make any difference now at all, so just settle back. No, not really. All right. But, I do—I do—want us to see what we’re really talking about. What is the battle? Look at it again in Ephesians chapter 6—look at it. The Bible says here in verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 6:18) What is praying in the Spirit?

### **A. Listening Prayer**

Well, in the first place, dear friend, it is listening prayer—listening prayer. It’s not coming to God and saying, “O Lord, listen, for your servant speaketh.” It’s saying, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” You see, when you pray in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit tells you what to pray. Prayer is not some sort of a means whereby we force God’s will into our will. *Prayer is finding God’s will and getting in on it.* The sweetest definition of prayer that I know is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. Oh, friend, that’s powerful prayer. Have you learned to listen to God?

Do you know in Romans chapter 8, verses 14 through 16, our relationship to God is spoken of as father and son? (Romans 8:14–16) In Romans chapter 7, verse 4, our relationship to God is spoken of as He’s the husband and we’re the bride. (Romans 7:4) In Colossians chapter 3, verse 24, our relationship to God is spoken of this way: He’s the boss, and we’re the servant. (Colossians 3:24) In another place, Jesus calls us friends. (John 15:15) All of those things—whether it be father and son, husband and

wife, servant and boss, whether it be friend and friend—all of that implies a listening. Have you learned to listen to God? Have you learned to be quiet and to be still and say, “Speak, my Lord. Thy servant heareth.” Oh, friend, praying in the Spirit is not just marching into God’s presence with a shopping list; it’s being still and knowing that “I am God.” It’s tuning your heart to God.

Do you know how to hear the voice of God? Can you hear God when He speaks? That’s one of the—that’s one of the—fine things about fasting. Fasting attunes our ear to hear God. What is praying in the Spirit? It is listening prayer.

### **B. Lingering Prayer**

I’ll tell you, it is lingering prayer. Look again: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 6:18) We can’t just rush into the presence of God. Jesus Christ said in John chapter 15, verses 7 and 8: *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, [then] ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* (John 15:7)

Oh, friend, we need to abide in the Lord Jesus, just exactly as a branch abides in the vine. A branch has no side issues. Do you know what a branch does to a vine? It is unconditionally committed to that vine. Jesus said, *“[You] abide in me, and [let] my words abide in you, [then you’ll] ask what [you] will.”* (John 15:7) You see, praying in the Spirit is letting the life of the Lord Jesus Christ flow through us, just as the sap flows from the vine into the branches. Did you know, according to rabbinical law, that the wood of the vine could not even be used in the temple sacrifices? It was against the rules to use it. Why, you couldn’t take the wood of the vine and carve it and make furniture. It’s good for nothing. The only thing that the wood of the vine is for—the branch—is just to abide in the vine. And, if it won’t do that, it needs to be cut off and cast into the fire and burned. That’s what Jesus said—it’s absolutely good for nothing except to abide. (John 15:4) Did you know that’s the only business you have on earth is to abide? And, if you don’t do that, you’re absolutely good for nothing—good for nothing. There’s... You have no other purpose but to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you, folks, that praying in the Spirit—listen to me—it is listening prayer; it is lingering prayer. “Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word” (William D. Longstaff)

### **C. Loving Prayer**

The third thing I want to say about praying in the Spirit—it is loving prayer. Look at it again in verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And for me.”* (Ephesians 6:18–19) Oh, Paul is saying, “Let’s pray for one another. Let’s pray in love.” Oh, *“By this shall all men know that [you’re] my disciples, if [you] have love one [for] another.”* (John 13:35) May I tell you, dear friend, if you find your prayers being too

egocentric, they're probably not Spirit-led prayers and they're probably not powerful prayers? The Holy Spirit wants to come into you to give you the spirit of intercession. O God, make us intercessors. O God, make us people who can pray for other people. Do you have a problem? Then, pray for someone else's problem. The Bible says that *"the captivity of Job [was turned] when he prayed for his friends"—"when he prayed for his friends."* (Job 42:10) It's loving prayer.

#### D. Laboring Prayer

And then, it is laboring prayer. Look, if you will, in verse 22: Paul says—excuse me, yes, verse 22—Paul speaks of, in verse 21: *"that ye [may] also...know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister [of] the Lord, shall make known [unto] you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that [you] might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your [heart]."* (Ephesians 6:21–22) And then, in verse 12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Ephesians 6:12) Real praying in the Spirit is not easy. It's warfare. It is work; it is labor. It's not always ecstasy; it may be agony. Jesus, in Gethsemane, was not in ecstasy; He was in agony. Romans 15, verse 30—put it down by this scripture: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"* (Romans 15:30)—*"that you strive together."* That word *strive*—*agónizomai*. It's *agónizomai*, is the word—*agónizomai*. It's the word that we get our word *agonize* from. And, what Paul is saying is that we need to agonize in prayer. Praying in the Spirit is laboring prayer. It's not easy. It takes blood, sweat, and tears to pray in the Spirit.

#### Conclusion

Now folks, our message tonight is a very simple one: there is no way that we'll overcome the devil apart from our warfare. Taking on the whole armor of God is just getting us ready for the warfare. The warfare is prayer, and prayer is the warfare that Satan cannot stand against. Jesus taught that we can rob a strong man's house if we first bind him, (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27) and the way that we're going to bind him is through believing—persistent prayer that will not take "no" for an answer.

Do you know what witnessing is, and soul winning? Friend, that's not the battle; that's just going out and picking up the spoils of the battle. The battle is won on our knees before we ever go. Do you know what preaching is? That's not the battle; that's just the spoils of the battle. The battle is won or lost before we ever start. It's prayer—prayer in the Savior's name, *"[putting] on the whole armour of God [and standing] against the wiles of the devil."* (Ephesians 6:11)

Let's bow together in prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank you tonight for your Word. Lord, I just thank you for the blessing it's been to me to preach it and study it again. And Lord, you know how my heart was convicted, O God, how I had to confess to you my weakness in prayer and, Lord, my old carnal nature that doesn't want to pray. But Lord, I pray that you will teach me to pray, and make me, Lord, a prayer warrior, that I might pray and intercede for my people here. And Lord, help us to pray one for the other. Give us the victory, Lord, as we win it upon our knees and then go up and out and pick up the spoils of the battle, the souls that are brought to the Lord Jesus. For we pray in Jesus' name.