

Knowing Jesus

Sermons by Dr. Russell F. Metcalfe, Jr.

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Knowing Jesus Better

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2. The Vessel Formed
3. Mystery
4. The Church as Community
5. Keeping Power Switched On
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7. Don't You Know There is a War On
8. The Hope The Glory The Power
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September 13, 1987

EPHESIANS: Knowing JESUS Better...A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS

Purpose: (3:14-21) 19b "...that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a manual on the healthiness of life in God as it is intended to be lived. Here we may read about how God's great POWER can be released in those who believe; we are introduced to mysteries of GRACE and wonders of KINDNESS and joys of LIFE. But the highest privilege is FULLNESS! The greatest imperative in the book is 5:18 Be filled with the Spirit! And in the prayer here (3:14-21) is the heart of Paul's concern for the Ephesians, and certainly God's will for you and me: FULLNESS! But what KIND of fullness?

I. THE QUESTION IS NOT 'SHALL WE BE FILLED?,' BUT 'WITH WHAT SHALL WE BE FILLED?'

- A. Each of us is a vessel that is full for there is no such thing as spiritual vacuum. People are full of the stuff of life; people are full of their own importance; they are full of worry; they are full of hot air. In our culture it is the norm to be filled with the importance of self. We are so near to our culture that we are often blind to the pervasive, insidious, all-encompassing

fullness of SELF WORSHIP as the 'accepted way' to live. There is occupation with what "I" want! There is obsession with being true to "ME!" To suggest otherwise is equal to LUNACY and TREASON combined.

IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, A CONTRADICTION, THAT ONLY WHEN I AM FILLED WITH GOD MY REAL 'BEST SELF'— MY 'FULFILLED SELF' CAN BE FORMED!

But this is what Jesus was talking about when He said: (Mk 8:35) "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall find it."

B. There are places where our fullness shows. We need to be looking at:

Reservoirs of consciousness: The things that "fill up our day." Not that we have consciously said: "This important!" Or even that we ENJOY it . . . but this is what we DO!

Wellsprings of attitude: The way we usually ARE to other people. The 'habits of the heart' (with apology to Bellah.) We let ourselves take on a "usual" way of looking at things: "Here comes the Dreamer!" said Joseph's brothers. "Here comes A PAIN!" "Here comes LOVE!"

Fountains of the spirit: The way we really ARE BEFORE GOD! Blessed are the pure in heart! Blessed are the seekers after God! Open, obedient, growing faith and love that is reflected in love for the Word, love for the place of prayer, love for the Church.

C. Our "fullness" is not usually a conscious choice:

1. We catch the ways of society more than we deliberately choose; it isn't that we need to look for the devil under every rock...the spirit of 'creeping secularism' is much more subtle than that— WE JUST NEED TO FORGET WHO WE ARE, AND WHOSE WE ARE FOR A SHORT WHILE!
2. Being filled is not necessarily seen as moral questions, or as "serious"— but things that 'take up space' in our souls.
3. (If we can speak as though spiritual things were 'spatial') Many thought-
s/attitudes/mind-sets "take up room" that might be used for better things. [If

your box is filled with \$20 bills, you couldn't get in \$100 bills even if they were offered!]

- D. Fullness does not say anything about CAPACITY. Remember, even a small vessel can GROW, and eventually take on surprising proportions.

II. THE IDEA OF BEING FILLED WITH GOD

- A. "Filled with all the fullness of God" ALL THAT GOD HAS TO OFFER - certainly doesn't mean that we have all of God that there is— the Universe does not "contain" God, but rather is sustained by His Word- but it DOES MEAN 'FILLED WITH GOD!'
- B. This is not a phrase to be lightly dismissed: "Oh, yes— what is meant here is 'the experience of entire sanctification!'" Which may be true— but in OUR context we may be saying: "This is stuff we Nazarenes 'own.' We are on familiar territory. Two trips to an altar and 'we have God's fullness!" Sometimes I think our church has got all the theological issues solved so neatly, and 'understands' all the 'hows' and even the 'whys' that people don't see how our "neat theology" relates to them where they are.

But there is REAL TRUTH in this message of holiness, a reality to being filled with the Spirit of God that, while it defies complete description, is crucial to our success as Christians.

EITHER WE WILL SEEK TO BE FILLED WITH GOD, AND BELONG WHOLLY TO HIM, OR WE WILL FAIL! And we will:

1. fall into outward sin
2. fall into sin of pride— thinking WE are the KEY—have a "holiness" that is a mass of rules and regulations
3. fall into sin of 'false humility' (antinomianism) and say: everyone has to sin every day anyway...

THIS IS NOT MERE THEORY (this prayer of Paul for you and me) AND ONCE AGAIN:

III. THE KEY TO FULLNESS IS KNOWING JESUS CHRIST

(v20-21) GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE THIS REALITY

This is what all the rest of Ephesians is about. But for right now we look at a practical application:)

- A. Fullness means the indwelling Christ (v 17): Jesus, welcome, at home, in you/me just NOW! By having heard Him knock, and by having deliberately invited Him in to STAY
- B. And Fulness means the empowering Christ (v 18): Enabling us to GRASP GOD'S LOVE:milk//meat/ /development/ /identity//responsibility
- C. The all-surpassing Christ (v 19): a crisis/on-going process of surrender; a grasping of the LOVE that enables us to "present our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1,2)Conclusion:
 - 1. You do not have the choice: "Shall I be full— or shall I not?"
 - 2. The question is: WILL YOU BE FILLED WITH JESUS CHRIST?
 - 3. Will you invite Him in? Make HIM your STRENGTH? Acknowledge your HELPLESSNESS before Him; and let HIM BE YOUR STRENGTH!

Make Him your ALL IN ALL? Trust Him with your secret ambitions . . .your dreams . .
.your hopes?

#241 His Way with Thee

The Vessel Formed

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1. Knowing Jesus Better
2. **The Vessel Formed**
3. Mystery
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September 20, 1987

Imparting of Life; Means to God's Purpose in THE VESSEL FORMED.

Introduction: God wants us filled, but first we have to be formed.

Two weeks ago we began this study of Ephesians with the text (3:19) "That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." This is the PURPOSE of this entire epistle!

[We said that everyone is already FULL of something (even if it is just hot air), but that if we are to be filled with GOD it will be a deliberate choice on our part.]

Being filled with God is the ONLY way to go! Without the fullness there will be failure. With the fullness we will be FULLY ALIVE!

But before we can be FILLED with God, we need to be FORMED in spiritual life. Before we can learn to walk we have to be born. Before we can dedicate our LIFE to Jesus we must have a LIFE to dedicate!

I. SALVATION AS A WAY OF LIFE

Look with me, if you will, at salvation as a complete way of life. Some people think of being saved mostly in terms of a fire escape. I'm glad IT IS THAT! But I'm also glad it is much, much more.

[I certainly don't want to miss God's best for all eternity! to be 'shut out' from fellowship forever!]

But if salvation is ANYTHING at all, IT IS LIFE!

Eph.2:5 "(God has) made us alive together with Christ..." The "Theology" of the New Birth is exciting:

[Do you know what the Bible tells us takes place when we come to Jesus for 'salvation?']

1. **Regeneration:** (v 5 Even when we were dead.. He has made us alive together with Christ) The reality of a new kind and quality of life. If there is not new life there is not salvation. This life is evidenced by appetite; and by growth; and by continued development.
2. **Justification:** (Eph 2:13 Brought near by the blood of Christ) also [Romans 5:1 Therefore being JUSTIFIED...] The satisfaction of sin's guilt. The breaking of sin's power. The freedom to choose right.
3. **Adoption:** (Ephesians 2:18.19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's HOUSEHOLD.) also [Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are Tchildren of God.) HOW near are we to God? We are FAMILY! We have spoken of "adoption", but "Citizenship" ALSO applies. There must be a sense of COMMUNITY or salvation is not complete as God intended. NO LONE RANGERS! Family! Access to the refrigerator!
4. **Sanctification:** Being made HOLY! Christ likeness begun! Begun the instant we belong to Jesus in surrender; continues to crisis of entire sanctification; continues in growth, Christlikeness to glorification, when we receive a spiritual body; continues to all eternity in God's Presence.

II. THE LOWEST LEVEL OF SALVATION Is PEACE WITH GOD!

All these wonderful things happen when we come to Jesus - [even though none of us fully realizes how wealthy we are in becoming God's children] - but usually THE FIRST OF what we understand is just ONE THING: WE ARE AT PEACE WITH GOD!

The wonder of peace; it is what we crave even when we don't realize it. {It is a luxury that cannot be bought with money. It is a pure and quiet conscience, with the knowledge of sins forgiven. It is the basis for real happiness and contentment. It is the foundation of the Christian life.}

Jesus is the Prince of Peace! That is what the angels sang when He was born! (2:14) And Jesus HIMSELF is our peace! THE ENTRY LEVEL OF SALVATION...is PEACE with GOD; being in harmony with Him, accepting HIS Word as true; seeking to live by HIS judgments, by FAITH - even though we can only SEE what we can see.

Being justified by faith we have peace with God: our life in Christ starts with peace.. peace with God

["I didn't even know I was at war with God!" "Rebellion is more like it...or anarchy!" Rebels can't dictate terms. Rebels can't make deals. Rebels can only surrender. But JESUS HIMSELF is our peace!]

[How so??]

III. THE DOOR OF ALL SALVATION IS JESUS

"I AM the Door!" At every level of spiritual LIFE, Jesus is the DOOR!

1. His death on the cross gives us access: (2:16 Jews and Gentiles alike! have access to the Father!) But that access is first of all access for salvation. . then filling!
2. Access by His Spirit - Convicting, convincing - speaking to you about sin!
3. Access in the "now!" When God speaks about salvation, His time is always in the present! The "Door" is not something which you can search for and find all on your own. In God's Providence it may well be here tomorrow when you seek it...but there is no guarantee, and presumption is a deadly enemy of eternal life!
4. Access in the context of the Church! [We are "being built together..."]

Conclusion: COME ALIVE TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF LIFE!

Do you know the high privilege of peace with God? Are you at peace with Jesus? I'm not sure what all is involved by NOT having peace with God. But there is an interesting figure here, when we combine the truth expressed about 'existence before we find Christ and are saved:'

1. We are DEAD in trespasses and sins, but also
2. We are WALKING AROUND doing like the world tells us; doing what 'the prince of the power of the air' has dictated TO the world at large!
3. So.. until we are born to new life in Jesus we are WALKING DEAD! Zombies!
4. But we are invited to COME UP to Christ's THRONE; and to SIT DOWN with Him! in PEACE!

Jesus Himself is the DOOR to Peace with God, and to LIFE and to Life "MORE ABUNDANT!" ... Come (1) confessing your sin(s)! And come (2) believing Christ's MERCY! (Romans 10:9,10. !)and that Door to LIFE is ajar for YOU this evening! You can be filled with all the fullness of God! That is God's best and perfect will for you!

#230 - Come, Just as You Are

Mystery

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September 27, 1987

Ephesians 3:4,10

Do you enjoy mystery? What is it about mystery that intrigues and perplexes? Conundrum, enigma, puzzle, riddle, secret . . . all these are elements of the phenomenon we call "mystery." [The BUTLER did it!]

But when "mystery" is applied to everyday life— to our paycheck, or to our marriage, or to the contents of the dinner on our plate— we are not quite so enamored with "mystery." It is 10 p.m.- and 'we want to know where our children are!

This certainly is true of our standing with God. The Bible makes it plain that we can know God, and can be sure that we are right with Him. It is important that we know we are saved, based on fact and not on myth or hand-me-down folklore. And yet having said that, here in Ephesians Paul speaks of the mystery of faith. The mystery is an open secret. It is the fact that God wants to live with men, both Jew and Gentile. God does not want us to doubt that fact.

But there will always be elements of the faith that go beyond what we can understand. Faith itself will always be mysterious. (So is electricity— but we still use it!) And we must live by FAITH as long as we are in this world of time and sense.

There are always temptations to elevate what we do know and understand, and make it more than it is, so we won't have to deal with 'mystery' any more— won't have to 'walk by faith.' And ...It is the profound sense of holy mystery, the mystery that enables us to know and not know at the same time, which keeps us honest before God and fellow man.

I. WE ARE SAVED BY FAITH AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO LIVE BY FAITH

There is a "funny thing" about salvation, it is a paradox:

1. Any child can "understand" it— we have all sinned; Jesus died on the cross to save us, and if we confess He will forgive and save us— and if we don't, we will go to hell. But also
2. there is a profound mystery involved— WHY should God care?

And there are many profound mysteries! IF He cares so much about people, what about those who never heard? What about seemingly unanswered prayer? Why is there suffering?

We are called to total obedience, to total commitment to God in Christ, before we know all the reasons why, but not before we know enough to be assured and satisfied that God is good, and that God is holy, and that God knows us and loves us.

- A. God's will in salvation involves THE CHURCH (and centers in the Cross (v 11))
- B. God's will in salvation HAS UNIVERSAL IMPLICATIONS (which we cannot fully understand). But unless we are careful, even in our desire to be more spiritual, and be better Christians— we can seek to sidestep the radical cost of walking with Jesus by faith!

This has been my day to be narrowly doctrinal! But:

The BESETTING SIN OF THE FUNDAMENTAL MIND-SET IS THAT IT WANTS TO ELIMINATE THE 'MYSTERY' AND "KNOW" ALL THE ANSWERS IN THE BIBLE

Fundamentalism leans just a bit too hard on human understanding of Bible content, and takes almost a 'cause and effect' line on prayer and holy things, even when God's perfect will is veiled.

The BESETTING SIN OF THE CHARISMATIC MIND-SET IS THAT IT WANTS TO ELIMINATE THE 'MYSTERY' AND "FEEL" ALL THE ANSWERS IN EXPERIENCE:

Charismatics seem to weigh heavily on the importance of experience, giving it what seems to be almost equal importance with Scripture.

But there is an elusive, Golden Mean of balance in living of doctrine, experience, and practice. But it is not an easy middle ground.

II. WE CAN BE FAITHFUL WHEN WE CANNOT FULLY UNDERSTAND!

The truth is: it is much easier to analyze other people's mistakes and shortcomings than it is to face the same situation with integrity.

1. We are called to a radical commitment to the authority of God's Word: The BIBLE is truth! No doubt about it! But the Bible does not save us!
2. The Bible shows us JESUS! HE saves us! and we are called to: life-changing involvement in experiential truth, while being subject to the Word. To be saved means JOY! No doubt about it! There is reality in being saved. But the JOY does not save us! The JOY results from being near Jesus. JESUS saves us!;
3. AND SO OUR PRIMARY CONCERN IS: having a LIVING connection with Jesus Christ, knowing Him, walking with Him, and abiding in Him. The Book of Job is an important book; it tells us that we can know God when we cannot understand Him. And it tells us that what we do is important to Him. And it tells us that faithfulness is precious to Him!

Conclusion:

God loves YOU!

Some day you may DO something wonderful for Him! But we need to see that right here! right NOW YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM! And you can give Him something! You can give Him your love! faithfulness! OBEDIENCE!

Mystery

We preach salvation and prayer and walking with God as though they were means to an end; as, if we will do these things then (1) we will be useful, or (2) we will live happily ever after. But what we need to grasp is the fact that there is ULTIMATE REALITY IN (simply) BEING BEFORE THE LORD!

Don't mistake: It is good and necessary that we witness and win; that we be USED of God; that we DEVELOP and STUDY and GROW and do all that we can understand of God's will, for the best reasons that we can know. . . We are not excused from witnessing and working and serving and growing and doing— all the things that we can understand of God's will. But when the way is hard— and we can't see anything being accomplished, and it seems we are at a dead end, remember ...there is more to this business than we can see! There is holy MYSTERY involved. It is NOT a cop-out to say that we don't have to understand all about our faith to be part of it. But we DO have confidence in the ONE we trust!

He is GOOD! He is GOD! And if we love Jesus, and are wholeheartedly involved in seeking His face... then we don't have to achieve or accomplish to be loved of Him... TODAY we are precious in God's sight! And if we will walk before God today, whatever the circumstance, then we please Him, and we fellowship Him, and somehow we shall fulfil our purpose. We are ALIVE in Him!

#71 (EH) *Sweet Will of God*

The Church as Community

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October 4, 1987

"The Eleventh Commandment"

Ephesians 4:12-13; 15-16;17-32

Just this week I took relatives to Plymouth. It isn't the Rock that fascinates me there. It is the memorial at the top of the little hill there, overlooking the harbor. I never get over the powerful sense of community that brought those people to these hostile shores.

I imagine also that many pioneers had the same sense of community as they trekked across the country in wagons, looking for a land of promise in the "Western reserve"— or further. In the past many communities have been welded together by common enemies, common visions of peace or purity. They appeal to us in some vague way— but seem somehow highly impractical...

Compare/contrast: Pilgrims/pioneers// "People's Church (Jim Jones)" . . . all had a "vision" a dream of Utopia . . . a place to go— modern day Hutterites very much a viable community.

But if we will look, such a challenge to community is found in the doctrine of the CHURCH, and here is one outline for us to look at and pray about: We are all familiar with "The Ten Commandments" that God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the laws that are the basis and hope for morality in our world today. And it is commonly accepted that "The Eleventh Commandment" is the commandment which Jesus gave that we should love God and man. Nobody is against "love." But do we make the connection between the commandment: "Love one another!" and the concept and idea of living in fellowship with the Church of Jesus Christ?

It is easy to talk about love, and to abstract about what love is, and even relatively easy to set up communes where everyone involved is supposed to operate out of pure love. It is another thing to carry out Christ's love into the nitty-gritty of peeling potatoes and carrying the weak and bringing home the bacon. Most "communes"—even Christian efforts— miserably fail.

And it is just as hard to deliberately be a part of a congregation made up of imperfect people who are sincerely trying to carry out God's will and be a part of Christ's Body, the CHURCH!

Between the idea and the carrying out there all too often seems to come frustration and failure. What is stopping us here from establishing a community of pure love and harmony in keeping with "The Eleventh Commandment?"

Should we strive to do that? I believe we already ARE striving to do just that! But look with me at some practical aspects of God's grace manifested in the church: look with me realistically at the idea of UNITY: as a fact, a reality, but also as a goal — never being daunted because the IDEAL is not seen in the way we think it OUGHT to be seen. Is that realistic? How can we do such an idealistic thing in the pragmatic present?

I. WE NEED A COMMON DESTINATION- A GOAL BEFORE US CONSTANTLY

And the first part of the chapter gives us this ideal: (vv12,13 "...so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith, and in the knowledge of the

Son of God and become mature, attaining to the FULL MEASURE OF PERFECTION FOUND IN CHRIST." (cf 3:19 "filled with all the fullness of God.")

1. We need to join our personal goals with those of Christ for His entire Body!
2. When we pray "Thy kingdom come!" we are affirming the community of faith! And we are saying: Keep this GOAL before us!

II. WE NEED A SIMPLE PLAN TO CARRY US FORWARD TOWARD THIS GOAL

And in verse 16 is the Divine Plan spelled out: Each member, each part, is to be connected with the Living Head: "...from HIM (Christ the Head) the whole body being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

1. The Separatists (Pilgrims) had to entrust themselves to God by way of men they trusted: Pastor Robinson, Elder Brewster, for spiritual leadership; Miles Standish for secular government; the master of the Mayflower for transportation.
2. We need to entrust ourselves to God, and seek more than a "nominal" or "intellectual" faith in Jesus Christ. He is the living Head— and every member of His body can be led by Christ. True, Christ will probably lead through people. But there must be the vital, living connection.

III. WE CAN BE AWARE OF A MIGHTY POWER THAT ENABLES US TO CARRY OUT THE BEAUTIFUL PLAN

Beautiful plans and schemes are plentiful: plans that work are few and far between.

1. The church is to be built on integrity; and on genuine caring:

(17) Walk no longer as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding excluded from the LIFE OF GOD because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart having become callous given over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. BUT YOU DID NOT LEARN CHRIST IN THIS WAY! YOU have been taught that you lay aside the old self which is being

corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth therefore laying aside falsehood speak truth each one of you with his neighbor for we are members of one another.

2. And the church is built on INTER-DEPENDENCE:

(v 25) "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

This is the identical thought Paul expresses in Romans 12:5

"So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

IV. WE HAVE A GREAT TEACHER AND GUIDE IN THIS GREAT ADVENTURE (VV 29-30)

(And the 11th commandment here has another serious commandment, a 'negative' side to the positive "Love one another!" and that is :DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD!)

The Holy Spirit is NOT "looking for reasons to leave;" but also, He never forces Himself on those who do not want HIM!

Evidently this is a list of the things that can grieve the Spirit: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice...

And definitely, here is what PLEASES God: (verse 32) KINDNESS! COMPASSION! A SENSE OF COMMUNITY!

Conclusion:

1. It may not strike you as attractive to join a community of faith. You may not see the need, like Pilgrims did, or pioneers.
2. But in reality their physical existence very closely parallels our own. WE ARE ALL ON A VOYAGE TO A NEW WORLD. We are in hostile territory, in alien culture. We MAY be

able to survive on our own, but it is highly doubtful. We need the church of Jesus Christ. My own immediate family did not come through the wars unscathed— and I shudder to think of the awesome task of rearing godly children today in our almost wholly secular society!

Children's ministry is NOT (just) Marilyn Stark's task! And while it IS the family's primary responsibility, it isn't just the "parents' task," either! It must be one of this church's priorities!

LET'S GET OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY TO HEAVEN! LET'S REACH AFTER THAT FULL MEASURE OF PERFECTION FOUND IN CHRIST!

3. WE HAVE A SUPPORT SYSTEM, AND A SUPPORT GROUP. WE NEED TO FIND EACH OTHER; WE NEED TO HELP EACH OTHER. We need to love each other— and as Reuben Welch said so eloquently and so simply: We really do NEED each other!
4. WE CALL THIS SUPPORT SYSTEM AND SUPPORT GROUP: THE CHURCH! We need to dedicate the rest of our lives to Christ's church: to
 - a. obedience and submissiveness to HIM; as well as to
 - b. finding and using our gifts to the full;
 - c. we will have opportunity both for personal growth AND for sacrifice.

But church is not an option. And church is not just for our benefit- it is the Bride of Christ, and His Body.

#47 (EH) *God of Grace and God of Glory*

Keeping Power Switched On

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October 11, 1987

Ephesians 3:19

Read 4:32-5:18. Emphasize 5:8 (You are LIGHT who once were darkness)..and 5:18 (KEY VERSE: *Be filled with the Spirit!*) Finding God's fullness as an on-going reality; carrying forward God's purpose for us, of being filled with GOD!)

I. LIVING AS GOD'S BELOVED CHILDREN MEANS:

A. Being FAMILY to God. The very idea of "family" as a good thing has been under attack:

1. The *sacred concept of 'family'*

The idea of belonging to one another for better or for worse; the idea that with God as Father, the community of faith IS family; *generally seeking the good of other family members*. (Sibling rivalry/friction may be a fact even within the church; but the idea of family is scriptural.)

2. The *sacred institution of the individual family*

This is dealt with later in the epistle; it is basic to the formation of character. In the reality of our society today many have to 'make do' without the ideal of parents (or parent!) who have no higher priority than children; it may be passe', but that does not make the ideal invalid., but the concept of commitment and loyalty and *togetherness* is vital.

ILLUS: Senator Paul Tsongas made a statement with his resignation a few years ago.. he had to choose between making policy for a nation.. or making an impact on his own family and children. Evidently Senator Tsongas chose to go with what would *last!* For our children will outlive and outlast this great Republic!

A *family* is NOT to be just an aggregation of individuals held together by mutual selfishness, meeting in the kitchen as they scramble off to work. They MAY have to do a lot of that *but a family is made up of people who CHERISH each other!*

3. The *fact of FAMILY in the CHURCH*

God is Sovereign; He is also "Abba." We must learn to make this more and more our own truth; to *appropriate it!*

[We are "family" with God, and God's family must be *sexually pure*.]

B. Being SEXUALLY PURE

1. God's Word speaks forthrightly about many of the issues that are argued back and forth in our society. We need to know what it says, and how we as Christians stand on such issues as *abortion*; as on *homosexuality*; and as on how we shall face the impending epidemic of *AIDS*. (In five years every one of us will be personally acquainted with a family that has a victim.)

2. God's WORD is not a clinical manual on medicine or human fertility; but it ought to be the foundation of the kind of sex education that leads us *from animal sex to human sexuality. ***
3. Sexual purity is the standard for the church for all professing Christians. NO believer can afford to rationalize, to lower the standards. The Bible has a clear standard: *all sexual intercourse outside of the marriage covenant is sin.* Homosexual intercourse [if there are children of the young age present, call intercourse "intimacy"] is sin, but so, also, is all heterosexual sexual intercourse that is not sanctioned and blessed by God in covenant blessing.
4. God expects purity
 - a. not only in the actual acts and physical relationships; but
 - b. in the intent and thought life. Sin begins with intent; with the cultivation of thoughts of evil. (There IS a distinction between "thoughts of evil" and "evil thoughts." There CAN be a resisting of temptation; of the enemy's attempt to twist HUMAN desire into EVIL desire.)

Summary of "Being sexually pure": Sexual impurity is wrong *because it breaks God's holy laws*; *but it is also wrong in that **it violates the sanctity of the family; and it treats PEOPLE as objects of selfishness*. I would love to change the more`s of our culture but that is not going to happen overnight.

Sexual impurity will NOT be unpunished. Indeed, it carries the seeds of destruction, disappointment, and even despair in itself. *But tonight we are speaking to God's family!*

The emphasis for THIS sermon is: LET THE CHURCH BE PURE! THEN THE CHURCH CAN HAVE POWER!

We all love it when we cry out against the sinfulness "out there!" "The world" is going to hell.. and we need to cry out against it.. *but the fact is, WE NEED TO MAKE CERTAIN OUR HEARTS ARE PURE, OUR MINDS ARE

GOD'S TEMPLES! AND *THEN* GOD MAY BE ABLE TO USE US TO CHANGE THE NEEDY, SINFUL WORLD!*

[Living as children of light, in God's family, also means:]

- C. NOT being GREEDY (Greed is the power.behind.the.throne in most sin; even (especially) in the sexual sins we have discussed; "power brokers" of the obscenity market).

We like to hear about the dastardly, flagrant sins of the world but we *don't* like to hear that we are in grave danger because the same fires of selfishness burn within US! If we LIVE TO GRASP! THEN THE SEEDS OF HELL ARE WITHIN US!

But we may be FREE from *impurity* and *covetousness, which is idolatry*! HOW?

II. ALL THIS THROUGH 5:18. FULLNESS. THE REALITY OF BEING FILLED!

1. (V 14: *Be awake to what is really going on!*)
2. *BE an OPPORTUNIST!* (v 15: *Walk with your eyes open!*) When He knows He can trust you, God will put you in places.. thrust you into opportunities where
 - a. you will know His prompting;
 - b. you will NEED His Presence and power;
 - c. you will find "**BREAK.THROUGH FULFILLMENT!**"
3. *But ALL THIS BECAUSE OF "5:18!"* We CAN be filled with the Spirit! We can STAY filled with the Spirit!

Exhortation:

GET sanctified! If you are a believer, (Romans 12:1,2:) *Present YOUR body to God! Give HIM your LIFE!* Be filled with the cleansing, empowering baptism of the Holy Spirit!

Get SAVED if you need to, in ORDER to get sanctified! STAY FILLED! STAY BEING FILLED!

(EH) *Give Me a Holy Life*

What is Your Name?

October 11. 1987 am

Genesis 32:26_28 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

"WHAT IS SALVATION?"

This is the third time we have used the same question, "What is Salvation?" We have looked at

1. God's Sovereignty and Our Free Will: [God Loves Us and Provides Salvation for Us by Grace;] and at the...
2. Atonement, ["Christ Died for Us."] Today we look at
3. Sanctification. "[Christ changes us, and makes us like Himself].

There are not "two salvations." Both the crisis of justification and the crisis of entire sanctification are elements of one great salvation. But Wesleyans have historically emphasized the need for a crisis of entire consecration on the part of believers after they have been saved, a crisis which on God's part results in cleansing and empowering and infilling with the Holy Spirit. This cleansing and empowering we call "entire sanctification."

What IS "entire sanctification?"

I. A THEOLOGICAL LOOK AT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

"Sanctification" refers the whole of what God does to us and in us to make us like Jesus. GOD WANTS TO CHANGE US INTO HIS LIKENESS; FROM WHAT WE ARE, IN OURSELVES, WITHOUT HIM— TO WHAT WE CAN BE BY HIS INDWELLING PRESENCE, FROM INADEQUACY AND SELFISHNESS TO CHRIST-LIKENESS AND SERVICE.

What is Your Name?

This life-changing, character-changing grace of God begins the moment we surrender our lives to God, and continues throughout all our lives as we walk with Him by faith; indeed, I believe it continues throughout all eternity! It is a process!

But at a very important point in this walk with God, every believer is challenged to a full and complete consecration, in love, to God, forever. In return God promises 'a renewing of the mind, an infilling, cleansing fullness of His Holy Spirit.' This crisis we call "entire sanctification." It is an all-important crisis within the process of sanctification.

Our Wesleyan definitions of "sanctification" are almost always definitions of "entire sanctification:" (such as)

Dr. E. F. Walker: "Sanctification, in the proper sense, is a work of grace, instantaneously wrought in the person of a believer, subsequent to regeneration, administered by Jesus Christ, through the baptism with the Holy Ghost purifying him from all sin, and perfecting him in divine love."

John Wesley (quoted in Wiley & Culbertson): "Sanctification in the proper sense is an instantaneous deliverance from all sin, and includes an instantaneous power then given always to cleave — to God."

Dr. John W. Goodwin: "Sanctification is a divine work of grace, purifying the believer's heart from indwelling sin. It is subsequent to regeneration, is secured in the atoning blood of Christ, is effected by the baptism with the Holy Ghost, is conditioned on full consecration to God, is received by faith, and includes instantaneous power for service."

Here is a statement of our accepted theology (Wiley) that may make it a little easier to see how different needs are met by justification and sanctification, and help us to distinguish "entire sanctification" from "justification":

1. Justification in a broad sense has reference to the whole work of Christ wrought for us; Sanctification, the whole work wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.
2. Justification is a judicial act in the mind of God; Sanctification, a spiritual change wrought in the hearts of men.

3. Justification is a relative change, that is, a change in relation from condemnation to favor; Sanctification, an inward change from sin to holiness.
4. Justification secures for us remission of actual sins; Sanctification in its complete sense, cleanses the heart from original sin or inherited depravity.
5. Justification removes the guilt of sin, Sanctification destroys its power.
6. Justification makes possible adoption into the family of God; Sanctification restores the image of God.
7. Justification gives a title to heaven; Sanctification a fitness for heaven.
8. Justification logically precedes sanctification, which in its initial stage, is concomitant with it.
9. Justification is an instantaneous and completed act, and therefore does not take place in stages, or by degrees; Sanctification is marked by progressiveness in that partial or initial sanctification occurs at the time of Justification, and entire sanctification occurs subsequent to Justification . Both initial and entire sanctification, however, are instantaneous acts wrought in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit.

II. THE NEED FOR A SECOND CRISIS

We probably need to emphasize and re-emphasize over and over that "sanctification" is both process and crisis; that the process begins when we are justified. We need to say over and over that it continues throughout life. "God isn't done with us yet...." He is never done with us!

But also we need to underscore that there comes a crisis of full surrender when the 'sovereignty question' is settled in a decisive way!

WHY do we need to underscore this second crisis? Because it is our Nazarene tradition? If THAT is the only reason— then let's have courage and dump it!

WHY underscore this second crisis? Because if we don't we will have no reason for separate identity from other evangelicals? If THAT is our reason we had better wake up! Other evangelicals are emphasizing "holiness of heart and life!"

THE REASON (then, that) WE NEED TO EMPHASIZE THE SECOND CRISIS IS THAT THIS IS THE SCRIPTURAL WAY PEOPLE ENTER INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S FULLNESS! WE CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS THE SCRIPTURAL TRUTH AND LIFE-CHANGING POWER, THE REALITY OF THIS EXPERIENCE WE CALL "ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION!"

We almost always COME to God for justification for selfish reasons: to escape judgment and penalty for our sins; to receive eternal life; to GET something from God. We are saved as we are "running away from our sins."

But this matter of "entire sanctification" is a matter of STAYING WITH GOD FOR BETTER REASONS! It is a matter of GIVING something to God as best we can! It is a matter of offering Him our love for time and for eternity! It is letting God have us to make us over like Jesus! We are "sanctified wholly" as we are "running toward God with our hunger for more of HIM!"

[Transition: But it is easier to see "second blessing holiness" demonstrated than it is to hear it described and "analyzed" by experts who often confuse rather than clarify:]

III. THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER

There are several powerful scriptural testimonies to the character-changing grace of God's sanctifying power in the lives of believers. One of the very best 'pictures' of the crisis of entire sanctification is found in the story of the patriarch Jacob. [Found in Genesis 32] I happen to believe that the story 'fits' our Wesleyan theology very well, but whatever your theology, the end result was exactly what Jacob needed, and what you and I desperately need.

The end result was a change in the very nature of Jacob. To understand the story of Jacob becoming Israel, we need to understand the deep significance of NAMES here in the Old Testament.

"Jacob" means "heel grasper." He came out of his mother's womb grasping his twin brother's heel. And he kept right on "grasping" from that time on. And in his

"grasping" Jacob was a lot like some people I know— a lot like YOU and a lot like ME! And the name was fitting. Jacob was all for Jacob. He was a cheat. He tricked his brother out of his birthright and out of his blessing. You know the story, and if you don't you should read it soon.

On the way from home to Padan-Aram, escaping from his brother and his 'sins,' he had the experience in a dream of a ladder from heaven to earth— at a place he called "Beth-El," the house of God. He was changed— he was different. But he was still Jacob. Note: God met Jacob when he was RUNNING AWAY from his sins.

But perhaps 14 years later, returning home, Jacob met with God in this way:

1. Jacob was now a very wealthy man. But he was anticipating meeting his twin brother, Esau; and fearing the meeting very much.
2. The crisis came when Jacob was finally all alone, even though he had become for all purposes a rich man. I am not sure of all the significance of separation as Jacob sent over his herds and flocks and family until he was alone by the Brook Jabbok. But I do know that now this crisis separated him for a time from all his ACQUISITION.
3. But in the confrontation with God that took place there that night, the life-changing point is reached when God asks Jacob: WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

"Who ARE you, really?" And Jacob has to own up to the fact that he is a GRASPER! He is a person who lives to ACQUIRE!

Now it isn't hard to be a GRASPER! Believe me! Things have a way of grasping us! But the one BIG thing Paul tells us about Jesus is this: JESUS WAS NOT A GRASPER! (Philippians 2:5-6) And if we are to be like Jesus, somehow WE have to "let go of things" so they will lose their hold on us. HOW?

Well— perhaps it starts with answering the question: "What is your name?"

4. Jacob answers God truthfully: "My name is JACOB!" And God says: "Not any more it isn't! From NOW on your name is: ISRAEL! You are God's man!"

What is Your Name?

5. Jacob also asks God: "What is YOUR name!"

It is sort of audacious, and there is no answer immediately. God is not answerable to any creature, and is beyond what we can grasp.

But the "name of God" does come to Jacob-Israel. In Genesis 35 it comes: "I AM God Almighty— El Shaddai!— the Nourisher!"

IV. WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

Conclusion: Perhaps one answer is: SANCTIFICATION IS GETTING YOUR NAME CHANGED! What is YOUR name this morning?

And what direction are you running?

Are you running AWAY from the results of your sins? If you are— God is waiting to meet you, and forgive you, and save you, and bless you.

But perhaps you are running TOWARD God, with the consciousness that your sins are forgiven— and that you are rich in blessings— but also with the deep awareness that your name is "Jacob!" God can and will 'change your name' from "Jacob" to "Israel" by this second crisis of entire sanctification!

#203 - Ho! Everyone That is Thirsty!

Real Solutions to Real Problems

Christian Living Series 6 of 9

1. [Knowing Jesus Better](#)
2. [The Vessel Formed](#)
3. [Mystery](#)
4. [The Church as Community](#)
5. [Keeping Power Switched On](#)
6. **Real Solutions to Real Problems**
7. [Don't You Know There is a War On](#)
8. [The Hope The Glory The Power](#)
9. [The Dynamic for Holy Living](#)

October 18, 1987

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

THE WINNING PRINCIPLE OF SUBMISSION

Introduction/Disclaimers:

Cultural Realities that we have no way of knowing, but we can infer a wholly different situation regarding women's status, as well as accepting absolute authority in government, and roles and classes into which people were born. No idea of "equality" of all men. Contextual setting of this passage regarding husband-wife: submission is not merely the task of women and children.

In any cooperative enterprise proper lines of responsibility & authority need to be understood and accepted. Respect for authority is one of the sadly lacking features in our American culture that may well finally bring it down. But this is a double-edged truth: real authority must be merited-/earned. One of the rare pleasures in life is learning the joy of losing one's self in a worthy cooperative effort. It is one of the great lessons of music; of playing in a group or band or symphony. It is "rare"

because most of us are interested in being "star performers." We want to be appreciated at all costs.

Allan Bloom says: "Everyone loves himself most, but everyone wants others to love him more than they love themselves." But there is a cost in entering into relationships of love and commitment. The taking of "Vows" is always sacred, whether they be wedding vows— "forsaking all others..keeping ONLY TO YOU" or whether they be salvation vows: "Jesus is LORD! forever!"

They bind us to a common submission and set of responsibilities each to the other. Any successful relationship of two free people will have to some extent be an exercise in submission to the common good. One cannot be a Christian without facing up to the Lordship of Jesus, and that means submission.

SUBMISSION TO JESUS CHRIST AS LORD

A Christian is one who is willing to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

SUBMISSION TO THE BIBLE AS THE AUTHORITY FOR LIFE

An evangelical Christian is one who is willing to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. If we are not willing to change our lives to conform to the revealed will of God, then we are not Christians. If this passage of scripture, or any other passage of scripture, makes it clear to me that I must change the way I live, and I choose not to do so, then I am not a Christian, whatever I may say.

SUBMISSION TO THE CORPORATE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The common way of looking at the church is as a convenience, placed here by God to facilitate our individual and personal growth. Jesus said the church is His BODY. It is Christ's creation, His building. But in the body of Christ our submission is A SUBMISSION THAT CAN NEVER BE ABNEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY.

SUBMISSION AS HEALTH WITHIN THE HOME

Unless two people deliberately determine that they will subjugate their selfish ways to make a relationship work, their marriage is doomed from the very start.

What do you expect me to say here? I can go either of two ways: the simplistic, literal way (like Bill Gothard) that denies equality. Or I can ignore the fact that Paul says the husband is to be the head of the home entirely. But what Paul is speaking about is the mighty power of MEEKNESS to release LOVE!

1. WIVES (no simplistic stuff here) Within the context of the culture to which Paul wrote this was revolutionary. Women were not to be considered at the same level as men. But the Christian faith has done great things to promote the equality of all people. There are no second-class people in God's family.

But what about "Be submissive— the husband is the head?" First— it says "Be submissive to your own husband." As opposed, perhaps, to somebody else's husband. This may be a call to loyalty.

- a. No one is "GOD" to anyone else, and is not supposed to be, ever! No one's word must be considered as final authority (except in infants that cannot yet know God's mind.)
- b. No one is "inferior by birth" to anyone else; that is, simply because one is born poor, or female, or a different color than the majority of a local church, does that in any way make him or her one whit less valuable (or MORE valuable) than the dominant majority of the church.

Illustration: Of the woman with the demanding husband who made her miserable with his lists, and then mercifully he died. She remarried and found a husband who loved her and cherished her— and one day she woke up to the fact that she was doing the "lists" her first husband had given her— but doing them joyfully. (I do not say the wife is the "servant." I say that we are all to "serve in love" in the home.)

2. HUSBANDS

Twice as much here about how the men were to cherish their wives. In light of what I saw with my own eyes in the Middle East this was truly revolutionary.

3. PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS

Here deal with potential/future parents—asking them not to repeat the imprinting that they believe may have been harmful to them; "Lord, Help me to be as near the "ideal parent" as I can be!" Does the parent live to serve the child? Does the child exist to satisfy and fulfill the parent? NO! But the home exists to glorify God! And where parents seek God's glory—instead of selfish fulfillment, God will help us to submit and respect each other...and make room for real growth. Perhaps the time for thinking about what sort of parents you ought to be is long before you have your first child. Take notes! Don't let your home overly influence you! Seek to submit to God and to one another to the glory of Christ!

4. EMPLOYEES-EMPLOYERS

(I don't know where that leaves the Quincy school teachers!)

Back to 5:21 (text) - and the ideal is JESUS!

[Conclusion: It may well be that I have only "muddied the waters" in much of this discussion—about the particulars of husband and wife relationships. If you will submit to the authority of the Word and seek God's mind I have confidence He will guide you. But let me close on a note that is much more certain and positive: (Mark Twain said: "It isn't the parts of the Bible I can't understand that give me trouble— it is the part I CAN understand and don't want to obey!")

Much of this word on "submission" is in the context of Christ and the CHURCH.

1. Marriage is one of the sacred symbols of the fidelity we are to have to GOD. No human marriage is ever perfect. God as HUSBAND TO THE CHURCH; and as our Master We don't like to think of being 'slaves' even to God! But we had better think about what a real SOVEREIGN is!

2. We are to be totally SUBSERVIENT TO GOD. He IS always right!
3. But He is also ALWAYS DESIRING OUR BEST! He DOES provide! He will be faithful!
And WE must be faithful, too!

#243 I'll Live for Him

Don't You Know There is a War On

Christian Living Series 7 of 9

1. Knowing Jesus Better
2. The Vessel Formed
3. Mystery
4. The Church as Community
5. Keeping Power Switched On
6. Real Solutions to Real Problems
7. **Don't You Know There is a War On**
8. The Hope The Glory The Power
9. The Dynamic for Holy Living

The Armor of God

October 25, 1987

Ephesians 6:10-24

Introduction:

We are coming to the final words of Ephesians this evening, but not the end of this series. Lord willing, there will be two more messages before our revival with Dr. Greathouse begins.

After the subject matter of the last two Sunday evenings, I should be happy for this familiar territory that is always good for spiritual application.

But that is just the problem. We often "retreat into spirituality" here. We describe the ancient soldier's armor, and think we have understood what this passage is all about. These words are much, much more than a stroll through a museum, looking at antique armor. This is a very practical message. It speaks to life as it is lived in 1987, and not just as it was in 87 A.D., when perhaps it was written. It is concerned with human struggle, and not just "spiritual matters."

I. CASUALTIES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

1. I see an all-out young Christian; full of fire and enthusiasm— sets his church on fire part FIRE and part enthusiasm of youth-being-converted-to-a-cause. Then there is FLAMEOUT. Perhaps disillusionment with older Christians; perhaps getting caught up in so-called intellectual questions. For all practical purposes no good to God or the kingdom of God.
2. I recall a solid, sincere Christian at a Christian college; never a wild party-er; good testimony; becomes a well-paid specialist in a high-paying profession; becomes rich in this world's goods, and totally LOST to the kingdom of God.
3. I recall more than one or two solid, talented pastors; gifted, charismatic (in the "old" sense of the word.) Become successful— become lustful, or greedy, or both— and they FALL, and they take an untold toll when they fall. It is hard to compare casualties like this with much more graphic casualties of physical warfare. It is easy to assume that I am being parochial, and exaggerating; to assume that I am a Nazarene pastor who is jealous for the Nazarene ministry— and there well may be an element of that! But I am desperately concerned and troubled that the Christians I serve, the sphere of influence where my voice is heard realize the seriousness, the all-out nature of this spiritual warfare: AND THAT WE REALIZE THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF WINNING OR LOSING THIS WARFARE!

II. POINTS OF ATTACK IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The passage is usually approached with a detailed description of the ancient armor. Even now it makes me think of VBS, and sincere ladies, and little paper armor sets stuck on easels.

But Paul was describing real dangers. He was talking about GUT SHOTS, and HEART SHOTS, and FOOT SHOTS in this spiritual warfare. Each piece of armor is connected with some aspect of integrity of obedience, and the admonition is: "You need it ALL!"

LOINS GIRT WITH TRUTH

I think of people who never go beyond living a role: living as they think others expect them to live; living as though appearances were more important than reality.

[It isn't that appearances are NOT important. But what a person is on the inside is ALL-IMPORTANT!]

What really counts is a LIVING, GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST!
[(6:14) Integrity over our "loins." The "vitals" which the Jews called "splanchna."
Where our GUTS come in— "stomach" for a fight.]

And so one day the pressure is on, and the enemy strikes, and deep in the "innards" is the sinking feeling: "I NEVER REALLY HONESTLY FACED WHO I AM, AND WHO CHRIST WANTED ME TO BE!"

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I think, also, of people who never want to make an all-out break with sin. They try to avoid the gross and obvious sins— but they excuse the so-called "little sins;" or they compromise on principles. If anything takes the HEART out of holy living it is trying to live over sin; to rationalize fudging on all-out commitment. We are DEAD if we are not right with God and walking in all the light we have. We are gravely mistaken if we think otherwise.

And so when the battle is joined it doesn't take long for an enemy dart to strike through the heart. It doesn't make sense to join God's kingdom in wartime, and not protect your heart.

FEET SHOD WITH PREPARATION

We make a joke of people who shoot themselves in the foot. It is the shorthand way of talking about "clumsy." But a soldier who is shot in the foot is helpless in the long run. He or she can only go where others may carry; and we aren't going to make the long haul unless we are prepared.

Taking care of your feet isn't very glamorous but it is one of the big things in a foot soldier's training. And it is one of the big things in this warfare to the death!

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

No one is perfect. We don't win battles because we are so strong or so invulnerable— but because we follow Jesus and OBEY. But there will be weaknesses in our

preparation; there will be areas of emotional stress, or bitter disappointment, or failure of friends, or any other of a thousand things to all but overwhelm.

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A "WEAKNESS SHOT"

— where the enemy, who knows your weakness, too— shoots at you where you are the most vulnerable. With the rest of the armor, faith makes us able to quench

ALL the fiery darts. Faith doesn't work right when used alone. Faith is a "completer" of body armor. When we have truth and righteousness and preparation and salvation as best we know, our human weakness is protected by this shield of faith.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

There will be questions that we cannot answer. Jesus is NOT anti-question! But being FINITE, we will come up against facts and concepts that shake us. I'm thankful for the way Jesus handled Thomas. There is no substitute for being a personal student of Professor Jesus! Being in His Presence, knowing HIS assurance, helps us through the mind-boggling questions of life.

And, as we shall see in a moment: PRAYER IS WHAT MAKES IT ALL GO!

III. THE BATTLE JOINED

- A. A Wartime Mind-Set: We can never simply live as if it were not so! It is difficult to explain what it was like during WWII when the future of civilization as we knew it hung in the balance. I'm sure there were vast distortions, but I truly believed that the Nazis and the Japanese warlords threatened all that was sacred and safe. I was also convinced that winning the war would take God's help PLUS all we could do. "Loose lips sink ships!" "Buy War Bonds"

Paul is reminding the Ephesians that there is a Titanic struggle going on in the Universe between good and evil.

- B. The Great Sweep of the Battle-Field:

That struggle for some reason centers in the battle for the personality of men and women.

It isn't that we are intrinsically so valuable; for some reason God has made His people the showcase for three watching worlds. But as far as you and I are concerned, this warfare has eternal consequences. We have everything to gain, heaven, and eternal growth and fulfillment, and divine fellowship; and we have everything to lose, with eternal darkness and separation and memory— an eternity without God and hope that we call hell.'

That struggle is also for some reason limited to this period of mortal life here in time and space. It may seem strange to you, but I do NOT think it is necessary to be "experts on the opposition." There are those who sensationalize, and make a great deal of satanic power, and the powers of darkness. Suffice it to say that the enemy is

wise beyond human wisdom dark world New Age (awareness, basically) (mysteries again) But there

are some important things we should remember about the enemy in this war to the finish:

- he is not as wise as he would have us think
 - he is already defeated
 - and God is always working "both sides of the street" when you are doing His will; Moses was afraid because he was weak— and then he realized God was with him; what he may NOT have realized was that God was working in Pharaoh's life just as much; and when the Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart it doesn't mean God didn't love Pharaoh, it simply meant that NOBODY resists God with impunity—and God is either USING you right now— OR HE IS HARDENING YOUR HEART!
- C. Your place, and mine, in this spiritual warfare: It is easy to get our eyes on to the "dramatic" and look for exorcisms and spectacular miracles. But real life usually is trench warfare; the battle is won by letting Jesus keep us sweet when the pressure is on, and by loving when it is easier to be spiteful and mean. It is better to be simple in faith and

Don't You Know There is a War On

obedient, than to be very wise in the ways of the enemy without the power of God.⁴

(6:13) The idea is to fight the good fight and to be faithful!

There are TWO VITAL ITEMS that we have not yet talked about in this warfare.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

(6:17) The Spirit sword - The "cutting edge" is being used of the Spirit. It is not that we are so wise, and know how to wield the sword, although God has a hard time bringing OUT for use what we have never allowed Him to PUT IN. But if we live with the Word, and if we say "Use me, Lord!" the marvelous thing about it is— He will!

And the other item, the absolutely most indispensable item is

PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT!

(6:18) Prayer is what makes it all go.

Every army travels on its stomach. When an army starves it cannot fight any longer. When communications are broken off with headquarters it is easily surrounded and destroyed. Prayer is where we maintain contact; receive orders; are kept strong; it is absolutely vital.

Conclusion:

We're in this warfare "for the duration!" As long as it takes!

We can get occupied with the "dramatic aspects" of opposition— the "conspiracy" revelations; but remember, actually we are more in danger of being swallowed alive by simple, old-fashioned selfishness, greed, insensitivity, and prayerless-ness.

If PAUL needed the prayers of the people— this great giant of a Christian— then we all need the prayers of one another!

The mentality of a bomber pilot flying missions: I do as I'm told— I take my place; I don't have to survive— I have to be faithful!

The Hope The Glory The Power

Christian Living Series 8 of 9

1. [Knowing Jesus Better](#)
2. [The Vessel Formed](#)
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November 1, 1987

Ephesians 1:15-23

[Introduction]

As we near the end of this series in Ephesians we look at another prayer of Paul. We began with a goal (3:19)- that we might be filled up to all the fullness of God. We are nearing the close with an over-view (1:15-23)- a look at the almost incredible resources that are ours if we want to do God's will.

These resources are unlocked from three words that represent great grace: these words are 'HOPE' and 'GLORY' and 'POWER'.

I. First, HOPE:

- A. Hope is NOT a weak word. IT IS HOPE THAT MAKES LIFE WORTH THE LIVING! ("I hope so..." means much LESS than Bible terms express) Hope is FAITH looking into the future. (In many respects HOPE is almost indistinguishable from FAITH, except that HOPE is confident in what God is YET GOING TO DO!) Hope is confidence that LIFE IN THE WILL OF GOD IS GOING SOMEWHERE!

- B. Hope can/must be translated into the way we LIVE. If we live our lives in a day-by-day rat-race, an endless cycle of schedule without God/prayer/submission/HOPE— then how we live agrees with the atheistic humanism and materialism we "intellectually despise."

It is possible to DISAGREE with the enemies of God with our HEADS, while our LIVES AGREE BY DEFAULT! If we live at the same cadence, for the same goals, by the same rules, THEN WE ARE NOT LIVING BY HOPE!

And it is LIVING BY HOPE THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

- C. HOPE acknowledges that there IS a war going on! That is the whole idea! We wouldn't NEED hope if there were no battles! The battle is for real! The stakes are eternal! Our sons, daughters, neighbors— our very lives are in conflict with evil!

This does not mean we never rest— never smell the roses— but we must live with eternity in view— and with a strong HOPE that God's way is the ONLY winning way!

- D. Hope says: LIFE/TIME IS NOT AN ENDLESS SPIRAL!

Creation speaks of order, not chaos, chance. History will prove to be HIS-story! God has the last word! The God we serve INTERVENES IN HUMAN HISTORY! He came (in JESUS, specific! place!.) He is COMING AGAIN! (Just as literal! Soon!) He COMES into personal, individual lives!

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE CERTAIN THAT YOUR LIFE IS GOING SOMEWHERE!

II. Second, GLORY

- A. Our HOPE is tied to another concept: HOPE "goes with" GLORY! And Paul was deeply concerned that the Ephesians see how very wealthy they were as children of God.
- B. John 1:12 "(by receiving Jesus we become children of God)" We tend to "not hear" the GLORY of being God's children: "O well, we are adopted children. Only JESUS is God's Son!" But to be ADOPTED by God and being JOINT HEIRS WITH JESUS is sheer glory!

In R.T. Kendall's latest book (Once Saved, Always Saved) he tells of attending an adoption procedure in a court in Florida. I'd like to read a brief account verbatim:

"A few years ago my wife and I witnessed the adoption of a child in a Fort Lauderdale, Florida, courtroom. We listened to the judge as he spoke to the adopting parents in gravest tones.

"'Before I sign my name to this document,' he warned them, 'I need to know you realize what you are about to do.' In a room of sobering silence in which you could hear a pin drop, that judge looked each parent straight in the eye and said, 'If I sign my name to this document, it means that this child is yours, legally yours, as though he were your natural son. There is no guarantee how he will turn out. He may disappoint you. He may turn to drugs as a teenager. He may develop a serious illness and you will be responsible to care for him. If I sign my name to this document, that means this child is yours from this day forward. He is protected by the laws of this state. You cannot turn him back once I sign my name to this document. Do you understand this?'

Those parents did not hesitate to answer. 'We understand,' they responded. 'Then it is your will that you become the parents of this child?' the judge asked. 'It is,' they replied. The judge signed the order.

In what I thought was a rather unusual gesture, he got off his seat and walked round to the two parents and congratulated them. Every eye was filled with tears. The judge then revealed that he too had been an adopted child." (p 114 *ibid*,)

- C. We say: "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the GLORY!" And rightly so! But God SHARES that GLORY as He brings us into His family! We are precious to HIM! And that is glory!

Too often we have been living, NOT as adopted children, but as FOSTER children— afraid God is going to "send us back to the orphanage" instead of taking full advantage of being FAMILY WITH JESUS!

III. Finally, **THE POWER!**

Paul wants us to see that God's will for us is not just a beautiful, ivory-tower theory— a wonderful, glorious PLAN— but that there is adequate POWER to do ALL that God leads us to do!

- A. We focus on the CROSS, and God's LOVE. That is good. But, [with the New Testament church as our example], we ALSO need to focus on the EMPTY TOMB, and God's POWER! That certainty is what gave the disciples mighty authority and power!
- B. We can re-discover God's mighty POWER toward us:
 - 1. It is resurrection power (1:19b-20; 2:5 "even when we were dead—(Christ)— made us alive together with Christ") We not only will live again after we die physically; but we live with a new quality of life here and now!
 - 2. It is also authoritative power (1:20; 2:6 WE are seated with Christ (positionally) in the heavenly places) Our prayers carry HIS AUTHORITY as we abide in HIM and HIS WORDS abide in US! As we said when we were speaking about "HOPE," there IS a war going on! But as Christians we have the POWER necessary to be "more than conquerors through HIM that loves us!"

In his controversial (but wonderful) new book, *Desiring God*, John Piper likens prayer to a walkie-talkie set tuned to the frequency of headquarters, for the purpose of reinforcement in battle. Nothing will be spared to support us as we carry out God's will. But too often we use the walkie-talkies to ask headquarters to send a servant around with cold drinks, or something for our comfort or convenience. But properly used, we have all Christ's power of authority!

[Conclusion:]

- 3. IT IS LIVING POWER! God's power is in the fact that God has given

the Church JESUS CHRIST, HIMSELF, AS OUR LIVING HEAD! (1:22
God put all things under (Christ's) feet, AND GAVE HIM AS HEAD
OVER ALL THINGS IN THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY! " God's
mighty POWER for Christians is centered in the FACT that we have
a living, loving, all-powerful Leader!

And (1) we can seek, find, know HIS MIND! (2) What He says, GOES! His command
is also His enabling! (3) But, too, what He says is never "an option!" IF WE WOULD
KNOW THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT, THEN WE MUST SEEK TO BE OBEDIENT TO HIS
REVEALED WILL AND COMMAND!

So there we have it: HOPE! GLORY! POWER! Beautiful words! Great "ideals!" But God
has the reality they represent available without limit for every one of us, and for this
church!

AMEN!

#409 Singing I Go

The Dynamic for Holy Living

Christian Living Series 9 of 9

1. Knowing Jesus Better
2. The Vessel Formed
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November 8, 1987

Ephesians 5:18

In his practical closing, Paul comes back to the theme that has been his prayer throughout this entire letter: to be the kind of Christian God wants you to be, you must BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT!

It is not just a parting thought . . . a wonderful "luxury" option. It is absolutely vital! Why?

I. IT WILL SUSTAIN YOU IN UNCERTAIN TIMES (So That You Can KNOW!)

Christians don't have all the answers . . . there is mystery involved at every level, in every discipline. But Christians can know hope and riches of glory and power!

Ephesians 1:15-19 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: 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,

It is possible to be so "sold out" to God that the heuristic quality of faith will drive you closer, and not farther away from a personal relationship with Him. As we grow in maturity, and as we grow older and (hopefully) wiser, we realize that we know less and less of the great truths of life. We can either take an obscurantist position, and say: "The earth is flat!", or, we can go with the "obvious" or the current fad belief, and say "The old is out-dated, only the new is true!", OR, we can say: "We may not know all the answers— but we BELONG to the One who does!"

This is one great reason why we need to be filled with the Spirit. It doesn't give us the answers; it does make us aware of the certainty of HOPE, the RICHES OF GOD'S GLORY, and the POWER THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES!

But there is another great reason:

II. IT WILL MAKE CHRIST AT HOME IN YOU, AND YOU IN CHRIST

3:14-21 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.

Psalm 90: 1 begins: "Lord, THOU hast been our dwellingplace . . ." "90" is a Psalm of Moses! Did you ever think what sort of "home" Moses had?

I love to travel and see new things. But I love to be "at home." I have a strong need for "home!" A strong sense of PLACE. But more and more the Christian realizes that "home" is NOT a place— it is a PERSON! ABIDE IN ME! Make JESUS AT HOME IN US!

Unless and until we are 'at home' with Jesus here and now we will not be likely to KNOW HIM when He returns, or to BE AT HOME WITH HIM throughout eternity. But we have the privilege of . .

Making HIM at home in OUR heart learning the privileges of development, intimacy, responsibility, growing reality ..the PERMANENCE of Christ RESIDENT!

We need "eternal security!" We find that security in LIVING WITH JESUS, AT HOME IN HIM! But there is at least one other reason:

III. IT WILL MULTIPLY YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

EPH 5:15-21 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]. 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.

Whatever we have . . . Even if we seek to use it 100% for God . . . Is only 100% of what we have. But when we bring it to Jesus and let him use it . . . then He can work His will and do as He pleases! HE can feed 5,000 . . . it is HIS business!

HOW may we be filled, and thus begin to make a difference?

1. We ARE full now . . . there are no spiritual vacuums. So God can only fill what is available to Him!
2. The "death" of entire consecration: (we have said some extravagant things here. But there is a truth we dare not dodge!) We cannot be filled with GOD unless and until we are empty of self: the cross, the dying, the renunciation of the right to self: In viewing the para-

dox, the mystery of Christian faith we are guilty of seeing the side we want to see. We say "Self is not dead!" And that is true. But still— self must die!

3. The CRISIS of entire sanctification: When we know that we have surrendered for time and eternity— completes the CRISIS of RECEIVING SALVATION . . . but it is not all there is to the sanctified life!
4. The (on-going) PROVING of the Spirit-filled life: carrying forward, learning the discipline:

CONCLUSION (heroes:)

But the world is waiting for people who will be filled . . . and go on being filled . . . and let God simply LIVE IN AND THROUGH THEM!

Less than two miles from where Rev. John Paton now lives (he was here three weeks ago)- in Blantyre, Scotland, is a little park. At one end of the park is a building that looks to me like several cement bookshelves stuck together, with semi-enclosed stairways going up the front. Between the floors of those stairways are toilets— the urban equivalent of the old outhouse - one toilet to a floor of several two-room apartments. In one of those two-room apartments lived a weaver and his wife and several children. One of these children was gifted. Perhaps more than one . . . but David disciplined his gifts, and became a medical doctor.

Wonderful!?! Yes, indeed! He had hauled himself by his bootstraps out of abject poverty into social prominence and financial security! He had reduced the total of the poor, and added to the total of the taxpayers! But THAT was not where David stopped! He gave that degree, and his learning, and his social prominence to God. And God said: Take your gifts far, far away! David is buried today in the main aisle of Westminster Abbey, in London. All but his heart, that is! THAT is under a baobab tree in Africa! And all the world has heard of the love of David Livingstone!

Later-day— Mother Teresa: great in her humanness and weakness

Esther Sanger—...and what of YOU?

#80 (Exalt Him) *Fill Thou My Life, O Lord, My God*