

Dartmouth Bible Notes

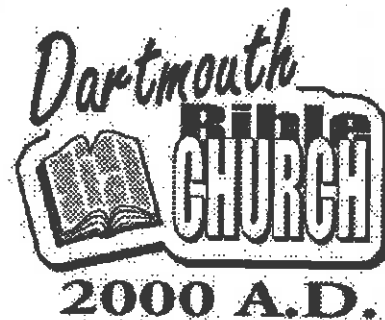
Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1,2

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: October 15th, 2000 (Lesson 1)



Little Romans

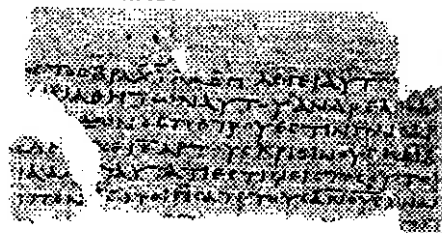
Introduction I was talking to a couple of other pastors this week and they were encouraging me to get involved with Henry Blackaby's book *Experiencing God*, or actually, the workbook. The premise is this: find out where God is working and go there and plug in. Blackaby is prodding us to experience God Himself in our daily lives. As I talked with these guys, being the skeptic that I tend to be, I asked them, "What's so unique about that idea? Isn't that what every Christian leader and writer has preached?" They felt Blackaby's approach is unique, so I have ordered a couple of copies of the workbook... But if you want to know the broad brush strokes, at least, of what God is doing, then we should turn to Paul's Book of Ephesians.

Now, I have noticed that once a person really discovers the Bible and starts to read it for themselves (I hope you do that!) it isn't long before they make their way to the Book of Ephesians. It is much like the Book of Romans (although less than half the length) because it deals with theoretical knowledge and then practical knowledge. It lays out doctrine and then practice. It shows how what God is doing is to CALL the church and then to infuse a different kind of CONDUCT into the church. The church, my friends, is what God is doing in the world. He has been and still is calling out for Himself a great company of people—all kinds of people—to be one body, a Bride as such, for His Son. There are many exciting things going on in the world today but the most exciting is the church of God. That is what God is doing. In the terms I laid out for you two weeks ago, His program is "soteriology" and then "ecclesiology." Salvation which places you into that universal collection of redeemed souls called The Church.

'Phesian Facts

Intro Info on Paul's Book of Ephesians

- Written about AD 61
- One of the "Prison Epistles" along w/ Philippians, Colossians & Philemon; written from prison in Rome
- 155 vss. Or, 6 chapters. Note: original letter had no chapter, verse or even word divisions. Looked more like:



- 1:1 at Ephesus not in some good mss. Also absence of controversy, personal names. Perhaps an "encyclical" letter, first read in Ephesus

Sometimes Christians get a little tired or disillusioned with the church. I understand that. But God does not. It is the project about which He is most excited, I believe. The Church of God on earth is not just a hobby of God's. It isn't something He does when He hasn't anything *e/se* to do. It is His greatest creation! Ephesians, like Romans, spends its time laying out "God's eternal purpose to create and to complete His body, the church of Christ" (Ryrie Study Bible, p. 1779). And so I like to call Ephesians, "Little Romans." The structure is similar and the burden of the apostle in writing it is similar.

Now in verse 1 of chapter 1 we read

PAUL, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Some scholars have doubted whether Paul really wrote this letter and they have dredged up the usual imaginary reasons—it isn't exactly like his other letters; there aren't the usual lists of people mentioned. It's too impersonal. Etc. Well, there's a whole bunch of corroborating manuscripts which start out *Paul...TO...* That's good enough for me. I think Paul wrote it and I think it flowed naturally out of his life's calling as an apostle. I do not believe there are apostles today in the same sense there were in Paul's day. ***Apostle*** means someone who is commissioned and sent with a message and missionaries today have a similar kind of calling. But to be an apostle of Christ Jesus in the first century meant you possessed a By Name calling and that you had actually seen or heard Jesus speak to you. Despite the wishful thinking of some today, I do not think that experience has been had by anyone since the first century. The apostles had a unique task to perform, and the writing of various kinds of literature was part of it. Some of what they wrote was above-and-beyond other stuff they wrote. The special and powerfully inspired writings became what WE call "The New Testament." The production of the New Testament was part of their calling. They were also called to decide and figure out and sometimes directly receive *doctrine* from the Lord. Doctrine is important. Without good and solid doctrine people don't know what to believe and they flit around from one belief to another. The apostles were TOLD by God to devote their best energies to the figuring-out of good and correct theology; theology which dove-tailed perfectly with what theology that had already been revealed in the Old Testament, but was fuller and more complete now that Jesus, the Son of God, had come and been resurrected and ushered in a new age.

Paul knew what the will of God was for his life. Do we? We can. I believe that God has a plan, a *will* for each of us. It isn't just some vague, generalized map with only the broadest boundaries laid out. It is a specific plan, right down to the perfect career, the perfect mate, the perfect ministry. Paul knew that what HE was supposed to do—and sometimes at pains and great expense—was to complete the program of being an apostle. I want to point out too that the plan of apostleship for him was not identical to that for other apostles. Each apostle gradually found out and experienced their specific program. God will do that with each Christian still, I believe. You can know what God's plan for your life is if you will seek Him and pursue Him to find it out. If you neglect seeking Him, and just lapse into going to church week after week you will never have a

great deal of confidence to say, "Bill, an engineer by the will of God" or "Jane, a financial planner by the will of God."

Whenever I have taught this book I always love getting to the recipients of the letter: *to the saints*. To the who? *Saints*. Someone once said, "Man, that Ephesus must have been one very holy city, being full of saints!" Well, actually Ephesus was a very Unholy city, full of paganism, a fast-paced commercial and political feel, infested with immorality. But Paul spent more time there than in any other one city and this letter went to *the saints* there first, at least. Ray Stedman wrote this:

Saints is a word that makes us all shudder a little. We don't like to be called saints because we have such an unrealistic concept of what a saint is. We think of them as being unreal—so beatific, so holier-than-thou, so unlike ordinary human beings. But the saints of the New Testament are not like that. They are people like us. Saints are people who are beset with struggles and difficulties at home and problems at work and troubles everywhere. They're normal people, in other words. But one thing is remarkable about them—the are different. That is really the basic meaning of the word, *saint*. In the Greek it is a word derived from the word for *holy*. And holy means distinct, different, whole, belonging to God and therefore living differently. That is the mark of a saint. It isn't that he doesn't have problems—but that he approaches them in a different way and has a different lifestyle. [But] their characteristic is that they are *faithful* which means of course that they can't quit. That's what a true Christian is—a person who can't quit *being* a Christian. When a young man called me recently to tell me how discouraged he was, how he had lost his confidence in prayer because he felt no answer was coming, and how ready he was to quit, I said to him, "Well, why don't you just quit then? Give up. Stop being a Christian." I knew that if he tried to quit the first thing he would discover is that he couldn't. And he knew it too. As Paul will describe in this letter we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, so we can't quit. That is the mark of a believer in Christ. (*Riches in Christ* by Ray C. Stedman, 1976, p. 13)

So, *saints* is a reference simply to Christians; to born-again people; to Jesus-followers. If you are a Christian you are a saint. I know that is hard to get used to because we're so accustomed to churches and places being named after long-dead super-Christians. But the Bible only means saved-people when it uses the word saints. So, I am Saint Neil, and you are Saint Jonathan and Saint Rachel and Saint Joan and Saint Robert.

Now, sainthood becomes visible in time by sustained faithfulness to Christ. That's how you can SEE who the real saints are... *who are faithful in Christ Jesus*. The Bible never sanctions the idea of people making an initial profession of faith in Christ but never bothering to grow in grace, and yet still retaining the privilege of calling themselves "saints." If there would be a Roman Catholic objection to this wider definition of sainthood it might be "You pass it out too casually and too carelessly. People have to earn it!" To some extent, I agree! They earn the REPUTATION by being faithful. Paul attaches to sainthood the description, "Saints are faithful." That's simple enough, I think. In verse 2 we read:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was not a typical way to do a greeting in first century letters and is uniquely Christian. The capstone of all we stand for is the word which Paul so frequently bequeathed to his readers: **grace**. Is there a finer word in the English language? "Grace" is getting a gift from God that we have not earned. We have not merited a divine favor we have found in our hands, when we are Christians. And our whole "soteriology" is based on grace. He gave to us; we try to give to others and TO each other because we have freely received from God in Christ.

I cannot understand why our theology is so repugnant to people when they say Christians are trying to cram their religion down people's throats. It is grace that we want them to hear about and embrace by faith. That's all. It's not Law. It's grace! And Paul wishes much grace upon the early believers who would receive this letter.

Flowing out of his heart to them was also the hope that they might experience **peace**. I can't help but think of one of the few places where we are told to pray for non-Christians in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 2:1,2

1 FIRST of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

The apostles all wanted the early Christians to enjoy a general lifestyle of **peace**. That starts by entering into a "declaration of peace" between you and God Himself. Jesus made peace by His cross. The death of Christ accomplished a state of peace. Paul wishes it to become the rule for believers' lives...

Real peace comes from **God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. Peace flows from God. There is never NOT peace within the godhead or in heaven, I believe. Peace is the natural state of affairs where God is in control. No church therefore, should ever be in turmoil, ideally. If Jesus is really the Head of a church or a family (which is sort of a micro-church) then peace should be the normal expectation.

Well, this letter is going to tell us what God is doing in the world. It's going to seem, for those of you who have studied in the Book of Romans, sort of like a Little Romans. Pray in this series that I will be given insight and clarity to teach through this book. Pray that the Holy Spirit uses this wonderful letter to challenge us and encourage us!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*
Scripture: Ephesians 1:3ff
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: October 22nd, 2000 (Lesson 2)



Reasons for "Vital Optimism"

Introduction Most of you know that for some years I, your Pastor, have had this silly love affair with computers. It began in late 1985 when I was given a portable computer [a Kaypro CPM machine] while on a trip to Dallas and it has continued for the past fifteen years, pretty much unabated. Until this week. This week I contracted my first computer virus, a nasty one. Now, I am nowhere near as excited about computers as I was! It started last Friday when I received a phone call from my friend Sandy, in Virginia, who told me that he had received a virus-infected "Alanis" screen saver from me via e-mail and "Hey thanks, Neil, for spreading your germs down here!" With my normal unreactionary eloquence I replied, "Whu?" I had not SENT him any screen saver and I had no idea what he was talking about. But I dutifully went right out on Monday and procured the Norton Anti-virus program and tried to immediately install it. For those of you who do not know what anti-viral software is, or even what a computer virus is for that matter, when you purchase the basic software it licenses you to dial up to the company's web site and frequently download disinfectants (the latest "virus definitions", they're called) for any and every known virus out there. That's what I wanted to do... But MY new software would not dial up to the company's web site. About then, on Wednesday as I arrived at our "Awana" children's club, I am presented with a U.S. Navy memo by our Awana "commander" warning me that it is a federal crime to attempt infection of Navy computers, eligible for a fine of up to \$20,000. Evidently ALSO last Friday (which was Friday the 13th by the way), as I e-mailed David he was ALSO offered the Alanis screen saver (by my computer which now has a mind of its own) which I now know is a shield for the nasty W95_MTX anti-anti-virus virus but the Naval Undersea Warfare Center protective firewall would not let the virus into David's computer and warned him that someone on the outside was trying to mess with his machine. So... now I'm starting to NOT like computers much AT ALL any more and as I find that I not only cannot log on to Symantec's web site I ALSO now cannot even get their 800 technical support phone number OUT of my computer from the Help menu (now crashing the computer whenever I try to click on it) with which to call them and say "Wuzzup?" So I find the number on the back of the box, call them, wait 45 minutes on hold, (having to listen to Jimi Hendrix, Kansas and Aerosmith on Symantec Customer Service radio) and am finally greeted by a delightfully friendly "Martha" who informs me that, by the way, this call (my first to the company) will cost me an additional \$29.95 since my computer was *already* infected when I bought the product—which, BY THE WAY sports fans—was WHY I bought the product... Not knowing what else to do I decide to accept her \$29.95 offer to manually e-mail me the latest virus list so I can manually disinfect my stupid computer, which I do, taking me two hours more (W95_MTX had wedged itself into more than 50 files inside my little ol' Hewlett Packard), only to receive Friday morning this e-mail News Flash from the Associated Press and CNN (supposedly) from my friend Sandy, back in Virginia—

"CIA COMPUTERS SHUT DOWN BY CHURCH VIRUS"

October 20, 2000

WASHINGTON, D.C. "A deadly worm virus found its way into Central Intelligence Agency computers last night, shutting down all agency computers and putting national security at risk. An agency spokesperson said that the virus was routed to the company through several Navy computers, which in turn had been infected by a church computer in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The pastor there could not be reached for comment, but several law enforcement agencies are engaged in an intensive search for the perpetrator. The virus, which originated in New Bedford, is also called the '7 of 9 Virus', for its propensity to direct all internet searches from an infected computer to a particular webpage in the popular 'Star Trek Voyager' website. No one knows why this happens, but a spokesman at the U.S. General Accounting Office says that the New Bedford pastor has 'quite a bill coming his way, as well as possible jail time.'"

So, how was your week?

How hopeful are you about the future? Do you look forward to whatever is coming? Are you going through life with the outlook that “the best is yet to come?” That is something called “vital optimism,” according to military historian John Keegan and referred to by Gordon MacDonald in his book *Mid-Course Correction*. Keegan says that Victorian England had lots of “vital optimism” but that the Battle of The Somme and the Battle of Ypres [SW Belgium] in 1917 killed it and to this day England has never recovered it (70,000 English dead; 170,000 wounded in that one two-battle event).

MacDonald, in his book, says that Christians possess a unique kind of “vital optimism,” sensing that the best is yet to come. He says our sense of *HOPE* is unequalled in the world! He says that we tell each other that there is a world to change out there, that there are millions of people anxious to hear what we have to say and that we are eligible to access a supernatural power which can get us over any human limitations.¹

What we read in the first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians gives us a bunch of powerful reasons to be optimistic, even giddy about the future. No virus—computer or biological; no financial catastrophe; no war; no divorce; no death of a loved one; can lessen the power of the truth which Paul articulates in the first few lines of his letter to the Ephesians! He begins this letter with a praise to the Lord.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

God is the “*blessed*” one; the praised one, the one who is the focus of our worship. We declare His goodness which is His very nature. He is the only being who is, in essence, purely good (Matthew 19:17). He not only *does* good things, He *IS* good in a way and to a degree that no human being except His own incarnate Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, can be...[and] there is no source of goodness outside of God.²

You know, it is no trivial thing to believe that God is good or to come to a worship service and personally declare “God is good.” God the Father is blessed and He has always been so and always will be so. When we sing it or pray it or say it in testimony we are plugging into a topic that angels in heaven never cease to converse about—(beings smarter, older and more powerful than the wisest or most wonderful man or woman on earth!)

Then Paul says that God has *blessed us* (who is *us*?) *with every spiritual blessing*. Not half of them; not some of them. Every one of them that is there to have and experience God has blessed Paul and his readers with. The apostle James said something similar: (1:17)

¹ MacDonald, Gordon *Mid-Course Correction* Nelson Publishers, 2000 p. xi

² MacArthur, John *Commentary on Ephesians*, Moody Press, 1986

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

But what does “every spiritual blessing” refer to?

Every spiritual blessing (eulogia) refers to every spiritual enrichment needed for the spiritual life. Since these benefits have already been bestowed on believers, they should not ask for them but rather appropriate them by faith. Similarly Joshua was not to ask for land since God had already promised it to him (Josh. 1:3-4). But he was to enter into the enjoyment of that provision.³

Note, Spiritual blessings are the best blessings with which God blesses us, and for which we are to bless him. He blesses us by bestowing such things upon us as make us really blessed.⁴

They are blessings, cool things, wonderful things, powerful truths and entitlements ***in the heavenly places***. Paul is going to use this expression four more times in this book (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). These blessings are headquartered above this place. We started getting blessed, when? In eternity past. With what? Every spiritual blessing, whatever those might be. How? In Christ—not in Buddha, not in Mohammed, not in Moses, but only in Christ. And where? ***In heavenly places***. Now, do you notice that this suggests that there ARE heavenly places? I cannot imagine what they look like or what are their dimensions. But the word ***places*** signifies real locations. Locations which are next to near where God is Himself. They are not subject to eviction. Our good things and future hope is not subject to decay, rust, becoming obsolete or running out of power. They are fixed in God Himself because He is the king of heaven and nothing happens in heaven but that He decrees it.

Now, the first blessing is next mentioned: ***just as He [God] chose us in Him [that is, in Christ] before the foundation of the world***. This is the election and predestination of God. It is a wonderful and incredible truth. It is also a ***spiritual blessing*** given to us from long before Adam and Eve ever were walking on the planet. The doctrine of election is a powerful truth which the Bible clearly teaches. Some struggle with it so much that they feel they must understand it like this: “Well, God can foresee the future, and on the basis of what He knows we will do, He says, ‘All right, I’ll elect them to be part of my process.’” Others wrestle with election and predestination by saying, “Well, God sees what we *will* be when we become Christians—He sees the *value* that we *will* have toward Him and He chooses us on that basis—how we *will* be when we receive Christ.” But these are not only too simplistic, they are not what the Scriptures say. It is a simple and wonderful truth of the Bible that Christians are chosen of God. In John 6:44 Jesus said,

No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

³ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

⁴ Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

That's putting it pretty plainly—you can't come to Christ unless you are drawn by the Father. We must still *choose* to come and we must make the decision personally, deliberately and intentionally. But behind it all is the electing love and grace of a sovereign God. Isaiah wrote (45:4):

For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me.

Paul wrote to the Romans (8:29,30):

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

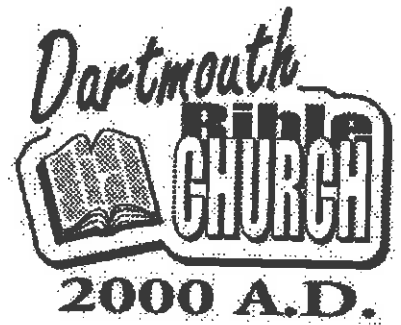
I want you to know that if this is the first time you have heard this Christian truth—which we are saying is the first of the spiritual blessings of heavenly coordinates which is true for us—and a thing which enables and demands us to be supremely optimistic—and if you find it startling or even confusing, I understand. It is an awesome and incredible thing to think about. But it should not make you doubt. Remember, we are talking about God, about a being Who, as we sang this morning, has ways which are not our ways and is high above us. It is His prerogative to BE God. It is *because* we are talking about God that we can intellectually “allow” Him to mark out in advance who will be saved even before He has made them. It is *because* He is God that we can intellectually “allow” God to have things un-figure-out-able to us, figured out and done so perfectly, in complete love, with all fairness and justice and violating not one of His own attributes for even one nanosecond!

I remember when I was a sophomore in college, and not yet even a Christian, I heard that a couple of former campus radicals had become some kind of “Christians” and were going around talking about a God who predestines people to become Christians. At the time I found the idea strangely compelling and I had never heard of the idea before (which only shows you how little I was aware of the Bible). I felt drawn to the idea, and sought these two guys out and asked them what was up with this thing. They gave me a piece of paper that had fifty Bible verses which clearly teach that a loving God elects and predestines people to salvation in Christ. I was blown away, and while it would be several more months before I would come to Christ in faith once I got there I was ready for a sovereign God, defeatable by nothing, intent on getting me to heaven.

The next “spiritual blessing” is *that we should be holy and blameless before Him*. Do you ever think we sing too much about holiness—His, or ours by adoption and by His giving it to us? Do you ever get tired or bored with the word? It is a spiritual thing that takes spiritual sensitivity to love it. I want to be more holy. I want to be in the place where there is no longer any sin in me or around me. I can hardly imagine that, but I want it. I want to be rid of rebellion and self-centeredness and greed and wrath and all that other stuff that is NOT holy. We are *holy and blameless* now, in the heavenly places and we shall be holy and blameless in every sense when He comes again or when He raptures us or when we go home to be with Him. All of this makes me pretty optimistic about the future. It makes me look forward to what's coming and realize that the best is yet to come! May God give us a strange and powerful awareness of what is coming. May He center our every attention on what we already possess in Christ.

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*
Scripture: Ephesians 1:4-6
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: October 29th, 2000 (Lesson 3)



The Electing Grace of a Loving God

Introduction It is popular today to talk about a wholistic approach to life and I would submit to you this morning that the Christian vision is a vision that communicates *wholeness* better than any other vision on the planet. And the book of Ephesians perhaps better than any book in the New Testament promotes a Christian vision of *wholeness*. It is a "wholistic" vision which not only considers body, soul, mind and spirit all together but which actually plugs us back into the original Creator's spec's with which we were made. It is a vision which is time-independent and culture-independent. You will forgive me if I sound like an engineer, but the Christian vision is a vision which comprehensively factors in every possible failure-event which we, the operators, might impose on the system and which anticipates all external agents who have targeted the system for failure. The vision which the Book of Ephesians lays out is the vision of the electing grace of a loving God.

Now, we are not very far into this book when we read about a God who elects and predestines certain people to salvation. I want to suggest that you not get all bothered by that. It is a fact of life that choices are made. By nature, we select one option over another frequently and without feeling strange about it.

1. If I go to the grocery store I select the kind of breakfast cereal that I want and I leave the rest. I do not go through the isle and say, "Oh, I do not like Wheat Puffs and I do not like Kix and I do not like Grape Nuts. I just go down the isle fully intent on finding what I DO like (the Sugar Cocoa Bombs!)"
2. When I was in high school it was still a time when there was still the idea of MAKING the final sports team cut. The coaches selected whom they wanted on the team and they passed by the others.
3. When we vote in November we will select whom we want to represent us in the various offices and we will, by definition, NOT select whom we do not want. Selection and election are a natural law of life.
4. Taking this a little farther, I want you to know that I love all of you. But I really love those of you who are DBC members. And I *really* love those of you DBC members who are here most of the time. And I *especially really* love those of you who are DBC members, are here most of the time and work hard at a ministry. But I *highly especially really* love my daughters and wife. They are the most special to me of all the special (even though I truly love you all!)

Sure, I believe that there is a sense in which God loves His whole creation. There isn't a person alive today or who ever was alive whom God did not make. He has made everyone and everything and as He looks at His creation, I believe He loves it. But that does not mean that He is not allowed to rescue from the tragedy of sin whomsoever He wishes. Sin entered the system and so any truly "wholistic" redemptive system must accommodate that fact. How is sin going to be dealt with? And if it is a fact that the sinners are utterly unable to rescue themselves—because sin has been so thorough in its destructiveness—how can anyone BE saved unless God does it?

We read in Ephesians 1:4,5 that *in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will*. I find immense comfort and warmth in this verse. God has marked out in advance, has "elected" in eternity past a great company of people throughout time to become adopted BACK into His family. They WILL come to Christ at some point in their lives and therefore will receive an eternal change in status before Him. They will be GIVEN holy and blameless status and thus compel a feeling of favor and love in the Father, just as any kid who does well makes his or her Father very happy.

When we consider the biblical doctrine of predestination it is important to consider it in exact Biblical terms. We must be careful not to say something about it that the Bible does not say and we must be careful to say *all* about it that the Bible does say. The Bible says here that it was *in love* that God predestined *us*. We read last week that verse from John 6:44, *No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him*. The word *draws* carries with it the idea of an irresistible force and was used in ancient Greek literature of a desperately hungry man being drawn to food...

Salvage yards use giant electromagnets to lift and partially sort scrap metal. When the magnet is turned on, a tremendous magnetic force draws all the ferrous metals that are near it, but has no effect on other metals such as aluminum or brass. Similarly, God's elective will draws to Himself those whom He has predetermined to love and forgive, while having no effect on those whom He has not. (MacArthur, *Commentary*, p. 11)

The Bible is pretty clear on all this and the electing grace of God (at which we stand in awe) is central to the "wholistic" plan of God to deal with the whole world.

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

Romans 8:29

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren

Romans 9:11

for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls

Romans 9:16

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

1 Thessalonians 1:3,4

constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you

Deuteronomy 7:7,8

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

I want you to remember some things about the situation at the time. Paul is in prison. He was not wealthy. He was not surrounded by a powerful infrastructure of supporters and connections and resources. He was almost alone, cordoned off from the politically correct of his day. He was in no earthly position to make bold claims of his status with God in order to impress people. Neither were the people to whom he was writing. There would be no reason to invent a grandiose theology out of the "nothing" of his then-portfolio, unless it were just the truth. And the truth it was—the early Christians were living in a time when a great cosmic shift was on. With all their humble circumstances, with their squabbling sometimes, with their occasional lack of clarity on some theological issues, the earliest Christians were the first-fruits of a New Chosen People, now not just limited to one people and yet still connected to that former Chosen People (Israel). The Ephesian Christians were both Jew and Gentile, worshipping the true God together. It must have been a strange mix in the earliest years... These are the people whom Paul says were in love predestined by God. John MacArthur sums up this whole section about God's plan nicely as follows (*Commentary on Ephesians*):

The method?	Election
The object?	The elect
The time?	Eternity past
The purpose?	Holiness
The motive?	Love
The result?	Sonship
The goal?	Glory

Now for a person who has had two wonderful parents, most of his or her life, **adoption as sons** isn't maybe as deliciously wonderful a promise as it might sound to an orphan in the ancient world (with no social services available whatsoever). Adoption means being brought into a family with full rights and privileges as any other child in the family. God views those whom He has chosen to become Christians that way. He loves them with the highest love. He wants them right next to Him and He wants them to know and act like they are heirs of the King! Now, it seems to me that Paul is a little emotional in this passage! (A. & P. LePeau, *Ephesians: Wholeness for a Broken World*, IVP 1985, p. 58). He is **feeling** praise to God, even from his prison-situation, for the fact that God is doing something wonderful out there. Even though he, himself, was cooped up and without a lot of personal resources, he knew that he, himself, and all other Christians, were part of

something big, something *really* big. It is hard to be just intellectual about that. Our faith is not simply a series of prepositional truths, a set of mathematical equations. It is like the first song we sang this morning,

Lord, I lift Your name on high. Lord, I love to sing Your praises. I'm so glad You're in my life. I'm so glad you came to save us. Or in another song we sang, Your name is life and breath to me!

Paul maybe has some real emotion here as he writes this letter about the plan of God. It is an awesome thing. It isn't just some kind of dry theological equation. It is life and breath to us!

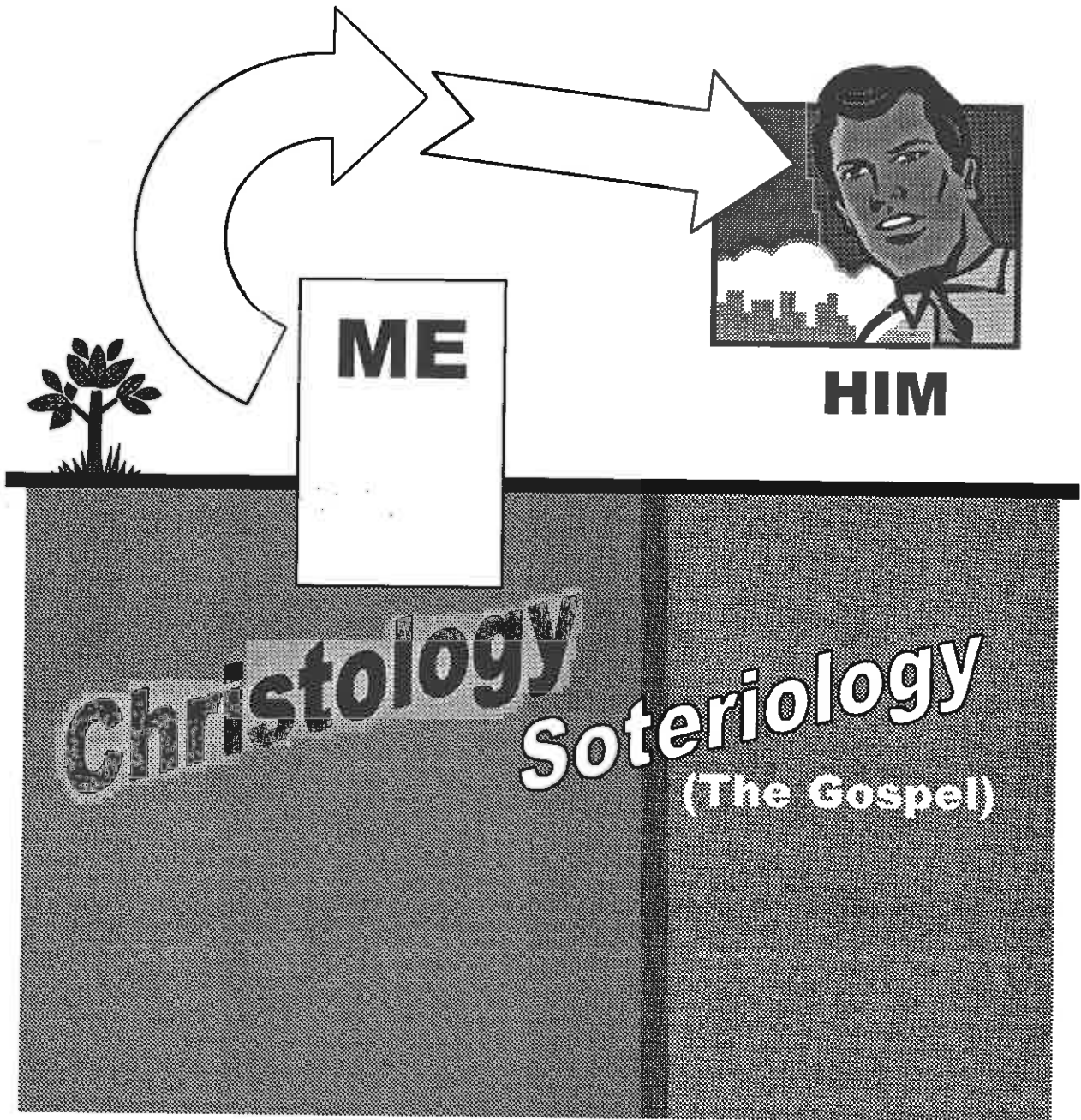
So, adoption as sons *to Himself* happens, he says, *through Jesus Christ*. Once again, this adoption only happens by attaching yourself to Christ by faith. It isn't through being a sincere religionist of some other kind. It isn't through amalgamating a little of this religion and a little of that religion into one big pot of theological soup and offering that to God as our ticket to adoption. It isn't through simply believing that Jesus existed or even through believing that the things the Bible says said Jesus did really happened... It is only through a personal cleaving to Jesus Christ and by means of His atonement on the cross.

And also please notice that the plan of God to rescue whomsoever He wished was out of kindness. *According to the kind intention of His* will... He did not HAVE to rescue anyone. All are guilty before God. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. No one *deserves* to be rescued, so badly has our own sin ruined us. But in God's love, He chose to choose. He willed that some—in fact, many—would and should and could come to Christ for rescue, for full atonement. Who IS that? Who ARE the ones who are the elect? I cannot say until a person comes forward for Christ and to Christ. And even then I am never sure until they begin to grow and bear fruit and prove faithful. The elect WILL persevere, no matter what, but exactly who are the elect in the Town of Dartmouth in the year 2,000? Our church membership lists are an approximation, hopefully a good approximation...

My friends, although this passage sits on a foundation of an absolutely sovereign God His sovereign predestination is bracketed by language like *in love, adoption, His kind intention*. It isn't out of some cold and calculating SYSTEM or FATE. Paul is praising, emotionally I think, God Himself for His adoring concern and action on the part of people. Since He is God, and the maker of all people, He gets to decide which people will come to Christ.

All of this ought to humble you. It ought to attract your full attention. It ought to give you great joy to think that you have or can be made a participant in the electing grace of God. It is a miracle to be sure, that anyone can and often "Anyone" does come to Christ. I am amazed at the unpredictability of who actually ends up loving Jesus Christ. I am also amazed at, for all the opportunities, who do NOT come to Christ and who reject the electing grace of God...

A Ministry of Evangelism



'Εν ᾧ καὶ Ἐκληρώθημεν

**En hoi kai
in whom also**

Eklērōthēmen

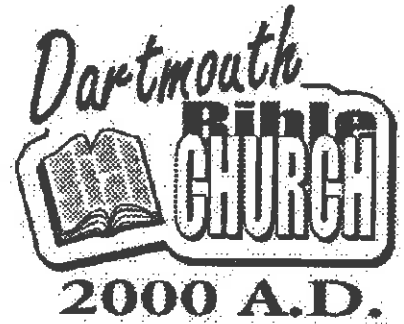
**We HAVE OBTAINED
an inheritance**

OR

**We WERE MADE
an inheritance**

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, He had His eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose He is working out in everything and everyone...

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: November 12th 2000 (Lesson 5)

What We See Because of What We Have

(Or, How to Read the Daily Newspaper)

Introduction In Stephen Coonts' novel *Cuba* there is an old fisherman, stranded on a doomed refugee vessel about to sink. The engine was shot and as they desperately tried to pump water out of the bilge, we read this description of the old Cuban's thoughts:

The old fisherman remained silent, not really listening to the younger man who prayed aloud, sobbed, babbled of his mother...and never stopped pumping—but thinking of his own life, of the women he had loved, of the hard things life had taught him. He would die soon he knew and somehow that was all right, a fitting thing, a proper end to the great voyage he had had through life. Life pounds you, he thought, knocks out the pride and bile of youth. Live long enough and you begin to see the big picture, see yourself as God must see you, a flawed mortal speck of proroplasm whose fate is of little concern to anyone but you. You work, eat, sleep, reproduce, and die, precisely like all the others, no different really, and the planet turns and the star burns on both quite indifferent to our fate... (p. 291)

It has been a historic week for our nation and we still do not know how our Presidential election will settle and who will be at the head of our government in 2001. It was a wholly unpredictable week (One New York Times journalist called it the most boring of campaigns but the most fascinating of elections.) I imagine many people wonder about where is the direction and sense in our country right now and who is really at the helm? It has been a week of confusion and uncertainty. Some of the most stalwart people say, "Aww, it'll get figured out sooner or later—nothing to worry about." But others worry and you hear concern expressed, even a nervous prayerfulness for our land...

And so I, for one, am glad that we as Christians recognize the letter of Paul to the Ephesians as something more than just "ancient literature." We think the Bible is divinely inspired and that its perspective and vision extend *beyond* this world. We turn to this book and we read words which sit us back down, pat us on the shoulder and tell us to have confidence that there is a big purpose unfolding in the world. Even as we enter a chapter of American history initialized, at least with great political bickering and what seems to be an increasing polarization within our own borders—we sense that something greater than an election or even our country is "going on." And so we come to Paul's words to the ancient Asian Christians... We're still picking our way slowly through the first chapter of

consider the specifications of any rescue plan they would see the brilliance of it. Somehow God needed to design a plan which would, at once,

↳ satisfy both His own justice and wrath (two attributes important to Him!) and His love and compassion.

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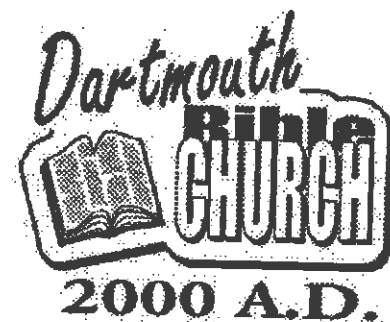
↳ It must never wear out and it must forever give God Himself delight and pleasure.

As God pondered it, therefore, only God Himself, a team of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, could pull it off, could get it done. I can imagine God thinking, "Mohammed was alright. But he's not my Son. Buddha was alright but he's not my perfect Son. Lord Krishna was alright but he's not my Son. *Only my Son* can win these people back from sin and Satan. Only my Son can accomplish the plan. Son, go... And so Paul says the plan to send the Son, the one and only Son, the *only begotten Son* was crafted *in all wisdom and insight*.

Paul says *Us* learned the *mystery of His will according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (vs. 9)*. "Mystery" is a recurring term in Ephesians (3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19). Here, as in the rest of the NT, it simply means a truth once hidden but now made known (Rom 11:25; Col 1:26; cf. Matt 13:11, 35). Both in Jewish apocalyptic literature and in the Qumran documents the word denotes the secret plan of God that will become apparent at the end of the age. "Mysteries are the answers to the great questions which continually throb in the human heart. But no ordinary enterprise—no course of instruction, no university curriculum, no scientific investigation—will ever reveal these secrets. Only God is able to tell us the answers..." (Ray Stedman, *Riches in Christ* p. 47) But in the NT the unlocking of the mystery has now taken place in Christ and there is no need to wait till the last day in order to know what God's strategy is (TDNT, 4:819-822).¹ It must have been hard to be a Jehovah-follower, a Jew, in the third, second and first centuries, B.C. No prophets arose who spoke the word of God. It was four hundred years from the end of Malachi's ministry (the last written prophet of the Old Testament) and the arrival of John the Baptist. And with great trials always seeming to fall upon the Jews there in Israel, it is not hard to understand why their ultimate rescue would have seemed like a mystery. "How are we going to survive?" would have been the cry! But in Christ, with His death and resurrection, with the arising of the apostles and the spread of the Gospel people were coming to SEE what God's plan was going to be! I think we underestimate how valuable it is to us to know what's going on in the world, really, and what is the plan and design. A great many of our neighbors are mystified by life and history and its meaning. But the mystery has been revealed and uncovered in the pages of the Bible and the answers are all right there for anyone who wants to read them. It has been so for 1,900 years now!

¹ A. Skevington Wood, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



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Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

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What We See Because of What We Have (Or, How to Read the Daily Newspaper)

Introduction In Stephen Coonts' novel *Cuba* there is an old fisherman, stranded on a doomed refugee vessel about to sink. The engine was shot and as they desperately tried to pump water out of the bilge, we read this description of the old Cuban's thoughts:

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Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Here is essentially what we see in the first part of this chapter...

We have read that God has a plan for the whole world. It is a plan so pervasive and complete that it even transcends time itself. Nothing is left to chance. We have read that at the center of this plan is a vast family of people whom God has sovereignly chosen for rescue from judgment. This plan of God is surrounded and filled with His love and kindness and it focuses on His Son, Jesus Christ as the Head of this vast family of people. There is no entrance into this family without believing in the Head but no one who *does* believe in the Head and entrust themselves to the Head will or can be dispossessed, forfeited or lost. It is the plan of God for this world; it is final and there is no negotiating it. It is a plan which, when you see it and really come to understand it, you are compelled to praise Him for it. You see that this plan and only this plan brings God the glory and worship which He deserves. And you want to glorify Him for it. Even to the point of seeing beyond your present, day-to-day struggles or insecurities or worries. Even though (as Ray Stedman put it) "each of us is a walking civil war" if you are a Christian you are swept up in a cosmic design by God Himself to bring out of this fallen world a people who have been bought back by blood, who are forgiven and cleansed of the guilt and debt of all their sins and who have been lavished with great giftedness from their Redeemer. Ephesians 1 is a blessed and heavily worship-driven part of the Word of God. It is not easily "diagramed" or quickly digested. It is the meat of the Word...

Now my desire today is to lay out what we see because of what we have. That is the title of the message. We have a broader view of the world and life, a keener sense of what is really going on in the world, even in world history, because of the *riches of His grace* which He has given us. Those riches include forgiveness, redemption, predestination and election, adoption, heavenly spiritual blessings the likes and list of which we cannot even begin to understand yet! We are not "poor schnooks", running around with no direction, surviving from one day to the next, driven only by animal urges, enslaved to sin. We see MORE than that because we have been GIVEN more than just life-breath. Christians have had new life-breath "breathed" into their lives.

Now we pick up where we left off last week, at the end of verse 8:

8c In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

I hear many thinkers in our culture essentially accusing God of being dumb. They don't say it that bluntly, but they imply it. They say, "this notion of the Christian gospel being good enough and sufficient for all mankind is balogna. If THAT were the only way to heaven God sure missed something. He should have factored in the fact that all the world will not BE Christians." The Christian Gospel, they imagine, is not big enough to handle the whole world and all time. They would say the Christian Gospel is not smart enough or intuitive enough. St. Paul begs to differ, however. As he laid out on Mars Hill in Rome (Acts 17) and as he lays out here with his pen (from a Roman jail cell) it was *in all wisdom and insight* that God invented the plan to rescue people. And if a person would

consider the specifications of any rescue plan they would see the brilliance of it.

Somehow God needed to design a plan which would, at once,

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Now, AGAIN we read about God's will being kind. His will and decree are not a cold, calculating program like some sort of control routine in a computer for automatic operation of some manufacturing plant. It is the wonderful heart of God, which devises plans and purposes, always in perfect, exquisite, pure love. When we sing about His love, think about the loving PLAN that the Bible lays out. Mediate, during one of these love songs we sing, about the *spiritual blessings in the heavenly places* and about *the riches of grace in Christ*. I fear we hear these words so often that we become numb to them. We take them for granted!

His plan has chapters, all laid out. We're in one now. It is not the final chapter. The final chapter will be, I believe, the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ which will be the summation of a centuries old, even millennia old unfolding of what God has planned for the planet, a bringing together and *summing up of all things in Christ*. It will have features like what we read elsewhere in

Ephesians 3:15

...from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name

Philippians 2:9

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name

Colossians 1:16,20

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. ...and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

In this summing up in Christ THE WORLD WILL BE JOINED WITH HEAVEN—at least insofar as administrative organization is concerned (οἰκονομία). In vs. 10 Paul uses the word *oiknomia*, management, economy, some translate it *dispensation* and he uses it again in 3:9:

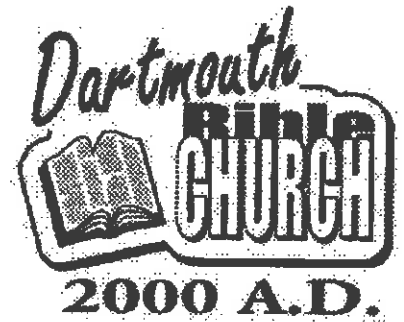
3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the ADMINISTRATION of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

The last chapter of world history was beginning when the apostles were living in the first century. They knew it and they talked about it freely. They hoped it would not last long but they did not know. We are in the same last chapter, still. We may well be coming to the end. When Jesus comes again and sets up His kingdom—this is really going to happen folks!— there will not be multi-cultural decentralization. There will be a complete summing up of all things under the headship of the Son—this remains for many

still a mystery! They haven't heard about it and IF they hear about it the mystery still clouds their hearts.

I want you to not worry too much about our situation politically. Pray for our leaders; pray that ***Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** But understand that a time is coming when there is going to be a real-time, live-action, planetary ***summing up of all things in Christ.*** There will be no debates, no recounts, no lawsuits and counter-lawsuits. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Where are you with Him this morning? You do not know how long it will be until He comes again or how long you have to really seek Him. I implore you, seek Him today. Seek Him until you know you have found Him...

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*
Scripture: Ephesians 1:11,12
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: November 26th 2000 (Lesson 6)

An Inheritance Without Probate

Introduction John Grisham's novel *The Testament* begins like this:

Down to the last day, even the last hour. I'm an old man, lonely, unloved, sick and hurting and tired of living. I am ready for the hereafter; it has to be better than this. I own the tall glass building in which I sit, and 97% of the company housed in it, below me, and the land around it half a mile in three directions, and the two thousand people who work here and the other twenty thousand who do not, and I own the pipeline under the land that brings gas to the building from my fields in Texas, and I own the utility lines that deliver electricity and I lease the satellite unseen miles above by which I once barked commands to my empire flung far around the world. My assets exceed eleven billion dollars. I own silver in Nevada and copper in Montana and coffee in Kenya and coal in Angola and rubber in Malaysia and natural gas in Texas and crude oil in Indonesia and steel in China. My company owns companies that produce electricity and make computers and build dams and print paperbacks and broadcast signals to my satellite. I have subsidiaries and divisions in more countries than anyone can find. I once owned all the appropriate toys—the yachts and jets and blondes, the homes in Europe, farms in Argentina, an island in the Pacific, thoroughbreds even a hockey team. But I've grown too old for toys. The money is the root of my misery. I had three families—three ex-wives who bore seven children, six of whom are still alive and doing all they can to torment me. To the best of my knowledge I fathered all seven, and buried one. I should say his mother buried him. I was out of the country. I am estranged from all of the wives and all the children. They're gathering here today because I am dying and it's time to divide the money... (*The Testament* by John Grisham, Doubleday, 1999, pp. 1,2).

The story goes on to tell about how this fellow surprises everybody and at the last minute wills the almost the *entire eleven billion* to a previously unknown daughter who is a Christian missionary in Brazil. "Rachel" is far back into Amazon country, not the least bit interested in wealth and comes, overnight, into eleven billion dollars! She receives an inheritance of unimaginable power and breadth, not because she especially deserved it or wanted it... There is at least one thing in this story that is much like how it is for people who find themselves—perhaps in surprise—believing in Jesus Christ: coming into a fabulously incalculable inheritance!

You know, it's great to be a Christian, even with our weaknesses and disappointments sometimes. In these times in which we find ourselves living it is wonderful to know that my future is secure, my past all happened with design and my present is being driven by the best mission that anyone on the planet can have—to

discover and fulfill God's will and plan for my life. It is truly excellent to be a real follower of the Lord Jesus Christ today.

Now, people who receive an inheritance often have to go through probate court and prove their rightful ownership of one part or another or the whole inheritance. But as Christians we have an incredible inheritance and there is no probate to go through in order to take possession of it. Christians are fully set up and equipped to be the happiest people on the planet and this is because as the apostle Paul said in Ephesians 1:3 that **God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.** That's no small potatoes! We have not just randomly, accidentally wandered into this faith in Christ. Oh no...

- One of those "spiritual blessings" is our predestination **before the foundation of the world.**
- Another is that the goal of that predestination of people is that they will be **adopted sons.**
- Another is that AS adopted sons we are targeted for **holy and blameless** status. Other spiritual blessings include
- **redemption through His blood** (vs. 7),
- **the forgiveness of our trespasses** (vs. 7),
- being the first to see the unveiling of God's overall plan for the world (vs. 9).

It may seem a little hard to grasp the meaning of each part of the "inheritance portfolio." But each of these "spiritual blessings" is ours because one day back in 19whatever (or maybe for you even just this year) you decided to follow Jesus and to hitch your faith to His cross and empty tomb. You have actually ALREADY been given a little piece of the inheritance: the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of you. We will hear more about this in vs. 14. The images of redemption (being bought back) and inheritance are big in the minds of Biblical writers. After God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt He led them to their "inheritance" or "possession" in the Promised Land. Later Jewish writers and early Christian writers considered the FUTURE as part of the Big Inheritance to come for God's people (Craig Keener, *The Bible Background Commentary*, p. 542). What a thing it is to have the giver of the inheritance, walking right beside us NOW, assuring us that it is coming.

I was gratified to hear one of the testimonies in our Thanksgiving Eve service speak of the presence of the Holy Spirit in that person's life, taking her through hard times. I love to hear things like that. It is His presence in the challenging times of depression, fear or weariness that really evidences that He is real.

Now this all ought to temper our whole outlook on life! Eugene Petersen's *The Message* translation of Ephesians 1:11,12 reads like this:

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

Paul is conveying to the Ephesian Christians that they, real people, living there in a real city in something like the year A.D. 61 were slated for much bigger things! So are you, if you believe in Jesus Christ and are now one of His adopted children...

Ephesians 1:11-12

In Him also we were made an inheritance

In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Now right off we have an interesting problem in the Greek text. Ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐκκληρώθημεν, ***en hoi kai eklerothemen***, what is called an "aorist passive indicative." When something in the future was so certain that it could not possibly fail to happen, the Greeks would often speak of it as if it had already occurred (John MacArthur, *Commentary on Ephesians*, p. 29). The same kind of grammatical Greek is in 2:6

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus

Now, this aorist passive indicative can be translated as ***either In Him we also have obtained an inheritance OR In Him we were made an inheritance.*** I think this is cool because we can say from this phrase that when a person becomes a Christian they, at the same time, OBTAIN a wonderful future and inheritance AND ARE THEMSELVES MADE God's personal inheritance. We draw on Him and also, He draws on us! That is incredible! Do you ever imagine that the Lord looks forward to your being with Him in heaven? Do you ever think about Him viewing YOU as someone that He is looking forward to *inheriting*? Well He does just as we look forward to inheriting Him.

Now generally, getting an inheritance is a thing a person looks forward to.

It involves coming into something.

It involves the potential to improve your standard of living.

It involves an upgrade in hopefulness about the future, maybe even a whole change of attitude and outlook.

If I was your father and I showed you my will for you and you SAW that it said that you will inherit a nice house, two nice cars, a boat, CDs in amount of \$50,000, several healthy stocks, several mutual fund investments and several treasury bills, and a number of valuable art pieces, how would you feel when I showed you the will?

From a spiritual standpoint, with what we have in Christ coming in the future, this all means we should not complain about what life hands us. It is the Father who has made that choice and has chosen to put us where we are and to give us the problems we have in order that, in the hurt and heartache and in the suffering, and in the joy and blessing and the riches, whatever they may be, the life of Jesus may be released in that situation. By that means He destroys the old and brings in the new. And we make ourselves available to Him moment by moment—in the shop, in the office, in the home, in the backyard, wherever we are—as we respond with joy and love and acceptance of the situation in which we find ourselves, God is glorified. Christ receives His inheritance (Ray Stedman, *Riches in Christ*).

In other words, whenever we have a victory over complaining and we can sincerely say, "I praise You, O Lord, IN this situation because I know my destiny is MORE than this," He is blessed. It isn't primarily in waving our arms or singing real crisply or even in feeling tears. It is continuing to praise Him *out there* and choosing to do that. Then, He is blessed and then He says, "Man—I love having these people follow Me!" Listen to these other verses...

1 Corinthians 2:9

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived WHAT God has prepared for those who love him"

Ephesians 2:7

in order that in the coming ages he might show the INCOMPARABLE RICHES OF HIS GRACE, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:8

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

Ephesians 3:16

I pray that out of HIS GLORIOUS RICHES he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being

In the next part of verse 11 we read again about how Christians are the subject of a predestination.

MacArthur says, "As Christians, we are what we are because of what God chose to make us before any man was created (*Commentary* p. 31)."

It has been ***according to His purpose and after the counsel of His will***. This is reminiscent of what John said in John 1:12; ***But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*** God has set into place an eternal and comprehensive purpose, His will. He turned to no one for ratification of the plan, He just set it in place. AND He carries it out.

Hendricksen says, "His providence in time is as comprehensive as His decree from eternity" (quoted in MacArthur).

Remember, this is God we're talking about. He does all things well. He does all things in perfect harmony with all of His own attributes and for the best manifestation of His own glory. And giving the great inheritance to His chosen ones brings Him great glory, Paul says. Now personally, I am not offended at that—I find great comfort in it. When I look at myself as a participant on the "winning side," I can only say "amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." The sovereign grace of God ought, first and foremost, permanently infuse a baseline humility in every Christian. That ANY Christian should lapse or backslide into any kind of arrogance or self-sufficiency is the greatest of contradictions...

The first to hope in Christ of course refers to the apostles and their followers (literally it reads ***the first to hope in the Christ.***) But in this passage there is an acknowledgement that from a human perspective, some come to a hope in Christ before others. I love the hope I have found in Jesus Christ. I am not sure why I did not feel it growing up because I grew up hearing about Jesus and going to Lutheran Church services. But when I really heard about the plan of God, and it dawned on me that all this is REAL that really cranked up my basic "vital optimism" about the future and about the

purpose of living. I cannot imagine the hope Paul and the early Christians felt as they lived so close to the time when Jesus died and rose and the Spirit was so evident!

All who come to faith in Christ—and that is not everyone—will end up *to the praise of His glory*. But the first who do so are in one sense at least, special! Anytime there is an unevangelized area and you have a few people who become the first Christians there, it is special. If it seems inappropriate that God should want all the credit for our salvation that is only because we have such a weak and limited view of His true holiness and glory. MacArthur puts it well: “God desires creatures that will give Him glory...” Amen! That is why He created man to begin with and that is why He has wrought the plan of salvation for people—to bring the most glory to Himself.

The inheritance we have, my friends, brings to us great benefit—you wait! You will see! But it will bring Him great glory. I love to imagine the wedding feast of the Lamb when we will “cast down our golden crowns around the glassy sea!” We will say and maybe sing, “Glory to His Name! Hallelujah, hallelujah to the Lamb who was slain!” Maybe we will glance at each other and see His name written upon us as John saw (Rev. 3:12; 22:4) and smile and weep and laugh and then turn our eyes back upon Jesus and cry out “Hallelujah, for the Lord God, the Almighty, reigns! (Rev. 19:6).” And we will revel in the inheritance that required no probate, no authentication and it will seem as if there was no waiting at all, when that day comes!

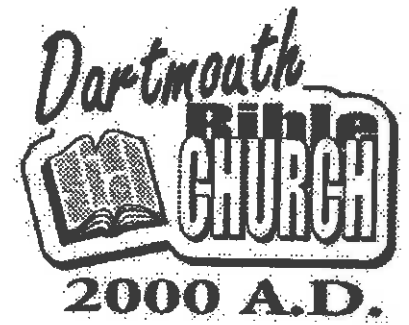
Do you know Him yet? Have you really invited Jesus Christ into your life and sought Him to be the Lord of your life?

(People Need the Lord!)

“Certain it is that, while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, war-like passion, or even cold, intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up!”

**Winston Churchill
1874-1965**

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:13,14

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 3rd 2000 (Lesson 7)

The Three Stages of Transfer

Introduction This Advent season we are focusing on that verse in the ancient prophecy of Isaiah (9:6)... *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.* Today we focus on our Savior being a wonderful counselor. He is the best counselor there ever was. He counseled all kinds of people in the short three years of His incarnate ministry. Some were powerful and influential people; some were desperate, even demon-possessed people. Some were immoral people. Some were military people. And many were just everyday, common, working stiffs. But to each He gave the exact right thing they needed to hear. He came as a child, grew up as normal little boy and then a teenager and then a young 20Something. Then He launched His messianic ministry...

Christianity is about one thing, really. It's about Jesus. It's about following Him and living for Him and serving Him and trying hard to hear His voice in your life, and making His will known in your circles, and trying not to grieve Him, and trying to feel His Spirit, and trying not to damage His name in the community, and memorizing things He said and learning His names, and trying to find out what fellowship with other Christians means, and demonstrating Him to other people, maybe trying to get other people to become Christians...

Not everyone in our society thinks that "becoming a Christian" is a real thing. Many people think that the process of *becoming* a Christian, converting, getting saved, is an imaginary thing, a fantasy entertained by Christians themselves. They're not sure that "getting saved" actually HAPPENS... You hear more things like, "Of course I'm a Christian—I've *always* been a Christian." Or, "I think people are naturally getting better and better." Or, "My pathway is leading me to other philosophies than the basic Judeo-Christian message." Or, and this is scary and we are hearing it more and more among young people—"There isn't any objective truth to discover or learn. It's all just random anarchy. Tolerance of all belief-systems as equally valid and contributory is all that matters."

Well, here is how the apostle Paul described that relatively small community of Christians in ancient Ephesus (1:13,14):

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

I would suggest to you this morning that Paul is not only saying without apology that people DO “become Christians” in real-time, but he is giving a simple three-stage outline of the transfer process. I think it’s the same today as it was back then...

Listening – It’s like he also said in Eph. 4:21 and Col. 1:5,

▶ ***if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus...***
▶ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel...

“Certain it is that, while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress—starvation, terror, war-like passion, or even cold, intellectual frenzy—the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up!” Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

People here about the claims of Christ. They need to have the opportunity to listen, to really listen. Our primary job in evangelism, I believe, is to give them that opportunity. We can do that through literally talking about Jesus to them, through giving them literature which maybe does a better, more succinct job of talking to them about Him, through broadcast, through film, through web sites and e-mail and other ways too. Our job is to set up the scenario where they can listen to the message of truth. We complicate things today so much I think by confusing them with so many other secondary issues and they don’t hear the main message too well...

Believing – The Ephesian people who became Christians then made a decision about what they had heard. They ***believed*** in it. They attached to the hearing, faith that it was true. To their intellectually processing of it, they added a decisive *personalization* to it. They decided that it was not just true, but this message about Jesus was FOR THEM. They entrusted themselves to it. And it wasn’t just believing “in the Gospel.” It was believing IN JESUS. That is what our faith is all about. As much as I love the study of theology, our faith is not just study. In fact if that is all it was it would be the cruelest joke of the devil! No! It is believing IN JESUS—***Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, eternal Father, Prince of Peace!***

Being Sealed – The third state of transfer, Paul says, was that immediately they were ***sealed*** with the Holy Spirit, who was given to each of them as a little piece of the grand inheritance to come. He mentions this thing “being sealed” again in 4:30,
And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The idea of “sealing” is taken from the ancient wax seals put on letters or official documents. The seal signified ownership. It is also taken from the official imperial seal of

the Roman emperor, such as what was affixed to the tomb in which Jesus was laid after He was crucified. You didn't mess with something which had the Roman emperor's seal placed on it. And the picture of the seal here is one of preservation. The seal would keep whatever it was affixed to from intrusion or destruction. This is what the Holy Spirit does for the true believer in Christ!

Now some churches broker this for people. They think that the church needs to offer this to really earnest people. They think that a person would come forward to get this "sealing." But Paul says nothing at all about it being something they DID or GOT sometime *after* they believed. He speaks of it as having happened **WHEN** they believed. He describes the Ephesians as being all three of these. Were he interested in teaching them that there was something *else* they needed to appropriate from God, he would surely have mentioned it. But these three stages seem to pretty much cover what happens **AS** a person is becoming a Christian... It is a simple process. Notice that no money changes hands. Notice that no songs are sung, no church services are mentioned, no holy, good deeds mentioned that needed to be done to become *eligible* there in Ephesus to be a Jesus-follower. Just these three stages. I find it delightfully straightforward. I like to think that that is what is happening with people today too. I do not know who has been predestined by God. But I do know that those who end up really being disciples of Jesus Christ—whatever **ELSE** they may be—all went through three stages in the process of becoming Christians. Listening, believing and upon believing being sealed with the Holy Spirit.

If we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit—marked with Him—then it only makes sense that we should be able and capable of demonstrating Him. That means we should be able to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. There's where they problems you and I are dealing with lie—Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit

Well, what does the Holy Spirit give a person who has been sealed with Him: 22, 23
Love or not feeling like you're able to love. It comes from the Spirit.

Joy or not having joy. It comes from the Spirit with whom, the Bible says, we have been sealed.

Peace or mental turmoil. It doesn't come from anything other than having the Holy Spirit.

Patience or impulsiveness and irritability. Patience comes from the Spirit of God.

Kindness or meanness. It's easy to be mean. But when we deal with other people in kindness, that's the Holy Spirit replicating Jesus in us.

Goodness or selfishness. The Spirit never motivates us to be self-centered. He wants us to be like Jesus was (and is): really good to other people.

Faithfulness or undependable. A person who has heard the message of Jesus, believed in it and then sealed with Jesus' Spirit immediately comes into possession of the possibility of becoming a faithful person—faithful to his family, to his church, to his job and community commitments. He doesn't break his word. He doesn't capriciously change his mind. He is faithful.

Gentleness or harshness. The Spirit is gentle; not wimpy or indecisive, but gentle in a powerful kind of way. The way Jesus was. The Spirit-sealed and Spirit led person never needs to become harsh or sarcastic or worse, abusive. He is capable, at least, of choosing to be humble and meek and gentle because He has the Spirit of Jesus living inside of him—IF he has truly heard about Jesus and entrusted his life to Him.

Finally, the day to day problems of life are assailable because the Spirit can give us self-control. Self-control or self-indulgence. The Spirit breeds discipline, not enslavement but voluntary holding back or holding off of what our feelings drive us to indulge...

Getting transferred to the Kingdom of the Wonderful Counselor is the best thing that can ever happen to a person. It doesn't just make him into a church-goer. It makes Him into a new person. It transforms his perspective on life. Now he knows God owns him (Ephesians 1:14) and his biggest goal in life is to glorify God. Not everyone around is interested in bringing glory to God. Not everyone has yet heard the message. Not everyone around has yet really believed in Him. But those who have—I wonder who will join us next year—become enabled to do new things because they have been transferred from death to new life in Christ.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:15,16

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 10th 2000 (Lesson 8)

Biblical Prayer Requests

Introduction Christmas is a time when we think about so many aspects of Jesus Christ. We think about His birth and all the circumstances and "players" in the great drama of His arrival. (We find ourselves wishing for a cleansing from all the legend and fantasy and myth and wanting just the pure history of it!) We think about the angels and the interesting part they played. And with a song like we sang last week, "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" we think about how Jesus fulfilled every Messianic prophecy and how He was longed after in Israel for so many centuries. We are persuaded, of course, that Jesus of Nazareth was none other than the Messiah of Israel, prophesied about in over 300 written places in the Old Testament. And Messiah is wonderfully encapsulated by the prophet Isaiah (c. 700 B.C.) in Isaiah 9:6. Today we think about His title "mighty God" and what that would mean for us...

I call Him powerful for many reasons, not the least of which is the vast inheritance that Christians will receive from Him in the future. This is what Paul talks about in the first few verses of Ephesians 1. We have spent seven messages outlining the ins and outs of that inheritance (as much as a preacher can do). "In light of that marvelous inheritance in Jesus Christ Paul intercedes for the possessors of that treasure" (MacArthur).

Now, He turns back to his specific readers, there in ancient Asia Minor (beginning with those in Ephesus)...

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers

These are real people who give two evidences of really knowing the Lord: 1) faith in Christ and 2) love for other Christians. These people had a reputation for believing in Jesus Christ. They were known for that. And Paul had word too, of a general kind of love (*agapen*) for ***all the saints***. They were generally loving. They did not tend to love some and not other Christians. They had this part of Christian living down. These two things are connected: head and heart. Coming to faith in Christ happens in a person's *head* but it also drops down and makes an impact in the heart. The truth of the Gospel hits a person's mind first but then it must also move down into the heart. There are people who think that

if you merely study the Bible and learn certain doctrines that this will make you a saved person. But the apostle makes it very clear that that is never enough (Stedman). The emotions must be moved too—as evidently they were in certain Ephesian people. And I think it is a good general rule of thumb that when a person really finds Jesus Christ and comes to realize that He is real and comes to embrace Him and the cross by faith, that he also begins to really see and appreciate other people who have come into the same discovery. In fact, he begins to love them.

Note: “Saints” is just another word for believers, for Christians. But as often as we have said that from this pulpit we need to *not* gloss over that the root word for *saints* literally means “holy” or “separated” ones. As well as it being a general and applied-to-all believers term, it also has a *clean* aspect to it. Christians are supposed to be cleaner than those who have not received Christ. It is a fact that a person does not BECOME a Christian by making himself clean but it is also a fact that *saints* gradually make progress in the getting-cleaned-up department. Our doctrine of grace does not license us to just sit and make no efforts to become more like Christ, to become more and more sanctified—set apart for Him—with each passing year. We cannot sit on His laurels!

Well, it is their genuine faith in Christ and their general loving nature that motivates Paul to really pray more for them—and that is an interesting thing to see here. When he hears about them, he *gives thanks* for them. “Thank you Lord, for Andronicus and Ampliatus, Apelles and Tryphaena, for Hermas and Julia” (names from Rom. 16, actually) and the others to whom You have given Your amazing grace—unlikely candidates but blazingly saved by Your grace and targeted for future inheritance. Man, how they love one another! Man, how Tychicus cannot stop speaking of their affection and preference for one another—how they watch out for one another, even risking safety. How they meet each other’s needs and go out of their way to make sure each and every church member is cared for. I love what you’re doing in them, Lord, and I want to pray for MORE for them.”

I love the phrase *making mention of you in my prayers*. Somehow, whenever we take the time to pray for specific other Christians, the Lord seems to bless that. We ought to pray for ourselves too. There is a balance in prayer between praising God for Who He is; confession of sin; praying for ourselves and praying for other Christians. (I might add that as much emphasis as we seem to place on praying for lost people, that emphasis is absent from the New Testament.)

Are you aware of other people in the community who have found Christ, and do you thank the Lord for them? So often times churches get into a competitive way of thinking, imagining some threat from other churches. That’s not giving thanks for them. Paul did not begrudge the Ephesians Christian community any success. He appreciated their having become grounded in faith and their having become connected in love.

After giving thanks for them, Paul indicates more about how he prays for them: *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him...*

The simple truth here is that believers need to pray for each other that we do not just intellectually *learn* certain truths and can then parrot them back to each other. We each need to be *gripped* by the truth that we hear. You never really know the truth until you have been gripped by it. And that comes only in prayer. I wonder sometimes if our Awana kids are getting it. I wonder if the kids in youth group or Sunday School or people adults in Bible studies or even you here on a Sunday morning are being gripped at all by the truth or merely instructed in certain concepts. Prayer is the key. Praying for our ministries that God, Himself, would ***give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.***

We spend so much time praying for healing and safe traveling and getting this job and for success in this or that business venture... Do we pray *biblically* very much? Do we ask God for the kinds of things that the apostles were asking God to do? Here's something Matthew Henry's commentary says on this passage:

Now what is it that Paul prays for in behalf of the Ephesians? Not that they might be freed from persecution; nor that they might possess the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world; but the great thing he prays for is the illumination of their understandings, and that their knowledge might increase and abound: he means it of a practical and experimental knowledge. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are communicated to the soul by the enlightening of the understanding. In this way he gains and keeps possession. Satan takes a contrary way: he gets possession by the senses and passions, Christ by the understanding:¹

I believe that the BULK of our prayer times together should be spent in this area. After praising God for who He is and spending some time in worship and thanksgiving, when it comes to intercessory prayer we ought primarily to pray for the things that are in this passage. ***Wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*** It comes from God, Himself. He will grant understanding to people. He does not withhold it. So many people are confused today. They are confused by pluralism. They are confused by darkness and evil. They are confused by temptation and sensuality. Many people would perhaps LIKE to know the truth and they are intelligent. But they lack wisdom and they lack being shown how to know God. In his famous book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer wrote these words:

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the 'eternal life' that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. John 17:3: ***This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*** What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. Jeremiah 9:23: ***Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories, glory in this—that he understands and knows Me.*** (p. 29, *Knowing God*, IVP, 1973)

This is a thing we should pray for often. Not in some mechanical, rote prayer. But with earnest determination, saying it however you want to say it but pleading with God to give light and understanding in how to know Him better. Each person needs this individually, at whatever station they are in life. The young need it for their trek. The old

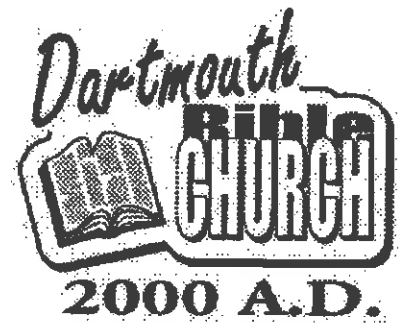
¹ Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

need it for theirs. A single person needs their own "Christmas gift" of wisdom and revelation for their situation. A married person needs his or her own blessing of understanding in how to know God better as a married person with a family. Whatever the state, each person needs someone praying for him that the truths we have been blessed with in the Scriptures will sink down into our hearts and grip us. There can be no greater ministry of prayer than that!

We shall go further with this in the coming weeks. We need a greater understanding of the *hope* and *power* available to Christians. May the Lord grant us a new chapter in our church of prayer ministry, as we transition into praying more biblically for each other, for the missionaries we support and for the many non-Christians and seekers that we shall yet encounter.

If you are with us today and you are not yet sure if you know the Lord, I invite you to speak with us. We would be more than happy to share with you what we know about truly seeing Him and believing in Him and the benefits of doing so!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 17th 2000 (Lesson 9)

Praying for What We Really Need

Introduction For my eighth birthday I asked my Dad for this really neat Cape Canaveral Space set that I saw in the store. I remember thinking, "No way." Do you know what? I got it. At twelve I asked him for a rifle. I had heard from him about rifles all the time—he was a soldier and knew a fair amount about rifles. But I thought, "No way. No way any reasonably intelligent person is going to put a firearm into the hands of a junior high..." Do you know what? I got it. When I was fifteen I saw this really spiffy electric guitar. I said, "Hey Dad..." Do you know what? I got it. At 32 years old I had been in possession of 10 shares of Great Northern Railway stock my Dad had set me up with some years before. Renée and I were going to have our second child, and we needed our own home, so I called my Dad up and said, "Hey Dad, would you mind if I sold that stock and used it towards a down payment?" He said, "Great idea son, and in fact I'll sell my 10 shares too and you can use that as well!"

Jesus told his disciples (Matthew 7:9-11),

...what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Sometimes I think, we just don't get it... We just *still* don't get how good the Lord is to every person who will simply trust in His Son and sign up for His family. But today in our Advent theme we consider Jesus in His messianic role as the fulfiller of Isaiah 9:6 and the title today is *everlasting Father*. We sometimes seem to insist that He bestow the same goodness and same promises equally on everybody regardless of whether they believe in Jesus Christ or not. But "everlasting Father" implies a strong family relationship between Jesus and His children. And the inheritance that the apostle Paul speaks of in Ephesians 1 is not promised to people who reject Jesus Christ. The peril of rejecting Christ is beyond terror and doom. But the deep goodness for all people who will, in even the simplest of faith, just depend upon the Son of God, is also beyond measure. That is where we are again this morning...

We take up where we left off last week, with Paul's account of how he prayed for his Ephesian readers: (Ephesians 1:18,19)

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

We're talking here about praying for each other—frequently, fervently—that each of us might have real spiritual insight into God; how He works and what He is doing in my life. Did you know that your heart has eyes? What a strange and cool expression! The heart was the center of thought and personality in the ancient vocabulary usage. It was “headquarters” for what made a person who he was. Paul wanted the central truths of the Christian faith to really take over “HQ.” He wanted people to see from the center of who they were, the main things about what it meant to follow Jesus of Nazareth. That kind of personally being *gripped* by the truth was what he prayed for. I don't know what ELSE he prayed for when the Ephesian people came to mind... But I know these steps of spiritual progress in their lives were things he earnestly sought the Lord on their behalf.

As on the bulletin insert last Sunday and the Scripture reading today, we get similar sentiments from Paul from his letter to the Colossian believers (1:9-12), written around the same time...

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

I believe more and more that these are the kinds of things we should EMPHASIZE in our intercessory prayers for other Christians. We tend to be so Here-And-Now and safety and convenience and health oriented. All those are things I enjoy, I admit. But they should not fill out the list of what we pray for when we pray for each other. We should pray for each other that how we see from the heart will be enlightened and that we will ALL see clearly, spiritually. That would translate into quickly sensing God's hand at work in my life in the various kinds of things that can happen to me. It would enable me to interpret the events of my life SPIRITUALLY, first.

Now there are three things to see today that he really zooms in on with the Ephesians:

Hope, riches and power; three things that on first thought it seems like everyone wants... But these *hope, riches and power* are qualified.

Hope of our calling, is what we need to really get a grip on. Some time ago, you perhaps sensed the Lord calling you out of the world, away from living for today and your flesh. He called you *into* a life of NOT having to sin and NOT having to dread facing God. Revisit that hope you felt on that day... What was it like?

What is it that generates hope in your life today? Hope for a happy family? Hope for big gains in the stock market? Hope for good health? But at the core of who we are is

our faith. It's the most important thing in our lives. It isn't just a *side* to us. It IS US! And whether I feel hopeful about the future really comes from whether I'm getting a regular shot of hope from the Holy Spirit NOW. Paul prayed that these readers would get that shot. It was an important prayer request. More important than momentary convenience or even success.

We have so much money in this country. I heard that last year online Christmas ordering was around 8 billion dollars. This year it is something like 11 billion that will be spent for gifts, just online. We are living in the most prosperous society ever, in its most prosperous *period* ever. You're probably tired of hearing that, come to think of it, it is trumpeted so much. But we are also living in a time of spiritual "recession." We are living in a time when people—so many people—are spiritually poor. They are all around us; they wonder if there is a God, or if He IS there, whether He cares. They anesthetize themselves from their fears and spiritual doubts with vacations and skiing and boating and computers and music and on and on. But Christians, on the other hand, are spiritually wealthy.

Riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... A deep and somewhat complex expression... He prays that these average Christians might SEE something of how THEY will be for God when He inherits them! I don't know about you, but I expect to be somewhat different by the time the day comes when my God inherits ME. I expect to be rid of my sin-nature completely. I expect to SEE more than I do now and have a full love for God and willingness to worship Him. I expect to even LOOK like some kind of honored heir. All that will be who I am, glorious, when I am awarded to God Himself as HIS inheritance. Paul prayed that these people would catch something of a glimpse, a vision, of what was coming along those lines...

Surpassing greatness... He prays that they would have some idea of the DIMENSION of the power that Christians have been blessed by and with... When you think about the power of God, a basic attribute of His, you remember that He never grows weary. He never runs low on power. He never "powers down" to conserve. He radiates holy energy and blazing righteousness. He always has and He always will. And He wants His sons to know how powerful He is and how He has engaged His mighty strength to save us in the cross, to continue to work with us and make us gradually more and more like Christ, to calibrate and recalibrate ourselves to do His ministry here and to re-start it again and again, depending on His power. Paul prayed that these people would really see how great the saving God's power for them was.

Now if I may comment, I do not want to stand in the way of any genuine and authentic display of His power. But power from our God is not a side-show. I hunger like anyone to really SEE and FEEL and REJOICE at plain displays of God's power. But I am beginning to think that it is PRIMARILY power
to privately deal with sin and discouragement and
depression and
defeats and

setbacks and
occasional demonic oppression and
persecution and
temptation.

No one may KNOW the times in this past week when you needed to plug INTO His power. But Paul was praying that Ephesian believers would know, in their hearts, how powerful their new God was!

Now evidently, the eyes of our hearts MUST be specifically and individually enlightened BEFORE

we will feel hope about our “calling,” and before
we will know how rich we are in Christ because of what has been reserved for us,
and before
we will know how great His power is toward Christians.

Sensing God’s calling, the riches stored up for us in Christ, having His joy and strength and understanding the dimensions of His power are not automatic. Paul knew he needed to pray for it for these people. We need to pray for it for ourselves! I want to challenge you this morning to make a commitment; a secret commitment. I do not want you to make this commitment right now. I want you to think about it. I want you to select someone in our assembly, in your mind. I don’t want you to tell them but I want you to make a private and secret commitment to the Lord to pray often and fervently for one person over the next year for the things we’re reading about. It’s sort of a “secret prayer sisters” deal. (If you really can’t think of one person to focus on, ask me and I’ll give suggestions...)

That may involve your studying this passage a little more careful and in a little more detail. It may involve your making a more deliberate point to REMEMBER to pray and to really start taking this person that you select before the throne of grace that they might SEE the hope they already have in Christ, that they might KNOW the riches of grace they ALREADY possess in Christ and that they might know, more than they do now, how great God’s power is to Christians. I do not even really know what all that means! I don’t know how God would answer your praying for this person over the next year—a Christmas to Christmas prayer project. But it would be fun and exciting to watch—to know that a bunch of people in this church are praying for a bunch of people in this church, along really Biblical lines. What could God do with that? What changes can you imagine might happen; secretly and the only one who gets any credit for it is the Lord Jesus, because, “Hey. He’s the only one who knows I was praying!!!”

These are the things we really need, my friends. Paul knew they didn’t come automatically, so do we. He prayed fervently for them for the ancient Ephesians believers. Will we pray for one person, each, for these things, over the next year. What will happen? How would our whole church be affected?

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:19-21

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: December 31st 2000 (Lesson 10)

Where Jesus Is Today and What He is Doing

Introduction On the brink of a new year and wondering what this next year will bring us quite a few people are re-evaluating themselves spiritually. Its common to do that at this time of year—what did the Lord do in your life in 2000 and what might He do in 2001?

More and more I find my own mind going back to the Gospels and the record we have of Jesus' doings and things He said. Sometimes I wish real hard for just five minutes with Him in which I could ask Him what do you want me to do and what will YOU be doing this year? Are you coming back this year? Are you still using me? Will my family be happy and blessed with good decisions and choices? How might you use them? What about this church? If you're NOT coming back this year is Dartmouth Bible Church still eligible to be used of you for getting people ready for when you DO come back? Does DBC make any difference at all in Your kingdom or are we just another private Christian club? In short I guess it comes down to are you IN my life; are You in our church's life? Where are You and what are You doing? It's the kind of questions people sometimes ask at this time of year...

Now in our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he tells them that as Christians they are heirs to an incredible inheritance. And he governs his prayer ministry for them accordingly. He says that he prays for their sense of hope, and that they may really understand how spiritually wealthy they are in Christ and that their lives will be transformed by a genuine sense of God's power... These topics for prayer *resonate* with the might of God; when we pray about subjects like this for one another, we are really tracking with the kinds of things that the Holy Spirit is anxious to bring about in our lives. God's might is RIGHT THERE. He says that these prayer topics, mentioned in Eph. 1:18 and 19a are *in accordance with the working of the strength of His might*. Dr. Richard Swenson likes to think about this phrase...

Let's look at **black holes**. All galaxies have black holes. Our Milky Way galaxy apparently has many of them. The number of black holes in the universe might even be larger than the number of visible stars. To get a feeling for how intense a black hole is, to make a star into a black hole, you'd have to collapse the radius of our sun from 450,000 miles down to two miles, so it could fit in Manhattan, okay? Now a sun that had that kind of density would weigh more per teaspoon than Mount Everest does. That's what a black hole would be. If you took the earth and made it into a

black hole, you'd have to crush the sphere into a radius less than half of an inch. Now when something is crushed like that, it has an enormous gravitational pull. The gravitational pull is so intense, nothing can escape it—not even photons which are light. And so, thus, the name black hole. Any thing and every thing pulled into a black hole is compressed down to a single point in space and finally has a size of zero. Did you hear that? Every thing sucked into a black hole, no matter how many billions of tons per second are sucked into this giant vacuum cleaner, are compressed smaller, and smaller, and smaller until they are a little tiny point that finally has a dimensional size of zero. Anyone who fell into a black hole would plunge into a tiny central region of infinite density and zero volume and the end of time. The irresistible gravitation is crushing to quantum nothingness from which is postulated new universes could possibly appear. Dante's caution at the entrance of Hell says, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." And that's what Hawking used in his book to describe black holes. Now what is the sovereign God's opinion of a black hole? This isn't just an academic exercise. This teaches us about God and you'd better listen because you're going to need this God in your future. We all are going to need a God that has this kind of power and we can trust in. Is God afraid of black holes? You know, as you get closer to a black hole, you finally get to the horizon—the "event" horizon. If you step one inch further, then you're gone. Nothing can escape once it's entered the event horizon. Does God sometimes stand on the event horizon and sort of taunt a black hole? I mean, what happens if he sort of slips over the edge a little bit? Who wins in that tug of war? Does God win, or does the black hole win? What's the answer to that question? God wins. There is nothing in the universe, there is nothing of created order that is more powerful than God. Well, think of that. It is an amazing thing! I just have so much fun thinking about God and how he bullies the universe. I mean, he just does whatever he wants to do whenever he wants to do it. Now a God who's that powerful, can he handle your problems? Does he even need your help?

Let's look at numbers. What kind of mathematician is God? Do you know that the number of electrons that pass through a filament of an ordinary light bulb in one minute equals the number of drops of water that flows over Niagara Falls in a century? Does God know how many electrons flow through a filament of a light bulb in one minute? He does. He counts them in his spare time. Do you know there's 10 to the 80th elementary particles—protons, neutrons, electrons—in the observable universe? And God has every one of them mapped, every nanosecond. He nicknames them in his spare time. The "talking number"—it's the number of words spoken by humans since the dawn of time. Did God hear all of those? It's 10 to the 16th. Did God hear all of those? Yes, he did. He's got a record of them, except for the sins he forgot. The Coney Island number. Do you know what the Coney Island number is? It's 10 to the 20th. It's the number of grains of sand on the Coney Island beach—10 to the 20th. Does God know all those little grains of sand? Yes, he does. Can he help you balance your checkbook? Yes, he can. (Richard Swenson, M.D., Focus on the Family Information Sheet *God's Sovereignty* © 2000).

Now all of that may be true but Paul says the place to REALLY see the ***strength of His might*** is in what happened to Jesus after He was crucified...

20 ***which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,***

When God the Father raised up God the Son—even though it was only one person, one body in one grave in one city in one period of time—His power was gloriously displayed. Why? Because Jesus was dead. He was fully, completely, totally dead. His spirit was gone. His body was limp and lifeless. He wasn't there. It was a spiritual event, a kind of which had never happened previous. The Son of God's life and person were put

BACK INTO the body of Jesus of Nazareth. It was a powerful show and demonstration of the strength of God's might.

And then what happened? Well, Jesus was sort of annexed to this world for a little while—about six weeks—in which He appeared here and there to a lot of actual people. There can be little doubt—judging by the historical evidence—that He really was alive again. And then, as Acts 1:9 tells us, he was *lifted up while they* [the disciples] *were looking on* [again, the public testimony and witness] *and a cloud received Him out of their sight*. Up He went into heaven, or, as Paul calls it *the heavenly places*. And when He got there the Father *seated Him at His right hand*. I wonder if the grammatical voice here in Greek is important... It is a 1st ^{aorist} active participle καθίσας (used also by Paul of the seating or appointment of a judge to his bench, 1 Cor.6:4). *God was seating Jesus...*

Mark 16:19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God

Hebrews 1:3 And He [Christ] is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His [God's] nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

Forgive me for dwelling on this, and I don't want to read more into this than was intended but I like to imagine Jesus arriving back into heaven after having "gone" down into a place with time and space. Now He is back. I can imagine, faintly, I am sure underestimating greatly the scene, all the heavenly creatures gathered around to worship and cry out "holy, holy, holy" is He who died for those people, who was separated from us, from here, from His Father, (and they all shivered a holy, heavenly shiver maybe) and NOW IS BACK! Behold, the Father welcoming His Son and leading Him to His throne and sitting Him down next to Himself once again. Gabriel let's sing! Michael let us bow down! Jesus is sitting there. He isn't standing, at least as far as this moment has been revealed to us. He sits. In His might and in His accomplishment and in His sovereignty and returned to His full glory, He relaxes. He does not exert Himself to rule. He does not run willy, nilly around heaven refreshing His memory with who is who and what is what. He is seated, by the Father, next to the Father—from where He had been dispatched on the first Christmas Eve!

Now this is not to say that Jesus is somehow *tied* to the throne. We believe there were occasions in the Old Testament period when somehow the Son of God appeared in pre-Incarnate form to Abraham, Daniel and others. And I am sure His rule from heaven now is not boring to Him. I think sometimes we secretly wonder if Him sitting on the throne next to the Father is somehow tedious or wearying. No more now than it was for all eternity before the first Christmas! Remember: these words only barely glimpse for us what divine sovereignty is. He has full occupation, trust to it! He revels and rejoices in receiving glory from His whole creation, much of which (I am confident) we don't even

know about yet; trust to it! He and His Father and the Spirit are completely content in the love they share in the godhead, trust to it! He is seated where He should be, where He loves to be, from the place with the best vantage point to enjoy the world as His footstool!

And then Paul says, that this Jesus in whom we have trusted here, all these twenty centuries later, having been seated there once again, HAS AN ADMINISTRATION WITH CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS...and he wants the Ephesians to know something about His royal administration...

21 ***far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.***

All creatures whatsoever are in subjection to him; they must either yield him sincere obedience or fall under the weight of his sceptre, and receive their doom from him. (*Matthew Henry's Commentary*).

There ARE other rules and authorities and powers and dominions in the universe, make no mistake about it. It is not a universe populated only by God, angels and people. There are other spirit beings around too. We cannot name them and we cannot delineate their features but they are there. We only get a glimpse of them but over ALL of them Jesus shall reign.

Names are important in the Bible. God named things, gave Adam the job of naming things, attached meaning to the naming of things. A name is personal and like your signature. It encapsulates a person's uniqueness. To you, I am sure, your name is precious. Once in a great while I hear someone say, "I don't like my name," but that is very rare. Most people—it doesn't matter how weird their name might be—love and cherish their own names. Jesus' name holds the highest name. I love the poster that was popular for a while, which has all the revealed names of Jesus on it. Prince of peace, Rose of Sharon, Lamb of God, Wonderful Counselor, Immanuel, Bread of life, Faithful and True, etc. And then we have this fabulous verse in Rev. 19:12

And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.

That name is above every name that ever was or ever will be. It is intriguing to me to wonder what Paul meant by the phrase, ***but also in the age to come***. I think this is maybe a reference to the millennial age when Jesus is reigning in a fully visible way. Then He will have a name that no one will profane or utter lightly or carelessly. When He is ruling during that time ON the earth and every community of humanity and every movement of men will bow in submission to Him, His name will bring joy and constant reminder of holiness.

22 ***And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church***

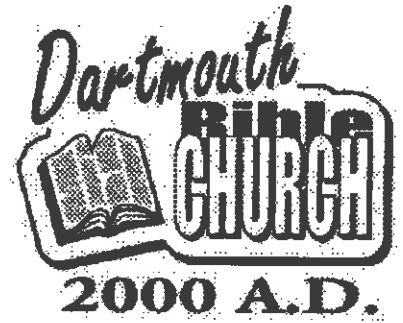
All things being in subjection under His feet excites me. I think this perhaps would include not only the societies of men and angels but physics itself. There is nothing that is OUT of the command of Jesus Christ. Nothing operates independently of Him. All laws, all animals, all creatures everywhere of any kind, all planets and stars and black holes and quasars and supernovas—they all step aside for the Risen King. This is the Jesus to whom we pray and ask things of. This is the Jesus whom we feebly try to sing praises to and then argue about the style of music we might use.

Finally, we should see our Head of the Church, Jesus, as a gift. God did not designate Gabriel or Michael or a seraph to head up the church. He gave Him TO us, as a gift.

It was a gift to Christ, considered as a Mediator, to be advanced to such dominion and headship, and to have such a mystical body prepared for him: and it was a gift to the church, to be provided with a head endued with so much power and authority. God *gave him to be the head over all things*. He gave him all power both in heaven and in earth. *The Father loves the Son, and hath given ALL things into his hands*. But that which completes the comfort of this is that he is the head over all things to the church; he is entrusted with all power, that is, that he may dispose of all the affairs of the providential kingdom in subserviency to the designs of his grace concerning his church. With this therefore we may answer the messengers of the nations, that the Lord hath founded Zion. The same power that supports the world support the church; and we are sure he loves his church, for it *is his body* (v. 23), his mystical body, and he will care for it. It is *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*. Jesus Christ filleth all in all; he supplies all defects in all his members, filling them with his Spirit, and even with *the fulness of God*, ch. 3:19. And yet the church is said to be his fulness, because Christ as Mediator would not be complete if he had not a church. How could he be a king if he had not a kingdom? This therefore comes in to the honour of Christ, as *Mediator, that the church is his fulness*. (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

I guess the practical application of this message comes back to the words of a song, *Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full into His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace...* Can we just CHOOSE to do that? I think we can.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 1:22,23

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: January 7th 2001 (Lesson 11)

The Head of the Were-Dead [Part 1]

Introduction For us as evangelical Christians, there are very few symbols of absolute loyalty. At least, nowhere near what some other religions possess. In Catholicism they defer to bishops and cardinals, dressed in an authoritative manner, and ultimately to the Pope. They have the pronouncements of ancient Councils to which they defer. Their church buildings are thought to be symbols of reverence and places of serenity. And from time to time they bring out a reference here and there to the Bible, to which they might defer too (usually, it seems to me, *not* from Paul's epistles).

We have no bishops or cardinals or Pope or Councils or buildings which embody theological authority, in themselves. We just read the Bible, seek to interpret it in a normal fashion and to re-configure our lives over and over again in accordance with what we read there. But in that process it is so easy for us to think of the Bible magically. I am constantly striving to understand more and more accurately what the Bible is:

I am convinced it is a completely sufficient "package" of divine revelation—given to us directly by God.

I am convinced that it is completely accurate in all that it says and in addition to being accurate, it is absolutely authoritative in what it says.

I am convinced that the Bible itself is one of the greatest miracles that men have ever seen—or perhaps a better word would be "wonder." It is wonderful how all those people over all that time could speak and write and some of each of their expostulations would be marvelously preserved and collected for us in one book, a book which would endure after it's last added chapter for nineteen centuries!

But having said all that, the Bible is not a magic book of spells and incantations. It is made up of what were originally real writings. Each of the sixty-six books of the Bible had an original document that somebody actually had to originally sit down and write. Some of the writings were like personal journals or logs. Some were letters and some were historical documents. (In two cases, the writing was a strange and wondrous kind of writing called apocalyptic writing and these are Daniel and Revelation.)

Among the letters, I do not know if Peter and Paul and John always knew right at the time that they were writing sentences which would one day be revered by Christians around the world as invested with the same authority as Genesis, Exodus and Isaiah. A rare comment along these lines comes from Peter,

...and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:15, 16

But as Paul was sitting there in jail in Rome and able to write some letters, he chose to write to the Christian people in Ephesus. And his writing ends up in our Bible and we discern that this letter is inspired, distinct from other ancient writings, special. We make it so important that we actually believe all that he wrote in this letter and we want to understand all that he wrote as fully as possible! And so we read early in this letter, which talks a lot about Jesus, that Jesus is the Head of the world-wide collection of followers called "the church" or more literally, "the assembly."

I want to use this message to explore more what that means. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Head of the Church? I suppose from one angle it doesn't need over-explanation: it means He is the Boss. But is there more we can say about it? Yes there is...

In the passage before us, as we are just about to emerge from Ephesians 1 and get into Ephesians 2, we see that He is what I call the "Head of the Were-Dead." In chapter two he talks about all of us having been spiritually dead before we met Christ. But we read just before (1:23), that the church is *his body the fullness of Him who fills all in all*, an interesting expression. In some wonderful sense—and I find it hard to imagine all that this means—He has decreed and chosen to be somehow incomplete until He is fully united to us. John Calvin said,

"This is the highest honor of the church that until He is united to us the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure incomplete. What consolation it is for us to learn that not until we are in His presence does He possess all His parts nor does He wish to be regarded as complete." (quoted in MacArthur's Commentary, p. 49)

Therefore, we can interpolate that IN HIM we are very secure. We are very important to Him. He has such high anticipation of our being with Him that His determination is unchanging that we SHALL receive our eternal inheritance!

But I mainly want to think about what we read in 1:22 that as head over all things, He is also Head of the church. I want to use the rest of our time to think about what this means--The Lord of all the universe is also the Head of our faith.

Crudely illustrated, its like saying the President of the United States is also the CEO of my own company or a little more closely, the President of the United States is also my very own older brother. I am in close association, organizationally, with the boss of the whole planet.

In Colossians 1:18 we read

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

He is our source of life—in fact, our very church life is in participation with His own. You can sort of see faintly that Jesus really IS alive by the life that Christian churches possess, so long as they *are* alive and not dead (cf. Rev. 3:1)! He loves His church and nourishes and cherishes it (cf. 5:29, 30). And because of what He has accomplished for us He is pre-eminent in our thinking. I cannot get enough of Jesus. He is the best EVERYTHING that there is.

In Colossians 2:19 we read

GROWTH

and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

The Head supplies the rest of the body and so the rest of the body hangs on tight to the Head. Do you hang on tight to Jesus?

In 1st Cor. 11:3 we read

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

AUTHORITY

There's always one person as head over another in this world that God has created. No one actually has no head over him. No one is completely autonomous. No one is so completely free that they live with no authority over them. The Father is over the Son and Christ is over men and men over women, in the created order.

As we also read from Paul in Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

In Ephesians 4:15 we read

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ

COMPREHENSIVE growth

Somehow it is the design of God for us to grow more *into* He who is our head and in this case that is evidenced by our speech.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Since He is Head, I am not.

No Pastor is head of the church. This gets confused often with people, particularly with people who a) come out of a denomination top-heavy with authority or b) with people who had a strong pastoral figure at some point in their lives. The Pastor is not only shepherd and teacher, he becomes Boss. His desires and preferences and convictions and even prejudices come to become church law. No don't get me wrong: I have all of those things too and sometimes I wished someone asked me a little what I would like. But I am not Head of the church. I am employee and Chief-thinker and care-giver and visionary and pulpit-speaker of the church. But I must defer ~~first~~ and foremost to Him who died for these people and for me—to Jesus Christ. You should pray regularly that I might have the mind of Christ on things. I would appreciate that!

Since He is Head, you are not.

You in the body of our church—neither as various leadership teams nor as long-standing pillar-families in the church nor as even as a whole congregation—are not the Head of the church. Great hurt and holding-up of spiritual growth is caused when church members think **THEY** are the Head of the church.

I was recently made aware of a large church in Texas which has been put back years due to over-bearing decision-making by one of their leadership teams, who evidently, took it upon themselves to make a number of important decisions regarding their church with no or little consultation with the body. It has caused great hurt and damage. If you are an elder in our church, and on occasion you find yourself the focus of some criticism, thank God for it! It is better that we should be humble and not cocky and not always completely do sure of ourselves.

I am also aware of several churches who have been blessed with long-standing and consistent attendance and contributions by certain families or individuals with strong personalities. But it can so easily mutate into, "Because we have been here so long and given so much to this church, our FAMILY is boss."

As to what is typically called "congregational rule," I remind you that I wrote my Master's thesis on this. I have been deeply interested in how churches are governed and ruled. But nowhere in the New Testament is rule of the church surrendered over to a popular vote by the body at large.

Since He is Head, what He said is of first importance.

Our attitude ought to be like that television commercial of a few years ago, "My broker is E. F. Hutton and E. F. Hutton says..." Our Head is Jesus and Jesus says...

It means that we hunger for the words of Jesus. How well do you know your way around the Gospels? You and I need to undertake a serious study of each of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

We revere the ideas that Jesus taught, even when they don't make us feel all touchy-feely all the time—we govern our world-view and our understanding of what is important in life by WHAT THE HEAD SAID.

Since He is Head, His will must be sought out and carried out.

The head of any organization generally has his wishes carried out. If they are not either he is not a very good head or the people aren't listening to him. Since Jesus is our head our first inquiry in any question from the littlest to the biggest ought to be, "What does He want?" What is His will?

When it comes to personal decisions, what does He want? He is the Head.

When it comes to church leadership decisions, what does He want? He is the Head.

When it comes to policies and rules in the church, what does He want? He is the Head.

When it comes to conflict either in our families or even between us in the church, what does He want? He is the Head.

When it comes to planning for the future and allocating our resources for ministry, what does He want? He is the Head.

Since He is Head, no association is supreme.

Occasionally I am asked if I am a Baptist? I guess so. My doctrine lines up with historic Baptist thinking for the most part. Are we affiliated with any Baptist group? Yes, we are happily affiliated with the Northeast Baptist Conference of the Baptist General Conference. But we are also affiliated with Awana Clubs, Vision New England, and more loosely with groups like the Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ, Prison Fellowship, Operation Mobilization, the New England Institute for Religious Research, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and so forth. We voluntarily cozy up to organizations which are of kindred spirit and doctrine to us but we bow down to no group. No group hovers over us and controls anything about us. We seek to be controlled by the Head of the Church and by Him alone.

Since He is Head, He deserves my attention.

On rare occasion I have had opportunity to be around or even sit down in the office of important people. An air force general one time when I was about ten years old; a Presidential inauguration four years ago, a U. S. Senator once and a congressman

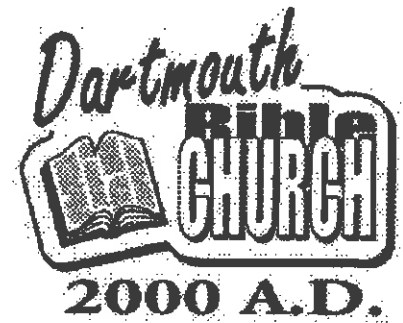
Once w/ Bobby Beathard

another time, a Secretary of the Interior, an assistant to the CNO (Chief of Naval Operations), Chuck Swindoll once, Howard Hendricks and S. Lewis Johnson on several occasions, a few times with John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, and one time with Dr. Cornelius Van Til, once with Jack Cassidy of the Jefferson Airplane... At those times I didn't just slide on in, put my feet up on their desks and flip through a magazine! I gave them my undivided attention. They were important people (or so I felt at the moment).

No one deserves more of my attention than the Head of the Church. I should be praying and seeking Him every day. He should receive the first-fruits of my giving, He should be first on my "To Do List" every Sunday. Ministering to people so that they might better love Him ought to be a high priority with me.

We do not have many visible emblems or signs of authority in our church. What we have however is a King. Jesus already IS the Head of our church and we want that to be more and more plain in the months and years to come...

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: *An Exposition of Ephesians*

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1ff

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: January 14th 2001 (Lesson 12)

The Head of the Were-Dead [Part 2]

Introduction Few things are as embarrassing as when you think you are something or can do something when, in fact, you are not or cannot. When you wake up and realize your inability or inadequacy, it is embarrassing. For instance, in the 1983 Robert DeNiro film *The King of Comedy*, a film about an obsessive character named Rupert Pupkin, who wants to break into the big time as a comedian, hounding Jerry Langford (Jerry Lewis) constantly to get on his T.V. show—we are embarrassed the whole show for DeNiro because he just doesn't see that he really stinks as a comedian. Not funny. Go away. But *he* doesn't see it. Or, when I was a freshman in high school I got this electric guitar and I thought I could sing. So I played "And I Love Her" by the Beatles and recorded myself singing it on to a little portable tape recorder. Then I played it back. It stunk. No one was in the room but I was so embarrassed that I sliced that part of the magnetic tape off of the reel and threw it away.

It seems like embarrassment is the great thing to avoid today. Avoid it at all costs! And since so many today are embarrassed about the word "sin" it isn't hip to fully acknowledge sin or hardly even use the word—not hip at all. Even when someone commits a public crime of obvious intent we hear them described as being "out of harmony with their heritage or their environment" but rarely that they are out of harmony with their Creator (*MacArthur, Commentary*). It's OK to acknowledge "disadvantage" and "disability" but to call a certain behavior "sin," well that just isn't done so much. Too embarrassing... "Evil" is not a word we want to ascribe to anyone or anything much short of a Stalin or a Hitler. And we use a phrase like "wicked bad" to mean "cool" or maybe "in large quantity." I would suggest to you that like Rupert Pupkin we are asleep as to how we really are... We think we're OK and even kind of noble, when in fact spiritually speaking we are in bad straights.

Well, here's how the apostle Paul describes the human condition apart from becoming born-again in Jesus Christ...

AND you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)

At least, he was telling the Ephesian people reading his letter that *they were dead in their trespasses and sins*. In the next few verses Paul is going to talk about the past, present and future of the Christian, the past in verses 1-3.

Dr. John MacArthur explains it this way:

We were not dead because we had committed sin but because we were *in* sin. *Trespasses and sins* do not simply refer to acts but first of all to the sphere [the Greek case is the "locative" of sphere] of existence of the person apart from God. He does not *become* a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because he already IS a liar. He does not *become* a thief *when* he steals because he already IS a thief. And so with murder, adultery, covetousness, and every other sin. Committing sinful acts does not make us sinners; we commit sinful acts because we *are* sinners. Jesus confirmed this when He said Matthew 12:35 "The good man out of *his* good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of *his* evil treasure brings forth what is evil and Matthew 15:18,19 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. *Trespasses* ("paraptoma") means to slip, fall, stumble, deviate or go the wrong direction. *Sins* ("harmartia") had the idea originally of missing the mark, as when hunting with a bow and arrow. In the spiritual realm it means missing or falling short of God's standard of holiness. (Commentary, pp. 53,54)

Consider these other statements in the Bible, by various people...

THE fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one. Psalm 14:1-3

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Isaiah 53:6

And another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." [probably a request to wait until Dad died and he could come into his full inheritance] But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead." Matthew 8:21,22

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

...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. Ephesians 4:18

But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. 1 Timothy 5:6

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

When you just throw all these Bible verses on the table what impression of mankind do you get? And our big challenge is to either believe what the biblical writers said about man's basic spiritual condition, or disbelieve it. If we believe it, we're in trouble because then we see that the condition of spiritual deadness and sin is desperate.

Again John MacArthur is helpful:

That all men apart from God are sinful does not mean that every person is equally corrupt and wicked. Twenty corpses on a battlefield may be in many different stages of decay, but they are uniformly dead. Death manifests itself in many different forms and degrees, but death *itself* HAS NO degrees. Sin manifests itself in many different forms and degrees, but the state of sin itself HAS NO degrees, NOT ALL MEN ARE AS EVIL AS THEY COULD BE BUT ALL FAIL TO MEASURE UP TO GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD. As a state of being sin has more to do with what is *not* done than with what is done. God's standard is for men to BE PERFECT just as He Himself is perfect (Matthew 5:48)...It is because of this perfect standard of holiness that men apart from God cannot be anything but sinful...No matter how much good he does or attempts to do, the standard of Never Doing or Never Having Done evil at all is unattainable. (Commentary p. 54)

Let me ask you today, do you assess yourself as having been spiritually dead? Do you view yourself before you became a full-fledged believer in Jesus Christ as having been spiritually dead? If you have not *yet* really fully trusted in Christ, what do you think about Paul's assessment of people before they come to Christ? Is it accurate?

He goes on in verse 2: *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*. Notice several things:

1. The Ephesian Christians *formerly* walked in the world. The implication is that now as Christians, they did not. The Bible talks often about our "walk." It characterizes people as being "in the world" or "in the Lord." People's lives can in this sense be generalized. The Ephesian "Now-believers" were the "Were-dead." They used to just buy into all the world's propaganda, entertainment, religion, philosophy.
2. The "course of this world" follows the leadership and design of Satan, described by Paul as *the prince of the power of the air*. Why the "air?" Spiritually, that is the realm of Satan and his demons. To live a worldly life in general, is to live according to the presuppositions, ideologies and standards over which sin and Satan have control and to be dominated by supernatural beings. Satan's supreme purpose for men is not to get them only to do evil things (the flesh will see to that, Gal. 5) BUT to think and believe evil things, especially about God (2 Cor. 11:13-15).
3. There is a general spirit working in the world and Paul characterizes all non-Christian people as being *sons of disobedience*. In vs. 3 he calls unsaved people *children of wrath*. It is the spirit of the world, the spirit of the flesh as fundamentally sinful, the spirit of the devil.

Remember though, Paul's main purpose here is not to say how unsaved people *are*—although this section is useful for that teaching—but to remind believers how they themselves USED TO BE.

And Paul includes himself in that lot (vs. 3). He says that in the world, he too—one of the most devout and zealous Jews you could imagine—was going around enslaved to the desires of the flesh and of the mind. I think of this verse whenever I hear some hipster

out in the media chant about “the mind,” “the mind.” The mind is fallen. It is co-slavemaster with the flesh and while people are not *absolutely* depraved (as Satan is, totally evil and nothing but evil) all these verses paint a picture that he is *totally* depraved, ruined by sin in every part of his being.

I think this sin-thing is a crucial societal problem today. This isn't something which only priests and ministers and theologians obsess about and pick over in their offices and study halls. It is, in reality, THE fundamental problem that touches and even explains so many problem areas of life. We can deny it, replace it with other smoother vocabulary but still human sin and evil is there, at the root of so many things, like tooth decay under a gold filling...

- It is the basic reason for all kinds of conflict in human relationships: divorce, illegitimate children being born outside of wedlock, abortion, homosexuality, domestic violence, rape, assault, robbery, drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution, adult entertainment, disrespect and defiance in the schools, cynicism among young people, political corruption and on and on.
- It is the basic reason why we need a military and a police force.
- Sin, at the root, makes sad sense in explaining the core reasons why money can be such a focus of greed and hoarding and selfishness.

Now let me ask you, should we teach children about sin?

When I was in college and had only recently become a Christian, I started going to a little church right on the edge of the Virginia Tech campus called College Baptist Church. Each summer they hosted, overnight, a busload of deaf teenagers who were midway from their group home in Pennsylvania to a two-week Christian camp in Tennessee. At that camp they spent the entire first three days, maybe a week, teaching these kids what the Bible proclaims about sin. They offered no news of redemption from sin, just taught them very thoroughly what the Bible says *about* sin. I was an overnight chaperone at the church twice for those kids—each time AS they were on their way to camp and on their way home FROM camp. Both times the change was remarkable. Many of those kids came to Christ, once shown clearly that He took those sins upon Himself for whomever will trust in it. It impressed me at that time that plainly our task is just to present what the Bible says about sin to people. We cannot convict them of sin or illuminate their hearts. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. But do that He will, as He wills, if people are just given the plain facts.

My answer is, if we do not, we are doing a disservice to children. We need not be mean-spirited in our teaching or reminding our church kids about sin. We need not harangue them or treat certain sins as *really* bad and others as not so bad. But we must teach them about sin—sin is their problem, not just someone *else's* problem. We should be gentle and patient but dogged in our instruction!

Should we seek to tell our friends and neighbors about the problem of sin? To be sure they may not be altogether receptive at first or even *at all*. But the same is true: if we do not, they will never appreciate the great wonder and joy of the SOLUTION, the cross of Jesus Christ.

We have read that Jesus Christ was made *head of the church* and last week I sought to suggest some implications for what that means for us. And now in Ephesians

2:1-3 we really see that He is “Head of the Were-Dead.” He is “federal head” (as some theologians like to say) of a great company of people every one of whom was spiritually dead. That a savior like Him should be willing, wanting and waiting to be head of a motley crew like us!!!

He knows what we were like and He loved us anyway.

He knows what is coming for us and He fiercely continues to persevere in His patient and love for us.

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 13)

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 4,5

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 4th, 2001

From Wrath-blasted to Mercy-injected

Introduction *It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us.* That's how Eugene Petersen translates Ephesians 2:3... What a great way to summarize what's going on in Ephesians 2! Whew! Do you ever feel like that? I think that would be a neat way—if we were going to do this (which we're not)—to institutionalize or “liturgicize” (a new word) what we say each month when we celebrate the Lord's Table!

I have entitled this message “From Wrath-blasted to Mercy-injected.” We move from Paul's sweeping and wholesale characterization of the human race in 2:1-3 to how God responded to the dilemma in a section which talks about the Gospel and many of its elements, implications, results down through chapter three.

God OUGHT to have fried us. That's the crux of the end of verse 3: *were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.* Disobedience and unbelief lead to the wrath of God, and to live NOW as future heirs of THAT precipitates a deep despair. Or it *would* if folks knew about what is coming... Life without Christ is hopeless. It is tragic. It is blindness and doom. I am sorry. I know its not very feel-good to think about it. I know we lose people from our church when we camp on these doctrines too long. But camp on them Paul does whenever he teaches on the great reasons why the Gospel is so powerful and so necessary for people to embrace.

I am reminded of a scene from C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* which I have related to you in the past (but some time ago). In that marvelous book Lewis imagines a bus ride for a sort of random group of people who are in hell. Hell, he describes, as an English inner city, late nineteenth century, always dusk, always just about to rain. The bus ride takes a few of hell's residents to the outskirts of heaven where they are met by a group of saints, people whom they knew in this life. One of the bus riders is a cranky old Anglican priest, a man who had several degrees and was held in high esteem in this life as a respected clergyman. He is met by someone he knew in his parish who had made it to heaven. The saint begs the man to consider changing his mind about Christ and even at that point to cast himself on Christ's mercy. He balks and scoffs and says, “I don't need any bleeding charity.” “Yes! Yes!” cries the saint, “Ask for the bleeding charity!!!” I love that picture of what we have done when we received Jesus Christ as Savior and found ourselves marvelously in possession of real faith!

When a person is in Christ they can read on past the deserved wrath that comes upon those NOT in Christ... He can read ***But God...*** Those two little words (de theos δὲ θεὸς in Greek) are the most wonderful little two words in the Bible!

But God would not let His wrath come upon everyone.

But God intervened.

But God's love would not indulge His wrath only.

Being rich in mercy... I don't know about the God of Islam. I don't know about the Gods of Hinduism. I don't know about the Roman or Greek or Mayan or Aztec or Oriental gods. But my God is RICH in mercy. He's not just in possession of some. He doesn't just have a *little* stored up in a little account. He is RICH in mercy. He loves to be merciful. He gets a kick out of NOT giving people what they deserve. I don't fully comprehend His sovereignty and how it all works out but I know this—many millions have come to faith in Jesus Christ and many millions are coming even today around the world and many more WILL come, if He tarries. He loves granting mercy and stays of execution to spiritual “death row” inmates.

His mercy flows out of ***His great love with which He loved us***. That's a neat expression, grammatically: He HAS love. And with that love He loved us. It is feeling and conviction in the heart of God. And then God's love rode out of the castle on a white charger to DO acts of love. It wasn't just talk or mushy emotion. It turned into action. The Son of God came forth and we have been ***made alive together with Christ***.

Note: (3rd person singular aorist active indicative of the root verb συζωοποιεω); ***made us alive together with Christ*** (συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ). First aorist active indicative of the double compound verb συζωοποιεω as in Colossians 2:13 which see. (A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures*). This is a word that in ancient literature is only found among Christian writers (BAGD), which leads us to wonder if it was a word developed BY the apostles! The other place it shows up is Colossians 2:13: ***And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions***

I feel so deeply the other scenario: having love but not doing anything with it. I have family in Tennessee that I have real strong feelings for. But I have not been able to do much FOR them, we are so far away. I labor under feelings of sadness sometimes that the feeling is there but the action is not. But God is NOT that way.

Even when we were dead in our sins. Have you ever seen a dead human body? It is a strange thing to look at one, I think. If it was someone you knew it engenders a feeling of the bizarre. They *were* there and now they're not. It's sort of insulting—“Hey, I'm talking to you!” You almost want to shake the person and wake them up. But dead is dead. Death is so total and absolute. It's now just a lifeless form, a statue of cold flesh. That is how the apostle Paul spiritually pictures us before we come to Christ. It is something of an insult but a person MUST come to that conclusion about themselves before they can become a Christian! It is how God views you and that is how it is. It is the

single prerequisite to getting fully rescued, saved, regenerated, born again! This phrase sounds so much like Romans 5:8, does it not?

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

The only way a spiritually dead person can communicate with God is to be made alive, and that must be done by the One who is Himself alive. He is the living God, “who gives life to the dead” (Rom. 4:17).¹

When a person is made alive together with Christ, they are saved by grace. There isn't anything tentative about it. This is what we're saying as Christians, about ourselves and about anyone who will step into faith in Christ: We are just as alive as He is. It is not just POTENTIAL salvation. It is absolute and total salvation. The Ephesian Christians needed to have this crystal clear in their minds. Paul wanted no confusion about it there in that ancient assembly of Jesus-followers. He had told the elders when he left them for the final time (Acts 20) that wolves would come into that church. I have no doubt that the first thing those wolves would do would be to gobble up the Gospel of grace and replace it with a “gospel” of legalism or some such thing.

My friends, you and I can say we are Christians and tell other people that, because of God's grace. It is by His sovereign decree and loving action that people come to real faith in Christ. It isn't because they were prone to it or inclined to it. It isn't because they are Americans, solidly entrenched in a Judeo-Christian heritage. It is because the Spirit moves all over the planet, injecting the mercy of God in this person here and that person there. Sent forth by the heart of God, full of love and mercy. May we never recover from the keen awareness of that truth!

¹Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 14)

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 5c-7

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 11th, 2001

From Where I'm Sitting...

Introduction Have you ever wished you could just have a religion where you didn't have to *think* too much; where you could just accept what the "guy up front" says, DO what he says you're supposed to do and then go on out and lead your life guilt-free? Don't you ever just wish we didn't have to do a lot of reading or splitting-hairs or even talking about a lot of technical details of how to relate to God, how to lead your life, how to deal with other people? It may be like that in some "faiths" but it doesn't seem to be so with ours. We all the time seem to be trying to get you to open your Bibles, dig into them, wrestle with the words there, strive to understand what was being said by a Moses or a David or a Matthew or a Paul... The words before us in the New Testament book of Ephesians are not easily understood words. At least they are not to me. They require some thought. And they seem to indicate that an underlying idea in Paul's head was that ultimate salvation came to people NOT by being a good-works doer or by being a real devout religious person, but it came as a free gift. Now to us, this kind of thinking is fundamental. It is why, essentially, we are not Jews, Catholics, Unitarians. This kind of thinking—that salvation is a free gift—is also, as near as I can tell, a RADICAL doctrine. And there is no more radical doctrine that we believe than the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.

It is so radical that it does not exist (as far as I know) in any pagan or non-Judeo-Christian religion.

It is so radical that neither the Roman Catholic nor the Orthodox churches teach it or believe it.

It is so radical that, in effect, even some evangelical churches underplay it with a code of legalism.

So if you are here today as a person who really believes in salvation by grace through faith alone, you are not in the majority, you are a minority. I don't know if that is an encouragement or a discouragement but I think it is true that we do not occupy large numbers. It is too radical an idea! But it is what Paul and the other apostles taught and fought for. Now let's consider where we left off in our study last week...Ephesians 2:4-7

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Christians are saved by grace. Paul said it. It's in the Bible. It means that ultimate going-to-heaven comes as a gracious and free gift. It is not earned or deserved. I cannot go on some new program or turn over some new leaf or quit drinking or quit doing this or that in order to qualify. It comes by grace, by means of God's unmerited favor to whoever simply wants it and believes in it. This is what we are asking people to embrace. We are trying to get people to see that this is the whole message of the Bible, and to embrace it by faith.

Christians are *made alive together with Christ...raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. We are talking about resurrection power here. The same power that raised up Jesus out of a condition of being very dead, raised up the people in Ephesus who entrusted themselves to Him by faith, and people today who do the same. And further, Paul sees it, from where he sat, as Christians being SEATED with Christ there. Now does that mean literally, because there would need to be lots of seats or one very big seat. I don't know what the physics of this is, or how the structural engineering of it works in heaven. I am sure once we're there it will all come together and won't worry us too much! Somehow this will turn out perfectly true. In heaven we will find ourselves seated with Christ.

And, DISPLAY is part of the agenda. God wants all those present, presumably including the angels, to see how good He intends to be to His people. There will be displays of HOW MUCH we did not deserve His mercy. Maybe some revelation of people's testimonies. There will be displays of His riches of His grace by means of rewards that are given. There will be displays of His kindness for all to see and everyone will be amazed because we will all KNOW we did not deserve it!

Now why should God want to show off what He has done? So He can get the maximum glory. Now, this is the kind of food for thought that I think is a challenge. All these things Paul says in this part of Chapter 2 seems so other-worldly. Us being there with Jesus and seated with Him somehow. God celebrating us and showing to angels how good He is. Man. This is deep!

I don't know... Imagine if we ran an ad in the newspaper and at the same time an ad on local cable TV and did a mass mailing advertisement... That during such and such a week anyone who wanted to could come by our church and be given \$500. They wouldn't have to do anything for it except to just come by and pick it up. Imagine how that would work! How many \$500 gifts would we give away in one week? And what if we then, some weeks later, got all those people back here and had them line up for a picture...

Now the thing to really see here in this passage today is the resurrection power thing. He made us alive along with Christ. He raised us up in Christ. He seated us with Christ. So what? What does that mean to me today? Maybe it sounds ungrateful or irreverent to ask, so what? And if I didn't belong to a faith which drives me to ask questions and search its texts for answers, I wouldn't ask. But our faith draws me into such an inquiry and there is an answer... So what?

Resurrection power means that a Christian can do what he could never do by himself (Ray Stedman, *Riches in Christ*, 1976). He is able to act in ways which are impossible to those who are without Jesus Christ! That's what, so what! Since I have been identified with Jesus in the heavenly places, that is my destiny and in fact my present position insofar as God looks at it, I am given the potential to live a changed life now.

The Christian is able to love the unlovable.

A great example of this is the marriages that have been re-started or resurrected because Jesus Christ came into the home. Before the man started to really seek Christ and His strength, he might have said, "I do not love her any more—in fact, I think I actually hate her. But now not only do I not hate her any more, now I can really love her!" And before the woman started to really seek Christ and His strength—the same power that raised up Jesus from the dead—she can now NOT hate him but actually love him...

I identify Jesus as the main reason for the tearing down of racial barriers. When you see that happening, I think it is usually Jesus under the surface. One day a person hated another person of a different race. Then when Christ invaded that person's heart, they found a whole new feeling and outlook. They KNOW they did not just generate it themselves...

The Christian is able to endure the unendurable.

Power is released in us by a risen savior and we find we can endure what we surely could NOT have before. We can endure without despair. It may be a physical malady. It may be poverty. It may be loneliness. It may be persecution.

I have always had tremendous respect for the trials endured by Corrie ten Boom. She is with the Lord now, but the book she wrote—later turned into a movie—*The Hiding Place*, chronicles she and her family's in the Netherlands hiding Jews in their home from the Nazis. Until they were discovered, and carted off to concentration camps. Missionary Darlene Deibler Rose also testifies to resurrection power being given to her also in a concentration camp situation.

But resurrection power for endurance is not only given to people in extreme suffering. It comes as a natural part of walking with Christ over a period of years.

James 1: 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Hebrews 12:1 **T**HEREFORE, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

The Christian is able to forgive the unforgivable.

When does another person's sin seem unforgivable to us? Usually when we can see no excuse for it. We act as clear-thinking judge and decide that the person had no excuse for what they did...

But in Christ we find we are *able* to forgive people even when they do not deserve it. We find we have begun to feel with the heart of Jesus Christ and we want to silence the outcry of judgment. We are able to forgive the unforgivable. That is resurrection power.

From where we sit as Christians now, we are able to do things, feel things, experience things completely impossible before. It is because of who we know! It is because of who we have trusted and attached ourselves to...

If there were so way to get an accurate survey in this room, I know we would discover numerous ways in which resurrection power has transformed you and is doing so. I know we would have numerous testimonies and we would not have to manufacture artificial examples or drum up magical incidences of power. Unfortunately I do not know how to take an accurate survey; I can only tell you as a pastor that every week I hear or see another evidence that Jesus is alive and in our midst. There is no other explaining the way some of your lives are changing...

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 15)

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 8ff

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: February 25th, 2001

Designed by the Master

Introduction Art, music, literature, architecture...the receptacles for man's creative pieces. My favorite painting is Rembrandt's *The Raising of the Cross*. My favorite piece of classical music is Bach's *Little Suite* from the Anna Magdalena Notebook. My favorite work of literature is J. R. R. Tolkein's *The Lord of the Rings*. And my favorite piece of architecture is Frank Lloyd Wright's *Falling Water* in Pennsylvania. Each of these exhibits the genius of their creator. In Rembrandt's painting he painted himself as one of the men lifting Jesus' cross into the air. Bach was a musical genius who wrote new church music for worship *every week* for many years—the *Little Suite* was written for his daughter. Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings* is actually an epic tale comprising four books and including about three thousand pages of text. Wright's *Falling Water* is an ahead-of-its time private home (originally) built *over top* of a running mountain stream. I am sure you have your personal favorites in the creative arts. With your favorite, I am sure that when you look at it or listen to it you see the artist's genius and it moves you in some way. Privately, you are in awe of the artist's insight and imagination.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers that he and they were God's masterpiece. Now understand: God made the world with all its beauty and complex design and perfect systems which even fallen under sin still marvelously testify to His majesty. The ecosystem of the ocean, the intricate conditions which must come together to generate a tornado, the Gobi Desert, the millions of stars and galaxies of stars all scream out "God is brilliant!" But the apostle tells us that ***We are His workmanship*** or ***poiema*** (ποίημα) a word which Plato used for a poem. Christians, Paul says, are God's craftsmanship, His poem. He has created us and then by His grace saved us through faith alone—there's no hope at all that we can be saved BY DOING good works. And as He saves people, He is creating a work of art. Do you think of your salvation as God crafting a beautiful piece of pottery at the potter's wheel?

Now when I learn a little about what goes into the designing of a building for instance, I appreciate that the architect thinks about what he wants the building to accomplish. He wants it to provide some kind of effective service for its occupants. *Falling Water* was originally designed for the family of Pittsburgh department store magnate Edgar Kaufmann in 1936. In addition to being brilliant looking it provides a home for a family. The architect envisioned a home which blended in with the natural surroundings.

And he wanted to use native stone which was quarried locally. Each aspect of architectural design dovetails with each other aspect. Aesthetics, functionality, building materials, maintenance considerations all work together. In our new building here by architect Peter Brown, he thought about meeting our ministry requirements for several months. He designed an affordable building which met our needs and fell within the constraints which we set, was very pleasing to look at and which even lends itself a little to edification and encouragement—(judging by people’s comments about the windows, ceiling, lighting and sound.) Dartmouth Bible Church may not be the most awe-inspiring structure in the Town of Dartmouth but it is the most wonderful building I know of because I watched its creation and birth and I know the care that went into its construction. I must say that I enjoyed the whole process of creativity in this! Without meaning to get too melodramatic about it, for me, it has been a work of art.

Paul says that when people become Christians they are God’s work of art, his *workmanship* and he says that *we are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* The best creative arts produce things for a purpose. God saves people for a purpose. Yes, salvation accomplishes heaven for us when we die. But there is also a purpose to getting saved HERE AND NOW. It is for the doing of good works that we are saved too. Completely opposite of what some churches and teachers teach—that we need to DO good works in order to *become* rescued, Paul teaches that in being rescued by the cross of Jesus we are now set up, geared up and tooled up to do good works. And it is not just any old good works it is *good works prepared beforehand.* Interesting... what kind of good works, you may ask?

What kinds of things did Jesus do? That’s a good question to ask... He healed people of their diseases. He talked about God and taught them right theological thinking, helping them untangle centuries of confusion. I am sure He also listened well! He rendered forgiveness to those who needed mercy. He gave them light about decision making. He fed them when they were hungry. He cast out demons when that came up. He talked about how to get to heaven.

Notice also that Jesus Himself said

7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”8 Philip *said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”9 Jesus *said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father’?10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves.12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.13 “And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14 7-12)

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says, "The apostles would not necessarily do more stupendous miracles than Jesus did (e.g., feeding 5,000) but their outreach would be greater (e.g., Peter in one sermon had 3,000 converts). This was possible because Jesus had gone to the Father and had sent the Spirit. Miracles are important, but some evangelists have done even greater things than these by preaching the good news to many thousands of people."¹

The term "good works", I think, is an intentionally general term. There are more good works available than we can list. Good works means kindness, love, compassion, mercy, helping one another, meeting each other's needs.

Every Christian, no matter what age, how much money they have or don't have, no matter how capable—has been saved to embark on a program of deliberately doing good. That is part of why we have been saved by God. He intends for the kingdom to be spread by Christians doing good things. Our faith is spread by our speech, our doctrine and our taking stands against bad things. But in addition to sharing the Gospel we are to spread the kingdom by doing good works. I do not think God ever saves someone and then their greatest passion is themselves. I know people who will not go to church and worship because they say "its too early." Why is it too early? "Because I like to go out late on Saturday night" I have heard people say, "I want to come hear good teaching but I am too busy with my business to engage in helping people with any kind of regularity." And self-centeredness in this culture comes up with a narcissistic kind of low-esteem too... "I can't help anyone, I'm not good enough so I am too scared to try." All of these things make Self the most important thing and that is not what we were created in Christ Jesus to "stroke," although it is the "prime directive" it seems of large portions of this population...

There are certain applications of this that have been *prepared beforehand* by God for us to do. Ray Stedman wrote that we just need to STEP INTO the good works God has already set up for each of us. Do you have any idea what good works God wants for you to do? He is waiting... They are a big part of your identity in Christ. They weren't there *before* you came to Christ and you were supposed to do them first... But they're there now.

Who around you needs a friend?

Who needs financial help?

Who needs to be taught the Bible better?

Who needs a regular prayer partner?

Who needs a ride regularly?

Who needs you to render patience and repeated forgiveness to them?

What group needs a Sunday School teacher?

Who needs help with their school work?

Who needs someone to just listen to them without receiving a lecture in return?

¹Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Paul is going to talk next about the fact that the Ephesian believers were largely taken from a pagan population, not from a Jewish population. Good works that they could now do in Christ, for Christ and by Christ's strength were a comfort to the as they realize that they had no claim on God's grace at all. They should never get too far away from remembering that their salvation was SO BY GRACE that He called them out of complete paganism. They had none of the benefits of being Jewish before they came to believe in the true God and in to trust in His Son.

We are His poem. We are His creative masterpiece. He delights in how your faith is developing the same way a musician delights in his song, an architect his building, an artist his picture. Let's close with a few practical thoughts about good works:

1. If we are busy with doing good things for people, I think that is a safeguard to growing introverted or too somber.
2. True good works never engage "situation ethics." In other words the kind of good works that have been prepared beforehand by the Father for us to walk in them never call us to violate the law of God with the rationale "the ends justifies the means."
3. Every Christian cannot and will not do the same good works. We each discover the things God wants us to do this week for Him and to help other people. That program is generally a blessing and we may duplicate each other's works sometimes but we never should impose what we individually like to do on each other.
4. If we look and pay attention, we can see what the Lord is setting us up to do.
5. You can never run out of good works opportunities.
6. We should not demand good works from each other. This is especially true when it comes to presuming upon each other's trades. Just because a person can sew or can cook or can work on cars, or can fix computers or can do carpentry or can do electrical wiring, we should not be looking for freebies from each other just because we're brethren in Christ. That's presumptuous and ought never be named among us.
7. The best "good works" direct the beneficiary's attention to God. A true good work prompts the person who was blessed to give thanks to the Lord in Jesus' name.

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
 Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 16)
 Scripture: Ephesians 2: 11-13
 Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
 Date: March 4th, 2001

Way Back When, Where Were We?

Introduction What is your opinion about people? I mean that all-sweeping, over-arching viewpoint of what humanity is like? And what viewpoint about people is taken by those with whom you work, live near, go to school with? What is your "theology of mankind?"

- In last Thursday's New Bedford *Standard-Times* there was story about a 35 year old man accused of three counts of grievous assault of a child. If it is true, how could this happen?
- Thursday's *Boston Globe* reported that "officials at Lawrence High School (Mass.) are reeling from a new in-house report that about 230 students - out of about 1,500 surveyed [15.3%] - said they had tried to kill themselves last year... Why?"
- And finally in Thursday's *Providence Journal* there was an article about the Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum into which the late Tiny Tim, who died while playing a ukulele, but has not yet been inducted into the Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum... Why not?

In the area of knowledge and understanding our universe it seems that things which are true are very simple or very complex, or both at the same time.

- A drop of **blood** seems very simple-red, sticky, thick. But scientifically it is complex and can be studied for its chemical breakdown, medical benefits, interaction with other systems within the human body, literary use.
- Studying people can get us into physiology, psychology (and several branches there), anthropology (which would study body, mind and soul), sociology, history, ethnicity, national pride, conflict and war, and on and on. Each of those areas of study can become very complex.

But one observed truth which comes across pretty quickly in pretty much any area of human study is the issue of ALIENATION. "There are many people who are disillusioned with "the system," critical of "the technocracy," hostile to "the establishment."...Some work for reform, others plot revolution, others just drop out. Karl Marx popularized the idea that the working class is alienated from himself BY the ownership class. He got it from the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (*The Essence of Christianity*, 1842, a rabid attack on historic Christianity). Nowadays there's a lot of talk about the working class and various racial subgroups therein, being alienated from the exercise of power and from decision-making" (*God's New Society* by John R. W. Stott, IVP, 1979)

But long before Feuerbach or Marx popularized it, the Bible spoke plenty about alienation. The Bible has a lot of things to say about studying people and about at the roots, how people are spiritually. We can take a "macro" view of people as the Bible does; a "bird's eye" view of people from a spiritual perspective. Does it help us to understand how people are today by reading the Bible? I think we are interested in why people do the things they do...

In the ancient world in which the apostles launched the church, you had Jews, in Palestine but also living in many of the larger Mediterranean cities, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, and on and on.

You could spend a lifetime studying the differences in culture between the people's of the ancient world. Or, you could look at them as Paul looked at them. There are those who are still separated from Christ and there are those who are in Christ. The apostles were used to this kind of thinking. Among the Jews, from which they were all drawn, there were Jews and non-Jews, "Gentiles." They were used to a simple two-category way of looking at ALL people. They looked at all people in this profoundly simple way because they were convinced that this is how God looked at people. Now, "Gentile" was the word the Jews used for anyone who was not a Jew. It wasn't exactly a name-calling term but it was close. It was the same thing basically as calling someone a pagan.

"If we ever really grasp what it means to be a Christian, we will never again be envious of anyone who is not a Christian. We will never wish we were back in the world nor will we in any way be drawn towards its outlook or its pattern of life.

One way we learn to appreciate what has happened to us is by looking back to what we were and really begin to understand what God has called us out of. In the beginning of Ephesians 2 we are told that we once were dead in trespasses and sins; we did what we thought was right but found it was constantly getting us into difficulty and destroying our humanity, and we never knew why. We were victimized by the desires of the body and of the mind, and were by nature (according to Paul), children of wrath. But out of this, Christ called us. We have been made alive together with Him, made new creatures different from anything we have ever been." (Ray Stedman, *Riches in Christ*, 1976 Word Books)

Also we have been given a new power (the same power that actually raised Jesus from the dead and a new attitude and perspective, in some incredible way seated with Jesus in the heavenly places. We've been allowed to relax and be confident that God is working out His purposes in our lives. Do you feel this way about what has happened to you? Its what comes with really becoming a Christian. You know who you are, really, for the first time in your life. You feel at peace with God and know that He is not only on your side but is working out His plan in your life, day by day, week by week, year by year. It is a wonderful feeling and confidence. Only Christians have it. Non-Christians do not and cannot.

The Bible lays out the universal problem of alienation as two-fold. People are instinctively "alienated from the life of God" as Paul says in Ephesians 4:18 and "from the commonwealth of Israel" (2:12). The second chapter of Ephesians is about a replacement of alienation with the reconciliation but he wanted his readers to appreciate the state of alienation from which they had been saved. We need to be deeply touched with the same thing. Now I know our culture insulates us from being deeply touched by much of anything but I hope you can see the heart of the apostle as he writes to a Christian community immersed in a city-culture no less cynical than our own...

But its good to never completely forget from where we have been taken. We have been taken from paganism. Now, you may not like to look at yourself as a pagan:

- The word "pagan" may drum up pictures of uncivilized, uncouth and savage people.
- When I was growing up there was a vicious motorcycle gang in the Washington area and they called themselves the "Pagans." The word doesn't attract me either.

But Paul called the Ephesian Christians former pagans, "*Gentiles*," and he shows how they were lost in ignorance and despair that Jews did not have (they had the right God at least, and many other benefits). Unlike the early church in Rome, made up scholars think of a good number of Jewish converts, the First Bible Church of Ephesus was mainly Gentile people who had heard the apostles'

teaching about Jesus, believed and were saved, completely apart from Judaism. Now let's look at Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands- remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

We read earlier a passage from Exodus (see the end of these Notes) wherein God commanded that His people should circumcise any stranger who wants to hang out with Israel-only after they were circumcised could they participate in the new Feast of the Passover. Circumcision is an extremely important issue in the Bible. It is a thing that God invented and commanded for Israel. The sign of circumcision marked out the people with a visible mark as a special people, belonging to God. But have you ever wondered why God chose to do it in the way He did, with this unique procedure done on the male sex organ? Ray Stedman offered this excellent explanation:

- o "The answer lies in the fact that we human beings are basically sexual, as the Scriptures plainly teach. The church has not often taught this but has acted as though sex is something extraneous to human beings, as though our bodies ended at the waist and we needed to be concerned about nothing further. But the Scriptures have always taught that sex is an integral part of our humanity, not only at the physical level but in the soul and spirit as well. There is a soulish form [meaning] to sex and there is a spiritual form [meaning] of sex. Therefore circumcision was God's way of indicating what the Jews were to think about themselves, their self-image. How people act sexually is a dead giveaway of how they see themselves before God-in other words, their true identity...The pagan ("uncircumcised") world was characterized by Paul as being basically two things: 1) sexually immoral and 2) religiously ignorant. All kinds of sexual weirdness goes on in the pagan world-showing that people don't really know themselves. But the Bible teaches us constantly that a person can never know himself until he comes to know God." (*Riches in Christ*, pp. 141,142)

Now let's keep track of what Paul is saying to us, now. It is good to remember way back when once in a while about how it was to NOT know the Lord. It is good to take an inventory every now and again about what it was like to be a pagan. I think that for some of you who were raised in the church that might be an exercise in imagination because you are more like the Jews. But for those of us who came to Christ later in life it should not be hard to remember what it was like to be living primarily for self, for the flesh, courting entertainment with so often themes of despair and hopelessness. It will not be hard for some of us to remember when we lived basically for the moment, for comfort and the achievement of pleasure. That was THOSE days.

But when a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ he (or she) is brought near to Jesus. We are made like the Jews were in the Old Testament sort of, although far better off! We become partakers of all kinds of benefits none the least being the chance to be AT PEACE with all kinds of people. Jesus Christ is in the work of bringing people together not dividing them apart. In Him there are **no first and second class citizens, no caste structure, no slaves and owners**. In fact even **sexual alienation** that sometimes gets really emphasized in this culture ("The Vagina Monologues" at U.Mass.Dartmouth recently) is reconciled and wonderfully made peaceful in Christ.

Coming to know Jesus as Savior is more than just getting out of hell, although I suspect that escape from hell is the most wonderful and incredible benefit. But it is not the only benefit. We get the Holy Spirit, we get the chance to become part of a whole new family of also-redeemed people, we get the Bible as a true and trustworthy rule of faith and practice on how to live. And we get the reality that NOW we are part of a healing process.

Have you met Him yet? It isn't just do you agree that you think that perhaps He does exist. Have you met Him? It requires a recognition of need, a recognition of profound spiritual need and an acknowledgement that without coming to know Him there is terror and death in sin. But He will meet you if you seek Him. He will prove Himself to you over and over again. He will genuinely redeem and change your life if you truly reach out to Him and talk to Him, asking for forgiveness for sin and turning your life over to Him.

- Today's Scripture reading... (an O.T. example of Jews/Gentile separation) Exodus 12:37-51
37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. 38 And a mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. 39 And they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. 40 Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And it came about at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations. 43 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; 44 but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. 45 "A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. 46 "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. 47 "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 "But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. 49 "The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you." 50 Then all the sons of Israel did so; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And it came about on that same day that the LORD brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 17)

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 14ff

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: March 11th 2001

Jesus, the Peacemaker

Introduction In our reading this morning we once again encounter that very special title which was given to Israel's messiah seven centuries before He actually arrived on earth...*Prince of Peace*, in Hebrew "*Sar Shalom*." Isaiah foresaw that among the many roles that the Chosen Deliverer would play when He comes and comes a second time it will be to broker a world peace, a quality of which has never been seen yet. He will be instigator, maintainer and enforcer of peace over the entire planet. I love the glimpses of that which we get in the gospels!

One of my all-time favorite things Jesus did was what we read in Mark 4:35-41:

35 And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side."
36 And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and *said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm [literally A GREAT CALM OCCURRED.] And He said to them, "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Also Matthew 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25).

From the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*...Jesus rebuked (lit., "ordered"; cf. 1:25) the wind and said to the waves, "Be silent! Be muzzled and remain so!" (the force of the Gr. perf. tense, *pephimōso*, πεφίμωσο) This verb, "be muzzled," was somewhat of a technical term for dispossessing a demon of his power (cf. 1:25) and may suggest that Jesus recognized demonic powers behind the ferocious storm. But at His command the wind stopped and the lake became completely calm.¹

In John 7,8 He finds Himself caught between a crowd bent on criminal justice of a woman caught in real-time sin, and the woman herself. In his brilliance He finds the perfect truce: "If you can throw a stone as a non-sinner then go ahead" and "Go and sin no more." Peace is made.

¹Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

When He appeared in the upper room, on Sunday night—doors are shut *Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, Peace to you (John 20:19)*. And then again He says it in vs. 21, Peace to you. As the Father has sent me I also send you.

I wouldn't recommend you study the human conflicts in human history too often but it is eye-opening to read about some of the battles between people in the world. It is not my intention to minimize these but some of them were short-lived: The War Between the States lasted four years, almost to the day. World War II lasted six years. The open conflict between the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese lasted about 25 years. All of those were resolved in one way or another. But some quarrels between people-groups are so longstanding that you wonder if there can ever be *any* resolution.

Serbs and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia have been hell-bent on just annihilating each other for something like nine centuries now. The same kind of throat-slashing hostility is well documented in places like India, Pakistan and the Persian Gulf states.

I'm sure there have been centuries old clashes or rivalries between various provinces of China.

Disdain between the Irish and the English goes back about five centuries.

Africa has not been a particularly peaceful place—warring tribes and small nations have spilled great quantities of each other's blood.

Last of all—is the seemingly insolvable conflict in Israel. Short of Jesus coming back one has to wonder if a workable peace is achievable there at all... But peace WILL be made there as everywhere because of the peace Jesus already established. It's interesting to me that the term which Muslims use to call non-Muslims is *infidel* which is similar to *Gentile* or simply, pagan. We read in the next section of Ephesians 2 about how Jesus is the great peace-maker. What He accomplished on the cross has had far more effect than to win only the salvation of the individual believer. Jesus brings together all kinds of people in the body, the Church. The far off are brought in alongside the near at hand.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

At odds with people, we feel a distance. We feel out of touch. We feel excluded. And nothing separates and places people at a distance like sin. Another sort of story in the Gospels that I love are those times when Jesus dealt with an outsider—the Centurion, the ten lepers, the tax-gatherer, the woman at the well in Samaria. To none of these did Jesus say, "You are not eligible for God's grace. You are *persona non grata*." To each of them, in different ways, He offered to bring them close to God.

People that we meet often tell us that they do not feel close to God. That is not their imaginations. Unless they are under the blood of Christ they are NOT close to God. Like the Ephesian Gentiles they were formerly far off. It is sin and nothing else which separates people from the Lord. And there is only one remedy for sin. That is the blood of the Savior and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. And when a person places himself under the blood of Christ there is a peace declaration! He declares peace

between God and that person and then He begins to erase, one by one, whatever hostilities that person experienced with other people.

This is not just fantasy. The closer we get to Jesus the less bitterness you will feel to other people, maybe to people who have really hurt you. You can't help but let that feeling of enmity drain out of you when you behold the blood of the Son of God draining out of Him and realize He allowed that to happen for you, personally. You can't stay mad when you stand at the foot of the cross. No injury, misunderstanding, prejudice or hurt that you have endured compares to what Jesus endured for us.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR (EPHESIANS 2:14-17)

I like how Paul puts it in verse 14: *He IS our peace*. In 2 Cor. 5:21 he wrote that He became our sin. And here he says that He is our peace. Jesus isn't just mildly interested in us. He actually becomes the thing we need. In Himself He brought together Jew and Gentile. There had been a division and a schism between Jew and Gentile all the way back to Abraham and Lot and Isaac and Jacob and all the early Hebrews. Now in Christ it was gone.

The dividing wall was a notable feature of the magnificent Temple built in Jerusalem by Herod the Great. The Temple building itself was constructed on an elevated platform. Round it was the Court of the Priests. East of this was the Court of Israel and further east was the Court of the Women. These three courts—for the priests, for the laymen and the laywomen of Israel, respectively, were all on the same elevation as the Temple itself. From this level one would walk down five steps to a platform and then on the other side of the wall fourteen more steps to another wall, beyond which was the outer court or the Court of the Gentiles. This was a spacious court running around the temple and its inner courts. From any part of it the Gentiles could look up and view the temple, but were not allowed to approach it. They were cut off from it by the surrounding wall, which was a one and a half meter stone barricade on which were displayed at intervals warning notices in Greek and Latin. They read in effect, *not* "Trespassors will be prosecuted" but "Trespassors will be executed." Paul knew about this wall from personal experience. Only about three years previously he had nearly been lynched himself by an angry Jewish mob who thought he had taken a Gentile with him into the temple (Acts 21:28), interestingly enough an Ephesian named Trophimus... This is the historical, social and religious background for Ephesians 2. Although all human beings are alienated from God because of sin, the Gentiles were also alienated from the people of God... hostility between man and God; hostility between man and man. John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society*, IVP, 1979.

But Jesus has blasted all that away! His method of breaking down the looking-askance at each other was by completely fulfilling the Law of Moses. If I am judging you by a certain standard and someone comes along who substitutes for you and DOES IT PERFECTLY how can I criticize you any longer? If I feel about myself like I can never match up to some standard and someone comes along who substitutes for me and DOES

IT PERFECTLY how can I be hard on myself any longer? Jesus stood between and STANDS BETWEEN warring peoples and says, "Who can be a good person, a faithful Jew, an upright citizen better than Me?"

As Paul says at the end of verse 15, the result is the establishment of peace. Both quarreling groups are reconciled to each other *through the cross*. This is why sometimes I think the toughest of human conflicts cannot be settled apart from the cross of the Prince of Peace. I don't know what the ramifications for that of our revered national idea of separation of church and state, but as I understand this passage even some political conflicts cannot be settled apart from getting together under the cross of Jesus Christ.

Verse 17 is a quote from Isaiah 57:19. The Messiah's program for those afar off and for those near is peace. He preaches it. He secured it, made it absolutely possible and then He proclaimed it. It came out of His mouth in the boat. It came out of His mouth as the lynch mob entrapped the adulteress. It came out of His mouth in the upper room.

Perhaps the most basic application of this is, how can we harbor a grudge, hang on to any bitterness if we are hanging out with Jesus? Can we dislike certain groups of people, and walk along with Him? Sooner or later He will look at you and ask, "Do you hate them?" Can we seek to have a close walk with Christ on a day to day basis and loath our bosses or our company? (You may say, you have a great company and no boss!) But I have worked for tough bosses and I have worked for companies. Can we be bitterly workers' rights and antiANYBODY and still walk closely with Jesus? I can't see how. Not and enjoy the joy of the Lord. Not and manifest His power very much. Bitterness and hostility grieves and quenches the Spirit. He said, *Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God (Matthew 5:9)*. When we emulate Him, He wants to call us His own! But I must go one step further—His peace is not just cessation of hostility. It isn't agreeing to disagree. It isn't staying together for the sake of the kids, but harboring a coldness and silent divisiveness. His peace is His JOY. It is harmony and sharing a mutual enjoyment. That's what really knowing Jesus brings!

I don't know what need for peace you have today. But in some powerful way I know He wants to give you some. It is His nature; it is His plan; it is His promise...

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 18)
Scripture: Ephesians 2: 18ff
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: March 25th 2001

A Building Without A Building

Introduction In 1974 I led a group of fellow industrial engineering students in a class project to provide my church with a master plan for an expanded church building. It was exciting for me—none of my fellow student team members were Christians and they came to church with me, as part of the project, and heard the Gospel there. We drew up a design for the class and for the church. In 1976 when Renée and I attended a small Baptist church in McLean, Virginia it was an interesting church in that the main family in the church included two architects (a father and son) and two builders. And they were in the midst of designing a new church when Renée and I were there—I was thrilled when they invited me to help them actually work on the architectural drawings with them (this was the days before CAD!). In 1977, I was on staff at a church in another city in Virginia and I was excited to be there when they added a large office and classroom addition to their church—I was excited because as part of the design, the new Youth Pastor (me) got his own office! In 1982 Renée and I were in Dallas, Texas and the church we were part of there undertook their first building program. It was exciting to attend “men’s meetings” in the church *as it was being constructed*. And here, from 1987 until now it has been exciting for me to be part of the whole process from early dreaming to completion of a beautiful building for the Lord... And today we’re going to read about a “new building” but not one of physical proportions, or made out of brick, mortar, drywall or steel. A building far more exciting than any earthly building is the body of Christ, the church, the Bride of the Lamb which is likened to a building in Ephesians 2 in the days some three centuries before any local assembly had their own building!

One of the tools that good Bible students use is the commentary. A commentary is a book written about a book of the Bible. It takes a scholarly approach usually, and depending on the writer can vary from being very academic to very practical. Any good pastor will have as many commentaries at his disposal as he can afford. My library contains about 200 commentaries on the Bible. Well, I was annoyed a little this week at one of the commentaries I was reading about the book of Ephesians, one which is generally one of my favorites. As I read this author’s comments about the passage before us today I found a complete supply of technical detail, dovetailed with a very adequate theological understanding. What annoyed me was the seeming lack of awe. Sometimes I think we evangelicals get so full of being right about everything that we miss the “awe.” When you read the few verses at the end of Ephesians 2, what do you feel? What is your reaction?

For me, I stand in awe of what we read in this chapter, with these words. If this is true then things are going on right now and realities are already established, which eclipse any problems we may have here, today, you and me... I can't stomach anyone talking about it in *only* an academic way. To me that would be like standing at Prince Charles and Princess Diana's wedding, or being at the Super Bowl as your team wins, or being at Yorktown when Cornwallis surrendered and just reporting it in a monotone way. It's too exciting to just talk academically about it! Now what are so exciting about the realities about which we read in Ephesians 2?

There is no grounds with God for self-righteousness, because

- 1) Everybody is equally dead in trespasses and sins without Christ vs. 1,5
- 2) Salvation is by grace, not of works—it is a gift vs. 7-9
- 3) Peace with God comes through God's making it happen, not ours vs. 14-17

Wouldn't it be cool to get rid of all self-righteousness? I don't know if people that act self-righteous bug you or not but they do me! If all basis that people could possibly imagine that God would recognize their law-keeping was done away with and everyone simply saw, bluntly and plainly that the only way *anyone* can stand before the Lord is because He has made the standing available free of charge... Well, that's worth hollering about, to me!

We have access to the very Father Himself vs. 18

The Trinity is so involved in our salvation. This chapter draws a picture of each person of the godhead being involved: We have a presence before the Father through the work of the Son, by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. How people from the cults who deny the Trinity can NOT see this has always amazed me. You have three persons in one God. Each is vitally interested and vitally involved in our salvation and in our living out our lives as Christians.

Ephesians 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

There is only one Holy Spirit and He is the means of our access to the Father vs. 18

Many of you are aware that I have listened carefully over the years to our charismatic and Pentecostal brethren and what they claim the Holy Spirit is doing today and how they think He moves among Christians. I have also listened to other Christians talk about the Spirit who claim none of the dramatic phenomena that charismatics and Pentecostals have made their own distinctives, but people who seem intimately acquainted with how the Spirit of God works in hearts. Are there two Holy Spirits? Is there a Holy Spirit for Jews and one for Gentiles? No. Is there a Holy Spirit for Pentecostals and one for just every-day meat-and-potatoes Christians who are neither comfortable with speaking in tongues, ecstatic utterances, prophecies, or healing events nor convinced that they are real? No, there is only one Holy Spirit who is ministering among all true Christians alongside Jesus Himself and introducing us to the Father... Down here, He is filling us up and gradually nurturing the production of His fruits in our hearts. Up there He is granting us access to the Father. But there's only one of Him.

That is exciting to me because it unconfuses me. His primary interest is in presenting us to the Father, whatever else He may choose to do down here...

We are part of a global family of God vs.19

I always get the biggest charge out of the fact that I am on the winning team! Our faith is not some local, Johnny-come-lately American religion. It is universal! It is a global family—we are **fellow citizens with the saints** and it is in reality like we live at God's house, not just visit it every once in a while. Households were very important in the first century—more like what we see in “old world” families today than what we see in modern “enlightened” families. Loyalty to the household, being either IN or OUT of membership in the household, being a son or a servant of the household—these were all first century superlatives for household living. When Paul spoke of the Ephesian Christians being equal members with the Jews of God's household they immediately knew what he was saying: they were as IN as one could be. There is no higher state of privilege.

It's not a new family vs.20

Jesus is the cornerstone of what we're about. We don't have a cornerstone in this building—I kind of wish we did! But in first century buildings it was common.

In ancient building practices “the chief cornerstone” was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it. The church's foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ¹

The apostles and prophets (probably referring to those special people from the first century church who DID utter direct revelations from the Lord from time to time) are the foundation of what we're about.

If you are proud of being from a Pentecostal background you must honestly admit that there were no Pentecostals until 1900. There were no Methodists before 1750, no Baptists before about 1650 and no Presbyterians before 1550, even no Catholics before about the year AD 450 or so. We are happy and delighted to be able to say that since we strive to be purist in doctrine, we go back to the apostles and prophets—their movement is lined up on the chief cornerstone, the Son of God, the Messiah of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and all the Jewish prophets. Our movement goes all the way back!

It's a family likened to a beautiful work of architecture vss.20-22

We are the temple, not this building. I love the words of these last verses of chapter two.

- 1) Whole building — everyone who is part of the church is part of the work that God is doing. No one is left out, except perhaps those who are in serious backsliding, but even with them I feel God's “building schedule” overrules and His plans will be met. They will somehow be fit in.
- 2) Fitted together into a temple, and a holy one—a special one, a set-apart one. What a great privilege. What an exciting reality that is going on even when we forget that its going on and get distracted... If we moved out of this physical structure and gathered over in the field across

¹ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

the street we would still be God's building, fitted together. Some would contribute by assisting in the getting across the street, seating everyone, making sure everyone was comfortable. Some would contribute by teaching and leading worship. Some would contribute by counseling and comforting and encouraging. Some would contribute by inviting others to come to the "field assembly" and would explain the Gospel to them. We would still be the building in which God is dwelling although we would be without a building! (By the way, this is why, I believe, some churches used to make a summertime habit of going into camp meeting during the summer for a week or two, so they could RE-CAPTURE that building/out of the building feeling!)

- 3) God is constructing us Himself to live inside of our assembly, Himself. We are being made, as were the Ephesian Christians, *into a dwelling of God in the Spirit* and The Lord Himself is the architect, the contractor, the foreman and the carpenter! The Temple in Jerusalem was the upgrade to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. We are the upgrade to the Temple in Jerusalem. Before the Temple was built there was no permanent place where God would powerfully dwell in the midst of His people because the people had no land yet. The Temple was a great improvement it seems to the Tabernacle. The church today is God's dwelling not just in one place but in thousands of places. He NOW dwells wherever His people assemble.

These words which close Ephesians 2 should not be just broken down academically, grammatically and linguistically analyzed. They speak of some realities which you and I, if you are a Christian, benefit from in incalculable ways, regardless of how aware of it we are or not...

I hope you love the church. God does. I hope you are interested in the biggest thing God is doing on the earth. Hold creation together is only a small part of what Jesus is doing today. His big project is seeing His body grow and mature and ready herself for His return! That may be soon. Are you ready?

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 19)
Scripture: Ephesians 3: 1-13
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: April 1st 2001

Personally Speaking, I Was the Most Surprised

Introduction What it must be like, to live in one of those rare pockets of history when in a very short time everything changes... In a short fifteen years (1933 to 1948) everything changed for European Jews. What had been a fairly stable culture for hundreds of years was completely decimated in a very short time, only to find themselves at the end of that tunnel of time in possession of their own homeland back in Palestine, a thing longed for since AD 70! In our own country, the very short four years between 1861 and 1865 completely changed the course of our whole country and the lives of virtually *everybody* in the American south. To find yourself living in one of those relatively few periods in history when the whole direction of mankind is changed is (I imagine) at the same time unsettling, confusing and very, very exciting. Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul, the apostle, found himself caught up in just such a time. And in addition he found himself caught up right in the middle of an incredible shift in the world, a shift engineered by God Himself, he says. Of all people, he was most surprised to be caught up in it and chosen by God to be a contributing engineer to the shift. How would you feel if, as a regular ordinary person you suddenly find yourself plopped right in the middle of history-being-made? Nicodemus, Gamaliel, Caiaphas, Pilate are all more-likely candidates, don't you think? But God loves to use humble, unsuspecting people. He chose Abraham or Ur of the Chaldeans to become the first of His chosen people. He chose Saul and David to be the first two kings of those people. Jesus chose twelve working-class people to be the **foundation** for the "shift." And here Paul is, called Saul most of his life, a Jew, proud of it, disinterested in anything outside his culture... And that's what he writes about it to the early Ephesian Christians in the third chapter of their letter...

Our Gospel receives different reactions from people. Most will probably not believe it; it is too incredible to them. It was so for Saul of Tarsus too. Lately I have purchased two wonderful books, one on archeological sites in Greece and one on archeological sites in the city of Rome. I love these books but if one thing comes across there were a whole lot of people around, spiritual-minded people, who did not either know nor care about the God of Israel. Greek culture and later Roman culture had lots and lots of gods. I was reading about Delphi, the place in Greece where Apollo, the son of Zeus, supposedly gave mysterious visions to people. Folks would go there to hear these visions from the Delphic priests. It was a big community, a big industry and a famous place. To my knowledge no apostle ever went to preach there. (Acts 17 on the other hand *does* show us Paul taking on the philosophers on Mars Hill with the Gospel). It is only one of hundreds of religious sites

around the Mediterranean which have no connection whatsoever to Israel or to Christianity. What about that? Well, it says to me that many will not respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so it would be completely understandable for God to just write the whole Greco-Roman civilizations off—they can go to hell. But Paul talks repeatedly about **the mystery** in this chapter before us. Before the first century the notion of non-Jews being grafted into the people of God alongside Jews was virtually unthinkable. I like the way *The Message* translates Paul's words from chapter 3:

The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of Him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, the same help, same promises in Christ Jesus.

Now this speaks to me already because it pokes at the issue of whether a church is primarily a private club or a public-minded outreach center. That is a question probably every church wrestles with at some time or other and I suspect the answer is both... But perhaps someone might make the case that people are naturally more comfortable among "their own kind." I can understand that. I think it's maybe true. I think maybe I am more comfortable, if truth be told, among my own kind (although I struggle to know what that IS, exactly...) I must admit it might be something of a mystery to ME why anyone would want to be part of a multi-cultural, diverse all-inclusive movement? I pretty much *like* people who eat, think, talk, dress and worship like me... But if I were running the Christian show back in the first century there probably would never have sprung up a Christian assembly in a place like Ephesus, the Hollywood of the eastern Mediterranean... I probably would have written the place off, "too pagan, too un-holy, too dangerous." But the sovereign Spirit starts churches in the most unlikely places sometimes...

In verse 1 Paul reminds them that he is a prisoner. ***For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles*** I have never been a prisoner. Yet, anyway. Some of you may have been in jail but none of you (to my knowledge) have been imprisoned as conditions as Paul was in the Mamertine Prison in Rome, a two-level dungeon that you wouldn't want to even visit probably... But despite his circumstances, his perspective is that, "Hey, it's OK, don't fret too much about me—I'm in this because God has allowed it and for His cause, the "shift" in how things are going to be from now on!

In God's providential plan it is sometimes meant to be for people to suffer for the name of Christ. Jesus said, ***Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you...*** (Matthew 5:10-12).

2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

Some people are given a gift of God's grace and it's primarily for somebody else. We sometimes think of grace given to us as being a benefit to me and so it is. But another side of God's grace to Christians is that with it they may minister to other people. That is the whole point of spiritual gifts. They are not meant for us to use them primarily to make ourselves feel good. The primary purpose of a spiritual gift (which every Christian possesses) is to use it to bless somebody else. I appreciated just this past Friday when we had a flood down in the lower office—water was pouring in through the wall. Four different men ended up coming alongside to help by five o'clock! All of them have gifts which I do not possess! They blessed me, and you too by keeping the water from doing damage.

In vs. 3 he says that **by revelation** he learned what was for that time period this incredible mystery that both Jew and Gentile would be brought together on equal footing before God in Christ. By the way: that may not seem like such a big deal to you. But imagine being told by Jews—who had all the Old Testament manifestations of God's power to back them up—that Gentiles were not welcome in God's kingdom. Some of the OT prophets caught a glimpse that it would not always be so; but only a glimmer of what Paul heard from God directly. Paul does not specifically say HOW he heard from God directly, only that he did. That's enough for me.

4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

Paul was not the only apostle who knew about this. Peter learned it (Acts 10). James learned it (Acts 15). John learned it and they heard it from other unnamed ministers or **prophets** who all revealed the same truth: there could be no mistake about it. It cam in my telephone, e-mail, fax, FedEx, UPS, smoke signal, sign language and any other means by which God wanted to communicate it. The shift was on! This new movement was not just local. It was going to be global! And it had gone all the way to Ephesus and Rome actually in only twenty five years. Think about that: 25 years to us is back to 1975. In that time the news of a risen Savior sluiced down the pipeline all the way to Rome and all over the empire there were new assemblies of people who believed it. That in itself is incredible.

7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

Finally we read in vs. 7 Paul's own part in it. He was **made a minister**. I feel like that too. I look back some days and wonder if I made the right decision to leave engineering and become a minister. But when I think about it, I remember the strong conviction that God was doing it. He was calling me. I do not have the gift of apostleship but I have a gift of pastor-teacher. That I HAVE that gift is a demonstration of God's empowerment. I was DEFINITELY not headed into professional ministry when I was 18

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 20)

Scripture: Ephesians 3: 14-21

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: April 29th 2001

Power Praying

Introduction We are right in the middle of this great epistle to the Ephesians and Paul has been talking about the great mystery of a world-wide family of God's people; a mystery only then being unveiled--the good news of redemption was now being opened up to Gentiles as well as Jews.

I would like to say right here that we do not know everything there is to know about salvation! As evangelical students of the Bible we like to imagine that we know a lot about this subject; in fact, we have made it the *sine qua non* (essential ingredient) of our whole theology. But do you know what? We can never get to the end of the subject, close the book and say, "That's all there is to know, what's next on the agenda?" The salvation of men and women is the great, cosmic plan engineered by God, initiated by God, carried out by God and it will be concluded by Him. It is the greatest subject that any person ever has or ever will think about, ponder or explore. If you are a Christian your experience with Christ is like Matthew 13:45,46 ***Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*** I say this to you because I think we are sometimes in doubt of it. We love the prospect of salvation in the future and we like going to bed at night not wondering if we will make it to heaven but we are also seduced by the influence of the world which sometimes hoses off our enthusiasm for what we are actually part of!

The Ephesian Christians were no different than us. They needed encouragement and reassurance that they were part of something incredible too. And Paul prays for them in chapter three after laying out more about the plan of God. He tells them that he himself was an unlikely herald of such news (vs. 8). Do you ever feel like Paul felt? He tells them that part of God's plan is to display His own brilliance through the unveiling of this plan, not to people, but *through* people coming to Christ ***to rulers and authorities in heavenly places*** (vs. 10). Evidently there are beings in heaven who are watching the unfolding of the church. They may even have watched YOU come to Christ and are amazed at the Lord for saving you! And he tells them that because they are legitimate participants in the plan of God they now have ***bold and confident access through faith in Him*** (Christ Jesus, vss.11,12).

Now in vs. 14 he prays for them. He says that he ***bows his knees before the Father***. I do not believe he is somehow mandating only one posture for prayer. But

love for them. Even to being **filled up to all the fullness of God** (3:19c). Do you think it is possible to be “filled up to all the fullness of God?” It must be or Paul wouldn’t have asked God for it. But it required prayer. He has told them that they already possess a great inheritance in Christ—things which they cannot even imagine. But they and we need to SENSE that in the inner man—deep down inside where only you and the Lord go. I am sure Paul wanted not one single Ephesian Christian to miss out on this. He bows his knees about this...

This is the kind of things we should be praying for each other. This is biblical prayer. We spend so much time praying and using UP all our prayer time on other things but if you want to be a biblically minded person you will really pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ about things like this. Remember what we looked at previously **Ephesians 1:16-19a**) ***I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.***

The section and the first half of the epistle to the Ephesians ends with (KJV) 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,*** ²¹***Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*** Another fabulous paradox—I love these! Paul bursts into praise in this “doxology” as He beholds the Lord—he is able to do far more—and is willing to do far more—than we ask OR THINK. It’s like Han Solo said in *Star Wars*, “I dunno—I can imagine an awful lot!” Well, imagine all you can and He is able to do more. He is able to do **exceedingly, abundantly more**. How much is that?

We glorify Him and worship Him. We do it ***in the church by Christ Jesus***. Do not ever feel insecure or discouraged about the church or about the exclusivity of our faith through Christ. There is only one mediator between God and man. There is only one Great High Priest. He is the focus of our whole faith and the means by which we can come boldly and confidently into worship and into prayer!

And as we go to a week of prayer, I encourage you, as I shall try to do, to pray in this way for our nation, for our own church, for our kids and for myself. If we really saw God answer these two “Ephesian Power Prayers” what do you think might be the result. Much has been made in the last couple of years about the prayer of Jabez in 1st Chronicles 4 but what about the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 1 and 3? May God move us to pray this week and to pray biblically as we seek Him!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 21)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1ff
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: August 5th, 2001



An Authentic “Walk” from a Powerful “Calling”

Introduction One of the things you learn as you grow up is that successful “doing” comes out of proper “thinking.” Usually, as a person thinks and really, deep-down believes, so he does. It is fundamental wisdom... It applies to lots of areas in life. And God intends for parents to deeply educate their children with the Word of God because as a person really deeply thinks, so—in general—he does.

A person who learns to think like an athlete, tends to live like an athlete—he (or she) **exercises** regularly, he **paces** himself well, monitors his **nutrition**, makes sure he (or she) gets **adequate rest**. He **reads** about his sport and **watches others** who do his sport. He learns something of the **history** of his sport and he pays attention to **changes** in his sport. His thinking has been infected by his love for his sport and it has a powerful affect on how he *performs* his sport.

I know little about basketball, hockey, soccer (which the English call “football”) or most ignorantly, cricket (as I recently learned in London). The sports I have played at one time or another include wrestling, karate, football, swimming, diving, fishing and hunting. I have been known to swing a golf club but I can’t actually say I have golfed (the little white balls always seem to fly off in the opposite direction from where I intended!) I would have to say that the sport that I was most passionate about was football. I enjoy the game of baseball very much but all my life football was in my soul! I loved taking a course in college called “Theory and Fundamentals of Football Coaching.” In that class the instructors (who were the football coaches at Va. Tech) taught us a lot about how to *think* football. There were little things like, “a football player talks, eats, sleeps and dreams football!” “A coach needs to communicate a love for the game to his players.” “You teach your offensive players how to play defense and you teach your defensive players how to play offense.” “Personal achievement is always secondary to contributing to the success of the team, the single goal of which is winning football games.” There were all these little gems of football philosophy which stuck with me. Successful DOING comes out of successful THINKING.

The same idea is what we find ourselves confronted with as we resume our study of Paul’s letter to the Ephesian Christians and take up the text in Ephesians 4:1:

I, THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called

It is Paul’s way of thinking to lay out doctrine and then to talk about how it affects everyday life. He does it most clearly in Romans where Romans 1-8 are all doctrine. Then, after a parenthesis of how God will deal with Israel in 9-11, he turned to practical

Christian living in chapters 12-16. It is the same in this great letter to the Christians at Ephesus. Successful DOING comes out of good thinking. Now, whenever you read the word “therefore” in the Bible you should ask the question “what’s it there for?” *I, therefore* here ties the reader back to the entire first three chapters of the letter. They are about proper Christian *thinking*. They are full of information and theology about what is true in the world and about what God has engineered as man’s redemption. We read about the sovereign grace of God in election and predestination, about the preeminence of Christ and how He is the head of the world-wide family of his believers, the Church. We read in chapter two about how God makes people alive in Christ, and that it isn’t really their own doing, and in *making* all kinds of various people alive in Christ He injects a kind of unity between them which works to break down barriers and dividing walls, particularly between Jewish people and non-Jews when they come together in Christ.

He is saying, “Because of what I’ve already talked to you about, I’m now ready to talk to you about body-life; about Christian relationships and about spiritual warfare.

Paul refers to his being a *prisoner of the Lord* (as he did in 3:1.) That doesn’t mean God has taken him prisoner but that he had been arrested (more than once) and was now in jail because of the ministry the Lord had given to him. He had decided to be obedient to the ministry the Lord had given him and it had been considerably costly for him. He was suffering because of his obedience to the Lord. Do we actually SUFFER out of pure obedience to something we know is God’s will? I know we are sometimes willing to be inconvenienced for Christ. But to *suffer* because of a ministry that God has given, that is something. And suffer Paul has, as he wrote in 2 Cor.11:23-30

23 Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.28 Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure upon me *of* concern for all the churches.29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness.

Now my purpose is not to put you on a guilt-trip and try to get you to “go out” and start suffering for Christ. And that wasn’t Paul’s purpose either. But he HAD suffered and he wasn’t going to let it go for nothing. He used his great résumé as an authorization to strongly exhort them to ***walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they had been called.*** He had the *right* to speak to them and AT them authoritatively about how to live. He had paid some big-time dues; so consequently he had the respect and esteem to lay it out plainly.

I have been praying with another pastor whom I have met recently who has been to Cuba eighteen times. It hasn’t always been easy. He has been searched, harassed and a few other unpleasant things. That impressed me.

Last year I heard Joni Eareckson Tada at Congress. She knows something about suffering. I’m willing to listen to her talk to me about what it means to exercise faith.

Now, what IS *the calling with which we have been called such that we should walk in a manner worthy of it?*

Is it a silly calling? The media makes fun of Christians sometimes and we are almost led to think, “Gee, have I bought into something silly? They’re making fun of me and making it sound like only dumb people become Jesus followers.”

Is it a shallow calling with which we have been called? Another idea we hear is that it is naive and intellectually boorish to think that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Is it a fluctuating calling? The *Standard-Times* this week suggested that no one is even arguing from a moral standpoint any more about gambling—religious people are so full of hypocrisy and they change so quickly on what is holy and what is not, that no one takes their ranting seriously any more. What exactly IS the calling with which the Ephesian believers had been called, and to which they needed to live up to?

It is the calling to become adopted children of the Lord. We are to behave in a manner in which adopted children of the heavenly Father could be expected to behave—believing His teachings, trusting His promises, obeying His will. We have been elected, redeemed, sealed, made alive, reconciled... It is only reasonable that a life of gratitude, abounding in good works would be in order for us.

The target of this is unity among them. This is where he is headed in verse 3... There are five things that contribute to unity between believers in Christ, five things which are worthy of commitment by people who call themselves Christians. Five things that if you see them being practiced WITHIN the church, you might just think that the people in the church have really met Jesus!

Humility, gentleness, patience, showing forbearance in love, being diligent to preserve unity...

These are true in the local church and they apply in those little churches which comprise the local church—your families.

There is a built-in unity that the Holy Spirit injects us with, between each other. It is our duty NOT to create it, but to *preserve* it. It is already there. You can feel it even when you meet people you’ve never met before and you just know they must be Christians. It’s there. Our job is to KEEP IT GOING. Many things would conspire to undo it. Many things HAVE undone it in churches. I am always greatly saddened when I hear of church splits, and they do happen. They should never be, at least never caused by strife or conflict.

John Calvin said, “Kindheartedness is the mother of patience and continually produces that fruit, and that if we are too stern there is cruelty in us and we are like wild beasts...” (*Sermons on Ephesians* p. 321)

If you are a Christian, the bar is set high for you. You have a choice—live up to the name Christ-follower; or give in to self. Strive to grow in your faith and really bear fruit in your day to day walk, *adorning the doctrine of God our Savior* (Titus 2:10). It is a struggle, I know. Paul suffered deeply because he was willing to take the hits in order to obey God. No one ever said that to walk with God would be painless. But it is a high calling which we have been freely given in Christ. We look to the cross, we think about what Jesus went through FOR us. I don’t know what your arena is—you may be a highly

active and public person or you may live largely at home. Bring your calling alive in your arena wherever it is. Walk in a manner worthy of the high, electing sovereign grace which we celebrate and sing about! Don't just sing about it here with music on a Sunday morning; sing about it on Tuesdays and Fridays when you're nowhere near this place and even when no one else is looking!

Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship. I heard John DeBrine say that old expression again this week on the radio. It is an old saying. But it is a true saying. We have been called INTO a walking, talking, breathing relationship with God Himself, out of His love—we can't earn it—we just receive it as a free gift by faith. Our walk is not an endless doing of activities. It is doing things which promote others' growth and edification out of obedience to our King, to our Father-King who sent His Son. Who suffered and died. Who rose from the dead. Who gives His precious Holy Spirit. Who will never leave nor forsake us. That's the calling with which we have been called!

Dartmouth Bible Notes

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 22)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:3-7
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: August 12th, 2001



The Ones of “Oneness”

Introduction One of the perplexing questions people sometimes ask of Protestants is, “Why are there so many different kinds of you?” It’s a good question. For some it is a troubling question. I’ve been pondering this question and answering it for a lot of people for a lot of years. I’m not sure I’ve hit YET on the perfect little answer. We say, “well, the Bible says that all Christians are one in Christ.” We say that there is a unity between all true born-again believers. And yet people ask, “Then why are you all so fragmented? Why are there so many different variations of non-Catholic, non-Eastern Orthodox Christians?” I know that in some countries, the Christian movement is much simpler. In Romania for instance, there are only Orthodox, Baptists and Pentecostals (in any numbers). If you had to fit yourself into just one category, could you do that?

Our only reply really, is to take people back to the Scripture and appeal to what it says... It says that there IS a unity of the Holy Spirit, which is built-in among all true believers. Paul does not qualify this and say there is a unity of the Holy Spirit built-in to all believers IF YOU SEE IT. He just says it is there. We are to

Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:3).

Now, the Greek construction of the sentence is interesting here. Here is how it looks:

ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων

showing forbearance to one another

ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ³σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς

in love being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond

εἰρήνης· ⁴Ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα

of peace, one body and one Spirit...

We did not point this out last week but do you see that the foundation of unity is the mutual calling we have, and that it’s epoxy is love? Go ahead and attach the two little words en agape (in love) to either the phrase before it (**showing forbearance to one another in love**) or to the phrase after it (**in love being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit**). Either way, it applies. The first rule of church membership is “operate always in love.” Love isn’t always easy—showing forbearance and being patient; letting things slide that people say; refusing to gossip and refusing to pass along a criticism that you heard; insisting on peace and absolutely disallowing conflict to take root—these things are

sometimes hard, hard anyway compared to just letting your feelings dictate how you act. But love is the “prime directive” for Christians.

Then if you can tell from the overhead after the word “peace” it just rather abruptly says ***one body and one Spirit***. There are seven “ones” that Paul mentions. It is from this repeated teaching about oneness in the body of Christ that we appeal. The same sentiment is found in the passage we had for a Scripture reading today in 1st Corinthians 12.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.14 For the body is not one member, but many.15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?20 But now there are many members, but one body.21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;23 and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness,24 whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,25 that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

In *this* passage there are nine references to the “oneness” of what God is doing among men in the world (*same Spirit, same Lord, same God, one body* and so forth). For a time, what God was doing was really happening in Ephesus. Then their time passed. Then He was doing it in other places in Europe and the movement spread to Africa and Asia. They say that Christianity did not make it to England until after the year 300 A.D. but it DID reach there. From there, it came here. From here it has gone to many places (including back to England.) But it is the same God, the same Spirit, the same Gospel, the same body that He is collecting individual members into. There is a unity between members of the body—distinct and individual though they be—which permeates our whole existence. Therefore, we are to live up to that oneness. We are to promote that oneness. We are to cooperate with that oneness.

We get it also from 1 Corinthians 6:17 ***But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him***. And from Philippians 1:27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel

And from Philippians 2:2

make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Now in Eph. 4:4 Paul tells them (and us) that we were called—LIFTED out of lostness--in ***in one hope of our calling***. Whenever a person is regenerated, born-again, saved, it is an incredible thing. It may happen when we're little and we hear the Gospel from our parents or grandparents and the miracle of regeneration happens or it may be as a teenager or it may be as a 20Something or it may be even much later. But WHEN it happens, when we are CALLED, it is a powerful and even "magical" thing. And when a person does really meet the Lord songs of praise make sense. Praying makes sense. Theologians call this the internal or effectual call. It is something inside of me that *hears* the Lord's quiet voice saying, "My promises cannot and will not fail, and I give you My word..."

All believers have a common hope regarding their future with God. It doesn't make any difference how GOOD a Christian you perceive yourself to be. My hope from one day to the next is not based on my performance any more than my being a Damgaard or not is based on any day-to-day measuring up. And if you are really a Christian then one of the distinctive features of your life is this HOPE you have in Christ.

So..... Flowing out of that, I DO want to ask you: Are you a hopeful person? Can others see hope in your life? If there is one contradictory advertisement we sometimes give, it is cynicism. When a person oozes that it seems real strongly like they have no hope or they see no hope. Among ourselves at least, we ought to sense hope. We ought to hear that internal voice of the Lord whispering to us, reminding us of what He has in store for us. And all of us hope-getters find ourselves bound together, connected by the Holy Spirit. It makes us sing. It makes us open our eyes and want to see *more* of what God is doing. It makes me anxious to learn of other people coming to Christ and how He is working in their lives.

Then we read some more of the singularity of what we're involved with, more "Ones"... Vss.5,6

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

We have one Master. The Church is not my Master, confusing me about whom I should obey. The Church is the body which is the collection of mercy-washed sinners. My past is not the Master, taunting me, reminding me of guilt. The Lord Jesus Christ is the ONE LORD and Master and King of our lives. We bow down and adore and worship Him alone.

There is only one faith. Did you see that? It might mean one act of reliance on our Lord Jesus Christ or it might mean one correct body of truth, of doctrine. In the latter case it is not very politically correct today. It is more politically correct to say that there are OTHER faiths which please God and which He honors. But Paul says there is one faith. There doesn't need to be any more faiths. What Jesus did is completely sufficient to save

all who will be saved. All who seek to be saved and repent of their sins and embrace Jesus, as the serpent lifted up in the wilderness (see [John 3](#)). For Paul to write **one faith** to people in Ephesus, a religious capital in the ancient world, to people raised in Roman pluralism, was striking.

But if he meant one ACT of faith, that too is striking. When I received Jesus as my Savior and decided that He is real and must be followed, that was a once in a lifetime transaction of belief. I do not need to keep getting saved over and over again.

Then he says **one baptism**. Again, is this a reference to Spirit baptism when a person is placed into the one body of believers at the moment of conversion? Or is it a reference to water baptism, whereby that person visibly testifies that Spirit baptism HAS occurred? Either. Or both, I think. Both are a single event and there isn't a Spirit baptism for pantheists and one for Jews and one for Buddhists, God somehow offering many doorways. There is just the one kind of getting rescued, by trusting God's redeemer and at that moment becoming immersed in His love!

Notice that the phrase is all connected together: **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**. There's a deliberate logic there in Paul's mind. It is a triad, a closely knit unit (as William Hendriksen noted, *Commentary* p. 187, 1967). A Christian sees the Lord Jesus, believes on Him and immediately is Spirit-baptized (and then later, hopefully shortly, is water baptized).

As a practical note, we take it from this verse that water baptism only need occur once. We do not continually need to repaint the picture over and over again in water. (We DO continually paint the picture in the Lord's Table though!)

We conclude with the last phrase in this Oneness exposé: **one God and Father who is over all and through all and in all**. We worship a God who is three persons. He is not three gods, but one God. But the one God exists in three persons, one of which is the Father. He is OUR Father. He is described in three dimensions:

Over all. There is none higher. There is no greater authority or power. He is the highest and it is to Him that we pray.

Through all. He permeates all things. He respects no boundaries for He is the Lord. He stops at no gates for His is the Master.

In all. He is in all things and there is nothing which does not have His presence. This even includes the hardest, most baffling human experiences. Even when people die, get sick, lose what is savagely taken from them, He is in it. His plan somehow lovingly and sovereignly includes it. Only HE gets this description. Because He is the Master!

He is One and He brings together in Christ all of us into one body. We trust His sovereign plan and His magnificent goodness. It's why we sing with joy

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.*

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 23)

Scripture: Ephesians 4:7-10

Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

Date: August 19th, 2001

The Gift-giving Heart of the Sovereign God

Introduction There is one word which sums up what real, authentic Christianity is all about. It may seem a little absurd to try to reduce our whole faith down to one word, but I really think there is one word which does it! It is the word "grace." There are other expressions of Christianity out there. They have a Jesus, a Bible, a triune God and lots of the other features of our faith. But I think grace is the thing that sets apart real New Testament Christianity. And even among the large family of churches which we would consider kindred, the prevailing feeling of seeking a God of grace can sometimes be elusive. I have been in churches which would line up with us perfectly in an official theological sense. But you don't *feel* the grace of God very much in them. Anyway, this is not a message about churches. It is a message about God, about the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we are going through the letter to the Ephesians. We have invested twenty messages in those first three, highly theological chapters of the book and have now downshifted "into second" and are hearing how Paul thinks true theology affects us, or *should* affect us in a true-to-life way. He says there is only one God. There is only one true faith. There is only one body of believers, ultimately. There's a whole lot of "ones" in the beginning of Ephesians 4. And it all stems from a God whose heart is huge, and who loves to give. Grace—unmerited favor from God—is our message. He loves to give. He gives gifts and most of all He gives HIMSELF.

If you can at all imagine a strange scenario with me for a moment... Imagine we are all locked up together in a prison. Every one of us, milling around together in the yard behind a tall fence with barbed wire on top and guard towers at each corner. We're all there together, standing around, imprisoned... We're all, every one of us, guilty of one crime or another, some of us of multiple crimes. As we look at each other, all dressed in prison garb, we *know* we all deserve to be there. We have not all committed exactly the same crimes but we all know that none of us can say, "Hey, I was framed, you know..." (I know, this is a *strange* scenario). And then we notice that outside the main gate, a limousine pulls up, in fact its several limousines, and out of what appears to be the main one steps the President of the United States. He walks through the gates and comes right up to the first inmate that he sees, addresses him by name, and tells him that he, the President, has personally pardoned him for the crime for which he has been imprisoned. Then he moves on to another individual and then to another. Each person is stymied and mystified as the President hands each a letter on White House stationary documenting his pardon. Then, after the President has spoken to each one of us personally, we're all standing there dumbfounded—looking at each other—documents of pardon in each of our possession. He has handed them to each of us individually. He has addressed each one of us by name. Everyone is speechless. Finally, he speaks to all the guards, "I have pardoned everyone here. You see it. Each one is

free to go." One more element in this fantasy: a truck pulls into the gates and wonderfully wrapped *presents* are distributed to each now-former-inmate. And each gift has a name tag! Each of us walks out the gates, pardon letter in one hand and a present in the other. Now how would we all feel—that's what I really want to create for you with this strange scenario to imagine! How would we feel? We all *already* felt a certain camaraderie of guilt. We were unified in the conviction of our just convictions! And then we all received the favor and overwhelming mercy of the President. None were left out! We were *bonded* by the joint-experience of seeing him arrive, seeing him look into our individual faces, each of us hearing him call us by name and each of us receiving a personal gift from him. The bond between us all would be powerful, don't you think?

In my head, this is the scene as we come to Ephesians 4:7-10. At first glance, this may seem a strange portion of Scripture. But it has embedded in it a lot of powerful truth. Here is what it is about, I think:

There is one God out there and in here. He has been doing one thing all along, and He is still doing one thing in the world. He is calling together His body, the church. That appears as various word pictures in the Bible—a bridegroom, a building for which Christ is the cornerstone, a growing vine, and here as a *host of captives*.

In Eph.4:7 we read ***But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*** If one thing is plain it is the words ***given, grace*** and ***gift.*** That is the bottom-line of what real Christianity is all about. It is not about what we do for God but about what He has already done for us. Christianity which sends the message only "What We Do For God" is in essence an erroneous form of Christianity. It is first about What He Has Done for Us, which is the underlying fact *enabling* us to do anything for Him. I think a new believer should be immersed for some time in a study of WHAT the Bible says God has already done for him.

To each one of us grace was given... Every true believer has a testimony. He should be able to say, "I am a recipient of the unmerited favor of God. I did not deserve it; I had to personally flee to the Lord, lean on the Lord, beg the Lord for His goodness to extend to me. Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling." Real Christian grace is an individual thing. Every Christian—the real ones—have a personal story to tell about how they, themselves, was given God's grace. (This is why I am a little skeptical any professing believer unwilling to say anything, even privately about what the Lord has done for them—it makes you wonder if they have really *felt* the mercy and love and sacrifice of the Savior, yet...)

Now what is ***the measure of Christ's gift?*** Each believer has been handed a present—or if you like—a bag of presents. The biggest is salvation, redemption, forgiveness. Then we each have injected and invested into us the very Spirit of God, as a gift, not just for the most spiritual or most disciplined or most committed. The Spirit is given as a gift, not as a reward. Then we each have at least one *spiritual gift* or, enablement with which to minister and serve in the body of Christ. (More about this to come in following verses). But the meaning of this phrase, I think, is that HE is the one who gives. The value of His gifts to us are incalculable. They are priceless. Nothing is

worth more than your salvation (therefore any voices around us which would Devalue our salvation should be muted and shunned.) Nothing is more precious to you than the indwelling presence of God's Spirit inside of you (therefore any influences which would grieve or quench the Spirit inside of us should be minimized.) ***The measure of Christ's gift*** involves an investment by Him in you of at least one enablement by which you can happily minister and serve in the body of Christ (therefore any distraction which might cause that gift to malfunction should be dealt with.) The measure of what we have really been given is so high and marvelous and powerful and meaningful, that all else should be brought into subjection to what we have in Christ.

Do you feel like exerting an influence which might splinter the body? Crucify it.

Do you feel like hosing off our hope with a stern dose of cynical reality? Crucify it.

Do you ever feel like losing your patience around here and being blunt and direct in a harsh way?

Crucify that. These are all things Paul spoke to in the first few verses of this chapter.

The measure of Christ's gift to us is so great that we are compelled to guard it and celebrate and talk about and sing about and practice the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we again read ***therefore*** in verse 8: Therefore it says, ***When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men*** which is allusion to Psalm 68:18. Now if you're at all like me, you may wonder why is Paul thinking about this rather obscure line in the Psalms? Well, this psalm is a victory psalm that David wrote after they took this Jebusite city. David felt like the Lord had marched up to the hill, proclaimed His victory and then gave out some of the spoils to His people in celebration. Who was being led by David and by God? A procession of the prisoners that had opposed them and were now inmates! So as Paul is thinking about the Ephesians, representative of this great new movement of God in the first century, he remembers back to a day when God was moving through David, conquering this city and that. Christianity is the great thing that is happening in the world! In the first century, and still in the twenty first century. Make no mistake about it! What you are plugged in to in your faith, amazed at yourself as you may be, is the greatest and most significant and most meaningful thing there IS! It is the dissemination and spread of the news that God is HERE and He wants to give people wonderful things.

Then in verses 9,10 Paul goes on to say (***Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.***) Jesus is at the highest place in the universe. He ascended there a few weeks after His resurrection. He HAD BEEN there for all eternity before that. He is at the right hand of the Father in the highest heaven. But we have this interesting and intriguing line ***He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth.*** There are several views on what this might mean. Here is what I think it means:

Coming to earth at all was a major condescension for the Son of God. But He was more than willing to do it. Any part of creation, compared to the heavens is ***lower***. When He was born in Bethlehem, He arrived in the ***lower parts of the earth***. When He died on

Calvary, He was also experiencing the *lower parts of the earth*—the lowest part of this creation is the reality of death which rules here. Check out these verses:

Psalm 63:9 But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth.

Matthew 12:40 **for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** Isaiah 44:23 **Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.** Psalm 139:15 **My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.** All of these indicate that the phrase relates to the created earth in one way or another, to the DEPTH OF THE INCARNATION (as MacArthur points out, *Commentary* p.139)

But then we ALSO have 1st Peter 3:18,19 to somehow dovetail to these two verses from Paul: ***For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison.*** And so I think Jesus, between Calvary and the empty tomb, dead in body but not in spirit, was IN SHEOL (“hell” is not technically the correct term, as the Apostles’ Creed says) proclaiming his victory to the demons who are bound there. There are some demons who are imprisoned there and some who are loose in this world. Those there heard Jesus proclaim, “I have won.” Those here heard the same when He rose. Their doom is sure. God always wins. Jesus always wins.

In accomplishing what He did in those three days, He fulfills all prophecies, fills each office—prophet, priest and king—incumbent on Messiah. There is no corner of the universe over which He does not reign and no moment in the schedule and course of our lives over which He has not prevailed. There is nothing outside of His plan. There is no galaxy on which He has not sat. He ***fills all things***.

Do you see that this passage is embedded with some high truths, some deep and powerful cosmology? Any philosophy, and art, any music, any film which would deny or diminish the sovereignty and reality and nearness of the Lord Jesus Christ is diseased, bankrupt, defective, misguided and I would even say ultimately evil. He is the Lord; He reigns on high. He is our great Savior!

Dartmouth

Bible Notes

Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 24)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: August 26th, 2001



Human Leadership in the Body of Christ [pt.1]

Introduction Churches so often seem to focus on their immediate needs. Right now we need a youth pastor, a young men's ministry coordinator, more Sunday School teachers, a new Christian Education director in January, library and A/V volunteers, etc. It is the perpetual search in growing churches to find qualified, mature and competent leadership; a search that never seems to end. People get tired, discover they're in the wrong jobs and want to do something else, move away, and so forth and the church is often engaged in filling positions so that the ministry can be carried on or so that new ministries can be explored.

And in thinking about leadership I can think BACK to when each leader in our church was not a leader and then became one. I am thankful for how they each have developed, the risks each took, the faith each exercised to trust the Lord to use their willingness to minister and to lead. But today I want to look FORWARD...

Today, we begin this "charter document" about church leadership. This is really the passage that has driven our church (Ephesians 4) for twenty years and we will go through these verses carefully in the coming few weeks. Today I want to take the tact of looking at it from the perspective of the *future* leaders among us...

...And He gave gifts to men.....And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4: 8c, 11-13

Verses 11 to 13 begin at the end of verse 8. Grace is given to each person who has really met the Lord. And part of that grace is spiritual gifts. And some of those spiritual gifts enable people to serve as leaders. Critical leaders. Now, at this point we need to remember when this letter was written. It is somewhere between 60 and 62 AD. Paul is in Rome, in prison, concerned for the brand new assemblies of Jesus-followers around Asia Minor. He writes to the one in Philippi. He writes to the one in Colossae. He writes to the one in Ephesus. He reassures them that the leadership that they followed and were still following were given by God Himself. They were a *gift* to the assemblies to get them well established, grounded and settled.

These early “offices” for leadership come under four categories, as Paul celebrates them. Yes—*celebrates* them. They are gifts, like presents. He is glad God gave them to the churches. He had been a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He probably never thought of himself back then as a gift to God’s people! He had been an *enforcer*, a zealous security officer for the rulers of Judea. He probably never thought of himself as a blessing to God’s people *back then*. But now, in Christ, he realized that God gives good leaders to His people and that they tended to fall in 60 to 62 AD into four general categories...apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd-teachers. Please notice the connection between verses 11, 12 and 13...

He gave some...for the equipping of the saints...to the building up the body...until we all attain maturity. Leaders are to be equippers so that they can do the ministry of building everyone in the body up so that the body becomes fully mature and really reflects Christ well. That is what New Testament ecclesiology is all about. That is what we have been energized by in this church for the past twenty years. Gifted leaders (who ought to be thought of as a blessing) are to try to equip the individual Christians in the church to do ministry themselves. We are going to go through this carefully and we are going to delineate in a coming message in some detail what these specific offices were all about. But for today I just want you to / 22. 25: 5'. In ten years where will the leaders of this church come from? In twenty years when our current teens are in their thirties, from what pool will our DBC leaders be drawn? Let’s imagine where the leaders of the church are going to come from in the future. Usually churches are so very focused on the present. In some cases all churches seem to want to do is focus on the past (“That’s the way we’ve always done it;” “it’s our Baptist tradition to always do things this way;” “I remember when we used to...and it was great!” The past.

But in the future, where will we get our elders and deacons and deaconesses and trustees and Sunday School teachers and youth workers and missionaries and scholars and evangelists? It is not the usual thing to think about the distant future but imagine with me about this question...

Will we get them from relocation, depending on the Lord sort of sovereignly bringing us the occasional ready-made minister? Will we get them by seeing them saved and then training them up over the years that it takes? Will we get them from other like-minded churches? Will we get them from our own ranks?

Probably half of our own kids will grow up and eventually move away from this area. It would not have been that high a percentage a generation ago but we have become a much more mobile culture, employment opportunities are more diverse in other areas, the economy is better in some places, and so forth. Half of our kids in the next generation will move away from here. They will not be available to serve as leaders here.

Another problem is that I fear we are losing our kids in significant numbers. I see kids reaching 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and slipping away. They are no longer forced to attend church—this church or any church—with their families, some have no great love for this

church and so they slip away. Some make their way back eventually but I fear many do not and probably will not.

I was intrigued to learn two years ago when I was visiting my friend Bill in the Shenendoah Valley of Virginia that Mennonite families have an unusually high rate of retention of their children in their faith. I was told that they keep a very loose leash on their kids when they are teens and it was strange to see a horse and buggy trotting along the highway, parents in the front seat, and young Johnny or Sally in the back seat with a boom box listening to Megadeth or Aerosmith...

But I am not in despair or discouraged, just concerned about what I see as a trend. I am still full of hope though! I think the Lord raises up whom He will and will always provide, as a gift to His people, sufficient leadership. I long to see Him do it significantly through our own kids.

- I think it is highly possible to see OUR OWN KIDS become pastors and missionaries and full-time ministers of all kinds of ministries.
- I think OUR OWN KIDS can become the elders and deacons and deaconesses and trustees and Sunday School teachers and Awana workers and youth leaders and worship team people.
- I think OUR OWN KIDS can learn to sense God's call, escape the call and drive of self-this and self-that.

Even now I enjoy seeing young people pursue ministry; explore the question "what do you want ME to do, Lord?" "Can you use ME Lord?" And even utter the words that Isaiah uttered, ***Here I am, send me*** (6:8).

I get excited when I imagine some of our young people, years from now, giving serious and mature and fervent concern for the things of the kingdom of God.

When I imagine some of our teens getting their BIGGEST "jollies" out of sharing Christ, discipling new Christians, studying and sharing and communicating the word of God...

It's exciting when I imagine a ___ or a ___ seriously praying about whether to become a missionary and go to some field of missions, either at home or abroad! Nothing is higher and more noble and more meaningful and sometimes more dangerous!

When I think of ___ or ___ in the future saying, "I want to serve the body as an equipper" and I think the Lord has called me to do that, I think that's very cool!

We need to pray that this happens. We need to promote the calling of being leaders in the body to OUR OWN KIDS and not just assume that we're always going to get our leaders from the outside. I think the Lord wants us to do this and I think more than that. I think it is supposed to be the natural and NORMAL way that church leaders are raised up. In some church traditions and in by-gone years this was the norm. I love to hear about multi-generation families of faithful, energetic Christian leaders who love to do the things of the kingdom of God.

For myself, I am the first Christian—at least of the evangelical variety—among the Damgaards. But among my mother's side and within my wife's family there have been

several generations of leaders. I saw this at Hap Donner's funeral when I saw several generations rejoicing in the things of the Lord. That is the way I want it be as a norm!

Let's pray that it does. Let's pray that when the Christian tradition begins in new families, that it SUSTAINS! Let's pray that when the Gospel takes root anew in a person's life that it spreads within their own family!

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 25)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Sept. 2nd, 2001

Human Leadership in the Body of Christ [pt.2]

Introduction For the past one hundred and fifty years or so there has been a denomination of Protestants called "Plymouth Brethren" or simply "Brethren." They have never been a large group like the Baptists or the Presbyterians or the Pentecostals. But they have been an interesting movement and one which has been close to my thinking. John Nelson Darby, F. F. Bruce are two well-known English Bible teachers and scholars who lived their lives from within the Brethren. S. Lewis Johnson is known to us through his study notes that some of us have used. In our own area, Crossroads Bible Chapel and Bethany Gospel Chapel are representative churches from this movement. And Renée and I attended two Brethren churches while in Dallas. Characteristic of Brethren churches is that they prefer the terms "assembly" or "chapel", they are dispensational in their view of the end times, they are invariably ruled by a plurality of elders and they generally do not have a full time pastor, per se (although this is changing and more and more you hear of Brethren churches hiring full-time people). On a practical level the Brethren insist that the Lord's Table should be celebrated every Sunday and often times there is the expectation that the women should cover their hair during worship. Most interesting is the overarching principle that the Brethren have stridently camped on what we see in the Bible we do; what we do not see, we do not do. Other groups have set out to be this way too but none with such a simple elegance (in my opinion) as the Brethren. We would not feel uncomfortable with that creed in itself--but the problem is to me that Brethren have adopted too rigid an application of the Bible, an approach so stern sometimes that this is why I am not in that movement. But one thing I have noticed about Brethren churches (and why I even bring them up) is their fervent desire to practice *well* the passage before us again this morning...

As we consider this great "charter of the church" section of Paul's letter I want you to ask yourself "why are leaders needed?" WHY did Jesus give to the church gifted people to lead in the church? And what kind of leaders do we need? Why do we need to apply the Bible to this question?

First, leaders are needed for the common-sense reason that **any successful organization needs good leadership**. Leadership must come from people who effectively lead, motivating others to follow. In my background one of the best-run organizations I was ever part of (and I can count maybe fifteen of which I have been part) was Dallas Theological seminary. When I first attended there in 1979 I was impressed with how smooth things seemed to run. The right people in the right slots, some leading, some functioning, some following, everyone pretty much happy. Before we ever opened ~~my~~ ^{ed} a Bible you could see how well-run the organization was.

Second, leaders are needed because **the Lord knows what we need** and He appoints people to lead His people all through the Bible and so it is a matter of lining up with His will, to have good leaders.

Third, leaders are needed because **the people need to know where to go**. They need direction, sometimes correction, understanding and vision about the future. Without good leaders they tend to miss out on these things.

Now we read in Ephesians 4:11 that Jesus Christ has given to the church **some as apostles**. Please note first of all the most obvious observation on the text: it was **apostles**, plural. Jesus did not just give one big-time leader to the church. The apostles were twelve in number and as the passage in Revelation that we read last week indicates (21:14)¹, they are very special. **But who WERE those guys?** **ACTS 1:13, 14**

They're fascinating to me in that they were all what I would call regular guys.

Here's what they were not:

They were not scholars, they were not wealthy, they were not powerful or well-placed men. They were not Gentiles; they were not from different time periods; they were not entertainers nor accomplished artisans in other ways; and they were not female.

They were regular, average type men: fishermen, a tax gatherer and presumably other normal lines of work. They were all from Judea and they were all personally invited to follow Jesus, sign on with His mission and they all personally saw His life end at the cross; they saw Him as the risen Son of God and then ascend to heaven. Each of them was chosen by Jesus and then commissioned by Him to spread the Gospel. They each became professional proclaimers of the news about Jesus. Not long later, Paul comes along and somehow he gets added into the mix—a thing as confusing at first for the other originals as it sometimes is to us (to figure out how he fits into the twelve).

Now the term **apostle** can have a couple of meanings. Technically it refers to the original twelve, plus Paul. In a more general sense it includes other leaders who were commissioned by the twelve to carry on their mission and ministry. In the most general sense all of us who are Christians are apostles too in the sense that **apostéllō** means most generally **to send** or to be a **sent one**, with a message. We are all sent by Jesus to tell other people about Him. But in the usual sense the word **apostle** refers to the original followers of Jesus, who became disciples and then apostles. He chose them; He trained them; He sent them. And the churches were blessed by their ministry. They rendered the **corpus** of thought that became the doctrinal, philosophical, moral and ethical base of Christianity. No one else since has had that ministry, nor gives apostolic ministry as a blessing to the church—not the Pope and not Pentecostal preachers who so casually adopt to themselves the term **apostle**.

Now why are the apostles a blessing, or a gift to us today, so long removed from them? We must admit they seem almost unreal. Church art has depicted them in many

¹ Revelation 21:14

And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

ways but always noble, thoughtful, stern and unmoving. I don't know, maybe it is comforting for some to imagine them being larger-than-life, less prone to the frailties and pitfalls of daily living like the rest of us. But I do not think of them as fantastic superheroes. I do not think of them as Batman, Mr. Spock and Sherlock Holmes. No I like them as they were: real guys, chosen from the common roads and shores and shops of daily life. And I see them as a gift, as a blessing to the church for several reasons:

- I take them as a gift of God to us even today because first, because I think of them as being regular guys, more surprised than *anybody* that the Chosen One of Israel would pick them to carry on His work and to establish the church age! They bless me when I read things they wrote about themselves and their own wonder at how God was working and how He was “stooping” to use even them.
- I am blessed when I think about the apostles being willing to sacrifice their lives for Jesus. They are a twelve-part video series on true commitment. Each of them, although called by the Lord, had to personally DECIDE to obey His call. They represent 12 great examples of regular guys called to do something extraordinary; and everyone of them suffered greatly for the privilege of being an apostle (which in itself evidences the truthfulness of their message)
- Third, I think we are blessed with them because they worked very hard to get the church solidly grounded theologically and intellectually. We tend to think of the Scriptures sometimes as this magical book, handed down from the sky, glowing with truth and joy. But in reality every New Testament writing represents a work, a labor or some apostle or apostolic-associate, to lay out the facts. Take the first few verses of Luke's Gospel for instance (to see the realness of the apostles' writings)... Luke 1:1-4 ***INASMUCH as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us,3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;4 so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.*** Now Luke is one of the second-line of apostles, a man trained and validated by his association directly with Paul. But his original letter, so to speak, to Theophilus (whoever he was) is so important and recognized as accurate and reliable that it becomes a foundational, an *apostolic* document and makes its way into the canon of special writings that we call the Bible. What I love about this passage is the words ***the exact truth about the things you have been taught.*** The church needs leaders who are equipped to give people the exact truth about Jesus. That's what people need to know. They do not need to be entertained. They do not need to be coddled. They do not need to be enabled to just sit. They need the truth and the apostles gave the foundation, the major framework, the build the basic support structure around which the body would be built.
- We are blessed by the apostles also because they not only teach us the truth in a macro sense—the big truths about the universe, heaven, hell and so forth—they teach us how to think in a micro sense. The whole collection of their writings, the inspired ones (the New Testament) includes within it a SYSTEM of truth. In the New Testament we out what the story is on morality, on how a Christian lives in a secular society, the family, and other relationships in general, ethics for doing business, dealing with problems internally in the churches, the future coming kingdom and the end of time, how Israel fits into things, evangelism, and many other topical subjects. It is no small thing that what to some might seem like a random collection of writings, each isolated in its own context, and yet amazingly coherent and consistent with each other. No New Testament writing contradicts another one. Matthew does not contradict Revelation. Romans never contradicts First

Peter. First John doesn't teach one thing and on the same subject James teach another. The apostles bless us by their being part of the production of a document which would affect the rest of world history—of which are living in a little envelope of time.

Remember, the apostles were given by the Savior as a gift to the church in order to equip the church to do the ministry. The apostles are OUR foundation. We recognize the value of traditions and the usefulness of continuity of policy between the generations. We don't mind associations and working relationships with other churches of like faith as ours. But ultimately we're comfortable with the name "Bible Church" (and not "Brethren" church or a this or a that church) because we simply love the Bible. And the "new-half" of the Bible we get straight from the apostles! Some people say we take it too seriously—so be it. We do try to interpret it reasonably and in a balanced way, but we feed on it and we seek to understand in it how to live and how to be a blessing to other people.

In a very real and serious sense we trace our heritage straight back to the apostles. We identify with their simplicity,
their absolute loyalty to their Master,
their love for seeing new people come to faith IN their Master, and
their way of thinking about truth, philosophy and how to live.

We hope to equip each other and a continuing stream of new people always in the thought and commitment of the apostles and we seek to help each person grow in their love of Jesus Christ! They were very real men. They trained very real other men and women and sometimes there were tensions and friction. But they knew their Savior and they loved Him and they laid down their lives for Him!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 26)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Sept. 9th, 2001

Human Leadership in the Body of Christ [pt.3]

Introduction I think the old world concept of the church had a local “parish” drawing from the immediate neighborhood right around the church building. You might have whole families attending the same church—grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. And you might have several generations of people in the same church because people did not move around that much. Additionally, it would have been much harder to change churches and go across town because of the distance and because of all the people you would be leaving behind. I think old-world churches tended to be, therefore, less diverse, more homogeneous. But today’s church tends NOT to be that way. Today’s church is changing all the time. Families are spread out all over the country; and there are many singles around today whose lives are growing increasingly mobile and unsettled it seems to me. As well, there are so many churches to choose from and they are all within thirty minutes’ drive. The term “local church” has almost become an anachronism.

But regardless of the increasingly complex challenge any church faces, there are always going to be

- ▶ “up-front” people and people who would rather stay in the background.
- ▶ Vocal people and quiet people.
- ▶ Leaders and followers.

There are so many different kinds of people, I am amazed at the different kinds of people who make their way into the body! In the first century as they were all discovering what a church was for the first time, they found themselves blessed with different personalities too. More than that, they found themselves blessed with people with certain unique abilities—who probably did not HAVE those abilities before they met the Lord Jesus as their savior. These early churches found themselves led by men with gifts that sort of fell into four leadership categories: **apostles, prophets, evangelists** and **shepherd-teachers**. You will notice that in Ephesians 4:11 only these four gifts are mentioned. There is nothing of the gift of exhortation or giving or mercy; and nothing of the “offices” of bishop/overseer/elder or deacon or deaconess. And there is nothing of I would call the “sign gifts” of healing or tongues. No, there are just these four that Paul mentions to the Ephesian church and I think these were general categories or almost KINDS of Christian leaders. Last week we said something of the 12 apostles and the thirteenth, Paul.

He also says that God gave to the church **prophets, evangelists** and **shepherd-teachers**. I want to say something about each of these other offices but I want to really get to the rest of the section! The rest of the section is WHY these kinds of men were raised up by God and given to the church and the WHY is very important.

Prophets is a topic of lots of discussion today. It is discussed a lot because there are some in the body of Christ today who believe that they have this gift. MacArthur summarizes this person as follows:

Not ordinary believers who had the gift of prophecy but specially commissioned men in the early church. The office of prophet seems to have been exclusively for work within a local congregation. They were not "sent ones" as were the apostles (see Acts 13:1), but, as with the apostles, their office ceased with the completion of the NT.

They sometimes spoke practical direct revelation for the church from God (Acts 11:21–28)
21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. 25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. 27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

or expounded revelation already given (implied in Acts 13:1).

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

They were not used for the reception of Scripture. Their messages were to be judged by other prophets for validity (1 Cor. 14:32) *and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets* and had to conform to the teaching of the apostles (v. 37)¹

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

Now I think the early prophets were a blessing to the church. Their ministry was exciting, vibrant and revelatory. I can imagine that they were very much needed in the first century as were the apostles. But I also am convinced that their ministry gave way to the third and fourth categories of leadership in the body of Christ, **evangelists** and **shepherd-teachers**. In a nutshell these are the two general kinds of "up front" leaders a church needs. They need elders and deacons and Sunday School teachers and administrators and mercy-givers too. But as a minimum there need to be

Evangelists who proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Cf. the use of this term in Acts 21:8²; 2 Tim. 4:5³. (The related verb translated "to preach the gospel" is used 54 times and the related noun translated "gospel" is used 76 times in the NT.)⁴

¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

² *And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*

³ *But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

I am always saddened today when we hear evangelists made fun of. And they are made fun of so much that you CAN get brain-washed into thinking there is NO VALID VOCATION of evangelism. Now I admit some people who call themselves evangelists ought to be severely corrected and sat down. The commercial proportions of some religious organizations are shameful, and some have even been exposed as corrupt. But because of the fraudulent nature of some, it should not make us suspicious of the very word! **Evangelist** was, and I am convinced still IS, a gift from God. We know several people who I have no doubt at all possess this gift today: John Ames, Frank Carmical, Martha Gushee, Ken Milhouse, Janet Thomson, Kevin Whitehead and Billy Graham to name a few. They are people who have a great heartbeat to TELL PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS. Now, evangelism is not something just for evangelists. It is for all of us, but there are some who are gifted to share the Gospel and they are (you will remember) given to *the church*, and for a reason.

The last gifted kind of man that Paul mentions are **shepherd-teachers**. Here are MacArthur's comments about this gift: This phrase is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. The Greek word translated "and" (καὶ) can mean "in particular" (see 1 Tim. 5:17 **Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.**). The normal meaning of pastor is "shepherd," so the two functions together define the teaching shepherd. He is identified as one who is under the "great Pastor" Jesus (Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Pet. 2:25). One who holds this office is also called an "elder" (*Titus* 1:5–9) and "bishop" (*1 Tim.* 3:1–7). Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet. 5:1, 2 bring all 3 terms together⁵

So with evangelists equipping Christians to share the Gospel, and shepherd-teachers equipping Christians to teach and nurture people, IN THEORY the church has what it needs to continue its work. And my friends, don't ever get down on the church—this church or any other church. The local church is the local branch of the universal, global Church. That body is called the Bride of Christ and Jesus loves her! She is precious to Him. He gave wonderful men to the early church to get her grounded and He is still doing so, in order that the church may accomplish some things. What things? Well, that is what follows in vss.12-16.

Verse 12 is pretty plain...These gifted men are given to the church to **equip the saints for the work of service**. What KIND of service? **To the building up of the body of Christ**. The **saints** are to do the work of building up the body of Christ. They are to serve EACH OTHER. Many times today you hear people complain that the church is not meeting their needs. You hear couples say, "The Church isn't adequately teaching us how to be a couple." You hear singles say, "The Church doesn't care about us." You hear senior citizens say, "The Church doesn't value us and doesn't listen to us." You hear teenagers say, "The Church doesn't make itself relevant for me." Sitting where I and many other pastors sit, you hear these complaints a lot. But I can't think of too many places in the New Testament where we are licensed to complain. And although the very PURPOSE of spiritual gifts is to MEET other people's needs, you are each TOLD to go out and **do the work of service**, and the leaders are supposed to equip you to do that.

John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

There is a lot of talk about equipping today. On the one hand I think we work hard at that. We have lots of seminars and retreats and small groups and classes and books and tapes and videos all designed to equip YOU, the saints, to get moving and minister to other people. It is mutant to not minister! It is abnormal and I believe a grief to the Holy Spirit when a Christian who has been saved by grace, invested with the Spirit of God, blessed with good leadership and empowered with his OWN spiritual gift, just sits there. Every Christian should view himself or herself as a Minister. That is what is embedded in verse 12.

Now how long should this go on? Well, Paul says in verse 13 ***until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*** Three things basically,

We are to keep equipping each other to keep building each other up until we ALL attain a sense of ***unity in the faith***. That means primarily a certain doctrinal or you might say mental or intellectual sameness or understanding, "particularly featuring (MacArthur suggests) the CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL. I do not think there is not supposed to be so much diversity from a theological standpoint as there exists even between evangelicals. We're all split up over Calvinism and Arminianism, over premillennialism and amillennialism, over charismatic and non-charismatic, and on and on. I think that if the Church had been really committed to Ephesians 4:12 over the centuries we would be much more clear on what is right and what is not right. Gifted leaders—evangelists and shepherd-teachers—are supposed to train and equip people to THINK theologically, balanced, understanding what is truth and what is heresy, understanding what is theologically important in the Word and what is of secondary importance. We are supposed to be rock-solid in our thinking. Not harsh and rigid and cold. That isn't like Jesus was, and being like Him is the second thing in verse 12...***the knowledge of the Son of God*** which is not, I do not think, referred to salvation knowledge but to a deep, daily walk with Him. Folks, if you do not get into the Word yourself, you cannot have a close walk with Him. If you do not pray and I believe if you do not vitally participate in His body, using your gift faithfully, you cannot have a close walk with Him. HE HAS DESIGNED it so that you receive encouragement and growth in the intimate knowledge of Him by means of understanding and learning the Word, the Bible, by receiving building up from other believers and by serving. How so many Christians can content themselves with just going to church once in a while is beyond me! If THAT was all the faith was about, I would have been out of here long ago!

Third, equipping goes on until we ALL manifest the ***fullness of Christ*** that is, we all start really looking like Him. Do we look like Him? Some days yes, some days no. Some of yes on some days, some of us no on some days. We're still in the process. We have come a long way but we have a long way to go. Please remember though, that HE is the energy and the giver of leadership behind the whole forward progress of the church. The Spirit is given to us to fill us, to rejuvenate us, to save more and more people in our midst, to raise up new leaders.... We are HIS body and more than anyone the Lord Jesus Himself is interested in our growth to look and BE like Him, more and more!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 27)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:13-16
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Sept. 23rd, 2001

Real Spiritual Maturity

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ, 16 from whom 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.

Introduction I don't know if it's a mid-life thing or not, but I'm thinking about "maturity" and wondering if I'm IT yet? When I'm around some people I feel pretty mature. When I'm around some *other* people I wonder if I've grown up at all yet...

But it's not just in the social realm that I wonder about whether I'm mature or not. It is in the spiritual realm too. Now, you might think, Hey if you're *not* spiritually mature what are you doing being a pastor? Good question! I believe, however, that a personal sense of maturity in the Christian life is somewhat elusive—anyone who thinks he has "arrived" had better wake up and realize that no truly mature Christian ever stops growing. There are always pockets of resistance still lurking in hiding places deep in my soul. There are always small terrorist cells waiting for a chance to strike at my sanctification when I am least suspecting them. That is the way the human soul is, and that is the thorough job that sin has done on me. So, now in my own life, at 29 years and counting in the faith, I am wondering about what makes for spiritual maturity? And I am gratified to find some answers in Ephesians 4.

Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians that critical to people maturing spiritually, is the human leadership in that body of maturing Christians, the church. We all look to the Lord for the ultimate leadership in our church, but the human leadership that we have is **THERE** in order to equip average Christians to serve each other in ministry. Apostles and prophets, originally, and more immediately evangelists and shepherd-teachers are there in order to help all the Christians learn how to build up the body. This is what we need to do in this church. We need to make use of the gifted leaders we have, as models and trainers for **OTHERS** to learn how to minister. I do not think this has ever been as clear to me as it has become recently. You need to become equipped. You are supposed to receive that from those in your midst who are gifted in equipping. Then **YOU** go and do

the ministry. That isn't a real traditional model. The traditional model is the "priestly" or "Levitical" model which has the priests and Levites doing the ministry, not the "saints."

How I wish to unpack the rest of this section, verses 13-16 of Ephesians 4 is outlined on the back of your bulletin today:

I think Paul sensed a real need to drive home to the Christians around Ephesus that THEY needed to learn how to minister. They were not going to have apostles and prophets forever. And so he established in vs.12 that

1. Equipped Christians **minister**

I think it is probably true that Christians who have not been trained and organized to minister for the building up of the body, will not. No matter how much we beg you or present the various needs for people to serve, if you do not feel able to do it, you won't volunteer—and you probably shouldn't! But if the leadership of a church makes it their priority to train people, they will have the confidence to minister. Spirit-filled Christians who have the ability to minister, who have been adequately equipped, WILL.

2. Equipped Christians ministering, **breeds unity.**

Secondly, when equipped Christians are ministering, it breeds a sense of togetherness in the body. Vs. 13. The sense of unity Paul has mainly in mind *here*, I think, is doctrinal. Doctrinal unity and feeling like you're on the same page with everyone else is real important. It is edifying and comforting. It sets us up to be able to give a clear message to new people who are searching, or even to a skeptical but watching community out there. Believers ministering together breeds a teamwork spirit.

I saw a little bit of this with the booth ministry at the Whaling City Festival this summer. They worked together as a team, with a simple message, and they felt like they were pulling in the same direction. I was not part of it, but I watched them and prayed for them and was proud of them!

3. Equipped Christians ministering, **causes each member to grow.** Growth is all over verse 13! Each person in a church which is a safe and affirming environment, will receive meaningful encouragement to grow in their walks with God and with one another. When you are in a church and you are receiving encouragement from a Bob Whitlow or a Barbara Gahan or a Dean Schmidlin or a Susan Brunette you are given **SOME** of the nutrients for growth. NOTE: Anyone in a church where equipped Christians are ministering should not NOT grow—at least that is never the plan of God NOTE2: You can tell when equipped Christians are ministering well because, as a result, others move towards maturity. One of the reasons we have an "encouragements time" at the conclusion of every Quarterly Family Meeting is to provide the body with the chance to hear how we are growing as a result of each other's ministry. It is tremendously encouraging to hear your name unexpectedly and spontaneously mentioned as having contributed a little to someone else's spiritual growth. I always try to think through in advance who I want to mention in that time. I look forward to that time because it is always an edifying time!

4. Real maturity means we actually look a lot like Jesus Christ. ***To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*** The imagery is a young person growing up to the full height of his parent. Mature Christians and amature

church, look like and have the qualities of Jesus Christ. Unlike other religions which seek sometimes to make little models of their heroes, we do not seek to make little Pauls or Peters or Marys or Billy Grahams or Spurgeons or Calvins or Luthers or anyone else. We seek to move people to want to become like Jesus. When we reach some level of real spiritual maturity, we are looking like Him.

We are reacting to things around us like He would.

We talk with measured carefulness and wisdom and grace like Him.

We are not emotionless but we are also not impulsive or quickly angered.

We are resolute but we are not stubborn and self-willed.

We are aware of our calling but we are not self-focused or self-centered.

We are like Him.

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* summarizes it this way: "As each believer functions in accord with the gift(s) Christ has given him (v. 7) the body as a whole enjoys unity (cf. vv. 3-6) and becomes more spiritually mature (cf. v. 15), more like Jesus Christ in all His fullness."

5. Real maturity means we are **grounded in discernment** and Paul describes what that means.

> We're not tossed

Not jumping from one new thing to another

> We're not carried away

Not dominated and "won over" by novelty

> We're not fooled

Despite their cleverness...and people even in so-called Christian circles can be very clever. Because *We have learned to not be naïve.*

You know, I have to admit, there are a few Christians around that I just basically do not like. I'm not proud of that, but they just rub me the wrong way. But sometimes even though I do not like someone, I acknowledge their groundedness. They are mature in that they are not swayed very easily. They know what they believe and they keenly have a sense for what is important. I value that in Christians, even if our personalities do not mesh completely.

These days there is so much new teaching and new claims for spirituality. I am skeptical of most of it. We have seen movements and trends come and go. Some are good and some are bad; some are fun and some are just silly. We've watched Operation Rescue, inner healing, Promise-Keepers, holy laughter, *The Prayer of Jabez*, and others. We've probably learned from each of them but I really like the story of the great theologian Charles Hodge in the 1800s when he was questioned by a lady in a church in which he was teaching, "Dr. Hodge, you never teach us anything new." He replied, "Lady, I am glad that for fifty years I have never taught *anything* new, but just the same truths over and over again."

6. Real maturity comes from **loving verbal ministries**

> Words are powerful. You know, you can sort of reduce vital Christianity down to two things—what we say and what we do. Authentic Christianity—and spiritually mature believers know this—has both elements. We need to be a SAYING people and not saying-people only. What we say needs to be followed with DOING, with good deeds—lots of them, done by all the Christians. But the verbal part of the faith is real important. Words communicate ideas and Christianity depends on right ideas, ideas which come from God Himself. I find it interesting that when Moses encountered God on Sinai, God communicated with him via words—carefully chosen holy words. A spiritually mature Christian is careful in his or her selection of words. He is not sloppy or uncaring about his words. He CHOOSES his words in ways that build people up, and do not distract them.

Verse 15 is an often quoted verse. In context, it refers to the kind of speech we share together which promotes growth IN each other. We do not waver on either side of this “equation:” truth and love. We speak the truth but we do it in love. There is a way to say something which might be true, but is not very loving. The person doesn’t come away from the hearing of that truth feeling like the speaker had his best interests at heart or that he cared very much. Leaders need to speak the truth a lot. But we need to do it lovingly, in ways that promote growth in grace.

7. Loving verbal ministries are **driven by the specific spiritual giftedness** and Spirit-provided opportunities of the moment... This is what verse 16 is all about.

> Each individual part is needed

> Each individual part contributes something vital for others’ growth

Wrap up

We need to be ministering, each of us, in accordance with our spiritual gifts.

We need to be stable and rock-solid on our basic doctrines.

We need to use words and teaching and all our verbal ministries well, so that people are truly growing in their own faith.

We need to make use of that which every member of the body can supply.

We need to insist on love within our church.

Real spiritual maturity in a Christian presumes that he or she is intimately tied into the Christian community. You cannot become spiritually mature and really reflect Christ very well if you are a loner. You need to be part of the Ephesians 4 process. You may not become a leader, but you are already a needed part of the body, if you are a Christian. You possess a unique giftedness that the body needs and deserves. The times are such that we cannot afford the luxury any longer of allowing gifted believers to NOT be used in the body. Not if we are going to really look to the community like a place where Jesus really reigns!

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 28)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:17, 18
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Sept. 30th 2001

Life Without Christ

Introduction When a person is a genuine Christian—when he has truly met and begun a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—it changes his life forever. He may slip and fall from time to time but the falling is *as he is walking* towards Jesus, getting closer and closer to Him. When a person really meets the Lord Jesus, her life can never go back to what it was before he or she met the Lord.

I loved being in London this summer. I loved just watching how Londoners live. Their lives are characterized by certain practices which, while maybe not present or visible every day, are in general the way they live. They drive a certain way (left side of the road), the Christians were absolutely committed to church on Sundays, love soccer and do a fair amount of eating out in international restaurants. (I wondered if we were doing this so much because I was their guest and I found that actually they like doing this fairly often.) We enjoyed Italian, French, Thai and of course, English fish and chips on the Channel! And when they eat, they have a distinct way of using fork and knife, too! When you're there, you do what the English do and you "walk" as the English walk. When I returned from there I enjoyed getting back to *this* way of life since this is home!

But the differences between how Christians live and how non-Christians live are far more than the differences between Englishmen and Americans! Non-Christians have a certain way of life. Coming to Christ genuinely changes that. I may still have problems as a Christian but my way of life is now different. Paul told the Ephesians it *should* be that way... He told them very bluntly and plainly **walk no longer as the Gentiles walk**. In fact it is so important for the Ephesians that they understand this—and they lived in a very pagan environment—that he says (vs. 17) that he **affirms this together with the Lord**, as if he was saying, "Hey you guys, the Lord is right here with me on this one—it's not just *my* opinion." It really matters to God how we live. It really matters how we choose to walk. It isn't only our reputation with other people that matters; it is our "reputation" with God Himself.

Now, how did the Gentiles walk in those days? Well, they were very devoted to pleasure and sensual pursuits, even to where there was city-sponsored prostitution associated with the Temple of Diana. Things that even in our downgrading society we might find shameful, were commonplace to Ephesian pagans. It was just "normal." And we're seeing more and more of that mentality marketed and even taught today. Things which were considered wrong and to be avoided fifty years ago are now considered by

many to be acceptable. But we need to wake up and realize that what is wrong is wrong and what is right is right.

Now Verses 18 and 19 describe how unbelievers ordered their lives. Paul's description is not very complimentary! He does not say things like we hear so often today, "All people are basically good." He says

Their minds are futile

Their understanding is darkened

They are excluded from the life of God

by virtue of spiritual ignorance and hardened hearts

They have become insensitive to the badness of sensuality

They are comprehensively impure and greedy

You and I are not to behave like non-Christians. We are not to have a daily lifestyle that is pretty much just like everyone else. Often I think we want to simulate non-Christians. We say, "I won't actually go into someone's house and steal their television," but I might be OK with cheating on my income taxes. We say, "I won't actually commit actual fornication," and then engage in pornography. We say, "I would *never* actually kill or hurt someone," but we have no problem watching others do it. Non-Christians have a cynicism about life; a sort of internal belief that life is basically pointless. *Their minds are futile*. They may not be stupid but their *understanding is darkened* and they cannot see what they should see. They are often downcast, pessimistic, crass and callous because they have not been given *new life in Christ*. They are *excluded from the life of God* and they don't even have potential to grow, spiritually, apart from Jesus. They think everything goes in the sensuality department and don't feel shame and do not even blush anymore. They are out for themselves primarily and approve impurity and greed across the board.

Verses 20 and 21 say **But you did not learn Christ in this way if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus.** Commentator Matthew Henry says, "Christ is the lesson; we must learn Christ: and Christ is the teacher; we are taught by him." What temptations and trials are you going through right now? You can flee to Jesus and He will show you how to be like Him. We do not manage stress and temptation and trial like unbelievers. It would be ridiculous to do so because the Bible says we have a powerful helper: Hebrews 4:14-16 ***Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.***

Paul warns about the powerful negatives of choosing to think and act like the world. He says BE NOT LIKE THEM. He tells them to ***lay aside the old self***, a lifestyle which only gets progressively worse (***being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit***). But he is positive too! In vss. 23 and 24

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind...Put on the new self

First is the choice to be renewed in our minds and spirits. The expression **spirit of your mind** testifies to the closeness of relation between the human spirit and the mind. They are intimately entwined. Most of the Christian life and most of the battles we face are faced in our thinking—our core and basic beliefs; our decisions and choices; our fears. These are all mental issues and it is there in our minds that we need to continually become new all over again, each day. We need mental and spiritual renewal, both—they are not two separate things. Now Paul said to them to BE RENEWED indicating it was something for them to go about doing. When I renew myself, it happens on the battlefield of the mind. And it happens *in* my spirit. Laying aside the old ways of living and thinking, even if you were raised in a Christian home, is like deciding to take off an old smelly jacket. And we deliberately PUT ON a new and clean jacket.

1. Renewal happens by spending time in God's Word.
2. It happens by praying and seeking the Lord yourself, privately, secretly.
3. It happens by exposing your mind to healthy spiritual things and by minimizing

the

unhealthy things.

It's always interesting to me when I hear someone say, "I went away on a week of vacation or on a retreat and there was no entertainment there at all—at first I was bored but then I started feeling my mind get washed and I came back renewed."

4. Renewal happens by honoring YOUR need for a sabbath-rest. We all need a regular time of rest and refueling. God originally figured we would need one full day in seven in order to be effective the other six days.
5. Renewal happens by availing yourself to the meaningful friendship of one or two other Christians that you trust. They can sooth you, encourage you, stimulate your desire to seek Christ, and challenge you.

The **new self** is something that God creates in us that, like how Jesus lived, is characterized by **righteousness and holiness and truth** (vs. 24). A person who has really met Christ is now INTERESTED in what righteousness is all about. He is interested in the subject of holiness. He wants to know the difference between what is true and what is not true. Those interests are inside of him now, if he has put on the new self. It is like what Paul wrote to the Corinthians... 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

This message is saying that if you are a Christian, live like one. Do not live a life which is acting out the way non-Christians live. Life without Christ is futile. It is a downward spiral. It ends up in spiritual death and eternal separation from God. Life without Christ is to me the most depressing state there is! But it is not unavoidable. The overall tone of the New Testament is that anyone can find new life in Christ and anyone can start to live for Him. Anyone at all is invited to change their minds about how to live and to begin to walk with Jesus and as He walked. Anyone at all!

We are not slaves to sin and we are never trapped in sin. I have heard Christians say, I HAVE TO keep being like the world. I am addicted. I am a slave to habit even though I have trusted Christ. Well, you haven't REALLY turned that worldly thing over to Him if you are still addicted to it! Here is something I read this week:

A number of years ago a Major Van Sickle of the Salvation Army in Washington, DC had a great evangelistic ministry with alcoholics. He told one of them, "If you take the Gospel of John and read it fifty times, I guarantee you deliverance from alcoholism." Was that a bold thing to say? Well, after reading John seven or eight times, the man trusted Christ. He kept reading the Gospel of John, and before long he was delivered from alcoholism. He came to know the truth, and the truth set him free. The Major said that over a period of some five years he had witnessed one hundred conversions from alcoholism by the transforming power of God's Word.

– Dr. Donald Campbell in Dallas Seminary's *Kindred Spirit*, Fall 2001.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 29)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-27
Speaker: Rev. Heli C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Oct. 7th, 2001

Depriving the Devil

Introduction We are going through this letter to the early Christians in the ancient city of Ephesus and I have found this book to be so very rich with meaning. It is an endless mine of wealth—I can remember first studying it in 1974 and I am *still* studying it. So you will indulge me if I tend to slow up from time to time to look at details.

We said last week that a Christian should live like a Christian—we are different; we are not like non-Christians and now Paul is going to lay out a number of specific ways that we should live differently. That is a main theme of Christianity—*living* differently. Well, that is basically what the rest of the letter is about.

So let me ask you, are you saved? I know it's a blunt question. If you feel you are, what evidence can you offer. Some would say, "Well, I felt like I believed in Jesus fourteen years ago and I made a commitment to Him at that time. Therefore I must be saved." I do not want you to doubt yourself but I must tell you that (as John MacArthur puts it) "the only reliable evidence of a person's being saved is not a past experience of receiving Christ but a PRESENT LIFE that reflects Christ" (*Commentary* p. 181).

In other words, new creatures act like new creatures. They have a new set of priorities. They have a new set of ethics. They have a new set of passions. They may still struggle with sin, but their lives are not *characterized* by sin. Some people may say, "No, no, I only have to SAY I'm a Christian and then I know I am one." Well that may feel good but it isn't what the Bible teaches. It is not what Paul or Peter or John or James taught. And it isn't what Jesus taught. **They all taught that a real Christian, although sovereignly made into a new creature and unconditionally rescued by a loving God, ALSO commands us in the strength of His Spirit to subdue our unredeemed humanness (I Cor. 9:27)¹ and to LIVE as new creatures.** It is a paradox, yes, to realize that the Christian life is both God's sovereignty and man's will at work. But the genuine Christian responds positively to God's sovereign declarations and commands. And He commands us to live as new creatures, not as non-Christians live.

Now in the passage in front of us there is the interesting phrase (vs. 27) **and do not give the devil an opportunity.** The devil...we believe in him. And I want you to know

¹ ... but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

that I have one paragraph here and that is it—because I don't want to give him any more "press" than necessary but hear this: that old dragon really exists and he is a powerful, cunningly deceitful destroyer of people. His biggest trick, I think, is to get people to not believe that he exists and in this he has gained many non-adherents! He is not omnipresent and he is not omniscient but he is real and he is alive on Planet Earth and should not be taken lightly or underestimated. And before we get into the particulars that Paul thinks the new Ephesian believers should major on, please notice what Peter said was so true...**1 Peter 5:8-10** *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.***9** *But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.***10** *And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.* Satan just loves it when we imitate life without Christ. He loves it when we simulate living like pagans. He looks for chances and opportunities and jumps on them and exploits them and amplifies them into major spiritual catastrophes... But our plain strategy needs to be prayer, prayer and simply more prayer. He looks for opportunities, yes—without sleep I am sure—but we pray and also work to deny him opportunities. He seeks to be the destroyer and to devise extremely clever plots, even within churches, to destroy them. But we guard our tongues, work hard to control anger and resentment, refuse temptations to lie and steal. We rejoice with the apostle John who said **1 John 4:4** *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.* So let us work hard at the following practical ways to BE Christian and with each victory joyfully realize that Satan is cursing us for denying him his chance to undo the Kingdom of Jesus.

Today we're going to look at the first two of these practical admonitions, which all have to do with relationships with other people. "Holiness is not a mystical condition experienced in relation to God but in isolation from human beings. You cannot be good in a vacuum but only in the real world of people" (John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* p. 184). And with each practical admonition the negative "don't" is coupled to a positive "do." And each practical admonition has a reason, a theological reason which is so "New Testament," the dovetailing of doctrine with ethics! He is saying SIX things in this section... Remember—DECISIONS to engage these ways of living are what really demonstrate, at "street level", who the real Christians are; who is **laying aside the old self...and putting on the new self** (vss.22,23).

1. Don't tell lies but rather tell the truth. (vs. 25)

There is so much we could say about lying, telling only *part* of the truth, the falsehood-laced society in which we live... But at the most practical level this passage is aimed at normal Christians, living in assembly with each other, and striving to witness for Christ. It is vitally important that we tell the truth with one another and avoid the telling of lies. I know, I know... it is easy to lie and to pull the wool over each other's eyes. We can get away with it for a little while but it will always come back to get you.

I think a major reason we might lie to one another, or do things which at least cover up the truth, is that we are afraid. We are afraid of being found out, of being shamed by

someone or of having some pleasure frowned upon. At a deeper level we fear being rejected by people and so we would rather live WITH the lie of professed Christianity only than to be found out. The whole environment of lies around us is such a kingdom-of-Satan feature. And sometimes I think our true Christianity gets so sloppy that we condone and even celebrate the cleverness of lying. We like a good espionage story. We love it when someone who is underprivileged or disadvantaged manages to rook the "System" out of something. We love plots of vengeance where the bad guys "get theirs" by a clever conspiracy of deceit by the victimized "good guy." But lying is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit and neither is vengeful cleverness. Jesus said, ***Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*** (Matthew 5:8).

I think this is probably **one of the most underrated**, least talked about problems that Christians might have. It doesn't get nearly the press that some other sins do, but in a sense it is a "foundational sin." It was a lie that got Eve and Adam to sin the first human sins. And because we are, as new creatures now, **members of one another** we ought to make truth-telling a real important priority! When we lie to one another here, or in a Christian family, it is a stab into the very guts of the body of Christ. No matter what the risk, we should avoid them and speak the truth to one another in love...

2. Don't lose your temper but rather ensure that your anger is righteous. (vss.26,27)

Keep short accounts, is the second idea. He does not say NEVER BE ANGRY for Paul is an excellent pragmatist. He knew that anger is an emotion and will happen in any person from time to time (Psalm 4:4)². But we do not have to ACT ON anger in vengeful or seething or bitter ways. Sometimes there is anger which is explosive. Sometimes there is long-standing anger which is bitter and grudge-bearing. These are the bad kinds of anger and need to be dealt with in the power of the Holy Spirit. But there is also a quiet kind of anger of conviction. While we control this, it is a normal part of life. We ventilate things that anger us and should vent them before bed every night, ideally.

If lying is an underrated sin, I think **dealing poorly with anger is a stealthy sin for Christians**. Somehow it is not seemly to admit you're angry if you're a Christian. And I think we fall prey to the temptation to cover it up and deny that it's there in some belief that this is spiritual. I think it is falsely spiritual. What IS spiritual is to **not sin** and to learn to deal with anger honestly and carefully—as with a pail of explosives perhaps—and to NEVER let a root of bitterness set in against one another and therefore to "cheat" (if I can use that term) Satan out of an opportunity to drive wedges into the body of Christ.

In churches, Satan gets chances sometimes to drive wedges because of angry things said—and then never reconciled—about power and decision-making roles, about preferences with buildings and music and money; and sometimes even silly things. I think he gets his claws into disputes Christians sometimes have over silly things we say to one another that are insensitive or critical or arbitrary or dismissing. But WHEN we get angry with one another the LAST thing you want to do is to talk to someone *e/se* about it before

² *Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. [Selah]*

you talk to the person with whom you have the conflict. And if you don't succeed in a satisfactory reconciliation the first time, try again! (Commentator William Hendricksen noted that it would be *better* if we got more angry AT our own sins...)

But here there DOES seem to be a legitimatizing of righteous indignation, anger at evil or at that which is done against the person of the Lord and against His will and purpose, which we as Christians have some sense of knowing. The word for **angry** is *parorgismos* (**do not let the sun go down on your anger**) and it is not the momentary outward, boiling-over rage or inward, seething resentment but rather a deep-seated, determined and settled conviction. It is the anger which abhors injustice, immorality and ungodliness of every sort. We are licensed to feel *parorgismos* from time to time but **NOT TO SIN** though. It is the thing that nine out of ten Americans are feeling today as they ponder what happened in New York City and Washing D.C. and a Pennsylvania field three weeks ago.

Next week we will consider the other four SPECIFICS of what a Christian looks like.

Don't steal but rather work and give. (vs. 28)

Don't use your mouth for evil but rather for good. (vss. 29-30)

Don't be unkind or bitter but rather be kind and loving. (4:31-5:2)

Don't joke about sex but rather give thanks for it. (5:3,4)

If you are with us today and you cannot offer to yourself any tangible evidence that you have really met the Lord yet, I urge you to seek Him. I plead with you to not let yourself just THINK you are a Christian. The Bible offers us the promise of a changed life that begins with the experience of surrendering your sinfulness to Jesus Christ.

Dartmouth Bible Notes



Notes From the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church
Series: An Exposition of Ephesians (Lesson 30)
Scripture: Ephesians 4:28
Speaker: Rev. Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Date: Oct. 14th, 2001

Change, from One Way to Another

Introduction I don't really hear the word used much, but it seems to me that a lot of what the Taliban and other fundamentalist Islamics are seeking is what they believe to be "holiness." I am really interested to know deeply what their notion of holiness is? In a manic and fearful way they seem more intent and deliberate than us to create it in their people and to impose it on others. This, to me, is the core and central question around the whole big conflict. Their imams and muftis and mullahs believe that God, the one God (they say), is pleased in certain ways and in a fiercely ruthless approach to mankind, bludgeons the world into submission. They are merely his agents...

We as Christians, listen to this with an ear also interested in "holiness." We of course trace directly from the Jews and the God of the Old Testament. We also want to please God and believe quite undauntedly that He IS pleasurable. The big difference for Christians is that we think "holiness" has already been completely achieved on our behalf by none other than the only God's Only Son, Jesus Christ, a Jew and attested by His resurrection from the dead. And our present lives grow in holiness as we surrender more and more to Jesus Christ. Islam has no redeemer and therefore quite simply, no hope of imputed holiness--unless they turn to Jesus... But we also are vitally interested in "holiness." I think...

Getting more holy is not an uncool thing.

It is not about becoming a dork or a geek or a square.

It is not about becoming more sour or more judgmental.

It is about becoming more good and more clean. And therefore it involves changing from one level of goodness and cleanness to another. It is about **CHANGE**. It is wonderful to see really **genuine changes** in our lives, when you know the area that change is needed. Although change does not come easily, it does come by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of an authentic Christian. We might even say that **what REAL Christianity there is among us—the really good stuff—is always accompanied somehow by an element of change**. We make such a big deal about change, because the Holy Spirit is never static and He is always working to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. So change is always on the agenda. And He is always willing and able to bring about specific change items in people's lives... We need changes in various areas of our lives. We need change to take place in our thinking. And it does!

♦I used to think it was all right to snatch some money here and there, let's say. And now I somehow find myself feeling strangely uncomfortable about that. I am changing...

♦ I used to not have any little twinges of conscience about watching soap operas but now I find myself feeling a little weird about that. I am changing...

♦ I used to have this attitude that everyone owed me something and that if I had to do without something it was more than likely because someone *else* was falling down on the job of providing for me. Now I feel strangely more motivated to get up and take care of myself and be responsible for my own happiness a little more. I want to leave the entitlement mentality behind... What's up with that? Where did THIS feeling come from? I am changing...

♦ I used to never forget a wrong suffered. Now I am so overwhelmed with my own sense of needing forgiveness that I am more than willing to cut loose anything that was done to me.

My thinking is changing because the Holy Spirit is gradually making me more like Christ—and He is doing it by slowly transforming my mind.

Now Paul tells the Ephesian Christians about some areas of change that they needed to work on: Ephesians 4:28 ***Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need. This is about changing from STEALING TO SHARING.*** It is a change of mind from looking for ways to get something that belongs to someone else, to looking for ways to work and earn the money with which to give more to other people. The change involves a negative and a positive. The negative? Stop stealing... The positive? Start working. You know, God's Word is kind of down on stealing. It is the Eighth Commandment, ***You shall not steal*** (Exodus 20:15 : לא תגנב) ***lo tognuv*** which in Hebrew is simply "don't steal." You might not have thought it was that big a deal but listen to this:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ***Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.***

Shoplifting would be one form of ***stealing*** but it is not the only one. It is a fundamental part of sin which lies inside many of us and perhaps one of the earliest manifestations of sin that we can see in little children. MacArthur: "there is a certain fleshly attraction in taking that which does not belong to us and trying to get by with it" (*Commentary* p. 186).

But stealing might also show up as
intentional overestimating,
falsified cost overruns,
padding expense accounts,
software piracy,
reporting more hours than were actually worked,
working the welfare system for more than is honorable,
failing to report income to the IRS,
reneging on a debt or on a credit purchase, or
not paying an employee fair wages.

James Dobson makes a pretty good case for how the whole lottery system, which includes scratch tickets is basically a system of stealing from the poor since it is mostly people of lower incomes who are induced to buy tickets and play the lottery. There is simply no end to the ways in which we *can* steal. Stealing is sin, and unfortunately I find us looking for explanations to justify it rather than the attitude of fleeing it.

The positive is to **labor**, even manual labor, doing a GOOD WORK and not just to stave off the temptation to steal but to positively place yourself in a situation where you can share with **him who has need**. Now a couple of comments on this part of worthwhile...

1. The work should be **honest, honorable and productive**. It is about God-honoring employment. There are kinds of employment which are God-honoring and those which are not. In general, I do not think any redeemed believer in Jesus Christ should work in a liquor store, or become a bartender, or work at a casino. They should struggle with working in any place which sells pornography. They should question the propriety of working in a job which is based on ripping people off and NOT giving them a fair product for a fair price.

2. **Performing with his own hands** stresses the truth that the norm is for every person to **be responsible for his own provision**. This is so contrary to our age of entitlement and seeking free handouts. Sometimes the church gets the "guilts" and *looks for ways to give people "freebies."* All that does is enable the entitlement mentality and discourages people from taking responsibility for themselves. Paul spoke to this elsewhere: 2 Thessalonians 3:10 **For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.** Also 1 Timothy 5:8 **But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.** I find it really encouraging and I would walk a *couple* of extra miles with a brother who is a hard worker and who works a full work week and even then some, in order to take care of himself and his family. I must admit that one of my subconscious gauges for who is really fulfilling this is the guy who works forty or more hours and does it every week and does it without complaining but who limits himself to NOT work on Sunday, if possible, and praises God every Sunday with his brethren and then tithes his income every week and looks for ways to help people. That to me is a real honorable man or woman and I really respect that person, no matter what OTHER weaknesses they might have. Conversely the person who does NOT do that and who spends a lot of time arguing about doctrine or whining about the church and whatever *other things* they may be putting their energy into, well....

3. But the verse has more in it. **To share with him who has need**. This for a genuine Christian who is undergoing deep change is MORE than just taking care of your own family or working some overtime so you can in some way raise the luxury, add to the vacations, pile up the possessions of your own, immediate family. That is not at all what Paul has in mind. He is talking about people who used to steal and now work, they work hard, and they are **driven by the desire to add to the community ability to care for others** who do NOT have and perhaps cannot work. Note: In the Ephesian community we are aware of no social welfare system. Widows and orphans had no resources other than what good people might assist them with. They were really at the mercy of a pretty

much merciless society. So it was vital that when Christianity came along, for authentic Christians to watch out for the real needs of the brothers and sisters, even being willing to work extra hours and extra hard to be able to help.

Holiness is found when we notice changes taking place. Real, deep-set changes of the heart and new directions. It doesn't mean we have achieved perfection or that we consider ourselves better than other people—in fact, holiness involves a real humility and non-threatening air as regards goodness and cleanness. But one sign is a person who used to look for ways to take from other people and now has become an other-people minded hard worker. If you look at yourself and find no change taking place at all, you had better wonder if you have really met Jesus or not yet because He wants to change you and make you a new person. He's got a new set of clothes for you to put on!

We serve a new King. We want to be like Him. Changing and becoming more like Him means good is done to other people. It means other people are helped, who need it, and they are helped more quickly. It means I feel the joy of the Lord as I watch my own desires and inclinations changing, from the inside out. No one is more amazed than the Christian himself at the internal transformation and growth in real holiness that is occurring deep inside of him...