

Growing Into A Perfect Man In The Lord

by Alan Martin

This sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ, highlighting the need to actively seek, listen, and seize the Word of God to become like Jesus. It discusses the different types of soil representing how people hear the Word, urging believers to have a good and noble heart that seizes the Word to bear fruit. The speaker encourages intentional effort, discipline, and seeking the Lord with all one's heart to grow spiritually and live as princes of God.

Scripture: Luke 2:40, Matthew 13:18, Matthew 5:48, Hebrews 5:11, James 1:4, Ephesians 4:13, Isaiah 1:18, Proverbs 2:1, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Hearing the Word of God"

Description

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Transcript

Again, how precious that Brother Darrell prayed that prayer that we be strengthened with power through his spirit and inner man so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. We're going through the book of Ephesians, we're about, we're nearing the middle of the fourth chapter. We're going to cover these, most of these verses this morning, maybe not the entire passage, but read with me, Ephesians 4, verses 13 through 16, until we all come.

And this is why God gives leadership to the church, he gives some, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry that the body of Christ may be built up. And this is that, until we all, until we all reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children or infants tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of teaching by the cleverness of men and the cunning of deceitful plotting. But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into all things into him who is the head, Jesus Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its own share, causes the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

So our beloved apostle Paul to the church here in Ephesus, he states three goals, the until, let's look at, let's consider them together, until, and notice, until we all attain to the unity of the faith. In other words, until all of us agree what the Lord says. We're clear on that.

It's what the Lord says, that's got to be our unity in the faith because men will share all kinds of ideas and they're very clever about it. We must be unified on what God says, that's a goal, that we attain to the unity of the faith and each of us have our own first-hand, direct contact knowledge of God, epigenosko, that means it's first-hand knowledge, you know the Lord, you're not hearing about him through me or through your teacher, you know him, you have a relationship with him, that's the goal for every believer in the church and the last thing, that until we, as a group, we come to a perfect man, and right there, that word throws people off, perfect, because we have an idea in English, that the original word doesn't really contain, it comes from the Greek word thalaios, and it means that you're complete in all its parts, a process has been at work and it's come to a fulfillment so that what was intended becomes fully functional. In other words, God wants us to grow up until we are living as he designed for us to live as Christians, full of his spirit, empowered by his grace, a living testimony as new creations in Christ Jesus, glorifying him by the transformation he brings about through dwelling inside of us.

That's his heart and his goal, and that's the idea of the word perfect, you're fulfilled, you're mature, you're like ripe fruit, you're ready to be eaten, you're a blessing to other people, that's the idea of perfect, that perfect man. Jesus uses the word, the same word perfect, look with me together in Matthew 5, verses 44-48, Matthew 5, 44-48, Jesus said, But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your father in heaven. For he makes his son to rise upon the evil and the good, and he sends rain upon the just and the unjust, for if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what do you more than any other one do? Do not even the tax collectors greet each other? Therefore you shall be perfect, even as your heavenly father is perfect.

And notice that perfect, in this fullest sense, in this context, you learn to love the way God loves. You love like he does, not just those who are easy to get along with, you love like God. He's kind to the wicked and the righteous, he's a blessing to both.

Now, Paul uses this term because it's so much on his heart. He wants us as believers to become mature, complete, full in Christ. Look with me.

As a matter of fact, I'm going to have Joe Hernandez, would you read 1 Corinthians 14.20? I think we're going to have it up on the screen. 1 Corinthians 14.20. Brothers, don't be children in thought, yet in malice be babies, but in thought be mature. Okay, mature.

Here's the word mature. In other words, in the way you think, be complete. Don't be immature in the way you think as a believer.

Stop saying everybody does it. Stop saying, well, nobody's. You hear that? You know how often we say that? Well, after all, nobody's.

We're called to be perfect, complete, mature. It was always in the heart of Paul. In all of his letters, he's exhorting the believers on towards his perfection.

Colossians 1.28. Brother Sam, would you read Colossians 1.28 for us? This is Paul. His desire was to present every single person complete. Every single person mature.

So he warned them. He taught them so that he might bring them to this state of spiritual maturity. This completeness.

And the reason being so that God gets glory from your life. So your life does not contradict what you say you believe. God lives in you.

His grace is sufficient for you. And Christ is fortifying you with power so that his work in you, God at work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure, produces good fruit. And you share the good fruit that God is producing in you with everybody in your life.

And this brings glory to God. In your life. That's what he decided.

He also, same book, Colossians 4. Colossians 4.12. Brother David and Ephraim, would you read that for us? Colossians 4.12. Ephraim, who is one of you, is certainly a Messiah to you. He is always striving to be a perfect person and will give you all the glory of God. Ephraim was this brother who was a member of the church there of the Ephesians.

And he's constantly praying that they would all stand fully complete. Fully complete in all the will of God. It was just his constant prayer.

He agonized, he was wrestling in prayer for this for them all the time. We also have the Apostle James. It's not just something that Paul speaks about, but the Apostle James writes about this, the importance of being complete, being fulfilled, being mature.

In James chapter 1, verse 4. Brother Larry, would you read James 1.4? Let patience have its perfect work. In other words, it's finishing work. You know what happens when you see a beautiful piece of furniture and it's been sanded smoothly and then someone takes the varnish and puts it across and suddenly the grains of the wood, they pop, don't they? They pop out.

They're all inspiring. We need the Holy Spirit to do a finishing work to sand away the rough edges of our old nature so that when others see us, they catch a glimpse of the glory of God and His power. That's what they see.

That's our goal. And it takes endurance having a work. Tribulation work is endurance.

Endurance works as proven character. Proven character works hope and hope does not make a shame. We can read about that in Romans chapter 5. But the end result is people seeing the goodness and grace of God in our actions and our conduct.

This is the kind of perfection that Paul has in mind. Let's look at it again. Ephesians 4.14. Follow this.

The reason he wants us to be perfect, complete, mature, in other words, a spiritual adult is so that we no longer be what? Children or infants. I like the word infants. So that we no longer will be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching.

Now, don't get too... We shouldn't downplay infants. We all start as infants, don't we? You're born again. You're born again as an infant.

But we're not supposed to stay an infant. If you're still an infant when you're six years old, something is wrong. Right? Something's wrong.

Now, there is a word that's no longer politically correct to use. It was a word used to describe someone who's very, very far behind developmentally. It's the word they're retarded.

It wasn't a... Now, we don't use the word anymore because it's embarrassing people. It's hard to hear. But it was used to describe someone that you could tell was not able to do what someone at that age should be able to do.

We do not want to be a retarded believer. Yes? Now, instead of mentally retarded, the term means intellectually disabled. Disabled, yeah.

Or mentally challenged. For us, we have spent too long talking about the things we cannot do. It's time for us as believers to say, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Because all of us are weak. And that qualifies all of us for His grace to be sufficient and His power to be made perfect where? In our weakness. That's what He has that opportunity when we look to Him to strengthen us on the inside.

We have this treasure in an earthen vessel, Paul said, to show that the all-surpassing power is of God and not us. And this demonstrates, listen, we've already proven who our great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather is. We know He's Adam.

We know He fell. We know that's the reason we do the things wrong. It's time for us to prove now for the rest of our life that we are sons of God.

Amen. And Christ is our brother. And His nature, we have the nature of God because now we are made partakers of the divine nature.

And everything we need for life and godliness has been given to us through the knowledge of Him. And that's where we need to be. But if you're an infant, think with me what an infant does.

Especially a new infant, if you put something in front of an infant, what do they do? They try to grab it. If you put something in front of them, and if they can grab it, what do they want to do with it? It goes straight to the mouth. They have no discernment.

They have no ability to recognize what's dangerous. They just want to grab it and want to pull it to you. If you're a spiritual infant, you don't even know the things you're doing.

You don't know what you're putting in your mouth. You don't know the danger you're reaching out for. You don't want to stay a spiritual infant.

You want to grow and mature in the Lord. So, now, we know this in the scripture. That a believer can stay an infant longer than they should.

How do we know that? Where do we know that from the scripture? You can tell me what scripture clearly says that by this time you ought to be teaching. That's right. Hebrews chapter 5. Let's look at that together.

Hebrews chapter 5 verses 11 through 14. Hebrews 5 11 through 14. And the writer of Hebrews has been talking about Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is a combination of a Hebrew word that's been translated into English. In the Hebrew, it's Melech, the king, and Zithenu, righteousness. The king of righteousness.

But in English, it's Melchizedek. So, he's been talking about that Christ, the ministry of Jesus is like the ministry of Melchizedek without father or mother, without beginning or end. You know, who has his priesthood through the power of an indestructible life.

But he says to the Hebrew believers of whom we have much to say, but it's hard to explain. Why is it hard to explain? Because you are dull of hearing. For although you ought to be teachers by now, that's how I know that someone can stay an infant too long when they should be a teacher.

So we know that. You need what you do need, even though you should be a teacher by now, what you need is you need someone to go back and teach you the basic principles all over again. So there's still hope for someone who's not maturing.

But you have to go back and get the process down, because you are not going to grow automatically. Yes, spiritual growth is a process, but it is not an automatic process. It is not a passive process.

If they process it intentional, it comes from asking, seeking, knocking, searching, hoping, pursuing, and we know these things. The word, the word dull comes from the Greek word nothrust. You know what it sounded like to me? Nothrust.

And that's really what it means. You're not pushing. You're not pushing in to learn.

You're just kind of sitting back when you're comfortable. You stop pressing in to know the Lord. You're not seeking Him with all of your heart.

You're interested, but you're just not all into it. You're nothrust. You dull.

Lackadaisical. Passive. Lazy.

That's pretty close to negligence. It's getting there. You're in danger when you're in that way.

You know how we are usually when our heart is not really in to something? We kind of, we use a term. We say we did it half... That's a good description of this word. Seeking the Lord half hard.

Nothrust. No power. No energy.

Well, that'll never work. Because Jesus described the way the kingdom of God moved forward. Do you remember that? He described the way the kingdom of God advances.

And He used some pretty strong words. Look. Someone read for me.

Matthew 11 verse 12. Brother Rudy, you can. Read Matthew 11, 12.

That's interesting. That's the King James translation there. The kingdom of God suffers violence.

The idea, the regular language is the kingdom of God advances forcefully. Force. And forceful men lay hold of it.

There's another verse similar. Luke 16, 16. Brother Ben, read Luke 16, 16 for us.

Everyone is forcing his way into it. Thrusting themselves. Pressing on.

Remember the woman with the issue of blood? Who had spent all that she had on doctors and she was no better? And yet Jesus was surrounded by a group of people. They said they could barely walk the crowd. And what did she do? She thrust her way through.

She pushed people aside just to touch the hand of God. And she pushed her way into being whole. Into Jesus touching her and healing her.

Power went out from him and it cured her. And these are the words of Jesus himself. Luke 13, 24.

Agonize to enter. Your translation may say strive to enter. But it's the Greek word agonizo.

Agonize to enter the narrow door for many will seek to enter but not prevail in strength. In other words, they'll want to enter. They'll even know that there is an entrance.

They'll make the attempt to enter. But they won't have the thrust to get through. That's a warning.

That's a warning from the Son of God. It has meaning because spiritual growth must be intentional. It's a process but like I said, it's not automatic.

We will mature through intentional effort through discipline, through practice and lack of a positive aggression can easily lead. If you stop moving forward and you slow to stop, what can happen? Especially if you're on a hill. If you're on a hill and you stop moving farther, what can happen? You slide backwards.

What do we call that? Has it ever happened to anybody in here? Oh yeah, it's happened to me. It happens when we stop pressing in to know the Lord. When we stop enjoying Him and our fellowship with Him being sweet and spending time with Him and building ourselves up in our most holy faith.

When we lose that momentum, we can easily begin to slide backwards. Let's go back to this verse in Hebrews chapter 5 again. It's Hebrews 5. We might have the wrong verse up here because I had to.

It's Hebrews 5 verses 12-14. Listen with me. You ought to be teachers.

You need someone to teach you again the principles of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk and not solid food. You see, that's the other way around.

Infants start off on milk and grow up to need solid food. But what's happened here? These believers have lost their thrust and they have begun to slide backwards and now they can only handle the simple things. They can't handle the heavy teaching.

And what is it they can't handle? Look at the following. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness. And what are we to seek first? We're to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

And if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, what happens? All these things will be added to you. So what if you're unskilled in the word of righteousness? You have just compromised yourself. You'll lack many things.

Because the blessing of God is upon the head of the righteous. He watches closely the way of the righteous. He fills the homes of the righteous with blessings.

But if you're an infant, you're unskilled with the word of righteousness. It goes on to say, for he's just an infant, but solid food belongs to those who are, and here's that word again, perfect, mature, complete. That's the mature believer who's grown spiritually.

He can handle the word of righteousness. And how? Solid food is for those who are perfect, who by disciplined practice have trained their senses to discern good and evil. And you know what benefit you immediately begin to reap when you can tell the difference between good and evil? You stop choosing things that harm you.

You stop choosing things that may feel good, but take more from you than they will ever do for you. Because men can be nice, can't they? When they want something from you. And when they get what they want, and I don't think, I don't want to pick on just men.

I'm talking about people in general. Rudy will always get onto me if I always pick on the men and not the women. Any of us with a motive really for ourselves can be nice to those around us.

And how many people genuinely love as Jesus loved? Laying down their lives for others. Having no self-interest in that at all. Now, so this passage that we're in, in Ephesians chapter 4. Let's put this together.

God has given gifts of leadership to the church for the equipping together of God's people for a work of service. So they can come together as a unit working together so that the church can be built up until we all reach unity to faith. And the full knowledge, the own personal knowledge of the Son of God.

And that we become mature, this perfect man attaining to the whole measure of the stature of Christ. That's why God gives the church leaders to help us get to this point where we mature spiritually. But here's what a leader does not do.

God does not give pastors to force people. And I don't think the pastors are supposed to just have an unending supply of baby food. I think some people want the pastor to chew it up, put it in a jar, and hand it out in a spoon.

I mean, you laugh, but are you seeking on your own? Are you chewing on your own? Are you crying out to the Lord for understanding and wisdom? Are you seeking Him? Or do you come here hoping to get it all? This will be your whole week's supply. Get your tank filled on Sunday morning. And if you have a Wednesday, you can refill, you can top it off again.

People do that. They do that. And they suffer for doing that terribly.

Because this is not how it happens. A pastor or church leader, your Sunday school teacher, what they're to do is to instruct you, exhort you, encourage you, inspire you to seek the Lord for yourself. To know the Lord for yourself.

To grow spiritually. To become strong in the Lord. To learn that Jesus Christ is with you every minute of every day, everywhere you are.

In every single situation, the counselor, you have a personal attorney. The very spirit and nature of God to counsel you to do this. Don't speak now.

Don't say that. Personal guidance from God. As you learn, as you grow into that.

That's why church leaders are different. They're supposed to work with you and you so grow up in the Lord that guess what? You no longer need them. I'm supposed to work myself out of a, where your dependence is on the Lord Jesus himself.

I'm not going with you to work. I'm not there with you when you're having that argument. I'm not there with you when you're being tempted, but the Lord Jesus is.

And when you learn to depend upon him and walk in the Holy Spirit, you come into the beginning of maturity. And with the Holy Spirit's help, as you practice keeping in step with the Spirit and following the Holy Spirit, you begin to discern the things that are good and evil. And when you know the very word evil literally means it's bad.

Wouldn't life be a whole lot better if you stopped choosing what's bad? Kind of instant improvement. Wouldn't it be? Didn't Jesus say, I have come that you might have life and have it? And the thief comes to what? Steal, kill, and destroy. How does he come to steal, kill, and destroy? He offers you trinkets.

He baits you like an animal. He uses your natural desires to draw you away to step into his trap. And if you grow in wisdom and understanding and mature, you recognize that's it.

I'm not falling for that. I'm not going there. Because if you walk by the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

You may be aware of them. You may feel the tug, but the Spirit inside in you tells you, don't go there. Don't yield to that.

You can overcome it. You'll find a way of escaping. So, I have a question as I try to wrap this up.

This mature person in Christ. Paul even uses the term, until we all attain it through the measure of the stature of Christ. What does it mean to look like Jesus Christ for us in a practical way? And how do we grow into this stature? What does looking like Jesus mean for us? Does that have to have a meaning? Something that comes to your mind? Let me get you started with this.

Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn of me. And then he uses two words, the same two words that Paul uses in this chapter when he says, I exhort you to walk worthy of the Lord in all blank and blank. Same two words that Jesus says you'll learn when you learn from him.

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart. The first two words in Ephesians chapter four, therefore I the prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk in all lowliness of mind and meekness. So that's one of the things that looking like Jesus Christ will look like.

Lowliness of mind. You know when you're lowliness of mind, you stop arguing because contention comes by pride. And the proud person is an argumentative person always involved in conflicts because that

person really values giving his two cents rather than just keeping your knowledge to yourself.

Realizing you don't know everything. And having the beautiful word meekness, the idea of meekness that you restrain. You don't run at the mouth.

You don't act impulsively. The Holy Spirit acts like a set of reins gently pulling on you. Gently keeping you from sticking your foot in your mouth.

Just something we can learn from Christ. Now, doesn't the New Testament also say that we are actually to walk as Jesus walked? This has to be practical. So how did he walk? How did Jesus walk? Do you think the scripture is saying all of us are supposed to be doing miracles? No, okay.

I don't think so. So how did he walk? Yes, he walked in perfect harmony with his Father. He trusted his Father and he loved his Father and he always did his Father's will.

And he not only did his Father's will, he said, it is my delight to do so. And that is walking like Jesus walked. Trusting our Heavenly Father.

Amen. Loving him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Seeking to do his will and having it be a delight to do so.

Not just a drudgery or a duty. People can tell the difference, right? I mean, my children used to take out the trash. Except for one.

Joseph, we named him Trash Man because no one ever took a can of trash more vigorously with more joy out to the curb when we designated him the Trash Man. He was pretty young but he was so excited about what he was able to do that he didn't yet learn it was something he didn't want to do. And what did Jesus say? Except you become like children.

That innocent joy, that curiosity, constantly asking, are we there yet? What does that mean? What's that? When we lose that, we're not pressing into the Lord. We're not enjoying him like we did. And Jesus would have walked like Jesus.

Speaking of walking like Jesus, did Jesus have to grow spiritually or was he just born with it all together? Was he just born full knowledge? What do you think? What did the Scripture say? He grew up. Oh, he grew up. Now the Scripture says that he was made like us at all points.

So he was an infant. So what... Consider these Scriptures. Luke chapter 2 verse 40.

And the child was growing and becoming strong, being filled with wisdom. Can we imitate Jesus in that? Can we grow and become strong and become filled with wisdom? We can. We certainly can.

Now and the last thing we know about his childhood was when he was 12 years old. And there's a lesson. Remember the story? Remember what happened? He had been traveling with his parents and on the way back, his parents thought he was traveling with some other relative when they realized that Jesus wasn't in the caravan.

Remember what happened? They went back and according to the gospel account, it took them three days to find him. But what can we learn from what they found? Where was he? Where was he? He's in the temple. What was he doing? They said very carefully.

The details matter. Learning at that speed. The first thing it says is he was sitting in the middle of the teachers.

What does that tell you about him? Why would he be sitting in the middle of the teachers? Because he wanted what the teachers had. Now you see I'm looking at my saints here. How bad do you want it? How much do you want it? It's not just about what you know.

It's how bad do you want it? How bad do you want to know? You've got a cell phone. There's a sister in the Lord you know. There's a brother in the Lord you know.

Remember that verse. You have not because you ask not. Everyone you ask everyone he seeks you can tell what Jesus was interested in by where he was at.

He was at the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers. And then what does it say he was doing? He was sitting in the middle of the teachers doing two things. First it says he was listening.

Do you listen? Or are you going another place? Hello? Are you here? Are you hearing? Or just here? There's a difference in being here and being hearing. Big difference. Jesus was listening to every word the teachers were saying.

Because he wanted to know the word of God. And then he did something. He wasn't just content to listen.

What else did it say he was doing? Asking questions. And what does that say? I want to understand. Too many people will sit and listen to a message or have a time of the scripture in the morning but they're not craving understanding.

So they don't ask. It's such a delight to me when anyone from my congregation comes to me and says, hey I got this question. What does this mean? I was reading this verse.

What does this mean? You know what it tells me? They want to know. They're hungry. Blessed are all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

For they shall be filled. And then the last. I close with this.

That illustrates it that I like to drive the nail home. If you're a carpenter, Joe's a carpenter. When you want to make sure that this nail never backs out, you whack it one more time.

You whack it one more time. Hit it again. Just to make sure it's not going anywhere.

Hit it one more time. That's my idea. Spiritual growth is a process.

But it's not automatic. It's not passive. The kingdom of God advances forcefully.

And forceful men lay hold of it. And Jesus actually described this in the importance of how we listen in the parable of the sower. Remember that? The parable of the sower? Four different types.

And each four types of soil represent different ways that people listen. The first way that represented is the some seed fell on the path. The path is where people walk and their feet pack the dirt and make it hard so the seed doesn't penetrate at all.

It falls on top of the soil. There's no penetration. And what did Jesus say happened to that seed? Right.

The birds of the air come along. They see food. They pick it up.

It's gone. The person gets nothing out of it. Didn't affect them at all.

That's the first type of hearing. Second type of hearing is a little different. It's shallow.

The soil is shallow. But it's full of rocks. Rocky soil.

Because if you've ever been a gardener you know you live in a pretty special place if your soil doesn't have rocks. But probably the first person that began to plant an area dealt with some rocks. But the longer you work with an area, the fewer rocks are there.

Why? Because you have plowed them up. So this soil represents someone who's receptive but the process hasn't worked very deep. Because immediately Jesus says they receive the word with joy but they don't have any root.

They're not rooted. And so when trouble or persecution happens, some difficulty because of the word happens, suddenly they're there. They were happy for a while.

They believed for a while then suddenly gone. Quickly fall away. It's just over.

Spiritual progress gone. I see it. Jesus was a master at describing.

I see it. I see people that they're there for a while. They're excited for a while and then suddenly gone.

Nobody. They didn't listen deeply. They were shallow in the way they heard.

And then there's the third soil. Remember the third soil? It says it started off pretty good. My gardens always started off really well.

When I killed my garden, my ground looked just as nice as everyone else's. It wasn't until later in the season that it began to look different because there were things in my soil that I didn't plant that were there already. Now when I plowed those things under, those weeds and those thorns, it gave what I planted a head start and it jumped out and it looked good.

You should have seen my gardens at the start. They were all beautiful. Perfect rows.

There's so much potential. And as long as I told my kids, get out there and keep the weeds down, it stayed that way. But you know, it gets hot and you get busy and the kids aren't as interested.

So what do you think happens over time? Just what Jesus said. The weeds spring up. They're there.

And if they're not dealt with, what do they begin to do? What do you say? What happens? They begin to choke the word. And the word becomes what? What happens to what you planted? It becomes unfruitful. It never matures.

It never achieves perfect. It never fully develops. It never functions like God intended to function.

And a lot of people listen that way. Things in this world, the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires of other things, they clog the heart and they prevent the word of God from having its full dynamic effect of bringing a wonderfully mature spiritual believer. And then I close with this, this last the

last soil.

And it's so important. The last soil Jesus described as a man having a good and noble heart. Now you think that's just a rare exception? You think Jesus was saying only one out of every four people are born with a good and noble heart? You think that's what he meant? No.

Then how does it come about that a person has a good and noble heart? How about this? How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed to thy word. What has happened is, what makes a heart noble and good? Is that heart has begun to be cleansed. Blessed are the pure in heart.

The Greek word is katharizo. Blessed are those whose hearts have been cleansed. Cleansed of the competing influences.

Cleansed of the things that choke the word of God and make it unfruitful. So this person that hears correctly has a good and noble heart. And then what it says, in the good soil these are those by a noble and good heart having heard the word they seize it.

They seize it. They grab it. They lay hold of it like they're never going to.

And how many people lives in that way? Let me give you an example. See if you can seize this. Do everything without murmuring or complaining.

Ever. How many of you have seized that? You've never murmured to them. Never.

Have you seized it? Or you've just kind of thought about it. Hmm. That would be an interesting concept.

But after all, nobody's perfect. Oh really? No, that's not true. The word of God is true and real.

And rare is the person that fully lays hold of it and walks in it. But diamonds are rare. Rubies are rare.

Gold is rare. That's what makes them valuable and special. I'd rather be a rare believer that lays hold of the word of God than a common believer that doesn't make any real difference in the world.

That's what God is. And that is what a pastor or apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, that's why they're there. They're to sit here in this chair and do what I do to you all the time.

Yes, you can do more. Yes, you can grow more. Yes, you can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Yes, you can experience greater grace. Yes, yes, yes. You can.

That's what Paul is calling these Ephesians to in Ephesians chapter 4. And so next week, we'll talk about just the opposite. He will use this idea of growing into the stature and fullness of Christ, and he'll compare it to the way the Gentiles lived. And we'll start there next week.

So you can see the good and the bad, the contrast, because the Gentiles had a way of living that all of us have experienced. But let's, I pray that you'll go back and lay hold of what you heard. You remember what did the cows do? Let's learn a lesson from the cows.

We've been grazing this morning. I hope you've been grazing. I put some hay out there and you've been taking it in.

But is that all the cows do? What do they do after they have filled their belly? Oh, that's right. They cough it back up and they chew on it again. They go over it again.

You know why? Because they don't get all the nutrition from grazing. They get all the nutrition from ruminating, meditating, going over it again and again and again until it breaks down and it gets in their bloodstream and actually strengthens their organ on the inside. When the Word of God is broken down in you, you lay hold of it.

It's done its work in you. You'll find this. You'll become strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.

It'll have its work. Brother, in preparation for next Sunday, talking about the Gentiles, the church is the new Israel. So those in the church are not Gentiles.

Well, we're certainly not to live like the Gentiles. That's for sure. We may be Gentiles in our physical nature, but we are supposed to be the princes of Elohim by our spiritual nature.

The word Israel means Yisra, prince, and El is short for Elohim. Yisrael, princes of Elohim. And that's really how we should live.

Our Heavenly Father is the King of the Universe and we are His sons and His daughters. We'll come back.

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