

The Way to Spiritual Ascendancy 2

by Dana Congdon

Spiritual ascendancy is the process of growing in our spiritual lives, being lifted up by God, and experiencing the heavenly life within.

Duration: 1:13:42

Topics: "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of encountering a woman who questioned his presence as a man of God. He admits feeling caught off guard and ill-equipped to respond. Later, the speaker reflects on the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit and the need for believers to understand its significance. He emphasizes the temporary nature of worldly distractions and urges listeners to recognize the spiritual realities at play, including the presence of angels and demonic forces. The sermon concludes with a reminder that Jesus is closer than we realize and encourages believers to pray for the blind to see the truth of the gospel.

Transcript

It is a precious thing to be together for these days. I thought the message this morning was one of the clearest expositions I've ever heard on the practical matters of sitting positioned in Christ and how the Lord works us and engineers circumstances to make us realize this position we're in and to deal with our flesh and those things that have been ground for the enemy in the past in our lives. I thought that was a wonderful exposition and then Ernie sharing about the Holy Spirit last night as well lends itself and actually is just something I would like to add to this afternoon as we're talking about this matter of spiritual ascendancy and looking at it from the aspect of the subjective experience of the Spirit leading us into the reality, leading us into all truth, as our brother shared last night.

The Spirit of God is now here among us and within us with this purpose to lead us into the truth of our position in Christ and of our spiritual ascendancy. And so we'll just try to touch on that in some matters today that hopefully will add to the things that were shared last night and this morning. To begin with, I'd like us to turn to a portion in the book of Acts that records Paul's ministry to the Ephesians before we actually look at the verses in Ephesians itself.

In Acts chapter 19, we just want to pick up where Paul arrives back at the beginning of his third missionary journey now and arrives in Ephesus and begins ministering there. We'll begin in verse 8. And Paul entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about

the kingdom of God. But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of tyrannous.

This took place for two years so that all who lived in Asia Minor heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. But also some of the Jewish exorcists who went from place to place attempted to name over those who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.

Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, I recognize Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you? And the man in whom was the evil spirit left on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known to all both Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus and fear fell upon them all.

And the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practice magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone.

And they counted up the price of them and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver. The point being, so the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. Verse 23.

Now, about that time, there occurred no small disturbance concerning the way this is where the silversmiths got up in a coalition against these gospel preachers. And just verses 26 and 27, where Demetrius is preaching. Verse 26, you see in here that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people saying that the gods made with hands are no gods.

Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, although he cares little for his money, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis Artemis Artemis be regarded as worthless. That she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned for her magnificence. Now let's turn to a piece and we just want to read in the chapter six and verse 10, Ephesians chapter six, beginning in verse 10.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God so that you'll be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly place.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day. And having done everything to stand firm, stand firm. Therefore, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God with all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the spirit.

And with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints and pray on my behalf that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness, the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains that in proclaiming it, I may speak boldly as I ought to speak. Let's just have a further word of prayer. Lord, we realize that this matter of spiritual descendancy has been given to us as something finished and accomplished by what your son has done.

And father, we come to you today and pray that this will once again be underscored in our hearts. As we look at some of these matters in the book of Ephesians, how we thank you, Lord, that you're teaching us these things. We pray that there'll be fruit in our lives.

Indeed, the realization of our position and a possession of those things that have been freely given to us, help us quicken us by the Holy Spirit. Even this afternoon with tired bodies and minds that have been stuffed to capacity. Oh, grant us the ability to understand and see yet even more in our hearts by a revelation of the Holy Spirit.

We commit this time into your hands, asking that your refreshing would be upon us in Jesus name. Yesterday we tried to emphasize from the letter of Paul to the Colossians that this matter of spiritual descendancy is really predicated upon us being founded upon the word of God and the truth of the word of God regarding the will of God. If we have this as our basis, as our foundation, we will be able to experience spiritual ascendancy.

As our Lord said, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you. This is so important. We not only abide in him, but we let his words richly dwell within us.

This is what makes us fruitful in the body of Christ. That's when we can with wisdom, offer psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, counsel, prayer, and all the things that are necessary in assembled life. It's this matter of having understood by the word of God what Christ has done, where we sit, who we are in him.

But we not only have this precious word of God, but we have the Holy Spirit that makes this word of God real to us and takes us through experience as our brother even shared this morning to make real the things that we understand in our head. It makes them real down in our hearts as he leads us into all truth. And so when you look in the book of Ephesians, just for the starter, let's look in chapter five and verse 18, because we see a wonderful complimentary verse with that, which we read yesterday in Colossians three 16.

It says in Ephesians five, 18, do not get drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but be filled with the spirit, putting it more correct that a Greek, you know, keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God, even the father and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. This matter of being filled with the spirit is found throughout this letter to Ephesians. Obviously, these things understand what this means.

And when we go through this letter, we see that really quite often the Holy Spirit is mentioned in chapter one. If you'll just look in verse 13, we see something that to me lends credence to what our brother shared this morning, that once we are saved, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. He seals us in that position.

And whether we wander out or become full of doubts or whether our soul life is uncrucified and we doubt anything, the fact that it matters, we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. It's a very powerful work. And

chapter two, of course, it mentioned that we are quickened, made alive together.

And we know from the rest of scripture that this quickening is being born again is by the spirit himself who brings us to life. What a mighty, powerful work this is for bringing somebody who is dead and trespasses the sin into new life by the Holy Spirit. It's a tremendously powerful thing.

And then we see in Paul's prayer in chapter one, that he's praying for three things to be seen by the Ephesian believers, that they could see the hope of his calling and the glorious riches of his inheritance in the saints. And third, the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe here again, practically saying that it's the Holy Spirit who quickens us. It's the Holy Spirit that raises us up.

It's the Holy Spirit that enables us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places. These are tremendously powerful things. And then we go on and we see further that in chapter two, as it talks about the two, the Jews and the Gentiles being made one, we find that it is the spirit that gives us this unity.

Now, this is a miracle. Now, I know by several years of being married, it's a miracle that Julie and I are one. And it's a miracle that brothers and sisters can come together and remain one and maintain the unity of the spirit.

This must be some tremendous fusing power that can fuse us together. But this is exactly what the spirit of God does. And then in chapter three, and again, I'm just going over some things that I think we all know.

In the chapter three, during poor Paul's prayer, he prays that we might be strengthened in the inner man by the Holy Spirit. Now, if we're going to stand, if we're going to overcome, if we're going to intercede, if we're going to do spiritual warfare, we've got to be strengthened by the spirit in the inner man so that Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith. This is an absolute necessity if we're to be in a position of spiritual ascendancy.

And then in chapter five, he talks about being filled with the Holy Spirit when you assemble yourselves together. An absolute necessity. The matter of the Holy Spirit being with us as we're together in worship.

And then in chapter six, when we come together for prayer, praying always in the spirit. The spirit is absolutely essential to our learning this life and living this life of spiritual ascendancy. He will lead us into all truth.

And of course, these things that we have read here in both Acts chapter 19 and Ephesians six, which is what I would like to touch on somewhat today. That is the matter of spiritual warfare. In this whole relationship of our spiritual ascendancy.

Our brother shared this morning that part of that spiritual warfare is for us to realize where we really stand. And that can only be tested in the crucible of conflict. And also when we're in spiritual warfare, we find ourselves being humbled because our flesh is always getting in the way.

We're always coming to the Lord, confessing, finding ourselves humbled in the presence of the Lord. And then he lifts us up and shows us his victory. If I had this pick out a book that I think most often shows us the sort of process we go through in this subjective manner of coming into spiritual ascendancy, it would have to be the book of Psalms.

When you read the Psalm, there must be, and I haven't counted, but I'm going to say there has to be 40 Psalms. Let's make it 51 third of the Psalms. Start out with David down on the ground in conflict, enemies around him or personally laid low because of his own sins.

Some way he's been brought low. And then the word of God comes to him. Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul, hope now in God, for you will yet praise him.

And he finds himself being lifted up. And then he finds himself standing with God. And he says, my heart is fixed.

My heart is fixed. You see, he's gone through a process. This is our process, too.

Well, we may be New Testament people, but we find ourselves scraping our chin on the ground because of sin being brought low or the enemies attacked us and blindsided us or our bosses gotten after us or something has happened that brings us low. We say, oh, like David said in Psalm 73, I look around and all the sinners, they're cheating on their income tax and they're hiding their bonuses and they're just doing great. Here I am declaring my bonuses, getting killed by the IRS.

And I'm looking around. Everybody's getting away with murder and I'm trying to do the right thing and I can't even buy groceries. And then I go in the house of God and sniff the fragrance of holiness.

And I realized, what am I talking about? It's better to have little and have the Lord and be content than to be as well in the courts of the wicked where you'll be snuffed out at any moment. How many times did David go through this process? He confesses his foolishness or he asks God, his cries out, God, why are they attacking me? I used to be their friend. They're attacking me.

What's going on? And then somehow God lifts him up further enough up into the heavenly places where he says, ah, but you, I can always trust in you. And then the whole tide turns, you see. Now, isn't that our experience? This is what we go through.

Then the Holy Spirit uses circumstances. The only problem is when we're so dumb and we are so dumb that we think circumstances just haphazardly happen to us. We would go a long way at the beginning of every day if we could simply say this, Lord, I trust you today because I live in you.

I believe I am exactly in the right marriage that you want. I am going to the exact job just tailor made for me and my boss. He is exactly how you have portioned to me.

Oh, now we will start out on the right foot. Instead of woe is me. Where's my resume? Woe is me.

Who is this woman next to me? And so on and so forth. Why? Oh, when the kids grow up, then I can finally be spiritual or all of these sort of things where we think circumstances have been laid upon us and God doesn't know. He's forgotten about us.

Oh, but when we find ourselves in the heavenly places, we find out God has never forgotten about us. He has prescribed these things for us and they are for our sanctification. Therefore, our education.

Sometimes it's for us to finally stand up and say, in Jesus name, I call it quits. The world gets in, slowly steals your soul and like that old frog they put in the frying pan and start heating up the water slow. Until next thing you know, you're on a job where you're making so much money and you can't even enjoy the money because you're working 90 hours a week.

And they got your soul. Well, the Lord even allowed that to happen to you. And if he delivers you, don't jump from the frying pan into the fire.

With another high power job that involves your soul and your right arm. So if we don't learn from these trials we go through, well, then we'll have to repeat it and lap around the wilderness another time. Now this becomes a crucially important as a matter of fact, it can be the life and death of a fellowship.

Understanding the dimensions of spiritual warfare. Because I don't know. It's just who we are.

That when the going gets tough, we blame one another and we wrestle against flesh and blood. Whether it's a family conflict, whether it's a fellowship conflict, we really are stupid enough to think it's the other people. That's the problem.

Oh Lord, deliver us from brother so-and-so and then we'll all be free. And until we realize we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but there are forces behind the scenes that are out to destroy anything that bears a testimony about Jesus redemption, unity and what he can do. We have to become wise in this matter of spiritual warfare in the progress of our spiritual life.

Can I just put it this way? As we mentioned yesterday, this matter of quickening, raising and ascension. Let me just say something like this. When we begin as new Christians, our lives are almost completely outward, aren't they? When I got saved at 20 years old, I was so thankful that he saved me from the sins I committed that I could recount very clearly.

And I was so glad I could say he saved me and he started changing my outward conduct. You know, I was a smoker and a cuss and a wise guy and a liar and slowly but surely God started changing that outward conduct. And I said, man, am I becoming a perfect Christian or what? I was even doing the thing that only monks and nuns did.

I was reading the Bible. And yet my inner life had hardly been touched at all. Yes, I had been quickened, but my whole deliverance was from outward things.

Bad friends, all this is what really being a Christian is all about. Then the Lord touched my inner life, showed me the nature of sin in me. And now I had to be brought to resurrection because that killed me.

When I saw my old man, I got very self-conscious and then I tried to hide the old man. You know, I'd hold my breath when people came around. Maybe they wouldn't know who he is.

I refined, I reformed my old man. You know, I tried to use flowery words, but the same old proud, arrogant, pushy, domineering, whatever, personality guy. And what a process.

Understanding that the cross is our deliverance from the old man and finding that deliverance and that tripping over into that exchange life where you actually sense this life inside. That's resurrection. You've been raised up with Christ, I asked yesterday, have you experienced that? Where you sense there's a heavenly life within.

This is the amazing thing. I'm walking on earth. There's a heavenly life within actually to have a heavenly motive, at least once a month.

I actually care about somebody else more than myself. This is miraculous. That's a heavenly life within.

And now you're living on a new plane, you see. And that's the sort of the second stage in our lives when we realize it's not I, but it's Christ. That's the key.

That's the center. That's the focus of my Christian life. And you start.

But we still haven't come to ascendancy yet. You see, there's still something more that has to happen. The Lord has to deal in our lives yet more and yet more.

And very often we find this matter of spiritual conflict as being one of the ways that he brings us in. Now, we read the passage in Acts because it was only recently in studying this book of Acts that I realized and I sort of saw the flow of Luke's account in the book of Acts. Of course, you realize that Ephesus was the last church that Paul constructed from the ground up, as it were, and that he spent a large amount of time with because shortly after that, he made a little trip up into Greece and everything went back to Jerusalem and was jailed.

Ephesus was his the church that was built with the greatest wisdom in master building. It was, in fact, while he was in Ephesus that he wrote to the Corinthians, I, as a wise master builder, laid the foundation. It can only be Jesus Christ.

And we mentioned yesterday that even Paul in his life is continuing to progress in his clarity regarding spiritual things. And as he comes to Ephesus and the church begins to be built there, he has a wisdom there that has been accumulated through his ministry in the past. And we see a wonderful church being established.

This church. He didn't just work with the Gentiles and say, I kicked the dust off my feet from the Jewish synagogue and work with. No, no.

He took the Jews out of the synagogue that were saved and he brought the Jews and Gentiles together in beautiful oneness. He laid that foundation. He laid such a foundation as he worked three years there in Ephesus that the church had first love.

They loved the Lord at the church had revelation. They saw much deeper, so deep he could write this letter to the Ephesians. Not only that, but during that three years in his wisdom, he had raised up some brothers besides Timothy, other young men in the area, sending them out, bringing them back, sharing with them, working with them as they preach the gospel and lay out to see a higher apple is Colossi and other places.

It was like a work center. There was so much going on there. This was the quintessential church building work.

This was a high watermark of Paul's active building work as an apostle. As I say, after that, he's thrown in jail. And though he visited churches afterwards, this was the last original, we might say, work.

And Paul is a Luke emphasizes this. Luke 19 shows us something. The one thing I want to say that is so clear is how much spiritual conflict is involved in building the church.

It was also while he was in Ephesus and wrote to the Corinthians that he made it clear that even preaching the gospel was a spiritual warfare against the God of this world who blinds the mind, the eyes of the unbelievers. And as he worked there in Ephesus, we saw, as we read in the book of Acts, this this story.

And what was the story? Frankly, it was a story of spiritual conflict after spiritual conflict where he took his stand with the brethren and God gained the victory and a greater response happened.

And the word of God was spread more effectively and the spirit had victory. So what did we see? We saw that many great acts were done as demons were coming out of people. There was spiritual oppression there and evil spirits.

And that can only be dealt with brothers and sisters by being filled with the spirit and under the blood of Jesus. Part of the work of building the church, especially in the area of preaching the gospel, is understanding the spiritual conflict with demonic elements that were being cast out, it says, even by the handkerchiefs that were going from the presence of Paul. And he also had to deal with the spiritual counterfeits of these exorcists who were exercising in the name of Jesus, but without the reality of Jesus.

And he saw that, you know, when you're building the church, there is counterfeit ministry that has to be exposed. And in that exposing fear came upon people because they saw this Jesus doesn't allow people to fool around. And suddenly people started coming, confessing their sins and asking for salvation.

And then those who would practice witchcraft, a whole nother occult dimension of spiritual conflict came into play as people brought their magic books and burned them, bringing forth the ire of all kinds of occult worshipers and practicers and idol makers. And then finally, I believe that this whole matter of Artemis, where they went into the great theater in Ephesus, you know, I said I was with Brother Christian Chen, we went to the theater in Ephesus, where it holds probably 60,000 people. And you can hear without the aid of microphone in the 60,000 people auditorium.

And so we went in there and Brother Christian asked me if I could pretend I was the apostle Paul and get up in the middle of this theater and preach. I shared my testimony, how I turned from false gods and came to Jesus as my savior. I stood there without microphone and there were 5,000 tourists up there.

They all stopped and listened to every word. Well, you know, of course, now in the story in the book of Acts, Paul never got to go into the theater. The Christian friends wouldn't let him go in, but they dragged in the other Christian guys and Demetrius is up there propounding.

Oh, this Paul, what a terrible man. He's bringing people away from sin and into Jesus. It's terrible.

And the worst thing about it is behind Artemis, the great temple of Artemis. Now, I didn't realize this. You know, you need a complicated person like Christian Chen to tell you all these facts.

When we were in Athens, looking at the Parthenon, you've all seen pictures of the Parthenon. The temple to Artemis in Ephesus was four times as large as the Parthenon. It was the largest temple and the seventh wonder of the world in the ancient times.

And this goddess Artemis was not only an idol. She was the principality in power over Asia Minor. And in the process of preaching the gospel in Ephesus, they touched that principality over that whole area.

And that principality yelled. And in the end, chased Paul away. It's interesting in church tradition, by the way, a second century tradition.

It says that John, the apostle, later came to Ephesus, which we know is true. And he went into the temple of Artemis and he says, Jesus Christ is Lord. And the author broken half of Artemis.

Now, whether that's true or not, I can't say these traditions are spectacular and all of these things. But the fact that there was spiritual warfare against Artemis is true. Don't think it's a statue with no power behind it.

People say, oh, what's the problem with having a little idol in the home? The idols of St. Confusion. I've got the idol there. I have it a dangling from my front view mirror.

What's the problem of St. Confusion? It's never the idol. It's the power behind that most people don't even realize. Now, Paul came to see in his building of the church that he preached the gospel and relied on the Holy Spirit.

But he did spiritual warfare there in Ephesus. Now read that account. It's full of spiritual encounter after spiritual encounter and victory after victory.

And every encounter led to a greater victory and more people were saved. That is the nature of church building gospel work. It's an eye opener.

When we see how much we need the power of the Holy Spirit. I'll never forget. It was 1971 and I was down in Times Square as a young pastor at that time of a Baptist church from Long Island.

I snuck into the city. Actually, Brother Ernie also snuck in there with me. And there was a brother named Arthur Blessed, who was an evangelist.

And he was spending the summer preaching the gospel in Times Square. Many people got saved. And I went in there on a number of occasions and joined with him.

I played my guitar and people would sing, you know, and then he preached the gospel. He was an amazing preacher. He was a street preacher, but he was amazing.

He'd catch people's attention. We didn't start the meeting until people came out of the Broadway shows. 1030 at night when the meeting started until 2 a.m. This is when he did it right there.

And now where that tickets place is used to be Duffy Square. So he was there. Well, I'll never forget one night I went in there and Arthur wasn't there.

His assistant was there. Very nice guy. We sang some songs.

This nice guy stood up with the bullhorn to start to preach. He got five minutes into it. And this woman stood up and said, I defy you to say that.

How can you prove that that she started rattling around and talking? And you know what? The man couldn't continue. He said, just pray, brothers and sisters. And she ruined the little gospel meeting.

She was a demon powered woman. Now, at that point, of course, 10 Christians were sick on her, you know, when I do it. What are you talking about? How could you say that? Let the guy alone.

Let him speak. And she's talking and talking and talking. Now, by that time, I'm walking around behind.

I'm curious. And there's a crowd of 40 people in front of her. And she's talking this way.

I'm walking behind her. I'm telling you, this is the truth. I'm just walking by and looking.

And she's talking to somebody and she spins like she spins and says, you man of God, what are you doing here? I tell you, you know, color went out of my face. My heart was down in my shoes. I wish I could say, I said, drop that lady down.

You know, I was so caught off guard and so ill equipped. All I could do was I stood there and stared at her. I stared at her.

I wouldn't let her eyes go off my eyes. And she stopped talking and left. Now I'm not talking about this was no great victory, believe me.

But what it was was a moment of reality. Now I'm driving home a half hour later, my hands are shaking. And the Lord said to me, unless my brothers and sisters know what it means to be filled with the spirit, you might as well pack up your bags and leave from a place like New York City.

If we think we can just walk in on principalities and powers and walk right through without static conflict, stoppages, problems where we're just foolish, this great conflict out there. And it scared me into a humbly asking the Lord, well, forgive me for ever saying I am filled with the spirit. I want to know more of your Holy Spirit.

It's going to take that in these last days for all of us. It's not just New York City. In the last days, we need to know what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

If this is the case, then we as brothers and sisters together, not as lone rangers. Of course, in that day, I was a Baptist pastor, and that means a lone ranger. It was me.

Now I have brothers and sisters, I wouldn't dare go somewhere alone and try to do something against the devil, principalities and powers. But you stand together with the Lord's people who are praying in the spirit. And then the Lord can do something.

Now, there's an interesting aspect to the book of Ephesians. And it has to do with this progress, this progress in Paul's life, where he is seeing more and more the dynamics of the spiritual reality before him. And as a result of it, when he writes this letter to the Ephesians, he has to find a phrase to explain a reality that's become clearer and clearer to him.

How do I explain this reality that I see clearer and clearer? As I'm looking at the unseen, instead of concentrating at the scene, there's this reality, what do we call it? And we find springing forth from his mind, this phrase is called five times in the book of Ephesians, the heavenly. It's the only time it's used in the Bible. But Paul has come to the place where he's realized if we are to know and experience spiritual ascendancy, it all begins with a recognition of this realm called the heavenly.

Now your Bible might have it put in italic afterwards places as my Bible does, but it actually just says the heavenly. And I'd like for us to look at the five places just so you can see it. And in verse three, we see in chapter one that right immediately that part of our great problem as Christians is we not only began with an outward sense of our salvation, but we also have an outward sense of we're almost like Jews expecting financial prosperity because we've become Christians.

And to this, Paul says, blessed be the God father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. Well, where is that? You want to cash in on your spiritual blessing? They're all located in the heavenlies. Well, that's not down at your local bank.

And he's not saying blessed is God who blesses us with every material blessing, every spiritual blessing in this place called the heavenlies. And then we see as he's talking about what happened to Christ in verse 19 of chapter one, the second occurrence of this race. 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, which he brought about in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenlies 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.

We go on and see in chapter three and verse 10 that the church has a testimony in the heavenlies so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies. And then the other one I wanted to touch on is there in verse 12 of chapter six. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies.

Now, I want to attempt to paint a little picture of this heavenly, this heavenly sphere, this spiritual sphere, because it's helped me. I suppose I grew up also with the Greco Roman idea of heaven or with the Babylonian idea of heaven. Up there in the clouds, the celestial city, you can see, you know, one of Walt Disney's castles rising up above the clouds.

And that's where we're all going. Streets of gold up in the heavenlies. Wonderful for me, a feeling of weightlessness.

We're up there forever, sort of going around and having a wonderful time. It's all very celestial. We've learned to breathe thin air and everything is crystal white and wonderful gold and all of this idea of heaven, which, by the way, brothers and sisters, is nowhere in the Bible.

Now, heaven is mentioned many times in the Bible. I think it's 434 in the Old Testament itself. Three quarters of that time, the heavens are describing the sky or the stars.

You know, the heavens declare the glory of God. He means by that the stars and the moon and the sun and all but a quarter of the time that the heavens are mentioned and they're defined if you read it consistently, the heavens. Is where God's throne is now, you might not think that that's anything spectacular, but during the time that the Old Testament was being written.

The mythology of the religions of the world, whether Egyptian or Babylonian, were rich in this whole matter of what heaven was like, including Greek or Roman mythology. Zeus with the big beard. This is how we know who God looks like.

He has a big beard like Zeus and he's up on Mount Olympus because that's where heaven is to the Greeks. And we get the idea that heaven is up on some big mountain. And all of this stuff has been brought into Christianity today that have songs about crossing the river.

Well, that's a Greek mythology, crossing the river Styx. They made it the river Jordan into this sort of promised land and heaven where, you know, there's always a harvest time and all of this kind of stuff. And there's a whole non-Christian understanding of heaven that unfortunately, most Christians really believe.

In the New Testament, half of the time that heaven is mentioned, it's again talking about God's throne. And it's always reticent to describe the details. A quarter of the time it's dealing with the stars.

It's quoting usually from the Old Testament. And then one quarter of the times in the New Testament, three new phrases have arisen that weren't in the Old Testament. Heavenly.

Kingdom of the heavens and the heavenly. Now, without going into too much about what these mean, because actually it varies in meaning a little bit from usage to usage. But heavenly usually means as opposed to earthly.

You have a heavenly calling as opposed to earthly, you see, without much definition to it. But when there is some definition to it, there's three things that are very interesting that these phrases, the kingdom of the heavens. Where does that come from? Matthew, exclusively Matthew, the gospel of Matthew talks about the kingdom of the heavens.

Luke, Mark talked about the kingdom of God only in Matthew, only in Ephesians, the heavenly. And these, these phrases have three things that are in common. Number one, the heavenly and the kingdom of the heavens are speaking of a present spiritual realm.

Where there is spiritual being and even conflict going on right now. Did you notice when we read those definitions of the heavenlies? Of course, I know, I know the first thing you saw there was that Christ is enthroned in the heaven. Now that's where his throne is right now.

He's in this heaven, in this sphere that we can't see, but there it is. And he's on his throne. But did you notice there's also principalities and powers and world rulers of darkness and evil, the strategies of the enemy are coming out of the heavenlies.

Now there's all kinds of talk. We can go into that, the strata, the first heaven, the second heaven, the third heavens, you know, unnecessary. What's important to realize is that this unseen spiritual realm is right now going on in a great sort of conflict.

It's in this spiritual realm where Jesus, our Lord has gained the victory and he sits in throne over all the principalities and powers, but they're still scattering about and their plans and purposes are still coming out of this sphere called the heavenlies. It said there in Ephesians chapter six, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against these principalities and powers of world rulers of darkness in the heavenly. That's where our conflict is.

I don't know if you ever realized that. See, that's where Jesus throne is, but that's also where some spiritual conflict is. There's a lot of spiritual activity going on right there.

That's number one. Number two, the kingdom of the heavens and the phrase, the heavenlies have this second thing in common. The heavenlies.

I don't want to scare you now is in close proximity to the earth. You see, when we think of the heavenlies, we think of Jesus as an example. Think about this.

Jesus was lifted up from their sight and was carried up above the clouds into the heavens. Now, I, I wonder what your view of that is, how far up you think he went? It was he like a missile like they have from Canaveral now and you keep watching him go up and up is seven thousand feet. He's now going up nine.

He went up. We know that the heavenlies are up. It's close to earth, but it's up.

But I would say he went up a hundred yards and vanished because the heavenlies are not there. They're juxtaposed. They're proximate to our physical realm, but it's a spiritual realm.

How close is it? It's so close that sometimes these spiritual forces are exposed on earth. It's so close that sometimes something is trying to be prayed about here on earth is interrupted by spiritual forces like the king over Persia, who interrupted Gabriel from answering Daniel's prayer. There are things going on there unseen to us, but right over our heads, literally right over our heads.

I'm not talking seven miles or just past Proxima Centauri or the third cumulus cloud on the left, or as some evangelicals have posited, you know, directly above the North Pole. It is the black hole there where there's no stars. This is where heaven is.

Heaven is a spiritual realm, but heaven isn't far from here. The heavenly is very proximate to this earth. When Joshua stood ready to take Jericho and wondering what to do, he saw one of the angels just suddenly showed up.

He didn't travel six nights, four days. He showed up. And when you read carefully, the beginning of the book of Judges, you realize that Joshua and the children of Israel won their victories in the conquering of their inheritance because that captain of the host of the Lord's army took the Lord's angelic army ahead of the children of Israel and gained the victory half the time before they even got there.

Now, what do you think happened when they walked around seven times and blew the trumpet and yelled? Is this a sonic phenomenon? Well, it may be, but I think it's probably just a couple of angels squished the wall. And half the time when they faced the foes, the foes were half defeated before the Israelis even raised up a spear because this invisible army had done things to them. So Elisha says, Lord, show that my servant, what's here? You see, he doesn't see the heavenlies.

He's just seeing the earth. What does it mean that we have a heavenly calling? Does it mean we should be no earthly good and heavenly minded? My life is in the clouds. Oh, praise God.

I don't have to worry about money or food anymore. No, a heavenly calling is walked out here on earth. What was the heavenly city that Abraham saw? As it says in Hebrews chapter 11, he saw that heavenly city.

What is that talking about? You think he saw, you know, Disneyland? Oh, I want to go to Disneyland. Oh, he saw a city on earth that had heavenly foundations. Now that I know that's a paradox, but the heavenlies has very much to do with earth.

It isn't another world, a retreating place. It's something that is juxtaposed right over our physical reality and has a very much to do. It was Daniel who always saw so clearly and even said the Nebuchadnezzar as he interpreted one of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams.

Nebuchadnezzar, I'm sorry, but our God is going to discipline you until you see that the heavens do rule in the earth. Now that's the reality. What is the reality? Jesus Christ is Lord upon his throne over this earth.

If we could only see that, and this is so proximate to us. Now I know this is conjecture, but I'm going to say what I think. How close are the heavenlies to us? When Stephen was being stoned, he didn't look up and see 29 miles past the sun, Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

He saw Jesus as far away as he was. How close is Jesus thrown to the earth right now? 200 yards, but unseen. Well, that's number two.

I'm just giving you something to think about because you see this, this area of the heavenlies is very, very close to us, has very, very much to do with how we serve, how we worship, how we pray, how we preach the gospel. It's very present among us. The third thing that these things have in common, which is a very interesting thing, the kingdom of the heavens and this matter of the heavenlies is this.

These, this spiritual sphere is temporary until the final coming of our Lord. What is the kingdom of the heavens? Our Lord is king of the kingdom of the heavens, but his parables in chapter 13 make us know for sure that the enemy still works in the kingdom of the heavens. There's a mystery there.

The enemy has done this. It says when they see the tears among the wheat, how come the enemy is allowed to work in the heavenlies because there's still a conflict going on, but Jesus has won the victory. And when he comes back, he's going to take the heavenlies and bring it down here on earth.

And suddenly we'll see all of these spiritual dynamics. We couldn't see before and we'll see him, especially upon the throne. It'll be a spiritual reality as physical reality.

I'm sorry. It already is a spiritual reality. If we could see it and by the spirit, we can see it.

So the final point I want to say that these things have in common is they're temporary brothers and sisters, these things about Jesus standing in the door and coming on the clouds. He's much closer than you think he is. And the angels as well as demon forces are all around much closer than you think, helping us much more than you realize how often the Lord has sent angels to help us in the time of dire need.

But these are unseen things and largely remain unseen things, except as by the spirit of God. He gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to see what Christ why to see Christ because our whole seeing of the heavenlies, including the seeing of the demonic conflict and including the seeing of angels is keyed in our seeing the son of man. Look at John chapter one in verse 51.

You'll see what I mean. And this very first chapter, as he meets Nathaniel, an extraordinary statement is made by Nathaniel countered by an even greater statement made by our Lord Jesus and chapter one, verse 48. Let's start right there.

Nathaniel said to Jesus, how do you know me? Jesus answered and said, before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathaniel answered and said, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

And Jesus answered and said, because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe you will see greater things than these? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man, son of man. Think about this for a minute. What is this talking about? Nathaniel is Israel.

He is a son of Israel, a son of Jacob. Jacob saw the ladder, God at the top angels going up and down. Jesus says one day when the son of man is exalted, he's going to be the ladder.

He is the ladder and you'll see messages coming down and going up, coming down and going up on the son of man himself, because Jesus is the center of the revelation of the heavenlies. If we see Jesus on his

throne and then the angels come back, it's an open heaven, brothers and sisters. When we see Jesus is on that throne.

How the angels are up and down and up and down and there's no interference when we're under the throne and see the son of man and he says in the family, you're going to see it. You're going to see it. Angels up and down and up and down.

And we as Christians, I'm not, I'm not going to be afraid of this matter of angels because I don't believe in the worship of angels, nor do I believe in getting crazy about angels, nor have I ever seen an angel. My wife, of course, but you know, so what, what, so let's, let's get back to some of you folks say, whoo, this has gone too crazy. All right, listen.

There is the heaven of the heavens, the highest heaven where God's throne is. There is no evil, no evil spirits, nothing up there except the kingdom of God. His throne endures forever in the heaven of the heavens.

There is this earth. We know this earth. We live upon this earth.

There is this intermediate sphere that connects heaven of heavens because Jesus sits at the right hand of the throne of God that is in the heaven of heaven. And it connects earth and enables things to be bound and loose because of what's going on in the heavenlies. If we could see that the battles to be won are in the heavenlies, rather than in the earth, we wouldn't spend our time talking against each other and praying against each other, but we'd see what's going on in the heavenlies and buying those spirits that are causing division in the body of Christ.

It's a matter of seeing that there is this place. And one day, one day we'll all be in heaven. And what is heaven now? Please, I know everybody.

You see, heaven is very controversial. So what I'm saying will probably have to be expunged from this tape. Heaven, I believe when the whole thing is worked out and Jesus is crowned and here on earth and a new heaven and a new earth comes about, heaven is going to be earth glorified, full of God, full of his glory, full of redeemed men.

That's going to be heaven. Don't look for the third cloud on the left. Forget about those stories about people who go up to heaven, knock on St. Peter's door.

No, no. Heaven is going to be to be here on earth with a redeemed, resurrected body before God and his throne, his presence down here with us. That is heaven.

It's very earthly. The heavenly has to do with the earth. He's not interested in building a new planet made out of fluff, but he's going to renew the heavens and the earth.

And you and I are going to enjoy heaven on earth forever. That's what I think heaven is. So don't get too up there about it.

You know, anyway, look at the, see what the Bible says about it. Don't forget the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and sets up right here. Right now it says in the Bible, in the heavens, there's the true tabernacle.

Wait till it gets laid down on Mount Zion. And Jesus is the center of the tabernacle and God is in the midst of her and there's no more night. We're talking about, we can't imagine what the earth will look like in its glorified form.

It's just going to be wonderful. And to be together with you and I thank God you'll be changed by then. Then I can take you and maybe you'll be able to put up with me a little bit too.

So you see this whole matter of the heavenlies for the Christian has everything to do with the Holy Spirit, revealing to us the reality of the heavenlies. And it starts with the throne of Jesus. Don't look into the heavenlies for demons.

It'll scare you to death. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you do begin to see the spiritual conflict behind things going on. It's a very important part point to come to in the Christian life, especially men gathered together in responsibility.

If we can't see things from the heavenly point of view and the spiritual conflict behind the things going on in our fellowship life, then we will not prevail. The enemies got us all how we need to humble ourselves and ask the Lord to show us what's really going on. This should almost be our prayer in all counseling, dear brothers and sisters, as you, as you're more mature and you counsel some new Christians, you should almost always say, Lord, what's really going on here? Because it's seldom what we hear at the at the face value of things, there's so much more going.

Well, I share all these things just to make a few practical applications in the corporate life until the throne room is central to church life. We're not gathering under an open heaven. Is the throne of our Lord Jesus central to church life? Is he really the Lord in the head when we gather together? If we see him seated above all principalities and powers and forces, it releases faith as we gather together.

Now let's think about some of our gatherings. The prayer meeting is the place where God, where our Lord at the head wants to govern the church. It's such a vital meeting, how and in the church life, the Lord wants us in prayer to declare the will of God.

But we can't declare the will of God unless we see the will of God. We cannot see the will of God unless we gain a heavenly point of view. Now, don't again get cloudy and what I mean by heavenly point of view.

Many times it means somebody has found the scripture that explains what's going on. And we can declare the will of God based on the word of God. And suddenly we can bind and loose.

Listen, it says, whatever you bind on earth shall already have been bound in heaven. Now, wouldn't it be a good idea to see that being bound up in heaven and then declared on earth? Wouldn't that be good? It should be our privilege and our portion when we gather together in prayer. It's that important to be praying in the spirit.

If we are before the Lord and under his headship, we will also sense the priority of the burdens that are brought into the prayer meeting. Now, most of us have a shopping list by the time we get to the weekly prayer meeting. We've got 10 things, 12 things.

People were sick. But what is the Lord's priority? What he wants us to pray about that particular night? It may be four things and he'll take care of the rest. It may be one thing or maybe all the things or maybe to pray for one another that night.

You know, this is a living experience when we come together, gathered together in his name, and it's for him to symphonize and organize that prayer meeting in the spirit so that we can bind and loose and take hold and use the keys and do all these things. It all takes a seeing of Jesus upon the throne, of having a heavenly point of view and of having the word of God as the sword of the spirit. So often our prayer meetings are just the opposite.

We don't take hold of anything. We don't really know the priorities and we get lost in the shuffle of things that are going on. You know, I'm so thankful that I know saints from many places.

Now, the brothers and sisters in Queens in New York, they had a little house and they decided to extend it. Praise God, the way they can meet. It's a wonderful thing.

What spiritual conflict they got into, they had no idea. They started building that place and suddenly code violations came up. There was zoning violations that came up.

There was somebody in the neighborhood started a petition to stop the work of the building when it was three quarters of the way through. Then there was the problem of getting a permit. You know what? They learned some spiritual warfare because they had to take this up above the individuals.

It wasn't the woman on the street who got mad because all the cars were parked in front of her house. Although they learned that lesson, but there was spiritual warfare involved in the building of a building. Can you believe it? All they're trying to do is a Jesus is Lord over New York City.

It's a very small matter. Well, they fought and they fought and they fought and their prayer meeting took on a battle room strategies sort of scenario. And the Lord had his way.

The Lord got the victory. And thank God they could rise above that and see this is a conflict in the heavenlies over this building. How do you see? This is so, so important that we see this and that we be seated with Christ in this heavenly place as we're gather around.

And that's why we have to realize often in our prayer meeting, you know, the enemy brings in static heaviness. We're praying, but we're not getting anywhere. What's happened? We've become viscous.

We're slowing down. That woman prayed and almost killed us. And now what's going on? We're going down and down and somebody needs to stand up and say, Jesus is Lord.

We lift this heaviness off of us now. We pray in the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, and then we all become sick, tired.

We have to, you know, I always thank God for whoever shows up at the prayer meeting, because I know they had to overcome something. It's almost guarantee. So thank God.

But then we can't go there and just fall asleep. You've only won half the battle. You got there.

Now you're asleep. Oh, you see. But isn't it wonderful? I tell you, when we have touched the throne and by God's mercy, how many of you been in a prayer meeting where we touched the throne? It's so wonderful.

You go home refreshed. Praise God. I don't know exactly what happened, but we were up there somewhere.

Jesus was there and he knew something was going to happen here. We go home refreshed. So let's be in the heavenly places if we're going to have a prayer meeting.

Okay? Under the throne of Jesus, alive by the Holy Spirit, sensing his burden, not praying everything because we have a list of 26 things. Moving by the Spirit. Oh, he'll take care of everything else.

But we need to find his way in this matter. I mentioned another matter, this matter of gathering and worship. Now, I know that there are such assemblies that gather on Sunday morning, would nary a prayer.

Everybody comes toodling in there. Hi, Myrtle. How you doing? Hey, Fred, how's things going? Tuning up guitar, guitar, piano players.

Nobody prays. They start a meeting. I'm telling you what, you got a 50-50 chance that meeting will go nowhere.

If we see that when we come to worship the Lord and we have the table before us, this table is spread in the presence of our enemy. And if all we do is come and say, as the brothers gather around together before the meeting, we just want to say, Jesus Christ is Lord over us today. Oh, Lord, by your precious blood, cover us and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Push out all distractions and let us live in your presence as we worship you today. That's all it takes. Now, sometimes the brothers get in a meeting beforehand to pray and they pray about everything else, but they don't take hold of the meeting on behalf of all the things in the name of the Lord Jesus.

But this is the ground we need to stand on. And then the ground is clear. And then and then what is this whole matter in Ephesians 5:18 about anyway? Be filled with the spirit.

It's specifically talking about our life in corporate worship. What a wonderful thing when some spirit filled people are among us and they offer songs and hymns and spiritual songs and sing and make melody in their hearts and pray with thanksgiving and their prayers are spirit filled and their worship is spirit filled. And if we all came together full of the Holy Spirit, what a transfiguring worship time we would have together.

But many of us drag in. We haven't even prayed. We're just fighting with the kids.

How we need to be filled with the spirit in order to offer songs and hymns and spiritual songs, be in tune and symphonized by the Holy Spirit when we're gathered in worship. This is such an important time. You know, Paul was very aware of angels.

He's a woman head covering. Don't you realize the angels are watching when we gather? Did you know that? You see, we women, we women. I guess I must say you women.

You see, shouldn't that be our spiritual reality? Oh, the angels are watching. Oh, wow. This is whole matter of covering and submission here.

Very important. Because in Ephesians 3:10, it says that the manifold wisdom of God may be shown through the church. The angels look down, not just the demons.

The angels look down. They all look at that. They're all one.

Look at that. They all love Jesus. Look at that.

They all have the Holy Spirit. Oh, they the angels love to see the church in unity, the body of Christ loving one another. And that's why it's so important that Paul says, I'm sorry, you don't realize it because you don't see the heavenlies.

You're too carnal. But some of you are sick and some of you are taking the cup in an unworthy manner. And some of you don't discern the body at all.

You don't recognize the Lord in his body. And so the Lord's disciplining us. We don't even realize it because the heavenlies is like we don't even know it's there.

We just come into church. We see one another. We think this is a composite of individual human beings.

And it isn't. We're taking a place every time we gather in the Lord's name to break bread and come before his table. We're taking a place in the heavenlies.

If we realized it, that's how close the heavenlies are to earth. You see what I'm saying? We don't have to go off there to reach it. He's right there.

He joins in singing when we sing in the spirit. Think about it. He's much closer than we realize.

But when we when we hold a gospel meeting, how we need to take hold of the Lord before a gospel meeting and say, Lord, we know the God of this world would want the blind, our gospel friends so that they don't see the truth that Jesus is God. Oh, Lord, set their eyes to see that the gospel is proclaimed and realize that there's enemy static going on, even in these gospel friends who would come to a meeting. You know, many times they go through a lot of I don't want to go and the wife is forcing them and all this stuff.

There's great conflict in preaching the gospel just to realize that's all I'm saying. Not to be afraid of it. Jesus Christ is Lord.

I remember one time I was in Manchester. No, that's not right. Some city in England.

I can't remember. And some young people that are at a college there. Oh, Nottingham.

And then the university in Nottingham, they had this big square. And the young people said, well, could you have a gospel meeting here? I said, well, how do you want to do it? Well, we don't know. I said, OK, we got a big square.

That's a good start. Let's go out in the square. There were 25 or 30 of this, like intervarsity or something.

Let's join around in a circle. I got my guitar. Let's start singing some songs.

So we got there. And then I said to them, now, look, before we even sing, let's pray and ask Jesus to circumscribe this whole square with his presence. We started to sing.

People started opening the doors and windows of the dormitory, sticking out the head. They started coming out and joined us. Like, you know, we had a whole bunch of people.

And I had two or three brothers and sisters share the testimony how they got saved. It was a wonderful meeting. People asked about how to accept Jesus.

But we wouldn't. Would you just sit there in enemy territory and start to sing? Let's realize that the Lord can sanctify this ground, as it were, and let his presence be there among us as we do whatever it is the Lord wants us to do. And then finally to say, you know, just to stand for the Lord's purpose is to invite spiritual conflict.

We can do many other things, have a good work going, busy ourselves, feeding the poor, even preaching the gospel. But when we decide to stand for the Lord's purpose and to be a testimony for the Lord, we should not be ignorant, but wise. There will be spiritual conflict, but we prepare.

We know this is a reality. We stay under the blood of Jesus. Oh, we submit ourselves in the presence of God, humble ourselves in the presence of God.

We resist the enemy and God gains the victory. So he has us go where we gather together, humbly gather together in his presence. He gains the victory and we learn who we are in Christ and who he is above us.

The reality of the heavenlies, we no longer look at things just from the earth as if we were against flesh and blood. But we start to see this richer, fuller understanding of our life that victory is found when we touch something in the heavenlies, exactly the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now here is a mystery.

It says in Galatians, now you are dead and your life is hid with Christ and God. Only the Holy Spirit can make that real to us. Isn't that so? He puts us in the middle of kingdom and says, don't pursue things.

Seek first the kingdom of God. He puts us in the middle of busyness and says, turn aside, be devoted to me. Rise early in the morning.

I mean, he tells us the most, it's almost like saying to the man with the withered hand, stretch forth your hand. I mean, it's impossible. Sticks you in the middle of university dome and says, enroll in the school of Christ.

And so on and so forth. I mean, he puts us in this impossible environment. I tell you, brothers, this isn't bragging, but New York's got to be the toughest place.

I know you want to nominate your city. You know, it's impossible to stand up for the Lord except by the strength of his might. Putting him on as our full armor and standing there.

Here we are, these little skinny weaklings wearing his armor, standing in Jesus name and the Lord gives the victory. Let that be our experience. Brothers and sisters, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Lord, we pray not shouting out to a throne that we reckon is a hundred light years away, but we pray under a throne that's nearer than we ever imagined. Oh, Lord, at times you allow us all in your mercy to see something of the heavenly places, to see an angel, to see the conflict, to see our Lord's enthronement.

Oh, how wonderful it is. Help us more and more as we grow in our spiritual life to realize this spiritual sphere called the heavenlies. Help us to realize that you are the king of the heavenlies, that even though the kingdom is not seen with signs and outward observations, there you are in the midst of it.

Oh, Lord, we believe we see you on your throne and we pray that thy kingdom would come and thy will would be done on earth, even as it's been already sealed in heaven. Oh, Lord, we pray, give us these eyes to see by the Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus, the son of man attained to that place of spiritual

ascendancy and all of the messengers up and down and up and down under an open heaven because the son of man stands there for us. Oh, we praise you and thank you and ask that you teach us these lessons as we gather together for prayer or for worship or for gospel meeting or for whatever reason.

Help us to realize the ground where we stand and that we're seated with Christ in the heavenly place. Oh, let this be our portion. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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