

# Ephesians (Part 1)

by Les Wheeldon

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*Les Wheeldon explores the profound themes of the Ephesian letter, emphasizing the importance of personal testimony, love, and sacrifice in the life of the church.*

**Duration:** 1:16:43

**Scripture:** Acts 2:39, Acts 6:7, Acts 8:39, Acts 9:1-5

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging that as humans, we were once children of rock, living in sin and fulfilling our fleshly desires. The speaker emphasizes that the revelation of being a child of God is a gentle one, and that preaching about the wrath of God requires a spirit of utmost love. The speaker also highlights the importance of understanding that the book being discussed is a testimony, not a doctrinal statement. The sermon concludes with a focus on the transformation that occurs when a person finds Christ, as illustrated through the story of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus.

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## Transcript

So it's wonderful to be together again, and just so wonderful just to sit in the presence of the Lord. Somehow the presence of the Lord is just so, there's something surprising catches you in a way, isn't it? Something so unprepared, and I've been really blessed just sitting here tonight. Can I turn you to the Ephesian letter, and I want to spend quite a lot of time this weekend in this letter, in the Ephesian letter.

Actually, having said that, I'm not going to say it out loud. If you like, use it as a springboard in the sense that I want to go tonight really to look more at the author of the letter. You find him there in verse 1 of chapter 1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints throughout Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

I want to look a little tonight at that man. Because this Ephesian letter, I'm sure that many of us who've read it, read it many times will love it, and enjoyed it, and will have been familiar with it. But one of the problems with it is that it can actually sadly lose its wonder simply by familiarity, simply by being read as a kind of doctrinal statement.

There's a lot of doctrine in this, if you like. And when you read it, you can sort of, I sometimes listen to someone read it through in a meeting, they've read through chapter 1, and after they've given a great sign, they thought, oh, isn't it wonderful? And I thought, well, actually, I didn't feel that when you read it. I just

heard the words, it seemed just to bounce off me like a ping-pong ball, just the words.

It can be very wordy. And you read it, you read, sometimes you read it and you can get lost in the fact that it's great long words in this particular chapter. You've got redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, prudence, and all the dispensation.

You've got all these long words in this chapter, predestinated, all kinds of words there. And sometimes you can get lost in how they all fit together. You can get lost halfway through and think, well, I haven't really followed that.

But the important thing to remember as you read through the book is that it is a testimony. It is not a doctrinal statement. It is a statement of testimony.

It is a statement of what he himself experienced. If you look at chapter 2 and look just there for a moment at verse 1, you have, he quickens, who were dead in trespasses and sins. We'll look at that in a moment and see how dead he was.

And you can look through this book and when you find various phrases in it, it does you good to realize he's speaking from experience. It's testimony. Of course, we cannot survive only on testimony, but no matter what we know, unless we have a personal testimony of it, it is dead, useless.

To have a grasp of some of the wonder of that chapter 1, intellectually, would be terrible if it were not based on an experience that you had. Look over again into chapter 5 this time, and this time look at verse 25. Husbands, love your wives.

Well, he wasn't married, so, but this is the point of verse 25. And even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. One of the things I want to come to talk about is the church.

Because I think all of us would agree that what we want is the church to grow. We want a church like this church, Ephesians letter. I think this is perhaps the highest statement of Christian life and of church life.

This document of the Ephesians letter is the highest statement that exists about church life. Of course, when you look at various statements, you can find statements that perhaps surpass it in various ways, and yet as a statement as a whole, the bringing together of truth in the Ephesians letter is so astounding. And I think all of you, we want, we desire a church like this.

If so, you'll be desiring, one of the things you'll desire is that we be perfect. We desire perfection amongst us. Which is possible, not just as a goal after many years.

Perfection is an attainable goal by faith through the Holy Spirit. Everything the Holy Spirit does is perfect. Everything.

Everything he touches has some degree of perfection about it. It may be tainted by man's imperfections along the way, and that's something we have to look at as well. But everything the Holy Ghost does has the mark of perfection about it in some way.

But here's the mark about Paul in verse 25, when he says, As Christ also led the church and gave himself work. And I want us to know, right from the outset, that if we want God to build a church, to spread the gospel, and build churches not only in our locality, but beyond our locality and in other places, if we want the church to grow as Christ wants it to grow, we must give ourselves. You must give yourself.

Christ gave himself to obtain the church. And there can be no church spring up anywhere, there can be no church life functioning as it is here, unless people are willing to give themselves as Christ gave himself. That's verse 25.

In other words, you are called, and I am called, to love each other unto death. In other words, though I cannot prove it to you and you can't prove it to me, we are called to love each other unto death. Of course, that does not mean physical death in the sense in which it would be very rare for people to actually lay their lives down as a sacrifice to each other.

I doubt whether I will be called upon to give my life as a ransom for another person. Maybe some of us have been through various experiences where we have had to do that. And yet, the truth still remains that I must be willing to die for you.

I must be willing to die for the church to come forth. As Christ died for the church to come forth. And that is really the basic condition of everything.

You see, one of the mistakes we make is to think that it is because we have abundance of life that we can impart life. That's a mistake. The abundance of your joy does not mean that through your joy you impart life.

In order to impart life, you must lay your life down. And I have met many people who have rejoiced and gone over the top in rejoicing and really had a wonderful ability to be free in rejoicing in their salvation. And yet, quite obviously, have not laid their life down.

And they have not imparted life. And whatever you feel is the wonder of your own experience, the center of you being able to impart life is that you be willing to lay down your life. You must be willing to die.

And somehow or other, although you could never say it in these words, everybody in the church has got to know that you are willing to die for them. The basis of church life. And it was testimony.

Paul knew it. He knew this was the way that churches are planted. He knew this was the way that the gospel is spread.

Because that's what he lived. It's the way he lived. And as I said, this book is not just a doctrinal statement that he works out sitting in some little safe place, thinking through things in a university where this book is thought to be effective nowadays.

He wrote this book from a prison. Written from Rome and to the Ephesians by Atticus. He dictated it to this man from a prison.

Imprisoned and as you know, probably know, he died. In Rome. And laid down his life for the church.

Now I want to go back and look at the conversion of this man in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 9. Now as I said, we start here because this is really the place from which the book springs. We're going to look at Acts chapter 9. At some point in the weekend we're going to look also at Acts chapter 19. And in this chapter, chapter 19 by the way is this chapter which describes how this Ephesian church came into being.

Now in this chapter 9, you have the description of the conversion of Saul. It comes at a point in the book which is also very interesting. If you look just a few verses before chapter 9, at the end of chapter 8, you find this.

You find verse 27. He arose and went and behold a man of Ethiopia. A man from Africa.

An African man was there in chapter 8. A black man if I can say this. He was there in chapter 8. And then in chapter 9 you have Saul. Who was a Jew.

And then in chapter 10 you have, verse 1, Cornelius. A European. Alright.

Now if you know anything about ancient peoples and tribes in history, you'll know that those three men actually comprise the three sons of Noah. In chapter 8 you've got the Ethiopian unit. You've got Ham.

In chapter 9 with Saul you've got Shem. In chapter 10 with Cornelius you've got Japheth. Alright.

Interesting isn't it? That from these three tribes the whole earth was over spread. And what you find in this Acts of the Apostles is that it's leading through to the conversion of the whole world. Not just the tribe.

Not just the nation. But the whole world. In these three individual men there is symbolized the conversion of the whole world.

In other words the gospel is for everybody. It's a turning point in the book because you know that chapter 10 is particularly significant in that it is the first time that Gentiles were converted. The Ethiopian was some kind of Jew.

Gone up to worship at the feast. But in chapter 10 you have the first conversion of Gentiles. People who were not of the circumcised people.

Believers. And so in this chapter 8, 9 and 10 you have the turning point of the book. In chapter 6 and 7 you have the stone stoning of Stephen.

It was the turning point for the nation of Israel. That though he had received the gospel. Though he had only received the gospel from Christ.

They had received it also for a fairly lengthy period of time from his apostles. And now in chapter 8 it's Samaria. Then this Ethiopian eunuch.

Then Saul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. And then chapter 10 the Gentiles come in. And then you have very soon the first Gentile church.

Isn't it wonderful? That in these three individual men, three conversions. Described in some detail at this point. That God is coming right down to show how the gospel is for all men.

And so we come to this chapter 9. And let's read this verse 1 of chapter 9. And Saul, this is the description of Saul's conversion. And Saul, he walks fleeing out threatenings. And slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.

Whence unto the high priest. And denies of him letters to Damascus. To the synagogue.

That if he found any of this way. The phrase that you find throughout the book. The way is how they describe Christianity.

Christianity was the way. Whether they were men or women. He might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed he came near Damascus. And suddenly there shined round about him. A light from heaven.

And he fell to the earth. And heard a voice saying to him. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said.

Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said. I am Jesus. Whom thou persecutest.

It is hard for thee to kick against the foot. And he trembling and astonished said. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The Lord said to him.

Arise and go into the city. And it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless.

Hearing a voice. But seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth.

And when his eyes were opened he saw no man. But they led him by the hand. And brought him to Damascus.

He was three days without sight. And neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple of Damascus named Ananias.

And to him said the Lord in a vision. Ananias. And he said.

Behold I am here Lord. The Lord said to him. Arise and go into the street which is called straight.

And inquire in the house of Judas. For one called Saul of Tarsus. So behold he prayeth.

And it's seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in. And putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered.

Lord I have heard by many of this man. How much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priests.

To bind all that call on thy name. So the Lord said to him. Go thy way.

For he is a chosen vessel unto me. To bear my name before the Gentiles. Interesting order there.

Before the Gentiles. And kings. And the children of Israel.

For I will show him how great things he must suffer. For my name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house.

And putting his hand on him said. Brother Saul. The Lord, even Jesus that appeared to be in the way.

Has now come and sent me. That you may receive your sight. And be filled with the Holy Ghost.

And immediately there fell from his eyes. As it had been scowled. And he received sight forthwith.

And arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat. He was strengthened.

Then was Saul certain days. With the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue.

That he is the son of God. But all that heard of him were amazed and said. Is not this he that destroyed them who called on his name in Jerusalem.

And came hither for that intent. That he might bring them down to the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength.

And confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus. Proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled.

In fact probably a number of years. The Jews took counsel to kill him. And so it goes on down.

And he goes up to Jerusalem. And so the story continues. The history of this man.

Saul of Tarsus. This wonderful man. We are glad that he was there.

To write this Ephesian letter. And to write about other things. There is his conversion.

This man Saul. Look at verse 1. Saul. Yet grieving out threaten.

And slaughtered. Against the disciples of the Lord. Went unto the high priest.

He breathed murder. It was in his breath. It was in the very spirit.

Because that is what breath means. He breathed. It was the spiritual atmosphere of his life.

It was threatening. And slaughter. When it says he breathed it.

It meant that it was like snorting out of him. He must have snorted and made noise I imagine. One of these men who made a kind of noise as he spoke.

But more than that. It also means that the whole tenor of his life. It wasn't just that he.

He may have been cool. He may have been calm at certain moments. But the whole tenor of his life was threatening.

If you stood in the presence of the apostle. Sorry not the apostle. Of this man.

At this point in his life you would have been threatened. Intimidated. You would have felt immediately that there was something about this man.

That was driving everybody out of his way to fulfill his purposes. He was driven. He was driven by his own will and determination.

Even though that will and determination was to do the will of God. As he understood it. It was his will.

It was his determination. It was his plan. It was his kingdom.

It was his position that he would build him. It was all centered around the fact that he was the one doing it. He was the one serving God.

He was the one as he said in Galatians. He was exceeding valid. Above many my equals.

I was better than many others. If you like he was vying for the position of the best Jew of all. Except he wasn't really a Jew.

He was a child of Benjamin. He was driven with this consuming desire to be the best. And because he was going to be the best.

He was going to drive everybody else out of his way. He was going to destroy anybody. Interesting that everyone of us breathes something.

We don't all snort. I know some of you. I don't know many people who snort and make noises as they talk.

But we all breathe something. We're all breathing. When you sit in the presence of someone.

They breathe upon you of their life. You sense the spirit of them. It doesn't take long before they breathe upon you.

And you feel their spirit. You feel the atmosphere of their presence. They breathe upon you.

He breathed threatening and slaughter. And he believed he was doing the will of God. Until you find him.

He went to the high priest verse 2 and desired him. This is the amazing thing that he desired letters. It wasn't just that he was interested in defending the cause.

He desired these letters. He desired to destroy Christianity. He was in the center of his being.

He desired to go this way. If you look at this man at this point. You would say it's impossible to convert him.

Because he was breathing out the opposite of the gospel. When you look at certain people. You think that it's impossible to convert them.

Because they're breathing the opposite of the gospel. Not just maybe not interested. But actually breathing the very opposite of the gospel.

And desiring letters. He desired. You see this desire of a man.

It's the womb of a man. The century of a man. What a man is going to become.

There was this desire. The whole man's being was consumed with building his own kingdom. Even in the name of God he was building himself.

He desired letters to Damascus. But if he found any of this way. Whether they were men or women.

He might bring them down to Jerusalem. If you look into chapter 8. It tells us in verse 3. As for Saul. He made habit of the church.

Entering into every house. Hailing men and women. Committed them to prison.

He dragged them through the street. Look at the next verse. Therefore.

They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. And the more he persecuted. Somehow the more the gospel increased.

For those three. He exact many women. There was no soft compassion in his heart.

He was determined against anyone who stood in his way. Man or woman. There was no soft heart in this man.

He was going against everyone. Interestingly also. You go back to chapter 9. You look at the first verse.

Isn't he. As I looked at this in my. One of my versions.

I've got this. It says at the beginning. It's but Saul.

It doesn't say and Saul. The actual verse starts with a but. One of those buts in scripture.

One of those buts. But Saul. If you read the previous verses.

You find in verse 39. When they were come. It is in chapter 8. When they were come up out of the water.

The spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. But the eunuchs saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing.

But Philip was found a devotess. And passing through. He preached in all the cities.

Till he came to Caesarea. But Saul. Yet breathing out.

Threatenings and slaughter. Against the disciples of the world. What you've got is this.

In chapter 8. You've got a description of the breath of God. Breathing over the. Over Israel.

And Caesarea. And then you've got an account of the conversion of the Ethiopians. And the wonder of it.

And this Ethiopian went on his way. Full of joy. And Philip was caught up in the spirit.

And was moved of the spirit. And then you find that. Saul didn't even know there was a Holy Ghost.

He didn't even know there was an existence of the Holy Spirit. You find the same thing in chapter 19. He came across disciples.

Who didn't even know there was a Holy Ghost. And you've got this verse 1. But Saul. That this man.

Although he was within an inch of all the movings of God. Was ignorant of it. Although he was persecuting and hounding these people.

Although he was having direct contact. With people who were full of the breath of God. And he was putting them in prison.

Although he was doing all these things. It still says but. But.

It didn't stop him. He didn't direct contact with people. Did not change the fact.

That his life was going on against God. He was directly going against God. And this man was not.

A man who was immoral. He was not a man who was set on doing evil. Or worshipping Satan.

You wouldn't have called him a Satan worshipper. You wouldn't have called him a. A man who was possessed of devils. Because of all his drug addiction.

Or immorality or any of those things. He wouldn't have said any of those things about this man. And yet this man embodied Satan.

He embodied darkness. And one of the things you read in Ephesians. Just go over to Ephesians now.

And look at that verse. In chapter 2. This is a revelation. The book of Ephesians.

Is nearly all statements about things that no one can see with their own eyes. It's all revelations. In other words you might read the book of Ephesians and it might be completely irrelevant.

You might say I've never seen anything like it. I relate to nothing in it. You might not even relate to this.

Paul wouldn't have in his original state. Verse 2. Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world. According to the prince of the power of the air.

The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. He is not describing a spiritual state. He is describing his actual state before he was a Christian.

He is describing the truth that he was in the kingdom of Satan. He was in the kingdom of the devil. Now let me tell you something very plain.

The kingdom of the devil is not something you can understand by working it out on paper. The kingdom of the devil. Not that we want it revealed to us.

You understand what I mean. It is a revelation to understand that it exists. You might say oh haven't you read the today's newspaper about all the things.

That in a sense is an insight into how wicked the world is. But you do realise that even in certain areas of the world where there isn't such a crime rate. It's still the kingdom of darkness.

Exactly the same. It isn't that one is in the kingdom of darkness because he is a drug addict and the other isn't. They are both in the kingdom of the devil.

And you realise, I don't know what you think is the worst bondage. To be bound as an evil spirit or to be bound as Satan. I don't know what you think it will.

We understand we were all bound as Satan. There is a bondage that is, in a sense it's far worse than being bound as a demon. Because it's subtle.

It's so subtle that a man can believe he is serving God. And in all the time he is breathing out threatening and slaughter against who? Against the disciples of the Lord and against Jesus. The whole quality of his life is against God.

And there are people who stand up and even say they are serving God. And all the time, because they have not been translated as it now was. Taken out of the kingdom of Satan and put into the kingdom of God.

Because what never happened to them, they are still in the kingdom of the devil. And if he said that to them, they would be shocked. Unless I don't serve the devil.

But you see the kingdom of Satan is served not because he can make you into an alcoholic. It's because he can make you into a person who serves your own end. If the center of your life is yourself, you're dark.

Not only are you dark, you are darkness. A self-centered life is dark. A Christ-centered life is light.

And if everyone tells you that you're dark, it will only be the understanding of how awful it is that comes by the Holy Ghost. Because I'll tell you this, you will not realize how wicked you are until the Holy Ghost shows you. And the other truth is this, that the Holy Ghost will not show you how wicked you are.

He dare not, unless he's awakened desire in your heart for Jesus. Because the knowledge of how wicked we are without God is more than a man can bear. The horror of living without Christ is an essential one's life.

It's unspeakable. Sometimes people, you know, those people talk to you and they say, well, you know, I'm not really saying how bad I am. You know, I'll say, I know you're not.

I like to say, I think you're far worse than you say you are. Because, not because I've seen them do something, but because I know. I know.

I know that you are far worse than you've ever told anybody. I know that there are thoughts, wishes, plans that are cast through your heart that you would never tell anybody. They are indescribably wicked.

It's only the letting loose of a man to be himself in sin that will make a monster out of each one of us, outside of Christ. The thing that Paul gives in Ephesians, one of the things he gives is a revelation of what sin is. And sin is not only something that's done that is wrong.

It is a spiritual condition of darkness and separation from God. It is this condition that he was in when he was breathing out threats and sorrows. He says later on, he says, Christ Jesus came into the world of faithfulness of whom I am its chief.

He said that not because he was trying to be pious. I thought, well that would be a nice quote for somebody's calendar. You know, someday.

It was because passionately, in his heart, he understood his own nature apart from Christ. It had come to him a revelation that he was indescribably wicked. He was in the kingdom of darkness.

He was darkness. He was not demon possessed. He was linked, joined in some strange mystical way with Satan himself.

This is the revelation of scripture. The revelation of scripture is that sin, all sin, in any form whatsoever, is linked in some awful way with Satan. It's his right, his domain.

This is why the scripture presents to us the great need to flee from sin. It's the great need to repent. The mark of scripture is repentance.

You must repent. You must flee from sin. Sometimes people say, well, I don't know, I think I'm this, I think I'm that.

But the question I like to ask people to clarify is, what about sin? It doesn't matter where you stand in one sense, in a theological sense. That we can leave, because sometimes people are confused about it. But the thing you are not confused about is, what about sin? Are you in sin? Are you disobeying? If you disobey God, then you need to repent and come to be cleansed.

That's simple, isn't it? The theological outworking of every detail about where you are may not be as easy. But this is easy. Are you clean? Are you pure? Or is there sin? If there's sin, repent.

Come for cleansing. That's the revelation. We won't read it.

Let's read the next verse. Verse 3. Ephesians chapter 2. So we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There's this understanding.

We were children of wrath. Revelation. Again, to understand that you're a child of wrath, is a revelation that God deals very gently with.

I'm sure that the reason we don't hear a lot about the wrath of God, well there are many reasons, but one reason is because I believe God will only entrust such a message to someone who has the right spirit to preach it. You can't preach the wrath of God unless you have the spirit of utmost love about you. Or Hamlet.

To tell somebody they're going to hell, and you must sometimes tell them, because they don't realize, but how we need to speak it in the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Not in the spirit of logic and theology. Verse 4. But God.

And I can see in his voice there, this great, but God. And you can think, he would go back now to his own conviction, but God. This is what he says.

But God who is rich in mercy, with great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, has quickened us together with Christ. He said this when we were dead in sin. And he's referring back to his own life now.

Because he understands how he was taking the Christians and dragging them to prison. He was keeping the clothes, the coats of the people who were stoning Stephen and standing there, with all approval. And perhaps he thought back and thought, Oh God, thank you, you didn't smite me dead on the spot.

Because God could have done, if he wasn't rich in mercy. He had the right to. And he did smite a man dead in this Acts of Apostles, he did.

He smote a number of people dead. Our God did. Ananias and Sapphira died in some condition.

Hard to describe what they really died of. But Herod died because an angel smote him. If it had been in the tabloid newspapers, it would have been said, Herod had heart attack.

Herod suffered stroke. Or something of that kind. But the Bible gives the truth.

An angel of God smote him. Remember when you read the newspapers, you're only reading one side of it. That's all you're reading.

Only one side of it. And that's not very much, because they can't see very much. They can only see from their position.

They gather all the information they can. And they select what they tell you. If you were at an event and heard it later reported, you would wonder sometimes if it's the same event.

God alone knows the truth behind world events. When a man is cast down from power, God knows. So this chapter 9, let's go back to chapter 9 then.

But God. But God. He would have thought God could have smitten me dead.

He would have thought God could have crippled me. God could have done anything to me. Because of the awful way I was treating His people.

And here He is fulfilling the desire of the flesh and of the mind. Do you notice? This is actually true in this particular case. He was actually fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

The desires of the flesh and of the mind. Do you notice? The desires of the flesh and of the mind are not all carnal, based in a way that you might think of as being a lord. Some of the things that a man desires in his flesh and in his mind can be quite apparently good causes.

He becomes consumed with them when he's serving Satan. You see, Christ isn't the center of your life. If Christ is not at the heart of all you are, you're dead.

That's the revelation of Scripture. You're dead. You're actually dead.

One could even say you're death. You're breathing death. And so look into this verse 3. Aren't He journeyed? This is now man in motion.

He's going. He hasn't got time. He's moving after His purpose.

He journeyed. He came near Damascus. You can almost see this man reaching out there to go to Damascus.

You can see him driving towards it. Driving towards it. He wouldn't have been one of these men just trotting along on his horse in a quiet way.

He would have been driving, not galloping all the way down the road to Damascus. But he wouldn't have been trotting in a leisurely pace. He was driven.

He was driven. He was fired on his journey. He journeyed for his goal.

And he came near to his goal. He came near Damascus. That's where he wanted to go.

That's where he wanted to dump the Christians out. No reason that he would dare to go to a foreign country, isn't it? No reason he would dare to go. Shines round about him a light, suddenly.

And he fell to the earth. And he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, I persecute his family. You see, at this point, there he is driving along, determined to get to his goal.

And then suddenly there's this light shine. What is the light? What's the light? It's Christ. Suddenly, Christ shone upon him.

Suddenly, there was a revelation to him of Christ. It was Christ that appeared to him. Christ appeared to him on the Damascus road.

Christ just appeared from heaven. And the impact of Christ upon this man's whole personality, and that's where it got to come, upon your whole personality. The impact of Christ on his whole personality was this.

He fell. He felt himself falling. He fell right down to the earth.

I like to think of him with his face down on the earth. He fell to the earth. And his face was down there, pressed in the dust.

He fell to the earth. And you can almost hear the crash, crash as he falls. He fell to the earth.

And perhaps he would have lain there in the dust and sort of waited for the next blow. He would have waited for the next blow that would have smashed him. He would have cowered and wondered, is it my last moment? He would have lain there and thought, oh.

He fell to the earth, but he heard the voice saying, and this is the voice that reached him right deep in his heart, that reached him beyond any light that would have shone in his eyes. This is the voice that said, Thor. Thor.

Why? You see, that word Thor, Thor, if you know anything about this Hebrew, when it doubles the name of it, it just means dear Thor, my beloved Thor, my dearly beloved Thor. My dearly beloved. Oh, it's so inscriptive.

It's my dearly beloved Thor. I love him, my beloved Thor. It would have spoken to him with great love, Thor, whom I love.

It's so often inscriptive when God speaks, Martha, dear Martha. Or many occasions when the name is doubled, it just means my dear, my dear Thor. And he would have heard, he would have seen the power, felt the glory, it float him in his tracks, and he was down there on the ground in the dust.

And there's the voice, my beloved Thor. My beloved Thor. Why? Why are you living like this? You could completely phrase me why I'm persecuted, Sammy, but you could also turn it into your circumstance.

Why do you live in such a model? Why do you live in such a hazy kind of model going from one crisis? Why do you live? What's the reason for your life? What's the reason you are what you are? What's the reason for certain events that have taken place? Why? Only Christ can answer that question. Why do you live like that? Why? And this is the answer he gets. Thor, Thor, why? Why? The answer he said, who are you? There's the reason.

He didn't know Jesus. He didn't know him. The reason a man, a man's life is wrong, let me just use the word wrong, is because he doesn't know Jesus.

That's the reason. I want you to notice this very clearly. The thing that had the greatest impact on the whole life of Thor was this moment when he saw Jesus.

It changed everything. All he did was have a glimpse of glory and to hear the voice of the beloved one. That's all he saw.

And that was the thing that most changed his life. Out of all the things that are yet to happen, and in three days time he'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit, out of everything that was to happen to him, this was the most powerful. He met with Christ.

Now I want to tell you very plainly, the thing that will most change you is an encounter with Christ. If you want God to do something to you, you're missing a step out on the way. You've got to have a face-to-face encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have to bear your heart to Him. You cannot do it in one sense. You can't design an event like this, cause Him to design it.

This is the thing that changes a man, that you can face to face with Christ. However powerful the baptism in the Holy Spirit is, it's an encounter with Christ that changes you. Never forget it.

Remember, always remember, it's Christ who is the key to your life. It's an encounter with Him that will now put your life right. It's an encounter with Him that will now put sanity in your mind.

It's an encounter with Him that will now put everything right that's wrong. What will He say to you? Will He tell you things like the Ephesian letter? No. Because one of the things you find in this encounter is that He didn't give Him any details.

You find this, that Christ is not going to meet you in order to inform you. Christ is going to meet you in order to transform you. In other words, you might be seeking information, what Christ wants to give you is transformation.

How? By Himself. In other words, you're not going to get an explanation from Him, you're just going to get a revelation of Him. Because you see, if I said to you now that I'll give you a long list of things you've got to do, that are subsequent to this, there are a lot of things that have got to happen to Paul in the next few days.

I'll tell you one thing that's got to happen to him. He's actually got to die spiritually. He's already lost a lot of life.

He's already died just by seeing Christ. He's lost an enormous amount in the presence of Christ. Do you know what has happened to him? He's suddenly got lost the favour of a life without Christ.

He's lost all desire to live without Christ. And that is the premise for dying with Him, for being baptised into death, is that you lose all favour to everything else. And you desire only one thing.

You desire sin. Because you see, if I said to you, you must die, you must die to sin, you must die to the world, you must do this, you might think, this is awful, this is terrible. But you see, when, when Phil met with Christ, he lost every ambition without any regret.

He didn't give something up and spend ten years regretting it. He lost it. He lost, he died by seeing Christ before he actually died in the baptism in the Spirit.

The baptism in the Spirit is baptism into the death. But the loss of every desire for this life came to him when he saw Christ. It's this desire thing, you see.

Who are thou, Lord? In one moment of encounter with Christ, every note of his life had changed. Who are thou, Lord? It's this submission, submission, and yet I'm sure there's also this question in the world, who are you? Who are you? And we're looking up and round and wondering, who are you? Speak like this, who? You see, when a man begins the prayer with God, the call is not something you get with an anointing. The call is something you get in the presence of Jesus Christ.

The call is here, all in this verse, when he says, who are you? Your call and your future is all up top in the answer of your being to the person of Christ. Who are you? Who are you? The Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the Prince.

And he trembling, astonished, said for the second time, Lord, what will thou have me to do? You see, in this moment, God had brought him to the point where he desired everything that Jesus wanted. He desired Christ. Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

If you like, it was another step down. You just go, ask then someone, you'll find out. Ask then someone.

You'll get in the same way as everyone gets in. Nothing special. It all happened to you, the same as it does to everyone, Saul.

The men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul rose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did he eat nor drink.

And you see, the mark of this man was that what he found in Christ smote him to the ground, and didn't only just slay him, didn't only just slay him, he denied him, it actually blinded him to the world. He was blind. He couldn't see anything.

Now, you know that when we say, most of us close our eyes, some people don't, entirely up to you, I don't care what you do particularly, but most of us close our eyes when we pray. I tend to, because I'm not looking at God who is visible. If I open them, I might get just as distracted.

I will get distracted. I'll close my eyes, and see with the eyes of faith, not imagination, faith. And you see, this man closed his eyes for three days, he couldn't open them.

He actually couldn't see anything. He was blinded. He was shut up to God for three days.

He was a bit like a man who was put in a coffin, waiting for his burial, if you like. He was there, locked up, dead. He'd lost all appetite for food, he'd lost all appetite for drink.

He fasted for three days, three nights. But this isn't real fasting. He didn't say, somebody didn't come in to him and say, what are you doing, Saul? He said, I'm fasting.

He didn't say I'm fasting. Somebody would have said to him, come on, go eat. And he'd say, no, I can't eat.

Have a drink at least. No. Take it all away from me.

It's your waste away. Go away. Leave me alone.

I want to sort this out with my God. I'm here. Nothing shall move me.

I want the answer from Him. He told me that I would find out. I want the answer.

She goes to call. That's when a man is called. When there's something happened inside him that he can't get away from this questing position.

When a man cannot get away from this position where he's utterly locked up with God. Something happens to a man that locks him into God. It's almost as if the baptism of the Spirit is an inevitable result of this.

When a man has been exposed to Christ, the impact of Christ locks him up to God and takes away his appetite. No one has to say to him, you must, you must, you must. He's lost all appetite.

He's lost everything. He doesn't want anything. He only wants to sit there in a room with his eyes closed and quest and seek.

You know, I'm struck when we pray. I mean, you know, you pray and you think, I'm going to pray for an hour. And sometimes you get to the end of that hour and you've got something else to do perhaps.

But have you ever prayed and not had an end to your prayers? Have you ever prayed and known that you're going to get through on this and you don't know where lies at the end of it? Because that's the only kind of prayer that is real. When there's something about this prayer that's going to take you to a place you don't even know about. This wonderful verse later on, when he says, you look at verse 11, the Lord said to him, Arise, it's unannounced.

This wonderful, despised for unannounced. Arise, go to the street, which is called Strait, inquire in the house of Judas, one called Saul of Tartus, for behold, he is praying. Now, if the Lord said he was praying, he was praying.

Now sometimes you go to a prayer meeting and people go, well they're praying. And you go and you listen and you think, well, I don't think they're praying. Or sometimes you pray for an hour and you think, well Lord, I've not prayed.

Sometimes your life goes on a little curve down and your prayers become just automatic prayers. I advise you to do something then. Shut yourself up to God until you pray.

Until you pray. There'll come a moment when you'll begin to pray again. It would be awful just to pray and not ask you to pray.

And so the Lord said, he is praying. And he hasn't got the Holy Ghost. He didn't know anything.

He, he didn't know. He hadn't been with Jesus. He hadn't been in prayer meetings.

He knew nothing. To be a man of prayer, you don't need to know anything. All you need to have is an encounter with Christ.

Don't you see that the great dynamics of spiritual life are not things that are taught to you. They are things that are imparted to you by the Spirit. They cannot be taught you.

If I could teach you to pray, and how many times have you heard, but the only kind of thing that will ever teach you to pray is exposure to God by the Spirit. Well, go and expose yourself to God. And if you can ever stir to pray, it's because someone exposed God to you.

And if, if you don't actually follow that on and expose yourself to God, that stirring you had will become just a forgetfulness, a memory that's passed. Behold, he's prayer. He's praying.

God can grip the heart of any man and make him a man of prayer. It has nothing to do with age. This can happen to a person who's 18.

It happened to me when I was 20. Actually, when I was 19, it happened to me when I couldn't stop praying and seeking God. Because this was before I received the Holy Ghost.

But once I received the Holy Ghost, it continued and increased because there was an impact on me to pray. It has nothing to do with how old you are. It has to do with the first of your life.

He prays and has seen a vision. And so, let's go down to verse 15. The Lord said to him, Go thy way.

He is a chosen vessel. Have you ever realized that you're a chosen vessel? There'll be moments in your life when you'll realize that you're doing something entirely because God has chosen you for it. Not because you've been one of a group, but because you were chosen to do that even though you didn't realize it.

You were chosen for it. You know, that people are chosen to fulfill a task. You are chosen of God, a chosen vessel to bear my name.

You are chosen to do it. It isn't just that you've got a duty along with all the others who are dragging their feet. You're chosen by the direct personal choice to bear his name before people.

Gentiles, kings, children of Israel. And I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And the knife went his way and entered into the house and he raised no tone about it.

I sometimes think about it. He walked straight in and put his hands on it. He says, Hello, I'm Ananias.

He walked straight in. Maybe he was a bit frightened of what would happen. Maybe he was a bit frightened of what the others would think because they wouldn't have been Christians.

He wanted to get the job done quick. Perhaps, we don't know. Ananias went his way, entered into the house and putting his hand on it, said, In faith, he said, Brother.

What a man this is. This was this man, Ananias. Brother Thorne.

I once preached on this in French and I got mixed up on calls his name Ananias, which is pineapple in French. And I said, that even a little pineapple can pray for a great apostle. But anyway, it's still true.

He might be a little pineapple. There you go. Every less than two, particularly Vicky.

Anyway, so this little pineapple went in. Brother Thorne, the Lord, little disciple, went in and he fulfilled apostolic ministry to the Apostle Thorne. He fulfilled apostolic ministry.

Isn't that amazing that you can fulfill apostolic ministry without being an apostle? Because you can get hung up on apostles. We need apostles. We don't need apostles.

Of course we do, you know. May God give us apostles. But what we need is people who will move in the Holy Ghost.

And the Holy Ghost will give you everything you need to minister to anybody. People will prophesy tonight. I don't know if there is a prophet in the room tonight.

Is there a prophet here? Would you call somebody a prophet because they prophesy? Would you say they're an apostle just because they prayed and ministered to someone like this man did? The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to me in the way as thou camest, hath sent me. He was called that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales.

He received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized. And he was also baptized in the Spirit. Whether that's what that verse refers to or not, we don't know.

He was baptized in water and he was baptized in the Spirit. Why was he baptized in water? Interesting question, isn't it? He was baptized in water because the apostle desired it immediately and because the one who was preaching the gospel to him also desired to obey the Lord Jesus immediately. Immediate obedience to the gospel.

Impressive, isn't it? These scriptures are impressive. Of course they are. Not a lukewarm approach to the whole matter.

If Christ has commanded you to be baptized, if the apostles preached it on the day of Pentecost, arise, be baptized. That's what Ananias said to him. Arise, be baptized.

Later on when Paul preached the gospel and the jailer believed, he took them that same day of the night and baptized him. Why? Obedience consumed them. Is baptism so important? Obedience is of great importance.

Arise, be baptized. Wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. That's what Ananias said to him.

And that's what he did. Why was there no fire to him? Why didn't he say, I find it very difficult to believe that, I haven't heard anything about that, could you give me a booklet on it please? Why didn't he say it? Because he was, something had happened inside him that had changed all his appetite. He'd been transformed in all his spiritual appetite before he received the Holy Ghost.

Do you mean to say then that the man must be transformed before he's transformed? Yes. Do you mean there's two experiences? I don't know how many experiences there are, but there's certainly more than one. What do you mean by more than one experience? The person of Christ is more than just one experience.

He's more. He's more than anyone's ever told you. He's more loving than anyone ever told you.

He's more loving when you live in love. He loves more than you've ever realized. He's more power.

Christ is more. He is. So you've got to be transformed.

Seek God and be transformed. Seek him and be transformed. Then be baptized in the Spirit, that'll be easy.

And then seek God and be transformed some more. And, and, and when you've done that, seek him again and be transformed some more. You realize the Scripture has a wonderful phase that occurs on a number of occasions.

It fills me with wonder when I think of it, from faith to faith. Not into faith that I then keep staggeredly gripping my teeth, but from faith to faith. From glory to glory.

All words of this apostle. Look, look at another verse, which one says, he increased the man's strength, well, it says he took, he ate. The first thing he did was eat.

Quite a normal thing to do, isn't it? Normality. He ate. Probably enjoyed his food.

Probably wondered where he was as he ate. Probably wondered if it was possible to eat. But he ate.

Increased in power, in strength, verse 22. Verse 20, straightway he preached Christ. Straightway.

He preached Christ, that he is the Son of God. Where? In the synagogue. He went straight to the point that mattered for him, and gave testimony.

He went straight to the point where it cost him, and gave testimony of what Christ had done. He immediately risked his life for Christ. Amazing, isn't it? That he immediately gave himself.

Maybe at this point he didn't realise what he was doing. Maybe he never realised what he was doing, because he loved Christ so much. Amen.

Amen. Let's leave it there. Let's pray.

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