

Ephesians (Part 2)

by Les Wheeldon

Les Wheeldon's sermon on Ephesians emphasizes the importance of personal experience and revelation in understanding one's faith and identity in Christ.

Duration: 1:27:39

Scripture: Acts 18:26 - 19:1, Galatians 1:11-12, Galatians 1:15-16

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by referencing a previous discussion and states that they will continue with it in chapter 5. They mention Paul's desire to address a great assembly and how it relates to our own lives. The speaker emphasizes the importance of breaking away from things that dominate our lives in order to have a peaceful heart and home. They highlight a specific incident in chapter 19 where people cried out for two hours, proclaiming the greatness of Ephesus. The speaker also mentions Paul's time in Arabia and his desire to understand what God had done in him. They conclude by mentioning Paul's time in Damascus, where he spent many days growing in strength and confirming the Jews.

Transcript

I was talking about the conference last year, and I said, I noticed you got a jacket that was a size too small. I'll lock that one at home this year. Somebody said, I noticed you always got a handkerchief ready.

Anyway, have it. I apologise for them. We're in Ephesians, and if you could turn to Ephesians chapter 1. Again, this morning I need a little background to the book of Ephesians really.

And I don't want to repeat that this book is not a statement of bland doctrine. It is a statement of experience. And no matter what doctrine we believe, when we actually state them, there must come a point at which we actually realise that they are our experience.

In other words, you must place your doctrine before you, because you have a doctrine, you know everyone has a doctrine of some kind, and you must weigh up your life in the light of it. Either you must repent, or you change your doctrine. And remember that unless we be hypocrites, which is God forbid, every one of us in the end preaches what we experience, in the end.

Which is one reason why the church often does have certain people who propagate, for example, that sin can never be dealt with, and indicate thereby that there's a sin problem that they can't deal with. So we

have to look at this book and remember that it is experience that lies behind it. So I'll point you now to this verse 12, and we'll go and look a little bit again in the Acts of the Apostles.

But if you look at this verse 11, In whom also, in Christ, you have attained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will. We'll come back to that and remember that in a moment, that statement. He works all things after the counsel of his own will.

But we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possessions, unto the praise of his glory. Let's go back then.

And just remind ourselves in Acts chapter 19, just notice before you do, notice the word it says, verse 13, In whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, it is the word there after in this translation, the correct translation is when you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Go back to Acts chapter 19 now, and just look at this, you can see the context of that statement in the experience of the Ephesians. Because in verse 1 it says, it came to pass, Acts chapter 19, verse 1, it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coast, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? That's the correct translation.

They said to him, We haven't so much as heard whether there be any Holy Communion. And he said to them, Unto what then will you baptize? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John, they were baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who should come after him.

That is on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied.

Now there you have the beginnings of the Ephesian church. It says then also, the number of the men was about twelve. Again, similar to the beginning in Acts chapter 2, when there were a hundred and twenty.

Now there are twelve, and number twelve reappears again. Hundred and twenty, twelve apostles, and now twelve men receiving the Holy Ghost. So you see, in this chapter 19 of Acts, what you have at the beginning is an imperfect experience that started the Christian life.

It was imperfect. So much so, that these particular verses cause much consternation and difficulty to interpret what had happened to these men. They were disciples as in verse 1, and yet, somehow, they hadn't received the Holy Ghost, they hadn't even heard about the Holy Ghost, they were baptized with John's baptism, they didn't know very much at all, and yet they were believers.

And then suddenly, they came face to face with this man called. And he immediately said, What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you? If you like, what's different? Have you received, did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed? He immediately comes out with this question, Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed? He senses, without a word being said or conversation, he just senses there's something here that isn't right, obviously. Let's go back a little bit further in this book of Acts, and go on,

and come back to this chapter 19 through the root of the previous page.

Go back to chapter 9, and let's find our Saul. In verse 22, You so increased the moor in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled.

Many days fulfilled. In fact, as I said yesterday, it's probable it's about three years that he spent in Damascus. So there you have the difficulty of Scripture.

That many days can mean more than just a week or two. And it's also at this time that this man, in those verses there, you've got the, After many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel of the church. In that period, you also have his years, or months, we don't know how long it was, but he certainly did experience in Arabia.

It's at this point that he left Damascus, left the disciples, and something was stirring in his heart. He wanted to go out and find out what this was all about. He wanted to discover what had happened to him.

He wanted to know the truth of what God had done in him. Because he didn't know. Now there's an interesting thing for you, that when God actually does say you, you do not know at that point what God has done in you.

The reason is because it's more than you can know. Even now, you do not fully realize what God has done in you by giving you the Holy Ghost. The thing is this, that it isn't that there's a distinct between God's love for some and his love for others.

He has no distinct. He doesn't bless some more than others. He's blessed us all the same.

You find this about the Ephesian letter, one of the things he says, in whom we all, and he speaks, he's raised his eyes up, and you might say, well, he's very tall not to have many places, but he hasn't raised me. But yes he has. But how did Paul know he was raised up to have many places? Because he went out to Arabia and spent a time searching out God and allowing God to show him things that were true in him.

Now, you can only know what God has done in you by God, or by a man who has gone on with God. You can't find out what God has done in you by comparing yourself with anybody else in the world. You will find no reason to help you understand your salvation anywhere except in God.

Even in reading the scriptures, you must realize that there are men who have taken the scriptures and have built up their own systems to explain the scripture, and they've written books, they've made doctrines, they've made theologies. But the thing is this, that unless a man has been taught of God, what he is teaching you is actually of no value in helping you to understand what God has done in you. God must teach you.

And he must teach you by revelation. I'll read this verse in Galatians. Chris told me this morning I wasn't allowed to approach one of the scriptures if I said I was going to preach in Ephesians.

But I will. Anyway. Galatians chapter 1. And if you look there, you'll find this.

Verse 1. You see, Paul, an apostle, not of men, nor of a dying man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. The apostleship of this man did not come from the other eleven apostles. It came directly from God.

The ordination of a man must come from God. It came from God. God made him an apostle.

Look further down. Verse 11. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not from man.

Neither, for now I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And then he mentions this time in Arabia. Verse 15.

When it pleased God to separate me from my mother's womb and call me by His grace, it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I unto Jerusalem, to those who were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus. This is the thing that he said.

I went into Arabia. What took him to it? What did he go to Arabia for? Because he knew that in Arabia he would find no one but God. Therefore, there must be something about your life, a place that you are going to.

You must have an Arabia in your life that you are going to where there is no man going to be there. When you come to a point in your life when you say to yourself, I am not going to ask a man about this, I am going to ask God. I am not going to get this answer from a man, I am going to get this answer from God.

One of the tragedies of certain people is that they have not learned, they have not stirred themselves up to go out of Damascus, the place where they were saved, into a place where there is no one who can teach them to get the answer from God. If I said to you, you must get an answer from God, that would not be immediately clear to you. For example, if you were sick, and you were very sick, and I said to you, you must get an answer from God, you would say, yes I know I must, otherwise I am going to die.

You would know that. But if I said to you, you must get a revelation from God for yourself, that would not be immediately clear to you. But you must.

You must receive understanding and revelation from God. You see the Gospel, according to what it says here, I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. If you have the Gospel in you, it is because you have received something by revelation directly from God.

If you look at your life and can sum up things that are from man, and through man, those things are disqualified from this. You must go to God. The strength of the church lies in the revelation she receives directly from God.

Because only that will mark you out as being different from every other person. Otherwise you will find Christianity will just be a system of belief shared among a certain group of people. We don't want that.

We don't want it. We don't want a system of belief. We want God.

If I was offering you a system of belief this morning, in a way you could choose which suited you best. It wouldn't make a lot of difference. But I am telling you that you can find God for yourself.

You can know him. God will reveal himself to you. According to what Paul prays, he will even give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

To whom? To you. You see, when he went into Arabia, he went out there and the first thing you would have thought of was, what do I do now? There has to be a point when you think, well what do I do now? Where do I go now? It's like a bird you've discovered when Columbus was out looking for America and he was out there in the middle of the ocean. When he was within 10 miles, actually who discovered America by the way? Another person, isn't it? But anyway, let's assume he did for the moment.

He was going out there when he was within 5 miles or maybe a bit further than that, 30 miles of the American coast. He didn't know where he was. He didn't know whether he would meet an island or whether he would meet a continent.

He didn't know what he would meet. But he was going to find out. And that's how Paul was.

He went out into Arabia and he said there's something about this, there's something more to this, if I can use this phrase, more to this than meets the eye. There is something more to this than meets the eye. And so out he went and was taught of God.

You've got to do it. There's got to be a place where you go and you come to the limits of everything everybody's taught you and then you say, where are you Lord? Where are you? Who are you? What are you? You're not asking correct questions anymore. You're asking any questions at all to find out who God is.

You want to know him. You want God. And you find this, that he was, he was, when Paul speaks about the spirit of wisdom and revelation, he was talking about that when he'd been in Arabia, he'd gone there, he'd quietened his heart, he'd let his heart search out and reach out and in doing so he had not been disappointed.

But as he had sought, so God had come to him. And God had shown him something. And what God showed him so fired this man that it made him burn with great zeal for the gospel all his life.

He saw that there was something he had seen. He had seen that what happened to him was indescribable. Even if he said it, it had to come with revelation.

You understand that the gospel must come with revelation. It cannot, it cannot, it cannot profit you unless it be with revelation. The church lives by revelation.

You live by revelation. Most people don't want to know anything that is revealed. They're quite content to live a kind of quiet life.

Because revelations will upset you. Revelations will cause you to be distant. Revelations will cause things to take place that are not very pleasant in some ways.

Let me show you another revelation before we go any further. Look at this one in chapter Ephesians, we go back to Ephesians in Revelation. Chapter 6 verse 12.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principality and power, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the wicked spirit in high places. What you find in the book of Ephesians is that there's a man here who has been somewhere and seen things and he's coming to tell us what they are. And he's basically inviting you and me to go to the same thing.

You cannot sit there and get it. You can only get up and go and get it from God. That's all it is.

You must go. And that's what he says to them, I want you to have this spirit of revelation. Go back into Acts then, we're going on.

This man, in chapter, you know by the way, we said yesterday that Saul was this, the man from Shem, the Semitic. Shem is the word Shem. The origin of the word Semitic is Shem.

The Semitic nation. And I said yesterday that he was the one from Shem. We said that the Ethiopian was the one from Ham.

The Halasic nation. And then we've got Cornelius. Cornelius in chapter 10 is the Japhatic.

And even anthropologists, somebody wasn't quite clear on this yesterday, I didn't make it clear. Even anthropologists divide the world up into three main groups. Hamatic, Semitic and Japhatic.

Linguists do the same thing. In these three men, in chapter 8, chapter 9, chapter 10 you have these three men. I noticed, and I'm quite pleased in some ways by the way the Lord does these things, the gospel was first given to Asians.

Jews, Asians, then Asians who were not Jews. Although in one sense, you could say it was first given, because Samaritans were first in one sense, but before this you got, you know, a kind of Jew really. But before, before you get the great missionary driver Paul, before that God called an African to be saved.

I'm glad about that. I love that. In some ways you could say an African was the first to receive the gospel, outside of Jews and Samaritans.

Samaritans in the way are Asians, and Jews are Asians. So in that sense, the Asians had it first. But after that, the African had it first.

That's very good because in Africa some people say, oh it's a European thing. Which is not true. It was African before it was European.

And it was Asian before it was African. And the Europeans come third or fourth of us, because we are European. But they come later on it.

It's the, it's the, Cornelius is the European. Anyway, we go down now into chapter 11, and they have this great difficulty because, you see, in chapter 11, when they heard that the, the, this Cornelius had received the gospel, they couldn't face it. Because the apostles who, the apostles, including Peter, had great difficulty.

And then you get this verse 22, Then tidings of these things came unto the ears. So, verse 20 of chapter 11. Some of them who were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spoke to the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. So you get the founding of the church of Antioch. The first Gentile church.

Again, an Asian church. Not a European church, Asian. Who when he came and had seen the ghost of God, so, verse 22, tidings of these things came to the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem.

And they sent forth Barnabas. Then you got verse 25, Then departed Barnabas, departed for to seek Saul. Barnabas had seen something about Saul, and now he goes and gets him.

And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch, and he came to pass that a whole zealot ascended themselves with the church and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. He finds then that Paul goes back to Jerusalem after this, and spends a short time in Jerusalem.

He's in Jerusalem in chapter 12, when Peter, Pope John was killed, when Peter was imprisoned. And perhaps it's at this point that Paul began to realize how much the powers and principalities were against the gospel. James was killed, Peter was imprisoned, and you have prayer made without him speaking.

So when you read, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, remember that Paul at this point was in Jerusalem praying with the disciples to hope to be in that famous prayer meeting in that house, and he was praying for the deliverance of Peter. And he wrestled against powers and principalities, and in that chapter 12 you find that the Lord sent his angel and delivered Peter. It's wonderful, isn't it? That little detail there of Paul again.

Chapter 13, you have him again, this time he's sent out, or the missionaries. Separate me, Paul, and Barnabas. You have this in verse two, that they were ministered to the Lord, and fasted the Holy Ghost, that separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the workworms who I have called them.

Separate me. He says in Romans, separated from the gospel. He was separated.

At this point, he was probably in the age of 50, maybe in his late 40s. He was converted when he was 37, 38. He'd been three years in Damascus, sometime in Arabia, seeking God.

Then he'd been over to Tarsus, there he'd been seeking God, and now he was called back. He'd been a year with the church patriarchs, he'd had a visit to Jerusalem, and now he was a missionary at the age of 50. You know, Gapartin went out when he was around that age.

He wasn't a young man. I know a man, Enoch Nelson, anybody heard of Enoch Nelson? How old was he when he went out? He was very old. And other men go out at various ages.

But look, man, Aristotle went out when he was about 50. Amazing, isn't it? God got hold of him. You know, psychologists will tell you little things about people that you can't change after a certain age.

Let me tell you, God can change everything about you. He can change everything. Doesn't matter how you've been over how many years, God can change everything about you.

Everything. Everything. Nothing that has been till now has to go on.

No measure of unbelief has to continue. God can change everything about you. And if you want to know where he will change it, well, one of the places is right where we are now in the Word of God.

We're in a place this morning, by God's grace, if it is the living Word of God, we're in a place where God can change everything. I love to preach because it's opening a door to see people come in to the living Word and be changed. It's like a womb.

It is like a womb where birth takes place. Not just new birth, but the birth of other things, the birth of calling, the giving of gifts, the giving of revelations. Because the man subjects himself entirely to the Word of God,

everything is possible.

And there's a word right back there when Jesus was conceived in the womb, when he himself was conceived in the womb, it says this, when the angel said, nothing shall be impossible with God, do you remember that? The word that the angel said, nothing shall be impossible with God. The actual group says, no word of God shall be void of power. No word of God shall be void of power.

And so, he was sent out and preached. He went out and his preaching as a missionary now, sent out as the Holy Ghost, was quite amazing. If you've ever been a missionary, or consider yourself as a missionary now, or whatever, this man went out, preached, going from place to place where there was no church, and in some of the places he preached at, in all places, churches sprung into being.

Isn't it amazing? And he didn't stay with them, he left them. He didn't stay eight years in one state of Isis, he accomplished, sometimes in one week, we thought it was eight years. But sometimes he went to a place and there was no church left.

And so he moved on. He didn't labour in every ground, he moved on. From place to place, preaching, and where his word was received, he stayed sometimes a week, sometimes a month, sometimes six months, sometimes 18 months, sometimes three years.

Always different. The total of his missionary labours could amount to as little as eight years, ten years, travelling ministry. In between he went home to his church and stayed there, teaching in his home church, Stantioch.

So it's possible that he saw all these churches of the New Testament, that we see, he produced, you know what I mean, he, God produced. It's possible he saw them through eight years of labour. Isn't it amazing? So he goes around, and when he found in chapter 16, he's going on, he's had this trouble in chapter 16, we won't come back much to that, but he'd had trouble with people who hadn't got revelation.

They couldn't see what God was doing. They were moving according to doctrine and precepts. And God was moving on.

You know the amazing thing about the Apostle Paul in chapter 16, in verse 3, this is an amazing verse, you might read it very casually, this verse is amazing, verse 3 of chapter 16, him with Paul, this is Timothy, Paul would have Timothy to go forth with him and circumcise him because of the Jew that he had most courted. He circumcised Timothy there in that verse. Well isn't that amazing, because in chapter 15, he's just fought a great battle to prove that you don't have to be circumcised.

And now he doesn't circumcise him. So you could say that Paul is jealous of the Apostle Paul. Holy boy, boy.

You say if any man be circumcised, it's a prophet in nothing, Christ the prophet in nothing, that's what Paul says in Galatians chapter 5. If any man be circumcised, Christ shall prophet in nothing. And you and I go and circumcise this man after we've been through all this strife. Yes.

I'll stand on my head. I'll do anything. I'll go against anything that anybody says.

If it's not essential to the basic truth of salvation, I'll contradict myself. That's what he was saying. I will believe this and we're not going to do the opposite.

I will not become devoted to my principles and my doctrines in themselves. I am devoted to a person. I'm not serving a gospel that is a doctrine.

I am serving a person who is able to cause me to change in such a way that I can see that certain of the things I preach in certain cases become irrelevant in others. And that certain of the things I think of being so important in one way in another way become absolutely meaningless in other ways, in other places. So that somebody will say, aren't you being a hypocritical? And you can say, well no, I just love everybody.

I just love everybody. Because he had seen something about the church that it was greater than him. Greater than anything that he in his small mind could grasp.

The gospel is greater than you. And unless you receive revelation about the gospel, your gospel will be to you more like a coffin. It needs to be a living thing.

Why? Because it is a living thing. It's a person. The gospel is not a doctrine.

It is a person. And that person has such a generous heart he will bless people in circumstances you wouldn't bless people. That person is willing to open his heart and fall out on faith.

And if you've got all the right doctrines and you haven't got faith, he can't fall out on you. It's the truth. It is actually the truth.

Don't think that you've got it right because you've got it right. You can only have it right because you've got something called faith. And love.

And because you've passed something through called repentance. You've passed through something called repentance. And you've laid aside sin and thought, this man pleaded with people not to accept his doctrine on circumcision.

As Paul said in everything, he pleaded with people to repent. Once they were repentant, they were liquid. They could be poured into the mould.

Not of the mould that Paul gave them, but into God, and God into them. So there you've got it in chapter 16, this man contradicting himself. And so we go now to verse 7, they're changed in this year, and they were said to go into this vineyard, but the Spirit suffered them not.

So verse 6, when they're gone throughout this year in this region of Galatia, and listen to this verse 6, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. Now Asia is not Asia from China to Turkey. Asia is a province of Turkey, on this particular side.

He tried to go, if you like, into Derbyshire. It wasn't a great continent, it was a province. And in that province, the capital of that province was a town called Epithet.

That is the centre of Asia. He tried to go into Asia, tried to go to Epithet, and the Holy Ghost stopped him. Isn't it amazing? You notice that how vital it is again.

Notice that he wasn't all concerned and saying I'm not going to go anywhere until I get revelation. He was gone, and he couldn't. He was in motion, and something stopped him.

Because something stopped him, he then turned somewhere else, and something stopped him again. And he didn't sit down and say well actually I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to go. He moved somewhere else, and then it didn't work again.

Some people will go nowhere because they won't move. Do you realise that you can't, say you're steering a car, and that it's moving. Do you do realise that? Unless you're in a tight corner, then you may have to steer without moving.

But it's no use actually steering a car unless it's moving. You may have to go along with the wheel and have some fun like a child, but you don't have to go anywhere. You've got to move before it's any value steering.

And he moved. He moved here, no. He moved there, no.

But the interesting thing is this, that God says no, I don't want you to preach in Ephesus. I don't want you to preach in Ephesus. Again you realise that the man was not driven by some precept.

He must get the gospel out wherever. Do you know that the gospel could burden someone to the gospel? Do you realise that it could? If you went and spoke to people who were not ready, it could actually have the opposite effect. Which is one reason why saturation of preaching must be done in the hood of God.

In these great campaigns, you must do it. You must do it inspired by God. How awful for the gospel to be seen as something that it isn't.

How awful for it to be preached without the attending power of the Holy Ghost. How awful for hearts to receive it in an unready state. That's what nearly happened with God's doctrine.

And then you find in chapter 18, he himself goes there. Chapter 18, he goes to Ephesus. Verse 19, he came to Ephesus and left Priscilla and Aquila there.

But he himself entered into this synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to carry longer time with them, he consented not. He said, I'm not staying here.

The brethren for all saying, I must by all means keep this beast that comes in Jerusalem. But I will return again to you if God wills. And he sails from Ephesus.

I remind you of that verse we read in Ephesians when it said, according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will. The greatest power in preaching the gospel is obedience. Your obedience to God.

Your obedience takes the gospel with you. Your disobedience shuts the gospel up. Even if you preach it.

Obedience preaches the gospel and is the most powerful thing. And so he says, if God will. That little verse there, if God will.

I'll come back again, if God will. And he left Ephesus. And you could say, well Paul, don't you care about the Ephesians? Why are you going to Jerusalem where they've heard all this for so long? Why not stay with the Ephesians? Because he didn't live and work and move on the level of human logic.

He lived on the level of God's speaking. God's intervening in his life. Now he comes back.

Look at this verse. Let's read in chapter 18 again. Verse 24.

So it is you named Apollos, born of Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. What he knows, I don't know.

But he knew something. And he preached it. And the Bible condemns him for preaching it.

Do you know that you should preach what you know? You don't preach what you don't know, obviously. But you don't also say, I'm not going to say anything until this point. You preach now.

You preach the gospel now. You share the gospel you have, what you know now. Verse 26.

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquinas was still with her, who had been in the prayer of ministry for eighteen months in Corinth, they took him unto them and expanded unto him the way of God more perfectly. What happened to him after that, I don't know. Maybe he was baptized in the spirit.

I don't know. Then he was disposed to pass into a car, where brethren rose, exhorting the disciples to receive him, who when he would come helped them not to a belief through grace. For he mightily convinced the Jews in that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

So there's Apollos, this mighty man of the Scriptures. And so we come to chapter 19. Came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coast, came to Ephesus and finds certain disciples.

Now, they were not a church. Turn to them. You see, God isn't in the process of destroying people.

He's in the process of taking them on. Jewry must be destroyed. Unbelief must be destroyed.

But God will not come to you and write you off. It isn't His way. God takes you exactly where you are.

Here comes Paul and finds these disciples who had had an imperfect experience. And one of the things that you'll find as you go around is that you'll meet dozens, hundreds of people who have had an imperfect experience. They have not heard the preaching of Paul.

They have not heard what he was preaching. They have only heard someone like Apollos who was mighty in Scripture. They've only heard a man who can divide the Scriptures and speak the Scriptures.

All they've heard is somebody astounding the wonders of Scripture. And yet, despite that, they have not heard the Gospel. Because the Gospel is with Revelation.

It doesn't mean to say that they were undressed. It doesn't mean to say that they were unfaithful. We leave that in the hands of God.

And you must, when you hear of groups and people who are not perfect in their understanding, who are not, who are not, when I say perfect, you know what I mean. None of us are perfect in that way. What I mean is they haven't heard of the Holy Ghost.

That's what I'm referring to. When you meet people who haven't heard about the Holy Ghost, don't dismiss them with one stroke of your pen and go whoosh! And dismiss them to regions of hopelessness. Don't do that.

They have not heard and they were ready to hear. Why were they ready to hear? Because they had repented of their sin. They had been baptized with the baptism of John.

And all I know is this, that that baptism of John was a baptism of repentance. They heard that. And because they had been prepared by it, faithfully, they were ready to receive the Apostle.

And that's what happened in verse 2. Have you received, did you receive the Holy Ghost? When you believe. And they said to him, we haven't so much as heard whether there would be any Holy Ghost. We gather, we pray, we do this, but we don't, we don't even know, didn't even know there was a Holy Spirit.

Now I ask you this question. Why didn't they know that? Were Aquila and Thessalonica around? Where were they? Maybe they just didn't have boldness. They just knew that they couldn't unlock things.

Maybe they just, they were aware that this was not something they should touch. All they did was encourage them to go on with the Lord. And they left things as they were.

Interesting, isn't it? That these people were very humble, weren't dogmatic. They were humble and patient in their approach to other people. They met with them, no doubt.

They talked with them. And yet they could not insist on the basis of doctrine that people should go on into things which they were not really able to minister. Whether that was true or not, I leave it to you to decide.

But you find in the Scripture that that is true in certain cases. For example, when Philip went down to Samaria, he preached, demons came out, people were healed, but none of them received the Holy Spirit. They even baptized a man they shouldn't have baptized, named Simon the sorcerer.

They baptized a man who was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, and his heart was twisted and wasn't right with God. That's what the Apostle said. Philip didn't notice.

And baptized him. And had he not, maybe Philip might have made him a decent, because of his zeal. Maybe Philip might have encouraged him to pray for justice.

But the Apostle wouldn't. But here in this chapter 19, you've got the Apostles come, and they are ready. And they say to him, we've never heard about the Holy Ghost.

Isn't that amazing, that you can go through life and never hear about the Holy Ghost. Now that is true about the Holy Spirit, that you can be ignorant of his existence. You can be ignorant of his existence.

Now I'll tell you this, once you receive him, you are conscious of his existence, more than anything else. They didn't know he existed. Why? What was it about the Holy Ghost that was so foreign to them? Well, that's exactly what the Holy Ghost is like.

He is foreign to our hearts. We are strangers and foreigners. Not from the Commonwealth of Israel, and that's what he said in Ephesians.

We are strangers to God. The Holy Ghost is the heart of God. You realize when you say, no, pour out your spirit.

What you are saying is, pour out your heart, Lord. You do realize that. You know, if I said to you, look, I want you to, if you need to blow it off, I want you to pour out your spirit.

If I said to you now, look, are you willing to pour out your heart here in front of this? I'm sure you people have poured out their hearts to you, haven't they? People do. They pour out their hearts. Often when they do, you know what happens at some point in the process, they burst into tears.

You know when people talk to me, I'm sure it's the same with you, when people talk to me, they say, oh, what's wrong with bursting into tears? I don't know if it's the influence I have. Maybe I've never heard this thing or something before. The thing is, in fact, they burst into tears.

Other people, don't worry. Don't get me started. I don't know if it's the influence of everybody.

But a lot of people just burst into tears. And then people say, oh, I hope you don't mind me crying. You know, you give them a bag of cheese and so on.

Don't get me started. But the thing is, it's normal. We all do.

I do. When I pour out my heart to God, I cry. When we say, Lord, pour out your Spirit, we're saying, Lord.

And I don't expect you to pour out your heart here. I don't expect it. I expect you to do it, not only here.

I expect you to go and find a place to do it. Pour out your heart to God, so that God can pour out his heart on you. I expect you to do that.

And sometimes, we do do it publicly, because the Holy Ghost has revealed himself in all his wonder and his preciousness. And so we're moved by him to pour ourselves out. And when we do, he pours himself out.

He can't pour himself out unless you pour yourself out. One must precede the other. You must pour your heart out.

Or God can pour it out. But you see, the thing is, you can be ignorant of the existence of the Holy Ghost. It's like at this moment, I'm ignorant of what dolphins are doing in this sea.

And I can't go and see them unless I go somewhere where I can absorb them through a fish tank. You know, if you've ever been to one of these zoos where you can see penguins underwater and dolphins and you can see it. You can go and see them.

You don't go in the water because you've not got that kind of capacity. You stay outside. And for the rest of your time, you're ignorant of what dolphins are doing.

I'm ignorant. I'm not a fish. Well, I'm not, by the way.

I'm not sure. I'm telling you the truth. I'm not a fish.

And the thing is, unless you are holy, you can't understand the Holy Ghost. Unless you've been made holy inside, you can no more understand God than you can understand a fish. God is as far away from you as the realm and order of every other living thing is from you.

You know you can only understand your own kind. You can only understand your own kind. A man cannot understand a woman.

Is that true? Now, women would say, and a woman can't understand a man. Ah, she's a little lovely. You've got some grounds to come and do this.

You know what I mean? You can't. You can understand certain men, but you can't understand each other, can you? You can only understand your own kind. Even adults forget what it's like to be a child.

Remember sometimes. Take time to remember. They can't project themselves into adults' minds.

You've got to project yourself into their minds sometimes and realize why they do certain things. Be patient. But the thing is, the Holy Ghost is a mystery.

He is not our kind until we are washed and cleansed. Now, let's go down then. Verse 6. They let Paul load his hands on them, and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

I love that verse. They spoke with tongues and prophesied. Not a profound verse, is it? But I love it.

They spoke with tongues and they prophesied. I wonder what they prophesied. Immediately, the gifts of the Spirit were manifest.

Now, do you have to manifest those gifts of the Spirit in order to be baptized in the Spirit? No. That's not a requisite. You don't have to.

But if you have never spoken in tongues, why haven't you? Let me ask you why. I'll tell you why people don't speak in tongues. One reason is that they are so mind-centered that they have no room for anything spontaneous from the Spirit.

And I'll tell you what will help you to become Spirit-centered, not mind-centered. It's to speak in tongues. And the harder it is for you, the more needful it is for you, for your spiritual growth and development.

You need to speak in tongues. And sometimes people say, you can speak in tongues. And I say, I can't.

And they say, you can. I said this to a lady recently. She said, I can't.

I said, you can. And it went on for a little while. And it went on.

And I said, well, you must do it. You just do it. And the next day, with a beam on her face, she said, I did it.

Do you know, another thing that stops you is because you're afraid of feeling a fool. You don't want to make a fool of yourself, do you? That's a good reason. But don't make a fool of themselves, don't they? Well, yes, but you see, there is an element of that that stops people from abandoning themselves.

But don't start a chorus up in case it's on the wrong note. Make a fool of themselves. All these things stop us.

You know what that is, in its proper definition? It's self-esteem and pride. Thank you, you get it. That's right.

It's true, self-esteem and pride. And that's what stops you speaking in tongues. Mind-centeredness, self-esteem and pride.

And you should throw it all away and speak in tongues. I can't. Yes, you can.

You can. I'll feel a fool. Yes, you will.

And it'll do you a lot of good. Maybe it'll bring your estimation of yourself closer to the truth. I don't want anybody to feel that I'm a fool.

Okay, I'll just be a fool on your own. It's terrible. You know, it is terrible to be a preacher.

You make all kinds of guffs and mistakes, don't you? You say things, you go home and you don't feel that I'm saying that right. You do. And then somebody says, you said this, did you really mean that? I don't know, did I really mean that? And you think sometimes, you don't do it.

But you have to go home. If you stop preaching because of all the foolish things you say sometimes, dogmatically, you have to go home. You have to be a fool for Christ's sake.

You have to say what the Holy Spirit gives to you to say. You have to. If not, the church will not be the church.

It will be the responsibility of the church, but it won't be the church. Because the church has life by the Spirit, not by men's minds. Go on, tell me a bit more.

They spoke with tongues and prophesied. I'd love to know what they prophesied, you know. I sometimes wonder what people say and it doesn't say what they said.

You know, there's this verse in Luke, Gospel chapter 7, when it says that they carried this young man out who was dead, and his mother, who was a widow, follows him. And it says that Jesus had compassion and he told her not to fear. And he said, this young man, I say unto thee, arise.

And it says, it's in the scripture, he sat up and started to speak. And I wonder what he said. I wonder what he said, whether it was nonsense or it was, oh, where am I? You know, I don't know what he said.

Maybe it was, maybe he just started speaking from where he left off. I don't know. I don't know.

It doesn't matter. One of those little They prophesied. What did they prophesy? Was it a kind of little prophecy that said, the Lord is love.

The Lord is love. The Lord is love. Was it like that? From the abundance of their hearts, they heard this declaration, God is love.

God is love. Because they wouldn't have been quoting the Bible, you know. Because it wasn't written at that time, that particular part.

God is love. God is love. And then, he says, oh, stop, stop, stop, stop that.

Stop that. They're not, they're not such a very deep prophecy. We're on deep prophecies now, don't you think? You know.

Or it might have been very scriptural. It might have got to be carried away. But that's what happens when the Holy Ghost comes.

People get carried away. Do you want to be carried away? The Holy Ghost wants you to be carried away in a way in which he will reveal to you truth. And that will come.

But he wants you to be carried away. The prophet said on one occasion, if we were beside ourselves, do you think we would be beside ourselves? Have you ever been beside yourself? They spoke with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about 12.

And there the church started. And so, Paul goes into the synagogue and spoke very boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. This man wasn't a chicken, was he? He went into the synagogue and preached and persuaded and disputed.

Can you imagine what it was like with Paul present at the council in Jerusalem? He disputed when, it says, when there was much disputation, I can hear Paul, quoting the scriptures and persuading them of truth and telling them. And I can imagine them sitting there thinking, how do we counteract all this? What do we do with all this? He persuaded them. He didn't sit down and say, the Lord will show them.

He persuaded them. And so verse 10, and this continued by the space of two years, this is now in the school of Turin. Two years he preached that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

And there were about seven churches started in Asia, possibly more, but ten at least, of which the chief one was Ephesus. And the rest I listed for you in Revelation chapter 1 and following. But it says here, God brought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs, the orphans.

And when the needy departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Now that's an amazing gift, isn't it? You see, I've got a handkerchief, you see. I've already mentioned handkerchiefs this morning, haven't I? Don't worry, it has no special powers.

Well, maybe it does, you never know. Anyway, we won't try out. Not yet.

But you see, great power. Remember verse 13, we've got this event. Thirteen of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them who had evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Has anybody ever asked me, have you ever been involved in an exorcism? I will say no. Exorcism is not the business of Christians. Not what people understand by exorcism.

When people speak of exorcism, they're talking about these strange ceremonies to get devils out. We are part of none of that. And if somebody asks you, do you have exorcism in your church? Say no.

Demons are cast out in the name of Jesus. Alright? There's a difference. There's a difference.

Now somebody may say, according to the dictionary there is, I don't care. According to what people think of exorcism, I will have nothing to do with it. Demons are cast out.

You understand? It's a strange, weird thing that people are talking about. This is the power of God. And here you've got these men.

Verse 14. Look at 13. We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preached.

And there were seven sons of one thief, a Jew, and chief of the priests who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know. But who are you? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them.

Though they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and groups also dwelling in the deserts. And Thera fell on them all.

And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. So here you've got this point now. A further point in the history of the church, when this strange event takes place, and evil powers are manifest, probably manifest, definitely manifest before, because it says so.

But now you've got this strange thing happen, when people realize that these people were using authority from a wrong basis. They were beginning to pray for these things from another basis, other than the basis of holiness. And I'll show you this verse now, verse 18.

And many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also who used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men. And they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. So here you have this point, at which there's an eruption of spiritual power again. You've got this again in the church.

That there's something taking place in heavenly places. This is what he says. He's talking about heavenly places in the Ephesian letter.

Heavenly places are being shaken by the church. Why? Well this is one reason, many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds. Something was happening.

People were getting right with God. People were going to get right with God no matter what it cost them. People were going to burn objects, destroy objects, no matter what it cost them.

You find this verse 19, about the books being burned. There was a fire built, and they burned books worth, I don't know what the modern value is, some thousands of pounds, maybe a hundred thousand pounds. The thing is they burnt everything.

What you have at this point is an altar built to God, and they burn everything on it. Everything is burned on it. You realize that when we come to God that we must build an altar and burn everything on it.

You have to burn sin. It must be consumed. It isn't enough just to say, I'm going to leave this thing in my heart, and the evidence of that thing continuing in your home.

You must burn. You must destroy everything that resembles it. If you were a Freemason, it goes without saying, you would burn everything to do with Freemasonry, even if it was in a family heirloom.

If you were a Catholic, you would burn all these idols and smash them and destroy them and all these pictures of Jesus and crucifixes and all these things, all of them. You would cut yourself off from it. If it was records that distorted and corrupted yourself, you would destroy the records.

If it was a fashion that you wore, you would destroy the clothing. It doesn't matter what it is, you would destroy it. And if you didn't, if the church was full of people who did not destroy sin utterly, they would not enter into the heavenly places in Christ, consciously.

You see, to enter into what God has got for us, the possession that God has for us, which is in Ephesians, you can see it all laid out, to enter into the precious possession which we have in Christ, you must destroy

your former life. You must burn it. Everything.

You must burn it. The word in the Old Testament that marks their coming into the Promised Land is this little word, utter destruction. Utter destruction.

God said you shall utterly destroy it. God said you shall utterly destroy it. And then he said that if you don't, I will no longer be with you.

Utter destruction. Let that be the word that is over the response of every man to the gospel. Utter destruction.

You destroy everything. Verse 20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Isn't that a wonderful thing? That in that climate, the word of God grew. How can the word of God grow? Yes, because the word of God is not a book. This is not the word of God.

It is a manifestation of the word of God. It is about the word of God. It is given of God and as such it has no odd in it.

And I can trust myself towards the statements of this book, but the book is not the word. God is the word. The book is about the word.

And the word grows. Can God grow in us? Yes, God can grow in us. The word grew mightily and prevailed.

Does that mean that there was a process of growth until there was perfect victory? Yes! Because something was taking place in Ephesus that was invisible. We don't need to worry what's happening in the invisible places, in one sense, because we don't have to worry what's happening with the piles and principalities in Woodhouse. We'll leave it.

But I tell you this very well. There is a spirit that resists the church in prayer. It resists the church in every way possible.

It seeks to depress us. It seeks to resist us. It seeks to discourage us.

It seeks to divide us. It is seeking by all means to resist the work of God here. And not just one spirit, many spirits.

Spirits working in families. Spirits working in ethnic groups, whether they're English, Asian, Irish, or whatever they are. Spirits working in religious groups, whether it's Catholic, or whatever, or other religions, you know, whatever.

Whether it's spirits working through families. Spirits working through regions. We don't know what they are.

We don't have to worry what they are. All we need to know is this, that you have broken with them. You have broken every tie that binds you to your tradition.

We'll have to come back to this and look at it in greater detail. But for man to be part of the church of Jesus Christ is this. A man must leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife.

That's what Ephesians says, isn't it? You cannot be married unless you leave your father's house. Do you know what spoils a marriage? It's a joke, isn't it? Mother-in-law spoils a marriage, doesn't she? It's a joke, isn't it? We laugh at it. It can be father-in-law spoiling the marriage.

But you know why? It's because the break has never taken place. Because the child has never said to the mother, stop it mother, this is my home, not yours. Leave it honestly.

It's not only leave it, I don't mean physically get out, but you may have to in some cases. Because it is not the right of anyone to come into that home, but there is a new head for that house. Do you understand? The church does not, the church is the home, the house of Jesus Christ.

And he says to every in-law, keep out. It's mine. And if you will not break with your tradition, what's your tradition? I'll tell you one tradition.

The mother England. Mother England, the motherland, or the fatherland, whatever you like to call it. My motherland.

We want Britain to go ahead. We're ambitious for our company, for our country, for our business. We're ambitious, we want the best.

It is. We want this to succeed. You bring that into the church, and you do if it's in your heart, and the church will not work, the home will not have peace.

Your heart will have no fire. You have not broken with father and mother. There's interference in your life.

And because you will not break with it, because your career is dominating you in your life, you will not break with it, therefore you will not have a peaceful home in your heart. They broke with it. They lost everything and were joined to Jesus Christ.

Do you see those steps that you go through in that chapter? The final thing in that chapter, if you go on down the chapter, you get this, look at, let's just read one verse about it. Verse 44. When they knew that he was a Jew, all but one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of Ephesians! Great is Diana of Ephesians! Now, have you ever heard people shout out for two hours something like that? Well, they're good at football games, aren't they? It shows you how you can get into people's blood.

I don't know, is it heading perhaps so much? I don't know. Sorry? Oh, I don't know. All right.

What's that? I don't know. I'm learning to cricket. I don't want to downplay from that.

But the thing is, they were gathered up by this spirit and cried out for two hours, Great is Diana of Ephesians! Great is Diana of Ephesians! For two hours. And there was a riot in the town. You know that when the church gets into the powers and principalities, not in the sense that we're interested in them, I don't want anyone to become interested in powers and principalities, but when you actually go on with God, the church becomes a threat to the powers.

And what you get, and this is something that really I know a little about, I know a little about, but not very much, but all I know is that there come stages when everything begins to turn in church life. Church life is not a static thing, growing in a little graph. It's a life that goes through the stages which are revolutionary.

And it can happen in a church life that suddenly there comes such a power and authority to the midst that powers are shaken. And you know what that means, don't you? It calls forth a reaction. Violence.

Physical violence against the church. You know, in countries where the gospel was preached, that when it was taken into places where the gospel had not been preached before, often, you know what you get, if you read something like that book by Gerald Fraser, read about his experiences there, when he preached, many of those who were converted, if you read it, it's true, became sick and some died. Some went mad.

They weren't born again. But as soon as he started to preach, reactions set in. You find, you read a little book on the power of prayer.

You read Gerald Fraser's book on the power of prayer. You look at what happened in the churches to be formed there. You look at what happens when a door is opened for souls to be saved.

I remember when, you probably know it, in Cameroon when we went there, that very soon a young man, within the first 18 months, one of the young believers was killed in an accident, along with three others, from three different churches. And there was this great backlash against the church. They threw stones.

There was a riot on one occasion. They tried. There was a meeting in the town council to drive us out of town.

And there was a man, a new man was brought in. They transferred the leaders of the council. There was a man who was transferred to the town a few months before the thought took place a reasonable, calm man like this Tom Clarke who stood up and said that we were representatives of Christianity and were to be left in peace.

It didn't change people's attitude to it, but it started with being cast out of the town. It's amazing, isn't it? That when you actually go... For the church to go on, you've got to wrestle. You don't have to worry about that side of things.

That will happen God knows when and how those things happen. But the thing is this. The church must go on.

And remember what I said. We started off by saying this yesterday and I'll finish with it today. Go back into Ephesians.

We'll finish with it here. Ephesians chapter 5. You notice in that chapter 19 by the way that Paul was wanting to go into that great assembly. He'd rather go in and talk to them.

Would you? I remember standing in front of all these people. It's amazing when it happens to you. When I was standing in front of all these people and they got sticks and stones and I don't know what they got.

And you stood there in front of all these people and you thought, I don't know what I'm talking about. But you could put a little spark and they'd go for you. Amazing isn't it? God has spoken to the father of the young man who died and told him, don't harm them.

He was a former terrorist. A former terrorist in the 60's and 70's. He was a terrorist and had been in prison for terrorism.

God said to him, don't harm them. And you know the interesting thing is that man is now in a church. I told you that.

He went out to find out the truth. He believed. And he's now in a church.

It's wonderful isn't it? God's way. So anyway. For when he risked his life.

Now in chapter 5 of Ephesians, you've got this. Verse 25. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

You see, Paul was reckless with his life, wasn't he? Wasn't he reckless? He wasn't just foolish about speaking in tongues. He loved speaking in tongues more than you all. He made some gasp in preaching, didn't he? I understand that.

He wasn't afraid of what people would say. He knew that he was laying himself bare to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. He wasn't bothered.

He was just determined to expose all the truth that God had put in him. He was reckless not just in speaking in tongues. This is recklessness in love.

In willing to lay his life down. He was willing to lay his life down. I think he thinks that the church can only go on if you'll be willing to give your life.

I said it yesterday. It's the truth. Your great joy is not enough to impart life.

You can't give anybody life because you've got joy. You can only give life because you're willing to lay it down. And the church will only grow because people are willing to lay their lives down.

Then you'll find that people aren't willing to. You'll find that the smallest of a thing, they'll build up a wall against somebody and hold them at arm's length for a year and a day before they eventually come round to the realisation that they shouldn't. Lay your life down for your brother.

Go and confess your sin to him because you've held him at arm's length. Make sure that you never do anything in the church from frustration. Everything in the church must be done because you've laid your life down and you're not fighting for yourself.

Remember what it says. It'll expediently one man perish. Why shouldn't you be that one man? You should perish.

It isn't fair, is it? But it's absolutely right. Perish! Lay your life down. Let the church go on in power.

Amen. That's a prayer for me.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/1/SID1848.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/les-wheeldon/ephesians-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net