

The Equipping of the Saints

by Major Ian Thomas

The purpose of the meetings is to equip the saints to do the work of ministry and build up Christ's body, the church, by understanding the gospel, the work of an evangelist, and the doctrine of man.

Duration: 52:02

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Matthew 6:33, John 16:13, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 22:13

Topics: "Equipping"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the passage from Ephesians 4:11-12, discussing the purpose of the different roles within the church. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the full counsel of God's Word in order to avoid becoming unbalanced or eccentric in our beliefs. The central theme of the sermon is Christ, who is the beginning and the end, the source and sustenance of our faith. The speaker also highlights the significance of the human spirit, which has the capacity to receive and enjoy the life of God Himself.

Transcript

Fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. I shall be reading from the Amplified New Testament, where I deviate from King James's version. From time to time it will be to the Amplified New Testament.

Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 11. And his gifts were varied. He himself appointed and gave men to us.

Some to be apostles, special messengers. Some prophets, inspired preachers and expounders. Some evangelists, preachers of the gospel, traveling missionaries.

Some pastors, shepherds of his flock, and teachers. His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints that they should do the work of ministry toward building up Christ's body, the church. That it might develop until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God.

That we might arrive at really mature manhood. The completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection. The measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in him.

So then we may no longer be children tossed like ships to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine. The prey of the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, gamblers engaged in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead. Rather let our lives lovingly express truth in all things.

Speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly, enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things into him who is the head, even Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. For from him, the whole body, the church in all its various parts, closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied. When each part with power adapted to its need, is working properly in all its functions, grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.

God always adds his blessing to the reading of his own precious word. Thank you very much. I say again how deeply I appreciate the warm hospitality of Mr. Burrow and the officers and members of this church.

I am sure that during these days that we shall spend together, we shall make many wonderful discoveries. I may be permitted to take these few moments just to explain the purpose of these meetings. In the passage of scripture that I read to you from the fourth chapter of the epistle to Ephesians, you may have noticed a rather strange thing.

It does not appear just so lucidly in King James's version. Just let me read you the relevant passage, Ephesians 4, from King James. He gave some apostles and some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Now, the actual sense doesn't really stand out in the way that it's given to you there. Perhaps if you remove one of the commas, it would help. For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.

No comma. For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. And it was to this end that God gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, preachers of the gospel, traveling missionaries, evangelists, preachers of the gospel, traveling missionaries.

His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints that they should do the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body. Now, that is the work of an evangelist. The work of an evangelist, in God's intention, is to the perfecting and full equipping of the saints that they should do the work.

Now, isn't that satisfying for the evangelist? The evangelist equips the saints of God so that they do the work. Now, maybe that's quite a new interpretation to you, the idea of an evangelist. You've probably thought of an evangelist as one who simply invites unconverted people to come to Christ, put their trust in him, and be redeemed through his shed blood.

Well, that does happen to be part of the work of the evangelist, but the evangelist, you see, is a preacher of the gospel, and the gospel is designed to equip the saints, God's consecrated people, that they should do the work. That's the gospel. Unfortunately, by common practice, we have falsely educated people to understand from the gospel that invitation to come to Christ and receive him as Redeemer.

That is never the interpretation given to the gospel in the Bible. The gospel involves that, but that isn't the exclusive purpose of the gospel. The gospel is the whole counsel of God.

The gospel is the good news from a holy God to guilty men. The gospel is designed to restore guilty men in their relationship to God, to their true humanity. The gospel doesn't stop with a big full stop when you have registered your decision to receive Jesus Christ as your Redeemer.

You haven't obeyed the gospel when you simply come to Christ and claim forgiveness through his shed blood. You haven't obeyed the gospel when you've only done that. You've obeyed the first part of the gospel, but the smallest part of the gospel, the least important part of the gospel, because when you have obeyed the gospel that redeems you through the shed blood of Christ, that is the least important part because it's that part which concerns you and nobody else.

The more important part of the gospel is that part of the gospel which concerns God and concerns your fellow men because of what God is enabled to do now through you to them. That's the most important part. If the gospel simply involves our escaping hell and going to heaven, that's a very selfish motivation.

That isn't the purpose which Christ died. The Lord Jesus died upon the cross that you becoming a redeemed sinner might become the recipient of his resurrection life so that he may live on earth again and do the work through you for which he lives in this world, seeking and saving that which has lost. So you see, the work of an evangelist is to lead men, women, and boys and girls to that relationship to God that restores them to their true humanity.

That is to say, the re-establishment of the totalitarian sovereignty of a risen Savior within the human personality that makes a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl wholly available to Jesus Christ 24 hours in every day, all through life, until you enter into his presence. That's the gospel. As to where you begin to preach the gospel, of course, depends upon the kind of person to whom you're speaking.

If you happen to be an unconverted person tonight, I would have to begin the gospel to you with the word of reconciliation. I'd have to explain to you how you became a forgiven sinner. If you happened already to be converted, of course, then I would be able to omit that part of the gospel that leads you to repentance simply for forgiveness, and I would introduce you to the more important and the greater part of the gospel, which involves your becoming available to the sovereignty of Christ.

And so in varying stages of spiritual maturity, the evangelist begins to preach the gospel in that area where it is applicable to those to whom he is speaking. When almost certainly, in such a gathering as this and in the gatherings that we may anticipate night by night, there will be men, women, boys, and girls in varying stages of spiritual maturity, some who haven't even been born yet into the family of heaven, unconverted, unregenerate. And I trust that in the presentation of the gospel, in whatever stage it may be in which you are now exposed to the truth, it will accomplish by the Holy Spirit that purpose which God has given us, the truth, through his word.

So I'm going to be preaching the gospel every night this week. I shall be doing the work of an evangelist. Primarily, I believe, that will involve a ministry to Christians.

But don't forget, I shall be preaching the gospel. The target in particular will be Christians. I trust there may be those who are unconverted who will come to the meetings, but I shan't keep on night after night repeating the baby talk that simply involves conversion.

I shall be preaching the gospel. And I'm quite sure that if there's anybody here unconverted, they will come to understand adequately what they need to do in order to be converted and to become Christians. So if

you happen to notice half a dozen unconverted people come in, don't creep up to me and tap me on the arm and tell me that and hope that I'll preach to them, because I won't.

Preaching to you, if you're a Christian. And no Christian is going to hide behind half a dozen unconverted people this week. You see, when we turn to the word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us, it's in order that he may teach us what we don't know.

That's the object of being a teacher. When you send your children to school, if you happen to have any children, it's so that they may be taught what they don't know. It's in order that they might have explained to them and made understandable what to them is as yet not understandable.

And that's going to be the purpose of the ministry of this week. Not to keep on telling you the things that you've been told for years, and you know by heart and you could tell me as well as I could tell you, there wouldn't be much purpose in that. I'd rather stay at home with my wife and family than spend a week telling you things that you already know.

I trust that as God enables me, I should be able to tell you lots and lots and lots of things this week that you don't know. That's the purpose of the meetings. I trust that as God enables me, you'll come to understand things that you never understood before.

If it weren't for that, we all might as well go home, quite obviously. It would be futile to come and tell you night after night things that you know, explain to you things that you understand. That would simply be a mutual congratulation society.

And I'm quite sure none of us would be particularly interested in that particular kind of pastime. I certainly am not. And so it'll be my lovely privilege this week, as God enables me, to lead you into the Word of God.

That he, by his Holy Spirit, may illuminate the page, so that you as a saint, that is to say a forgiven sinner, set apart for God's use, may be fully equipped to do the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body. If you happen to be a member of this Christian fellowship, it means, as God helps us, that at the end of this week you will be a much more valuable member of this church fellowship. For it may well be that this week you will have discovered that secret of all secrets that allows the Lord Jesus to be himself, releasing his resurrection life in terms of your redeemed humanity, making its impact upon your fellow believers right here within the church fellowship and out into the world, bringing them in to Christ and into this fellowship.

And if you belong to some other Christian church fellowship, I trust that as a consequence of these meetings, if you join with us night by night, you'll go back to that church fellowship, to allow the Lord Jesus to display his glory, his blessing, his power in all the power of his resurrection life through you in that particular area where he, as the head of the body, the Lord of the harvest, pleases to place you. And that's his business. Certainly not my business to tell you where you're to be in his body or to what fellowship you should belong.

That's his business. That's his prerogative. The nature of the meetings inevitably will be consecutive, and that's why I trust that insofar as possible you'll come night after night.

There'll be two parallel sequences, the evening and midday. In order to understand truth, it's very important that we should gather the accumulative truth of God's word. Otherwise it's so very easy to go off at a tangent, to become eccentric, to be unbalanced, to be overweighted in some particular direction.

It's very important that we should take the whole counsel of God, the full gospel from the whole Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth as he takes the things that are of Christ and shows them to us, glorifying him. If there's one word, of course, that sums up the whole spiritual content of our faith, it's Christ. He's the beginning and the end.

He's the author and the finisher. He's the source and the sustenance. He's the root and the fatness.

We shall discover that everything is to be found in him, Jesus Christ. And I believe that there will be some of you who will make discoveries in Christ that you never dreamed of. I believe that as God leads us to him, for some, life will never, never, never be the same again, as from this week.

Nothing would surprise me less. That's what I've come to learn to expect. That's what I've come always to experience, that as we are exposed to the truth of God's word, the Holy Spirit bears witness to that truth and translates it into the experience of our lives.

For some, it's going to be revolutionary, because we're going to examine basic principles. And you know, there are so many Christians, earnest, sincere, lovely Christians, whose love, personal relationship to the Lord Jesus is unchallenged, and yet who are very, very ignorant of basic principles. Now, that's, of course, why we're going to meet together.

You see, communists indoctrinate. They're fiends for indoctrination. They're never satisfied under any circumstances that men, women, or boys and girls should be nominal communists.

They're not the slightest bit interested in adherence to their organization. They're only profoundly interested in those who have come to know what they believe and believe what they know and know how to explain it to those who don't know. That's communism.

And because the communist spends his time indoctrinating, indoctrinating, indoctrinating from the earliest age, half the world's population has been evangelized. Half the world's population has been evangelized with dialectic materialism, God-hating, Christ-rejecting international communism, because communists have become aware of the fact that men and women must be indoctrinated. Now, unfortunately, in our so-called Western civilization, our so-called Christian civilization in the West, we have ignored indoctrination.

So long as a person has gone through the motions, so long as a person has learned the language and uses the right phraseology, the evangelical jargon, and the correct clichés, all is well. That they don't understand the language that they use is immaterial, so long as they use the right language. Of course, there are certain areas where you have to dot this I, and other areas where you have to cross this particular T, but as to whether they know why they dot that I or cross this particular T, that too is immaterial, but it makes them acceptable in that particular area.

Now, during this week, we're going to do a little indoctrination. We're going to discover the real, inherent meaning of some of the phraseology that we use. For instance, here's an example, perhaps you're wondering what I'm talking about.

You'll wonder a lot about what I'm talking, especially in the first meeting or two. You say, Jesus Christ lives in your heart. Does he? I might come to you and say, does Jesus Christ live in your heart? Have you received him into your heart? And your face would brighten up and you'd say, yes indeed he does.

I'd say to you then, where's your heart? Why doesn't he live in your elbow? Why doesn't he live in the back of your neck? Now, all I'm doing is asking a perfectly intelligent question that an unconverted person, utterly untutored in the things of God, who's never been Christianized, has the right to ask you. If you tell the man in the street that Jesus Christ lives in your heart, he has a right to ask you why he lives in your heart, where your heart is, and why he doesn't live anywhere else. The fact that you've become acclimatized to using that expression doesn't mean to say because it's meaningful to you that it's meaningful to him.

How could it be meaningful to him? He's never been taught. Therefore, it's up to you as a member of the body of Christ, a member, a living member of this church fellowship here at Parkside, it's up to you as the vehicle of truth, as the mouthpiece of God in heaven to him on earth, to be able to give him an intelligent reason for the hope that is within you. And when he says to you, why does Jesus Christ live in your heart and nowhere else, you must give him a reason for why you say Jesus Christ lives in your heart.

Well, where is your heart? Well, you would say to him, don't be so stupid. I don't mean when I say that Jesus Christ lives in my heart, that he lives in that physical organ that pumps blood around my body. I don't mean that.

Well, then he says, what do you mean? Well, you say the heart is the, well, is the seat of our affections. It's where we, it's that part of me that starts thumping when I'm emotionally disturbed. It's, oh, I see.

Christianity is just an emotion. It's just peculiar feelings inside. Oh, no, you say, no, no, no.

Jesus, Jesus Christ doesn't, doesn't consist in pure emotionalism. No, no. It isn't the organ that pumps blood around my body.

It isn't just my emotional impulses. It's, well, what is it? And you begin to wonder what it is yourself. Jesus Christ lives in your heart.

Were you ever competent to explain to anybody, intelligently, what that means? Don't you think if you're an adult Christian, it's time you did? Don't you think if you are concerned at all, that non-Christian men and women and boys and girls in this district should come to Christ and have an intelligent faith in a living God, that that's one of the things you ought to be to explain to them? Well, maybe that's being a bit unfair. It may be that there are many of you who could give a perfectly adequate, intelligent explanation. But it'll be my purpose, as God enables me, to examine some of the basics of the faith that will enable all of us to live intelligently, healthy, holy, balanced, wholesome Christian lives, the kind of life for which Christ's precious blood was shed, enjoying to the full that victory which is characteristic of the true Christian life, because that life, the true Christian life, is Christ.

I'm firmly convinced that we shall never understand to what we have been saved unless we first understand from what we have been saved. And I'm perfectly convinced that we shall never understand that from which we have been saved until we know that from which man fell into sin. Because until you know what man was before he fell, you won't know what it is to be lost.

And if you don't really know what it is to be lost, you'll never fully understand what it is to be saved. You'll be able to say, I am saved, but you won't be able to understand or explain what it means to be saved. So I thought that tonight, by way of introduction, in the little time that we have, we might examine man as God intended man to be.

What is man? What is the doctrine of man? And here's a principle that I shall repeat again and again and again and again throughout this week. It's a basic truth, in antithesis of which we shall be also discovering the basic lie. Now here's the basic truth.

Man is man by virtue of what God is in man. It is only God in man that makes man man. That's the basic principle.

It's the basic truth concerning man. Man is man by virtue what God is in man. It is only what God is in man that makes man man.

And apart from God in man, man ceases to be man as God intended man to be. He becomes subhuman. He becomes what the Bible describes the natural man.

If you happen to have a French Bible in your home, you might be interested to look up 1 Corinthians 2.14. 1 Corinthians 2.14 in your French Bible. And there you will discover that instead of translating into the English, as we do, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, in the French Bible it says l'homme animal, the animal man. In other words, the subhuman, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him, neither can he know them.

And a man apart from God ceases to be man as God intended man to be. He becomes subhuman. He becomes abnormal.

So man is man only by virtue what God is in man. Apart from God, man ceases to be man as God intended man to be. For it is only God in man that makes man man.

How does this work? Well, in the first epistles of the Thessalonians and the fifth chapter, 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 23 and 24, the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Isn't that a comforting thing, to know that everything to which God calls you is something which God himself does? Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.

He who calls you will do that to which he calls you. If God calls you and calls me to a life of righteousness, it is God who in us does all that is necessary to enable us to live a life of righteousness. That when God calls us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, it is the God who calls us who does.

There is nothing to which God has called you which he doesn't do in you. But in order that God might do in you that to which he calls you, he demands of you a moral response without which he can do nothing. Because made you man with a moral capacity to choose spirit, soul, and body.

That's God's order of importance. Man's order of importance is body, soul, and spirit. The average individual says body, soul, and spirit.

He doesn't talk about spirit, soul, and body. He says body, soul, and spirit. In point of fact, the average individual doesn't talk about body, soul, and spirit.

He talks about body and soul. He says, after all, you've got to keep body and soul together. That's why he goes to work.

He goes to work to keep body and soul together. He goes to work to earn sufficient money to put sufficient food inside his mouth to keep body and soul together. He goes to work, in other words, to look after the animal appetites, the animal comforts of an animal body.

And he does that primarily because, although he doesn't really know what his soul is, he has a vague suspicion that if one day his soul leaves his body, folk are likely to bury his body. So he says we better keep body and soul together. It's more comfortable.

Now don't ask me, please. He says, please don't ask what my soul is. I know what my body is.

I walk around in it. I stick it on a chair when it's tired, and I lay it down at nights. And I buy things to put on it at various angles to make it look more attractive.

I know what my body is. I have a vague idea that I need a soul, and that it's a good idea to keep the two identified with each other. Yes, the body is the most tangible part of our being.

The soul is more important than your body, of course, and your spirit is more important than your soul. But the natural man, the subhuman, the abnormal, fallen man, is unaware that he's got a spirit. That is why he concerns himself with his body and his soul.

And being subhuman, the animal man, he's more concerned with his body than he is with his soul, for he looks after its animal appetites, comforts, security. That's perfectly reasonable for the natural man. Because the body is the most tangible part of us, perhaps it would be better to begin there.

The body is the house you live in. Now every form of created life has a body, of some shape or size, or form. That's how you recognize different forms of created life.

For instance, outside this church, it wouldn't take you long to find a tree. You'd recognize it as a tree by the peculiar shape of the house in which the tree lives. You recognize it at once for what it is.

That's a tree, it isn't a cabbage, because it doesn't have the same body that a cabbage has got. It isn't a cat, it's a tree. You recognize a tree by its tree body, the house in which it lives.

And there are all forms of vegetable life that have their own vegetable houses to live in. But there are certain characteristics of animal life that are not true of vegetable life. Though an animal has a body to live in, and a vegetable has a body to live in.

What are the difference in characteristics? Well, a tree doesn't get irritated with its neighbors. That's one of the advantages of being a vegetable. On the other hand, a tree doesn't fall in love with the bush over the wall.

That's one of the disadvantages of being a vegetable. What is it then that differentiates between a vegetable and an animal? And when I speak of animal, I mean all forms of that kind of creative life--fowls of the earth, fishes in the sea, creeping things. Don't be shocked when I tell you this.

That which differentiates the animal from the vegetable is the possession of a motivating mechanism called the soul. If you turn to the first chapter of Genesis, you'll discover in the thirtieth verse of the first chapter, that to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, God said, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so.

Wherein there is life. And that word life is living soul. Exactly the same word is used throughout the first chapter of Genesis for creature, or living creature.

It's the identical word that is used in the seventh verse of the second chapter, where the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the word there, a living soul, is identical with the word used for life in the thirtieth verse of the first chapter. Or creature, or living creature, applied to every form of that kind of created life, other than vegetable.

Well, that's a bit alarming, isn't it? Perhaps you never thought your dog had a soul. Well, it has. It's got a dog soul, in the same way that it's got a dog's body.

It has a motivating mechanism. There is still a difference between the quality of the dog's soul and the quality of your soul. We shall discover that in a moment.

But it has a capacity to think, it has a capacity to react, and it has a capacity to decide. That represents the soul--mind, emotion, and will. It's the motivating mechanism that differentiates between animal life and vegetable life.

Very fascinating to see the activities of the soul within the various forms of animal life. When I was in Central Africa two summers ago, I saw these enormous ant heaps, built magnificently by tiny little white ants. They have a wonderful social economy.

They have a central government. It's a dictatorship. It's a petticoat dictatorship.

It's the queen ant that wears the trousers, if I may put it that way. She controls the concern, and they keep reporting backwards and forwards to the queen ant. If she dies, the whole thing goes bankrupt.

She's the master genius, or the mistress genius. There are the ants that dig holes in the ground for the wells. Other ants go and collect the water.

Other ants chew vegetable matter and produce a compost, which they plant in little fields. Other ants come and plant mushrooms, which they reap as a little harvest. That's their food.

When some clumsy person comes and makes some damage, the working parties go out, and the chewers don't chew compost this time. They make a cement in their mouth, and the plasters come and do the repairs. It's a wonderful economy.

I was in the east coast of the United States not so long ago with some friends of mine staying there, and my hostess was very perplexed because she was very fond of both birds and squirrels, and she liked to feed them with peanut butter. But she hadn't yet succeeded in discovering a means of feeding birds with peanut butter at the same time as squirrels, without the squirrels stealing the peanut butter that she put for the birds. She'd devised all kinds of ingenious means, but always to no purpose.

She told me of an occasion when she really hit upon the highlight. There was a laundry line that went out on two pulleys from her second story to a distant tree. It was a double line so that she could put her laundry in and pull it out, and when it was dry, pull it back.

So she thought, that's it. And she got a very fine thread about two yards long, tied the top of a tin, a lid, made a little tray, and put the peanut butter on the tray, tied the fine thread to the laundry line, pulled it out

halfway between the house and the tree. Well, no squirrel could get that, she thought.

And to look in through the window a little while later, she saw the squirrel go up the tree, climb upside down along the laundry line, hang by its hind legs, pull up the thread with its front legs, and eat the peanut butter. She now feeds squirrels, and she's given up feeding birds, because as yet her human ingenuity has not been able to outwit a squirrel's ingenuity. Some folk would tell me that that was instinct.

I call it cold calculation. Your dog, when you go home, recognizes you, wags its tail, indicates it's an emotional joy at its mental recognition. It knows you by your peculiar shape.

Everybody's got their own peculiar shape, some more peculiar than others. Recognizes you. When you go through the front door, no objection, for it gives mental consent to the fact that you have a right to go through the front door.

But if in the middle of the night it saw somebody climbing in through the bathroom window, there would be a mental reaction that said, that man doesn't have the right to come through the bathroom window. My master has the right to go through the front door, but he doesn't have the right to come through the bathroom window. And instead of registering joy at one end of its anatomy, it would register irritation at the other end of its anatomy, probably to the detriment of the man's pants.

This is all going on in the soul of a dog. It remembers where it put its bone. It can go back to it.

It remembers the girl that gave it a piece of chocolate and come some more. It remembers the man that kicked it last week and snarls as he passes. It dreams in its subconscious mind.

You've seen a dog dreaming, its feet rushing down the street, its lip curling as it's almost on top of the cat, fast asleep, all in the subconscious mind. Emotionally, it can be jealous, angry, fearful, afraid, happy, or sad. It can exercise its will.

You can call the dog, give it a whistle, and there it stands, one ear up and one ear down, head on one side, with a sort of mischievous look in its eye, just wondering, dare I? Shall I obey her or shall I chase the cat? Much more interesting. And it's undecided, until suddenly it remembers what happened last time, and it hurts. And so it comes back, conscious already that it may have grieved you, tail between its legs, it slinks under the table.

That's all going on in the soulish mechanism of a dog. So, so far, we have simply discovered that if you have a body and you happen to have a soul and they're still being kept together by some means, you're a good animal. Is that then all? No.

What is it then that distinguishes man from animal? Because if God gave to all physical forms of life a body, and if God differentiated animal life from vegetable life by giving to it a motivating mechanism, a capacity to think, to react, and to will, that which differentiates man from animal is that God gave to man what he did not give to any other form of created life, a human spirit. Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 1. Zechariah 12-1. The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel saith the Lord which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

The God who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, the creative deity who did all that by an act of creation created in man what he did not create in any other form of life, a human spirit. And it is because you possess a human spirit that you are man and not an animal. And if it were not for the

fact that you possess the human spirit, your soul would not be more immortal, it would be mortal, and you would be no more than animal.

What then is the human spirit? What is the unique capacity of the human spirit that thus differentiates between you and the animal kingdom? Proverbs 20 and verse 27. One of the most important verses in the Bible. Proverbs 20-27, if you want to understand.

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. The word candle, in your marginal translation, or in the 20th verse of the same chapter, for it's the same word, is the lamp. The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.

A very beautiful, helpful definition of the human spirit, and very accurate. Because although we popularly suppose that lamps produce light, in point of fact they don't. Lamps don't produce light.

I could easily demonstrate that to you by going to the master switch and throwing it out. And I wouldn't need to touch any of these lamps hanging from the ceiling, but there would be no light, because lamps don't produce light. I wish they did.

If I could invent a lamp that produced light, I would have made my fortune overnight. If a lamp produced light, you wouldn't have to pay any electricity bills. All that a lamp has is the capacity to receive that which working in it and through it produces light.

And the moment I cut these lamps off from the source of supply of electricity, they're useless. They hang uselessly from where they are now hanging from the ceiling, and they would not display any light whatever. They would be empty.

For a lamp is simply created with that capacity which enables it to receive that upon which it is totally dependent for the performance of the purpose for which it was created, and without which it functions not. That's a lamp. There's a lamp over there.

There's no light from it. But it's a good lamp. But it just doesn't happen to be receiving that for which it was created.

And therefore it is not functioning in the purpose which it was created. And God says the human spirit is his lamp. The human spirit is that unique spiritual capacity that God created in man to receive what God is and to enjoy what God is.

For it is God in man that makes man, man. And if man did not have the spiritual capacity to receive nor to enjoy God, he would be no more than an animal. Is that important? It's as important as the world in which you happen to live in, in the 20th century.

Because if the basic truth is this, that God alone in man makes man, man, the basic lie is this, that man is man apart from what God is in man. He's man by virtue of what he is without God, and that is the basic philosophy of Christ-hating, God-rejecting, dialectic materialism, international communism, which captures today half the world's population. That's how important it is.

It is the philosophy that repudiates what I'm telling you now that keeps us poised today upon the threshold of devastating nuclear war. The only difference is that communists know what they're talking about, and the average Christian doesn't. That's why the man in the street normally thinks they talk more sense than we do.

Because what they say is based on what they think are facts, and what we talk about, they say, is based on sentiment. Because that's largely the way we preach. We appeal to people's emotion.

Teach them some language, and send them off with a sentiment. And my Christian friend, in the hard, wicked world in which we live today, it won't do. God created in you a capacity called the human spirit to receive what God is.

And when God created man, he gave him a body like every other form of created life. He gave him a soul like every other form of created animal life. But he gave him, too, that human spirit that adds to the human soul its quality of immortality.

The human spirit that has the capacity to receive and to enjoy the very life which is God himself. And when God created man, the Holy Spirit, as the representative of the triune God, the Trinity, came to indwell the human spirit. And from the human spirit, the Holy Spirit invaded the human personality, which is his mind, his emotion, and his will, the human soul.

So that everything he did in his body, by the exercise of his will, under the influence of his mind and the influence of his emotions, was done under the influence of a God-taught mind, was done under the influence of God-controlled emotions, so that everything that man did in his innocency was an expression of the nature of the God who made him, who lived within him, and expressed himself through him. And man was a lamp, a light. For what God was, living in man, was expressed through man.

In him was light, for this light was the lightest. And God made it abundantly clear that man could continue to enjoy this quality of life which is spiritual and eternal, which is God himself, only so long as man had God. But in the day he repudiated his relationship to God and his dependence on God to be man, he would cease to be man, he would die.

And man, one day, repudiated God. And God withdrew himself from the human spirit. And the lampman, physically he remained alive, soulishly he still functioned, sub-human, spiritually he was dead.

That's why Jesus Christ said, except a man be born again, he shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Animal men are born the animal way by their animal parents, empty of God, uninhabited, born of the flesh.

And they that are in the flesh cannot please God, for God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And the animal man is empty of God, his spirit is empty of the Holy Spirit, he's dead. Nicodemus, only that which is born of God that has its origin in him is spirit.

Marvel not, but I say to you, having been born of the flesh, you too must be born of the spirit. Having received animal life from your animal parents, the animal way, you must receive divine life, eternal life, God's life, God's way. And if it was sin that drove him out, only the forgiveness of sin will bring him back.

That's why we need a cross. And the gospel begins to make sense. Calvary begins to make sense.

I say that's where we'll have to finish tonight. Tomorrow night we're going to talk about the conversion of Adam. Maybe you didn't know that Adam was ever converted.

Well he was. And we're going to talk about his conversion tomorrow night, and what happened as a result of his conversion. But remember this, every child born to this world, since Adam fell into sin, is born, listen,

uninhabited by God.

Uninhabited by God. The human spirit, because of sin, destitute of the Holy Spirit. And the boy or the girl or the man or the woman who remains in the condition that they were born, is spiritually dead.

Only by the miracle of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is a man made man again as God intended man to be. And if this miracle of regeneration has not yet taken place in your life, you may be a very respectable citizen of the city of Adelaide. You may even be a member of some respectable church.

But I want to tell you this, so far as God is concerned, you are dead, through and through, spiritually. You have no part nor lot with God. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The lamp is out, and it's never been switched on. And if you remain in that condition, you will die in your sin. That's why you must be born again.

Now let us pray. We thank thee, Lord Master, for thy Word, for the Holy Spirit whom thou hast given to be our teacher. We pray that we may not only have receptive but obedient hearts, and for thy name's sake.

Amen.

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