

Developing Your Full Potential in Christ - Magnitude of Grace

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of presenting your body to God, allowing Him to live His life in and through you, and tapping into His power to accomplish the task of witnessing for Christ and bringing men to Himself.

Duration: 57:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:38, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:14-15, Ephesians 2:1-2, Ephesians 2:6

Topics: "Grace Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and experiencing the truth of God's word. He encourages the listeners to cry out to God and ask Him to open their eyes of understanding so that they can effectively serve Christ. The speaker also highlights the need for laborers in the harvest and urges the listeners to pray for God to send workers into the mission field. He reminds them that they were once dead in sin but have been raised and seated with Christ, and now have the responsibility to enforce His victory over the enemy. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about a missionary conference the speaker attended in Dalton, Georgia.

Transcript

Brother Jones, we're so glad you're here today. Glad the Lord is giving you strength to be with us. Having you here is such a benediction and blessing.

I know that you're praying that our brother Jones is going to just have life from the Lord service by service to be with us. We were yesterday in Ephesians, this marvelous manual on developing your full potential in Christ. And I trust, I'm sure, for you that are here this morning at least, that is the desire of your heart.

And consequently, I feel as though the seed is being sown on good ground with you. Will you turn please to that first chapter? I had intended yesterday to get where I hope to be able to get today. I'm not going to promise because this is so rich, you know.

Every time you stoop down, you're picking up diamonds, truly acres of diamonds, in the epistle to the Ephesians. I'll begin reading with the 15th verse so that you get the background of the text. Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for

you, having put you on my prayer list.

Well, better than that, making mention of you in my prayers. Elsewhere he said, I labor and travail in prayer night and day until Christ be formed in you. I'm praying for you, believers, said the apostle, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling.

That's where we stopped yesterday, the hope of his calling that we, redeemed by his blood, would count it our reasonable service to present our bodies, our blood ransom personalities, all we are to him so that he could have them to live again his life through us. But that's only one of three important aspects of this prayer, that he might know the hope of his calling. And now the second segment, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Now, we saw in the previous segment that it's his calling, the call he had that drew him out of eternity into time to redeem us. Most of the expositions I find on this particular section of this verse speak of it as though it were the riches of the glory of our inheritance as saints. And there's much said in the scripture about that.

But just because we're so eager to find out everything the Lord has for us, should not close our eyes to the fact that he has something for his son. So look at this, the riches of the glory of his inheritance, his inheritance in the saints. Or in other words, the saints are his inheritance.

That's what we have to see now. So when you present your body to the Lord Jesus, for him to live his life in and through you, then you can understand that what he is going to do through you is to continue the ministry of witness that he had when he was here. That living in you, he's going to use your life to the end of bringing men and women, boys and girls, out of death into life.

That is thus set forth, as I see it, as the direct result of Christ being given the privilege of living his own life in his own resurrection power in and through your personality. He wants you to present your body to him, your brain. That's part of your body.

He wants you to present your brain so that living in you, he can use your brain to think his thoughts and get them back into the world again. He wants you to present your eyes. That's part of your body.

So that living in you, he can use your eyes to see the multitude as sheep scattered without a shepherd. That's how he saw them. And he's the same Jesus.

And if you give him your personality and body, then he's going to do through you what he did when he was here. He's going to use your eyes to see men as lost and in need of salvation. Then he asks you to present your ears so that living in you, he can give to you the patience to listen to that which sometimes you might not want to listen to.

But you see, a good part of witnessing is listening. I suppose that if you were to break it down into percentage, probably 90% of an effective witness is an effective listening. And the church needs fewer talkers and more listeners.

You know, you have to earn the right to plant the seed of the gospel. Everybody you meet has a plan of salvation. Oh yeah, you ask them, do the best you can.

If you're good, outweighs the bad. Everybody's got a plan of salvation. And before you can give them his, you've got to listen to theirs.

So he asks you to present your ears so that living in you, he can use your ears to listen often to a lot of nonsense. But you know, if you don't listen, their minds are so packed with their own ideas, there's no room for his truth. So he says, present your ears so that I can use your ears to listen and to let people give their burdens and spill their troubles and to just let me have your ears.

Then he said, let me have your heart. You remember when he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion. Your heart is part of your body.

So the Lord Jesus says, present your heart to me, your emotion, so that you can feel. Weep with them that weep and rejoice with them that rejoice. Now, if you know you as well as I know me, you know that that's not your character.

That's not the way you are by nature, or some more than others perhaps. But we feel so strongly about our own concerns and our own problems and our own interests. And it's only the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that enable us to see the multitude as sheep scattered without a shepherd.

So he says, present your heart to me so that living in you, I can have a heart to be broken again for the need of the lost. Then he says, present your feet to me so that living in you, I can use your feet to go any place I want to go to find those that I would bring to myself. Present your feet to me.

Blessed are the feet of them that publish glad tidings and bring the gospel of peace. That's part of your body. Present your body.

That means present your feet that you're willing to go any time of the day or night that you may have, that he may lead, or you may have an opportunity. You've already given your feet to him. And consequently, you're prepared to just let him use them to take you any place that he wants to go.

Present your hands to him so that living in you, he can use your hands to accomplish his purpose. He used his hands for those many years, probably 20 or more, 18 at least, in carpentry work, making things for people and helping provide them the things that they need. And if you present your hands to him, you probably are going to find that you have many occasions to use your hands to assist and to aid, to lift the fallen, to feed the hungry, to guide the blind to light.

Present your hands to him. Then he says, present your lips to him. Your lips to him.

So that's part of your body, isn't it? Your ability to speak. So that living in you, he can use your lips to speak his word of redeeming love to those whom he would. That's what the apostles said.

I said, he am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I. But I presented my brain, my ears, my heart, my feet, my hands, my lips, and the life I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God.

What was the faith of the Son of God? That if he redeemed us by his blood, we counted our reasonable service to present our bodies to him so that he could live his life in and through us. And the end, that men might be brought out of darkness into light and out of death into light. Now, I went to Africa years ago back in 1945 as a missionary.

And to be perfectly honest with you, I really went. I suppose I never analyzed it or wrote it out, but I wanted to. I didn't think it was fair for people to have to go to hell without at least one chance to be saved.

And I suppose you could say if you wanted to assign to it a motive, it was really in a sense to complete or to improve on the justice of God. But when I got there, to my amazement, I found out that the people that I had come to see and to serve were just as wicked as the ones that I'd left back home in Indiana, where I'd been a pastor while finishing my training. They were stubborn and rebellious and selfish and arrogant and proud.

And even when they heard the gospel, they didn't bow and bend before him. And I can recall on one occasion getting down on my face and saying, Father, I've been sold a bill of goods. I somehow thought when I got out here and they saw me, they were going to say, oh, you've come to show us the way to heaven.

They couldn't care less about the way to heaven. They knew the name of God. They knew that God was holy.

They knew that they were sinners. They knew that God was going to punish them when they died. And they served the evil spirits because evil spirits made them miserable for a little while while they were alive.

There was no fear of God before their eyes. And when I had finished pouring out my complaint to the Lord and telling him what a dirty trick I really seemed to be to get there and then to find that they didn't want to be, want salvation or want the Lord or appreciate my coming to tell them, it seemed to me as though he whispered, yes, you're right. You're absolutely right.

That's true. They are just as lost as you are, and they deserve hell just as much as you do. And they don't deserve to have me die for them, and they don't deserve to have you tell them that I died for them.

They don't deserve anything but my wrath. But you see, I love them. I want them.

I loved them when they were just like they are. And when you were just like that, I loved you. And I didn't send you here because they deserve you.

I sent you here so that you could let them know of my love and you could lift them as it were into my waiting arms. You see, from that moment on, it completely changed my attitude toward evangelism and toward witnessing. Up to that point, I thought that I was trying to snatch sinners out of the hands of an angry God and rescue them.

And from that point on, I saw that I was snatching angry sinners and trying to lift them into the hands of a loving, waiting, gracious God who was longing that they should ask Sue for peace and ask for pardon. And that in a sense, it was that we were laborers together with him in bringing this inheritance for Christ. And to see them not as they were, vile, wretched worshipers of evil spirits, practicing every kind of cruelty and immorality, but to see them as they were going to be, with new natures and new hearts and new names and new bodies, new spirits, and be to the eternal praise of the glory of his grace.

That's what he wants you to see, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Zanes. Now it's well and good for you to say, I want Christ to live in me, I want him to fill me with himself, I want to walk in the fullness of the Spirit. But there's just one thing you've got to understand.

The fullness of Christ is not to give you a handle on God so you can do with God what things you would like to do. It's to give him a handle on you so that he can do through you what he wants to do. And what he wants to do is to bring men and women out of death into life so that they will be their part of the inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he wants you to have the eyes of your understanding open, so that instead of seeing the little mean, nasty kids that tromp through your flowerbed, instead of walking around on the sidewalk, go through your yard, and take a stick and rattle on the picket fence and wake you from your afternoon nap, and all the other things, and you call our mothers and say, those nasty little children, all they are is just lost boys that are saying, oh, doesn't somebody here know God and love me, and won't they pray for me and tell me about Christ? How imperative it is for us to understand this. The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, because it changes our attitude toward the lost. Instead of seeing them as shameful and wicked and unclean, we see them the way they're going to be, to the eternal praise of the glory of his grace.

That's what he wants to have our eyes open for, so that we can see that the manner in which he works is for Christ to live in us, and the purpose for which he works is to bring men out of death to himself. Now, the next thing he wants us to understand is the energy that's going to be employed in accomplishing this task. You know, when David Livingston's father or grandfather, or whoever it might have been, was given the freedom from serfdom to take a name, he probably had come to know Christ and took as a name Livingstone.

And I like that name because the Bible speaks of us as having stony hearts and hard hearts. And you can be just as successful, if you please, and I put this in quotes, in saving someone as you can go be in going out here and finding a granite boulder and doing something to make it become live, living, quivering flesh. Now, when you're certain that you can turn a boulder into flesh, then you're pretty sure that you know all the answers about seeing men brought out of death into life.

But the fact of the matter is that for someone to pass from death to life is just as much a miracle as for a stone to come alive. It's just as much a miracle as it was to raise the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. In fact, it took the very same kind of power to save you that it took to raise his son from the dead. It's a miracle.

And when our soul was seeing, it took a miracle. When he saved my soul, made me, cleansed me, and made me whole, it took a miracle of grace. Is this miraculous? It's supernatural to take someone that has a hard, stony heart and make that one a child of God.

You don't do it. I don't do it. Oh, I know how to give the plan of salvation and get people to say, in the right places and write down on my card that I've made a convert.

But I've seen so many of my converts still living in sin, still living in darkness, that I've had to come to the conclusion that there's a great deal of difference between that and seeing someone pass from death to life. Paul said, when it pleased God to reveal his son in me, salvation is revelation. Salvation is miracle.

So what's the power? How are we going to do this sort of a thing? What's going to, how's it going to be accomplished? Well, notice the next thing. He wants the eyes of our understanding open that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heaven. Now, what's he saying? He's simply saying this, that when you present your body to him so that he can live in you, when you present yourself to him so that living in you, he is free to use you

in that which is the supreme task of the Godhead, building this inheritance for Christ, that the power that's available to you is the very power that raised up Christ from the dead.

That you're to be the channel by which this power is to flow into the affairs of men and into the lives of people. Notice it again, that you might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe. What does this mean? That if you will present your body to him for the purpose that he said is here, that the power that's to enable you to accomplish and fulfill your task is not just human enthusiasm and dedicated energy and consecrated intellect.

It's all of that. But more than that, it's the very power that raised up Christ from the dead. It's quite interesting that in this verse, in verses 19 and 20, every word in the Greek language used for power or energy is employed.

What is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ. All the words that are used to convey this thought are put together here in seemingly hopeless effort on the part of the apostle, though certainly not hopeless, but an effort to let you understand that the power that's to flow through you as a mother in the home, as a man in the office, as a young person in school, to enable you to live this life for Christ and witness for Christ, that is the very resurrection life of Christ. Now, that ought to bring out a hallelujah here or there, to think that this is what he's telling these people, that that's what's going to happen.

Now, we have seen something of his plan to live his life in us. We've seen something of his purpose, which is that through us to bring men to himself, that they might be part of the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And we've seen something of the power, namely, that there's going to be the same flow of resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead flowing through your personality to make you effective as a witness for him.

But there's something else you've got to see, and that's the place from which all of this is done. Go back to the third verse. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.

Where? In the heavenlies. Now, he hasn't said anything about it there. He just goes on to talk about, now he comes to that, to the heavenlies, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

Now, will you go down to the second chapter and notice the first two words. If you're using the King James, they are, and you, and you. Well, have you ever stopped to think how kind of a cumbersome chapter break that is? The function of a conjunction is to conjunct, but when you see a chapter beginning with and you, you have to say somebody kind of slipped up here.

It just doesn't make a great deal of contextual sense. But it'll do it if you do this. If you'll do it in your Bible like I've done in most of mine, and you try to draw a little circle around and you, and then you take a fine line and run it back to verse 20, and it reads like this, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him and you from the dead, and set him and you at his own right hand in the heavenlies.

You say, now, brother, you're just making too fast a loose with one conjunction to do a thing like that. What's your authority? Why can you say that when Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised, and when Christ was seated, we were seated? Why? Because he repeated it in the fifth and sixth verses of the next chapter so that I'd have a good defense for putting that little circle around and you and tucking the

point of the line in up there. Because in chapter two, in verse five, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together.

Now, what did I say? Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him and you from the dead, and set him and you at his own right hand in the heavenlies. You see, he was your representative, and he was dying your death, and he was buried for you and quickened for you and raised for you. But since he was your representative, that meant that what he was doing for you in the father's eyes, from heaven at least, you were doing in him.

So the father didn't just see Christ die for you, he saw you die with him. And he didn't just see Christ buried for you, he saw you buried with him. And he didn't see Christ just quickened for you, he saw you quickened with him.

And he didn't see Christ just raised for you, he saw you raised with him. And he didn't just see his son sit down at his right hand for you, he saw you sit down at his right hand with him. Because that's the place from which we're to pray, that's the place from which we're to speak, that's the place from which we're to live.

And he's blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And the tragedy is so few Christians, it seems, understand that that's their natural habitat, now that they're in Christ. And most of us are living under the circumstances instead of sharing the glories of his presence.

That's where we belong, there in the heavenlies, where he's blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So who's he writing to? Well, he's writing to a group of people that a few months before were on their faces in the slime of their immorality, groveling before Diana of the Ephesians. And now he's telling them that Christ wants to live in them, that's the hope of his calling.

He wants to live in them so that he can bring to himself his inheritance in the saints, that he wants to live in them so the very power that raised up Christ from the dead can flow through them, and that the place that they have in God's eyes is risen with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies, because there's a foe, notice, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him and you from the dead and set him and you at his own right hand in the heavenlies. Where? Far above all of the forces that are going to bind the lost and interfere with the work of God. Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that's named that's in opposition to God.

And he has put all things under his feet and what are his feet? His body. Isn't that marvelous? And where is body? Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him and you from the dead and set him and you far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named, and made him, and gave him head over all to the church, his body, and hath put all things under his feet. Well, what's his feet? His body.

And he's put all things under his body. So in your home, where you have unsaved loved ones, if you understand what it means for Christ to live in you, then you're going to have an opportunity to present the testimony to your children and their friends. Because it won't be just you and me and our irritation and our weariness and our fatigue.

It's going to be Christ living in us. And he's everything we're not. And how desperately our children need to see Christ living in us.

And our neighbors, and our friends, and our family. How well they deserve to see Christ living in us. Because from them are going to become these trophies of grace that will be part of his inheritance.

And if we understand that we were raised with him and seated with him, then the powers that bind our children and would hold our neighbors and would control the affairs, these forces are under his feet. And we're part of his body. And we might even have the honor of being a feet in the body of Christ.

And isn't it thrilling to think that he gives to us the privilege of enforcing his victory in the world. So, we see something of the place. Now we need to get a little look at the people.

What kind of people is he talking about? Oh, some might say he's talking about Jews that have a heritage in Israel and are the first generation Christians and say they had a lot going for them. But he can't mean me. He can't mean me.

Well, he does mean you. Because he says, you who were dead in trespasses and sins. Now that's better than if he put my name there.

Because if he put my name there, I'd never know whether it was my great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, my son, my grandson. And you wouldn't have a chance at all. And it wouldn't do me any good.

But when he says, and you who were dead in trespasses and sins, then I know he's talking about me, because I was dead in trespasses and sins. And so are you. So he is saying this, look, nothing of your past is going to interfere with my plan for your future.

Isn't that great? Isn't it wonderful to know that somebody loved you when he knew the worst about you? You know, if most of our friends knew about us what God and we knew, we wouldn't have many friends. Only thing is that if we knew about them what they and God know, they wouldn't have us as friends either. Or we'd all be friends the way it ought to be, because we would know we were woven on the same loom.

Maybe the wolf was a little different, but boy, the warp is the same. I know you, friend. You can't kid me.

I know you, because I know me. And I know that we were dead in trespasses and sins, and you who were. So he's talking about folks just like us, who walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince and the power of the air, that very same spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

That's who we were. That's who we were. And those are the very people that we're going to witness to and minister to and see brought out of the bondage of Satan into the liberty of the children of God.

Now, do you see why it's so important for us to understand that the way he to work is for us to present our bodies to him so he can live in us, and that the reason that he wants to work is so through us he can bring these that are still in satanic bondage, and every lost person is, into that place where they're part of this inheritance for Christ, his inheritance in the saints, and that the power is the very power that raised up Christ from the dead, and our position is seated with Christ? You see, once we were dead in our sins, we walked according to the course of this world. So we know the plight of these that are unsaved. We know the power of darkness.

We also know that any effectiveness is not because we were better than others, not that because we live differently than do others. No, not at all. We know that there was nothing good in us, nothing that called forth his love, that God had to love us when we were utterly unlovely and had nothing to commend us to

him, and he had to be willing to accept us when he knew the worst about us.

You know, I'm always surprised what I find out about me. I'm kind of surprised what I find out about you, too. Shouldn't be, but I am, because it's, you know, it's a little hard.

We get the idea thinking we've been around so long that maybe somehow the warp is a little different. Then God lets a circumstance come, and we get a good glimpse under the cover, you know, and see that the seed of every sin that anyone's ever committed is in our hearts, and there's nothing that anyone has ever done that we weren't capable of doing, still would be but for his grace, and that there's no one worse than we are or could have been, and the only reason we didn't do what others have done is because we didn't have incentive. We certainly had capacity.

Now, if you understand yourself, if you've ever seen yourself the way God sees you, then you're going to identify with these people to whom God is speaking, and he's saying, now listen, don't kid yourself, don't fool yourself. I know you. I know all about you.

There's nothing you'll ever find out about yourself that'll surprise me. I've loved you when I knew the worst about you. There's nothing that you'll ever find out about yourself that's going to make me change the fact that I love you.

I just don't want any pride around here. I just don't want any confidence in the flesh. I just don't want you to think you're better than anybody else.

I just don't. I want you to know that if you are, it's only because of me and not because of you. Is that hard to take? Is it pretty hard for us to say, Lord, you know those awful heathen that our brother Troutman's been working for for these 27 years out in New Guinea? Oh my, they're terrible, Lord.

Look at the things they did. Yeah, but the only reason you weren't doing them is because an accident made you born here instead of there. But you've got all the capacity they have.

There's nothing they've done you couldn't have done. And it doesn't take any more of God's grace to save one of those people than it does to save you. That's the astounding thing.

That's the amazing thing. So what are you saying is this? Let's be done with this idea. You know, I can't do that.

I've never done it. Oh, no one like me could do that. The Lord Jesus, you think he really wants to live in me? Oh, if you knew what kind of a life I lived before I was saved.

Well, if it was anything different or worse than the dear people up at Ephesus, I'll be surprised because if they hadn't done it, it just couldn't be done. That's all. They did it.

They went through it from A to Z and they did it backwards as well as forwards. And he's saying about them, listen, your past is not going to interfere with my plan. There's nothing you've ever done that's going to keep you from fulfilling what I have purposed for you.

I want to live in you, dear child. I want you to present yourself to me so that I can live in you. I want to use you to bring the loss to myself.

I want the very power that raised me from the dead to flow through your personality so that you can be an instrument in my hands to see people brought out of death into life. That's what I want from you. I want you to just let me live my life in you.

And if you'll do that, then it's going to be possible for you to labor with me and share with me in enforcing my victory over a defeated foe, over all the forces of darkness that I've defeated. Now, isn't it interesting that what he has put here in germ form in this first chapter and the second, he's enlarged on elsewhere? Let's go, for instance, shall we? I've taken you to the verses here of the second part of this first chapter, put as far above all principality. Let's go over to chapter six for just a minute and see the implications of it.

In chapter six and verse ten, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God. Well, he already said your position is seated with him in the heaven.

Now he said you're in earth. So you're to put on the armor. Put on the, when you're down here in time, and we live in two places at once, you know, seated in the heavenlies in Christ and Christ living in us here.

Now he says, put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand. And I'm always amused and gratified when I realize that that word stand is a, you know, you, you know, Greek survivors, amazing how much you know. Have you ever heard the word antihistamine? Of course you have.

Okay. That's the very word from the Greek text is here. Antihistamine.

Exactly. Just picked right up out of the text. And having done all antihistamine, come against so as to cause it to stop.

And having done all to stand, stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Well, we're seated above principalities and powers, aren't we? And taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

So here he's telling us that we're engaged in a warfare. Back in verse 12, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places. So verses 20, 21, 22 tie in with Ephesians 6, 10 through 18.

It's one of the germ of the one is fulfilled in the other. Now let's look for a moment at the implications. Some weeks before coming here, Dr. Nathan Bailey wrote a letter to all the assigned speakers in the Alliance summer camp meetings such as this, and asked that if in the course of our ministry, we would definitely bear in mind the need for workers, the need for workers.

And as I thought of that and in preparation for this menace ministry, my heart went back to that time I told you about the other night when I was at the seminary and took spiritual inventory. I started to study the word and I said, Lord, from here on, it has to be real. And I was felt led to take that verse in Matthew 9, pray the Lord of the harvest that he will thrust out laborers into the harvest field.

And I started to parse it in Greek. I tried to take every word and get the meaning of it, the construction and the form of it. And this is what I found out there in Matthew 9, where it says, pray the Lord of the harvest that he will thrust out laborers.

I found out that the construction there in the original is so that you would have to translate it this way, pray ye the Lord of the harvest in order that he will be able to thrust out laborers. And I was astounded and I couldn't trust my own exegesis. So I went to a seminary professor, a man whose father worked with my father in West Palm Beach.

And I said, Doctor, I've done this study and would you please look at it and tell me whether it's correct? So a couple of days later, I went back to his office and picked it up. And he said, it's correct, but I wouldn't touch it with a 10 foot pole because the implications of it are something I don't even want to find out about. But now listen, pray ye the Lord of the harvest in order that he may be able to thrust out laborers.

I remember going into a village on the Sudan-Ethiopian border and there was a witch doctor at the edge of the village and he had a woman about 16, I suppose, and going through part of the adult initiation rites and her back was being cicatrized. In this tribe, they had elaborate diagrams that were put on the back and on the front, on the breasts and so on, of the women at each stage in their development and acceptance into the tribal life. And as I came in, here was this girl sitting there with no anesthesia at all, just sitting there, and he had a spear blade, just a dirty old spear blade that had been worn down and sharpened.

And the witch doctor had taken all out the shaft and he held it and he'd sharpened the point. There was a stone there and he would wipe the blood off on his thigh or on the ground and then he would take this and she'd just sit there and he'd carve into the back and then he'd open up the crack, the cut, and reach over and take soot off of a cooking pot and put it in and close it because that was going to make it heal with a scar if she didn't die of infection. And it was just as though that place was charged with evil, charged with evil.

The old chief had come out. I'd sent a boy on in and the old chief came out to see me. And as he came, he said, why have you been so long? Why? Why didn't you come sooner? Now, what did you mean? Why? He said, when I was a little boy like this, we always measured this way, when I was a little boy like this, my father took me over to the town where the sun sets where the government is, Malacal in Upper Nile Province.

And there he said, I heard a man like you, I've never seen one with a face like yours since then, and I heard him talk the sweetest talk. And I spoke to my heart just like honey, about God, about God who made the world, about God who loved us, and God. And he said he'd come and tell my people.

My father died and I became chief and now look at me. And there was a man on each side as he moved with a stick and they held him up as he came out to see me. Why have you been so long? We've waited for you.

He said, now you're here. We walked by and he said, this is one of my people. And there was the witch doctor carving, not just like just evil, evil was tangible, you could feel it.

And in my eyes, it was almost as though Satan could be seen. Oh, there was the witch doctor, there was the girl, there was I, but it was almost as though you could see the prince of darkness laughing into the face of Jesus Christ, saying, you made her. You made her in your image.

You made her in your likeness. You told your church to pray. You told your church to care.

You told them that you'd live in them. You told them that you're seated with them, and they don't care. And I can cut her, and heart her, and scar her, and brand her.

She's mine. Oh, she knows you, but she doesn't accept you. You can't get your people to care.

He's waited. So as I was studying this verse, pray you, the Lord of the harvest, in order that he may be able to thrust out labors. All I could see was someone coming and standing, as it were, at that village and saying, Father, I was once one of Satan's servants.

I was once bound in darkness. I was once dead in trespasses and sins. I walked according to the course of this world.

I was like this, and your grace found me, and your grace saved me, and I'm washed in the blood of your Son, and I'm born into your family. And now, Father, I plead for this, my sister. I plead for these, my brethren.

And I ask you, in the name of your Son, who conquered this defeated foe, to send in the missionary. Send the witness. This is the implication.

Pray ye, the Lord of the harvest, how, from what position, that we once were dead in trespasses and sins, we once walked according to the course of this world, but now our risen Lord, with whom we've been raised and seated, who's living in us, has put us here to enforce his victory over that defeated foe, to get the laborers in and to get the people released. Do you see it? I was in a little church down in Dalton, Georgia. The pastor had heard me speak at Chattanooga, and he'd asked me to come for a week's missionary conference, which was what we did in those days.

And as the week went on with the morning study, something like this, and then the evening study, one morning I felt the blood of the Lord, just asked the people, saying, tomorrow when you come, we're going to stay through the noon hour and fast and pray for the week that God wants to do here. And I'd been talking about this to some degree, and the pastor said with tears in his eyes, I've been pastor here for seven years. This church has been here for 50 years, and there's never been one missionary go from it.

There's never been one to carry the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. It's a missionary Baptist church. But not one life has been from this church, though the word has been preached, carry the gospel.

And he said, could it be, could it be that Satan has bound the young people in this church and bound the families, should we not pray this way for our people? Well, that's what I'd been yearning for and longing for in teaching, that we should stand on the victory of Calvary for the release of the young life around which the web had been woven of selfish ambition and parental plans outside the will of God, that we should stand on the victory of Calvary for the release of these young people. And so we went to prayer, and it was astounding the way the truth had captured these hearts. They were fresh and new.

They hadn't heard everything and become calloused with truth. They were eager and open and excited at the implications of it. And there was a blending as we stood on the victory of Calvary, and together we resisted every effort of a defeated foe to continue to hold these young men and women.

And we released them into the will of God and into the purpose of God. And it was almost as though a black cloud was being lifted up and pushed away, and the light was beginning to come in. That Sunday morning the invitation was given, and there were several that came.

And again that night, and subsequently there were many young men and women that went out from that church as missionaries for Jesus Christ. And I believe that if it had not been for an intelligent and

deliberate and purposeful use of the Scripture, those young people would have stayed there as their fathers and grandfathers had done. Never gone into that which was closest to the heart of God.

So what we're talking about here is not any little matter. That's why the Scripture says that we're not ignorant of his devices. We are at times.

We behave as though we did. We are. We feel sometimes that it's just emotion and appeal and excitement and information, but it's more than that.

There's a spiritual battle going on. And our weapons are not carnal, but mighty to the tearing down of strongholds. So imperative, therefore, that we should understand that what the Apostle is giving here is no light and no little matter.

But it's an emancipation proclamation, and it's an enlistment, and it's the high and holy privilege of being laborers together with God in the most important work in the world. And if he could use Ephesian believers that had no background, no history, no education, nothing at all to commend them except that they were heirs of the grace of God through faith in Christ, then he can use us. The botched they had been, injured by their years of sin, and yet God was able to heal them of the scars of their sin and release them from the bondage of their iniquity and bring them into the place where they were effectual laborers together with him.

His workmanship created in Christ Jesus under good works which God had before ordained they should walk in. So I'm submitting to you this morning that this text, that we have the eyes of our understanding open. Oh, can you see how important it is to see what his plan is to live in us, what his purpose is to build is that inheritance, that heir, that body, that bride.

What the power is, the resurrection life of Christ, what the place is seated with Christ in the heavenlies, what the position is to enforce the victory of Calvary over a defeated foe, who the people are, people just like us, who had been dead in our trespasses and sins but have been made alive in Christ. Everyone here, every home here has a tragedy in it, close to it, so enormous and so hopeless that only the power of Almighty God is enough to solve the problem. And here is the answer.

And yet you can treat it as another sermon, you can treat it as just another lecture, you can treat it as a Bible study, but to your own heart. But if you cry out, O God, Father of Jesus, open the eyes of my understanding that this truth is not just a text that I've read in a chapter I've studied, but it becomes part of the equipment that I use in my service for the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the cry of my heart today.

Shall we bow together in prayer? With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I'm not going to ask us to sing. In just a moment we're going to pray, and then we're going to have the benediction. There'll be no singing this morning.

But if you're here and God has spoken to your heart and you sense and know a need while we're praying right now, get up from where you are and come and kneel here. We'll join you and we'll pray with you. And if you don't, we're going to assume that you can wait till another time, but if you can't wait, you come.

But I want you to think for a moment with me. And this invitation is open. You won't interfere.

If you just have a burden on your heart to seek altar prayer, you come. But I want you to think over the grounds we've come. Jesus Christ invites you to present your body to him.

That's the hope of his calling. He wants to use you to be with, to part with him in bringing men out of death into life. The power is the resurrection power, the power that raised up Christ from the dead.

The place is seated with him in the heavenlies. The position is as his feet over principality and power. And the people, just you.

Once dead in sins, you. Are you willing to say, Lord Jesus, I want this desperately. Open the eyes of my understanding.

Help me to see, help me to understand, to experience, be a laborer together with you in a new dimension of effectiveness for Christ. That's the cry of our hearts. We're going to take 60 seconds by the clock for disciplined silence.

During that silence, I want you to go over the ground I've just reviewed with you. Find where you are. And ask God to make the truth real, operatively, experientially real.

And we're going to stand for prayer. And we're going to be dismissed. But 60 seconds of disciplined silence.

Now we stand together. Brother Jones, would you dismiss us with prayer? Thank you.

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