

Your Full Potential in Christ

by Paris Reidhead

God's purpose in salvation is to make us like His Son, to have a relationship with Him and to be remade in His image and likeness.

Duration: 59:47

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1

Topics: "Full Potential"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for the power of Almighty God to solve the enormous and hopeless tragedies that exist in every home and life. The speaker encourages the audience to not just treat the sermon as another lecture or Bible study, but to truly open their hearts and ask God to make the truth real in their lives. The speaker shares a personal experience of leading a week-long missionary conference where fasting and prayer were encouraged to seek God's will. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the hunger for knowledge that God has placed within us and the importance of continually seeking to learn and grow in our understanding of God's truth.

Transcript

We've been looking at Ephesians as a manual on developing your full potential in Christ. We believe that it is His intention, not that we should merely be saved somehow, but triumphantly. Not that we should just make it through, but that we should have that which we can lay at the feet of the Lord Jesus, to have a crown of rejoicing that we can cast at His feet.

And therefore, the epistle to the Ephesians, in my judgment at least, is that handbook. How to develop your full potential in Christ. We saw yesterday, as we considered the first segment, verses 1 through 17, that the Ephesian believers were partakers of His grace.

How marvelous is that grace. How wonderful it is to realize that as Father, God purposed our salvation before the foundation of the world. You see that in verses 4 and 5. He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy, without blame, before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

So God has purposed, even before He made the world, our salvation. And in that purpose, He has anticipated everything we're going to need. Everything that's necessary for us to be everything that He's planned.

Holy and without blame before Him in love implies that there's going to be victory, and there's going to be strength and wisdom and guidance, and absolutely everything that He anticipated we would need is in His purpose. Then the next section, you have verses 7 and 8, have to do with that which the Son, God the Son, provided. Now He only provided that which the Father purposed, but everything that the Father purposed.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence have He made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself. Here again, the Lord Jesus Christ provided that redemption, and everything that we need to be everything He's planned is included in that redemptive provision. But we are now dealing with two factors, you see.

First, that which before the foundation of the world the Father purposed, and then that which in the fullness of time the Son provided. But we're not left to our own devices. Notice that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ, in whom He also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory.

Now, the Father purposed our salvation, the Son provided it, and the Holy Spirit, God in His omnipresence, wants to make real to us and in us, experientially real, all that the Father purposed and all that the Son provided. Now, one of the most serious indictments that you find in the epistle to the Hebrews is the fact that they would tread under their feet that which the Father had purposed. They counted it as having no worth and no value and not important to them.

What a tragedy it is that people do get the idea somehow that the whole of God's intention was to save us from hell. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from hell and take them to heaven when they die. Is that what it says? Well, I must be reading from the reverse vision.

That often gets in the way, I find, not only with me but with others. No, that isn't what He said. He said, Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

God's purpose is to make us like His Son. The Lord Jesus, therefore, was willing to become what we were so that we could be made what He is. And if we understand that, then we understand how serious is the indictment to the Hebrews that they would tread under their feet as having no worth or meaning or value that which the Lord Jesus Christ had purchased with His blood.

They counted it as having no significance. And we would not be among that number, certainly if we're wise we don't want to be so included, rather that we should treasure for ourselves everything that the Father purposed and the Son provided. Then we saw in the 15th verse and thereafter that the Apostle, having established for the believer brethren at Ephesus something of the nature of His grace, then proceeds to tell them how they are to avail themselves of this ministry of the Spirit.

He declared that he prayed for them. Isn't it interesting that the believers at Ephesus got onto Paul's prayer list just about the time people would get off of ours? Isn't it great? God saved Mary, now let's pray for Bill. Well, that's not the way the Apostle did.

He said, we're so pleased to hear that God has saved you, now we put you on our prayer list. Well, that isn't just the way we thought about it, was it? But it's the way the Lord Jesus does it. He says, I'm not praying for the world, I'm praying for them thou hast given me out of the world.

And the Apostle said, I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, so now I put you on my prayer list and I'm praying for you. What is he praying for? That the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, will give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that their eyes of their understanding may be opened, that they may know. Now, in a sense, we begin with our continued study at this point in the 18th verse, that we may know there are three things that he cites here that he wants us to know.

They must be very inclusive. They must have dimensions far beyond the mere sequence of words. There must be something he implies and we can infer that corresponds to what the Father purposed, what the Son provided, and now that the Spirit of God is going to illumine to our hearts as well we trust as he did to the hearts of the church at Ephesus.

So notice then, in Ephesians 1 beginning with verse 18, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us who believe. Three things, and these three things will, I believe, give to us some idea of the scope of God's grace, that we might know what is the hope. And the word hope really is expectation.

Hope has been defined by one of the dictionaries as being an expectation, a valid expectation, based upon and legitimate grounds. Is it going to be sunshiny today? Well, I hope so. Well, I don't really know anything about it, but I hope so.

Are you going to get a promotion this year? Well, I hope so. They don't know anything about it, but we hope so. Now, that's not the manner in which the word is used in the New Testament.

Not here. Not something that has the prospect of of not happening, because it's just wishful thinking. This is a valid expectation based upon reasonable grounds.

God had had considerable foundation for his hope, that hope that we had. Now, notice again, it's not only a reasonable, valid expectation based upon reasonable grounds, but it is the hope of his calling. In most of the commentaries I have on this portion of Ephesians, I find that following a tendency that's very common to my heart, and I'm sure to that of the commentators, that it sounds something like this, that we might know what is the hope that we have been called to.

Well, obviously the scripture has a great deal to say about that, and we're very interested in that. But just because that's the natural tendency, it doesn't seem quite right that we should twist the text, the original text, to make it fit our convenience. I think the text really says precisely what the King James from which I'm reading says.

What is it? The hope of his calling. Now, did the Lord Jesus Christ have a call? Of course he did. Where did it begin? Well, it began before the foundation of the world, didn't it? It began back there when God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this God who is loved, yearned for with an eternally, an eternal yearning,

yearned for someone upon whom he, God in his trinity, could pour his love.

You see, in a sense, love is incomplete without an object, without someone that needs it, that understands it, that can enjoy it, and can return it in such a way as to satisfy the heart of the one that's originally given the love. Now, the only being that the Bible says that God loves is man. He made other beings we don't know a great deal about them.

He made Lucifer. The Scripture doesn't say God ever loved Lucifer. He made Cherubim and Seraphim, and I've accumulated a world of ignorance about both.

I really don't know much about Cherubim or Seraphim, but I know one thing. The Bible doesn't say that God loved them, and it does not say either in what sense Cherubim and Seraphim differ from man. But the only being that God has said that he made in his image and in his likeness is man.

And the only being that God has said he loves is man. And in a sense, perhaps the reason is that because we can only love that which is like us. You know, we're accustomed to using the word rather loosely, aren't we? You've heard people say, we love our new house, or I love that shade of blue, or, well, I just love this new car, or where I come from, I love southern fried chicken.

You know, chicken and cars and houses and colors can't understand and appreciate what's being poured on them. And they don't need it to be complete, and they can't return it. So as a manner of speaking, we have abused the word love when we so use it.

And I'd like to rescue the little word, shake it out of all of this abuse, and pick it up and leave it so that it's used only when it's appropriately used. That's in two directions. To love people who are like you and love God in whose image you are made.

And that's the only time and place to use the word love. All these other things, like, enjoy, appreciate. Some other word, please.

Let's keep this word love so that it has some meaning when we really need it. Not wear it out in the useless and the trivial, but so when we come to want to actually express something, we have a trite and meaningless symbol. Now, God had in his heart a great yearning and longing.

God as father wanted children. And God as son, as bridegroom yearned for a bride. Someone with whom he could share all that he is and all that he has and all that he's doing and wants to do.

They say that one reason men work hard, one of the primary drives of American and European energies and activities is so that they can please the woman in their life, their wife or whoever it might be. But this is one of the primary driving forces in human experience. Men work so that they can have that which will please and satisfy that woman in their life for whom they're working.

And we understand something of this. We understand that God made the world as he beautifully, as he did, so that he might have something that would please his beloved. As father, he wanted to have that which would please his children.

As bridegroom, he wanted to have that which would please his bride. And so he made the world and all that's in it in that way and for that purpose. Now, this ancient longing, this ancient call included the fact that this one made in his image and made in his likeness had to be given certain qualities if he was to be the

object of his love.

I remember years ago at the University of Minnesota, a student said, why did God ever make man in the first place if he knew that man was going to do all the cruel things that he's doing? This was back in the Second World War and word had come of some of the atrocities that had grown out of that time of carnage. He said, why did God ever make man so that he could sin? Well, that's not an immature, childish question that should be passed off with a flip of the tongue or the finger or a toss of the head. It's an important question.

And it's one that's involved here in his calling. After all, what is sin? I think that we've got two definitions that fit close together and we should see them briefly in this context. First, what's temptation? Well, to find out what's temptation, you've got to find out how God made man.

When he made us, he said of the man that he had made, it is good. And we go back and we look at that creature that he had made in his image and said was good, and we find that he gave to that being, to man, certain drives or urges or propensities or appetites, you call them what you will. They're there.

For instance, he knew that we would be nourished by the repeated intake of food, so he wired us in such a way that our computer tells us now and then that we're hungry. We call that computer report an appetite. We call it hunger.

And God put it into us so that when there's a need for food, our systems rings a lot of bells and lights go on, so to speak, and say you better get some because we're running out down here. This urge or drive for hunger was the way God put us together. It's the way he wired us up.

And then he knew that we learn in sequence. We're microcosms of God in his image, but on a miniature scale. God is infinite and we're finite.

And God knows everything at simultaneously. He never learns anything new, and we don't know simultaneously. We only learn sequentially or in sequence.

We learn, for instance, one day in school that two and two makes four. We think we've mastered arithmetic. We go back the next day and she tells us two and three makes five, and she's thrown us all out of gear and spoiled our whole relationship to arithmetic because that's how we learn.

One thing one day and another the next until we go on and on and on and either quit or just decide we've learned all we want to learn. But whatever we know today, we acquired item by item and fact by fact. Now there's a hunger that's in us that God put there.

It's that hunger that's expressed by usually one of the first words your child learns. Why? Why mommy? What's this? Why mommy? Why? That is God's little bell ringing in there in the computer saying there's so much to know and you've got to learn all you can as fast as you can. Mother prays, oh Heavenly Father, I don't want my child to be dumb and not able to speak.

But six months later, she's saying, Lord, couldn't you slow him down a little? His why all the time is getting a little bit, a little bit heavy. I don't want him to be retarded, but just retired a few whys. No, it's not going to work that way.

God wired that little tyke to learn and put into him a drive for knowledge, a drive for sex. God made Adam and Eve and out from that pair would come this beloved, these children that would satisfy his father's heart, this bride that would satisfy the bridegroom's heart. So he gave to us a driver, an urge for sex.

Then God had made such a wonderful world, he gave to us an urge, a drive for, or hunger for beauty and for pleasure. He wanted us to enjoy what he had made. Then he intended us to serve as the lords of and rulers of his creation, so he gave to us this drive to govern and to take charge and to control.

So for, because he was a protecting, caring father, he gave to us an appetite for security. So with the drive for knowledge and for hunger and for food and for sex and for security and for pleasure and for authority, he looked at the man into whom he'd put all of these and he said, it is good. So don't talk about the appetites being bad.

You malign the creator when you do that. What happened? What was the difficulty? Into the garden came the serpent, and what was, what did he do? He tempted Eve. Now, what's temptation? I've said all of that to say this.

What's temptation? Well, let me give you a definition. Temptation is the proposition presented to your intellect to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. Now, there wasn't anything wrong with her appetite for food or pleasure or for even status, secure authority.

God had given her these. What was wrong with the whole proposition? Lucifer was proposing to her that she satisfy these good appetites in a way that God had forbidden. That's temptation.

Now, what's sin? Sin is the decision of the will to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. Now, if God had made man so that he couldn't sin, then he would have had to have made man without an imagination, because it's at that level that we're tempted, mentally visualizing satisfying good appetites in a bad way. And secondly, he would have had to have made man without the ability to decide to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way.

And in dust, man would have been a mere automaton, a machine. Can you imagine a father away as I was for years as an evangelist and in Bible teaching ministry coming back to my little family and seeing my children there, now pretty well grown up, it's not nearly as appropriate as it once was. But can you imagine my having to hypnotize my children until my mind control theirs and then to give them orders to come over, stand in front of me, put your arms around my neck, place your lips upon my cheek, say, I love you, daddy.

Can you see the little automatons march over like robots and go through that motion? Can you imagine that such a performance for a moment would satisfy the need in a lonely daddy's heart? Nor would it have been worthwhile for God to have waited from eternity past to have man turn out to be an automaton, a machine that marched over and said, God, I love you. No, he had to make man capable of saying, I hate you. I won't.

So that when he said, I love you, I will. That love, that obedience had meaning to the heart of God. Now, anticipating man's action, the Lord Jesus Christ became the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.

He wanted the beloved so much. He yearned with such an ancient yearning and longing. So deep was the desire of the father for children, of the bridegroom for a bride, that he was prepared to make man as he

had to make him if he was to be child and bride to God, even so that he could sin.

And the Lord Jesus, as it were, said, Father, I am prepared to have that bride. And for thou, that thou canst have the children to die, to become what they are so that they can truly be remade in our image and in our likeness. And so before he ever made man, the Lord Jesus Christ became the Lamb slain before the world was founded.

Now, there was an expectation that he had. There was, in the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus, the one who ruled the universe, the one by whose outstretched hand and scepter the world had been created, by whose spoken word stars had leaped into existence and found their place and stayed in their course. This one, God the Eternal Son, in the fullness of time, took off the diadem of his glory and he put it down.

He took off the robes of his majesty and he folded them up in the scepter of his power and he laid it by. And the next moment he answered the call, the eternal call in the heart of Triune God for a beloved. What was it? It was an answer to a call that had been there from before the world was made.

And he was off on that journey, that journey into time. And one cell in the body of Mary was quickened by the Holy Ghost who overshadowed her. God, in his omnipresence, compressed the eternal Son by whom the world was made to join one cell invisible save by a microscope, so that that life which was conceived in Mary and born of Mary was none other than Emmanuel, God come in the flesh, who'd taken upon himself our form and likeness.

He'd made us in his image and now he was made in our image with a body like unto our body, with all the limitations of it, with all the appetites and urges and drives of it. As he made it, when he said it was good, and that babe which was born of Mary was truly God-man, God come in the flesh, the council said, he was very God of very God, for there were those who doubted his deity. He was very man of very man, for there were those who doubted his humanity.

And then he grew increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man in response to his call, the call of his heart. In his ministry he declared, I have no fear that my coming is in vain. The Father has told me that if I will declare what he's given to me to declare, that all that the Father's given me shall come unto me.

This wasn't a speculation. This wasn't just a fantasy trip. When the Lord Jesus came, he knew that there would be those who would receive his word and would believe on him.

And so there can be no hope in this regard, because he has been told by the Father that all that the Father has given him shall come to him. But there is another element that's involved in this text, the hope of his calling, the reasonable expectation based upon valid grounds. What is that? Well, if it is to be established as a fact that there would be those who would come, who would repent of their sins, and who would trust in his name and would be born into his family through faith in his finished work and faith in him, then it must be that this hope of his calling has to do with the kind of people that are being written to in this epistle.

Now, what kind of people are they? Saints at Ephesus, faithful in Christ Jesus, of whose faith the apostle could say he gave thanks, for he saw it certified with a hallmark of genuineness that couldn't be counterfeited, love unto all the saints. So the hope of his calling must have to do with believers. It must be, therefore, something that a believer, someone that is in Christ, can do.

He can't mean me. Well, he does mean you, because he says 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 mine to have a chance at all, and I wouldn't do it.

And so are you. So are you 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 loves you when he knew the worst about you? You know, if most of our friends knew about us what God and we know, we wouldn't have many friends.

The only thing is that if we knew about them what they and God know, they wouldn't have us as friends either, because, or we'd all be friends because 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 wolf 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 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 wants 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 same, 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 to 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 my, 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 take? Lord, you know those awful heathens that our brother Stoutman'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 he is 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, do you think he really wants to live in me? All of you knew what kind of a life I lived before I was saved. Well, if it was anything different or worse than the people up at Ephesus, I'll be surprised, because if what they hadn't done, it just wasn't, just couldn't be done.

That's all. They did it, they went through 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, the second part of this first chapter, put it 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 10, 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. It's amazing how

much you know.

Have you ever heard the word antihistamines? Of course you have. Okay, that's the very word from the Greek text is here, antihistamines. Exactly, just picked right up out of the text.

And having done all antihistamines, come again so as to cause it to stop. And having done all the 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 ye 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 spirit in high places. So, verses 20, 21, 22 tie in with Ephesians 6, 10 through 18. That this one, the germ of the one is fulfilled in the other.

Now let's look for a moment at the implication. Some weeks before coming here, Dr. Nathan Bailey wrote a letter to all the assigned speakers in the Lyons summer camp meeting 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 in preparation for this 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, and 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 rite, 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 rite. 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 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 the scars. 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 send 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, and we always measure 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, Malachal in upper Nile province. And there, he said, I heard a man like you. I've never seen one with face like yours since then.

And I heard him talk the sweetest talk, and 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.

And 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, mark her, scar her, brand her. She's mine. Oh, she knows you, but she doesn't accept you.

You can't get your people to care. He 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 lasers.

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.

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? For 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 in Chattanooga, and he'd asked me to come for a week's missionary conference, which is 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 led of the Lord to ask 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.

And 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, and 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. It's 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, debauched 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. Here's 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 heavenly, what the position is to enforce the victory of Calvary over a defeated foe, and who the people are, people just like us, who had been dead in our trespasses and sins 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, Oh God, Father of Jesus, open the eyes of my understanding that this truth is not just the 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. 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 of know and 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 offer of 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 call. 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, to 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 discipline silence.

And 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. Then we're going to stand for prayer and we're going to be dismissed.

But 60 seconds of disciplined silence. Shall we stand together? Brother Jones, would you dismiss this with prayer?

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