

Ron Bailey - Part 1

by Ron Bailey

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Description

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Transcript

I've had the pleasure to release some afternoon sessions that are a bit different, more direct. We'll just get in and get on with it. Richard and I, some years ago, were out in Malawi, working with some African pastors.

And we had quite a few meetings that we were having, and these dear African brothers have discovered the word seminar. And everything that was advertised was a seminar. So there was a seminar here, there was a seminar there.

Everything was a seminar. And I was a little bit mischievous at times. And I said, well, I've never been to university.

One of the African pastors told me, we don't sing choirs at the seminar. But if you're going to give prayer, let's pray. Again, for the access that we have into you, we thank you for it.

And advocate divine. That we meet you genuinely in your presence. I'm here to speak to you in church.

And I ask you all to open our fellowship, Lord, in the scriptures. Open the book to us. Open your heart to us.

Open our hearts to us. Lord, make this time a time that writes something in our hearts. Significant is heard from your son.

Your glory, by our name, Jesus Christ. Amen. Now, I'm staying with a friend who lives 50 miles away.

And I slept very well last night. Fortunately, because I still have a student tomorrow. So this is a surprise for me.

But I'm speaking today. And I need to ask you, as are my friends, Would you mind turning your feet to the edge of your cross? I want to begin by looking at this meeting of four parents. With these men who are elders in the church in Ephesus.

He calls them to him at this place called Miletus. And he has something that he wants to destroy. He doesn't expect ever to see them again.

This is their last meeting to have. And these are the things that he wants to abolish in their hearts. These are his last words, in a sense, to the church in Ephesus.

Of course, they're not the Lord's last words to the church in Ephesus. And a little bit later on, we shall find another word that the Lord has to speak to the church in Ephesus. But I'm going to start with chapter 20.

And I will read from... Let me just read from verse 31. That will give us the context, I think. Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

So now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified. I'm not going to read anymore. I just want to draw your attention to this little phrase that Paul uses when he speaks to a young man who he doesn't expect ever to be able to speak to again.

And he says, I commend you. Let me read it properly so you can read it in here. So now brethren, verse 32.

I commend you to God and to the word of His grace. What did Paul mean when he spoke of the word of God's grace? Well, he didn't mean the epistle to the... He didn't mean the first and second Corinthians. He didn't mean Romans because they hadn't written that.

And yet he says to me, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able. I'm trying to... Paul's not going to break every single sentence like this. But I want to make a point that we sometimes describe grace as being unmerited favor.

God's unmerited love towards us. And that is true in as much as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Because grace is not just God's attitude towards us.

Grace is God's imparted enabling. So that God makes it possible for us to do and be what we could never do and be if God did not speak to us, speak the word of grace to us. There's an enabling power in the word of God.

This isn't theology I'm speaking to you. This is the way that God intended His church to function. He intended it to function in the way that Jesus functioned when He said, you remember in the Temptation, at one point He said, Man shall not live by bread alone.

Now notice the tenses, please, if you will. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that is promised. That's to say, He saw the word of God as a dynamic thing.

Most of my time in this book, but He wasn't just thinking about the book. He was thinking about the way in which God brings His Word into the situation. His transforming Word.

And when God's Word comes, it really does alter all the possibilities for all kinds of things that may have been locked into positions and you thought, that's it, we're stuck with this, it's always going to be like this. When the Word of God comes, it changes. It changes all the tensions.

When the Lord Jesus was in the synagogue during the day, a situation that was a test case took place, where a man was discovered with a wooden hand. And they wanted to see what the Lord would do with this man. And the Lord requested, commanded that he should come into the midst.

And then He said to this man, stretch forth your hand. Now it would have been very possible for the man to say, but that's my problem. I can't stretch forth my hand.

This hand doesn't stretch forth. It's a withered hand. That's why I'm here.

I need you to do something for me. He's already done something, He's spoken to you. The moment He speaks to you, you can do impossible things.

You can stretch forth withered hands. You can go and sin no more. You can walk on water.

You can do anything if the Word is great. Not just theorists, not theology, but when God speaks to us. One of the things that Paul believed in was, he believed in the Holy Spirit.

That was his confidence in the way he led these churches. He didn't believe that they were dependent upon his ministry alone. And that when Paul was absent, everything was for Christmas.

He believed in the first soft presence of the Holy Spirit. And believed that the Spirit of God would bring the Word of God. So he commends them to the Word, to God and to the Word of His grace.

Which is able to build you up in some sense. And to give you an inheritance. Do you believe that God is able in this day and age to speak into your life of change? Do you believe there is still power in the Word of God? I'm not talking about Bible verses, I love Bible verses.

I'm talking about the way that God addresses something to your situation. The old Quakers would have said that God speaks to your need. What they meant by that was that God doesn't just aim roughly over the head so that you can pick up what you can.

But He has a way of speaking directly to the heart.

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