

To Make All Men See

I have been preparing this message for quite a while, and it has to do with Paul and the Ephesian letter. I feel like a bull rider sitting on something so immense, so powerful and so great, I feel helpless. I do not know how those bull riders feel, but I would be totally helpless. That is kind of the way I feel this morning as I come to share this. I guess all I can say is open the gate and hang on for eight seconds.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we come to You this morning. Oh Lord, what an immense, awesome book and message our brother has given to us. Lord, I am so inadequate, but we come not counting on my words but on the Holy Spirit this morning to enlighten us, to give us that spirit of revelation that Paul talks about in this book. So we ask that you bless us and bless this meeting. May Your Spirit move in all of our lives and hearts this morning that we might see Jesus. We pray in Thy precious name. Amen.

Paul's Passion

In the book of Philippians, which is another letter written from prison, at least most feel that way, along with Ephesians and Colossians. Paul was under house arrest when he wrote these prison letters. He was awaiting trial in Rome and was not quite sure what the outcome might be at this point. It was really near the end of his ministry for a couple of years later he would be martyred for the namesake of Christ, as he was told in the beginning. The Lord did not tell him he was going to be martyred, but He did tell him that he would suffer for His namesake.

Near the end of Paul's ministry and his life, he said, "That I may know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable to his death" (Philippians 3:10). This was Paul's passion. Ever since the Damascus road encounter with the Lord Jesus where he had that great vision of Christ, this was Paul's

passion. He never faltered from his passion to know the Lord all the way to the end.

As we come to this time of ministry, we have already talked about resurrection. Indeed, most of Christianity sees resurrection as an event that occurred a few thousand years ago when Jesus rose from the dead, which is absolutely true. However, very few really know that Jesus *is* the resurrection. They just see it as an event, a religious event, but Jesus Himself is the resurrection. He said, “I am the resurrection.” That is a reality. And yet, fewer still have experienced that resurrection life. Paul certainly did. It was by resurrection life that Paul was able to live and survive during his years of ministering.

I want to share what I think is the essence of the burden this morning, and it comes out of the book of Ephesians. As we look into this letter, I think it is critical that we enter into the spirit of the book, not just learn the letter and the principles and the doctrine, but may we enter into the spirit of which this letter was written.

Ephesians 3:8-11: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and *to make all men see* what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The Mystery of Christ Revealed

What a mouthful! The unsearchable riches of Christ, the fellowship of the mystery that was in hidden in eternity past. Eternal life is brought into this passage, and it is according to God’s eternal purpose. The breadth of what Paul is trying to bring to us is absolutely amazing. But I think here is what I want us to see as we read and study this book. And it is in verse 9: “To make all men see.” That was Paul’s heart. That is why

he wrote this letter that we might see. Paul is not giving us a doctrinal dissertation in this letter. He is not really giving us a teaching. That is not his concern. He is really proclaiming the greatness of the Christ that has been revealed to him which he has experienced throughout his ministry and through his life. It is a proclamation, a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says that it was revealed to him. The mystery was revealed to him. And Paul is saying, “Look, with all of my heart I want all men to see. I do not want you just to have knowledge of what I have seen. I want you to see far deeper than just knowing; it is seeing. I want you to have the spiritual revelation that I had of our Lord Jesus Christ and all of His work on Calvary’s cross. He wanted us to experience what he had experienced, something of the fulness of Jesus Christ that all men might see.

Paul’s First Encounter with the Lord Jesus

When Paul met our Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, it was a revolution in Paul’s life. In fact, so dramatic was his revelation of Jesus Christ that when he met Christ on the Damascus Road, the first word out of his mouth was “Lord.” This self-made Pharisee was on his knees. He was blinded from the brightness of the light that he had seen, and he said, “The one thing that he knew was this: “LORD”. Whoever this was He was Lord, and he was willing to submit to His Lordship. This was an amazing encounter that Paul had, and it changed his life forever.

You need to remember that Paul’s whole life was steeped in Judaism because that is what he knew. He was passionate about learning the Scriptures, pursuing and following the law of Moses. He said that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees, and he had a desire to serve God. He was born in Tarsus, a Roman city, so he was a Roman by birth. But his allegiance was not to Rome at all but to the Jewish religion to which he was in full allegiance.

We need to see how ingrained this was in Paul, and the reason why it was so engrained. If Paul at that point in his life had been asked why

he was so dedicated to Judaism, he would have said, “God gave us the Ten Commandments. They came from the hand of God and not from man. The law of Moses came from God. The covenant that God made was with the people of the nation of Israel of which I am a member. The Passover Feast that we celebrate is a celebration of God’s release of my people from bondage four hundred years ago who were a predestined people to be a testimony to God on this earth. We have the tabernacle where the actual presence of God resides, and the temple. The priesthood that God gave to us was that we might be able to serve and worship the living God. The sacrifices we make are to God. We had our father Abraham to whom the God of glory appeared, and we are Abraham’s children. We are his heritage—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God raised up Moses, who was our greatest leader, to lead us out of bondage. He gave us prophets and kings. He gave us the greatest king that has ever been—King David.”

However, Paul did not realize until later that all of these were symbols. They were all representatives of God, but they were not the real thing. Later, they are referred to as the shadow of things to come, but they were not the real thing.

Paul could legitimately say that all of this was from God, and it meant everything to him. Unfortunately, the Jewish system had become corrupted. The Lord rebuked many of the Pharisees for not following the law that they preached. “Hypocrites,” He called them. In one place He even called them vipers, but Paul was not that way. Paul even confessed that according to the law he was blameless, he had followed it to the T. They had over ten thousand rules that they had to go by to interpret the law of Moses. For instance, on the Sabbath, they said, “Okay, this is the Sabbath. You cannot cook on the Sabbath, (most women would love that.) You cannot pick up sticks on the Sabbath to build a fire with, and you can only walk a certain distance. If you exceed that distance, you have violated the law.” In other words, they took what was from God

and corrupted it. So they just began following rules instead of following God, and that was Paul's life.

At the age of twelve, probably Paul went to Jerusalem to study the law. He lived in Tarsus, four hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem. That is how far he traveled. And he studied under Gamaliel who was the most learned man among the Pharisees at that time. In fact Gamaliel was also in the Sanhedrin, and today he would be similar to the chief justice of the Supreme Court, the judiciary arm of the Sanhedrin. But Paul was no hypocrite. He was totally given to the Jewish religion and followed it to a T. Judaism was a part of his very fiber and being. It was the purpose of his life and that which he lived for. And he, like the rest of the Jewish nation, was looking for the Messiah. But their view of the Messiah was that He would come and overthrow the Roman government which suppressed them, and He would become the earthly King, and the Jews would rule over their nation which would be the ruling nation.

The Dispensation of Law Changed to the Dispensation of Grace

We need to know something of this background to appreciate Paul's letter to the Ephesians. When Jesus Christ came, we know He came as the Son of God. It was a revolution to the religion of that day which was the Jewish religion. Jesus Christ came not only as the Son of Man, but He said He was the Son of God, and they could not receive that. But it was a great change in the dispensation. When Jesus Christ came, it changed from the dispensation of law to the dispensation of grace. Grace and truth came with Jesus Christ, it was a whole new paradigm in today's vernacular. His whole world was about to shift. The new paradigm was going to be a shift from the shadow to the reality, a shift from law and earthly promises to grace and spiritual blessings and promises in Christ, a shift from the nation of Israel being a testimony of God on earth, in which they still are in a way, but it was going to be the church which is referred to now as the holy nation by Peter. A great change was about

to take place, and Paul was not ready for it, and neither was the Jewish nation.

Out of the eternal counsels of time and history in the past, God began to reveal a mystery that He had hidden until this point in time. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the Son of God, something they were not ready for. Jesus Christ brought out the onslaught of spiritual forces of darkness as had never been seen before. They are described in Ephesians 6 as the principalities and powers of darkness. Once the reality was here, they came out in fury against our Lord Jesus.

When our Lord was here, He said, "You are searching the Scriptures, (He would have told Paul the same thing) and you are seeking eternal life by following all the rules, and yet these Scriptures are speaking of Me. You are missing Me." He claimed to be the Son of God. "Blasphemy!" Paul would have said. He was in agreement with all the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees. "This is blasphemy to even consider that You are the Son of God." The Lord Jesus said, "If you destroy this temple, in three days I will raise it up again." "Blasphemy! You are talking about destroying this temple that came from God?! You have got to be kidding me. It is blasphemy!" And their response to Jesus was "away with Him!" That was their response to the Messiah, the Savior of the world. You have to remember that in Paul's eyes and in the eyes of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, Jesus was an imposter, and His followers were traitors. They said of the miracles Jesus did, "No, they are of the devil, not God." Jesus was an imposter, and His followers were traitors.

Interestingly enough, most believe that Paul was a part of the Sanhedrin because he got letters from the Judicial Council to go out and persecute the Christians. In other words, Saul was the enforcer of the Jewish Judicial Council, and when they made a ruling, Paul was used to enforce it, if there was resistance.

The First Martyr

That brings us to Stephen, the first martyr that is mentioned in the Word of God after Christ had come. In Acts 6:8 it says that Stephen was full of faith and power, doing wonders and miracles. He was speaking the Word of God, and testifying that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God. “Blasphemy!” they said. “He is speaking against the law of Moses and teaching that the temple was going to be destroyed by Jesus.” Of course, this was not really true, but the Judicial Council brought Stephen before the people, and as he began his defense his face began to glow like that of an angel. And he began to tell them of the history of Israel and their relationship with God. He ended by telling these people of their true condition, and this is what he said to them: “You are stiff-necked; you have hardened hearts, you have deaf ears, and you are resisting the Holy Spirit. Your fathers persecuted and killed the prophets, and yet the prophets were speaking of this Jesus whom you have betrayed and murdered.” That is what he said to them.

Then he said, “You speak of the law, but you have not kept it.” They rushed upon him, even gnashing their teeth, and they took him out and stoned him. As he was being stoned, it says in the Word of God, he looked up and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He cried out: “Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” That was his testimony, and his face was glowing like an angel. He said, “I see Jesus; He is standing at the right hand of God. He is the Son of God,” and they stoned Him to death. Saul, the enforcer was there, and he said, “I consented to His death.” He even guarded the belongings of those that were stoning Stephen. Saul did not see what Stephen saw. He did not see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, but he did see his face glowing like that of an angel, and he did hear the testimony as he was looking up and saw Jesus, the Son of God standing at the right hand of God.

Saul Meets Jesus

Brothers and sisters, I think there is no doubt that this made a great impression on Paul, and it began to work on his conscience because later when the Lord challenged him, He said, “You have been kicking against the goads. your conscience has been pricked, but you are struggling, and you are fighting.” Paul was so infuriated at this traitor—at least he considered him a traitor to the Jewish religion—that he went to the council and said, “I want letters, giving me permission to go to Damascus, 250 miles away, a Gentile city. I want to go there and seek out the Christians and throw them in prisons.” What a man! So zealous!

And he did go, but on the way to Damascus, a bright light shone before him, and he was blinded because the light was so intense and so bright. And he heard these words: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Saul, blinded by the light, said, “Who are You, Lord?” In other words, he knew this was the Lord, someone whom he needed to submit to, but he did not know who He was. “You are accusing me of persecuting You, but who are You?” And the Lord replied, “I am Jesus, the One whom you are persecuting. I know it is hard; you have been kicking against the goads. I have been trying to get through to you, but you have been resisting. You became infuriated and are now seeking to persecute even more. And when you persecute these ones, you are persecuting Me.” I can only imagine what Paul’s thoughts were at that time. I cannot say that these were his thoughts, but I could not help but put myself in my brother’s place: “Jesus, this One who was crucified on Calvary’s cross? Is that who is facing me now? Is that the Lord Jesus, the crucified One? Is that the One whom Stephen testified to seeing, standing at the right hand of God? I saw that he was stoned to death and executed at my consent. And now this One whom I am before is saying, “It was He whom I was persecuting.”

As you read the word, you will find that these believers were the body of Christ on this earth, and as he persecuted them he was persecuting

Christ. I can hear Paul thinking, “But I did not realize this. I did not know this. I did not understand. Yes, this thing that I saw and heard when Stephen was stoned has really gotten to me and bothers me, and now I see it as Jesus, the same Jesus whom I was persecuting. I thought I was doing God’s will, but I was really fighting against God Himself. I was fighting against Jesus my Lord. Lord, I repent before You, and I submit.”

Then Paul says, “Lord, what will You have me do?” He was fully submitted, fully committed, and fully convicted. I think the reason why we have such poor births, or premie births today in the Christian faith is because people really have not been convicted as much as they have been convinced of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing to be convinced, but that does not bring salvation. It is conviction that you are a sinner, and you need to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. I think it is so true of many Christian lives, (I know it is of mine) that there are many years between the time a person accepts Jesus as their Savior until they accept Him as Lord.

That was not true of Paul. It was all in one moment. And that is really the way it should be, but he came under such conviction and he saw the reality that Jesus was Lord of his life.

Paul Meets the Body of Christ

Then the Lord Jesus did an interesting thing. He left Paul blind for three days, and I really think he needed that time to begin to grasp what had just happened to him. And the Lord sent Ananias to him. Do you know who Ananias was? He is only mentioned one time, but he was a brother in Damascus. We do not know if he was one of the leading brothers, but one thing I am quite sure of is that he was full of the Holy Spirit. When the Lord spoke to Ananias, he said, “Lord, You want to send me to open the eyes of Saul, this guy that is going around throwing everyone in prison and murdering people? Stephen was murdered at his direction and consent.” And the Lord said, “Yes, I want you to go.” And he went; that is amazing! It shows that brother Ananias was a good

brother. We do not know if he had any real standing as one of the leaders in the church. He was not named as one of the seven chosen to serve the tables as Stephen was. He was just a brother. The Lord was showing Paul that he needed his brother; he needed his brothers and sisters. Paul would not have received his sight had that brother not come to him and laid his hands upon him.

Then the Lord told him through Ananias: "You are a vessel of God; you have been chosen to bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles, before the kings, and before Israel. And you will suffer greatly, not for punishment, but because you will lift up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will suffer for the Lord's name."

Brothers and sisters, there is no doubt that he was a changed man. He was not just a convinced man, he was a changed man, convicted and changed. He was no longer married to Judaism. He was no longer bound to Judaism; he was bound to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I have not come to destroy the law or all the things that God had given to the Jewish nation. I have fulfilled them; I am the reality. They were just shadows of Jesus Christ. Paul, you have been hanging onto symbols, you hung on to the shadows, but I am the reality that all the symbols represented. I am all of the words of the Old Testament." Paul's life was changed.

Has our life changed? I ask the question: Have we encountered the Lord in such a way that our lives have changed? That we have given up trying to follow rules and the law to following the Holy Spirit, and following Him thoroughly and without question? Are we hanging onto traditions or is it real? I would ask you today that whenever you come and take this table: "Is it just a religious act that you perform or is there something living about it?" We do this week after week not to make it a tradition or a thing that is required. The Lord Himself says, "As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of Me." It is real; it is living. Enter into the spirit of it when you come. Ask the Lord, "Bring me into the spirit of this table."

Pau's explanation was in Corinthians, where he said that the Lord revealed this to him about the table. He was not at the table. He was not one of the disciples at the Lord's last supper, but the Lord came to Paul and told him how special that last supper was to Him, and He revealed the spiritual reality of that table to Paul which he shares in Corinthians. This is the blood of the new covenant that God has made with you. This is His body broken for you. That is the spirit of the table.

When we take this table, I hope we are convicted and released. I hope that we come into the joy of being with our Lord Jesus as He said, "I am in your midst where two or three are gathered together in my name." That is the reality. Just taking the elements is not the reality. The reality is through your spirit in union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual revelation is what our brother had. In the book of Ephesians he prays that the Lord would give to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Let me say that knowledge will not emancipate you; it is revelation. It is when the Lord Jesus, by the Spirit, speaks to you and makes this word living to you that brings emancipation in your life for release from bondage, the break from tradition.

You would never have been able to convince Paul by argument, by reasoning, by convincing him through trying to educate him, teach him or persuade him that Jesus was Lord until he met Him on the Damascus road. That was revelation. Up until then he was bound by following rules. Now he was released to follow the living Christ, the reality. God's reality to us is Jesus Christ. God wants us to know Him, to be with Him, to fellowship with Him, and it is in Jesus Christ. That is why He sent Him. Paul was fully emancipated. You would have never been able to persuade Paul to be a Christian. It had to come by revelation.

Now might I say this to you? You might say, "Have I ever had revelation?" If you have come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have had revelation. It is because the Lord spoke to you in your heart. It is because you were convicted in your heart, and you willingly gave up your life to

Him and said, "You are Lord of my life." Yes, you have had revelation. Now I have seen people that have been convinced, but I have also seen their lives, and there is no change. They are convinced, and they may even start fellowshiping with saints, but they still do not know the Lord. We must know Him by revelation, and revelation only comes from God. He speaks to you by the Holy Spirit. You better be thankful that we have the Holy Spirit to speak to us.

Revelation Sets Us Free

Paul was so captured. He later said in Philippians: "I have given up all things. I consider all things to be rubbish that I might know Jesus Christ." He had the Jewish heritage. He had it all. He was a man's man among the Pharisees, and he said that was just rubbish. Now I know Jesus. Revelation emancipates us; it opens our eyes. Revelation sets us free. That is why Paul says in Ephesians, "I pray for revelation for you, saints, as you read this letter."

Let me say one more time; this is not a doctrinal presentation. It took revelation for Paul and not the letter of the law. It became living to Paul because revelation is living. It affects your life, it changes your life, it captures your life, it gives you a new purpose, and it gives you your vocation for life.

In this book of Ephesians Paul is trying to share all of his revelation of Christ, all of his experiences of Christ into one little, short letter. It is a concentrated letter. All of that first chapter is in Christ, and even then he does not exhaust Christ. If you read King James, verses 3-17, it is the longest sentence in the Bible. He just goes on and on. Our salvation is in Christ, and it stops. It is like he has to take a breath and then he said, "Wait a minute, I can tell you all of this, but it is not going to mean anything. I pray that the Lord will give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation as you read this letter. He does not want it to be just knowledge.

You remember the story of the man born blind? After Jesus had touched him and he could see, the Pharisees and the family and friends all gathered around him. And they said, "Is this really the one who was born blind?" They even questioned the parents. "Is this the one born blind?" "Yes, that is our son." "How did this happen? What happened? Who did it? How did it happen? What was the method that was used?" They said, "I do not know; you are going to have to ask him." So the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin interrogated him three times. And he finally said, "Look, this is all I know. Jesus touched my eyes. Once I was blind, but now I see." That was his testimony. "That is foolishness," they said. They would not believe him, but he was there, and he could see, and they could not deny it. That is revelation; once I was blind but now I see.

Let me ask you a question: Do you believe revelation is possible for you? Can you have revelation? In Ephesians 5:14 Paul says, "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you life." In other words, you cannot be passive about this matter of receiving light in revelation from the Lord. You have to be active. He said, "Arise." You cannot stay asleep. Wake up, pray. That is the way you receive light. And that is why we have been consistently praying on Wednesday night for light and revelation as we study this book.

I want us to grasp something of the greatness of what Paul had seen and experienced in his life. He concentrated all of twenty-six years into this one little letter of what he has seen and experienced.

There is a soap on the market that is really good at getting grease out called Dawn. That is the one they use to clean all the ducks when the oil spills happen. I bought some recently and noticed that along with the ordinary version of Dawn, there was one that said, 3x. In other words, you can get the concentrated version of Dawn which I bought, and it is three times more powerful and effective, and you do not use as much. Anyway, when you come to the book of Ephesians, this is Paul's life all concentrated into one book. Of course, there is more in Colossians and

Philippians also. I cannot leave that out, but this book so concentrates it all.

That first chapter is like an explosion. The words just pour out of Paul's heart. You are blessed in Christ, chosen in Christ, without blame in Christ, predestined in Christ, accepted in Christ, redeemed in Christ. It is glory. He exhausts the language; he cannot find the superlatives that are needed to describe what he has seen and experienced. He talks about the hope of His calling, the riches of His glory, the exceeding greatness of His power, the fulness of Him that fills all in all. Paul is like a dam breaking open when you read that first chapter.

Then he stops and says, "I have just got to pray at this point, and that is when he prays for wisdom and revelation. His revelation did not just start there. It was not a onetime thing in his life. The Damascus Road, of course, was his beginning, and he started revealing Christ immediately. He started preaching in the synagogues around Jerusalem right after his conversion. Of course, he was saying, "Jesus is the Son of God," and they said, "Not only is Jesus a traitor and an imposter, so is Paul." They turned against him, and they put out a dead or alive order on him. His ministry was so powerful that it shook them up, and they sought to kill him. The sentence of death was truly upon Paul. When Paul said, "The sentence of death is upon me," it literally was upon him. So much so that even thirty years later he was actually martyred, but the sentence of death was upon him the whole time that he ministered.

You will remember that one time they had to let him down in a basket to save him. Then he went to the desert area for three years. You might say, "What in the world is he doing for three years?" He had learned a lot through Gamaliel. He had all the teaching and all the learning. It has been said that the Pharisees and Sanhedrin had memorized the first five books of the Old Testament. Certainly, he knew the word of God intimately, but he did not know *the* Word. He knew the letter, but I am sure he was looking at that Old Testament in the light of his vision of

Jesus Christ, and he became more and more amazed in those three years.

I can just see him saying, “Wow! The tabernacle is where I thought God rested, but no, Jesus Christ came as the tabernacle of God. He is the temple of God. God is in Christ Jesus. I can see him saying about the Feast of Passover and how it was kept in remembrance of being freed from Egypt, but now Jesus is our Passover. We were under the slavery and penalty of death, but now Jesus has set us free. He is our Passover. He is the candlelight in the temple; He is the light of the world. There was the shewbread, but He is the bread; He is our life. The veil—oh! I did not see this before. That veil was rent when he was crucified, and now I see that that veil was the physical body of our Lord Jesus in which the glory of God was hidden. The ark was hidden behind that veil until Jesus died on that cross. Then it was opened, and now we have access to the holy of holies. There was the ark with the mercy seat on top. What was it? It was made of wood, overlaid with gold, wood speaking of humanity, gold speaking of God.

God Joins with Humanity in the Son of Man

Brothers and sisters, Paul saw it. Christ Jesus, the Son of Man is also the Son of God. It is God joined with humanity, not sinful humanity, but God joined with perfect humanity. He saw that that was the new man in you. You have a new man in you, a new I. Paul said, “Put off the old man and put on the new man. What is that new man? It is Christ in union with humanity. It is Christ that we put on. But you remember, He is now joined with us in humanity. It is not the fallen humanity that we have, but it is that perfect humanity. That is the I that He wants us to put on and live. The ark on the mercy seat was mercy, and it was the mercy of God that sent Christ to us.

The revelation did not stop with the Damascus Road experience. Remember Paul said, “He was taken to the third heaven which is where God and the throne are. It also said that He went to Paradise where those

who are asleep in Christ are waiting until the resurrection day. He was in both places. He said that he saw things unlawful for him to speak. I do not know that the word unlawful really translates into what I think Paul was trying to express. I do not think he was not permitted to speak or say. Some say that, but I will not argue with them. I believe what he is really saying is that he saw things and heard things that he honestly could not describe to us. "I do not have the ability; I do not have the words; I do not have the language." John struggled with that in the book of Revelation in expressing to us what he had seen.

I do not know if you have been to the third heaven in a revelation as our brother had. I do not think I have, but the Lord says we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. What amazing revelations our brother had!

Now you would think that after three years he would be right back in Jerusalem. But no, he goes briefly to Jerusalem, but then he goes back to his hometown of Tarsus. And for eight years he ministered around Tarsus and that region which is about four hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem. But in his eleventh year after his revelation, Barnabas seeks Paul out and brings him to the church in Antioch. They received him there, and he began to minister to the church. That is where he was when the Lord spoke to the elders and said, "Send out Paul and Barnabas for the ministry." And they did. Paul spent the next ten years on three missionary journeys, and all the experiences he had in those missionary journeys are just amazing.

Paul's Battles with the Forces of Evil

I want you to understand the forces now in which Paul had to wrestle with. The book of Acts takes you through the whole time of those missionary journeys and most of Paul's life. He was dogged everywhere he went by Judaizers who followed him. They were the ones who wanted people to stay with Judaism. "Oh, you can accept Christ, but you really need to follow the law." The Judaizers continually followed Paul everywhere he went and sometimes would go to the place before he

went in order to discredit Paul in his apostleship, his teaching, and some even sought to kill him. He did not just give us his thoughts about the powers of darkness; he experienced them working in his life.

In II Corinthians he said that he labored constantly, was flogged, whipped with thirty-nine stripes on five different occasions. He was beaten with rods on one occasion. He was stoned, and most think he was stoned to death in Lystra. He said that he was shipwrecked three times in his travels. One time he spent a whole day and night treading water in the ocean. He said that during his ministry he was weary, hungry, thirsty and in pain often. And then upon him was all the cares of the assemblies. Through it all he experienced God's grace and provision, and above all, Paul experienced resurrection life. That is the only life that could have made it through all that our brother went through. The spiritual conflict was intense with Paul. Indeed, he experienced the principalities and powers and rulers of darkness trying to take him out.

When you get to Ephesians 6, it is not a teaching on spiritual warfare; it is an admonition from Paul. He had experienced the forces of darkness and hell, and he knows if you try to bear the testimony of Jesus, you too will have to face the same thing. Jesus said that the gates of hell would come against His testimony in the church, and it has. Paul experienced it.

Twenty-six years later from the time Paul was on the Damascus Road, he was in prison. He did not know what the outcome of this trial would be. Actually, it came two years later. But for a while he was released and then was put back in prison at which time he was martyred. However, he is trying to share all of this revelation and experience with us that all men might see. You remember that the burden of this letter was that all men might see. He said, "Oh, that all men might see what I have seen, and I want to share that with you."

The Mystery of God Hidden from the Ages

He speaks of the will of God, the all-encompassing governing will of God in this book. Do you know what that will is? It is the will of God that has guided creation, that has guided Christ going to Calvary's cross, that has guided us until we have returned to our Lord Jesus Christ. There is an encompassing will of God in this letter that he shares with us. Do we know what it is? He speaks of the mystery of God that has been hidden from the ages but now is being revealed. It was real among the apostles. Do you know what that mystery is? What it is that He could not share with the Old Testament saints? But He was able to share it after Christ died and was resurrected. He speaks of the mystery of God, and there is also the mystery of Christ. Do you know the difference? He speaks of God's eternal purpose, the guiding purpose of our lives for the ages; not only the age in which we are living now, not only this earthly life, but the ages to come. There is an eternal purpose in this book. Do we know what it is? It is God's prime directive. Do we know what it is? It speaks of the exceeding greatness of our calling in view of this great purpose. Do you know what your calling is in Christ? He says that we have been chosen and predestined. What for? He speaks of the adoption of sons coming into sonship.

I want you to know what we are looking for as we go into this book. He speaks of the fulness of Christ being manifested, being expressed. Brothers and sisters, are you involved in that fulness? Are you involved in the fulness of Christ being expressed? He speaks of the body of Christ. This revelation of the body of Christ was unique to Paul. The other apostles talked about the temple of God, the house of God where God's presence would reside. Actually, Paul also spoke of this in his letter. He says, "We are a habitation for God, and Christ is the chief cornerstone. It is a living temple." He goes on to say, "We are the body of Christ, the temple is a habitation of Christ. The body of Christ is God's instrument which He will use on this earth and in the ages to come."

Is this reality to you? Or are these just metaphors? Is this a reality to you that the body of Christ is the temple of Christ? They were not to Paul; it was real. Being a part of the body of Christ is real. You are living stones being built together, and you are also joints and bands that hold the body together, building itself up in love through fellowship in Christ. Are you a functioning member of the body of Christ to be a part of the filling up of the fulness of Christ? He says that we are to walk worthy. In other words, after the first three chapters, he gets real practical about things. After he has talked about this heavenly eternal purposes, he says, "Men, love your wives." It has very much to do with God's eternal purpose. If you are a boss, you have to be careful how you work with your people. In other words, you are a living testimony all of your life, and you represent Him on this earth. Therefore, you need to walk worthy of that calling. All of this becomes very practical in our walk.

He speaks of the heavenlies. You are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. You have redemption in Christ in the heavenlies. What in the world is the heavenlies? What is this realm? Let me just say this much. There is a spiritual realm wherein is the third heaven. Christ in God is overseeing all of this spiritual realm, but you have come into a new paradigm as well. You have come into a life in the spirit. You are no longer just in an earthly realm here. You are in a spiritual realm where everything is in the spirit and works by faith. Do you know what these heavenly places are? Have you experienced being seated with Christ in the heavenlies? Well, I do not think that is something we dream about. I think he means for us to experience that in our spirit. Spiritual warfare in the heavenlies is where all the warfare is being carried out. We see the effects of it in our lives on the earth, but it is being carried out in the spiritual realm. That is why we are encouraged to pray, and that is how we affect the spiritual realm.

Nine times he speaks of glory. I want you to remember this. Glory is God's end game. That is what you are working to get to. That is what you are trying to achieve. He created you for glory, but not glory just for you;

glory for Him. Glory be to God in the church through Jesus Christ. Ten times he uses the word grace. That should tell us something. It is by grace after all.

Brothers and sisters, all that was on my heart is the spirit of this book that all men might see. Paul saw so much, experienced so much, but it does not mean we cannot experience it too. We might not have such dramatic experiences that Paul had, but in the spirit we can experience more.

Oh Lord, I just come to You today and offer all this back to You. Lord, just take Your word and use it as it is needed. I do pray as we look into this book of Ephesians that we will see, not just understand, not just grasp it in some mental way, but really see. Lord, bring us to our knees. We ask for that spirit of wisdom and revelation. In Jesus' name. Amen.