

Our Inheritance

A new couple moved to Atlanta and had been there for some time. I'm not in Atlanta often but I was sitting there on a Tuesday night thinking, "You know, there ought to be something I could do." Realizing that Mark and Jennifer were there and I had really only met them with a brief, "Hi, how are you?" I thought, "Let me call and see if I can take them out to dinner." We got together for dinner, and they were busy telling me about themselves and where they came from, what their genealogy was, and so forth. Then, there got to be this pregnant pause, and I realized that their expectation was that I was going to do the same thing – who are you, where did you come from, why are you here – that kind of thing. I said, "This might be a bit unusual, but for those who know me it would be expected that it would be unusual." I said, "I'm gifted. I've been gifted by the Holy Spirit, and nobody that knows me doesn't realize that I'm gifted." I let it hang for a little bit on purpose. When it started getting uncomfortable, I said, "...but that does not make me better than you."

One of the most pernicious things in the body of Christ is what is termed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. There are two things in the letters that Jesus wrote to the churches. In some cases he congratulated them; in some cases he said, "In spite of what you have gained, I still have aught with you or against you." So he both congratulated and reproved them. There are two places where the word "hate" comes in, and those words "hate" are associated with first the works and then the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. What that doctrine is rooted in is that there is a distinct, inherent difference between those that sit in front of the pulpit and those who stand behind it. My testimony this morning is rooted in the reality that there is no essential difference. The takeaway from that is the gifting does not make you better. Gifting just makes you gifted. If you are going to fulfill the purpose for which the Holy Spirit has gifted you, it's going to be because you are going to learn what it means to be a servant in the kingdom of God because that has to be learned by the Holy Spirit.

My sister Linda spent 35 years of her adult life serving in Africa as a missionary. Nathaniel, the first child she bore, died of a massive infection there in Africa, so she has paid a price. When she was a little girl sitting at the dining table, it became obvious to us as her siblings that she was at heart by natural gifting – I'm not

talking the Holy Spirit gifting – but by the natural gifting and aptitude, she was a servant. She liked to help people, just a natural quality. When she would get up (because my mother would not have the milk carton on her table) to get a glass of milk, we would wait until she was almost reseated and say, “Oh, Linda, would you get me ___?” – “Oh sure.” It was never, “You could have asked me when I was in the kitchen.” It just wasn’t in her. It was just an expression of who and how she was wired and set up. It never occurred to her that we were playing a somewhat rude game. We got over that, but Linda is still that way.

When she came to the Lord, when she was not just born again, but when her soul began to be converted through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit after she was born again, it turned the orientation of her helping to things of the Spirit. The last place that she and Bruce served in Africa for World Vision was Lusaka the capital of Zambia, and there was a disadvantaged portion of that city called Chikumbuso. It was ravaged not only by poverty but by AIDS. As she began to be Linda there and Bruce had his responsibilities for World Vision, she saw women who we might think middle-aged but in their culture because they start bearing children early they were maybe 35 but grandmothers. They no longer had employable skills for their community. Most of their immediate children being in the 20 something range had been wiped off the board by AIDS, so they couldn’t move in with their children. They didn’t have a place to live; they were a noticeable portion of the disadvantaged and homeless population of the ghetto suburb of Lusaka.

Linda would help a rich man take his offering to the offering box; she would help because it’s how she functions, but when she sees disadvantaged, she can’t sleep. She started reaching out to some of the widowed, orphaned grandmothers inviting them over for tea or whatever it might have been, and began to teach them the Scriptures, and hold Bible Studies getting into their lives to improve their existence and their daily way of living. At some point she had 8 or 9 orphaned grandmothers and found out that they in fact had grandchildren that they were trying to take care of when they didn’t really have a place or a way to take care of themselves, but much that they did get, they passed on. They was not only disadvantaged by poverty, disadvantaged by their next generation being wiped out by AIDS, but having the burden of the natural, maternal instincts for grandchildren that they couldn’t care for, so it was really just about as tough a circumstance as you can imagine.

I don't want to get into the particulars of their difficulties and the reasons that they were unemployable, but as this thing developed there is now a significant community in Chikumbuso that George and Laura Bush visited in Lusaka. Good Morning America did a small snippet of the work that is there because the Bush's toured the compound. There was a bar there that was a geography for everything that you can consider associated with a bar in a disadvantaged area; and it had been bought, purged, painted, added onto and to this day there have been over 500 children that have processed through the school. Some of them are now exiting college and coming back to the community in various functions. Grandmothers have started a cottage industry bringing income not only to themselves but to the community and are now living in homes and actually sleep on mattresses. I know a lot of these things aren't consideration for most of us but certainly an improvement for the community. It was birthed out of Linda's heart to serve.

We face in the world around us something that goes so far beyond the poverty and the extreme disadvantagedness of their lifestyle. We look at a world that scripture says is without God and without hope. I know I have said it here before behind this pulpit, but the gospel of this world is that there is no change. You can improve your lifestyle; you can improve your education; you can improve your wardrobe; you can even upgrade the expression of your life and its interface with the world through education, but you cannot change. The essential issue of what you were birthed as does not change. We could wrap it up by saying, "If you are born a leopard, you die a leopard and you can't change your spots while you are a leopard." In fact, there is not only a book but I think there was a movie and even some Broadway plays based on the book called *My Fair Lady*. Eliza Doolittle went to Professor Henry Higgins, but when that horse turned the backstretch toward home, the veneer fell off and nature outed. Her appearance was changed but the essential ingredient of who she was and how she processed internally had not wavered or been affected or even caused any tremors based on the encounters of her attempts at self-improvement. That is what God wants to address with some in this age.

This is the purpose for which we have been drawn by the Holy Spirit, and the influence of that Holy Spirit drawing us took an effect in our lives before we were even aware that it was happening or what it was that was causing it. A friend of mine and I were discussing the scripture where it talks in Hebrews about

approaching the throne of grace to find grace and mercy to help in time of trouble. There are a couple of take a-ways from that, and that would be ‘when would we not?’ If we see the issue at hand, it isn’t because I’m getting a head cold or because I got a bill that I wasn’t aware of, and I don’t have the money to pay. Those aren’t the only troubles although we certainly can approach for those reasons; but the trouble that we have is a nature that inhibits the completion of the work that God called us unto.

Paul referred to it at the end of Romans 7. This was not a Christian who was wet behind the ears, neither was he writing in the seventh chapter of Romans about a historic event like some grandfather saying, “You know I remember the day when..... This is a mature saint, who went through the transition in his own life of the work of the Holy Spirit that was already accomplished for him to the work of the Spirit that has to be rooted in co-laborship.

The Holy Spirit was already working to fashion in Paul a humility enabling the enlightenment of the gospel that no man had yet seen or heard in history. When he stood holding Stephen’s coat signing off on his murder, the Holy Spirit was working to set Paul up, to imbed so deep in the history of his interface with the work of God in the church, to create an inherent sense of his incapacity and unworthiness for the majestic revelations that God was going to unveil to him and the work of the Holy Spirit that would bring those revelations into a sense of reality by life. As Paul later said, “I, Paul, am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of Jesus Christ.” Yet, when his back was against the wall, he would defend his apostleship, not because he wanted to be seen as having a title or because he wanted to appropriate some authority that wasn’t really stemming from what the life was that was in him but because he wanted to rise to a defense of the gospel that God had given him, and not for his own benefit but for theirs.

The need that we see in the world around us is obvious. Sometimes I look within and I see things that transcend what I see out there, so sometimes it is necessary for me to be encouraged. Sometimes it is necessary to recognize the fact that David wasn’t favored because God anointed him to be king. God anointed him to be king because he was favored. He was already singing hymns, watching over the sheep before he ever got oil poured on his head by Samuel. The fact of God’s favor toward David wasn’t because of what God had called him to do but because of the pursuit of David’s soul by God to become something that he wasn’t by first birth.

That's really the path that our feet have been set on. The path of becoming and one of the incentives that is built in that path is the inability to perform it because, you see, if I by first birth I have been born with a capacity to perform what God has requiring of me, there would be no need for me to change what I was by first birth. I would just get better. One of my sons became one of the five best people at his job in the world. In the pursuit of that excellence, he said, "You know, when you get to the apex of your profession, you are competing against people who are as gifted as you. You can't rely on your gift to get better than most of those who are gifted. You have to work at what you're not good at. You may have relied on your gifting to get through several layers of the progression of getting to the peak of your profession; but when the weeds start falling away and only the gifted rise, now you are competing with the people that are as gifted or maybe in some cases, more gifted than you. If you are going to rise further, you better start working on your deficiencies. If what we are called to is a natural pursuit, the natural man could be cultivated and improved to the point of fulfilling the purpose of God in the earth today and we could work on our deficiencies.

Unfortunately, most of the church is in that position. Most of the church is still trying to improve dealing with its anger better or dealing with whatever weakness is their thorn. You know that verse where it says, "...the weight and the sin that so easily besets"? Most people are focused on trying to get better dealing with that. That isn't the purpose that it becomes obvious. The purpose that the thorn that is in my flesh and the thorn that is in your flesh is not so that we would get better dealing with thorns. It's so that we would have an ongoing testimony in our life that if we are not changed in nature, being saved from the sins of that nature is not going to be a finished building site.

The thorn in our flesh is not to indicate the things we need to improve. The sin that so easily besets for one person might be a volatile anger. It just burps. Without hardly any provocation, it can go to flame on, and so we need to learn to bite down when we feel the bile starting to rise, the frustration starting to accumulate. Those are the kind of warning guards on the railroad tracks when the arms go down and the lights flash, and you hear the "Ding, ding, ding. Take a clue here. Slow down. Get ready to stop." However, it still doesn't deal with the source from which those things stem. We can get better at dealing with them, but Jesus

said not doing something is not the whole purpose of God. Murdering is not a good idea and Jesus was still on page with that, but if you hate, you are guilty. Well, then who has hope? What hope do we have? The purpose for the thorn is a testimony in our life of what is the purpose – not being fulfilled just by being forgiven or baptized in the Holy Ghost. It isn't so that you can get better; it's an on-going testimony that we must be changed in nature not attempt to modify behavior.

Let's take a moment and look at Paul. He said he prayed three times. I don't think it was the "Fold your hands before we eat, hurry up; don't ask a preacher to pray grace because he could end up preaching instead of praying." I don't think it was "Now I lay me down to sleep." I think there was an importunity that he had before God when he said, "God, what I have working in me is so contrary to the gospel you've given me, can there not be a resolution of this?" I think it is not uncharacteristic of what Paul himself described the on-going work, not only with God saying to him, "Well, I could, but I'm not going to because this has been given to you to off-set the abundance of revelation lest you get carried away with yourself and think you're something you are not because the revelation itself doesn't make you different." The revelation is attendant to the gifting. We know that knowledge and even specifically more importantly than just general knowledge puffing up (because that has that effect whether it's natural knowledge or any other kind of knowledge) but particularly understanding of the things of the kingdom. Wow, do they inflate, so something has to work here to off-set the natural course of events because "Paul, you are still a natural man."

Speaking back into Romans 7 and the end of Romans 7, when Paul penned this he said, "O wretched man that I am." He didn't say, "Oh, wretched man that I used to be." He wasn't wet behind the ears because he got all the way through Romans, which to me is a legal defense of God doing what He does in Christ, and he got through the first 7 ½ chapters before it even comes up as an issue. He is talking about a righteousness that is imputed and sins that aren't imputed and all without works. I mean this is not somebody who just got born again and is excited. This is a seasoned veteran writing to the church to put a foundation under the church that would establish them in a stability that would allow the work of the Holy Spirit to go forward in their life and finish the purpose for which beginnings took place.

The testimony of the church through history is a good start but not much of a finish. In Ephesians, I want to frame the “not a good finish” first. Paul is talking about the distribution of God’s grace that was given to him for their benefit. A servant in the kingdom of God isn’t just taking a low place though it certainly is that. Being a servant in the kingdom of God first becomes anchored, if it is going to become effectual, in becoming a slave to Jesus Christ. “I, Paul, a bond slave of Jesus Christ.”

A willing bond slave. That means isn’t contouring my will to His Will; it’s giving up my will for His. A slave by force has their rights stripped by force, but a bond slave gives up their rights willingly just as comprehensively and completely as if they were stripped from them by force. The difference is that if you strip a person’s rights by force they can be performing outwardly at the fear of beatings or torture or death, but inside they are not at all convenient to the purpose.

This is the indentured servant, finally. It isn’t – at least, for me it hasn’t yet been – the first time through being in debt and serving seven years. I’ve taken my seven years and gone out free to get in debt again. I don’t actually have an account of how many times that has taken place, but I’m beginning to wake up in this period of seven years recognizing that if I get the point of all this, I’m going to say, “Although I can go out free, I’m in love and I want to stay. I want to be the expression of what You have called me to be not just an expression of Your grace to get me out of debt when I get there because of the nature that is working in me. I want to stay so that the nature is actually defeated.”

Ephesians 3:3 – 10 How that by revelation God made known unto me the mystery. When you read this so that you can begin to understand my knowledge of the purpose that is intended by God in Christ. In other ages prior to this was not aware in mankind. It’s now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs. Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His Power. Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I may preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; to make men or to make available to all men so that they can see what is the fellowship of God’s purpose in Christ which has been hidden from the beginning of the world. The tenth verse is the failure of

the church. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

You see there is a reason why even though Jesus came and triumphed (as Colossians 2 says) openly over the powers of this world through resurrection from the dead, that he proved that death, which is the bastion of their strength and the last enemy that we face, had no hold on him. He submitted himself to physical death to prove that death is a paper tiger and death is a defeated enemy. We do not see this world yet reeling in the aftershock of that testimony. We see this world flourishing head long, and we see the evidence even in the church that is a testimony more to death than it is to life. The church, along with the children of Israel separated from Egypt by the mighty hand of God – in the wilderness, the accounting was that they draw nigh with their lips but they reserved their heart for themselves – in spite of being provisioned by a miracle for 40 years. This was an ongoing miracle. This was a miracle that was so continuous that it became boring. Did they not say, “Manna – mashed, fried, diced, fricasseed but yet manna. How about some good, old quail?” God said, “Fine, I can do that. The purpose of manna wasn’t to bring you to boredom. The purpose of manna was to give you a testimony that would anchor you with your father Abraham that although he reached the physical, geographical destination for which I had called him out of Ur. When he got there, the relationship that was developed between him and me, while I was leading him, caused him to realize that when I said, ‘No, you don’t have to unpack your tent anymore. This is it. The journey is over.’ He had enough of Me working with him to look at the dirt and say, ‘This can’t be the reason You brought me here.’ He said, ‘I’m not going to put a foundation down. I’m not going to live in a house; I’m going to stay in a tent, not because I am refusing to believe that this is the geography God wants me to live in for the rest of my life, but because my testimony is there is something working in me that says this can’t be all there is. I’m still looking for the destination that isn’t the fulfillment of the geographical search that I’ve been on but it is the fulfillment of the relationship with God that began when He said, Lift up thine eyes and I will show you a land that I have called you to.’”

The world has not received the testimony because the principalities and powers that govern this world have not received the testimony by the church. They got the first notice of eviction and the eviction wrote, “Your time is limited. The evidence of your power has been broken. You are going to have to vacate these premises when

you get the next notice, so you have a window.” The testimony of this evidence happened even before the death and resurrection physically of Jesus. He approached the region of Gad and there was one who was possessed. With no notice – there wasn’t a proclamation team out in front of him, “Here comes Jesus,” – spoke to him before he got too close and the spirit speaking through the man said, “What are you doing here? It’s not time. We have more time. You being here isn’t framing the time.”

The testimony is because Jesus really wasn’t the church. The church is made up of those who were born of Adam, born in sin, shaped in iniquity and the testimony has to come from that congregation. Jesus was not that. He could proclaim the victory that the Spirit of God can have over death, but he was born without sin of a virgin. Although it could bring notice of the power of God, it couldn’t release this world from the death grip that principalities and powers have on it. So why didn’t what Jesus do change the world? There are people that want to manufacture, “Well, but it did. It brought Rome to its knees.” Augustin and Constantine and all the church fathers said, “There are thousands of people that are being born again.” Look, the point isn’t about starting. The point is about finishing.

Discussing this with a friend about drawing nigh with boldness to the throne of grace and what we concluded was through co-munication that this approach started in my life long before I even knew I was being drawn. If we would take Moses’ experience and history as an example of this, what consciousness did he have of the purpose of God in his life when his mother put him in a basket of bulrushes without a paddle? We could see the evidence of the keeping and the fashioning and the shaping and the influence of the Spirit of God on it because in spite of not having a paddle or a map or any kind of understanding of the currents of the Nile, he ended up at the feet of the daughter of Pharaoh. God had the Pharaoh who wanted to kill him raise the deliverer at his own expense. Unbelievable stuff but he had no awareness. He had no clue. Things that have taken place in your life that you know about were preceded by things that drew you to a place of understanding the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God was working before you knew it.

So the end of the matter is the church would bring testimony to the governing powers of this world. We’re not talking about Trump or anybody else. We’re not

even talking about the shadow government behind the obvious government. We're talking about the death grip that has dominion and has retained the integrity of their authority over this world. It isn't going to be broken by God flashing out of heaven. It is going to be broken by some rising up to express the full purpose of God having birthed them by His Spirit and by growing up to full stature and breaking the bonds of that authority by their testimony and it won't happen until that happens.

Natural Israel is not the timepiece of God. The sons of God are the timepiece of God. When there are sons that are actually here, still alive during their natural lifespan, that come to the place where they are glorified inside so that He can clothe them upon with the appearance of a glorified body – because if we know anything about God, we know the testimony of Jesus is He does not like Pharisees. He does not like something that looks outside what it is not inside.

Over in Ephesians 1:11 In Christ we have obtained an inheritance. That inheritance that we have obtained has predestined us to fulfill the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. When I look inside some days and I look at how renegade the will is that drives this body, I have to be encouraged. God does encourage us. One of the important lessons of that confrontation in David saying, "Why are you cast down O my soul? Hope thou in God." It is instructive. If my soul is framed on its own capacity, it is going to go through these cycles of feeling encouraged because of God's moving and then feeling discouraged because of my own activity. In the cycle but hope in God, not just that God would cure the discouragement but that God would cure the cause of the discouragement, which is this pernicious self-reliance and the fact that I haven't been brought to slavery yet.

Looking at Ephesians 2, there are things that Jesus and his interface with his disciples and they would question things. In talking about the coming events, he started fairly vaguely with them. He was talking to them and they were used to not understanding what he said, so he would give them a parable. They would go off and talk amongst themselves and send some representative of their discussion to him and say, "When you get a chance, could you interpret that thing for us? We have talked about it, and we're not sure we are getting it. I mean we get sowing and harvesting, we get fishing and all the parable settings, but surely you are not

just talking about fishing and farming.” He would interpret it for them. But he began to introduce the conflict that he was going to have to go through in order to finish his mission here and that he was going to have to fulfill other parts of Isaiah that were not quite as pretty – that he was marred to the point that he almost didn’t look human, and that he suffered, and that the penalty of our transgressions would be laid on him, and that those that would betray him would be those of his own house, and all the things that it spoke of, not just, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given” – but the actual walking out of the purpose of the Messiah and portray for us that if we are going to finish we are going to have to embrace something that he began to speak to them first about before he said, “If you don’t eat my flesh and drink my blood, you can’t be my disciples.” He said, “You need to deny yourselves.”

Patterning that, there was a move of the Spirit in the 1940’s and 50’s that began up in Canada; it was called Latter Rain. The Latter Rain was birthed out of a school of ministry, and they began to be concerned about the lack of the gifts of the Spirit and their functioning in the church. That was actually the burden that began to function as a petition before God and Latter Rain was birthed out of that context. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit were already established and had already begun to be in some level of decline so that they were concerned about it. As they got before God the outworking of the Holy Spirit birthed a movement called Latter Rain. It swept the globe. It was not on the front page but it was certainly something that God sponsored and God blew on and promoted. One of the things that was birthed out of the Latter Rain was not only a reestablishing of the work of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the church but was really a new thing that had had little testimony to it before and it was called the five-fold ministry.

The five-fold ministry was restored to the church through a move called Latter Rain. This move of the Spirit already had the foundation of Latter Rain and the five-fold ministry established in it, so it wasn’t through this move of the Spirit that this was brought to the church. What was brought to the church and highlighted through this move of the Spirit – and this move of the Spirit was blown around the globe in 15 years from one man talking into a reel to reel recorder some foundational teaching that became booklets (some of which were *Gideon’s 300* and *The Glory of Giving*). In 15 years it was borne around the world by the breath of

God. It was as valid a move of the Spirit as there has ever been on the planet. The message that was imbued within that blowing of God was not five-fold ministry, not the gifts of the Spirit, not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but was the message of death to self.

There is some sense to which we would like to shrug off the accountability to the ongoing purpose of the Spirit of God and go back to the warm and fuzzies of what's already been established. We can be encouraged momentarily. I can't tell you how many times – and I don't have to talk about history; I could talk about the last six months – how many times I've had to be encouraged that the foundation of God's work in my life began by my not having my sins imputed to me. Boy, I mean it wasn't just a past occurrence; it's an ongoing capacity of God. If it wasn't for my confidence in that and the seeing of the work of the Holy Spirit to actually cleanse me – you know John said, "If you confess, He Is faithful to forgive." He didn't stop with forgiveness but also, "... and cleanse." You know, really, the conviction that I need for hope in my life is not just that I believe God forgives sin, but that I experience a cleansing from the conflict and the slime of descending back into the pit and the stench of it. It is not just through faith in the operation of God – hopefully, there is none of us that does not realize that God is capable, but it is the faith of the operation of God. My faith is encouraged when I am cleansed through the work of the Holy Spirit, and I can say, "God is still on the throne. In spite of what seems to be irrational behavior on His part, He still visits me." The accounting of that goes past the fact that my sins aren't imputed. It segways directly from that (as the same thing as a head and tail same side of the same coin) that there is a rightness that is established by that same imputing capacity of God so that He does not impute my sin but He does impute righteousness. It says in Romans, "...without works," but I think we could clearly take away that it means in spite of my works, which has the intention and commitment of God to take what He has begun to a completion of original purpose.

This purpose isn't going to finish based on my getting good at it. It's going to finish based on my ceasing from my own efforts. "Oh, so we don't have to do anything?" No, that's dangerous because this is a co-laborship. "Well, then what do I have to do?" Cease. What does God say to the son that is different than what He says to angels? The commandment to the son is Hebrews: "Sit. Sit." – "Ok, I'm sitting. How long?" – "Until." – "Til when?" – "Til I put your enemies under your feet." –

“Oh, can I help?” – “Nope.” – “But...” – “Nope.” – “Could I?” – “Huh-uh.” Really, when I get into trouble is about the time I think I have some capacity to do something, especially if it’s good stuff. We have an inheritance and that inheritance predestines us to fulfill the purpose. Here it shows how the purpose is fulfilled: “according to the working of Him that works all things in accordance with His will.” Sit.

In the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul begins to build the context of our finish. He starts with being quickened, brought to life out of death, and in that death we had "in time past walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience," and that’s the one that was our influence that we are called to testify to. We are called to testify to him not by quoting verses. We are called to testify to him by living according to another Spirit. Paul says in Galatians 6, that those two forces are on a collision course. This is the true definition of Armageddon. We don’t have to worry about nuclear warfare in the far east. Look at the conflict that’s going on right here. If you are not feeling it, just start giving yourself to the Spirit. One of the things that Hebrews testifies to in the progression of discipline by the Holy Spirit is that it begins by chastening, and that’s verbal instruction, but it ends in scourging. We are encouraged not to despise the chastening. We are also encouraged not to faint when rebuked. Fainting in the natural, I think we all get that, but spiritual fainting is just saying, “I can’t handle this. I’m out of here.” We choose not to follow on. I want to tell you that, in spite of some of the things that have been preached over the course of the church’s existence, you can’t get unborn again. You don’t lose what God’s done. Whatsoever God does, He does for how long? Forever, so if you get born again by the Spirit of God, I defy you to do anything that would get you unborn again. It isn’t that we lose what we have; it’s that we lose the fulfillment of the inheritance that we are predestined to finish.

In the seven feasts of Israel’s agricultural year, the fifth feast was Trumpets. It was to embed a message within Israel of how to keep and fulfill the next feast that was coming. It was blowing a trumpet for the feast that was coming, and the feast that came, atonement, was the only feast that had a prerequisite for them to do in order to keep it. They had to afflict their own soul and it says, “Any man that does not afflict his own soul is cut off from the people.” Now I don’t know what that meant. I don’t know what the penalty “cut off” meant, but I know in the Spirit that

if we come to the things of the Spirit and we are encouraged by God, we hear the messages, the revelation of God to go forward, and if we can't get to the point of denying ourselves for His sake and for the gospel's furtherance - the further invasion of the gospel in this world, a testimony to principalities and powers being accomplished by life not by words - what "cut off" means is not that we lose our citizenship, but that we can't go forward. We are cut off from going forward. We don't lose what we have; we lose the opportunity to finishing because the essence of the objection that keeps the gospel from being completely explained and communicated through me isn't the words. It's life. Getting past the end of Romans 7 into a functional relationship with God whereby I am no longer a wretched man conflicted by something that isn't me that is still operational in me.

That's the essence of what Paul was describing. He said, "Therefore, I see that it's no longer I that doeth but sin that dwelleth in me." There is tangential scripture by the same author saying, "That the man of sin must be not only revealed but destroyed." If the man is destroyed, the testimony burping out of the cesspool will cease and not until then, and that's my thorn. It's whatever keeps me grounded in spite of what God has given us concerning the revelation of His purpose that by the church He wants to bring a testimony that will set this creation free from being locked up in corruption and hindered from being joined to the glorious liberty of the children of God. That's our calling.

Is there going to be pressure? Has there been pressure? Is there encouragement? Oh, there is great encouragement. Paul didn't say that we have hope only in the next life. He said, "If we have hope only in this life..." We do have hope in this life. The cleansing and the repurposing and the fact that God's capacity overwhelms the testimony of my own activity, not just past. The foundation of God is anchored in the expression of a mercy whereby my sins are forgiven. The sense I had at the time was a relinquishing of the guilt and the accountability to the Holy Spirit; but it didn't become dysfunctional going forward. It still operates. It is still the foundation that upholds everything that's built on it. When the fire comes and you lose what you built because you didn't build it right, it doesn't touch the foundation. It just cleans it off and saves you - really a good program. The cleansing. We say, "| Cleanse my heart, O Lord." He says, "Ok, here comes the fire."

One of the things about this sonship is that it is built on the ongoing work of God to fulfill its purpose in the son. The testimony that we have to that is that Jesus didn't have a public ministry in order to heal people or to multiply loaves and fishes or to walk on water or to talk in parables so that they wouldn't understand. That's quite a ministry - you know that. That public ministry was testifying by God who and what Jesus had become. He himself said to the crowd at one point, "If you don't believe what I say, at least believe me for the works that I do." The works were not the point. The works were to bear testimony not just of the words that he spoke but of the One who was speaking. It was a testimony to the life of Christ in the earth that had never been seen before, and you and I have a destiny to replicate that testimony by coming to the expression of that life.

What is it going to look like? When is it going to happen? You know, he didn't know. That was one of the things he learned during those 18 years – accepting and getting comfortable and actually embracing on purpose the dialogue of the Father with him which was "Sit, until." Sit where? Sit in the hope that God has a purpose for what He is doing in your life today, but harvest the work of what God is trying to do in your life today by embracing the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ (We could go through and it's in Ephesians as well.), Christ is the compression of the whole thought of God. The sum of all things in the heart of God is Christ, but he is also the compression of time, and in Christ there is no past and there is no future. In Christ there is today. That's the embracing of the harness that Jesus learned for 18 years when he came out and said, "Of myself I can do nothing. I sit at the right hand of my Father. The works that you see me do are not my works. It's the Father that works." This is a totally different operational system that brings the life of Christ to a full expression than the natural man has.

There is also a verse in Ephesians the 2nd chapter where it says that we have been raised up together with him and made to sit in heavenly places. All things that pertain to life and godliness have been given unto us. When? When we sit. Sitting in the face of great need. There is testimony from the scripture that Jesus entered into a city or a village, and it's said that he had compassion upon them and he healed them all, and he cast out all the devils. What was working in his heart and expressed during his public ministry certainly was not a light switch of compassion that turned on when he was 30 after he went to a marriage feast. He lived in Nazareth. It was the low point of Israel, not geographically but spiritually. They

hired a Madison Avenue executive to come up with a theme for this city, and they were excited when he said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” because they thought that was a step up. Hope.

There were things that he saw and encountered and that moved him deeply like my sister was moved, seeing orphaned widows dying in the streets without a place to live or means of making an income and providing not just for themselves but for their grandchildren. Linda was moved and she did something because she was moved; but in the testimony of history, although it’s a testimony to her heart, it does not solve the world’s problem. We need to get moved by a compassion that transcends doing and begins to be an expression of becoming, to actually present ourselves to the work of the Spirit of God in a way that has had few testimonies to that ongoing work by those born in sin and shapen in iniquity. The company is more than one, probably more than ten because that’s as far as Abraham dared to negotiate with God, you know, was to ten. The Spirit of God answered that – this is a little parenthesis. The Spirit of God answered that and didn’t say to Abraham but did say in the scripture in Ezekiel that if there were three men – Noah, Job and Daniel – in the city and if Abraham had gotten to three, He wouldn’t have saved the city but He would have saved the men.

To escape the corruption that is in the world through our own will, our own desire is only possible if we embrace the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to fulfill His purpose, setting ourselves to the purpose of denying ourselves by sitting.

John Cheever
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