

Ephesians

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 December 2015

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] Okay. We are talking about the gullibility that exists in the minds and hearts of people before the gospel comes in. But when the gospel comes in and spiritual enlightenment comes with it, then the individual is put in a position where they are able to defend themselves because they are taking in the truth of God that allows them to combat the error that often comes their way.

And one of the points that we've made in the past, and I will be continuing to make it again and again and again, and that is there is a whole lot more error out there than there is truth.

And the truth that is represented in Scripture is that which flies in the face of what we would call common wisdom or human wisdom.

And the Bible is the only place where we will get the kind of information that is needed in order to combat the error. And that's precisely what Paul is talking about here.

So, bear in mind that once salvation has occurred, the most important thing that can happen in that life is the realization of spiritual growth.

[1 : 0 9] Got to grow and mature. So, we will not be subject to every wind of doctrine by the slight of men, cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But, on the contrary, the opposite of that is not only be able to understand and take in the truth, but also able to speak the truth.

Because the grace of God that came to you in salvation through Jesus Christ was never intended to just be lodged in you and stop there.

It is intended to pass through you to others. And that's where the speaking in love comes in. The importance of that is twofold.

You have to have the truth, and you have to have the love to be able to speak the truth. Bottom line is this. Do we care enough about our fellow man to be willing to share the truth with him?

[2 : 1 7] And that can be a very sticky wicket and very intimidating. And the reason is because in order to really share the truth of the gospel with people, you have to also give them bad news, not just good news.

And the reason you have to do that is because the good news, which is salvation through Jesus Christ, doesn't make any sense unless it is preceded by bad news.

Bad news is the reason you need the good news. And the good news, of course, is the gospel that is designed to counter the bad news.

The bad news is we are lost, we are undone without hope, without Christ in this world. And the good news is Christ provides a way to God that is provided through no other avenue.

And that's the good news. But the good news doesn't make sense without the bad news. And the bad news is you have a need. You cannot meet the need. And you are lost.

[3 : 2 6] How do you go about telling people that they have a need and that they are lost and that they are condemned? How do you go about telling them that without upsetting them? How do you go about giving them the bad news so that they can be ready for the good?

This is why I've often said, you know what? A lot of people have to get mad before they get saved. Because when you give them the bad news, and this is the hard part of the gospel, when you give them the bad news, it may very well not turn out well.

And they may come back with something like this. So, you're saying I'm not good enough the way I am. Well, yeah. That's exactly what you're saying.

But how do you couch that and put that in terminology that doesn't turn them off or offend them?

Because they're thinking, I'm just as good as you are.

Well, they are in the flesh. But the thing that makes you different from them is that Christ is in you, the hope of glory, and they don't have that.

[4 : 34] They don't understand that. They don't know that. They don't have the information that they need to be able to understand that you're actually being a friend to them, and you're actually looking out for their best interest.

They often may think that you're putting them down. So, you're saying I have to believe like you do. Well, yeah. But how do you tell them that?

You see, it seems to be that you're setting yourself up as some kind of paragon of virtue, and that they have to come up to where you are. So, fellas, there is so much room for misunderstanding when you try to communicate the gospel.

And Christians know that. They understand that. And they're thinking, man, this is a delicate business. I don't think I could do this.

I'm afraid I would just mess it up. I'm afraid I would turn them off. I'm afraid I would say the wrong thing. I'm afraid I wouldn't put it right. And we just back off because we are intimidated.

[5 : 45] We know how much is at stake. And we don't want to make a mess of it. And we don't want to turn off our friend or neighbor or whoever it is. We don't want them angry with us. We don't want them misunderstanding.

And it does become a really sticky wicket. But here's the issue. And this is a biggie. Our fear of intimidation.

Our fear of not saying it right. Our fear of running the risk of turning them off. Is supposed to be overwhelmed by our sense of love and compassion for them.

Are you willing to run the risk of, quote, messing it up because you really do care about them and you want them to know the truth?

Or are you just going to back off, keep quiet, not say anything because you'd probably do it wrong anyway? Tell us, all you have to do, all you have to do is give them something to think about.

[6 : 57] Because that starts the process. I've got a little booklet. In fact, I left them in the car. But I'll have them next week. It's one of the most penetrating, disarming things I have ever seen in the explanation of the gospel.

And I've ordered a quantity of them. And it simply asks a question on the outside. And it says, may I ask you a question? And you open it up. And it begins with, has anyone ever taken the Bible?

Showed you how you can know that you are a child of God and that you're going to heaven and so on. And it is very disarming in the way that it is put.

And I would suggest, and I want you to be thinking about this because I'd like to saturate our whole community with these. You can take this little book. You can read the whole thing in, what, 60 seconds.

Read it in a minute or less. But all it is designed to do is cause people to engage in a vein of thinking that perhaps has never occurred to them.

[8 : 06] And that's where the journey begins that often can lead to them embracing the gospel and becoming a believer. You have to start with the thinking process.

And this little booklet will help do that. So it is a very disarming thing. And you can take this little booklet and say, here, this is something I came across the other day.

I read this and I thought it was really interesting. I thought you might enjoy it too. And you give them that. And that may very well begin their journey that ends in their salvation.

So it's something I want you to be thinking about and ruminating about in your own mind. And next week I'll have a quantity of these and you can take them and do with them as you will. But speaking the truth in love, being motivated by love, is the reason we share the truth.

Joe. And Mark, we have to leave. Like Kevin has brought out, the Holy Spirit is the one that's going to win that person. Right. Not you. We are not sold. You don't have to look at it and he messed it up.

[9 : 07] You've got you need to work. You've got maybe, you know, he's the one that's going to work on them. Not you. That's right. And convert them. So if they don't come to Christ, it's not because you failed.

You didn't fail. We are a vehicle. That's right. And we are responsible for sowing the seed. And we are responsible for watering. But who is it that gives the increase?

Yeah. It's the Lord that gives the increase. So we're just charged with sowing the seed. We can't save anybody. That's for certain. And it's a good thing because we'd mess that up, wouldn't we?

But we can sow the seed. And you know, nobody sows seed perfectly. Nobody waters perfectly.

We get into this area of discussing the gospel and eternal life and sharing the plan of salvation with

somebody.

And you better believe it is a heavy thing to consider. It really is. There's a lot at stake. And the information is valuable. The information is from God himself.

[10:11] And, in fact, fellows, there is something wrong with us if we aren't a little bit scared in the flesh in doing it. And the fear factor comes from the realization as to how important it is.

We ought not to be lackadaisical. Easy come, easy go. Ah, no big deal. You can share the gospel. It's an easy... Hey, this is important business.

We are talking about the souls of people, of human beings for whom Christ died. And it is not unreasonable to feel inadequate because you are inadequate.

Deal with it. We're all inadequate. That's part of our humanity. So, as someone said, sharing the gospel is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

And the adequacy is with God. As Joe said, the adequacy is with the Holy Spirit. He's the one that regenerates. He's the one that makes new in Christ.

[11:15] So, when we really care enough about somebody that we are willing to get out of our comfort zone and go out, if you will, and take that risk of sharing the gospel, it is simply an indication that you are allowing your love and concern for the person to outweigh the fear factor.

Are you fearful? Yeah. But you do it anyway. Just like one of the Medal of Honor winners said when he was asked years later about the battle that he was engaged in and how he won the Medal of Honor and everything.

And the guy was interviewing and said, well, weren't you scared? And he said, of course I was scared.

I was terrified. I was scared to death. But I did it anyway. Because the fear factor was not allowed to outweigh the responsibility factor.

And it doesn't mean that you aren't fearful with intimidation and everything that goes with it. That's natural. That's natural. But you do it because love compels you to do it.

[12:39] Love compels you to take the risk. And you know what? God will bless your efforts. Don't feel that, as Joe said, don't feel that it is your responsibility to convert anybody.

Because it isn't. It isn't even your responsibility to persuade anybody. Someone has said, if you could argue people into heaven, you could argue them out. It's not our responsibility to persuade them or to make them believers.

It is just our responsibility to give them something to think about. To sow the seed. To water the seed. And that is a priceless commodity.

Speaking the truth in love. May grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. And if you'll take your sheet now and look at 4E, at verse 16.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplied. Now the body he's talking about here is the body of Christ.

[13:50] This is the spiritual body of Christ. And it is comprised of all believers all over the world. Whatever language. Whatever culture.

Whatever color. As long as they are believers in Christ, they are members of this body. This is the body. This is the church.

The church which is the body of Christ. This is the church that you have to have membership in. It's not the one of brick and stone on the corner. That determines your eternal life.

But it's membership in this body that does. The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies. According to the effectual working and the measure of every part. Maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. And there are other renderings that are given here. So Paul is using the human body as an analogy.

[14:46] And he's saying in the same way that your human body is all connected with all the several parts. All working together efficiently.

Contributing to the benefit of the whole. That's exactly the way it is in the body of Christ. And he uses that analogy also when he writes to the Corinthians. Talks about the body here.

And other renderings here. Weymouth translation says, Dependent on him, the whole body, its various parts closely fitting and firmly adhering to one another, grows by the aid of every contributory ligament with power proportioned to the need of each individual part so as to build itself up in the spirit of love.

What a beautiful analogy here. We've got these bodies of ours are just so absolutely amazing. The way they are put together, the way they function, the way they operate, and the way every part of your body contributes to every other part of the body and makes that vital contribution.

So it is in the body of Christ, in the spiritual body of Christ. And this ties into what Paul said earlier about this body. He gave some as pastors and teachers and prophets and apostles and so on.

[16:09] Each of these have a position in the body. All working together. And it's a beautiful, beautiful thing how this body is to work. Verse 17. In other words, as a result of the way all of this works, that leads me to say this, that you henceforth, that is, from this time on, and he is addressing these Ephesian believers from the point of their conversion, bringing them out of sin and moral and spiritual darkness into his glorious light, so that they grow and mature and are no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doubt, and that you will henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.

Because you are in Christ, there is to be a big difference in the way you conduct your life as opposed to the way you did before Christ came in.

Before he came in and took charge of your life, you had reason to live the life that you lived that was displeasing to the Lord.

Now, you no longer have an excuse for that. You have no basis for that. Because Christ is in you, you do not have to walk as other Gentiles walk.

And by the way, this is a perfect illustration, an example as to how Paul is addressing non-Jewish people here. He is addressing Gentiles.

[17:51] These are former pagans. There may very well have been some believing Jews in the congregation who helped to make up that local assembly. But by and large, he reminds these Gentiles of who and what they were back in chapter 2.

that you were at that time without God, without hope in this world. You were not partakers of the promise. You were isolated from the commonwealth of Israel.

You were in a really miserable situation. But now in Christ, that's all changed. And now he is reminding them that you no longer have any reason to conduct your life like you did before Christ came in because he makes the difference.

That you henceforth walk from this point on, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. That means in the emptiness of their mind, the unfruitfulness of their mind, in the darkness of their mind. Because you have been brought into a sphere of light, which you didn't have before.

[19:04] Now start living like it. This is one of the great dilemmas of the Christian life. And that is walking in the flesh as opposed to walking in the spirit.

An unbeliever has no choice. An unbeliever has to walk in the flesh. That's all he's got to operate with. But once you become a believer in Jesus Christ, you do not lose the flesh, but you now have an additional component in the person of the Spirit of God.

And he is able and willing and eager to enable you to overcome the pull, the power, the temptation of the flesh, if you will.

Now, we've talked about this before, about the dynamic of the Spirit of God, about the flesh that is in you, the Spirit that is in you, and how it is decided which way you're going to go.

Comment or question? Roger? How do we fit the God-given conscience into all this equation with the flesh and everything? Because I know people that are not believers probably act better in the public than I do.

[20:23] I mean, you're giving. You know right from wrong from God, don't you? Yeah. You know right from wrong from God, don't you? You know right from wrong from God, don't you? Yeah, I think Romans 1 addresses that and talks about God having place within.

For God has revealed it unto them, and he has placed it in them. And that is the sense of moral direction and an understanding between the difference of right and wrong.

And even unbelievers know the difference between right and wrong. It's just that they are lacking in the ability to do the right thing.

And the reason they do is because their life is dominated by the sin nature. They do not have the facility to combat that that a believer has. And this does not mean that they have no willpower because they do.

And here the volition thing comes into play with the conscience that you're talking about here. And it is the presence of volition that is the ability to make decisions that God has given us that becomes the basis for God judging and evaluating.

[21 : 33] And not only that, fellas, but it becomes the basis for the judge on the bench, evaluating and sentencing.

Because we have this innate knowledge of right and wrong. And you know what? Man recognizes that. Man, that's why we have laws.

Because we have an instinctive awareness that there is moral right and moral wrong. And when men engage in moral wrong and are brought to task for it and are prosecuted for it, they may be punished for it, sent to jail, and maybe even executed for it.

Because the conscience is that thing that causes us pause when we know we are doing wrong. But, we often go ahead and do it anyway.

Now, Paul talks about this in Romans 7. Maybe it would be good if we revisited that. Because he talks about the distinction and the difference between the flesh and the spirit that is within us in Romans 7.

[22 : 41] And Paul, as an apostle, says, I'm really conflicted about this. Because I have a desire to do the right thing.

But when I'm confronted with the option, I do the wrong thing. Why is it that I do that? And then he talks about this power that resides within him that is called the flesh.

And fellas, when you came to faith in Christ, you were a regenerated person. But God did not remove your flesh. You still have the ability to displease God.

And that's, that's, the flesh is the thing you use to sin with. The spirit of God that indwells us as believers has no part of our sin or our sin nature.

The old flesh does. And we are in the same position the apostle Paul was in in Romans chapter 7. When he says, oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?

[23 : 47] I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ who gives us the victory. And this means that when the spirit of God comes in and regenerates and takes up residency in your life, you now have, for the first time in your life, you now have what is necessary to combat the work of the flesh.

The question is, will you utilize it? Because the spirit of God does not take over your life and overpower you against your will and make you do the right thing.

He does not do that. Your volition is still very much in play. And that becomes the basis for your accountability. So that's true before and after Christ.

This is something that we need to develop a little further because it ties in with the Galatians thing that we looked at earlier when Paul said this. I say then, walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Implication is, if you do not walk in the spirit, you will fulfill the desires of the flesh. And this is real practical stuff. And all of us are confronted with this.

[25 : 03] Especially as men in this day and age of pornography and everything that goes along with it. This stuff is coming at you from every direction all day long.

And it's as available as a computer screen or the bookstore or whatever. And it's something that is decimating to the lives of a lot of men. We'll pick up on this and we'll continue this thought next week.

And we'll be in Romans 7 and also in Galatians tying it in with Ephesians here. Thank you all and enjoy your breakfast. Did you have something, Kevin? Yeah, I was thinking through this lesson, you know, the Bible says he gave some.

He gave some preachers, he gave some teachers. Now, on the day of Pentecost, when the Word was given, that was the preaching. All the Holy Spirit just went mightily, didn't it?

It went mightily. That was preaching. But if you look at this closely, Paul is set in a format right here. This is a teaching. This here is a teaching.

[26 : 10] If I agree, this is a teaching. This ain't like the day of Pentecost. This is where Paul is set a format for what the description of the word Bible means.

Basic instructions before leaving. There you go. Basic instruction before leaving. B-I-B-L-E. Thank you.

Thank you, Kevin. What did you learn it?