

The Hope of Your Calling

Fred R. Coulter—July 17, 2010

We're going to have a little different study this afternoon and I want to concentrate on during difficult times which we are seeing and facing right now, especially with the events that we know are going on with some of the brethren in Churches of God this very day while we're here.

Let's come to Hebrews 12, and we'll combine most of what we're going to do with the book of Ephesians and we'll cover the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians because in times of difficulties and trouble we don't want to get sidetracked. So Hebrews 12 shows us how in times of real difficult times and struggles we can keep our perspectives, we can keep our minds on what is right and what and what we should be doing, so that we can keep our bearings about us. Every time there is an upheaval or every time there is a real challenge or every time something doesn't go the way we think it should go, we have an opportunity to react spiritually or to react carnally.

Remember, all of our reactions whether emotional or impetuous are choices, even though we may not sit down and say, 'I choose to do this,' The very fact that you do whatever you do or react whichever way react is a choice. Lots of us don't make good choices, so we have to go back and repent of it and retread, and do what we need to do to get straightened out. I want this also for the sake of the many brethren who are again going to go through the shredder of the *church wars*, so that if they come to you, you can help them keep their perspective. Because when you're going through *church wars*, and you see one side pitted against the other side and everybody is for or against one thing or another, it's very easily a sidetrack which can pull you away—even if temporarily—spiritually.

I know during some of the experiences that we've all gone through, there have been a lot of people that just threw their hands up in the air and said, 'I'm out of here.' Now many of them have been able to come back, many of them have been able to be repaired, so what we want to do with this one, we want to understand what is it that we can look to that God has provided, which is going to give us ***the strength, the encouragement, and the endurance*** through the difficult times that we're going to go through. And especially after the two sermons I gave, *Aftershock—the Coming Global Meltdown*, it's going to affect everyone and it's really going to present a lot of grave difficulties for all of us.

So let's come to Hebrews 12:1, and this is after Paul recited all of the great patriarchs of old.

He said: "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight..." So what you need to do, ask the question when a problem comes along: Do I need to solve this myself? Maybe ask the question first: Is it my business? Then do I need to solve it, if it is my business, myself, or do I need to also resolve something with someone else at the same time? So this way you will be able to have a good analysis of what you need to do.

Now here's what happens if you don't lay aside that which weighs you down, the next thing happens: "...and the sin that so easily entraps *us*.... [And what is the major sin that Satan would love people to do when they're confronted with *church wars*? ***Take one side or the other!*** But the question is: who's side should you take? ***You should take God's side!*** And also remember that God is dealing with us individually, and our relationship is with God.] ...and let us run the race set before us with endurance" (v 1).

So this shows we're going to have to have endurance, we're going to have to have staying power, and as I mentioned in the sermon, *Aftershock*, two main reasons we are in Afghanistan is:

1. for the drugs, like they were in Vietnam
2. for all of the raw resources, especially lithium, steel, gold, aluminum, silver, copper

That's why we're there! Who is behind all of this in the first place? Those big corporations who want to get in there and develop it. If you look at the map of Afghanistan, you will see there is a sliver of Afghanistan called the Khyber Pass, which borders on China.

Now consider this: We know that Revelation 9 talks about an army of 20-million. And of course that army can't be all in one place at one time, but what must happen for the kings of the east to come over? *There has got to be transportation facilities, rail, gas, oil, roads.* So I think we are looking for a lot longer period of time than we have anticipated. We still have not connected what we need to connect with what is happening to modern-day Israel. And as I point out in the sermon, it says an awful lot that you will be 'brought very low.' Now we don't know what all that means, as how it's going to affect us personally and individually. So not only are we confronted with the church wars, but we're confronted with all the problems that are happening in the world and a coming world currency. It's going to happen.

You have to have a world currency and a world banking system before you can have the *mark of the beast*. So the mark of the beast will be the last thing that will take place financially. The coming world currency will not be the mark of the beast. A coming world credit card will not be the mark of the beast. But when they put it on your hand or on your forehead, then it is. So we know where to draw the line.

Now here's the key that God want us to always to keep in mind, v 2: "Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of our faith... [Isn't it interesting? 'I'm the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.' See, it is a true statement that the work of Christ, for redemption and reconciliation, was finished at the cross, but that is only the beginning for those that He called. That's where Protestantism misses the point. They say, 'Finished the work of Christ. It's over and done except Jesus, it's true.' *No!* You have to grow in grace and knowledge because the plan of God is greater than what they've ever imagined.] ...Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God."

And where are we eventually going to be? *Right in New Jerusalem!* Not only at the throne of God, but we're going to see the Father face-to-face. So he says, v 3: "Now meditate deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds." Now let's come to the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

Now Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are what I like to call Paul's inspirational epistles. Here's another thing that is amazing about these epistles. Paul was in prison and is it not true that when you come to a great trial, and you're relying on God and trusting in Him, that He gives you strength and He gives you more inspiration at that time—doesn't He? And this is why these are so inspiring. And we're going to find in this the whole reason for the grace of God and commandment-keeping in the series that I've just recently been doing. Here's the whole purpose of it. Here is where we're headed. Here is where we're going.

We're going to see that God the Father and Jesus Christ are personally involved in our lives. It's not a matter of a church attendance. It's not a matter of what side you're going to take. It's a matter of your love and faithfulness and devotion to God the Father and Jesus Christ and what They have done for us and what They are doing for us at the same time. I love all of Paul's openings here of every epistle. You go back and read the opening of every epistle.

Ephesians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by *the* will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and to *the* faithful in Christ Jesus.... [Now isn't that an interesting statement? He knew that this was going to go beyond just to the Ephesians.] ...Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ..." (vs 1-2).

Everything that God does with us is because of His grace. That's why when we understand the truth about commandment-keeping for the New Testament,

- that we need repentance
- that we need the Holy Spirit
- that we need the Word of God
- that we have a high spiritual standard to keep
- that the keeping of the commandments is all through the grace of God

—because as Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, 'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.' That's the goal, but it can only be accomplished spiritually. So it's through grace and peace. If you're spiritually minded, you have *peace* with God. If you're carnally minded, you're an *enemy* of God—correct? *Yes!*

"...from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.... [Now Paul was really rude to the Holy Spirit, *if* the Holy Spirit were God. Because never once in all the fourteen salutations of his epistles, does he mention God the Holy Spirit.] (Notice again, he repeats it): "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ" (vs 2-3). Now we haven't received all of them yet. But you start looking at the spiritual blessings that God has given us:

1. His Spirit
2. His Word
3. fellowship with Him
4. understanding of prophecy, to the degree that we understand it
5. the strength and ability to overcome sin
6. the ability to come to God and repent
7. the perfection that God is working with us

All of those things are part of what God is doing and blessing us with the spiritual blessings in the heavenly things. The Holy Spirit, does it not come from heaven? *Yes!* Is that not a heavenly thing from God? *Yes!* Same way with understanding the Scriptures and all seven of the things that I have mentioned.

Verse 4—I want you to really think about this and meditate on this, and if you're personally having troubles right now, I want you to take the time and study what we're covering through now in prayer on your knees before God, so that this will

- impact your mind
- lift your spirit
- lift your understanding
- give you encouragement

So that you can see that every problem that is external out here, we don't need to let it destroy us within. Now think on this, and also think on this in relationship to the question: Does God know me? Am I important to God?

Verse 4: “According as **He has personally chosen us for Himself**... [Who called you, who led you to repentance? *God the Father did! He has personally chosen you!* Think on that! This is why, brethren, that ***brethren are not the property of the ministers.*** God is the One Who has called them. We are not the rulers, we're to be the feeders, we're to be the helpers.] ...for Himself...” *Personally chosen us!* Why did I translate that ‘personally chosen’? There is a verb in the Greek which you can't find in exactly the same way in any other language. In English it's called a reflexive verb that you do something for yourself, but that involves several words in English. In Greek it's contained in one verb, which is called the middle-voice verb, which is *the one who is doing the action is also receiving the benefit.* The subject is the object and here it's the middle-voice verb that God has done something for Himself, personally choosing us. I don't know about you, but that really gets me all excited.

Now He had this plan “...before *the foundation of the world*... [Because Christ was what? *Slain from the foundation of the world!* Isn't that true? *Yes!* So He had to have the plan all ready to go, so when the world was founded it was put into effect. Notice what God is doing and what we are to be, right here:] ...in order that we might be Holy... [Isn't that an attribute of God?] ...and blameless... [Another word for blameless then is *perfect.*] ...before Him in love” (v 4).

The reason that everything that we do should be based on the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of each other, is because that's what makes everything work spiritually. It's never going to work by human edict or command. It has to work with God's Spirit in us. It has to work because God the Father is personally involved in our lives. Remember what Jesus said that ‘if you love Me and keep My commandments that the Father will love you and We,’ together—What do we have here? *God the Father and Jesus Christ*—‘will make our abode with you.’ *Isn't that something?* To have the Spirit of God means that *God Himself is living within you.* So therefore, the external of the physical that we have is really not to be compared to what we shall be.

Now notice our destiny. We have a destiny. “Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself... [To be His children, to be His offspring.] ...through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will” (v 5). So what is the will of God for you? *To be His son; to be His daughter!* Let's look at a couple Scriptures here which verify that. Let's come to 1-John 3.

Now in the New Testament there are two words that can be translated *son* or *children*. One of them is pronounced ‘huios’ (vee os) and that son of God is a general application. The other one we find here in 1-John 3, which is called ‘teknon’ and comes from the verb ‘teknion.’ And teknon means *your own offspring from you.* That's why the *King James Version* translation of sonship as ‘adoption’ is not correct, because it doesn't matter if you adopt someone they still don't have your own genes and chromosomes—do they? *No!* But with the Holy Spirit of God, begotten by God, what do we have? We can say liken to the spiritual genes and chromosomes from God the Father—correct?

So that's why it says here, 1-John 3:1: “Behold!.... [That means look! Pay attention! And if we could put some emphasis in it in English—this is fantastic!] ...What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God!” The ‘teknon’ of God, *His own offspring by the begetting of His Holy Spirit.* That's something. God the Father, the Great Sovereign of the universe, with Jesus Christ at His right hand, He is the One Who intervened in your life.

Now let's come to 2-Corinthians 6. Let's see where Paul expands on this a little further. 2-Corinthians 6:17: “Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,’ says *the Lord*, ‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you... [that's spiritually and physically, as well.] ...And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters’... [what a promise!] ...says *the Lord Almighty*” (vs 17-18).

Now let's come to Revelation, the fourth chapter, and let's see where all of this emanates directly, personally. And John was given the vision to see the throne of God. This is where all of this is coming from directly to us. That's why this is so great. Our calling is so magnificent. It is spiritual and it's spiritually understood. And it's the secret plan of God! How is He going to call out of this world a people for Himself and the world not even understand it? *He does it with His Spirit! He does it with His Word!* And here is where it emanates from.

John was told, ‘Come up here, into heaven.’ Revelation 4:2: “And immediately I was in *the Spirit*; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and *one was sitting on the throne.* And He Who was

sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius stone; and a rainbow *was* around the throne, like an emerald in its appearance” (vs 2-3). This is where God the Father is. Christ is at His right hand. This is where we get

- our source
- our power
- our strength
- our begetting
- our growing in grace and knowledge

—from God the Father and Jesus Christ. That’s why every epistle of Paul starts out that way. So if we can, with God’s Spirit, let that uplift us in understanding and open our minds in greater appreciation, this is going to help us through the troubling times that are here.

“And around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had on their heads golden crowns. And proceeding from the throne were lightnings and thunders and voices; and seven lamps of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God... [Which it says over in Rev. 5 are the seven eyes of God.] ...*were* burning before the throne. And before the throne *was* a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne and over the throne *were* four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind” (vs 4-6). Then it describes them. Then it says they call, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.’

This is the scene, brethren. This is where the plan of God is being carried out. This is the *headquarters of the universe*. So it is true, we all get our instructions from headquarters—**God’s!** Isn’t that amazing? So this is the setting.

Ephesians 1:5: “...to the good pleasure of His own will.” This means

- God has *called* you!
- He has *given* you His Spirit!
- He *loves* you!
- He *wants* you!
- He *needs* you!
- He *desires* you to be in His kingdom!
- He *desires* you to live forever with Him!

Keep that in mind whenever any troubles come. Don’t let anything blot that out.

Verse 6: “To *the* praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved Son.” Think of that! What does God think about? *His plan!* We are involved in God’s plan and all the brethren that He has called. That’s the central object and focus of what He is doing spiritually right now. After that then comes prophecy.

Verse 7: “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, Which He has made to abound toward us... [Grace upon grace. Have you heard that? *Yes! John 1.* Everything that we do through the Spirit of God is by the grace of God.] ...made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence... [I want you to think about this]: **..Having made know to us the mystery [secret] of His own will...**” (vs 7-9). We have it in the Word of God—isn’t that something?

Just think of the world out there. They don’t know about God. They don’t know who He is, where He is, what He’s doing. A lot of people don’t believe there is God, so they think they’re god. Well, the true God *has given to us the understanding of His secret plan*, and it’s contained in His Word and the framework of it is contained in the Sabbath and Holy Days. The very thing the world hates and rejects is what God uses to reveal His will. Isn’t that amazing?

“...according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself” (v 9). Now I don’t know exactly how that works, so we can ask the question of ourselves individually: Why did God call me? *Because you look and examine who you are*, as I do myself and know that ***I have absolutely nothing I didn’t receive.*** Everything physical, everything spiritual, ability to know and everything all comes from God, every bit of it! And like Paul told those who were arguing about various philosophies there in Athens, he says, ‘In God we live and move and have our being.’ So all the glory goes to God. Everything that we do comes from God.

God loves us and we love Him. And we love Him not only just in keeping His commandments, but we love Him emotionally and spiritually and mentally, and in everything that we do. ‘He’s made known to us.’

Verse 10: “That in *the Divine* plan for the fulfilling of *the* times, He might bring all things together in Christ... [It’s all going to come together and where is that finality of that plan depicted? *Revelation 21 & 22—right? Yes!*] ...both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.” So we are involved in something that is really awesome and fantastic and absolutely magnificent. Us little ole peons down here, as the rest of the world would look at us.

Verse 11: “*Yes*, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance...” Wonder what that inheritance is going to be like in New Jerusalem? What did Jesus promise the disciples on the Passover night? *He said, ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’* I wonder what that’s going to be like? I

wonder what it's going to be like to live in New Jerusalem? Just like we're made of the dust of the earth and all these things around us are made of different forms of dust of the earth, so there are things composed of spirit which are not living beings. They are spiritual things. New Jerusalem is a spiritual structure composed of spirit so that spirit beings can live in it. And I wonder what it's going to be like.

I know Dolores and I have thought of this many times, I wonder what it's going to be like, we go into wherever the place Jesus has prepared for us. I don't know if there's going to be nameplate with our new name there or not, could be. I don't know if an angel is going to lead in there, probably be angels, Christ can't lead every one of us to where we're going to be. And He opens the door and we look in and here's our new place where we're going to live. And He takes us over to the closet and He opens up the closet and here are all these spiritual clothes hanging there, if we could picture it that way. God wears spiritual clothes—doesn't He? Christ in vision, John saw Him with a robe, that clothed down to His feet—correct? That had to be made of spirit, otherwise He wouldn't be able to have it. Then look around and understand—

- no more war
- no more Satan
- no more sorrow
- no more crying
- no more death

This is what we need to keep our minds on. "...inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose... [This is why the love of God becomes so important. The world wants God to love them and accept them in their sins as they are, but God wants us to know that He loves us, and that we need to love Him back with all our hearts, and mind, and soul, and being. It goes that way.] ...Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will.... [And is not the will of God perfect? Is not the plan of God perfect? *Yes, indeed!*] ...That we might be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ' (vs 11-12). Can you imagine that? The angels are going to see all of us born into the Kingdom of God, and they are going to be singing praises to God because we're His children. I can't imagine that, but it's going to happen. About the closest I can get to that, come over here to Revelation 5. If you have *The Messiah* at home, crank it out and listen to it again.

Revelation 5:9: "And they sang a new song, saying... [This is the song for us, but they're singing it to let us know that it's there for us.] ...'Worthy are You to take the book, and to open its seals because You were slain, and did redeem us to God by Your own blood, out of every tribe and language and

people and nation, And did make us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth'" (vs 9-10). Think about reigning forever, brethren, into the ages of eternity.

"And I saw and heard *the* voices of many angels around the throne, and *the* voices of the living creatures and the elders, and thousands of thousands... [Whew! What that's going to be like.] ...saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing'.... [And that's part of our inheritance.] ...And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and those that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing, and honor and glory, and sovereignty into the ages of eternity'" (vs 11-13).

So if we keep this fixed in our minds, the fact that God Himself is personally dealing with us, this is going to help us through anything that comes along.

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Ephesians 1:11: "Yes, in Him... [that is Christ] ...in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will; That we might be to *the* praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ; In Whom you also trusted after hearing the Word of the Truth... [So this is all about the calling that we have here.] ...the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise: (vs 11-13). That is the begettal which comes from God the Father, so the Holy Spirit contains two elements:

1. the begettal of the Father
2. the Spirit of Christ

so we can have the mind of Christ. We are sealed. Now what does this tell us in relation to the 144,000? We can't be part of the 144,000 because they are sealed when? *During the Tribulation!*

Let's come back here to John 14 and let's see that. John 14. Let me just mention this: The more you study the Bible and the more you understand the Bible, that only comes through prayer and study and God's Spirit, and loving God, and all of that. Then you look at the religions of the world and even the religions within the Churches of God and you will see how they're missing the mark so greatly.

I just heard a man who is a well known Sunday-keeping evangelist and he gave a very good sermon on how to cope with difficulties and problems. He was very sincere in what he did. He said the thing that kept him going in times of

difficulty was that he had to prepare a sermon for every Sunday. Then when he got to the end he said, ‘Well, we’re all going to be in heaven.’ So it was very interesting in how he really did not emphasize the Spirit of God, though he gave good steps to do, though he said, ‘Look to God,’ and all that sort of thing. So it is true they have an understanding to a certain point, but this is why with the Spirit of God and constantly study, growing in grace and knowledge—and let’s understand this: ***Never do we arrive until the resurrection.*** So whatever we know today, that’s fine, but we better learn some more down the road. We can never become stagnant, because the Spirit of God is not stagnant. When you become stagnant, you become lukewarm, like it says of the Laodiceans.

Now here John 14:21: “The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” That’s how you were called. God the Father and Christ working together.

As I’ve mentioned before, there is a signal event in your life when you can look back and you can say, ‘That’s when it began.’ Now it may be something that is not spectacular. It wasn’t a bolt of lightning from heaven. It wasn’t any of that. It was some event in your life that God interacted with you and that event, and you knew that it was God and you knew that something was different.

Verse 23: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... [That means the whole message of Christ.] ...and My Father will love him, and **We**... [I want to emphasize the ‘We.’ That why in every introduction of the epistles by Paul, it is ‘Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is ‘We.’ That’s who the ‘We’ are, that’s who the ‘Us’ are. Going clear back to Gen. 1:26, ‘Let **Us** make man in Our image after **Our** likeness.] ...We will come to him and make **Our** abode with him.”

Think of that. What a tremendous blessing, what a tremendous calling. You can look around, if it’s a trouble or difficulty you’ll get through it. When you get through it and God inspires you—and I found this, whenever I’m really, really, really inspired, then something carnal happens afterwards. That is the operation of being kept humble. I’m sure you’ve experienced that—haven’t you? *Yes, indeed!* That’s so we always know that it comes from God.

Now let’s come to 1-John 3 again; let’s see something else here. We’ll look at the Father part of the Spirit. 1-John 3:9: “Everyone who has been begotten... [Because in order to be a son or daughter or children, ‘teknon’ of God, you must receive the Holy Spirit from God the Father as a begettal, so you

become His child.] ...Everyone who has been begotten by God does not practice sin... [*King James* says ‘cannot sin,’ that’s impossible. Does not *practice* sin, because God’s Spirit will reveal the sin to us so we can repent.] ...because His seed... [And the Greek there is ‘sperma.’ Sound familiar with human procreation?] ...Everyone who has been begotten by God... [that’s the Father] ...does not practice sin because His seed... [And obviously that’s talking about the seed of begettal—right?] ...His seed of *begettal* is dwelling within him, and he is not able to *practice* sin **because he has been begotten by God.**” That’s the element from the Father.

Now Romans 8, let’s look at the other element of it. I think, brethren, in understanding God’s grace and commandment-keeping, that everything from Rom. 1:16 thru Rom. 8 is one complete unit with all the components to give us understanding. Romans 8:9: “However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit... [That’s the way that God looks at you, though you still have a fleshly body. You are not categorized as being carnal. You’re categorized by God as being spiritual.] ...but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you.... [And we just saw that it is ‘We,’ the Father and the Son.] ...But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin; however the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.... [Here is the second component of the Spirit of God]: ...Now if **the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling with you...** [That’s from the Father. That is the begettal.] (And when it comes time to be born again, he says): ...Now if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells within you.”

Now let’s do a little ‘chest beating’ here, ‘arm beating,’ whatever. Paul said that as we have *borne the image of the earthy*—do we have that? Are we made of the dust of the earth? *Yes!* You walking around in the flesh is a guarantee that you will have a spiritual body, because he says ‘as we have borne the image of the one of dust, so shall we bear the image of the spiritual.’ That’s why we’re made in His image. So what we’re talking about is not some ethereal thing way out here, we’re talking about a realistic thing of how God is spiritually dealing in our lives. Then this helps us to be able to

- keep our focus
- keep our purpose
- keep our eyes fixed on Christ

when there are times of troubles and difficulties and trials, and we’re surely going to face them.

Let's come back to Ephesians 1:13, again. We haven't gotten very far—have we? "...sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is *the* earnest of our inheritance until *the* redemption of the purchased possession, to *the* praise of His glory" (vs 13-14). Isn't that something? God is investing in us and He's going to cash it in. Think of it that way.

Let's see what Paul says. I think that Ephesians 3 is really one of the most inspiring and uplifting parts of the Bible. Ephesians 3:1: "For this cause I, Paul, *am* the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles." Now isn't it interesting, too, that even in trials and difficulties you have sometimes the most important spiritual insights in your life and understanding of God—isn't that true? That's what Paul had. And this is the time that God decided to give this revelation to Paul and the apostles.

"If indeed you have heard of the ministry of the grace of God that was given to me for you; How He made know to me by revelation the mystery... [That's the secret of God.] ...(even as I wrote briefly before, So that when you read *this*, you will be able to comprehend my understanding in the mystery of Christ), Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men... [Now how many years is that? Well over 4000 years God didn't make it known. That's amazing—isn't it? That's why there's the second resurrection. There's got to be!] ...was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His Holy apostles and prophets by *the Spirit*" (vs 2-5).

Spiritually understood. What did he say? Spiritual things are understood by spiritual means. What are the spiritual means?

1. the Word of God
2. the Spirit of God
3. by being able to love God

Those are the spiritual means by which God reveals these things to us.

"That the Gentiles might be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God, *which* was given to me through the inner working of His power" (vs 6-7). So whatever we are to do as ministers and teachers it has to be with God's inner working of His Spirit

- to teach
- to help
- to educate
- to uplift

And I found this brethren, the worst way to correct people is to give a sermon and expose every sin in the congregation and attack every sin publicly. I did that once, because that's how we were taught to do

it. It took me two or three years to win back the congregation after that and I don't do that anymore. ***The best way for correction is to be inspired to change.*** Is that not true? Because when you're inspired to change, it's from the inside and you want to—isn't that correct? When someone is beating you over the head with the Bible, you don't want to change. You may be convicted that, yes, you're wrong, but the real thing to motivate that change is the Spirit of God. So you must be inspired to change. When you keep this before you and keep this in mind, you're going to want to change—right? *Yes!* You're not going to want to keep old carnal things around. *No!* Get rid of them. Now notice how Paul viewed himself, even though he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Would that we all as elders and ministers keep this same attitude here. "To me, who am less than the last of all the saints... [Where's the hierarchy here? *It's not there*—is it?] ...was this grace given, that I might preach the gospel among the Gentiles—*even* the unsearchable riches of Christ... [Which is what we are covering today.] ...And that I might enlighten all *as to* what is the fellowship of the mystery that has been hidden from the ages in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the Church to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places*" (vs 8-10).

Brethren, the knowledge that God gives us, even principalities and powers don't understand. Isn't that something? Think about it! Think about the love of God that He would call us and grant us this knowledge and this understanding. That's fantastic, but it's also tremendously humbling—isn't it? Just like it was with Paul here.

Now v 11: "According to *His* eternal purpose, which He has wrought in Christ Jesus our Lord, In Whom we have boldness and *direct* access with confidence through His *very* own faith... [That is His sacrifice and His shed blood.] ...So then, I beseech you... [Here he is in chains. Everyone could feel real sorry for him.] ...I beseech *you* not to faint at my tribulations for you, which are *working for* your glory.... [Notice the attitude that he had]: ...For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... [continually] ...Of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named... [Think of that! Going to be of the family of God.] ...That He may grant you... [Now this is what we need right now, more than anything else, more than what the details of the *church wars* are. This is what we need the most.] ...That He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man.... [Strengthened with the power and Spirit of God.] ...That Christ may

dwell in your hearts by faith” (vs 11-17). That we have *the love, the faith, the hope*. What we’re talking about here is *the hope*.

“And that being rooted and grounded in love...” (v 18). This is why love gives us the understanding. This is why it’s so important. I’ve had people say when they come and visit you that they are astounded at the love that you all have for each other. That’s great, that’s wonderful. Because we want, when brethren come in, we want them to be loved, not judged. We want them to be welcome, not separated. We want them to understand God loves them and we love them. That’s how we can help them more than anything else.

“...you may be fully able to comprehend... [To grasp, to realize, to understand.] ...with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height... [of God’s plan and purpose for us. Isn’t that something? This doesn’t come all at once. This comes a bit at a time, a bit at a time, a bit at a time.] ...And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge... [This is our destiny. This is the predestination that God put in His plan for those who answer His call will receive—right here]: **...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God**” (vs 18-19). That’s the destiny, brethren. *Filled with all the fullness of God*.

Now notice, it’s going to be done, v 20: “Now to Him Who is able... [that is has the power] ...to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or thin, according to the power that is working in us.... [That’s why it’s going to be an amazing thing at the resurrection—isn’t it? *Yes, indeed.*] ...To Him *be* glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, even into the ages of eternity. Amen.” (vs 20-21).

Now let’s finish by coming back to Ephesians 1 again, and let’s see Paul’s prayer for us. I think these words are absolutely inspiring, eloquent, uplifting and sustaining in everything.

Ephesians 1:15: “For this cause... [The whole cause of what he wrote here in the first part and all the rest in the book of Ephesians.] ...I also, after hearing of the faith in the Lord Jesus that is among you, and the love toward all the saints, Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (vs 15-17). That’s what it means to grow in grace and knowledge.

“And may the eyes of your mind be enlightened in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the inner working of His mighty power” (vs 18-19). And as he was writing these things, he was in chains. I am amazed at the tremendous inspiration that God gave him in spite of those circumstances.

“...according to the inner working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from *the* dead, and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named—not only in this age, but also in the *age* to come... [the Kingdom of God] ...For He has subordinated all things under His feet, and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the church, Which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all” (vs 19-23). So this is how, brethren, we can have the

- spiritual strength
- love
- endurance
- hope
- faith

to face whatever may come, however it may fall. And that we can, brethren, encourage others. There are going to be a lot of people going to need some encouragement, need some understanding and you can be one of those to help them.

So let’s all stay close to God, grow and overcome, and help as many as we can.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 12:1-3
- 2) Ephesians 1:1-5
- 3) 1-John 3:1
- 4) 2-Corinthians 6:17-18
- 5) Revelation 4:2-6
- 6) Ephesians 1:5-12
- 7) Revelation 5:9-13
- 8) Ephesians 1:11-13
- 9) John 14:21, 23
- 10) 1-John 3:9
- 11) Romans 8:9-11
- 12) Ephesians 1:13-14
- 13) Ephesians 3:1-21
- 14) Ephesians 1:15-23

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 9
- Matthew 5:48
- Revelation 5
- John 1
- Revelation 21, 22
- Genesis 1:26
- Romans 1:16 thru Rom. 8

Also referenced: Sermon Series:

- *Aftershock—the Coming Global Meltdown*
- *God's Grace and Commandment Keeping*

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