

Ephesians 1: I'm going to read verse 16. *I do not cease giving thanks for you, making a mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of your calling.* Is anybody going to correct me? Well, thank you... *of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe? These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might, which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.*

Now return to verse 17. *That God might grant to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.* Turn to Ephesians 3:3. *By referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.* And whatever that verse says, it says this: Christ is a mystery, and there is a mystery.

I'm going to take those passages of Scripture, and Galatians 1:12: *For I received,* and he's speaking of his gospel, *for I neither received it from men or man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through the revelation of Jesus Christ.* And in Galatians 1:15-16: *But when He had set me apart even from my mother's womb...* sister, he chose to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior, but God had already set him apart from his mother's womb, which is irreconcilable. *But when He had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, He was pleased to reveal His Son in me.* Praise the Lord.

Now, there is a recurring word in all of this, and that word is revelation, and that's what I want to talk to you about tonight, and that is... I'm really tempted to say that we need a revelation of Jesus Christ, but actually that's not true. *The body of believers* needs a revelation of Jesus Christ... so that your heart might be open. Isn't that fascinating? To a people, he said that your heart, and that being the eyes of a church, might have its eyes opened to a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now, when you get used to that, I'll go on and speak, but we're going to listen to it for a minute. No message is more difficult to bring than the one I'm going to bring you tonight. It's going to take everything you've got, if that stays on, to even remotely grasp anything I have to say. I've only brought this message one other time. It was two weeks ago, and it was one of the most difficult things I ever did in my life...and I didn't say a great deal. Paul said elsewhere, *"I bow my knee before the Lord Jesus Christ, before the God of heaven and earth, that you might have a revelation of His Son."* And He says here that I pray that God may give you the wisdom and revelation of the experiential knowledge of His Son Christ Jesus. Then he says, before I was born or in my mother's womb, He set me apart that Christ might be revealed in me. Now, I assume that is possible then for you and me. Have you ever thought that God might have set you apart, that you might have a revelation of Jesus Christ?

Now, in the first century we had men who preached a revelation of Christ, and because they preached it, for reasons we cannot understand or comprehend, He was revealed in others. Somewhere around the 3rd century, we lost those kinds of men who preached the revelation of

Jesus Christ. He preached a revelation as did other men, and because it was preached and because of the working of the Holy Spirit, others received that revelation. Somewhere around the 3rd or 4th century, that revelation was no longer preached, and when it is not preached, it's not preached because men don't have it. Therefore, if men do not have that revelation and do not preach a revelation they have, then God's people are never exposed to it and have no opportunity for the Holy Spirit to make that revelation possible.

Now, I want to make it clear that I said around 300 or 400 A.D., and I'm going to make a little parenthesis here. You've heard a great deal, and quite often it's said what the church needs today and what's wrong with the church today, and you will get the distinct impression that the church of Jesus Christ here at the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st is really worse off than it's been at any other time. That is not true. If you're going to talk about worse off, then you're talking about 1700 years. You're not talking about our generation. Our generation of the church is no better or worse than other generations. In fact, we're a lot better off since the Reformation.

But I wouldn't want the church of 100 years ago. I really wouldn't. Women wearing bonnets, preachers preaching six hours, going out under a brush arbor preaching hellfire and brimstone. I'm not into that, and you're not either. It would not mean a great deal to you. I wouldn't want to be a part of the church in 1920. It's hard enough to go to church as it is today; in 1920, they didn't have air conditioning. But there are a lot of things today. There's some pretty good Christian literature if you look really, really hard. Something is happening in America right now that has never happened before. America has never had an organic expression of the church. All it's ever had has been what it got from England, and that's not been true before.

There are a few Americans, us who are called fat, dumb, and happy...there are a few Christians in America for the first time in our history, who are beginning to see a little bit of the deep things of Christ. That's never happened before. Now, if you're going to say what the church in the 20th century needs, you need to go back to the 3rd or 4th century. Saints, we're not so bad off compared to other centuries, but if you compare us with the first two or three centuries, ooh, we are all in bad shape—1700 years of us.

Because of this lack of revelation, we hear the Gospel preached today that we hear. It is because of a total lack of revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in us that we fall for all the dumb things we fall for. I want to stop a moment and say some of the things you have done have been so ridiculously stupid it is unbelievable. Do you remember when you walked into a meeting, and you heard what we need is submission and authority in the church, and that thing got so big, and it got so big, and there were so many scriptures, and you were overcome by, yeah. Yeah. That's it. That's it, and boy, did you get taken to spin dry.

Then there was that meeting you walked into, and they said, "Boy, what we need is the power of God." We need the power of God. Power of God. They brought all these messages to you and the power of God, power of God, and it just overwhelmed you. Yeah, that's it. We need the power of

God. I want to pause for a moment and speak to you a moment about the power of God. Anytime anyone speaks to you about the power of God, be pretty sure that man has never had a revelation of Jesus Christ. My personal impression is that most men who speak on the power of God are “Sauls” who have great outward power, know very little internal transformation, and have very little depth in Christ. Now, I lay that down. I don't back up.

Now let me give you an opposite illustration. Of all the men who have lived in your lifetime and mine, no one could say there's been a greater demonstration of power in his life than Billy Graham. I would like you to go back through everything Billy Graham has ever said and see how many mentions of the “power of God” you can find; they will be virtually nonexistent. I commend my brother Billy Graham for that, as I would commend brother Paul of Tarsus, who also did not talk about the power of God in his life until one day he was forced into a corner and made one short reference to it because they were going to “seed” on the power of God.

You have been in those meetings where it was said that miracles and healing...and we can't prove the gospel unless we...and you saw the power of God in healing, and it was marvelous, and that leg grew. You saw it grow. It grew that far, didn't it? You bought into that, and then one day you bought into prosperity, and then the guy who was preaching it to you went to jail. But boy, one of the most difficult tricks I ever heard of in my life of having a gospel preached that was the gospel of prosperity is finding that in the New Testament. That is tricky. That is really difficult...but on every page is the cross of Christ. I don't know how it's done...but let me get off of that.

Then there was prophecy. You remember that we have to have prophets, and we have to have the recovery of the gifts. The five-fold, or is it six or seven or four or three? How many? Five-fold recovery. That's foolishness too, because I have counted at least 17 gifts in the New Testament; Ephesians mentions just five. We have to recover the gifts. So we bought into recovering the gifts. And for me, I will say that one day I bought into evangelism. We have to have evangelism. Souls are going to hell. And you know that is just taking a segment of the gospel, taking it over here, blowing it up, and making it a 20th-century thing that is totally irrelevant and has no connection with what was being reported in the first-century writings.

A sister asked me last night about evangelism. I believe I'm correct. The word does not appear in the New Testament. There are evangelists, and there's the evangel, but I don't think there is evangelism. I'm going to tell you something. There's not supposed to be any evangelism outside of the body of Christ. We are not supposed to specialize in anything; we are supposed to be a whole body. The healers were local, and the evangelists were local. They didn't have tents on the road; they were local to their own town or village. The healers were local. They were not special. They were ordinary people, not looked upon as special. They were just some of the brothers and the sisters in the fellowship. They didn't start out with this thing; it just came to them.

I want to give you the definition of a healer. Would you like to hear the definition of a healer? A healer is a brother or sister in a local assembly who has prayed for someone to be healed; if that sick person is not healed, the healer continues to care for and seek to restore that person. Now

show me that person, and I'll show you the gift of healing in the local body of believers, because you're not the kind who goes around doing this and, if that doesn't work, heads out the next day for parts unknown. You're stuck in the local assembly where your gift has its limits. You continue seeking to help this person regain his health or comfort him while he's dying; that is a healer.

We heard about evangelism, and we heard about theology, and we heard about Bible school. We heard, and this is incredible, about knowing the Bible, specifically the New Testament, and we got into that. We got into doctrine, and we bought into that, and we memorized all those verses, and then one day we went to breakfast, and we heard about speaking in tongues. Here I've got to be careful because some of you people are just downright sensitive about this, because you still believe that is the center of all things and it has changed your life. I wrote somewhere in a book that you could stand on the corner of any main street in America, and you wouldn't have a day go by without stopping everybody who walked past you, but what you would find was at least a half a dozen burned-out Pentecostals who had been through it all and were just the walking dead.

I'm not going to take away your experience, but now I'm going to stop and make a point: each of these people proclaimed to you an "it." Each of these people proclaimed to you an "it"; is that not true? Each one of them proclaimed to you a miracle, a tongue, a sign, a wonder, a healing, empowerment, evangelism, prophecy. Would you like to help me now? You were waiting for me to cover the one you got into. Submission and authority, shepherding, whatever. Yes.

Let me take a minute with discipleship. I want you to go to your concordance and look up the word discipleship outside the gospels, in reference to those who followed the Lord Jesus Christ. The word stopped being used after that. It is another perfect picture of our independent thinking wholly and apart from the church of Jesus Christ. One man is going to disciple another man. You can't run fast enough to disciple me, mister.

I would not let any typical Christian on this planet, on this day, breathing the same oxygen that I do on this planet, try to teach me all the stuff I have just presented to you, which he's going to present to me, and tell me that's going to make me a better Christian. Let me tell you something. There is enough Christian ignorance on this planet to drown it in ignorance. When I hear and see people discipling other people, then the words come to my mind, as I'm sure they do to you: "The blind leading the blind."

What a distortion of the first century. There ain't no such thing like that going on. But what about 2 Timothy 2:2? 2 Timothy 2:2 is a church planter writing to a church planter about church planters. That's all it is talking about, and brothers and sisters, we need second Timothy 2:2. We need church planters raising up church planters raising up church planters who will preach to us and declare to us a revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; first and foremost, to present *Him*.

Now, I'm never going to get anywhere with an "it". I need a "Him"; what I needed the day I got saved. I needed a Him. Someone showed me a manuscript recently that was about to be made into a movie, and it was Christian. They asked my reaction to it, and I said, "You know, it has the same

fallacy in it, according to my personal judgment, that all of us have. We feel that if we could just get the plan of salvation out, then more people would be saved. A lot of people just don't understand it, and if we get it understood, then so many more people will get saved.” And I said, “The whole movie is about the plan of salvation, but salvation is not an “it”. Salvation is a “Him,” and nowhere in that whole motion picture was He lifted up. A plan that mentions Him as Savior is in there, but the plan predominates. I did not get saved by a plan of salvation; I had a head-on collision with Jesus Christ.

Now, I know many of you were “four-lawed.” I've heard this term. You got four-lawed, and you got saved miraculously, and I think that's wonderful, but I'm going to tell you something. I don't know anybody who got “four-lawed,” but more than anything else, they need a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, they will be turned into a soul winner, and I can promise you in 6 to 10 years they will be a walking Christian zombie. Burned out.

Now I am an old man...boy, do I enjoy using that term...and I have watched the Christian drama longer than probably anyone else in this room. Let me see. Have we got anybody over 60 here? Let me see you. Yes, we have one; alright, we've got two. Three. I have still watched the Christian drama longer than you have. I've been right in the middle of it, and I watched the repeating and the people who become soul winners and evangelists burn out in 5 to 10 years. It'll take everything you've got inside you.