

## *“Prayer and Grace”*

### **The Family of God**

Ephesians 1:15-2:8

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**Jeff:** Father in heaven, we thank You for the time that You put into our lives. And we thank You for the times that are ours—not necessarily sovereignly, but certainly ours with which we exercise responsibility. And this You’ve given to us so that we might redeem it. Father, we pray that we would redeem the time, these early morning hours for Your glory. And we pray, Father, that You will bless us and magnify Yourself in them.

We thank You for Your word. And we never tire of thanking You for that Word, for it is indeed the rock upon which we take our stand. For it is Your Word, and there is no division between it and Yourself. Father, it’s the only safe Word upon which we might stand today in a world of words and spin. Father, we often tire of the world we live in, and the words that fly about. And Lord, we pray that we would take our comfort, and we pray that we would take our refuge in Your word. Father, we ask that You would minister to us by it, because it’s not simply a dead word on a page but it is Your living Word. And it is living because Your Spirit inspired it. And whether it be upon a page or not, it is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword that has the ability yet to divide both bone and marrow and soul and spirit, and it penetrates our hearts as well. And we’re thankful for that. We pray, Father, that it would penetrate us not only this morning but every day. And we pray that by Your ministry of the spirit in the Word that we would be changed. Father, we ask that this morning would be no different.

Lord, there are many concerns that each one of us has. We’re thankful for Your oversight over Kevin and his family and for the way that you watch out for his granddaughter, also for Glenn. And Lord, we’re praying that You’ll not only watch over Brad cognitively, but that You will watch over Him spiritually as well.

Father, thank You for the many opportunities to You give us to bring our concerns to You. We ask that You will take them and deal with them in Your sovereign and tender mercies as we know You will. Father again, thank You for the morning. And bless us in it, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** I’ll tell you one thing about my inaugural address. First of all I let my wife read it. And she handed it back to me and she went like this. *(A snorting sound. Laughter)* And I sent it to a friend of mine who has a Ph.D. And he wrote back and said, “It’s engaging to say the least.” And so I compromised and I made it short. *(Laughter)* Oh well, wives! *(Laughter)*

**Ted Wood:** God bless them.

**Jeff:** Yep. *(Laughter)* That’s right; thanks for saving me there. That’s right. *(Laughter)* God bless them.

**Don Maurer:** Some men would say that you can’t live with them and you can’t live without them.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

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**Ted:** Yeah; that was Fozzie Bear.

**Jeff:** Yeah, that’s right. *(Laughter)* All right. Well, we are continuing on in Ephesians. So I’m going to start in verse 15 in our reading and read to the end of the chapter. And then I’ll just read into the first few verses of chapter 2. And so we’ll see how far we get today.

*“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and Your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him as Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

*“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

*“But god, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* The word of the Lord.

**Men:** thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** Okay. Well, here is where we are. We finished with our security the last time. We looked at that we were chosen by the Father, given by the Son and sealed by the Holy Spirit. That’s a summary of the verses that we looked at. And now I want us to move to the prayer. Certainly if there are no questions I want us to move to the prayer inverse 15.

And the prayer inverse 15 is significant in several ways. And I just want to touch on some of those ways this morning. And certainly, as I said to you before, I developed this as an overview. So if I don’t say some of the things that you would like to hear, don’t ask me to say them. No, I’m just kidding. *(Laughter)* If we’re not talking about a particular element in the text that you would like to talk about then please raise it.

The first thing I want you to notice is that *Paul prays*. And he doesn’t cease. And why does he not cease? That’s the question.

And the answer to that is that he knows the powerful effectiveness of prayer. Now I think that if I could just stop here for a minute and say something to you that would be more pastoral than it would be necessarily textual, but this is an application when I think of the text, one of the things that I think we need more than ever is that we need to be

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praying. I think that if oftentimes if you talk to people—and I’ve talked to a number of people—if you talk to people about their habits, their spiritual habits, you find that a great many are deficient in the very basics of the Christian faith. And you’ll find that a number of people don’t read the bible regularly themselves. You’ll find that a number of people don’t pray.

I don’t exactly know what the cause of that is, but I know that’s the case. And I know that it’s not just me making that assessment. I’ve talked to a number of other ministers who are active in churches, shepherding their people. And they’ve found the same thing.

And the only thing that you can do in that situation is to encourage people to be about the means of grace that God has given them so that they might grow thereby. And that’s basically what you have to do. And I would encourage you if you’re not playing regularly and reading the bible regularly to be about that, because those are some of God’s appointed means whereby we grow up in Christ. And if we’re not doing that then we’re not growing. And then sometimes we run into that hard patch in our lives. And we wonder, “Where in the world is the Lord? Why isn’t God here?”

And it’s not that God is absent. It’s that we feel absent from Him because we’ve not exercised our faith in doing the very basic things of the Christian life that will promote a nearness to God.

One of the things that I think is important for us to remember is what I put on the board the last time. When you think about say, Saul, when you think about the Lord Jesus, those are two examples, and obviously in different ways. But those are two examples where God withdraws from the individual.

For instance, He withdraws from Saul to show His disapproval of Him and to show His approval of David. He withdraws from Jesus and leaves the Son derelict because the Son is our substitute and Representative, and He must bear the curse.

But I want you to understand something. Those are two cases in the Scriptures where God draws back. And the interesting thing is that God does not draw back from His own people, from His children who belong to Him in Christ. And though we’re told in James 4 to “*draw near to God and He will draw near to you,*” the implication is that God doesn’t move. And we need to draw near to Him in our Christian experience through the exercise of those basics in order to have a sense of God’s presence.

If I can give one more example it comes from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. And you know, when Christian enters into the narrow gate, one portion of it, he finds a man by the name of Weak Faith, Little Faith. And you remember that Weak Faith didn’t have to have weak faith. Why? Because he had the scroll of assurance in his robe. And so when he arrived at the Celestial City he was going to present that scroll and so be admitted. And all he had to do was draw down on what he possessed, the resources that he possessed in order to have a nearness with God. But he trundled along in the Christian experience because he didn’t exercise his faith. And that’s very true of us, and we need to exercise that faith.

So Paul recognizes the powerful and effective nature of prayer. And I’ll just pause there. Anything you want to talk about there? Yes? Hold on just a second. Let them get the mike here for you, Don.

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**Don Maurer:** Okay. When you say to draw near to God and that God hasn't moved, what about passages, for example, in Psalm 66 where David said, *“If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the LORD would not have listened?”*

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** How do we deal with that verse in light of what you just said?

**Jeff:** Yeah. Let me see if I can put my eye on another passage that might help us here.

**Kirk Ellerbusch:** Well Jeff, that doesn't mean that God has pulled away from us at that point. It means that we need to deal with iniquity in our hearts and lives rightly before Him before He will respond to our prayers.

**Jeff:** Well, the thing that you have to remember is that I think that the Psalmist is coming from a different experience in the Old Testament when he's talking in the Psalms. I think we talked a little bit about how there's a progressive experience in the believing life along with a progressive revelation. And so I think that it's not that the Old Testament believer believes that he loses his salvation. But certainly there's not an intimacy that every believer enjoys to the degree that a New Testament believer enjoys. And the reason I say that is because, if you remember what I said about why it is that Peter quotes Joel in the sermon in Acts chapter 2, you remember what I said. I said that he quotes Joel where it says that *“your old men will see visions and your young men will dream dreams.”* *“Your sons and daughters will prophesy.”* Something like that. And he's quoting Joel.

And why is it that he says that? Does he say that because he means that every individual Christian will be a prophet? And the answer to that is no; that's not the case at all. In fact I don't believe that Pentecost is a repeatable event that we ought to strive for in the Christian life. I think it's part of the history of redemption that is bound up in Christ. He lived, He died. He was raised, He ascended into heaven. He received the Holy Spirit. *“He poured out the Holy spirit, which is what you now see and hear.”* And Pentecost is part of the history of redemption. That is what Christ does. Remember the envelopes. And so I don't believe that it's a repeatable event.

But one of the things that you have to remember is that it is the demarcation of the fullness and fulfillment of the covenant of grace. It is the climax of the coming of Jesus, which means, which signals a change in our relationship with God. It is not what it once was, as it was in the Old Testament. Remember I said to you at the time that prophets enjoyed the most intimacy with God of anyone. So for instance Amos 3 says that God does nothing without first revealing it to His prophet. So Elisha sees the shunamite woman comes to Gehazi is pushing her away. And he says, *“No; let her come. God hasn't revealed this to me. He hasn't made this known to me.”*

As if that's an anomaly. Here's this prophet. He has not made it known to him. And so now in the New testament it's not that everyone is going to prophesy and dream a dream and have a vision. In the New Testament it's that every believer will enjoy the same level of intimacy, the same level of believing experience that the prophet of the Old testament enjoyed.

So for instance, going back to Don's question, Don says what about Psalm 66, where it appears that God has deserted him? And you have other Psalms like that. Psalm 13: *“How long, O LORD?”*, right? God appears to be slumbering. Well, it's the level of

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experience that they’re reporting and singing about. And that’s one of the things that we have to register. And that’s why I said to you the last time that there’s a sense in which, in a most basic way, where the experience of the Old Testament believer ends, that’s where our experience begins. And it’s because of what Christ has done as the climax of the covenants. So does that make sense?

**Don:** Yes. Okay; all right. Yes? I knew you were shuffling around in those pages and I was waiting for it to come. *(Laughter)*

**Ted Wood:** I was looking at the Scriptures. And you and I have talked about this before. I was resorting to Psalm 51.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** It says:

*“Cast me not away from Your presence,  
And take not Your Holy Spirit from me.”*

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** You kind of intimated that that’s an Old Testament experience versus a New Testament experience. I would disagree with you.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** But *“if I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the LORD would not have listened.”* First of all, that’s David speaking about his experience. It’s not saying “if you have cherished iniquity in your heart, the LORD would not have listened to you.”

**Jeff:** So the only thing I’d say,--and I want you to interact with this,--but Acts 2 tells us that David was a prophet.

**Ted:** Yeah, okay.

**Jeff:** So his experience is really a New Testament experience.

**Ted:** but the fact of the matter is, in fact, *“if I had cherished iniquity in my heart.”* Well, what’s the iniquity? Well, okay. If I cherished lust in my heart, for instance. Well, let’s not go there. Let’s go to something more common. How about worry and anxiety? In fact that is our experience. That is our ongoing experience all the time. We do cherish iniquity in our hearts, and the Lord would not have listened. So it’s got to go beyond that.

**Jeff:** See, I disagree.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Now I want you to interact; I don’t want to shut you down.

**Ted:** Let’s get it straight. I’ll never be shut down.

**Jeff:** No, no. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** I’ll never shut down.

**Jeff:** Go with me to Romans for a second. Now you may disagree with me about this, so that’s fine. Just keep it to yourselves. *(Laughter)*

**Brave Man:** We’ll have to call the lifeguard. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** So yeah, here we go; three verses again. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** If this discussion is not a benefit to others, there’s no reason for us to have it. I’m serious; I’m not being smart-alecky.

**Jeff:** I know. Is that—

**Ted:** Maybe it’s the one thing we have talked about.

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**Jeff:** So let me just pause and kind of interject. I do a lot of talking at times in this bible study. And I’ve had men come to me at different times who I think have appreciated the times where there is discussion amongst the brethren. And so once a discussion starts there’s a kind of evenness in terms of how much I speak and how much discussion there is. I sometimes speak for long periods of time, and then all of a sudden we discuss.

I have allowed that to happen because I’ve always felt like that’s something that you guys have appreciated, at least from the comments I get. So just to kind of say it, if you disagree with that kind of way of running the bible study you’ll have to let me know. . So I’m going to go ahead and go.

So go with me or romans 7 for just a minute. And in Romans 7 one of the things that we find is that I think we find an interesting situation. Here we find this. If you look at, say, the first five or six verses, you find a principle given and a principle illustrated. The principle given is, as long as a person is alive he is bound to the authority of the law. And then he gives this illustration of an ideal marriage. As long as a woman is married to her husband she is bound by the law. But when he dies she is free to re-marry.

Then there’s an un-ideal situation given where the woman commits adultery and she transgresses. And so she is under the authority of the law in that sense.

You know, here’s what we expect to happen. We expect Paul to be saying this. We’ll turn it around in terms of a woman. Here’s this woman married to a hard man. The hard man dies and she’s free now.

That’s not what he says. What he says is, here’s the point. This woman is married to a hard man. And she dies, because we’re the ones that have to die to the law. And some of the more liberal commentators say that Paul just got himself confused here. But that’s not what’s happening. Paul is making a point that in order for there to be freedom from the law there has to be a death. That’s the point. So that’s the first set of verses.

And then he asks the question. Well, what about this? So you go to verses 7 through about, I don’t know, 12 or 13. And that’s where he goes into the past tense and he says, “Let me talk to you about your old relationship to the law.” And basically this is what he says. He says that your sin is like a sleeping bear in a cage, and you’re in the cage. And the law comes to the cage door and says, “Don’t wake the bear!”

And the bear wakes up, and it starts mauling you. And you yell to the law. You say, “Save me!!

And the law says, “I can’t save you. That’s not what I’m built to do.” And that’s what Paul’s getting at, right? Paul said, “Covetousness slept in me until the law said, ‘Don’t covet.’ And when the law said ‘Don’t covet,’ it awoke and started pummeling me. And I sought help in the law and the law couldn’t give it.” And that’s when he finds Christ.

Now that’s basically it. And then the question becomes well, is the law sin, or is it good? And he says, “No, the law is good.” Sin is the thing that seized the opportunity that the law afforded, to make me aware of my sin.

And then it’s in the final verses—13-25—where he talks about our new relationship to the law. And whereas before he’s like, “Oh, the law! Oh!” Now he’s like, “I agree with the law; it’s good.”

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But one of the things that you have to get out of this (and there are a number of things that are here.) But one of the things that you have to get out of this is that he does the thing that the law says not to do, and he hates it. But he realizes—and this is the glorious part of it!—he realizes that if you be in Christ that his relationship to the law is now changed. Whereas before, when in the law would speak into his life, “Don’t covet,” and covetousness would arise, he would be condemned by it.

Now his relationship to the law has changed. He has died to the law in Christ. And now he still covets. Covetousness still comes along by way of the law and says, “*Thou shalt not covet.*” and he may still covet at times, in fact more often than he would like, if you read the text. But he knows that his relationship to the law has changed. And now he lives in spite of his guilt, right?

So he realizes that the law has no power over me. I have to put covetousness to death in me. But whereas once I was condemned by its declaration, now I am in Christ, and so dead to the law and alive to Christ, and able to put covetousness to death in me. And that’s what I need to be striving to do, even though I fail at it miserably and often. That’s what I strive to do because Christ has enabled me.

So that’s my take on it in the New Testament. So if I cherished iniquity in my heart, I would say that you could run in two different directions with that. First of all there’s the unbeliever who creates a pattern of sinfulness in his life—a pattern, right?, rather than instances for which he repents—even if those instances are numerous, right? But if I’ve created a pattern in my life for which I do not repent and cherish it and hide it, if I try to live a double life and don’t let anybody in, all of that sort of thing, then the Scriptures say that you have reason to question as to whether or not you’re in Christ, right?

But if I have instances, even numerous instances, for which I repent and struggle against and hate and lament and agonize over and those kinds of things, and still have instances, then I have the romans 7:13-25 hope that in Christ I am both dead to the law and alive to the Lord Jesus Christ, and enabled despite my many failures to both take confidence in Him who is in me, and who has released me from the law of sin and death, and who has made me alive in Christ, that I might cherish what I have. So Kevin is behind you there.

**Kevin Cohn:** So you were saying about high and low. Now being a Christian you say that there are times when we go down really low. Do we then lose the Spirit Himself, or that we’re not strong through the spirit? Are we getting to that point?

**Jeff:** No. What I’m saying there is this. When we feel low it’s because we are not exercising faith and practicing repentance. So when I feel low, faith is what? It’s what I know, it’s what I assent to. It’s what I cherish; it’s what I love. It’s what my affections pine after, right?

Did you ever meet that person who says he’s a believer, been a believer a long time, been active in the church, and then says, you know, “The family hasn’t gone to church for about six or eight months. We’re just not going.”

Well, you’re apart from the very thing that you need, right? And if you wonder why your spiritual life is tepid, maybe you shouldn’t wonder too hard. You’re absenting

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yourself from the family of God. And so what I’m saying is that you’re not practicing the very means that God gives you in order to have that sense of God’s nearness. It’s not that the Spirit departs from you.

**Kevin:** Exercising our faith. Is that being a Christian, talking about being a Christian to non-Christians?

**Jeff:** Well, that’s part of it. But I would say that the majority of it is preaching the gospel to myself, right? So for instance, you know, one of the things that I do quite regularly in the shower is that I’ll go over the Ten Commandments. And then I will go over the gospel. I will go over the gospel. I will talk to myself about the Apostles’ Creed. I will talk to myself about the things that I believe, the gospel that sets me free from the law of sin and death. I’ll pray the Lord’s Prayer. These are the things that I’m speaking to myself and literally saying to myself. These are things that you believe. These are good things that you ought to be thinking about. These are things that you ought to cherish and put into practice, and how can I do that—that sort of thing. So is there good in that discussion? Is there anything else that we want to—Okay.

Okay now. So why pray? Well, prayer is powerful and effective. But for what does he pray? And that is what we find in verse 17: *“that God may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened.”*

Now I want us to stop and compare something. I want you to look in two different places. First of all look in verse 18, which is what we’re now here in. *“Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.”*

And I want you to flip back to verses 8 and 9. Look at what 8 and 9 say. There are a couple of things that I want to pull out of this.

I’ll start in verse 7. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to the purpose which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him—things in heaven and things on earth.”*

Now did you notice the parallel there? *“That He may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”* And then in verse 8, *“He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will.”*

In verse 8 we see that we possess the very thing that he’s praying for us to have in verses 17 and 18. Isn’t that interesting? These are the things He has lavished on us. And Paul says, *“And I pray that you have these things.”*

So one of the things that we have to realize is that we’re not talking about conversion. If you were to go to Acts chapter 16 and read the story of Lydia, it says that Paul spoke to this little group of people down by the river. He spoke the gospel to them as they gathered for prayer. And when he did, it says that the Lord opened Lydia’s heart to receive the things that Paul said. *(Greek phrase)* He opened her heart to receive.

Now if that’s not a Calvinistic expression found in the Scriptures, I don’t know what is. It’s the Lord enabling her to receive what she heard from the apostle Paul.

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Now that’s a different thing from what we see here in Ephesians. We’re not talking in Ephesians about conversion. We’re not talking about regeneration. What we’re talking about here is what God has lavished upon us in Christ. And then in verses 17 and 18 what he’s saying is that prayer will provide you with the means to access through the Spirit the resources and the riches that are already yours in Jesus Christ.

In other words, he wants them to have the spirit of these things—the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation and of knowledge. Why? Because it is the Spirit who continually opens our eyes more and more to what we already possess in Jesus Christ.

You know, it’s sort of like this, right? When you became a Christian you didn’t know everything there was to know. And you didn’t do all the things that you should have been doing. And you progressively came to an understanding of what the Christian life was and what you ought to believe, and so on and so forth. And you only get that by the Spirit of God in you.

You know, one of the things that I remember so vividly is that I was at Grove City College and I knew virtually nothing. I knew the gospel but I didn’t know much theology. And I remember the professor saying some things that I used to think to myself, Wow, he’s really exercised about something! I had no idea why he as so exercised about it, and developing this theme and on and on and on. And I thought that somebody must be mad somewhere about something. You know?

And then it wasn’t until even a couple years, several years later, that I would have been reading or sitting in another lecture or listening to somebody else talk. And I realized that, you know, two plus two all of a sudden made four. I realized now what was at stake, what was the issue, what the man was so exercised about, right?

So I was developing and growing. But that takes the Spirit of God in you as you continue to search and learn and grow and develop as a believer. That’s not just true of things that we know. It’s true of things that we do. So what he’s praying for is that continually the ever-abiding Spirit who causes us to grow in the things of the faith. Does that make sense? And what questions do you have about that, if any? Yes?

**Bishop Rodgers:** Can you say a word about God’s inheritance in the saints?

**Jeff:** Yeah. This is in verse 18: *“the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the work of His great might that He worked in us when He raised Him from the dead.”*

So I would say that when you think about the inheritance of the saints, the inheritance in the saints, one of the things that I would contend is this. We oftentimes think of this as very individualistic. And yet notice the way he ends what he’s talking about. Look at verse 22. *“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him as Head over all things”* what? *“To the church which is His body,”* right?

So one of the things that I think that we have to take on board is that *Christ is the mediatorial King over the nations for the church*. In other words, there is no one who cares about the church more than the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s His bride in the world; it’s His bride in the midst of the world. And when he talks about the passage that we just looked at, where he talks about giving the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the

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knowledge of Him, *“having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,”* and so on, what he’s saying is, everything that is in Christ, everything that Christ accomplished the Spirit of Christ is making known to you. And so it is that knowledge that we grow up into together, because it’s a knowledge that is given to God’s people. And I think it’s a knowledge that the church possesses as it’s sort of a bride in the midst of a war-torn world.

So I think that part of that is part of the mystery of the gospel made known to the church in an unbelieving world. That’s the idea.

**Bishop:** Do you understand it to mean not an inheritance that He has for us, but that we are the inheritance of His?

**Jeff:** You know, there’s a way of translating it. Isn’t there something—

**Bishop:** He’s made it our goal. He’s called us to our goal. But it seems like he’s almost shifted, that we’re the inheritance that He looks forward to, the saints.

**Jeff:** Yes. So in verse 11, *“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works.”* I can’t remember whether it’s that verse or the verse you’re mentioning. But it’s an interesting thing because the way you could interpret one of those verses kind of makes us God’s inheritance, right?

**Bishop:** Yes, mm-hmm.

**Jeff:** And then the other way is to make what God has done for us in Christ our inheritance.

**Bishop:** Right.

**Jeff:** So I’ve not had a settled position on that frankly; I’m not sure. I just go with the English at that point. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** There is a verse in John 17 that’s one of my favorites, if you’re allowed to have favorite verses of the Bible, where Jesus says: *“Father, I long for those You have given me to be with Me where I am, and to behold My glory.”* And I think that is what you were saying. It’s really the interpretation that we are His inheritance. Bruce Bickel was always fond of saying that we are a love gift to Christ. That’s unbelievable on the surface of it that we, sinful as we are, could be that. But that kind of gives a little more credence to that latter interpretation that you were talking about.

**Jeff:** Yes. Okay, Kirk?

**Kirk:** I can’t remember the verse right off hand. But the Scripture says that we are *“fellow heirs with Christ.”* And so we have an inheritance to be fellow heirs. I don’t have the foggiest idea what that means in totality. But it does sound great. *(Reflective laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yep. I do think that part of it is, if not the vast majority of it, is that what Christ possesses we possess in Him. Anything else? Okay?

**Don:** I think you’re so right. Paul says, at least in my translation, that it is *“the riches and the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”*

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

**Don:** And the importance of the church, as he goes on to the latter verses. We’re so individualistic as Americans, even as Christians, that we have to remember that Christ

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founded the church. We are to participate in this together. And so the centrality of the fellowship of the saints is really important.

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, I think that one of the things that is very troubling today is the fragmentation of the church in the various ways in which you see it. For instance, one of the ways that I see it fragmenting is that here we are in the midst of this world situation, no matter what you think of it. And I think that John MacArthur is fighting a battle at Grace Community.

You men may not see this as I do, and that’s fine. I have big enough shoulders to bear the fact that you disagree with me. But one of the things that I think is that governments have either been absolutely stupid, like the governor of New Jersey who said when he closed down the churches, “I just wasn’t thinking about the First Amendment.”

Okay; all right. Well, that’s stupid. You’re an elected official who’s supposed to apply the Constitution, and you just didn’t think about that. All right. Okay, I guess we should vote you out.

So it’s outright ignorance, or what I think is absolute persecution. So for instance, when you allow riots, and yet you arrest people as they did in Chicago, as they blocked driveways to churches and towed cars away as they were in church parking lots and threatened to arrest people for going to church, that’s persecution.

And I think, when you look at California and California says, “No singing allowed; no gathering,” I personally think that is an attempt by the state to persecute the church under the auspices of a pandemic.

You know, when you look at church history, it’s certainly not monolithic. But one of the things that I see, one of the pieces of literature that has helped me, is one by Martin Luther. It was called *Is It Ever Right to Flee a Plague?*

And Luther says if that if your faith is weak then it’s perfectly fine to flee, as long as somebody can cover your role. If somebody can cover your role, flee.

If you’re strong and you want to stay, fine. Just don’t act stupid. Just don’t act like an idiot.

But then at the end he says, “I’m going to give you instruction because I think that people are going to want this beyond the requested city.” And he says this. He says that everybody ought to be in church because that’s where you’re going to learn to obey God in the midst of a situation like this.

And so I think that when the state says to us, especially when it says to us, “You may not do this, but this group of people may do that,” that’s persecution. And if we don’t recognize that that’s happening in America, and that there is an attempt to continue to isolate the church,--

I mean, I know a federal judge who told me that every course coming down the pike,-- and this was a few years ago,--has to do with basically redefining the First Amendment not to be the free exercise of religion, but to be worship. And so once you remove the idea of the exercise of religion and replace it with worship, well then you’ve got the church contained within the four walls.

But then now you’ve got the pandemic which says, “Well, you guys can worship at home and live-stream.” Now you don’t even have to get together as the church anymore.

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The state says this is worship, and your leaders agree with it. So now it's not even within the four walls of the church. Now they've got you at home.

I just think that if we think that the state is not continually encroaching on the church, I think we've got blinders on if we think that the state loves the church and is actually trying to do the very best for the church that it can do. It's not.

I mean, that's not what I find in the Scriptures. I find in the Scriptures continually that the state is always encroaching on the authority of the church.

So here you have John MacArthur out in California. And you know, he's under some level of persecution by the state and by the city. And what do other Christians do in other parts of the United States? They attack him!

I don't get it; it doesn't make sense to me. I may not agree with his Baptist theology. I may not agree with many things that he holds to. But here's a brother in Christ who is basically trying to worship God and gather his people to do the same. And we're criticizing him for doing that. I don't get it. I'm not down with that. I'll stand with him on that particular shoe any day of the week. And I think that we better kind of orient ourselves to standing in that direction, because things aren't getting better; they're getting worse for the church. So anyway, that's probably a longer statement than—

**Don:** That's a very good application, Jeff.

**Jeff:** Okay. Anything else?

**Bishop:** That's what he gets for living in California.

**Jeff:** Well, here here! (*Laughter*) You know, the bishop always has a succinct and wise way of putting it. (*Laughter*) And that was one example.

**Don:** And as California goes, so goes the rest of the nation.

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Sig Tragard:** But Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Sig:** I can't help but ask. Do you not think that the virus is real?

**Jeff:** Sure I do.

**Sig:** Then isn't it dangerous for people to be in close proximity and without masks and not separated?

**Jeff:** Well, I think that when you look at the numbers from the CDC, I think that it's dangerous for people over 69 years old. But I think that even a person over 69, if he or she gets it, has over a 95% chance of living through it. If you're younger than that you have an over 99% chance of living through it. And it seems to me that according to what the CDC says the average age of death with a COVID patient is 78, which is the average age of death in the United States. So I personally do not look at this virus as dangerous as they're making it out to be.

It certainly spreads easily. And I know people that have gotten it. And I know people who've gotten it and the symptoms have been really bad. But the vast majority of people who I've known who've gotten it had two or three symptoms and have gotten over it in ten days.

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So you know, no one wants to be sick. And certainly no one wants a virus like this one. But one of the things that I have been thinking is that part of our country is using this virus to manipulate us into a position of fear. And I think it has succeeded.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Sig:** But my comeback to that is that no amount of people have died in such a short period of time from anything else. 210,000 people have not died from heart attacks, car accidents, etc. The numbers are staggering.

**Jeff:** Well,--

**Sig:** Isn't it their role to protect all of our people?

**Jeff:** Well, here's the problem. The problem is that the flu disappeared last year. So I wonder how many people actually died from the flu. And when cases surfaced, for instance that a man died in a motorcycle accident and his corpse tested positive for the virus, he was still listed as a COVID 19 death. I'm sorry, Sig. I know we have this number, and it's constantly on the side panel of CNN. But the bottom line is, I just think that it's being used as propaganda. And when all of this shakes out, I don't doubt that the death number will be—

**Brave Man:** A lot less.

**Jeff:** I don't doubt that it will be a lot less, if we're told the truth about it.

**Bishop:** I was just going to share a remark by Archbishop Templeton. And this has to do with the fact that the church is always being attacked by the state. (*Unclear*) “*we can't go to the catacombs. But we ought not volunteer to go there.*”

**Jeff:** Yeah, right.

**Bishop:** So in other words, we shouldn't struggle against this sort of thing. And there's no doubt that in certain states,. For instance, they look down on you if you plant a church. It used to be that they wanted you there because people would live there because the church was nearby.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** But now it's reversed. In some states because you don't pay taxes they worry about that. I think that the climate is pretty strong against the church.

**Jeff:** Yes, it is.

**Bill:** It looks like the debate between Biden and Trump. It sounds like a debate between Biden and Trump.

**Jeff:** Well, those issues play out there; that's for sure.

**Don Rimbey:** I just wanted to point out that the restrictions are very disproportionate against the church. For instance, down in North Carolina where they tried to fine people \$250 for going to a drive-in service. But you have people going to casinos and whatever. They're just letting it up to the people. But they're not applying that the same to the churches.

**Jeff:** Yes. Ted?

**Ted:** Just to take the conversation off of the virus and on to the issue of MacArthur, it just strikes me here once again as an example of the tremendous fragmentation of the body of Christ, that nobody can speak with one voice. MacArthur is part of that problem.

**Jeff:** Yes; I agree.

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**Ted:** That’s the problem with every church that starts off as its own little thing. We’re doing our thing; we’re doing it in God’s name. And in time there is total fragmentation. The only church that concedes to some authority is the church of Rome, which I don’t agree with. But they can speak with one voice.

And here we know we can. And so every time MacArthur gets into trouble on these issues he says, “Let’s all get together.” But he himself has fled the unity of the body.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Ted:** And he justifies it in every sort of way. I was watching a video the other day of a fellow who was a Protestant and ended up becoming a Catholic priest. It was on EWTN. It was an hour long and very interesting. . . And the guy brought his entire congregation out of the Protestant faith into the Catholic faith.

And he put something on the board and he said, “Here’s Christ. Here’s the church in 1050—the split between Rome and the Orthodox. Here’s the next problem: the Protestant Reformation. And he drew line after line after line—one break, one break, one break, one break, one break. The Pandora’s box is opened. And we are helpless as a body to do anything in opposition to the state when it comes to this, because we’ve all wanted to do our own thing.

**Jeff:** Well, you know,--

**Ted:** Every single denomination, every independent church has made the decision that they’re going to ignore the unity of the body and speak of it in very theoretical ways. But

**Jeff:** Yeah. You know, this is very interesting, because I was over in Belarus in 2013. And I was part of a panel discussion over there. And here were men from Ukraine, from Siberia, from Russia, from all parts of Eastern Europe. And they got together for this conference and there were breakout sessions.

And one of the breakout sessions had to do with what are we going to do about training our men, because we have to come together in some way. Most of these men were independent Baptists. We have to come together in some way to train our men and trust one another with the training that we’re getting.

And it was interesting to me. And they were speaking in Belarusian which it takes forever to translate, right? So you might say something short and it took forever to say. I couldn’t believe it.

Anyway, one of the things that I realized was that there was a push to bring Presbyterianism back into Belarus. And there were those that had actually gone to prison and were with us. And they were arguing for independency because the state can actually infiltrate Presbyterianism, whereas they were arguing that it has a harder time infiltrating an independency. So that argument is just really interesting to me.

I was totally on the side of the Presbyterians, right? Of course. But just the argument back and forth was really interesting.

The other thing I would say to you is this. I’m not disagreeing with you; I’m just adding an element. The other thing I would say to you, (and I totally agree with you about MacArthur; I think that you’re right.) That kind of mindset promotes this sort of thing.

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But one of the things that I always appreciated back in the ‘90s was that you had MacArthur and Sproul and Boice. And one of the things that those guys could do, even though Sproul and Boice even had eschatological differences and things like that, these guys could get together and take guys like Chuck Colson and J. I. Packer and sit them down and say, “Look, we disagree with you about this. Can we talk about this?”

And there was a collegiality even among those who believed differently. And maybe it was just centered around personalities that the five of those guys could sit down and talk and disagree pretty sharply. But they could still sit down and talk.

And you know, as I’ve watched MacArthur I’ve thought to myself, I wonder if he wishes for the days of Sproul and Boice again, because I wonder if he expected Mark Deaver in Washington, D.c. to step up with him. He hasn’t right? Actually, the Nine Marks has been against him. And so it’s just kind of a fragmentation, not a collegiality. Maybe it was built around personalities; I don’t know. But I don’t know; it’s just kind of an interesting road we’re going down.

Well, I’ll tell you what I’m going to say. I’m going to say this. I’ll say that the same power that was at work in the resurrection of Christ is at work in every believer who is raised from the dead. And we’ll get to that. So we’ll start with chapter 2 next time. I am going to slip out of chapter 1 while the slipping is good. *(Laughter)* And then let’s pray together and then we’ll close out.

Father, thank You for this day, for the Word. And thank You, Father, for the ministry of it by Your Spirit in our lives. And thank You for our time together and for these men. Lord, bless them and strengthen them and their families. And bless us together, Lord, as we gather about Your word and seek to do Your will, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*