

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 4 **Spiritual Blessings**

By

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Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 1. As we noted in our last lesson, the first thing is relationship. Our relationship must be established with God, and that relationship is in Christ Jesus. Apart from Jesus Christ you can have no true relationship with God. And any thought of relationship with God apart from Jesus Christ is only a pseudo-relationship. There is no true relationship with God apart from Jesus Christ.

So the first thing that He establishes is relationship and then come the blessings of that relationship—all that is ours through that relationship. We are chosen in Him, and all of these blessings come as the result of that relationship in Christ Jesus. As we mentioned in the previous lesson, you should go through Ephesians 1 and note the blessings that are yours.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. ([Ephesians 1:4-5](#) KJV)

You see this blessing of being predestined and adopted as God's child is by Jesus Christ.

In the sixth verse it says, "accepted in the beloved." God accepts you in Christ. He cannot accept you outside of Christ. There is no basis for you to be accepted outside of Christ, but you are "accepted in the beloved"—I love that. It says,

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, ...[that] he might gather together in one all things in Christ...even in him. (cf. [Ephesians 1:7, 9, 10](#), KJV)

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance...that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. [So all of these are the blessings.] In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. ([Ephesians 1:11-13](#), KJV)

So these are the spiritual blessings, Paul enumerates them. And they are all as a result of relationship in Christ Jesus—by whom, through whom, in whom—we have received all of these wonderful things.

Then Paul closes off Ephesians 1 with a prayer. I think that the prayers of Paul deserve a study in themselves. I have no intention of going into that now because that is not the direction we are moving in these studies. We are looking at the church, the purposes of the church, and the ministry of the church in a biblical setting with Ephesians as our pattern. So this prayer though, is something that deserves a lot of meditation. And I would encourage you to get in and really meditate on this prayer.

Now in Ephesians 2, we are going back to the subject of the blessings that we have through relationship. There is an interesting balance in the Christian life. God has done many things for you and for me—that work of God on our behalf. Now corresponding to that, there is always our work for God in response to what He has done for us: our responding to the grace of God, our

responding to the goodness of God. And you will find that the Scripture lays out what God has done. Paul, in the first three chapters, is going to lay out for us what God has done for us. Then he is going to lay out what we are supposed to do for Him. You will find this pattern throughout the New Testament, God's work and then man's work. Now as we study it, we find that God's work is always the greater and is always more, and ours is just sort of the response to that which God has done.

For instance, Peter said:

Thank God who has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God. (cf. [1 Peter 1:3-5](#))

That is all God's work. He has begotten you again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, fades not away. He has reserved it in heaven for you, who are kept—He even is keeping you for that. And then he gives us our part—"through faith." But God's part has to be first. The faith would not have validity unless God had already done these things. This is God's part. So in Ephesians the first three chapters, we are dealing with God's part.

The Scripture is always interested in, first of all, what God has done for you; then you respond to God for that which He has done for you.

Now many times in our preaching, we frustrate the Church because we are emphasizing their part—what they should be doing for God. And so often you will find that the minister is putting greater emphasis upon what the people should be doing for God. And he even has worked it out for them in a neat little program. "Now you ought to be witnessing for God and this is how you witness. You ought to be giving to God, and this is the amount. You ought to be serving God, and this is how you should serve." Preaching usually is putting an overemphasis on man's part, and not enough on God's part.

Now the Scriptures always emphasize more God's part, and then there is our automatic response to what God has done. But in our desire to get our program rolling, and our desire to get the church going, we start laying upon people their part—what they should be doing for God. And here we find people trying to do for God something that they have not yet been equipped to do or enabled to do by the Spirit, because they do not yet know fully the relationship and the benefits of that relationship. So many times people are pressed into service for God because they *ought* to serve the Lord without first of all realizing what they are, what they have, what they can become through their relationship with God in Christ Jesus.

So Paul does not say a thing about the walk, until he first of all establishes what they are. He gets them positioned in Christ Jesus first. Once he has them thoroughly positioned in Christ Jesus, then he says, "Now walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you were called."

In other words, here is all that God has done for you, here is all that God has given to you—now respond to it. Any work that is not a response to the grace or the goodness of God is a work that, in its end result, is going to produce a tendency in my heart to say, "Well, look what I have done for God. I have given this to God. Look what I have sacrificed for God." This is because I have put the works first. Any work that I do that comes from the response of God's grace in my life

after I have done it, I will say, “I am an unprofitable servant. What I have done is the least that could be expected.” Now I am responding to all God has done for me. I am not then resenting it. I am not becoming embittered.

I have met so many people who are bitter against God, and against the church because the church made workaholics out of them, made slaves out of them. They were pushed into all kinds of service unto God, but they resented what they were doing for God. It became a heavy obligation. They chafed under the load. God does not want you to give anything to Him that you cannot give willingly and hilariously. And that is not just money, it is of time or service or anything else. God wants whatever you offer to Him to be offered willingly, out of a free heart. And if you cannot give your life to God that way, then do not give it. If you cannot give your money, then do not give it. If you cannot give your time that way, then do not give it. It is better that you not do it, than to do it and gripe about it, or to do it and then go around and moan about all you have sacrificed or given up for God. I am sure that God says, “Keep it! I do not want it. I do not want any griping service.” The important thing is that whatever you give to God, you give willingly, cheerfully, and hilariously.

Now I can only do this as I recognize the greatness of God’s love and what God has done for me. And when I look at all that God has done for me, oh, the least I can do—as the song says, “How can I do less than give Him my best and live for Him completely, after all He’s done for me.” But you see, people are not always shown what God has done for them. That is not the emphasis always in our ministry. We are emphasizing what you can do for God, what God wants you to do for Him. And actually what you are doing is creating a congregation filled with guilt-ridden, frustrated saints because you are telling them what they ought to be doing for God. They bow their heads and say, “Yes, I know. I ought to be doing that.” As you tell them what miserable Christians they are, they bow their heads and say, “Yes, I know I am a miserable Christian. I am a miserable witness. I am a failure. I do not love as I should. I do not pray as I should. I do not give as I should. I do not serve as I should.” And you are laying it on them week after week, and they are just getting more guilt-ridden all the time. But along with the guilt feelings, there is a frustration. “Oh God, I want to serve You. Oh God, I promise I am going to do better.” And there is frustration because they want to do it, but they cannot and they fail.

Guilty, frustrated saints are all over the country. Why? It is because they have never been taught the resources and the blessings that are theirs by relationship with Jesus Christ. They have never thoroughly been established in Christ Jesus. They are not aware of all of the resources that are made available to them by God, because man’s part has been emphasized rather than God’s part in their lives. They have tried to do it in their own strength, in their own abilities, and they just have never come to that realization that God does not require us to do a single thing but what He will and has enabled us to do.

I am certain that we have pushed many people into works that God never intended for them to do. No wonder they were failures at it! And then they feel like they are failing at Christianity. I can be so anxious to see this program go that I am conscripting people, I am pressuring people, I am pushing people to get involved. Maybe God does not want them involved. Maybe that is not what God has for them.

I was reading in 1 Samuel where it said, “For by strength shall no man prevail” ([1 Samuel 2:9](#)). That is, by our own strength, and yet we have been trying to push people into these things before establishing them in who they are.

So, as we get into Ephesians 2, we continue now in what God has done for us. “And you hath He quickened, [or made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins” ([Ephesians 2:1](#)). Once you were totally dead unto God, dead because of your trespasses and your sins. God said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die” ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)).

Notice He uses trespasses *and* sins, and there is a difference between the two. Sin has as its root meaning, “missing the mark.” Now I would like to suggest that many times I have done my best to hit the mark, but I am just a poor shot and I missed it. In other words, sin is not always a willful, deliberate act. Sin can result from just a weakness, a weakness that I hate, a weakness that I detest, an inability and a failure in myself to hit the mark. You say, “Well, shame on you.” Well, if I tell you what the mark is, then shame on *you*. It is perfection. “Be ye perfect even as My Father in heaven is perfect” ([Matthew 5:48](#)). So, if you can hit that mark, great. Now we try, and the fact that I am weak and have missed so many times is not an excuse to not keep trying to hit the mark. We are never to excuse our weaknesses. Just the recognition of the fact that sin means missing the mark, and thus it is not always a willful, deliberate missing of the mark, can be a heartbreaking experience. I am doing my best, I am trying my hardest, but still, I have failed.

Whereas, a trespass is a deliberate, willful disobedience to God. It is not even trying. It is almost defiant. God may say, “Do not cross over that line.” I step over it and say, “Okay, what are you going to do about it?” I have trespassed, knowingly, willfully. That is a trespass.

Now trespasses and sins, either or both of them, alienate me from God. I cannot make God a party to my sin or to my trespass. And yet, in this relationship in Christ Jesus, actually Christ has become a party to my life. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, shows the total inconsistency of bringing Christ into an ungodly relationship because He is indwelling you. In other words, with Christ dwelling in you, as Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 6:15–16](#), if you actually have sexual relationships with a prostitute, then you are making Christ a part of that horrible act. You are bringing Christ into that, and he shows the inconsistency of that. You have been made one with Christ. Now if you are joining yourself to a prostitute, you are making Christ one with a prostitute. That cannot be. We need to realize that this relationship with Christ, being one with Him, makes Him a party to what we do. We are drawing Christ into this.

Now, the effect of sin and trespasses is death. “But you has He made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins.” And of course this is a reference to your life prior to coming to Jesus Christ.

For now,

If we walk in the light as He is in the light— having come to Him, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is continually cleansing us from all sins. And if we say we have no sin we are only deceiving ourselves. The truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And if we say we have not sinned then we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us.
(cf. [1 John 1:7–10](#))

So this relationship is a great relationship because it is one of continual cleansing. “You hath He made alive.” You were dead in your trespasses and sins and now you are alive unto God through Jesus Christ. “Wherein in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world...” ([Ephesians 2:2](#)). In Greek there are more than a couple of words for “walk,” but this particular word for walked is a word which means, “to meander.” Now there is another Greek word for

“walk” which does speak of a gait—of a directness with a steady gait. You see a fellow walking down the street with a fast gait, head up, shoulders back, straight down the street and you say, “Well, he is going somewhere.” There is purpose expressed even in the way he is walking. He is on his way someplace. But you might see another fellow just sort of hands in the pockets, looking in the window, going out and examining a tree, looking at the fire plug, and then looking back in the next window. He is just sort of meandering back and forth. You would say, “Hey, he is not going anywhere. He is just killing time.” There is no purpose. He is not really headed anywhere.

And that is what this particular Greek word is, you meandered. In other words, life was lacking real purpose. You were not going anywhere. Life, apart from Christ is without purpose and meaning. You are going nowhere. You are just passing time till your time comes. Your life is lacking in definition and in purpose. So, you at one time were meandering, living a life without real meaning or purpose, going nowhere, getting nowhere. As you meandered according to the course of this world—the word “course” is the word used also for weathervane. Now you see the weathervane on top of the barn and what does it do? It points in whatever direction the wind currents are flowing.

Now as you look at some people, their lives are just turned whatever direction the current or the flow of the world is going. Whatever fad comes along, wherever the world’s pressures are pushing, they just turn with it and they just sort of flow with it. They are meandering according to the weathervane of the world. This is life without purpose, life without meaning.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in
the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the
mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
([Ephesians 2:3](#), KJV)

The word “conversation” there is our manner of living. Our manner of life was this way prior to Jesus Christ, in times past. He is describing our past life apart from Christ, the former life before this new relationship, as a life without purpose, a life without meaning, a life that is governed by the desires of our flesh and of our minds.

Man is a three-fold being: body, soul, and spirit in his fallen state. In the original state in which God created man (Adam) he was spirit, soul, and body. God is a superior Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. Man is an inferior trinity of spirit, soul, and body. And as God originally created man spirit, soul, and body, with the spirit uppermost, man had communion and fellowship with God because God meets man and fellowships with man in the area of the spirit. His Spirit bears witness with my spirit. God does not come and deal with me in my flesh in a direct way. He deals with my spirit, and from the spirit through the flesh. He does not deal even with my intellect in a direct way, but with my spirit and from the spirit, to my intellect. My place of meeting God and fellowshiping with God, is in the spirit. No man, by searching, can understand God to perfection. My intellect is not an adequate tool in the discovery of God and in my relationship with God. It must be a spiritual relationship; thus, His Spirit with my spirit.

What precipitated the Fall? Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to eat, the lust of the flesh. It was pleasant to look upon, the lust of the eyes. And as she ate it, it would make her wise even as God, the pride of life. So in following the suggestion of Satan and eating of this fruit of which God said she should not eat, she allowed the fleshly desires to dominate. And in allowing the fleshly desires to dominate, she became then inverted, and became body, soul, and spirit. The mind was now no longer being ruled over by the spirit, but the mind was now being ruled over by the flesh.

And the spirit was subjected and subdued, it died actually. The consciousness or the awareness of God was gone. They found themselves, hiding from God, running from God.

What is the new birth? It is again an inversion. It is God putting man back into his proper order. As they reported to the magistrates in Berea, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here” ([Acts 17:6](#)). That is what the gospel is to do. It is to turn men upside down. Well, let’s correct that, it is to turn men right side up. They have been upside down for a long time. It is to bring men back into a spiritual dimension of life. It is to awaken and make alive that spirit which was dead because of trespasses and sins. And that alive spirit can now again be in fellowship and in harmony with God.

But the former life is described as a life that is living after the desires of your flesh and the desires of your mind. Now as we look at man apart from Jesus Christ today, what are the controlling factors of that man’s life? The psychologists have the word *homeostasis*, by which they describe the body needs or the body drives or if you please, the body appetites. And they have listed the body needs, the biological needs or drives of man. The strongest is your air drive; then comes your thirst drive; then comes your hunger drive; then comes your bowel and bladder drive; and then comes your sex drive. And they have listed all of these drives of the body, the biological desires or appetites of the body.

The Scriptures describes man, apart from this new relationship with Christ, as a man who is controlled by his body drives. His mind is in control and he is thinking always of how to fulfill the body needs. He is dead in his trespasses and sins, living after the desires of his body and of his mind. And so they have listed the sociological drives: the need for attention, the need for security, the need for love, and the need to be needed. And they have described these lusts of the mind or the drives of the mind. And these are the things after which the natural man lives; this is the life of the flesh.

Now, this life of the flesh is actually right on the animal plane. It is exactly what a dog does. He lives only to satisfy his own physical needs. And many men are living as animals, living only to satisfy their own biological and sociological needs. They have no awareness of God, no fellowship with God and no relationship with God. It is no wonder natural man seeks his best to identify himself with the animal kingdom, and looks to the ape for a relationship because he is living as the animals live.

But the Bible teaches that God created man in His image and in His likeness. And rather than man being a highly evolved animal, he is a fallen creature. And the missing link is not on the scale downward; it is on a scale upward. Man was intended to be related to God, not to the animal kingdom. And that is, of course, exactly what happens when we become quickened or made alive. By this relationship in Christ Jesus, we come now to a new relationship with God. “You hath He made alive.” And that missing link is found. Jesus Christ has become the missing link, and He links us back to God by making our spirits alive again. And with that quickened spirit, we now have this beautiful relationship with God.

Life is no longer without meaning or purpose. I am no longer meandering through life, following every whim of the world. Now there is direction, there is meaning, and there is purpose. And thus when Paul says, “walk worthy,” he uses the other Greek word for walk. We are not to just meander, not to walk or meander according to the course of the world, but now we are to walk with direction and purpose.

Then he goes on to say, concerning the past life, that not only were we meandering according to the course of the world, according to the desires of our flesh and mind, but we were actually by nature the children of wrath even as others.

This is the sad, sad picture of the history of every man apart from Jesus Christ. No exceptions. You may say, “Oh, but he is such a good man.” He is walking according to the course of this world, according to his own desires of his flesh and mind. And he is by nature a child of wrath. You see, he is in the kingdom of death and darkness and I do not care how high he climbs in that kingdom. There is a wide spectrum. You have the streetwalker to the lady in purple, or whatever; but they are all in the same kingdom. It makes little difference. This still describes them.

Verse 4, of course, is always glorious. This is in spite of all of this focus on our flesh, and in spite of what we are.

But God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He
loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive
together with Christ. ([Ephesians 2:4-5](#))

God reached down to you, into your helpless state. It is God’s work. Salvation is God’s work. It was God who reached down to you. Man had attempted to build his towers to God. That always ends in confusion. It is interesting that Jacob, on his flight from his brother Esau when he came to Bethel, laid down his head on a pillow and went to sleep. He dreamed that he saw the heavens opened. He saw a ladder that was going up to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on that ladder. And the Lord spoke to him and he woke in the morning and said, “Truly the Lord is in this place and I knew it not” ([Genesis 28:12-16](#)). But what did he see? He saw a ladder that went from earth to heaven. Men have been searching for that ladder. Men have been trying to make a ladder. Men have been trying to build their towers of philosophy, their towers of religion. But man’s efforts have failed to bring him to God because you cannot start with an earth base and reach heaven. God has built a ladder. And Jesus declares that He is that ladder that Jacob saw. When He began His ministry He said, “Henceforth you are going to see the heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” ([John 1:51](#)). God has built the ladder. Jesus Christ is that ladder whereby men may come to God.

But God, who is rich in His mercy, established the basis of our salvation. “For by grace are ye saved.” It is not something that we do merit or even can merit. By grace are you saved, which is God’s glorious, unmerited favor in Christ Jesus.

“And He hath raised us up together.” Now again we get back into the blessings. These are the blessings which are ours. He has “raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). We are returning to the theme of [Ephesians 1:3](#), our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. He has raised us up together, made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; for it is there that we have these spiritual blessings that God desires to bestow upon each man.

Now, this is looking out to the future.

That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of
His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ([Ephesians](#)
[2:7](#))

These blessings are ours in Christ Jesus. Why? It is because of the marvelous, exceeding riches of His grace.

Now I would like to suggest that God's love and God's grace for you is so great and so vast that it is going to take all of eternity to reveal it. Through the ages to come, He is going to be revealing the exceeding richness of that grace and love that He has for you through Christ Jesus. I sit down sometimes and bemoan the fact that I just cannot comprehend it all, as I seek to understand God's goodness, God's grace, and God's love toward me. I drink it in, and I seek to get more. But listen, it is so vast that it is going to take all of eternity to reveal. Throughout the ages to come, God is going to be revealing new dimensions of the vastness of His love and grace toward us through Jesus Christ.

For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. ([Ephesians 2:8](#))

What is a gift of God? The faith. You see, we are so anxious to get our part in there. We are so anxious to do something worthwhile, that we are often prone to exalt and magnify our faith because we want some credit somewhere along the line. But God gives me no place for boasting, except in Him. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ. I cannot even glory in my faith whereby I believe. Where did that faith come from? It was a gift of God. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

God came to Gideon and told him that he was to lead the children of Israel into victory over the Midianites, and Gideon objected because of his family's background and so forth. And when he was assured that it was God who was calling him, then Gideon gathered the men of Israel together (32,000 of them) in Mount Gilboa. Gideon looked at the 135,000 Midianites spread out in the plains like grasshoppers. They were well-equipped, well-trained armies that were camped out there in the valley. And here was Gideon over in Mount Gilboa, with 32,000 scraggly fellows that had come in off the farm. God said, "Gideon, you have too many men. I know these people. I know the wickedness of their heart. If I would deliver the Midianites into the hands of the 32,000, they would go around glorying and boasting in what they had done. So you go out to the men, Gideon, and you tell all of those who are fearful, to go home." Gideon went out to his men and said, "Fellas, all of you that are afraid to go into battle, you better go on home." And twenty-two thousand of the guys packed their bags and headed home—that left him with 10,000 men. Now Gideon looked at the Midianites out there like grasshoppers covering the valley, and he looked at his 10,000 men. And the Lord said, "Gideon, the men that are with you are too many." Gideon thought, "Oh, wait a minute, Lord. That is thirteen-to-one odds." God said again, "If I would deliver the Midianites into their hands, they would be boasting in what they had done" (cf. [Judges 7:1–3](#)).

What is God saying? He is saying, "I want the glory for the work that I do." God does not want you going out and taking bows for Him. And one of the greatest dangers in the ministry to a man used of God is that he starts to take the glory or the credit for what God has done. And the moment you start taking the bows for God, you are in big trouble.

It is not of works lest any man should boast. God has eliminated boasting. By what? By works? No, but by the fact that His grace has done all of this for me as I believe in Him. And thus, through faith and the fact that faith is the agency, it eliminates boasting because even that faith came to me as a gift from God. So God has wiped out any area of boasting or glorying in my flesh at all. He has just totally wiped it out, giving me no place for boasting.

Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship. ([Ephesians 2:9–10](#))

The word there in the Greek is *poema*. And it is a word that expresses more than just a work. It is a word that expresses a work-of-art—*poema*. Now we actually get our English word “poem” as a transliteration of this word *poema*. Our word “poem” comes directly from it, which is a work-of-art.

Now, when an artist is producing a work, what is the purpose of the artist? The purpose of an artist is always to express himself in his work. Whether it is a feeling, a thought, an inspiration, or something that is within me of beauty, I want to express it. And if my fingers are gifted, I may express it in a sculpture, or I might express it in a painting. It is something that I can see in my mind, a form of beauty. I want others to be able to share that beauty that I can see within my mind. If I am a musician, I hear it. It is beautiful. I want others to hear and to enjoy the beauty; and so, I compose, and I arrange that beautiful melody and the instrumentation that I can hear in my mind. I always admire the work of artists. People who have been gifted, express themselves in their work. I love to see them really get into it as they are expressing themselves in their art.

Now, God seeks to express Himself in this world. God has thoughts, ideas, and He wants to express those thoughts and ideas before the world. And you are His workmanship, or His *poema*. You are the expression of God. Your life is to become the expression of God. God seeks to express Himself in you and through you. You are God’s work-of-art, the expression of Himself before this needy world.

It is interesting that in at least three places in the Scriptures, the figure of the potter and the clay is used to express the relationship of God and man. In Jeremiah 18:2–6, the Lord said, “Go down to the potter’s house and watch him work a work on his wheel” (paraphrased). And so Jeremiah went down to the house of the potter and he watched him as he made a work on his wheel. And the work was marred in the hands of the potter and he crumpled it all up and put it back on the wheel and began a second work, forming it all over again. And the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the Prophet saying, “Is not Israel like clay in My hands? Though it has been marred, I am going to remake it into a vessel that is pleasing” (paraphrased). Paul uses this same illustration in his chapters in Romans in which he is speaking of the sovereignty of God over man. “And what right has the clay to say to the potter, ‘Why hast thou made me thus? Why did you form me like this?’ Hath not the potter the power over the vessel to make of it however he wants?” (cf. [Romans 9:20–21](#)). He uses it as an illustration of the awesome sovereignty of God over man.

That is a figure that would frighten me if I did not know the Potter. But when you tell me the Potter is love, and that His purpose and His plan for my life is love, then I can yield to the touch of the Potter. Otherwise I would be prone to challenge and resist because I do not always understand every circumstance in which I find myself. There are times when I am prone to complain about the conditions in which I find myself and say to the Potter, “Why hast Thou formed me thus? Why God, did You allow this? Why Lord, did this happen? Why, God?” And I would be prone to challenge the Potter if I did not know that the Potter loves me. Every pressure that He brings against me is to form and to shape me according to the design in His mind and the purpose in His mind, as I become His workmanship, His *poema*, His expression of Himself. God wants to use my life as the expression of Himself in this world in which I live.

The Potter has in His mind a plan, a purpose, for that piece of clay. Apart from the Potter’s touch, that clay will always be worth very, very little because it is so common. One of the most common

materials in all the earth is clay; and thus, the value is so small in its native state. Yet the Potter is able to take a piece of worthless clay and by the deft touch of His hand, He is able, by His mastery, to make of it a priceless vessel. And when the Potter begins His work on that piece of clay, the Potter has in His mind what He wants to do with it.

Now the clay can only discover the mind of the Potter by submission to the hand of the Potter. The minute I start getting my own self into it, the minute I start resisting the work of God, the minute I start going my own way, then the purpose of the Potter is thwarted. The type of vessel He is seeking to make can be changed. I must remain yielded and surrendered to God if I am going to understand what God has purposed and planned for me as He works in me His work-of-art, His work of love, as He expresses Himself through me.

So you are His workmanship. God is working in your life today, forming, developing, shaping, and molding. God is working in you today. You are His workmanship created together in Christ Jesus. You cannot get away from it. It is all in Christ Jesus.

Created together in Christ Jesus unto good works that God has
foreordained that you should walk in them. (cf. [Ephesians 2:10](#))

God has already foreordained that which He has planned for your life, the purpose, and the work that you are to accomplish for the kingdom. Your ministry has already been completely foreordained by God. God knows exactly what He is bringing you to and God knows what He is preparing you for.

Now it is after you get to my age that you can begin to look back at some of those experiences in the past that, while you were going through them, you could not understand what God was doing. There were times in my life I felt, “I really missed the leading of God in this one. God, You get me back on the track and I promise I am going to be more careful in the future how I listen to Your voice.” And while I was going through those experiences, I could not understand them. I was complaining, I was kicking, and I was screaming against God. But now as I can look back, I can see why God led me through that path, why God brought me to that situation, and why this had to happen. I began to see what God was doing because all the while He was preparing me for the work that He had already prepared for me.

I did not know the work God had prepared for me. I had no idea, no dream at all, of the work that God had prepared for me. It was so far beyond anything I had ever hoped, or thought, or conceived. If just ten years ago you would have told me about the work that God had prepared for me, I would have laughed and said, “Blessed are they who dream. Dream on, brother.” And yet I can see where God’s hand was in my life in even those discouraging, difficult experiences that I could not understand while was going through them. All the while God was working, God was forming, and God was faithful, as He was preparing me, working in me in order that He might prepare me for the work that He had foreordained that I should accomplish in Christ Jesus.

It is so glorious to be a servant of God. You are His workmanship, His *poema*. You have been created in Christ Jesus unto these good works that God has already foreordained that you should accomplish for His kingdom. It is glorious to know that God has a plan for your life because sometimes our lives look like chaos. We cannot always understand and it looks so confusing. But it is glorious to know that God already had the plan. He has the work that He wants you to do and this is just necessary preparation as He is equipping you, and preparing you for that work that He has down the line.

I found that some of the greatest works of God in my life were during the times wherein He wrought total failure in me. He worked through those times when I sought to take over and do the work of God myself with my own ingenuity, my own genius, my own drive, and my own determination. God let me go ahead and use my genius, my drive, and my determination to build the body of Christ. And God let me fail utterly and completely during all of those great years of my life, when I still had a lot of hair, a strong physique, a good physical condition, all of these natural characteristics going for me. God let me fail utterly in every effort that I endeavored for His kingdom in the energies and the abilities of my own flesh. He allowed them to all come to dust, in order that after I had expended all of my genius, all of my powers, and all of my good years, then He accomplished His work. He brought me to the work. But knowing what I can do, having it proved to me over and over again—there is no way that I can boast in what I have done. I can only glory in what God has done through an old, worn-out man, whose stomach hangs over his belt, who is out of shape, out of condition and out of gas. Really, as far as the energies, powers, drives, and ambitions that I once had, they are just gone, or ready to go.

So God's purpose in your life is to bring you to that relationship in Christ that He might work in you as He prepares you for the work that He has already ordained that you are going to accomplish for His glory. Now what is He going to do? He is going to turn around one day and reward you as though you did it. That is so unreal, but He is just so good!

Father, we thank You for Your goodness and for Your work in us today. And we pray, Lord, that we might abide in Christ, and have His Word abide in us. Lord, help us not to resist that work of Your Spirit in our lives; but may we yield ourselves to Your touch, to Your hand today, so that You might accomplish, Lord, in us Your full purposes through Jesus Christ. Amen.