

# Spiritual Perfection Through the Mediator of the New Covenant

by Ed Miller

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding Christ's present ministry as our substitute and advocate, and how He gives Himself to us to make us perfect in His perfection.*

**Duration:** 1:05:43

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:28, Colossians 3:1-3, Hebrews 2:18 - 3:1, Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 10:1

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Consecration"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of coming to God with an empty vessel in order to receive His blessings. He compares this concept to how God created the universe out of nothing and encourages the audience to bring their raw material to God and witness what He can do. The speaker also highlights the need for consecration, surrender, and total abandonment to God's will, emphasizing that there can only be one life in the body of Christ. He references the story of Elisha and the widow in 2 Kings 4 to illustrate how God is prepared to pour out as much as we are prepared to receive. The sermon concludes with a discussion on the brain's control over the body and how it serves as a metaphor for Christ's union with His people.

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## Transcript

Well, good afternoon, brothers and sisters. As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, and that principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. This is God's Word.

He revealed it, and now He must give us a revelation of the revelation. The Bible, like our Lord Jesus, has a human side and a divine side. We need both.

We need the human side. Only God can reveal the divine side. In 2 Kings 4, verse 3, this is the story where Elisha was with the widow, and you remember, he told her and her sons to go gather vessels, empty vessels.

And 2 Kings 4, verse 3 says, go borrow vessels, not a few. And then they went out, you remember, to the neighbors, and they gathered all of these empty vessels. And then verse 6 says, when she asked for another vessel, one of her sons says, there is not one vessel more.

And we read, and the oil stopped. And among the many things we learn from this passage is this, that God is prepared to pour out as much as we are prepared to receive. You say, how can I be prepared to receive? Bring an empty vessel.

That's what our part is. When God created the universe, He created it out of nothing. That's the raw material.

Bring Him the raw material, and watch what He'll do. Let's bow before the Lord. Our Heavenly Father, how we thank You this afternoon that we have a privilege of opening Your Word and beholding by Your light our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know if we are to receive a transforming look at Him, it must be Your working. Open our eyes. Take the veil away, we pray, that we might behold the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that You would deliver all of Your people from everything that is not from You. And I pray that You would bring home to their spirits everything that is from You. And to this end, we give this session to You in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus.

Well, I've been given this privilege again to address You for the next few minutes. You've been given the privilege to listen. I hope Your privilege does not run out before mine does.

I want to continue to look at this great reality that God has called us to consider this weekend, spiritual perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ. I want to review a little bit of what we touched on yesterday afternoon, and that will prepare our hearts for this next section. We'll begin in Hebrews, and finally, somewhere along the way, end up in Colossians 2. So you might want to mark that passage.

Hebrews 7, verse 19. I'm going to read that verse. Hebrews 7, verse 19 says, For the law made nothing perfect, and the bringing in thereupon of a better hope through which we draw nigh to God.

The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did. And then chapter 10, and verse 1, For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never, with the same sacrifices year by year which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Yesterday we discussed this fact that there was no possibility of spiritual perfection.

No possibility of completeness, of maturity, of development in the Old Covenant. If we're ever to have any spiritual perfection, it cannot be in the Old Covenant. Remember, the Old Covenant was God's covenant with His people.

If you do this, I'll do this. If you obey unto spiritual perfection, I will grant you life. Well, you know it didn't work.

Chapter 7, verse 19, The law brought nothing to spiritual perfection. It could not. And why did it fail? Glance again at chapter 8, verses 7 and 8. Finding fault with them.

Not it. God had to correct the people. Not the law.

The law was good, and holy, perfect, spiritual. The law was acceptable. But Romans 8, chapter 3 says that the weakness of the law, what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh.

That was the fault of the first covenant. They tried to keep it in the flesh. They tried to become perfect in their own determination and willpower and discipline and zeal and sincerity and self-righteousness, and it could not be done.

And so if there was ever to be anything that would bring us to this spiritual perfection, there had to be another covenant. There had to be a better hope. The Old Covenant couldn't do it because something was wrong with them.

Not it. Them. Us.

The people. And so God, in His great grace, made another covenant. This time it was not a covenant that God made with His people.

This is a covenant that God made with His Son on behalf of His people as their representative, as their substitute, as their head. It was a covenant between the Father and the Son. And because He was not weak in the flesh, and because there was no fault in Him, and because He did not fail, He lived perfectly and satisfied all the demands of a thrice holy God.

And completing that command, God could look at His Son and say, this is My Son, your representative. This is My Son, the second man. This is My Son, the last Adam.

And in Him, I am well pleased. And because He did it as your substitute, I will keep the conditions of the covenant. Because He dealt with the fault.

He said, now I'll give you a covenant that is absolutely unconditional as far as we're concerned. In this covenant, He promised that He would write His will in our mind so we would know it. He promised He would write His will in our heart so that we would love it.

He promised He would choose to remember our sins no more, so that we could walk in an unbroken union. He could be our God. We could be His people.

Well, that's where we left off yesterday with that better hope, which I hope encourages your heart and gives you confidence that when you hear something like a phrase, spiritual perfection, you don't throw your hands up in the air in despair and say, woe is me. No hope for that for me. Oh, there's hope.

There's a better hope. There's hope in the new covenant. As I said yesterday, perhaps not in these words, but this is the reality.

If all you had was that new covenant, it would mock you. It would mock you. We need more than the new covenant.

We need someone to mediate that new covenant. Yesterday we spoke about the gospel, the mystery of the gospel. And you prayed that I might, as Paul prayed, when I handle the mystery of the message, that I might speak with boldness.

And I'll ask again, Colossians 4, verses 3 and 4. This afternoon we're touching the mystery of Christ. And when we touch the mystery of Christ, Paul said, pray that I speak as I ought to speak, clearly, plainly. We need to see the simplicity of this.

It needs to be delivered with clearness, plainness. May God help us. Hebrews 7-11 If there were perfection through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Aaron? There was a need not only for another covenant, but for another priest.

Chapter 8, verse 6, please. And now he hath obtained a ministry the more excellent by as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted upon better promises. It's not the new covenant alone that can bring us to spiritual perfection.

It's a person. And his name is... Say it. Say it again.

Oh, may God help us. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. We can't separate the ministry from the minister.

He's the one that makes this thing real. How can I get those wonderful promises into my heart? Chapter 8, verse 6 says he has obtained a more excellent ministry. That's his ministry.

By as much as he also is the mediator of a better covenant. I love that. The ministry is excellent by as much.

When you say by as much, that's a measurement. That's a comparison. We don't have time to look at the whole book, but the whole book just begins right at the beginning, telling us how great Jesus is.

The word that's used over and over. He's better. He's better than the prophets.

How much better? Ten times better? Fifty times better? A hundred times better? Infinitely better than the prophets. And then it says he's better than the angels. How much better? A billion times better? Infinitely better than the angels.

Infinitely better than Moses. Infinitely better than Joshua. Infinitely better than Aaron and that whole entire priesthood.

How great is the new covenant? By as much as Jesus is better. What a covenant! What a covenant! What a comparison God gives us! The measure of the ministry is given in terms of the measure of the minister. Chapter 7 verse 22 So much the more, Jesus has become the guarantee.

Darby translates it, the surety of the better covenant. It's the person. It's Christ who lives to guarantee that covenant.

Now, take too long. Far too long. This is the logical step that we can't take.

The logical step then is to look above and see His present ministry in heaven. What's He doing up there now? As an advocate after you sin. As an intercessor before you sin.

As a mediator of the covenant so that you might not sin. I don't know if you're familiar with the way God has laid out His New Testament. Oh, but it's marvelous.

The book of Romans is the great foundation. That's what Jesus has done. And after you have the book of Romans, you have a church epistle built on that.

If you really believe what He has done, what will your life look like? Read Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians. That's what you'll look like if you enter into what He has done. Then He gives us the book of

Hebrews, the great foundation.

What's He doing now? What's going on? What's His present ministry? And then He gives us eight more reality epistles. What will my life look like if I enter into what He's doing now? Many, many Christians have entered into what He has done and how that has changed their lives. And they've only begun to see what He's doing now.

We don't have time to look at all of that. Let me just give this much of His present ministry in heaven. And that will get us to the burden that's on my heart.

When our Lord Jesus lived on the earth, He lived on the earth as our substitute. See, many times we just say, yes, on the cross He was my substitute. But was He my substitute in His life as well as in His death? Or was He just my example? He was my substitute when He was born.

He was my substitute when He was circumcised. He was my substitute in His baptism, in His death, in His resurrection. He did that as the representative man.

He was my substitute. Now He's glorified in heaven and He is still your substitute. I love these verses.

You don't need to turn to them, but I'll give the reference in case you want to. Hebrews 6.20 says that Christ entered heaven as a forerunner for us. Hebrews 8.1, the main point, after eight chapters, the main point in what has been said is this, we have such a high priest.

We have Him. Hebrews 9.24, Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands a mere copy of the true, but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. He's there for us.

He's our representative still. Our federal head. As far as I can trace it back, the first one to ever use the expression the exchanged life was Hudson Taylor.

And that's the key to this whole idea of spiritual perfection. There's got to be an exchange. He's the one who entered, who attained spiritual perfection.

He's the only one who's ever attained it. And He's the only one that can attain it again in you and in me. If we miss the truth of His substitute life, then we have to throw away forever every hope of spiritual perfection.

He's there for you. He's there for me. Some have this idea.

They wouldn't say it exactly like this, but it boils down to this. When our Lord Jesus ascended into glory, you'd have a vague idea. They don't understand His present ministry, what He's doing up there, just sitting around waiting to return.

He has a ministry. And part of it is becoming the surety of the new covenant. That's the part we're going to get into.

But some people have the idea He's just exalted to mind the store. He's been exalted as high priest so He can hand down gifts. He's got little bottles of joy up there, you know, on His shelf.

And then when someone prays in faith, the mediator of the covenant goes and he takes whatever they prayed for, a little bottle of joy, and hands it down. Or if they have more faith, they can get a jug of joy. Or I

guess if you have more, you can have a gallon of joy.

That's not how you get joy. God gave us that great parable of the vine and the branches. And the general principle of that parable is that there is no fruit bearing apart from abiding in Him.

Would you agree with that? Here's the first application of that. See, fruit is too general. The first application is John 15.11. I've told you this, that my joy may be in you.

I've told you how to abide in the vine that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full. He's not up there handing down something called joy. He says, you want joy? You better learn to abide in the vine.

And then my joy will be yours. He doesn't just have joy and power and patience and wisdom up there in little packages waiting for someone to order it. And then he gets it packaged up and sends it down.

Gets some kind of an order. Send a hundred days of patience to Ed Miller. He's going to need it.

Ah, three weeks supply of strength to Christian A. Six months supply to Christian B. Christian D needs a gallon of grace and half a gallon of love. Alright, package it up, send it down. That's not his ministry at all.

Since God's covenant is not with me, but with His Son. Since God's covenant is not with you, but with His Son. Since God's covenant is not with us, but with His Son.

We better learn how to tap into His Son. He is the mediator of the new covenant. It's not so much the new covenant we have, it's Him.

Hebrews 8.1 says, the chief point of everything we've said is we have a new covenant. It doesn't say that. That's not the chief point.

We have a new covenant. It says we have such a high priest. It doesn't say we understand Him.

I don't want to be irreverent. It doesn't even say we follow Him. Or we obey Him.

Or we surrender to Him. It says the main point of everything we've said, we have Him. We have Him.

Not something called grace, or power, or love, or hope, or proof. Hebrews 5.9 says, having been made perfect, that's Him. Having been made perfect, He became, to all who obey Him, the source of eternal salvation.

There is spiritual perfection. He has it. And He wants to be the source of that salvation to us.

He's not there as the proprietor of the store. He's there as the source of life. He doesn't give me joy.

He gives Himself. He gives His life. If we're to be sanctified, we've got to understand Hebrews 2.11. Hebrews 2.11 says, He who sanctifies, and those who are sanctified, are one.

In His high priestly prayer, John 17.19, He says, for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they might be sanctified. Our perfection is in His perfection. Now, don't think He's way up there, and I'm way down here.

It's true, He's way up there. But He's also way down here. Right? You say, I'm down here, He's up there.

It's true, you're down here. But you're also up there. Isn't that true? Risen with Him.

Seated with Him in heavenly places. We need to understand, He's up there, He's down here. He's giving His life.

He's pouring out. He's still our substitute. And the way we enter in, is He mediates the new covenant by letting us partake of His life.

Now Hebrews, actually, I had planned to give this whole message from Hebrews. But it was too theological. It was driving me crazy.

It's there. But I couldn't get it down to where you could get a handle on it. Hebrews teaches life from heaven for life on earth.

It teaches that. But in a theological way, Colossians teaches the same thing in a more practical way. At least with the light I have now.

And so I'm going to ask you to turn to Colossians and then we'll touch, really, what's on my heart. Let's begin in chapter 3. I'll sort of move into where I want to go. Chapter 3, verse 1, Therefore you've been raised up with Christ.

Keep seeking those things where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Verse 3, Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you'll also be revealed with Him in glory.

Colossians is talking about the Lord Jesus exalted in the heavens. That's what Hebrews was talking about. Turn to Colossians 1, please, so I can show you that we're not leaving the theme.

The theme is spiritual perfection. Does Colossians say anything about spiritual perfection? Indeed he does. That's the heartbeat of the book.

Look at verse 28 of chapter 1. This is his prayer. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man, teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man perfect, complete in Christ. The Apostle wrote this letter to show the saints how they can be mature, how they can enter into completeness, how they can have spiritual perfection.

Now turn to chapter 2. This is where I want to be. The Apostle gives two illustrations. I'll mention both, but I'm going to focus on the second one.

Chapter 2, verse 6, As therefore ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted, built up in Him, established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. This is the first picture he gives. And Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents the Lord Jesus as the believer's soil.

And you're rooted in Him. And everything the soil is to the plant. He pictures Christ as our soil.

And that's what those first chapters are all about that are so full of Christ. He's analyzing the soil. He's telling you what a wonderful soil it is.

And you're rooted in Him. And don't let anything or anybody or any voice or any influence break the connection between the root and the soil. He's your soil.

He's adequate. He's sufficient. He's enough.

And you're rooted in Him. And don't let anything take those roots, shake those roots, and uproot you. How I love pictures.

Maybe that's just part of my simplicity. Pictures help me. They help me see the truth.

They help me grasp it. It simplifies things. And when you come to the Bible and you see pictures in the Bible, you know that the reality is always greater than the picture.

No matter how great the picture is, the reality is greater. And when the reality is Christ, here we go again. How much greater? Ten times greater? Hundred times greater? How much greater is the reality than the picture? And the answer is infinitely greater.

The soil to the plant, how the soil provides for the plant. That's just a little picture. The reality is infinitely better than that.

But His second illustration absolutely blew me away. The illustration is so big. And then after you're done with the illustration, you've got to multiply it by infinity to get a passing glimpse of how great Jesus is.

Let me give you the second illustration, and may God give us light now as we touch this mystery of Christ. He doesn't change the subject. He's still talking about spiritual perfection.

All He changes is the illustration. He's no longer talking about Christ our soil rooted in Him and growing in Him. He changes it.

Chapter 2, verse 18, Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility, worshiping of angels, dwelling in things which he hath seen vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind. Now here it is, verse 19, not holding fast the head from whom all the body being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands increases with the increase of God, or grows with a growth that is from God. And the Apostle Paul had this burden on his heart.

He said, I long to bring every believer into maturity, into perfection. I want everyone, nobody to miss it. He said, how can I illustrate this? Of course, it's by inspiration.

God gave him this illustration. And as he thought about it, he said, if you're going to grow with a growth that's from God, because that's maturity. Growing, you've got to grow.

Like a plant in the soil, you've got to grow. If you're going to grow with a growth that's from God, you have to have the same relationship to Him that the body has to the head. That's his illustration.

There's no possibility of growing, maturing, coming to perfection, except by what he calls the increase that is from God. If you've not discovered the secret of the increase that's from God, you can't get into spiritual perfection. Some dear folks are grace-centered, not Christ-centered.

I love the New Covenant. I love the message of grace. I love the Gospel.

And I want to proclaim it boldly. But as I suggested yesterday, after all, it's not Him. It's not Him.

I must learn to hold fast the head. Whatever that means, we'll touch that. Hold fast the head.

If I'm ever going to grow with a growth that's from God. Because in the picture, the head there is the brain. And the brain is the great giver of the body.

And as the body lives for the pleasure of the head, and the head is allowed to flow and give its life, then the body is able to grow with a growth, with an increase from God. Now, there's an increase that is not from God. There's an increase that is death.

See, sometime, and I know I got into this in my early struggle, trying to understand these wonderful truths. I knew I was supposed to grow. They told me that.

Grow, like the little child with the flower. Grow. Doesn't always work that way.

I knew I wanted to advance, but I hadn't learned God's wonderful secret of holding fast the head. So that the life of God Himself could flow, causing me to grow with a growth that's from God. But I knew I was supposed to grow, so I expanded instead of grew.

There was no life. An icicle grows. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.

But it's not growing. It's not life. There's no life in that.

It just melts and freezes and melts and freezes. It can get pretty big. We used to break them off the porch and sword fight with our icicles.

But it's death. In Newport, our brother John Ingalls last night was talking about the signs that he saw in England and so on. In Newport, they got signs all over the place.

Stay off the dunes. We've got sand dunes all along the beach. And every time I go down there, they're bigger.

These things are growing. They're growing. They're not growing.

They're getting bigger. The wind is blowing one grain of dead sand on another grain of dead sand. It just grows and grows.

But it's death. It's death. It's like a crystal.

It just grows, but it's death. It's accretion. It's not life.

It's not growing. Coral reef gets larger and larger. It may look beautiful to the natural eye, brightly colored.

This thing gets bigger and bigger. But no matter how beautiful it appears, no matter how it's cut, no matter how highly it's polished and turned into jewelry, it's made out of the skeletons of sea animals. It's death.

Nothing is more frightening to my heart than a coral church, a coral Christian, a coral life. Expanding, getting bigger and bigger. Knows nothing about the increase from God.

Just mustering up these artificial stimulants to cause growth and to get bigger. To run after one religious excitement and then after another religious excitement. This novelty and that novelty.

Sincere, noble desire, but it's wrong in principle. We're not to expand by accretion, just piling one dead thing on another. This program, that activity, this meeting, that work, let's add pews, let's add resources, let's add buildings.

We get bigger and bigger and bigger. We've never learned to hold fast the head so that the body might grow with a growth. An increase from the Lord.

Colossians 2.18 and 19 tells us about that growth, and this is one of the most beautiful pictures of Christ that I know in the New Testament. It seems to blend everything together. The objective and the subjective.

What our brother was sharing this morning, those things we get by obtainment, by gift, and those things that we get by attainment, it's all here. Holding fast the head as the head, as the brain of the body, Christ is the great giver. I'm not pretending that I understand all of this, but when I began to see this, I don't know the internet well, but I looked up brain.

Just wanted to get some ideas. Oh, I'll tell you. It became my text for a while.

Marvelous! The brain and its nervous system. This is not my idea. This is God's illustration.

That little brain weighing three pounds with its billions of interacting cells. God said, I think I'll create something to picture My Son and His union with My people. I read how the brain sends its commands to every part of the whole eight systems of the body.

The brain commands every part. And you know what the internet told me? The brain doesn't only send the command, but it sends the enablement. Marvelous picture this! Without your brain you couldn't think, you couldn't speak, you couldn't move, you couldn't remember, couldn't move a little finger without your brain.

It controls everything. I was shocked. Your heartbeat, the brain controls it.

Whether you smile, whether you frown, whether you blink your eyes. The brain is what makes you breathe. Your pulse rate is controlled by your brain.

Everything. Your thirst, your growth, your appetite, whether you shiver, or whether you sweat. It's all through the brain.

By the brain you feel pain, you feel heat, you feel cold, you feel confused, you digest, you assimilate in Christ. I don't think the Holy Spirit could have chosen a greater illustration of how to increase with the increase of God and to move on into spiritual perfection than this marvelous picture of the member in union with the head. And the head giving its life.

When there's a problem in the brain, when there's something that interrupts that union, it's devastation to the body. Perhaps you've known some with brain tumors, or cerebral palsy, or Bell's palsy, or epilepsy, or something like that. And how it affects the body.

My dearest friend, he's with the Lord now for 25 years, three days a week, three hours a day. I was his therapist. He had multiple sclerosis.

Just laid there on the bed. Paralyzed from his neck to his feet. Had a brain connection problem.

It affected the body. The body is helpless. It can't function.

Let me show you how this illustration, and then later, God helping you, you can multiply it by infinity. How this illustration yields up the secrets of spiritual perfection. I don't need to be convinced about what I told you yesterday afternoon that the Old Covenant cannot bring perfection because my flesh is weak.

You don't have to do much to convince me of that. I've known that for 62 years. And especially the last 46 years, I've known that.

And so my heart cries out, I want a New Covenant. I need something unconditional. I need something that doesn't depend upon me.

How well I perform. But the cure for the Old Covenant is not the New Covenant. The cure for the Old Covenant is laying hold of the head because God made His Covenant with His Son.

His Son then became the source of life. And now I must tap into the source. I'm happy to hear of the New Covenant, that it's unconditional.

I went through what many Christians go through. Oh great, that's great news. I have no responsibilities.

I have no duties. I have no obligations. Get away from me with your rules.

I don't want to hear it. I'm free. I'm free in Christ.

I don't need those rules. I don't need those obligations. He took it all away so I can do nothing.

That misses the point. That is not the point. The reason the New Covenant is unconditional for you, for me, is because He has met the conditions and He lives in me to meet them again.

He hasn't just set me free to be unholy and slipshod and live any way I want to. The same Jesus that we have a record in the Gospel. He lived on the earth.

He walked for 33 1/2 years in the body God gave Him through Mary. He's back again. And the only difference now is He has a new body now.

It's the same Christ. He's come back to live again. But He has a new body.

But it's Him. And He's come to live again. And to live out all of the conditions.

Dana shared four burdens for prayer with us as we opened the conference. And the fourth one was his desire that we could stand, Ezra 3, verse 1, as one man. What a picture here of the corporate, the head and the body.

If we're holding fast to the head, our body will experience the life of God. I don't know if you brothers know George Carter. I met him at Richmond.

Some of you may know him. He's been sending me devotionals in the email. And just before I came here, he sent this.

Quote, Do we not become members of the body of the Divine Person of Christ? Yes. The same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand. The same life which quickens Christ quickens His people.

Whatever else is illustrated by this illustration, you've got to have this. The head gives life to the body. And there can only be one life in the body.

It's got to be common life. The life that's in my head is in my hand. The life that's in my hand is in my fingers.

The life that's in my fingers is in my leg. The life that's in my leg is in my foot. There's only one life.

My paternal grandmother, Grandma Miller, had an aggravated case of diabetes. And first they had to amputate her right arm. But she continued to live because there's no life center in the right arm.

And then they took off her right leg. And she continued to live because there's no life center in the right leg. And then they took off her left arm.

And she continued to live because there's no life center in her left arm. And then they took off her left leg. And she continued to live even as a stump on that chair because there's no life center.

Her life was in her head. There was no life center. My hand does not have a life, a will of its own.

When God developed this very message in Ephesians, He called attention to the fact of the unbeliever. Chapter 4, verse 18. He says they're excluded from the life of God.

They don't have the life of God. They only have their natural life. The unbeliever.

They only have one life. Why do you think Brother Stephen spoke so passionately today about the absolute need for consecration and for surrender and for total abandonment? It's because in the illustration, the body can only have one life. It can't have more than one life.

There can't be an independent life. Every time there's a problem in the church, somebody is independent. There can only be one life.

We have common life and one will. That's why when we lay hold of the head, we consecrate. We lay down our life so there won't be division.

What if your right hand had a will of its own? What if your left hand had a will of its own? What if your right foot wanted to go left and your left foot wanted to go right at the same time? What if your feet wanted to run and your back wants to rest and your voice wants to sing and your stomach wants to eat all at the same time? You say, that's chaos. If my hand had a will of its own, it would be awful. It would be spastic.

It's funny as a body. It's tragic in the church to see so many members with a life of their own when our Lord wants to give His life through the brain. He's the head.

He wants to supply the body. That's the new covenant that I experience in my life, the life of the Lord Jesus, so that He can come, not so I can learn to live for Him, but so that He could come and live for Himself in me, in you. He's your substitute.

It's an exchange life. As Christ is the reason the new covenant is unconditional for me because He lives to keep all of the conditions, my heart also cries out for that part that said it's internal. He'll write it in my mind.

I want to know. I want to know His will. How can I know? I want to love.

I want to love His will. How can I love it? Hebrews 7.22 Jesus is the guarantee of the new covenant. As I draw from the head, He communicates His life and I know it.

Look at the picture once again. The members of the body drawing life from the living head. They automatically function as God created them to function.

If this hand is living for the pleasure of the head, and this hand is living for the pleasure of the head, this hand will act like a hand. My ear functions as an ear if it's living for the pleasure of the head. And my foot functions as a foot if it's living for the pleasure of the head.

As I'm meditating on the picture, my hand is stupid. Honestly. It doesn't even know it's a hand.

It doesn't. It doesn't know that it's a hand. My foot doesn't even know that it's a foot.

But guess what? When my hand lives for the pleasure of my head, it works as a hand. It functions as a hand. We hear so much about advancing in spiritual perfection, and we're told to find out who we are.

Now, I might be treading now on some private property, and I apologize for that, but I feel very uncomfortable when I hear undue emphasis on find your spiritual gift. Find your spiritual gifts. You've got to discern your place in the body.

Find your gift, and then after you've discovered it, develop it so that you can use it for the Lord. I'll tell you there's a more excellent way. There's a more excellent way.

You just live in union with your head, and any gift or gifts that God has given you, they will function. They will function. You don't even have to know who you are.

You just have to draw life from your head. If you're in union with your head, it's going to work out. I remember in my life going under a great cloud of guilt because I didn't enter into the sufferings of believers, into the sufferings of Christians.

When Christian A was hurting, I'm a Christian. I'm supposed to feel that. And so I tried to muster up.

Somebody comes to me, and they've just been divorced. I say, well, I can imagine what that feels like. I can't imagine what that feels like.

I've got Lillian, and I've had her for... I forgot. A lot of years. I'm in trouble.

But I don't know what it's like. And I can't feel what it's like to have cancer. I haven't had it.

And I don't know what... I've never broken a bone. Recently, my son-in-law, man of youthful zeal, was helping me clean the attic part of my garage. He was on the top, and I was on the bottom.

An arrangement that will never happen again. He was handing things down far faster than I could receive them. And he sent down a missile, a four-by-twice, that hit me in the elbow.

I still feel that. Now, to be honest with you, my right hand did not feel that pain. But immediately, my right hand went like this, and began to embrace that and hold it for a long time, actually.

You know why? Because my right hand wasn't supposed to feel the pain. The pain was registered in the head. And the head then sent a command to the right hand, and the right hand, living in the pleasure of the head, responded to the command, was empowered by the head, and then went over to rescue the left elbow.

It still didn't know what it was. And I'm suggesting what a picture. Multiply it by eternity.

That's new covenant living. That's perfection. Just laying hold of Christ, drawing from His head.

Let Him live. Lay down your life. He can live.

He knows how to live. He's done it before. He wants to do it again.

He'll meet all the conditions. He'll let you know. It's intuitive.

He'll work it on the inside. It'll become automatic. Take, for example, the unity of the body.

If my hand, my right hand, lives for the pleasure of the head, and my left hand lives for the pleasure of the head, they're in perfect union. I don't have to have a lesson on unity, how to get along. There'll be no clash.

There's harmony. There's unity. There's fellowship.

There's oneness. It doesn't have to be regimented. It's spontaneous, without fretting, without trying, even without thinking.

I don't have to have a committee meeting every morning. Okay, body, here's the rules. Today, the left foot will begin the walk, and then the right foot will follow.

The right hand has to do this. I don't need to tell my back when to bend, and my head when to nod, and my arm when to lift. It's automatic.

If you're drawing life from the head. He's the head. And Paul says, Hold fast the head.

You want to grow with a growth that's from God. Learn the secret of laying hold of your risen head. Lay hold of Him.

This is the new covenant. He meets all of the conditions. He lives His life.

You will automatically fulfill everything God has created and redeemed you to be as you lay hold of Him. That's how you do it. The head stimulates the members, and then provides the power to perform.

He's the giver. He's the source. And finally, I told you in the new covenant was intimate.

My heart cries out, I want to walk with God. He's my God. I'm His child.

Well, this body, head, illustrate once again. It's so perfect. Look at the assurance.

The confidence you get. Someone once told me, or asked me, Aren't you afraid you'll slip from His fingers and be lost? I am His finger. I am His finger.

I'm not going to be lost. You say, well, Satan's going to one day get you. He's going to scratch the heel.

That's all he can do. He can't reach the head. My son thought I was getting too fat.

I don't know where he got that. What do you mean by that? So he bought me a membership at the YMCA so I could swim. I'm not a good swimmer.

But I do know this. If my head stays above the water, I won't drown. You can't drown the body.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, your head's above the water. Ascended on high. How safe you are.

This is the new covenant. The greatest piece of spiritual advice I ever got in my life was from my little four-foot-one or two grandmother. My mom and dad were divorced when I was three, and so my grandmother brought us up.

That's the story all that's on. They called me Butchie. That was my name.

And if I heard this once, I heard it a million times. Butchie, will you use your head every day? Butchie, will you use your head? You want spiritual perfection? Use your head. Use your head.

He's the life holding fast the head from whom the whole body is nourished and grows with the growth that is from God. Praise God for the new covenant. Praise God for the mediator who gives not the new covenant, but his life to make that real in your life.

May God work this in us. Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for this marvelous picture in Colossians of our Savior, the head.

Teach us what it means to hold fast the head, to abide. Forgive us for the times we've tried to have independent life, work, consecration in us, so that there might be only one life. There might be unity.

That we might grow with a growth that's from God being conformed to the image of Christ manifesting Him and experiencing Your heart's joy, spiritual perfection. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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