

At the Right Hand of God 2-16-03

Ephesians 1:17 – 2:10

I want to encourage this congregation today! You have put up with me for an entire year, haranguing you to get in the Word, to examine your heart, to become a house of prayer, to reach out to the youth, and especially to forgive and love one another. You must flinch every Sunday morning at what I'm going to throw at you next. Well, I want you to know something. It's not me. It's the LORD. If I thought it was from me, I'd be upset with my constant challenges to myself! As that great Scottish preacher Sidlow Baxter said, "It is a temptation for a pastor to preach in a way that would make us popular and accepted. I crucified that desire!"

You see, Jesus loves us so much that He won't leave us where we are. He always desires our spiritual growth to be more like Him. (Romans 8:29) He has destined you for Christ likeness. Everything I challenge you with, He is challenging me with too. So you see, it is not because I think you are in such sad shape, it is because the LORD has such a desire to see us grow into the blessedness of spiritual maturity. I'll never forget when the LORD began to show me that everything He asks of us in His Word is asked for our good. (Deuteronomy 6:3) It is because He doesn't want us to suffer the consequences of sin. He tells us to be holy because that is what He is, and that is what is good and is best for us. If we are set apart for Him, we won't have to endure the ravages of the natural and just consequences of sin.

When I pray and ask the LORD each week what I am to bring to you on Sunday, you may think my active imagination comes up with the message. No way! He won't let me get away with that. He has to show me and then confirm it in some way. This message today is not what I originally planned. And as I look back over the year, I see the LORD was extending a gracious hand toward some who were struggling. Through correction, He is trying to spare us. I make a consistent effort to never preach to any specific person or situation. When people are offended by the sermon, you can look at my short comings in not getting the wording just right, but please look beyond me to the Holy Spirit who gives me the topic and the Scripture passage, and check to see if it is a message from God's word. Ask the Holy Spirit what upset you, and if it isn't based in the truth of the Word, don't worry about it. If it is, then ask the LORD to help you conform to His Word.

All that to say, "Thank you for enduring. Thank you for putting up with what was from man and tossing it aside, but more than that, thank you for hearing the Holy Spirit and letting Him work in you to make this church come alive." I know it has been challenging to many of you. Would you rather I just read you a nice poem and made you feel good about yourselves? Shall we just bless one another, sing a nice song, and go home to our routines? I don't think the LORD called me to bless apathy and make you feel good about compromise. I believe He is challenging us all to live closer to Jesus today than at any time in our lives. Why? Because the culture we live in needs people whose lives are radically different. They need lives that demonstrate the love of Christ. That means we have to take the message of the Gospel, the message of dying to self, quite seriously. We have to die to our own agendas and comfort zones and

Commented [notes1]: 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
Romans 8:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 3 Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. Deut. 6:3 (NIV)

seek God's will and way. Hear how the Apostle Paul describes it in 2 Cor. 4:10-11 (NIV). *10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.* Jesus told us if we will lose our life for Jesus' sake, we would truly find life. (Matthew 16:25) Dying to our ways is not an easy message, but it is Jesus' message. It is His path to the fullness of real life in Him.

Commented [notes3]: 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Matt. 16:25 (KJV)

I believe you want to see this church on fire for Jesus Christ, a dynamic, Spirit empowered group of people that are used by God to bring Jesus to the community in all His glorious attributes. Isn't that what you're after? Are there any 'amens' out there? If that is what you are after, seeing this body of believers on fire for Jesus Christ, a dynamic, Spirit empowered fellowship that is used to bring Jesus to the community, then there must be change. In case you didn't notice, that is not what we are now. We are taking steps in that direction, but we all have a long way to go, and that includes me. I want to be so much more like Jesus. Don't you?

I heard that I've been accused of trying to change the church. No, no, no! Jesus is trying to change this church! Not that there aren't a dozen wonderful things about it right now, but there are things to overcome also. We always have room for growth, but our old nature says, don't stretch or change because that is uncomfortable. Let's just stay here in our comfort zone. We can't do that and still become more Christ like. I don't think Jesus will let us do that. There are too many people out there that don't know about the great love of Jesus for them personally. We aren't reaching them the way we are, so that means we have to change. The need for personal growth necessitates challenge, and so the LORD challenges us week after week to change into His likeness.

I think some of the fear is that perhaps someone has a secret agenda of making the service this style or that. I don't! Well, that's not entirely true. I'll confess my agenda, to live the Great Commandment when we come to worship – all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to worship in Spirit and truth. I don't know what that will look like. Every church expresses that uniquely, because each of us building blocks is unique.

Another fear may be that there is a power struggle, and people will get angry at one another, as has happened in the past. By the grace of God, with confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, I declare those days are behind us! Praise God! No more politics in this church! We cannot go on business as usual and expect to suddenly be living in a more life giving way. Together we must seek how the LORD desires us to change. We can't afford not to change.

Is the LORD pushing too hard? Isn't it the cry of your heart to be changed into the image of Jesus? That is going to take some intense pressure, the kind that changes coal into diamonds. See if you recognize the author of this poem.

Lord, make my life a miracle,
That others may see
You living in me;

Lord, make my life a miracle,
To live by your pow'r,
Each day and each hour;
Lord, make my life a miracle,
Beyond commonplace,
Transformed by your grace
'Til all the world through me
Christ alone in all His wondrous love may see.

By Ken Wells

You can say, 'No thank you, LORD', and be saved, yet so as by fire. Or you can say with the song, "Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me! Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me." There is no melting and molding without some suffering and challenge to change.

I want to encourage you that we have turned a chapter in the work of God at Wayside. I really believe that in my spirit. I think we have finally moved past some of the old struggles, and that God has some great steps forward for us this year. It will take some time for Sedona to form a new impression of Wayside, but as we change, it will come. I see the Holy Spirit making us into a House of Prayer that He so longs for us to be. When we get serious about prayer, we will see things begin to happen. When we turn from the power of man to the power of God, we'll see God drawing more people here. We'll find the calling of God for each of us individually, our place in the body. We'll grow in love toward one another, with genuine concern. But most of all we'll grow more in love with our Savior as we fellowship with Him. If we ask for His great name's sake, He will answer! To help with your prayer life there is a great daily prayer guide available as an outline for prayer as you leave the sanctuary today. One of the men in the discipleship group summarized our last book study into a prayer guide. Be sure and get one as you leave this morning.

I want to give you a Scriptural insight that will help you participate in this process of transforming this church through prayer. Would you please consider the passage for today and what I'm about to tell you? We've seen in the Sunday morning Bible study that God gave dominion of the earth to man. Man gave it away to Satan at the fall in Genesis 3. That is why the world is such a mess. But Jesus became the 2nd Adam and took back the authority. He crushed the head – or authority to rule – of Satan just as the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 predicted.

Let's turn to our text for today. If you have your Bible, and you should, turn to Ephesians 1:17. Just because it is on the screen doesn't mean I won't invite you to a passage we hadn't prepared to go to. Be prepared. Bring your Bible. The rustle of pages is music to my ears! *17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.* Eph. 1:17-19a (NIV) 17 tells us what we need to pray for one another. We all need the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Jesus better. As you see Him more clearly, you

Commented [notes4]: 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Gen 3:15 (NIV)

will come to love Him more deeply. We all need the wisdom and revelation that deepens our comprehension of all that Christ is and all He has done and is doing on our behalf. Then 18 tells us we need to pray for the eyes of our heart to be enlightened to know the hope He has called us to. (2 Corinthians 3:18) What a treasure we should be to one another, each of us a vessel for Christ! Then He tells us we need to use those heart eyes to see the incomparably great power for us, and goes on to compare it to the power of resurrection. That's our topic this morning.

Commented [notes5]: 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor. 3:18 (NIV)

Eph. 1:19b-23 (NIV) *19b That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

The Apostle prays that the Ephesians would have the spiritual vision to see that resurrection power is for us. But wait! He goes on describing what that power did. It seated Him at the right hand of God. That is the place of authority and importance. It is a place where power is exercised. Psalms 110:1-2 is the most quoted passage of Jesus. It tells of His sitting at the right hand of God and the scepter of ruling power in His hand. Everything is under His feet – but look there in 22 and 23! He is the head, and we are the body. We are those feet. Everything is under us! We have been given back that authority we lost in Eden. We have received power and authority. Do you have the spiritual eyes to see it?

Commented [notes6]: 1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. Psalms 110:1-2 (NIV)

But now lets go to the 2nd chapter remembering that there are no chapter breaks in the original text. The thought is continuing. Eph. 2:1-5 (NIV) *1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.*

Every one of us was destined for the wrath of God. What a contrast that illuminates the grace of God! We went from being a rebel, ready for and deserving wrath, to a part of His body with all things under us! We went from slaves of Satan to co-laboring with our Creator by grace. We went from death to life because of the rich mercies of our Savior. When He rose, we rose to new life in Him. But now watch what the Apostle says in the next verses, what raised up with Christ means to us.

Eph. 2:6-7 (NIV) *6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.* God raised us with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms, in Christ Jesus! But wait! Where is He sitting? Do you remember what we read in chapter one? He is at the right hand of God. We are seated with Him, in Him, there. When you pray

from the right hand of God, things happen. You hear from the Father, His perfect will, and you speak it into the earth. The Father says, I want those dry bones in Wayside Chapel to come together. You pray, "Lord, bring these dry bones together." Clatter, clatter, clatter. You hear the Father's desire to have flesh and sinew cover the bones, and you pray, "Lord, put muscle, sinew and skin on the bones." You pray – it happens! You hear His desire for us to be filled with His Spirit and you pray, "Breathe, on us LORD Jesus!" And the breath of the Living God enters us, and there is a living church where there were once dry bones. (Ezekiel 37)

In the ages to come we will look back and marvel that He would choose to change us by working through us. We will marvel at the wonder that He could use us in such a mighty way to pray His will into the earth! Pray from the right hand of the throne of God. Don't pray from your personal desires and preferences, from your own vision and what you are used to. Listen to the Father's heart and pray His will into the earth. He wants to change things through you. I don't yet know what the LORD wants to turn this church into. I just know He wants to change us and fill us with His Spirit so that He can safely send His lambs here. He wants to build some safe sheep pens in Sedona. I know He wants us to care for one another, but not forget about passing our faith on to the next generation. His word tells me that, and I believe it. (Deuteronomy 6:7)

He wants us to become a House of Prayer. His word says it, and that word reveals the will of God to us. Now we need to pray from the right hand of the Father, seated in Christ, that we become that house of prayer He desires us to be. His word says He wants us to express His life to the world through us. I can know I am praying in the will of God when I ask for Him to continue to change us into His image. I don't pray these things from the earth, I pray them from the place of power and authority, knowing all authority is His and I am in Him. (Matthew 28:18) The Messianic prophecies tell us He will one day rule over the earth, but the resurrected LORD said He has that authority right now, not only in earth, but in heaven too. We can pray against evil spiritual powers that hinder us, our church, our city, and our nation. We can ask the LORD to rebuke them.

When we know His will, we pray in His name, that is to say, with His authority. When we add on the end of our prayer, "in Jesus' name", we are declaring that we are praying from the right hand of the throne of God. Don't add that unless you are. Don't add that unless you know you are praying the Father's will. Don't say it lightly. When you add it you are declaring you are in Him asking His will. Then we can be assured it will happen in God's perfect time. Sometimes we need to persist in prayer, but it will happen. How long do we need to pray from the right hand of the throne of God for Wayside to be revived and become a real lighthouse in this community? God knows. But if we believe that is His will, then let's not stop praying 'til it comes to pass. Do you believe revival is His will for your life? When He revives us individually, we will be revived corporately. Then we will see what great things God will do. Shall we begin right now?

Let us pray for FORGIVENESS of PRIDE & REBELLION, for RENEWAL, the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT in our LIVES, for JESUS to BREATHE on us, to be made into a HOUSE of PRAYER, to HEAR and PRAY HIS WILL into our homes, this church, and this city.

Commented [notes7]: Chapter 37

The Valley of Dry Bones

- 1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.
 - 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.
 - 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."
 - 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'"
 - 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.
 - 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD."
 - 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.
 - 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.
 - 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'"
 - 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.
 - 11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'"
 - 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.
 - 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.
 - 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'
- Ezek. 37:1-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
Deut. 6:7 (KJV)

Commented [notes9]: Matt. 28:18 (NIV) ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."