

Let 12-29-02

Matthew 5:14-16; 11:15; Colossians 3:15-16; Galatians 5:25; Romans 6:10-12

Sometimes the greatest influences in life are very small details. A word of encouragement or instruction can completely change the course of a life. You've probably heard the poem about the loss of a nail. It was made into a popular song, "For the loss of a nail, was the loss of shoe, was the loss of a horse, was the loss of king, was the loss of a kingdom." One small word can change an attitude that can in turn change our direction and the outcome of our life. There is a little three-letter word in Scripture that has this potential. Jesus used it, and so did His apostles, and yet we seldom give it the attention it deserves. It is not so much a physical action as it is an action of the heart. It will change this New Year for you if you will consider its implications in your life.

If you sneaked a peak at the bulletin you already know that I'm speaking of the word 'let'. The word itself is actually not a Greek word but must be used in English to explain the tense of a verb. 'Let' is often used to express the active imperative tense of a Greek verb. I'll give you an example from the words of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us to let our light shine before men. Let's read that passage in context. Matt. 5:14-16 (NIV) *14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, **let** your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

The verb is "to let shine". From the context of the expression we can learn a lot. We have the implications of the opposite expressed. The opposite would be to make an effort to cover and hide the light. That is not why people use light. It is to be put in a place where it will spread the most possible light. The full Greek tense here is aorist, active, and imperative. If you're saying, "That's Greek to me", let me explain. The aorist tense is something that happens at a point in time and in this case with the affect that it continues so in the future. The voice is active. The subject is doing the actions. You are the one that allows the light to shine. The mood is imperative. It is something that Jesus is commanding us to do. So we could translate that in an expanded way by saying, "You must begin to allow your light to shine."

I used the word 'allow' instead of 'let'. Think about what that means. If all I have to do is allow, or let it happen, then it takes very little or no effort on my part. It takes a great deal of effort to hide light. How would you hide the city of Jerome? You'd have to get everyone to agree together to turn off his or her lights at a certain time. That would be a huge undertaking. But to shine, now that is another story. Maybe they could leave their curtains open, but even with

them closed, some light is going to shine through. This means man has a natural tendency to make an effort to hide the light of Christ. We don't want to stand out or be different. But Jesus is commanding us to let it shine. Or expressed in a negative way we could say, "Stop trying to hide your light!" You are a new creation in Jesus. Let it shine. Let the light out in your words and in actions that you as a Christian are inclined to do. Don't resist the expression of your new nature. I recall a time when the Holy Spirit was really challenging me to do everything with the intent purpose of loving God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. Someone asked me in the Supermarket what I was up to now. I told them, "I'm striving to Jesus with my all my heart, soul, mind, and strength." That was what was on my heart. That is what I was thinking about. I could have intentionally come up with something else to make them feel more comfortable, but why? Let it shine. Don't try to be religious, just be who you are in Christ. Be different!

The young people had a popular band a few years back called the Newsboys. They had a big hit called 'Shine'. A couple of the lines were: "Shine, make 'em wonder what you've got, make 'em wish that they were not, on the outside looking bored". You see, the world wants us to think we are on the outside, and that Christianity is boring. No! We are on the inside of God's Kingdom. We have joy and peace. We are where the eternal action is. We have the fruits of the Spirit. Let your life express that!

Someone voiced concern for what others thought this week when they had peace in the midst of terrible circumstances. They didn't want others to think they were uncaring. Shine! Let the fruits of the Spirit be visible whether people expect it or not. It is a testimony of Jesus. He commands you to let your light shine. Let it!

Do you see how the word 'let' has so much to say to us in this passage? It is not an effort, or a chore, but it is allowing Christ in you to express His life. Let's look at a few other verses that use this word. Oops I just used 'let'. I meant, "allow me to show you". You see, you don't need to act; you just allow it to come about by not resisting. I hope that after we are done this morning, you will never let this little word slip by you when you are reading your Bible.

Matt. 11:15 (NIV) *15 He who has ears, let him hear.*

Though in this particular case we are reading a historical present tense, the seven times this expression is used in Revelation 2 and 3 the same tense explained in the "shine" passage is used. In Matthew Jesus is asking those present to allow themselves to really hear what was being said. In Revelation all readers are asked to let themselves hear at a point in time with an affect that continues into the future. The Apostle James said, "The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives liberty, not forgetting what he has heard, but

doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25 Hear, retain, and act on what the Holy Spirit speaks to you.

It is easy to refuse to let our ears hear. You don't have to run out or plug your ears or put your hand over my mouth. When we hear the voice of conviction, a word of rebuke, we can gloss over it, let it pass as if we didn't even hear the words. The Scriptures can show us the need for a change in attitude, and we can refuse to hear. The Word goes out. Let us hear it. Let us not make an effort to not hear through justifying ourselves. Allow your heart to hear so that conviction can cause your life to conform to the Word of God. Let it happen. Don't make the effort to resist it.

Two of my favorite "let" passages are in Colossians. These are the two that first drew my attention to the word 'let'. Col. 3:15-16 (NIV) *15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

You sports fans will really relate to verse 15. In the Greek it literally means to allow the umpire of peace to call the plays in your heart. Have you ever seen a batter get in the face of an umpire and chew them out for calling a strike? This passage is telling us that the umpire of peace should be allowed to call the plays in our hearts. We shouldn't argue with Him. And Who is the Prince of Peace? When we decide to do something, to act on an idea or not to act, Peace calls you safe or out. He will tell you whether the ball was in our out of bounds. Will you let Him? He could say you were "OUT!", that is, out of the will of God. Your heart is not at ease. You know something is wrong, and yet you go ahead and act on it. Do you see the importance of the word 'let' here? Peace will be in your heart or it won't, depending on if you are in or out of God's will. Will you allow Him to rule? In these verses the Apostle Paul is giving us an imperative command. "You must allow peace to rule in your hearts!"

In verse 16 he commands us to "Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly..." The Message Translation says we should let Jesus' words have 'the run of the house'. They should affect every area of our life. We shouldn't water them down. Allow them to have an impact in all their fullness. This is a powerful truth that will transform you if you will LET it. The Word is in you because you have become a child of God. If you will refuse to resist Him, in all His fullness, you will constantly be saying "Yes" to His directions and "NO" to sin. That will cause your life to be of eternal substance. Remember, this is not something you work up or try to make happen. The Holy Spirit will bring the word to your mind. If there is any effort, it is to not allow your flesh nature to resist what the Spirit is doing.

I was on my way to teach in Cottonwood one week when I had way more work on my plate than I knew I could do. A number of pressing concerns were on my heart. I was feeling weighed down with the impossibility of getting it all done. The word that dwelt richly in my heart said the simple little verse, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I never interpreted that verse that way before, but suddenly I saw it in a whole new light. Just believe He is my Savior in all situations. Just trust He will supply the time and energy and I'll see it work out. Once I heard it, I can let it live in me. My attitude becomes positive. I am full of hope and trust. The smile comes back to my face, and I learn to trust Him more. OR I can refuse to let that word dwell in me richly. I can reject what He is saying. I can make the effort to dwell on how much needs to be done and how much time it would normally take. I can make the effort but why would I want to make myself miserable? Why not let His wonderful word dwell in me richly? Of course my flesh hates that and wants to make me doubt, and I will let it do so or I will let the word dwell in me richly. It is a simple choice that I must make. I allow one or the other, flesh or the Word.

This next passage tells us we can make the choice if our life is by the Spirit. Gal. 5:24-26 (NIV) *24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

Let us keep in step with the Spirit. This verb mood is not a command like the other passages we have looked at. It is subjunctive, conditional. We can allow ourselves to keep in step with the Spirit IF our life is by the Spirit. You can't allow yourself to keep in step with One Whom you do not see or hear. When a drill sergeant yells out, "Left, left, left, right, left," you can keep in step because it is something your ear is tuned to. Unless you have been born of the Spirit you will not have the inclination to keep in step with Him. You can't hear Him. But if you are born of the Spirit you will see He is working in your life and in your surroundings constantly. You can move in sync with Him, or you can refuse to. This verse is telling us that if we live in the Spirit we will let our life be in step with the Spirit. We won't be fighting the Spirit. Then it gives us the opposite for a contrast.

Let us not... Don't allow, refuse to yield to conceit (I know better than you! My way is the only way!). The fruit of the Spirit is in all humility, for you are not the source. Conceit is not in step with the Spirit. Do not allow that fleshly response to come from you. Provoking – that is the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit – gentleness. Envy – that is the opposite of love that prefers your brother. Those things are out of step with the Spirit. Don't allow them to issue from your life. Choose to walk in step with the Spirit.

We'll wind this up with one more "let us not" example. Romans 6:10-12 (NIV) Referring to Jesus it reads: *10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Jesus died with the sins of the world upon Him. Now He lives without that sin, in the will of God His Father. We are to consider ourselves in Christ, one with Him. That means we, too, are dead to sin, but alive to God. Because of that "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body." Don't allow it to come into a place of ruling over you. There will always be temptation, but don't let it take control. Don't let it call the shots. Make the choice to be dead to it and alive to God.

Again, we can let it rule us, and why would you want to? Now that we know life is in Christ, we should not allow all that is opposed to His life in us any room to work. The word "let" implies our ability to choose. We make the choice to yield to Christ or to that old nature. The verses we have gone over include making the choice to shine, to hear the word, to let peace guide us, to let the Word live in us richly, and to keep in step with the Spirit.

In a negative sense we also saw that we are to not allow the opposites of the fruit of the Spirit to be exhibited in us. We are not to let sin reign in our physical bodies. There is an interesting subtle implication throughout Scripture. Sin masters and controls us. Christ invites cooperation. Sin drives. Jesus lovingly draws us.

Choices that we make moment-by-moment determine what we will let into our lives. Those choices determine the direction, attitude, and outcome of our lives. We have just received direction from the eternal God as to how we must make those choices. Will you let your ears hear? Will you let peace rule in your heart? Will you let yourself keep in step with the Spirit? Will you refuse to let sin reign in your mortal body? It is your choice to make continually. Choose wisely, day by day and watch your relationship with Christ increase. As you let the word dwell in you richly you will find yourself in communion with God. As you let peace rule in your heart, you will find it easier to make decisions. As you keep in step with the Spirit you will recognize God working through you in an increasing way. Let it happen. Let your ears hear the message today. Amen? Hear, retain, act on it and be blessed!

If you'd like to do some preparation for next week's message, we will be looking at the "let us" of Hebrews. That author used the term frequently with consequences in mind.