

Ephesians

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 September 1976

Preacher: Mercer, Philip (1932-2013)

- [0 : 0 0] I'm nervous this morning by singing hymn number 1085, to the tune Ashfield 285.
- Hence vain, including world, depart. No more allure, nor vex my heart. Let every vanity be gone. I would be peaceful and alone. Here let me search my inmost mind, to try its real state to find the secret springs of thought explore, and call my words and actions on.
- Hymn number 1085. Hymn number 1085.
- Hymn number 1186. Hymn number 111. Hymn number 1185.
- Hymn number 11 Kayla's five gas relación. Thank you.
- [2 : 1 2] Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- [5 : 2 4] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- [7 : 5 8] Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Amen. May the Lord be pleased to help this morning to direct your attention to the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 32.
- [1 0 : 1 0] The epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, and verse 32. This is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the Church.
- This is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the Church. We think of those words of the apostle in another place where he says, great is the mystery of God in it.
- And these things are a mystery, friends, to the carnal mind of man. As we thought of this first sentence in our text concerning the great mystery, we thought of three different characters mentioned in the Gospel according to John.
- And first we thought of the case of Nicodemus, who came to the Lord Jesus by night.
- And that new birth that the Lord Jesus spoke to him of was a complete mystery to him. For he said this, How can a man be born when he is old?

- [11 : 34] Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? You see, Nicodemus had not yet known that blessing of the new birth, although he was a ruler of the new birth.
- And these things were a complete mystery to him. He could not understand or grasp the truth concerning what the Lord Jesus spoke to him of.
- He must be born again. Have we grasped it? Have we been born again of the Spirit? Have we known that, that we read of in chapter 2 of this epistle?
- And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. It's only the Spirit that can quicken a soul.
- It's only the Spirit who can bring a dead soul to know this life in Christ Jesus. And you hath he quickened.
- [12 : 41] This is God's Word. But it was a mystery, and it will be a mystery to the carnal mind of man. This is a great mystery. And then the second character I thought of was that woman of the well in the fourth of John.
- When she came to the well of water, we can see that these things were a mystery to her. What did she say to the Lord Jesus?
- She said, The well is deep, and thou hast nothing to draw with. She, like Nicodemus, was thinking of the natural. She could not grasp the spiritual.
- But I believe this, friend, although she went there with just a natural thirst, I believe she came away with a spiritual thirst. I believe the Lord dealt with that, brought her to feel her sinnership, and enabled her to say, At length, come see a man that told me all things that ever I did.
- Is not this the Christ? Are these things a mystery to you? Or have we been brought to see something of the mystery, unraveled, revealed to us by the Spirit?
- [14 : 04] And then we thought of the Jews in the sixth of John. When the Lord Jesus was speaking to them, he said this to them, Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you.
- Now those Jews could not understand what the Lord Jesus was saying. How can this man give us his flesh to live? You see, these things were a mystery to them.
- But have we been brought to see the wonder of these things, that we do by faith partake of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- We do partake by faith of his flesh and of his precious blood. For without it, we shall never know salvation. If we have not partaken of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is a great mystery then.
- This that the Apostle was speaking of here concerning the husband and the wife, the husband representing Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, the wife representing the church.
- [15 : 23] This is a great mystery, says the Apostle, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. And I feel in this epistle, friends, to the Ephesians, we have this mystery brought before us in a foretold way.
- The church and Christ is spoken of. We go back to the second chapter and towards the end of that chapter we have the church set before us in this way.
- Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
- Here the Apostle is speaking of the church as a building in whom all the buildings fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temper in the Lord.
- Christ and the church is set before the people there and Christ is set before us friends as the one foundation upon which the true church is built.

[16 : 41] There is no other foundation but him. He is the rock on which his church is built. What did he say to Peter on one occasion?

Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. What a mercy friends to be part of that church.

I speak concerning Christ and the church. First then in that way Christ the foundation the church the building built upon that one foundation.

And then I feel in the third chapter it is set before us in another way in verse 15 of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

There the church of Christ is set before us as a family. The head of that family is Christ but are we among them?

[17 : 50] Can we join in with that language? One of this remnant I would be now and in eternity as we sing sometimes of that family in the hymn there is a family on earth whose father fills the throne although a seed of noble birth to men their little know.

Do we want to be among them? There is only one way friends we can be a member of that family that is to be born again, born into it, born by the power of the Spirit.

he must be born again. There is the second unfolding then of this text, Christ and the church, the church as a family.

And then in chapter four we have it set before us in this way, but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ from whom the whole body fitly joined together.

There the church is represented as a body. Christ that came to that body. Christ and the church. Are we a member of that body?

[19 : 13] May be a feeble member, may be a little member, told to be a member of him, to be members of him as we've been reading in the chapter this morning.

We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And then of course in this chapter here where our text is, he is setting before us the husband and the wife.

The husband setting forth Christ, the wife setting before us the church. Husbands, love your wife, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

Now let us then look at these words in that way. This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Let us look at what the apostle says concerning the foundation as we think of this church as building. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle goes into this concerning Christ and the church.

[20 : 33] And this is what he says. We are laborers together with God. We are God's husbandry. We are God's building.

every believer is part of this building. There are stones in the church, in the building.

We are God's building. And then he goes on, according to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereof.

and then he speaks of the foundation, for of the foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

What a foundation he is. We were speaking on Thursday evening of that wise man in the gospel according to Matthew who built his house upon a rock.

[21 : 36] The Lord Jesus speaks of those of the end of that sermon on the mountain. And he says, whosoever heareth these sounds of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man which built his house upon a rock.

My friends, where are we building our hopes for eternity upon? Are we building upon this rock? Is our hope built on nothing left than Jesus' blood and righteousness?

righteousness? Are we part of this church that's in our text? Are we part of this building? Are the foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ?

Oh, friends, as we think of this foundation, how perfect it is, how upright it is? If you think of the foundation of any building, it must be both upright and level, completely level, perfect, otherwise the whole building is out of joy, and if it is so, friends, with pride, it's perfect, a perfect foundation.

Oh, are we building upon him? Are we building our hopes for eternity upon this one foundation? For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.

[23 : 13] And I often have this thought concerning the foundation, it bears the weight of the whole building, and the Lord Jesus Christ bore the weight of the sins of the whole church of God, the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

And this foundation, friends, is out of sight, cannot be seen, as it is with the natural foundation, that most important part of the building is out of sight, cannot be seen.

And we remember what Peter says in the opening of his epistle, in chapter one, he says this, of whom having not seen, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, this foundation, whom having not seen, he loved.

Have we been brought to love him? We know this, and if we have, it is because he has loved us first. We love him because he first loved us.

We should never have loved him, friends, if he had not loved us from all eternity, whom having not seen, he loved, in whom thou know he see him not yet believing, he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

[24 : 40] God, oh, what a wonderful thing then to think of this foundation unseen and yet most important, the most important part of the building, Jesus Christ.

oh, what a mercy, friends, if he is our foundation, if he is our rock, if we can say concerning him, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

but are we among those built upon him? You see, we have that set before us in that second chapter, that the Lord's people are built upon him, built upon him, are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, there he is spoken of as the chief cornerstone, another important part of the building.

Oh, what a wonderful thing, friends, to see the Lord Jesus having the preeminent in these things. If we are rightly taught, I believe we shall always seek that he should have the preeminent.

We should be like John the Baptist who said, I must decrease, but he must increase, he must have all the preeminence. he is the cornerstone in whom all the buildings fitly frame together.

[26 : 29] How wonderful this is, Wendell, text speaks of Christ and the church, and yet those two things are joined together. you cannot put them asunder, they are one.

And as you think of these four things that we have described, in each case it is one, one building, one family, one body, and the husband and the wife are one, one flesh.

Oh, how wonderful it is, this union, friends. Oh, do we not desire more of this felt union to Christ? In union with the Lamb, from condemnation free, the saints are everlasting were and shall forever be.

this is a wonderful union that exists between Christ and his church, the foundation and the building and of one in whom all the buildings fitly frame together.

I love that word together. We read it just now in the Corinthians. We are laborers together with God. Together.

[27 : 49] And I love that verse in the sound, friends. Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

These brethren are the church, the church of Christ, framed together. All the buildings fitly framed together, growing.

What a wonderful thing it is to think of a church in this way. It's growing. Not only growing in numbers, for I believe as we have it in the Acts, the Lord still adds to his church, but it's growing in grace.

Are we growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Are we growing in the knowledge of our souls first and what we are as guilty sinners?

And then do we know what it is to grow in the knowledge of him? You know, the Apostle Paul was growing in this way and he said that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable unto his death.

[29 : 15] What a wonderful way to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom all the buildings fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together.

The same word again, built it together. for an habitation of God through the Spirit. And I love the way in which Peter deals with this matter of the church and he speaks of it in the same way as a building.

Oh, how beautiful is that passage concerning these things in his first epistle. To whom coming as unto a living stone disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious Christ Jesus was a chosen foundation chosen of God and precious and he will be precious to you if you are part of this building for we read in this same epistle of Peter unto you therefore which believe he is precious and to you he will be more precious even than your daily food and more precious than your vital blood this person this foundation will be precious to your soul divine but how does he describe the believers in this church ye also as lively stones not just living stones notice, lively stones oh how we desire to know more of this liveliness in the things of God as lively stones you may have that petition in your heart as you think of these things and desire to be numbered with these people may I be found a living stone in Salem street above and help to sing before the throne free grace and dying love but are you among them even now in the church on earth are you one of these lively stones are we lively in prayer do we know what it is to pray in secret, I was saying on the past evening here we need to enter into that word more the Lord Jesus says to us in that sermon on the mountain when ye pray enter into thy closet shut thy door about thee pray unto thy father which seeth in secret and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly you know friends if we're one of these lively stones there'll be much of that secret prayer much of that prayer in the closet and then there will be the open reward in God's house you know

I often think of that passage in the act concerning Cornelius and how that he prayed in his house and how that Peter prayed upon the house and when they came together the blessing was realised the power was given power with the word oh what a wonderful thing when we can feel something then of this liveliness in prayer liveliness in prayer it is good when we gather through the prayer meeting sometimes to feel feel that the spirit is helping us in prayer granting us liberty granting us a freedom in prayer together and then we can experience what the hymn writer brings before us the saints in prayer appear as one in heart and deed and mind while with the father and the son sweet fellowship they find

I believe they have been some of the sweetest times to us as we've gathered for prayer when there's been that flowing together when there's been that real liberty in prayer and supplication and praise he also is lively stone I want to be more lively in these things lively stone built up a spiritual head you see friends this is spiritual and that's why the natural carnal mind of man cannot grasp it it's a mystery to him this is a great mystery to the carnal mind of man as we have it in Corinthians again the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned when the Lord quickens the soul he grants us that spiritual discernment we are built up a spiritual head yes the church is a spiritual head and these stones are joined together by love love is like some men it's blind it is beautifully brought before us in one of our hymns love is the golden chain that binds the happy souls above and he's an heir of heaven that binds his bosom glow with love do we know something that's glowing with love do we have that real love in our hearts one to another we know that is a sign of spiritual life

[35 : 37] John gives it to us in his epistle as an evidence of having eternal life he says this to us we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren with that love you see it's a sign of life do we know what it is then to be cemented together as these stones in the building yes cemented together in love realizing that we are bound together with the cords of love you know I think of Naomi and Ruth how they were bound together with love nothing could separate them dear Ruth although she had been brought out to that foreign land that land of Moab she felt such a love to Naomi that nothing would cause her to go back she was bound to Naomi with love she was cemented together to Naomi and she says entreat me not to leave me or to cease from following after thee thy people shall be my people and thy God my God oh do we know this being bound together with real love may we know this then that we have here set before us by Peter he also as lively stones have built up a spiritual house a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ and then he goes on to speak of the

Lord Jesus again Peter you know felt the preciousness of Christ he had been left to that denial and yet the Lord had granted him that real repentance and granted him that restoration he had sent him that special message go and tell my disciples and Peter that I am risen from the dead and I believe he felt the preciousness of Christ because he so often speaks of it in this epistle wherefore also it is contained in the scripture behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone elect precious the Lord Jesus was elect of the Father yes chosen by the Father as the foundation of his church and precious precious and then notice what

Peter says next under the inspiration of the Spirit he says he that believeth on him what a mercy friend to be brought to this believe on him he that believeth on him shall not be confounded those who are brought and given faith that faith rests in Christ will never be confounded they will be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation he that believeth on him shall not be confounded unto you therefore which believe he is precious the Lord Jesus is precious to every believer but unto them which were disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner and the stone of the stone and concerning these people that are in the church the true church he speaks of them in this way ye are a chosen generation generation a royal priesthood and a holy nation and a peculiar people they're brought out of nature's darkness into

God's marvellous light what a mercy thing to know this then that we are part of this building the true church of Christ and have been built upon this one foundation Jesus Christ the righteous this is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the church now in the second place then we would think of this church as a great family the Lord's family on earth yes as the apostle speaks of it here of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is a church both in heaven and on earth part of the church of already reached heaven going back forth but the other part is still on earth this is the church of

Christ the whole family now have we been born into this family have we been brought to know that we are among them we must be born again we must know this that we have in the beginning of chapter two this quickening grace if we are to be brought into the family we must know what it is to be born of the spirit and as we said recently friends the first sign of that being born of the spirit is to have a cry in our hearts for mercy we were looking at those words last Sunday evening concerning the publicans and that's the cry of these that are quickened brought into the family of God God be merciful to me a sinner every one of these are brought to feel their sin the spirit convinces them of their sin gives them to feel their malady and then shows them where the remedy is in Christ have you been brought into this cry have you this sign of life this sign in the family part of this church have you been given a cry from your heart do you know what it is to pray indeed for prayer

[43 : 04] I feel is the bleeding of the soul as the hymn writer says prayer is the Christian vital breath is watch word at the gates of death he enters heaven by prayer the word of God tells us pray without ceasing only while we pray we live it's like breathing you see in the body and if we know what this is it's a sign of life there's no life without breathing and the first thing that those that are concerned with the birth look for is a cry as a sign of life or have we known it brings that cry to God in the sea have we known that real repentance that godly sorrow for sin have we known these marks and evidences of being brought into a family born into it have we felt our unclean lips

I was thinking this morning earlier about the lord servant Isaiah when he saw the lord and he said well it me for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips how the spirit would teach us we should feel our unclean lips if we have been born again if we have been born into this family we should feel to be unclean we should know what the hymn writer meant when he said the leprosy lies deep beneath we should feel it in our own soul that real uncleanness before God and we shall go to that fountain that was open for sin and for uncleanness there's only one fountain there's only one way in which we can be cleansed so it is in the precious blood of the

Lord Jesus have we come to that fountain have we been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ for cleansing to see those babes how they need continual washing and how the soul that is born and new friends feels his need of continual washing that blood you know the hymn writer knew these things when he said this daily I repent of sin daily wash in Jesus blood he felt the daily pollution of sin and he felt his need of daily repentance and so we shall if we're taught to the spirit we should feel the need to come daily to that fountain for cleansing and how wonderful it is that those who are born again not only feel their need of cleansing but they feel their need of living bread they feel their hunger and their thirst now this is a mark of life also in a body has a hunger and there's a thirst there's an appetite where there's life you see there's an appetite for bread or for milk in the first place and that's why Peter says in his epistle as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby that's a mark of life where there's a desire for this word we can look back some of us to when this word meant nothing to us when perhaps we read it but there was nothing in it for us but all have different matters this word has become to us the sincere milk and it has become our bread has become the living bread bread

Jesus spoke of it as in the six of John yes that bread that was thrown down from heaven and when he spoke to the enemy of our souls in the wilderness of temptation he said man doth not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God does man live have you felt your hunger for it have you felt a need for it the bread of life and not only for the written word but have you felt your need of the incarnate word the Lord Jesus Christ the mercy when we feel our need for is the one thing need for Mary I believe he felt that he felt he was the one thing able he often was found sitting at his feet hearing his word whilst Martha was so careful and troubled about many other things we often feel the same careful and troubled about many things but Mary was seeking this one thing to hear the words of Jesus it is there dissolved have we been through this spiritual hunger this spiritual thirst it's a sign that we've been born into the family that we've been quickened that we've known that great blessing from the second chapter and you'll notice there it's very clear it's

God's word from beginning to end but God who is rich in mercy for his great love where we beloved us even when we were dreading sins have put in us God could he's the one that gives us spiritual life there's no life without him if he doesn't give it to us he begins the work within us and he will carry it on as we have it in the Philippians he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ what a mercy then to be among this living family of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is name Christ and the church Christ the head of that family we often think of the father as the head of the family and you know the Lord

[50 : 37] Jesus was the father because we read of him as such I am my father and I want he that has seen me has seen the father he's spoken of in Isaiah as the everlasting father yes the Lord Jesus Christ and the church then we have here in the family of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man all to know this strengthening friends in the inner man and that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith so we have the family as the church of Christ and then as we said we have the body in the fourth chapter he gave some apostles some prophets some evangelists some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying edifying of the body of Christ the body is a wonderful type of the church the various members of it some members have one thing to do others members have something else to do some are more feeble than others but they all have their place in the church oh are we one of these members it is wonderfully set before us by the apostle in the Romans concerning this body the church how beautifully does he speak of the body there for he says for as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same of us so we be in many of one body in

Christ and every one member one to another and in another place he says this if one member suffers all the members suffer with it that's a wonderful thing you know friends when that is so when we see one member of this church suffering there will be a sympathy in the hearts of the others there will be that real sympathy in their hearts the others will suffer with that person and when one rejoices all the others will rejoice with them yes we are exhorted in the word to weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice and this is so in the church because they're one one body the head and the body are one you see Christ the head he feels the pain you know our head feels the pain wherever it is in the body and Christ feels the pain of every believer every one of these members in the body he feels their pain knows each tempted member's pain for our affliction is what a wonderful thought that is the Lord

Jesus was tempted in order that he might suffer them that are tempted oh how wonderful to think of the Lord Jesus Christ and as the head and as the church we think of the body Christ is the head of the church and he's the saviour of the body but now in this chapter 5 where our text is taken from we have this wonderful illustration here concerning the husbands and the wives and he speaks of this church in that way husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it how wonderful that the Lord Jesus should give his life for this church lay down his life for his people and that he might sanctify and cleanse it this church you know is a sanctifying church set apart separated from the world cleansed a cleansed church with the washing of water by the word and presently it will be presented to himself a glorious church and we long for that time don't we sometimes when we shall be presented to the

Lord Jesus Christ not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing now we feel so many blemishes so many sins sins of omission sins of commission sins in thought sins in word sins in deed but as seen in the Lord Jesus Christ as washed in his blood and has covered in his righteousness this church is presented as not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish what a wonderful prospect that this church will presently be presented in this way because they're found in Christ he who was without blemish he was spoken of as being holy harmless undefiled and separate from sinners so all men says the apostle to love their wives as their own bodies oh how

Christ then loved the church how he gave himself for it and how wonderful to be part of it oh how wonderful to know this blessing that is set before us here in the verse previous to our text for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife and they too shall be one and this is true concerning Christ and the church they're one it's an eternal union nothing will separate the two it's forever once in him in him forever thus the eternal covenant stand what a wonderful thing then to be part of this church to be numbered with this is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the church Christ the foundation the church the building

[57 : 48] Christ the head of the family the church the family Christ the head the church the body Christ the husband the church the wife and she has spoken of it is she not in the revelation as the lamb's wife and presently we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the man what a prospect that is this is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church may you and I be among those who are spoken of here united to the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting and eternal union amen our concluding hymn is number 580 for the tune redeeming love 724 my soul with holy wonder views the love the Lord the Saviour shows to wretched dying man so strange so boundless is his grace he takes the vilest of our race with him to live and reign he'll charm them with a holy kiss and make them know what union is he'll draw them to his breast a smiling eye upon them cast which brings them to his feast feet in haste each singing i am blessed him number 580 twice

I saw it I saw it I saw it

I saw it I saw it