

10044

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1993

DEITY MANIFESTED IN FLESH

Speaker: Bro. John Knowles

Study #6

The Measure Of The Stature Of The Fullness Of Christ

Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

Brethren and Sisters:

Well, it is with some anticipation and some sadness, I guess, that we come towards the climax and the conclusion of our school. On the positive side of things, our study this morning has indeed to be the climax of the theme of Deity Manifested in the Flesh, which is the particular aspect of the subject that I've been dealing with this week. It starts from beginnings which, perhaps, some of us in the past might have thought were simply technical exercises in the Word. You know, colouring in the different name and titles of Deity in the scripture, being able to recognize the difference between Yahweh, Ail, Eloah, Elohim, and whatever others, and yet I think we'll come to realize as we look here, particularly this morning, at Ephesians 4, and we talk about terms like love and meekness and long suffering and forbearance, that maybe some of us in times past, because I can speak for myself, would have thought that those things are two different ends of the spectrum. And in fact, we would almost say they're not related.

Now, perhaps none of us would say that in words, but in our mind you think, 'oh, no, that's study and that's love. And let's be honest, brethren and sisters, there have been times, I know in my life, in my ecclesial experiences, where people have been told, those who study don't love, and those who love don't need to study. And at an arranging brethren's meeting once, where I was a visitor when I was a young man, I was told it was true what scripture says that 'much learning doth make thee mad'. I don't think that bro. Moulett would say that today, but we were being reprimanded as a group of young people, and I want to make no quotations, but that's the sort of thinking that has existed, and I think we'd all be honest to say that.

And yet I believe that's what has happened this week, at least in this series of studies, is that we've been brought from an appreciation that the Word becoming Flesh, Yahweh Elohim, this is My Name forever, Yahweh our Elohim is he essential basis for understanding God Manifestation, and that God Manifestation is, the body of Christ, our oneness with Him. The family of God, our character and, this morning, the need for

each one of us, to edify the body in love.

So love and study are not opposing principles at all. True bible study is the only way by which we can get true bible love. There is no qualification needed for that statement, and so reading Ephesians 4 this morning, and looking at terms which we all heard before, and maybe known before, and maybe we're not going to learn anything new, but perhaps one thing will happen, and that is, like all exhortations, it brings things perhaps into a new focus. And we're going to see in fact that this is the climax, of course, of those things which we have been studying, which we might have said at times, were academic things.

We've been endeavouring in a sense to base it upon Eureka vol.1. Bro. Thomas says on page 100 in this section entitled, Deity Manifested in the Flesh, he says, 'Yahweh or Yah, as a noun, and signifying 'He who will be', is then the memorial name the Deity chooses to be known by among his people'. And those are the things we've been talking about back there, aren't they? 'It reminds them that He will be manifested in a multitude; and that, in that great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands (Rev.7:9) -in each and every one of them, 'He will be the all things in all (1 Cor.15:28);'. Now, my series of talks don't take us that far, bro. Graham's do, but he [bro. Thomas] does go on to say, 'or, as it is expressed in Ephesians 4:6,'there is one Deity and Father of all, who is upon all, and through all, and in you all.'

The Deity, then, in a multitude, is a conspicuous element of apostolic, as well as of Old Testament teaching. One Deity in a countless multitude revealed in the memorial name, and expounded in the mystery (or the secret) of godliness'. And I trust, we've seen that that term 'mystery' does not mean something that is unfathomable, but really as the word actually means, it means a secret that's been revealed by a friend. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, as that Word made Flesh, he says, 'I no longer call you servants, I call you friends'.

And if there was one way of describing the book of the Apocalypse, as I've done in the introduction to the notes we produced some years ago, we said it's a personal message from Jesus Christ to his friends, and can only be understood by his friends, because only his friends understand his language. And therefore, whilst words like 'love', and 'forbearance' and 'meekness' and 'long suffering' are words that people can sort of understand, they don't understand Bible love, Bible forbearance, [Bible meekness], Bible long suffering because they're not really friends of Jesus Christ.

And so let's get to the issue. Let the apostle Paul and the others help us in our understanding this morning, but it's once again just a reminder brethren and sisters, that there are terms here which sometimes in the past, we might have heard an exhortation about love, and we said, 'all the speaker said was platitudes'. I mean those things do happen; we're not proud of them happening, but we're going to see that they're not platitudes. And when the apostle Paul says in Corinthians, 'there remaineth therefore,

faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love', he meant that! But he meant that on the basis of our appreciation that it all starts with the understanding of the concept of God manifestation and it's GOD ALL THE WAY THROUGH.

And that's what bro. Thomas meant in that chart. It starts with Deity and it ends with Deity. We, today, are Deity manifested in flesh. We today are the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but we're waiting for the time of the manifestation of the 'sons of God in power'. And therefore, it is incumbent upon us to be endeavouring to manifest the attributes of Deity now, because if we can't develop it now, then what's going to change at the judgment seat? I've used this expression before because I rather like it; it wasn't one I invented, it is one that a brother wrote at our ecclesial camp notes some time ago, and I thought it was a very, very good expression of the judgment seat. 'The judgment seat is the final stage of the refining of our character.'

We're going towards the end of our address to just have a brief look at some aspects of our attitude to the judgment seat. Do we see it positively or negatively? If we see life now as the training ground for the kingdom, that in the kingdom we're going to be kings and priests, administering mercy, and meekness and graciousness to people, and long suffering, and yet also the judgments re going to be manifesting those attributes then, when are we going to start learning them? When Christ returns? If the seeds are not there, you know, that incorruptible seed that Peter spoke about, if it's not there when Christ returns, then Christ can't refine it. So what we're saying is that we're not expecting to be perfect this side of the kingdom, but we're heading either, remember that 180 degree line, " we're either going that way, despite all our good works, and all the things that we are doing, but it may be self centred, it may be will power", or, else, with all our weaknesses and with all our failures, we're actually trying to go that way and manifest God.

And that's the difference between a good conscience and an evil conscience. Despite all our apparent good works, it can be the out working of an evil conscience.

So brethren and sisters, we want to talk now about the attributes which are going to be required of a saint in the kingdom. But they've got to be seen in our ecclesia now, not just so that you and I might be approved at the judgment seat, no, but that our community, to the best of our ability, might be knit together in love, that we can help each our to the kingdom. And the world will look at us, and wherever they might say, they say that community is knit together on a basis, a basis of the Bible. And whatever they may criticize us for, they can see where we're trying to go. And that is why, of course, as we mentioned before, what caused David such great distress, that in his sin he had marred God's glory. Is that what we worry about when we fall short?

Well, there it is. That's what we're going to talk about today, 'the edifying of the body in love, our work for Him'. And of course, it wouldn't be Series 2 of the studies if we didn't, in addition to that, put up this chart as well. It's not that I don't think you remember it, but it just helps to focus our minds on what we are talking about. What we're talking about is how we're going to get from there to there. Because the tape recorders which we always seem to have around the place, can't read the

transparencies well, what we're saying of course is, here we are, children of God on earth. Bro. Graham has spoken about the hope of the time to come, when Deity will be manifest in spirit. It's the attributes now that we're going to talk about, using Ephesians 4 as the base, which are the attributes seen now, which will be seen in perfection in the kingdom. And we are manifesting these attributes because we love God. We know He has loved us. We love Him, and if that is our frame of mind, then we are going to love each other with a true, spiritual, divine love. And the Lord Jesus Christ is involved in this, because he set the example. And in a way in which we can't perhaps fully comprehend, he is there, as the mediator at God's right hand. He is the One there, who is mediating on our behalf. He is the great firstborn Son, and we have been given unto that Son, and that Son cares for us.

You know, we talk don't we, in terms of Hebrews chapter 1, about the angels being the ministering spirits sent forth to minister on behalf of those who will be heirs of salvation. But on whose behest do they act? They act on the behest of the Son, the Son, who of course, is now completely at One with the Father. So that would be the way in which we would say that when God says, 'I have given them unto the Son', the Son there at the right hand of the Father, the angels now becoming subject unto him in respect to this present dispensation go forth as those ministering spirits. As the Diaglott rather, I think, intriguingly translates it, 'public serving spirits'. They are the public servants of Deity, that's how the Diaglott translates it. And so the angels go forth, the Son is caring for us, and if we will allow the angels to work in our lives by submitting to Deity, that when trials and tribulations come upon us, rather than getting irritable and annoyed and saying, 'Why does it have to happen to me?' or lashing out at others, we take stock of the situation, we may stand back from it.

One of the words we're going to look at tells us to try and take in the whole picture, and we say, 'Jesus Christ as the firstborn son is caring for me. Oh! Christadelphians don't like making statements like that. That sounds very much like the Pentecostals.' But brethren and sisters, we have been given to that Son, and that Son is sitting at the right hand of his Father, and the angels are there to help us develop those characters that that family of God might one day be complete, and we will be 'One Yahweh and His Name One' in the complete sense of the term.

Well, I would like to spend with you a few moments this morning looking essentially at two verses in Ephesians chapter 4. And these two verses are going to be just two examples of many such verses, which show to us that when we come to understand God manifestation, it will be seen in certain significant and important attributes, based upon the right principle for the purpose of uniting the body, to the best of our ability, this side of the kingdom.

And so, as a led up to it in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 19 to 22, and we could go back many, more verses, but we'll just start at verse 19 to pick up the end of what Paul has been saying there, about how the Lord Jesus Christ has brought Jew and Gentile together. And we read in Eph.2:19, 'Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners,' (and of course, he's essentially writing with emphasis to Gentiles in that

context), 'but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'.

Who's building that temple? God's building that temple. He's laid the cornerstone. Who's the cornerstone? Jesus Christ. He is now fashioning other stones, other stones that must conformed to the image of His Son. Remember the words from Romans 8 in the context of pre-destination? That's what pre-destination is all about. That's what pre-determination is all about. God's pre-determined purpose is that we must conform to the image of His Son. We must allow Him to fashion us to fit into that cornerstone, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and when the time comes, the headstone of the corner will be put into place. Who's the headstone? Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ is the corner stone; he's the headstone of the corner. And that's why Elpis Israel finishes with those words from Zechariah, 'that then shall the Headstone of the corner be put into place, and they shall cry 'grace, grace unto it.'

And that's the conclusion of that very wonderful book that bro. Thomas wrote because he appreciated that that book was for the purpose of bringing together a body of people, founded on the chief corner stone, Jesus Christ, and the apostles and prophets, but waiting for the headstone of the corner to go into place.

And why do they say, 'grace, grace unto it'? Because, brethren and sisters, leave God's grace out of it and we can forget about everything else in the truth. There is no way that we can argue or reason or bargain with God. And that's why in this book of Ephesians that we are talking about, it starts with grace and it finishes with grace. It opens with the salutation, 'Grace and peace be unto you', and it finishes with the very last words in Eph.6:24, 'Grace be with all them that love our [God]'

And so we are coming now to consider how we have received from God unmerited Divine favour, His grace. Do we really appreciate that? And therefore, do we reflect that love back to Him, and to each other, which shows to us, that we've really understood God manifestation? Ephesians chapter 4 verse 1, 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.'

Did you notice with interest that it is a very similar opening to Ephesians chapter 3:1? 'For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,'

And yet there's a difference. (By the way, just as another aside, see the word 'cause' there, that's the same as the word 'grace'. You'll find this word 'grace' hidden all the way through Ephesians.) On account of this 'grace', 'I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ'. Why is he a prisoner of Jesus Christ in chapter 3, but a prisoner of the Lord in chapter 4?

Well, the first 3 chapters of Ephesians deal with what we might call, the doctrinal base,

doctrinal being rather perhaps an inappropriate word, but it's the exposition. And in those first 3 chapters he's expounding how through Jesus, the Anointed One, he has been called to a particular work, but when we come to chapters 4 to 6, he's now going to show to us the practical outworking of that. And because it's the practical outworking, he recognizes that he and we ALL SERVE ONE LORD. So, now he's the prisoner of the Lord, same prisoner, but you see, he's bringing out a different theme.

Now, brethren and sisters, that Lord is a Master. Oh! yes, we can talk about Jesus as our friend, as our Saviour, as our Redeemer, as our High Priest, but as the manifestation of Deity he is also a Master in a sense, isn't He? And Paul brings these three relationships out in chapters 5 and 6 in particular, husbands, wives; parents, children; masters, servants because everyone of us is related to Deity. We are the bride of Christ, we are the sons and daughters of God, we are the servants of one Master. So if we are all serving one Master, what rights have you and I got? And it's bro. Carter, who in another section of Ephesians talks about the fact, and I wrote it in in capital letters in my margin here, it's in the section about 'submitting yourselves one to another' which we won't be dealing with this morning. He says, 'each party is reminded not of rights but of duties', because you see, we're all serving the one Lord, and if we're all slaves, right down here, we've lost our identity. Then what rights have you and I got?

Certainly [we've] got no rights to demand our rights with God. But, you know, it's almost amusing because of it's stupidity, that with our young people we've been dealing with the blood of Christ, and you might recall the question that was so well answered at the picnic the other night, 'Give us four reasons why substitution is wrong?' And substitution is based upon the basis that God owes us salvation. Jesus died instead of me, then I don't die, Jesus paid the price. Therefore, the account has been settled. And, you know, can you see why people in the churches aren't going to be in the kingdom? It's not a matter of talking about the good (whatever religion) person that lives down the street. If they don't know God manifestation, then they don't understand what it is to recognize the difference between rights and duties.

So, we are here this morning in the context of which we are talking about, as the 'pinnacle of God manifestation in flesh', as slaves with Paul, all serving the one Deity. Therefore, how do we act towards each other? Do we lord ourselves over each other? Do we demand our rights? I want more ecclesial appointments. I want more this. I want that. Why doesn't anyone speak to me? You know all the sorts of things. Well, he says, here are the attributes, and I want to look with you at four attributes which he lists here; lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and the fore-bearing of one another in love.

There they are! The purpose being that we might endeavour, that we might give diligence as the word means, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. I think many of us would feel that it would be lovely that this group could go away now and be an ecclesia for the rest of our days, because we feel a unity of spirit here, which hasn't come about because we've got the BASF out this week and all read it and said: 'Yes,

we agreed with it.' And I'm not deprecating the BASF in any shape or form, or got the unity booklet out and said, 'OK, do we all agree with the unity booklet?' It forms an important part of trying to solve problems, but those things are a means to an end, and not an end in themselves.

There is an end; there is something in this life which is an end in itself, and Paul's going to use it as the very last word in the reading from this morning - 'love'. But it's not something that we can start with. And you see, the religious world out there, thinks it all starts with 'love'. Well, in a sense it does of course, it starts with God's love, but love is something that we have to develop and all of these other things are a means to an end.

Lowliness, what's lowliness? Well, we're told there that it literally means a 'humility of mind'. That's really what it is. It's a humility of mind.

There's been various characters, I'm not a great student of the classics, but I think there was one character, I'm not sure if it was in Shakespeare or Dickens, who was proud of his humility. (Dickens wasn't it, one of the Dickens' characters I think. Anyway, no one seems to know, that's good, perhaps we'll spend more time reading Dickens. I've never read Dickens, none of it, but there was someone who was very proud of his humility.) I think he went around saying, 'I'm a very umble man', dropping the 'h' as some English do.

But it's a mind! It's not a matter of convincing ourselves that we're humble or try to convince God in our prayers that we're humble. I mean, there's nothing wrong in saying that we 'come before Thee humbly', but it's a humility of mind and that's what that word 'lowliness' means. One particular commentator says it means, 'an unaffected lowly estimate of ones self'.

We've noted here that Paul could cite himself in his own personal example. These quotes are all very easy. I think we'll look at them, brethren and sisters. They don't require any exposition, but they get our minds working along the right channel. Acts 20:19, we would remember the environment in which these words occurred, a very touching scene, where in Acts 20, Paul is saying 'farewell' for the last time to the elders of the Ephesian ecclesia. And in Acts 20:19 he says, having said in previous verses, to remember his example, 'serving the Lord with all humility of mind'.

There it is, that's the same word as 'lowliness'. So lowliness isn't 'coming in and making out with very humble people, but inside are very selfish'. He says, 'you know what my attitude has been, I've served the Lord with humility of mind, many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews,' And so, here was a man who saw the truth as a very emotional thing.

You know, if we were to have a criticism of our community, it might be that in some instances we run away from emotion because emotion is too much tied up with the charismatic, etc. Here was a man who was not afraid to say that he'd served God with

many tears but it was because of his mind, because of that humility of mind. There's something that it must entail.

Turn over again to the words of Paul, this time in Philippians 2:3. As we said before, nothing new in any of these verses, but how powerful, Philippians 2 verse 3, 'Let nothing be done through strife.' 'Let nothing be done through strife', (I didn't lose my place), 'or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind'. There's the whole expression, 'lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.'

Brethren and sisters, everywhere you go in the world there's human beings. Wherever you've got human beings we all have the potential to react the same way. What happens when we have a difference of opinion? You know, strife comes into it. As we've often said, we drive each other into a corner and then it's self glory. We try to vindicate ourselves. Well, he said, 'don't do that.' He said, 'Look not at every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'

(I think that was the theme, wasn't it Sandra, that you had for the Bible school in England, if I recall, was that on that chart, wasn't it?. Very similar.)

'This mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus'. Wonderful theme! So that comes from a frame of mind which says, 'it is possible to esteem others better than ourselves'. I mean, it's foolish for someone who is obviously an accomplished Sunday School teacher to say, 'I've done this for 12 months, I think it's important that someone else should do this because I think there's others here that ought to do it because I shouldn't esteem myself good.' If that person does a good job and everyone knows it, it's foolish to go around and say someone else should be doing it, when we know they're not better. But that doesn't mean to say 'I am better than them' or 'more suitable than them' for everything in ecclesial life. We can all learn something from each other. That's what we're saying.

And in that sense, therefore, we esteem others better than ourselves. And, of course, he doesn't just mean in ability, he means in the fact that we should be serving them, not serving self. And of course, selfishness comes out in all sorts of ways, doesn't it? I think the most insidious way is the selfishness of our opinions. I'm right, I know I'm right, and when you can come to agree with me, then that's fine, if you don't agree with me, then I'm leaving, or I'm going to resign or I'm going to stand down, or whatever. Maybe we don't say it like that, maybe we just slip off into the distance and just not allow ourselves to be appointed next year, or something.

Brethren and sisters, I think the 'humility of mind' is the thing we have to look at so very, very carefully, and we've got to try to examine ourselves, because ecclesial unity, the unity of the spirit which shows that we really are Deity manifested in the flesh now, requires that the spirit of Christ, the true spirit of Christ, must be there.

What's it going to entail? Colossians chapter 2 verse 18 and 23, Colossians, the

so-called sister epistle to Ephesians. We would therefore expect it to say similar things. I might have said, 'What it must entail.', but it's, 'What it must not entail, of course in this line, doesn't it? We've just seen what it must entail, what it must not entail. So sometimes we can learn best by being told what not to do. It can be helpful. Colossians 2:18 says, 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.'

You see, humility is a very insidious thing in the sense of someone coming along with what he calls here, this voluntary humility. You might have heard the latter verses of this chapter read before from other translations, and if you haven't, I think Weymouth's translation is very helpful. And I think it picks it up from about verse 20, the one that I've got here, listen to this, 'Wherefore if you've died with Christ and have escaped from the world's rudimentary notions, why is though your life's still belong to the world,' (and by the way, the word 'world' there was not the sort of world we talk about, he's really talking about the 'cosmos', the Jewish order of things, the touch not, taste not, handle not order of things, the negative religion), he says, 'why as though belonging to that world do you submit to such precepts as 'do not handle this, do not taste that, do not touch that other thing', referring to things which are all intended to be used up and perish. And he says, 'all these things are in obedience to mere human injunctions and teachings.' He says, 'these rules have indeed an appearance of wisdom, where self imposed worship exists. They have an affectation of humility and an acidic' (you know, withdrawal) 'severity, but not one of them is of any value in combating the indulgence of our lower natures'.

I think Weymouth, at times, tended to be more of a paraphrase, but I think in this case he picked up the idea of it. In other words, when we go around saying, 'You know, I'm a strong brother.', or hoping someone might say I'm a strong brother, because I no longer touch, taste or handle, i.e., all the things I don't do, all the people I don't associate with anymore, all of the ecclesias I no longer identify with.

And you understand the sense in which I'm saying this, don't you? There are times when it is valid, of course, and correct and appropriate and proper to remove from that which is wrong. Our big decisions in life are: At what point do we do this? and, What are the grounds for separation? Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, that is not the topic of my discussion this morning, but brethren and sisters, I think one thing we have to say is that 'it must be a last resort'. And our theme this week is: Here is a body of people who have come along, believing the truth, want to manifest God manifestation, we've got to go out from here now and say, 'We're going to treat others as God treats us'.

God does not condone sin, we don't condone sin. God doesn't even condone one little sin. We don't even condone one little sin. But God says 'I can save and help the sinner', and so we might go back to an environment in which there are people who don't

understand these things. Are we going to say because they don't understand them, I'm not in unity with them, I can't be in fellowship with them. Well, we have to think very carefully about that because if that's the way God treats us, then the moment we sin, He says, 'I'm not in fellowship with you, I'm sorry, go away'.

And so there's going to be that exercise, isn't there, of our mind, in these very terms that he's going to talk about here, of longsuffering and forbearance, etc., etc? And I can't give you the answers to all the problems, nor can you give them to me, and they're all going to be different. But if we've got this frame of mind and we're trying to say, 'I want to see God's glory manifested, but that we can't separate principle from people, then even though along the way we make some wrong decisions, (and we will make wrong decisions, I don't believe for one minute, this is my opinion and I could be wrong, but I frankly don't think that I am, I don't believe for one minute that we are going to be rejected at the judgment seat because we made a mistake in fellowshiping that person or that situation), wherein we made a conscious decision. We weren't just sweeping an error under the carpet. We weren't just ignoring it and saying, 'I hope it will go away'. We made a conscious decision that we could do more to the glory of God by holding that person, by manifesting long suffering, which after all is a divine attribute and Peter says, 'God's long suffering is our salvation [2 Peter 3:15].

But of the judgment seat [assuming we kept such a person and assuming] we were told, 'Now, look, frankly if you hadn't of fellowshiped that person it would have been better for this and that'. I don't believe we're going to be rejected for that. The judgment seat is the final stage in the perfection of our character, and that was an area in which we made a wrong judgment but we endeavoured to make it on the basis of God manifestation. On the other hand, if we reject somebody, at the judgment seat [assuming] we are told, 'you know, if you hadn't rejected that person, then that person's life could have been different'. You know it's mercy that rejoiceth against judgment', isn't it? And if we are going to err, let us err on the side of mercy, because, brethren and sisters, it doesn't matter what we do, God can still change it, can't He? If we say, 'Look, I think we ought to go that way', and maybe, like David bringing the ark to Zion, we take so many steps and then we stop, and allow God to move, then He will move. So it's not really up to us entirely, is it, to get ecclesial unity?

We've got to live the truth. We've got to try to do what we believe is right, and allow God to work. And that's why we say when we look to the judgment seat, (Therefore, I think the judgment seat should be the most exciting thing that we're looking forward to in life, because we know we're not going to be good enough, but we know that that's going to be the opportunity for that great big blank area that we never came to grips with, didn't even know it was our weakness, and when that's brought to us), we're going to say, 'Ah! I was an absolute failure in my life, you mean, I never thought about all of that'. And the Lord says, 'No, I'm not rejecting you because of that'. The incorruptible seed was working there. It worked well in this area and that's where we're going to be totally humbled, aren't we? And the judgment seat is going to be the most humbling experience of all, but if we can start to humble ourselves now, how much easier it's going to be at the judgment seat.

So that's something it mustn't entail. Don't think that by abstaining from certain things it automatically makes us righteous. There can be a need, of course, and we do flee from idolatry and we want to rid out of our life all those things that are going to cause us to stumble, and I'm sure you know my views on that. I was saying to the brethren the other night about magazines and that sort of thing, yes, we want to keep those things out of our lives, but let's recognize not everybody has come to the same development as everybody else, and we want to try to bring as many people along with us as we can.

And we must move on to complete this thesis. 'It's a garment that all must wear.' Let's just take the quote in Colossians because that's where we're already there, Colossians 3:12, 'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, (and here's the expression) humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering.' He's picking up the same words from Ephesians because, (and it's an incredible thing really when you think about it, and yet when you do think about it, it's not so strange), the problem in Ephesus and the problem in Colosse were apparently two totally different problems, and yet he wrote almost identical letters to those two ecclesias.

In Ephesus the problem appeared to be Epicureanism, 'let's eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' In Colosse the problem appeared to be 'touch not, taste not, handle not', Stoicism. And yet, to answer both of those problems he wrote two letters that were almost identical, because they weren't the problems, they were only the symptoms of the problems. Both Epicureanism and Stoicism elevates the flesh. Abstinence, at times, can elevate the flesh. You know, 'I haven't touched something or other for three years, Ah! good. No, I'm not necessarily good, but let's hope it's helped us to be good.' So, there we are, that's why Colossians and Ephesians are so similar.

Back to Ephesians chapter 4 then. As we've seen then, the practical outworking in our lives of this Deity manifest in the flesh (meekness) has often been said, 'meekness is not weakness'. Moses, classified as one of the meekest men that ever lived, yet he could come down out of the mountain and he could smash the tables of stone. He could grind up the golden calf and cast it into the drinking water. The Lord Jesus Christ also, is the epitome of meekness, even in his earthly ministry at times, of course, showed the other aspect of the character which will be more particularly revealed when he returns. It's been suggested that it [meekness] means gentle, and entire submission in times of trial. We're told to 'receive the word with meekness' (James 1:21). We won't look it up. In fact, some have said, and I think it is right, that the word 'meekness' can be equated to 'teachableness', and certainly the quote in James 1 fits that, doesn't it?

Teachableness! We must manifest it in our lives. Perhaps we can look at that one, James 3:13, it's in the context of how we speak about others, how we act towards others, and James says, you know, there's really two types of thinking; he says, (1) the thinking that comes from above; he says, (2) the wisdom that comes from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, devilish. But in regard to that wisdom that comes from

above, he says in verse 13 of chapter 3, 'Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good [way of life] his works with meekness of wisdom'.

And so he submits. He submits to whatever false accusations. False accusations! Has he ever been falsely accused as much as the Lord Jesus Christ was? No, of course he hasn't. Meekness, he endeavours to teach others for the benefit of them and for the glory of God. 1 Peter 3:15 and 2 Timothy 2:25 says, 'We should use it [meekness] in spreading the truth. And in Galatians 6:1, we use it in approaching erring brethren. Galatians chapter 6:1, because we're talking about the unity of the body, it's appropriate to read that particular one, Galatians 6:1, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual,' [you that understand God manifestation], 'restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'

So one thing we're not going to do when we go away from here, is saying, 'Now that I understand God manifestation, I can just see how weak the rest of my ecclesia is.' Well, that might be true, but that's not going to do you or me any good to go away thinking like that, and it's not going to do them any good. We're going to determine more than ever to try and, well, he uses the word, 'restore'. We might almost have to start from first principles. We might find it gets rejected, but nevertheless we are going to keep trying, aren't we? So, look at those words which perhaps in another environment you could say, Ah! that's just platitudes, it's a superficial talk. But, brethren and sisters, these are the most powerful words in the Bible when we can see them based upon God manifestation.

Longsuffering! Hum! This may be the most difficult one, not in the sense it's difficult to do, because we can make the decision quite easily. Ah, no! we won't reject that person though, we'll give them another week, or a year, so maybe the making of the decision can be done very quickly, but what's the difference between longsuffering, which is a divine virtue, and toleration of error and maybe compromise and things like that, by, shall we say, sweeping the truth under the carpet, which is very, very wrong. That's where I think we have to learn to forbear with each other, and it's not without accident that the next word is going to be 'forebear'.

That in this matter, how often ecclesial decisions or ecclesial discussions erupt into a major row because someone says, 'I'm not prepared to tolerate that', and someone else says, 'you've got to show love', and then we start talking about love as though it's a bad thing, and toleration as though it's a bad thing, and in the end we make all sorts of threats, veiled or otherwise, and the unity of the spirit has just gone out the window.

This is something we've got to bear with each other in, because you see, the word 'longsuffering' has also been translated as 'patience'. One particular commentator, and I do like this one, he says, 'it can signify a 'largeness of view of things.' Not so large that you're not prepared to see the detail. Not so large that you just stand back and say, 'Oh! there's a few little problems there, I'm going to ignore them.' Oh, no! it's a case of not making the little problem a big problem.

I find Romans 14 a very helpful chapter, as do other people, of course, who read it, in the environment of non-fundamental issues. And when we are talking about a non-fundamental issue like the eating of meats, the keeping of the days, and things like that, it's very important to try and appreciate the difference between us. All of us in some areas have weak consciences. All of us in other areas have what are called 'strong consciences.'

And for those who haven't looked in depth at Romans 14, don't mistake a weak conscience for a weak brother. Weak conscience means a sensitive one. The brother with the sensitive conscience usually allows himself only a narrow channel in which to work. And Paul says, 'The danger with that is, ok, if that's the way you are inclined', (and all of us have areas where that might happen), he says, 'the tendency is for you to condemn the brother who says, oh!, I can step outside of that channel and there is no problem'. And there is no problem to him. He's the brother with the strong conscience, and the brother with the strong conscience, says Paul, 'has the tendency to despise the brother with the weak conscience.'

And those words go through, meticulously through, Romans 14. So if I've set myself a narrow channel, then howbeit, I'm not prepared to move either side of that aisle because that's where I feel safe. And there could be very good reasons for that, not necessarily doctrinal reasons at all, in fact, not doctrinal reasons, but, 'my experiences of the past' and all sorts of things. Emotional things which are very real, and when I see someone moving outside of that path, my tendency is to judge or condemn. Those people who see that I can't do it, I can't move, they tend to despise me or set me at naught. That's the situation you've got in Romans 14, when you're dealing with non-fundamental issues.

Now the point I was going to make a few moments ago, when I was speaking about looking at that little thing. How often do we take a little thing, and because we're not showing the true spirit of Christ in the terms we're talking about this week, and we want to win an argument? Let's be honest, that's what we're trying to do. We make that little thing a big thing, and we say, 'I see that as a fundamental issue'. Now, there's one way I can get very quickly into trouble in this talk, and I'm not going to, and that's to start citing examples. You go away and I go away and we think of our own examples. There are many things in ecclesial life which some ecclesias will make huge issues, yet when [they're] boiled down by comparison, they are really quite insignificant. They can have an effect on the ecclesia, but they are not a fundamental issue of the truth which causes us to split the ecclesia.

Now, we have to think about those things. And, brethren and sisters, that's where longsuffering is important, because a brother here might genuinely believe that it's a fundamental issue. We've got to keep talking, and talking, and talking, and talking bearing in mind that God's longsuffering is our salvation (2 Peter 3:15). We're not going to look up these quotes. James 5:10, says, 'Let's take the prophets as an example of longsuffering'.

What did Jeremiah say? He says, 'I've determined that I'm no longer going to speak in the name of Yahweh, but, His word was in my heart, as a burning fire, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay.' And so out he went and he did it again, and they persecuted him and they threw him in a dungeon.

Ezekiel, look what he went through. All the signs: cut off your hair, go and eat that defiled meat, tomorrow morning your wife's going to die, and in the afternoon go out and preach, lie on your side for 390 days and when you've done that, lie on the other side for 40 days. Longsuffering!

Yes, it means patience. How long are we prepared to endure? No, we don't endure fundamental error that's going to destroy the truth, but, brethren and sisters, there's a lot of weaknesses in you and me that God bears with, and we have to ask the question, 'At what point do we stop bearing with the weaknesses of our brethren and sisters? Can't answer that question for you, and please don't come up and give me a specific case and say, 'What would you do in this case?' because, you know, circumstances are circumstances are circumstances. But what we're saying is: If we can be thinking along these lines, what a wonderful community will present itself before the Lord at the judgment, maybe having made a lot of wrong decisions along the way, but we tried to make the decision on the basis that we thought was right, and we don't believe in 'guilt by association', do we?

Ah, yes! identify with fundamental error, and that's what John's second epistle says, 'you bid him God speed, you are forwarding that error', and John, of course, is talking in the context of anti-Christ, isn't he? That's his theme there, anti-christ. Well, when you feel that a brother or sister has got to the stage of being 'anti-christ' then, of course, something has to be done about it, but we'd be very loath to make such a decision. Generally, of course, as John says, 'they went out from us', and in most cases, if we keep propounding the truth, the mind of the spirit and the mind of the flesh, God manifestation verses, if I say, human salvation, (you know I mean it in that context of the selfish attitude), they eventually say, 'Look, we've got to go our separate ways'.

But, longsuffering, it's part of the goodness of God. We know that, don't we, from Exodus 34:6? Our children sang that last night. We've read it. Peter says, 'God's long suffering is our salvation.' Can we turn that up? 2 Peter 3:15, Peter's remarks concerning the last days, the last days of Judah's commonwealth, undoubtedly by extension, a lesson for today as well, and he says, starting at verse 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you'.

And we've been quoting a lot from Paul this morning, haven't we?

So, that's going to mean that we have to 'bear with each other'. And so he says, 'forbearing one another in love.' It means to sustain or support in a self-sacrificing

manner', an essential characteristic in every ecclesia.

We've only talked about two verses this morning, but I'll repeat once again, brethren and sisters, we've talked about them in the context of God manifestation. I'd like to put up a transparency, if you haven't seen it before, and I'm sure many of you have. Perhaps don't try to copy it down all that quickly, I'm sure we can get a copy of it for you later. I'd rather you picked up the spirit of it rather than the substance of it as such. Where did I first use this? Well, Elpis Israel part 1, Romans, Hebrews. Can you think of one place in the Bible you wouldn't use it? But, brethren and sisters, the first part of it is easy; the latter part of it is what we are talking about. The Bible talks about a 'good conscience' and a 'defiled conscience'. Bro. Thomas calls it in Elpis Israel, part 1, 'a good and evil conscience'. He says, 'the evil conscience is what really separated Adam from God. Yes, the eating of the tree was the sin, but it's the conscience that matters. And when Adam was called out of hiding he said, 'I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself'.'

Bro Thomas comments in Elpis Israel, 'fear, shame and concealment were plainly about, the answer of a defiled conscience'. I'm going to leave those last two lines out for a moment, about negatives and positives, we'll come back to that. But, that's the defiled conscience.

We have been baptized into Christ. We've dealt with all the constitutional changes, we're no longer 'sinners', we're 'saints', constitutionally. We are no longer in Adam, we're in Christ, in a certain constitutional sense of the term. But, brethren and sisters, what has it done for us as far as God manifestation is concerned? Does fear, shame and concealment, form part of our life? I know there will always be the tendency on occasions for the flesh to come up, but are they really dominating principles? Are we afraid of the judgment seat? Are we ashamed of our nakedness? Would we run away and hide if an angel suddenly appeared? Well, our first reaction would be fear, there's no doubt about that, from a physical base, but we're talking about 'conscience', we're not talking about physical. I mean, just about every time an angel appeared they said, 'fear not', but they weren't saying that because this person had a defiled conscience.

Perfect love casts out fear; we've been clothed with white raiment; we've seen that we need a confidence and an openness towards God. That's what God manifestation is, brethren and sisters. That's God manifestation. It's going to be at the judgment seat the answer of a 'good conscience' towards God.

You know, the person over here, he's going to say, 'But Lord, Lord, didn't I prophesy in your name? Didn't I do many wonderful works? I gave out 33,564 leaflets. I kept a good count of them. Look at all that work I did?' Didn't know you, you didn't offer food to the hungry, says Matthew 25, you didn't visit those who were in prison.

And these people over here are going to come along, and he's going to say, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, enter into the kingdom prepared for you, because, when I was hungry you fed me'. When did we do that? When I was in prison you visited me. I

don't remember doing that. You see, they weren't Judaizers. It was just part of their way of life. It was their attitude, it was a conscience, THEY LOVED GOD because they knew that God had loved him, and them.

They recognized that they had been given a garment. That white garment of righteousness, and I didn't hear that part of Colin's talk this morning, but he may have brought it together. The white garment and the golden girdle. And what's the golden girdle? Tried faith. God's given us the garment. How do we keep that garment in place that the shame of our nakedness do not appear, quoting Rev.16 [verse 15]? Keep that golden girdle of faith, believe.

The greatest thing we can do to honour God is to believe Him. That's how we look after our clothing. And we come before Him in openness, confidence (Gr. parrhesia), freedom of speech, confessing our sin; and as Daniel did so beautifully in chapter 9, the sin of his people, 'we have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have not hearkened unto the servants the prophets'. Daniel? Daniel wasn't responsible for that. Daniel hadn't done those things, but he saw himself as representative of a community and he prayed on their behalf. And so we confess OUR sins; OUR meaning the multitudinous body that we're talking about here for the moment.

What does that mean? It means we've got either a negative or a positive attitude towards God, and that's the one thought that I'd like us all to go away with. If we don't understand God manifestation then we do live in fear. We're afraid of the judgment seat, and all of those sorts of things, because we really have a judiastic, stoical, negative attitude. It does not mean that we don't recognize sin, and I hope that I have made that quite clear. The talk has probably been overbalanced in one direction. It's very difficult, if you are trying to make a point, to give a balanced talk. Now you might say, 'Look, you've given the impression this morning that you just close your eyes to error and we love everybody and there's going to be open fellowship.' Brethren and sisters, I have not said any such thing, and I hope it's come across very clearly. If it hasn't, then we're all coming back tomorrow morning and I'm talk on the other side of the subject. But what we are saying is this, surely, we don't ignore error, we don't condone any sin, but God has said 'I have a means by which the sinner can be accepted. And because we believe that, we know that His longsuffering is our salvation. And we've got to try to decide that if we are going to have the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, how do we manifest that to others? That's going to be a positive attitude. We're not going to be afraid of things like 'guilt by association'. We will not identify with fundamental error, but we're not just going to run away from a community because they're a bit weak in the truth, or not associate with a brother because he doesn't understand God manifestation. You know the sort of things, that's the flesh.

And so, have we got a negative attitude or a positive attitude towards God? How do we get a positive attitude towards God? Very simply. Believe that He loves us, and love Him, on the basis of the principles of God manifestation.

We're going to conclude then, by going back to Hebrews 4 and doing nothing more than reading the concluding verses of that section which we read this morning. If time had permitted, I would have had a look at the spiritual warrior, by the way of Ephesians 6. If you'd like to have a look at that some time, that spiritual warrior is not you and me as individuals, that's US. It's the one body, it's the one man. And that's what Paul says here in Ephesians chapter 4, 'we're no longer individuals.'

And so picking it up in Ephesians chapter 4, he says that, in verse 11, I'll paraphrase it, 'that He gave apostles and prophets, evangelists and teachers'. Verse 12 says, 'the purpose was that the saints might be equipped and there might be the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ'. But picking it up in verse 13 and reading to verse 16, 'Till we all come' (and notice the word 'all') 'in the unity of the faith'.

So it's Ephesians 4:13, did I say the wrong book or something? Hebrews, did I? Oh, it's always interesting to watch people flicking pages, and thinking, why are they all doing it? Ephesians chapter 4, I did say we were going back there, and we haven't been in Hebrews all morning, so you should have got it right.

Now let's get the atmosphere because this is the climax, brethren and sisters. Now, I've just lost verses 11 and 12 saying this is the lead up because we're starting halfway through the sentence, Eph.4:13, 'Till we all (that's a multitude) come in the unity (and unity means 'one' faith, so it's a multitude believing one thing) of that full knowledge (that Gr. epignosis) of the Son of God, unto a mature man (now, it's a multitude who are one; right? and that's what that spiritual warrior is too, in Ephesians chapter 6) unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children (we're going to grow up, we're going to be mature, that's what God manifestation is). 'We're not going to be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in L O V E, (love, 'agape') may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; (it's going to be our responsibility to try and keep that head and body, tightly knit together, because it's from that head, where the signals come; the brain is directing that body; the head, Christ), 'from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.'

I believe, brethren and sisters, that's the greatest thing that we can do in this dispensation, to see the manifestation of Deity in flesh. That's the pinnacle we can reach this side of the kingdom. Deity manifest in flesh, the pinnacle of which is our endeavours on the basis of our knowledge and our love for one another, that we might seek to edify the ecclesia, and to bind it solidly together on the basis of that divine love, which is, as the apostle Paul says, the greatest of all spiritual virtues.