

Eph 4: 14 A Perfect Man  
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Jason Henderson  
Market Street Fellowship

Ephesians 4: 13  
A Perfect Man

We've come to a verse in the book of Ephesians which is one of the greatest statements of purpose in the entire Bible, in my opinion. This is just one of those rare times when Paul gives a succinct statement both of the what and the how of the eternal purpose of God. He tells us what God desires, and how God achieves it through a people.

Lets read the verse and jump right in:

**Eph 4:13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

What a statement! So much comes to mind when I read this passage. Back when we were in the beginning of Ephesians chapter 4, I kept jumping ahead to this verse because it more or less sums up everything that He's said so far. It sums up the purpose of God and it sums up the means by which we attain to that purpose.

The purpose of God can be stated in this one phrase: "a perfect man". The means to this end is the "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God".

We'll start with the latter because it is by the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God that we come to God's purpose. We have to hear that. We have to hear that God's purpose is arrived at by the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God...because so many are seeking purpose in the body of Christ through some other means. First we invent our own version of purpose, and then we labor towards it in whatever way makes sense to us. But the foolishness and presumption in that should be frightening.

Rabbit trail - You know, I don't know what the initial experience is like when our bodies die. I know that when that happens to me I will be in Christ, even as I am now. I know that I will not receive at that time a greater salvation than the one I have now. That much I know. But I do suppose that I will comprehend that salvation in a greater way. I suppose that, when we are separated from the flesh and the world of type and shadow, there will be a new awareness of truth to the extent that I failed to see it while in the body. I don't really know how that looks, and how that works...and honestly I don't really care about the specifics. But I do care about this: I care about the probability that man will see the Truth face to face and most will have to realize that their life contradicted it.

The last thing that you or I should want, is to face God having given our natural lives, time, and attention to something that ended up being CONTRARY to His purpose. To look Him in the face, so to speak, with the awareness that I was saved

as one passing through fire but had lived my life as an enemy of the cross....that, to me, is an extremely sobering concern. Not a fear. Just a fact.

Maybe you don't think about that very often. Though some of you I know do. I do. I find myself thinking about purpose much of the time. I seem to have this nagging awareness that, sooner or later, my little bubble of life and identity and purpose and imaginations that I have created for myself is bound to pop...it must pop... and it will leave only His. My purpose will one day give way, and only His will remain. Frankly, I'd rather that be sooner than later.

Jessie and I were recently talking about what motivates people to know the Lord. We got into talking about personality types. Some people are this way, others are that way. Some are gifted in this way, others in that way. We were talking about why some people seem to have more of a heart for the lord, etc. And somewhere in there she asked me what it is that motivates my heart to pursue the knowledge of God. What keeps me going. And I didn't have to think about it. I don't think that it is my personality. I really don't think that has anything to do with it. I don't think that it is my particular gift mix, or my interests, or even my upbringing, though I'm sure that had something to do with it.

For me that is a very easy question to answer. It is quite simply this overwhelming realization that I have never been able to ignore, not since my first real encounter with Christ, that God has no opinions, and He respects no opinions. God has and is and in fact *defines* reality. And everything, sooner or later, despite whatever resistance in our heart, in our will, in our mind, or in our actions...sooner or later everything that has fallen short of His purpose will have to reckon with that. And even as believers, to the measure that we have fallen short of purpose, we will have to face into that.

I'm not talking about condemnation. Truly, condemnation doesn't make sense in Christ. I'm talking about living the truth or living a lie. I'm talking about the fact that you can't pull one over on God. And you can't claim ignorance either. God is seeking to reveal His Son in you. Ultimately, the only reason we don't see is because we don't want to.

And I'm saying all of this because it is with these sorts of thoughts in mind that I approach verses like Ephesians 4:13. When I read a clear statement of both what God wants and how it is that it is achieved...well, something inside of me says "pay very close attention to this verse...it deserves every ounce of attention that you have".

So...with that said...like I said in the beginning, I see in this verse both the purpose of God and the means to that purpose. I want to spend most of our time talking about that purpose again today. That is really where the Lord has my heart. He has my heart focused on purpose and glory, and it's been there for some weeks. Those two words – purpose, and glory...which are inextricably tied together in my heart because the purpose of God IS glory. And I've been a bit frustrated with myself this past week because, though I feel like I have come to a very new and greater view of purpose and glory, I don't have any new or greater words to describe what I'm seeing. That's frustrating as someone who tries to teach. I want to be able to say it in a new and different way, and the only thing that is new is what I'm seeing and not how I'm speaking. Regardless, I'll give it a try in a few minutes. But first I want to talk about the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God.

Really, these two things, faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, practically speaking, are synonymous. They are not different. Faith is God's perspective wrought in your soul by the Spirit and that brings you to the true knowledge of His Son. Not the knowledge about His Son. That doesn't do anything for you soul.

Whenever I am teaching from the Bible and I come across the word faith, I feel like I have to, and I want to, stop and remind us that we're not talking about what most understand to be faith. In the mind of most people, faith is what you believe about God. For most, faith is something you want to be true, hope is true, or count on being true. It's really synonymous with belief for what seems like the majority of the body of Christ. It certainly was for me for a very long time.

But the problem with that is that it's wrong. **Faith is to believe what seeing is to remembering.** Can you understand that? There is a name for that kind of sentence...its on the SAT, but I can't remember it. Faith is to believe what seeing is to remembering. Faith is something entirely supernatural that happens in the light of His appearing. It is a spiritual seeing of Christ and all that is real in Him. Belief is something that happens in the mind of man. There is nothing supernatural about belief.

**Beliefs can be created by faith, but faith is never created by belief.** Belief can exist in your mind after the soul has seen Christ by faith. But belief is just something that the mind of man thinks is real. Faith is what the mind of Christ shows to be real. There is all the difference in the world.

The problem with confusing belief and faith is very much like the problem that would exist if you tried to **walk around today in the memory of yesterdays light.** Go ahead and try to walk in only the memory of what light looked like yesterday. Just go for a drive and see how that works out for you. My guess is that you will be very quickly reminded of the difference between a present view that is created by light, and a memory that is retained in the mind without any light. The two are very much different.

Sometimes people look at me strange for making a huge distinction between faith and belief. But the distinction is far more than words. They would quickly understand the importance if I put them in a car and asked them to drive me to the airport with their eyes closed and using only their memory of light. Memory is not a present experience of what is real. Similarly, belief is not a present experience of Who is real. On the other side of that same coin – seeing IS a present experience of what is naturally real. And faith is a present experience of Who is spiritually real.

One time I was sitting with somebody that was asking me a lot of questions and jotting down notes on my answers. Not jotting down notes so that they could bring them to the Lord and ask to see them by faith, but jotting down notes so that they would have the right answers, jotting down notes so that they would know what this verse meant, and how to answer a person if they were asked that question, etc. And I didn't say anything, but I wanted to tell them that they might as well throw their notes away. It doesn't matter one bit if you commit these true answers to memory and repeat them to people. Just as soon as you turn them from statements of faith into truths that you believe, you have completely removed all power from them. You might as well not even know the answers.

You see, belief is not really much more than a memory. It exists in your mind because of a memory of something you've learned or something you've seen. I believe God is mighty. Why? Because one time I saw him part the Red Sea. Well, that is not a present experience of God. That is a belief based on a memory. Someone else says "I believe in the five points of Calvinism". Well, that's nice...but those are really just five things that you heard, they sounded right, and now they exist in your mind. But those beliefs are powerless. **You can live your life by them, but its still just YOUR life.** And right there is precisely the difference.

The enormous difference between faith and belief is that only in light, only in faith, can you live, can you walk, can you abide. You cannot live in belief. You can live YOUR life BY belief, but it will forever be your life. Can you hear that? You can live YOUR life according to beliefs, but that is still YOU living your best for God. But faith is something altogether different. Faith is the mind of the Lord, and in the "light of life" you can actually live in and by the life of Another. **In His light it is no longer you living by a memory of what you think is good and bad. In His light it is not you trying to remember your beliefs and apply them to your day. In His light all things are done out from the reality and Person and will and nature of the one who lives in you.**

Faith is a participation in the mind of the Lord working in your soul that allows you to live in and by that mind. So the life that is lived by faith is the life of the Lord. When you are walking by faith, Christ is living in you. Let me repeat that, it is very important that we understand this. Faith is a participation in the mind of the Lord working in your soul that allows you to live in and by that mind. So the life that is lived by faith is the life of the Lord. When you are walking by faith, Christ is living in you.

That is why Paul prays in Ephesians 3:16 that Christ would dwell in believers hearts by faith. That is also why Paul says in Galatians 2:20 that He has been crucified with Christ and now Christ lives in Him, and therefore the life that He now lives, he lives by the faith of the Son of God. The mind of the Lord operating in His soul. That is also why Habakkuk and Hebrews teach us that the just shall live by faith. You see its all the same thing. Faith is the participation in the mind of the Lord working in your soul that necessarily allows you to live in and by that mind. The life that is lived by faith is the life of the Lord.

Well, contrary to that...belief is a participation in the mind of man. It is either an experience of your own mind and your own beliefs, or maybe somebody else's beliefs that you have taken into your mind. Either way, the life that is lived by belief is your own life.

I've said this before, but in the New Testament the word belief and faith are the same Greek word. The reason that we bring that one word into English as two separate words is simply because we do not have a verb or participle form of the word "faith". In other words, we don't say "I faithed the gospel". We say "I believed the gospel". We don't say "I am faithing that sermon". We say "I am believing the sermon". So every time the word appears in the Scriptures, with respect to spiritual reality, it is a completely spiritual phenomena.

I'm not sure we often stop to think very often about how supernatural faith really is. It is completely and entirely miraculous in every sense of the word. It is nothing less than the actual mind and light and person of God being shared with the human soul.

I appreciate the way T. Austin-Sparks writes about this. He says:

*For the first glimmer of the knowledge of God a miracle has to be wrought, by which blind eyes which never have seen are given sight, and by which light comes as by a flash of revelation so that it can be said "blessed art thou...for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"...Every bit of real light which is in the direction of that ultimate effulgence, the revealing of the glory of God in us and through us, every bit of it is in Christ, and can only be had in Him on the basis of the natural man having been altogether put outside, put away, and a new man having been brought into being with a new set of spiritual faculties.*

This is a complete miracle. And in the light of this miracle we can bring forth the Life that is in us through new birth. Apart from faith, nothing of what God has given by grace is accessed or experienced or known.

But when it is known, when it comes to be known by the agency of the Spirit of truth, then it necessarily brings us to unity. Why does it bring us to unity? Because faith shows us the same Son in the same light. Faith shows us what God has already done, what is already real, and there is no room for your thoughts to the contrary.

**In the same way that light necessarily removes the opinions that were created in darkness, faith crowds out your opinion. Faith doesn't leave room for your neat ideas about Jesus.** It shows you one thing, and it always shows it to you according to God's view. So then, without a question, those who are growing in true faith are necessarily growing in the unity of the faith.

I told somebody in one of the groups this week that if you met somebody that you had absolutely NOTHING in common with from the opposite side of the world, but who had been seeing the Lord by faith, you and he would be seeing exactly the same thing. It doesn't matter what part of the world you are from, culture and color and age are irrelevant. Faith sees one Son by one light.

You know, just as a side note, it is the mind of man that pretends that God wants all of the varieties of human culture and color and age and race to worship him in their own unique way. I know this may sound a bit politically incorrect, but its true. I've often heard preachers espouse the idea that God wants to collect an assortment of colors and cultures and ages because he loves the variety that all of them bring to the table, and because he's working different and unique things in all of them. Well, that's not true. Certainly people from every color and culture and age, race, and gender are invited into Christ. But God isn't seeking something different in any of them. God sees and reveals and glorifies **one Son**, and it is always according to one faith. One view.

So if you met a 94 year old dancing Somalian pirate who was having Christ revealed in Him, I guarantee that He would be seeing EXACTLY the same thing that you are seeing if faith was involved at all.

Faith is the light of life in which we come to know and live by the mind and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know the Son of God in this way. Our verse talks about coming to the knowledge of the Son of God, but the knowledge it speaks of is the supernatural experience of faith. And if you're listening to this right now and thinking "I'm not sure I know faith in the way that you are describing"...that's ok.

Admitting that is a really good place to start. Don't condemn yourself, don't compare yourself. Just ask the Lord to open the eyes of your heart and show you the difference between faith and belief. It is so important that we do this. I need to do this every day, all day long. Because only by faith can we come to "a perfect man"

This is where growing in faith takes us. Brings us to the reality of what Paul calls "a perfect man". It doesn't say "perfect men" or "perfect women". It says "a perfect man", and it speaks with regard to Christ the head joined to His body. This is the finished product, so to speak, the goal, the end for which God created man. This is THE big deal in the heart of God. This is what God saw from the beginning, one new man.

Why does he use this metaphor. God uses the metaphor of a man because there is no better illustration of what He is after. The head of a man is the origin and source of all will and action and thought and emotion. That life which is found in the head fills and floods a body in such a way that every cell of that body, every digit and every limb, becomes nothing less than the fullness and expression of Him who fills every part.

***Eph 1:22-23** And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, **(23)** which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

A perfect man is one who has grown up to full stature, one who is the full expression of its indwelling life. Not a body that tries to act like the head. Not a body that is waiting around to one day meet the head. No, this is a body that is bearing in itself all that the head wills and wants and does and things. In God's view, and according to God's plan, **a perfect man has a body that bears in itself the glory of the head.**

There is no doubt in my heart that the Lord is dealing with me right now with regard to purpose and glory. In my mind right now these two words are really the same thing because the purpose is glory. Glory is the purpose of God. And glory isn't glory unless there is something in which God is glorified. For God to be seeking the increase of His glory, there must be that thing in which the increase exists. For Him to be glorified, that is expanded, expressed, magnified, spread, there must be a body that bears in itself that glory. And this verse has everything to do with that. We are the body IN whom God is glorified.

I was telling the group down in Arkansas a few weeks ago that the Lord has had my heart back in the Exodus story again. It seems like every year or so that Lord brings me back there. The first time I felt the Lord drawing me there it seemed like the emphasis was on the blood covered. The door that is death on every side. The door that is a way into Christ's death so that we would be judged in His death.

Another time when I felt drawn to the Exodus story it seemed like the emphasis in my heart was on the wilderness. I saw that the wilderness was the land of unbelief. It was the place where hearts wandered around in blindness, demanding provision but refusing purpose. And I saw that we are very much like the children of Israel that came out, but refused to go in.

Now the Lord has me back there again, but this time the emphasis is on the Promised Land. Now the emphasis is more on what I believe God had on his mind even way back at the door. Well, I know it is what God had on His mind even before the door. In this death, in this people, in this deliverance and redemption and adoption, in all of God's dealing with Old Covenant Israel there was the unfathomable prospect that God would in fact be **glorified in a people**. God glorified IN a people. Not really God glorified BY a people. That's not really the picture here. Not really God glorified through a people. But God glorified IN a people.

God filling the land with all things that bear His image is a wonderful picture of God filling your soul with all things that bear His image. He filled that land with a covenant relationship. He filled that land with the reality of a priest taking a people beyond the realm of flesh and shadow into heaven itself. He filled that land with the righteous requirements of the law. He filled it with a the blood of the uncircumcised, with the blood of the lambs and goats that show the end of that man. He filled it with His holiness seen through sacrifice, with His wisdom seen through Solomon, with His strength seen through David. He filled it with victory over all opposition. **He filled the land with all things that bear His image**, even as He promised to Moses saying, "Truly, as I live," says the Lord, "all of the land shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num 14:21). This was at the center of the Lord's heart all the time.

Jeremiah spoke of the day that Israel passed through the sea into the wilderness. In that day, Jeremiah says, "Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase. (Jer 2:3) Isaiah saw the glory of God filling up the temple of the Lord, and spoke of a covenant where "the increase of His government and peace shall know no end" (Isa 9:7)

We're out of time. But I just want to mention at least this week that this "perfect man" mentioned in Eph 4:13 is the corporate man that, through faith, has come to bear in itself the glory of the Lord. This man is the one in whom the Lord has been glorified, the Lord has had His increase, the Lord has had His harvest.