

T raining you can trust *L* eaders you can follow

“The impact of Dallas Seminary on my ministry is immeasurable. It has given me a vision for ministry.”

—Dr. Tony Evans



DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.



DR. TONY EVANS received his Th.M. and Th.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary. He helped organize and served as vice president of The

Urban Evangelical Mission, a national evangelistic and church-planting organization, and has served as an associate professor in Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Seminary in the areas of evangelism, homiletics, and black church studies. Dr. Evans is cofounder and serves as senior pastor of the 4,000-member Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship church in Dallas, Texas. He is also the founder and president of The Urban Alternative, a national organization that seeks to bring about spiritual renewal in urban America through the church. The Urban Alternative radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*, can be heard on more than 400 stations daily throughout the U.S. and in more than 40 countries worldwide. Dr. Evans is also the author of 20 books. He is married to Lois and is the father of four and the grandfather of two. This article is adapted from a recent message given at the Seminary's Chafer Chapel.

Turning the Key to Spiritual Power

Dr. Tony Evans

It's very easy for us, as evangelical Christians, to be spiritually malnourished . . . to settle for that which is low on substance but high on succulence . . . to settle for that which, for the moment, is quite pleasing, but in the long-term offers nothing that will take us to higher heights and deeper depths in our faith and our commitment.

Paul's concern in Ephesians 3, one of the great prayers of the New Testament and one of his numerous prayers to the church at Ephesus, was that the Ephesians would not simply live a spiritual life of succulence with little substance.

And so his prayer for them is his prayer for us.

He wants these believers, and you and me, to know that spiritual power is dependent upon spiritual capacity. And spiritual capacity is dependent upon spiritual intimacy. He wants to make it clear, unmistakably so, that your

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experience of God's power is intimately and intricately related to the expansion of your capacity. And you can only expand in your capacity if you go deeper in intimacy.

In raising this issue, he says, "I kneel before the Father," in verse 14, "from whom [the whole] family in heaven and on earth derives its name." He wants all the church to know that we all have the same last name, and that no matter where you are with culture, with background, you have the same "Papa," the same "Daddy," the same access.

Putting the President-Elect on Hold

My secretary understands that it doesn't matter who's on the line if my family calls. In November 2000 I got a call from then-governor and president-elect George Bush. We had talked on the phone for a few moments when one of my family members called. I had to say, "Governor, President-elect, I think, would you hold the line? I'll be right back." For a moment or two, I had to leave such a high person. I couldn't talk long, but I just wanted to let my family know that I knew they were there because, no matter what your political affiliation, this was family calling.

What God wants you to know, what Paul wants us to know, is you've got your Daddy's last name. Every believer in Jesus Christ has the same

"Papa," and that means the same access. There are no superstars. No matter what your limitations and liabilities are, if you're in the family, you've got the name. So you can have the access.

And he wants them to know that he wants God to grant them access. Verse 16 says, "I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being." He wants them to experience God-power. He's not apologetic to talk about God's power. He wants them to know God and he wants them to know what God can do.

But it's curious how you arrive at it. He says, you arrive at the experience of God's power, not through external performance of miracles, or pulling off external phenomena, but he says, if you really

want to arrive at God's power, it is through what the work of the Spirit does in the inner man.

To see God's power work out of you, he says, you must first have the *capacity* to experience it at work in you. What God can do for you and through you and by you is greatly dependent on what He is able to do with you in the

inner man. This is because it is in the inner man where the Christian life is fundamentally lived and where the Spirit does His best work.

First Thessalonians 5:23 makes it pretty clear to me that we are tridimensional people. Paul says, may you be sanctified in your "spirit and soul and body." He doesn't say,

"body, soul, and spirit," that's "Backward Christian Soldiers." He says, "spirit and soul and body," that is, we are transformed from the inside out. Our spirit gives us the capacity to communicate with God, our soul the capacity to communicate with ourselves, and our bodies, of course, the ability to communicate with those around us.

If you want power in your body out *there*, it must be because there has been a transforming of your soul in *here*. And if you want a transforming of your personality and your soul inside, it means the Holy Spirit has so dominated the human spirit that the soul can't be the same. And since the soul dictates to the body, the body can do more powerful things, because the one informing it has become a much more powerful person.

Become a Popcorn Christian

When I'm looking at a *Monday Night Football* game, one of the things I love to do, on occasion, is to eat popcorn. There's nothing like hot, buttered popcorn. I don't know if you've ever tried to eat unpopped popcorn, but that's a pretty miserable experience.

Trying to eat unpopped popcorn is a painful experience because you can't get to what's on the inside, even though you want the enjoyment of what popcorn represents. So to resolve that problem, what we do is put the popcorn in the microwave and what the microwave does is heat the popcorn. Every kernel of popcorn has moisture in it, and the

moisture, when heated by the microwave, becomes steam.

The steam presses against the shell so that the shell cannot contain the pressure of the internal steam against it. The shell, not being able to handle the pressure of the steam up against it, lets everybody know it has been overwhelmed by what's on the inside with a "pop."

So all this popping goes on to let you know that what is on the inside has become so hot that the outside cannot contain it. And when it pops, you discover something wonderful, that there was more on the inside than you saw on the outside, but you'd never know it until it pops.

When our human spirits are put in the "microwave" of God's Holy Spirit and heated enough, the shell of our external humanity can no longer contain it, and "pop!" The net result of that is the delicacy, the power, the pleasure, and the substance of what originally was inedible. He says, I want you to be strengthened in the "inner man," because it is there that the Spirit does His work and expands our capacity. It's like the boy who fell into the barrel of molasses. He fell into the barrel of molasses, and he looked up toward heaven and said, "God, make my capacity equal to this opportunity."

God has given you and me an extraordinary opportunity—an opportunity to be illustrators and demonstrators of His power. But He said He does not want to grant us that until our capacity internally has been expanded.

So how do you get that? He says, ". . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . . being rooted

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and established in love” (Eph. 3:17). He says that it has to do with being at home. “Dwelling,” the New Testament word, has to do with being at home, putting a welcome sign outside your door. And we all know it’s possible to put a welcome sign outside your door and not mean it. It’s possible to have an external sign but an internal refusal. It’s possible to make folks think that they’re welcome to come in, when you really know that you’re putting on a façade because things on the inside are not prepared for them.

How God Moves into Your Heart

God says that He wants access to the inner man. He wants the ability to visit the library of our minds to see what we’re thinking. He wants to be able to visit the den of our pleasure to see what we’re enjoying. He wants to be able to visit the garage of our carpentry to see what toys we’re making. He wants access; He wants to be at home.

John’s word for this “at homeness” is *meno*, abiding. The word *abide* means to stay or remain, or, as we say in the ‘hood, to hang out. When you abide, that’s where you hang out, that’s where you loiter. John says, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish” (John 15:7).

It’s sort of like making tea. There are two ways to make tea. Some people are dippers—they dip the tea

bag up and down until they get the water like they like it. Abiding is not like that—it’s just putting your tea bag in the water and letting it stay. And if it stays there long enough, and the water is hot enough, the influence of the bag in the water will transform the water so that it becomes what it was meant to be.

Many Christians are dippers. They “dip” in on Sunday morning and dip back out. They may dip back in on Wednesday night and dip back out. John’s sentiment, which is the same as Paul’s, is that God wants to be at home. He wants to loiter there, in the person of Jesus Christ. When you abide, Christ is at home in the inner man, being rooted and grounded in a love relationship—not merely in doctrine, not merely in theology, as fundamental as they are.

Nobody goes to a restaurant and studies a menu so that they can quote how much of the menu they know.

God says He wants access to the inner man.... He wants to be at home.

Nobody goes to a restaurant and becomes an expert on what is written about the cuisine and then leaves, because the whole point of going to a restaurant is to enjoy what you read about, to experience what you read about, not just to recite what you read. He says, be rooted and grounded in a relationship, not merely in information. And while it is critical that we know the Bible, study the Bible, be able to parse the verbs, decline the nouns, and, as professional teachers of God’s Word, know the Book, that’s not enough.

Having been “rooted and

grounded in love,” he says, I want you “to comprehend with all the saints”—because you’re not an only child. That’s why you’ve got to be part of a fellowship of believers, because some of the things God wants to do He will only do in the context of the body of Christ.

So he says, don’t forget all the other saints because I want to express through you the power of the “breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” Why? So “that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” [vv. 18–19]. In other words, “I want to express Myself in you and through you and to you.

I want My power to resonate from you because I have had this ‘at homeness’ within you and that has expanded your capacity for Me.”

Are You a Thimble or a Tanker?

God says, “I want that corrected.” “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think . . .” “Now to Him,” now after you understand where I’m coming from; now after you understand the importance of the inner man to God’s ability to do things for you, to you, through you; now that you have the relationship between your power out here and your capacity in here; now we can discuss the ability of your God

expressing Himself through you.

If you take a thimble to the Pacific Ocean and dip it in, there is more than enough ocean to handle your thimble, but only your thimble, because your thimble only has a thimble’s worth of capacity. If you bring a glass to the Pacific Ocean, you can get more than a person with a thimble but you will never get more than a glass. Because while the Pacific Ocean can give you more than a glass, all you brought was a glass.

If you bring a bucket to the Pacific Ocean, it’ll give you more than a person with the thimble, more than a person with a glass, but it will not

How can you ask the God who made the Pacific Ocean to give you more than your thimble’s-worth of commitment will allow?

give you more than a bucket because all you brought to that big ocean was your limited capacity. If you bring a barrel, then it will give you more than the bucket, more than the glass, and more than the thimble, but not more than the barrel because all you get is what your capacity can handle. If you bring a tanker, it’ll give you more than the barrel, it’ll give you more than the bucket, it’ll give you more than the glass, and more than the thimble, but it won’t give

you more than the tanker because that’s all you have to work with.

Facing the Critical Issue

Why are we not experiencing God’s power? How can you ask the God who made the Pacific Ocean to give you more than your thimble’s-

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worth of commitment will allow? We want to see God do exceeding abundantly more in our lives, in our families. We want to get on our knees and we want to make heaven quake. Thimbles don't do that.

You say, "Well, what do I have to do?" You only have to do one thing. He said it in the final verse, "To Him be the glory in the church." Glory. The more glory He'll get out of it, the more power He'll put into it—the more that God will get out of it.

In the middle of the election controversy, I asked our president-elect, "Governor Bush, have you gone into your closet and told God what glory He will get out of it if you win? Because the more He gets out of it, the more He is willing to trust you with it. The less He gets out of it, He can pick any ol' person to do the job. Be a Moses and tell God what He's going to get out of it. Moses said, 'Lord, if you destroy these people, then Your name is going to look bad, and they're going to say, 'Look at that God. He was good enough to bring them out of Egypt, but He was a 90-pound weakling because He couldn't get them through the wilderness to the promised land.' And You're going to look bad.'"

When Moses brought out the glory of God, it says that God changed His mind. That's power. But, of course, Moses talked to God like a man talks to his friend.

A number of years ago, I took my family to Niagara Falls on vacation. We got there late at night. We were at the hotel, and I could see Niagara Falls and it was awesome. I was just amazed. I couldn't wait till the next

day. The next day we walked to the falls. On the Canadian side there's a park. Now that was a lot better than the hotel because I not only could see the falls, I heard the falls. And the falls thundered down in the basin so I could hear a loud noise. The water flew up from the basin and even careened across the street. I even got a little misted by the water, because I was now no longer in the hotel room, I was at the park.

But there is another way to see the falls—the Maid of the Mist. These are boats in the basin that take you up to the falls. They give you a raincoat and an umbrella because you're going to get soaked.

Some of us are living our Christian lives from the hotel room. We see Jesus from afar, and He looks good. Others of us, dissatisfied with that look, live our Christian lives from the park. We hear a little bit more and we get a little misted every now and then. But some of us, who aren't happy with either of those, want the boat in the basin because we want to be soaked with His glory, soaked with His knowledge, and overridden with His power.

Where are you looking at Christ from today? The hotel room, a long way away? The park across the street? Or have you gotten on the Maid of the Mist because you want to be soaked with His presence?

Let's Reject False Choices

As I listened to Tony Evans give this message in Chafer Chapel, and as I read the printed version in this issue of *Veritas*, I was reminded again of the false choices we often offer ourselves.

Knowledge versus zeal, for example. Too many Christians focus on one to the detriment of the other. But the Scriptures say that a godly man or woman must have both.

It's a false choice—an illegitimate competition.

And there are more: Bible scholarship versus prayer, intellect versus heart, seminary versus ministry, doctrinal toughness versus loving fellowship.

Tony Evans reminds us to beware of the temptation to be unbalanced, especially toward the purely intellectual aspect of Christianity. As he puts it, you don't go into a restaurant merely to read the menu. You read the menu to fill yourself up with the food you enjoy!

Similarly, you read the Scriptures to find out about God so that you can know Him *personally* and *intimately* and let Him fill you up. Jeremiah 9:24 proclaims two virtues: "Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me."

That's our goal at Dallas Seminary.

We seek to study the Scriptures in-depth, but not to be, or produce, ivory-tower clerics. Our passion is to send out graduates who understand God in order to know Him better—so that their intimacy with Him will then overflow as they share this relationship with others.

When you support the Seminary, then, you are investing in truth and relationships (relationships with God and between Christians who love each other in Christ).

That's what the church needs more of today. Truth and love must go hand-in-hand. We are thankful that your prayers—and financial support—make that happen.



DR. MARK L. BAILEY
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Bailey".