

2Timothy 24-12-01b

We're ready to pick back up now in Second Timothy chapter three. I want to finish up our look at the alpha privatives. Privative is, you know, a fancy thing they use when you're taking Greek and talking about these words that start with alpha or a, and it's the same root that we get privation or deprive.

It deprives the word of its meaning and makes it mean the opposite. So if you have storgos, it's loyalty and fealty and dedication and astorgos, it's the lack thereof. You've deprived something or someone of those qualities.

And it is the same with all of these alpha privatives. But right in the middle, you have diabolos. The root meaning of diabolos is to accuse or to slander, to defame, to, in an exaggerated and unfair and harmful way, decry and debase the object of your attention.

So anytime you look at someone, you only see the worst. Our political climate is rife with this. Listen, in politics, there are seldom people who are 100% shot through with evil.

And there are seldom those who are 100% good and ought to be depicted with a cross in their hand and wrapped in a flag, as you will see posters of one side, and horns and a forked tongue and a tail on the other side. It's seldom that clear, but there are these exaggerated caricatures that are adopted and flogged in the media and in social concourse and discourse. And it's just not fair to never recognize that somebody did something right, or to recognize that your hero and your candidate, your guy or your position doesn't have some downsides or some dangers or some flaws.

It's one thing to do this with yourself. This is the arrogant and the boaster. I am the greatest thing since sliced bread.

But to attribute this to anything or anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is alone to be worshiped and praised and adored. There are no negative qualities to the Lord Jesus. But in human life, we are all as an unclean thing.

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We fade as a leaf. Our iniquities, like the wind, can carry us away.

And there is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one. We have to remember that at our best, we are still imperfect. We are in the process of our salvation.

We have not been delivered from our fallen nature. We have not been delivered out of the world or from the effects and the influences and the deceptions of Satan, the devil. He slanders us.

He accuses us before the Lord. And you know what it is that Jesus can say when he intercedes? There are two lines of response that the Lord Jesus will use. We know this from scripture when

we are accused before the throne by the devil, capital D. Two things, first, foremost, and most effective is that we are in Christ.

In him, we have redemption. He has been made to us righteousness that we lack. We are alpha privative of anything good.

But in Christ, we share his righteousness, his peace, his sanctification, his sonship, his inheritance, his priesthood, his being chosen as the avenue of fulfillment for God's plans and purposes. We enter into that and we share it. We have been purchased out of the slave market of sin.

We have redemption through his blood. We were not redeemed with gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ. And that gives us value.

You see this on Antiques Roadshow all the time. Somebody buys a thing for 15 bucks at a yard sale and it turns out to be worth five figures. It's from the Ming Dynasty and they've been putting popcorn in it and serving it at picnics.

A thing is worth what someone recognizes as value and is willing to pay. The Lord Jesus looked at us. God the Father looked at us as redeemable and they were willing together to pay an enormous price for us.

All we have to do is be willing to be purchased, to allow ourselves to be redeemed, to accept the grace of God in Christ. And the transaction takes place beyond us. We're just the clay bowl that gets moved from the popcorn table to a prized place in a collection of fine pottery.

We become vessels of honor, sanctified and fitted for every good use by our decision to be cleansed by God. We just see this in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 21. We cleanse ourselves in God's grace by the blood of Christ and become a vessel of honor.

And the potential value becomes actual value, especially in the eyes of God. So Diabolos, this is slander. This is only seeing the negative, exaggerating it, using it as leverage to try to accomplish some purpose.

Well, to be a slanderer is to be someone who repeats the negative. Someone talks about the candidate you didn't vote for. You're quick to bring up, well, you know this and that and the other.

That's it. There are truths. You can say someone supported a thing, but to vilify them, to pillory them, to condemn them, to judge them, to try to encourage others, to view them in a dim and evil light.

It is one thing to observe or to communicate simple facts. This is why I didn't choose this person for a leadership role. I don't agree with their policy.

I don't agree with what they promote, what they stand for, what they themselves identify with

in their own speeches, in their own presentation of themselves. This is what they embrace and espouse. I don't agree with that.

As a believer, I think things ought to be a different way. Therefore, I more closely align with this other side. Don't be a diabolos.

Don't be a slanderer, someone who is quick to pick up on the next negative thing and to almost dance on the grave of somebody's career or a failure or something that comes to light that is damaging to them. People take a perverse and vicious pleasure in denigrating and pulling someone down from a perceived height. That's being a diabolos.

This is what Satan does to us. Why would we as believers ever get anywhere near trying to do that to others, believers or unbelievers, private or public, coworker, student, somebody else in our near or distant family or somebody that we know about? Why would we engage in the same kind of activity that Satan, who is going to perish in the lake of fire, practices on a regular basis? We are the targets. The Lord Jesus defends us with His own character and His own righteousness and what He has accomplished on our behalf.

To the extent that we avail ourselves of that and cleanse ourselves and we, by God's grace, become vessels of honor, the Lord Jesus can also point out the positives. Here is someone who is endeavoring to walk the narrow road and head through the straight gate. They are eschewing that which is evil and clinging to that which is good.

They are trying to not be a party to any of these failures. They stumble and fall. They err and come short again and again, but they have a great devotion and they are on the upward way.

They are conscious and aware. They confess their sins and we, in the glorious divine trinity, are faithful and just to forgive them and to cleanse them because that is their heart. That is the kind of people we want to be.

We want to be the servant who has forgiven a great debt and isn't quick to impugn and invoke a debt that someone else may have incurred, whether to us or to society or to the political niceties or whatever it may be. It is a wonderful tribute. You hear this sometimes at memorial services.

I never heard this person say anything bad about anybody. They always seemed to find some redeeming quality. They were the nicest, kindest, most forgiving, most pleasant to talk to because they didn't engage in the downward look and the insulting conversation.

They always seemed to see the good in people and would acknowledge what somebody did right and they didn't dwell on and dance around on somebody's failures. That should be us. That should be us every day, all the time.

Don't be diabolos. And that one is right in the middle of a cluster of lacking. This is something that we provoke and promote as an activity.

It is not a failure. It is a commission. It's not a sin of omission.

It is a sin of commission to denigrate and belittle others. So we do not want to be a slanderer. And of course, the Devil, capital D, is the patron saint of all slanderers.

He is the first and greatest example of all slanderers. He's the chief. He's the archetype.

And there is a line in Shakespeare's Othello. Shakespeare was a tremendously adept observer of human character and human behavior. And he put this in the mouth of Iago, one of, if you know Shakespeare and you know Othello, Iago is one of the main characters.

And Iago has this to say, and I'm going to translate it into modern vernacular and not leave it in Shakespeare's English, although it's beautiful that way. But he says, basically, paraphrasing, a good name, whether it is a man or a woman, is the immediate jewel of their souls. Whether it is a man or a woman, the jewel of their soul is their good name.

If you steal my purse, if you steal my treasure, you take my stuff, it's trash. You've just taken something that belonged to somebody else, and it's eventually going to belong to somebody else. It's a temporary possession.

You take my purse, you've just taken trash. It's something, but it's nothing. It was mine, now it's his, and one day it will be somebody else's.

Those things have been a slave to thousands, he says. But he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which does not enrich him and makes me poor indeed. If someone takes away another person's good name, they don't suddenly acquire a treasure that used to belong to them.

He that filches from me my good name robs me of that which does not enrich him and makes me poor indeed. You have stolen the jewel of my soul. We should never be the agent of destroying someone's good name, ever.

That makes you a devil, a diabolos. This is what Satan attempts to do before the throne of God the Father, and our defender, our savior, is the Lord Jesus. That is what it takes to defend against this kind of theft, this kind of slander.

Only the Lord Jesus himself is powerful enough to overcome the diabolos in that regard, and we need the presence of the Lord Jesus, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling of all three members of the Trinity to prevent us from becoming echoes, and followers, and disciples of the diabolos, the devil, the slanderer. It's a horrific thing. It's put right in the middle of these alpha privative descriptions.

And people who would never dream of stealing material goods, they wouldn't go to your dining room when no one's looking and take your silver, or take an expensive vase, or steal your car, or pilfer your credit cards, or take your cash. They don't think anything of passing on a story

that ruins someone else's good name without even trying to find out whether or not it's true. It's just fun to pass on something that maybe someone else hasn't heard or doesn't know.

And it has been said that in large local churches, there is enough slander to make the recording angel weep as he writes it down. It goes on to say, the next one is after slanderers says, without self-control, this has been translated ungovernable in their desires. It is an alpha privative.

And then kratos. Krato is one of the five Greek words for power. And this is lacking a power, lacking a skill.

We were talking on the break about the wonderful skill of being able to govern and control and use for benefit something that is very powerful, like a shovel, a scoop, or a crane, or some other, you know, a bulldozer. Something that is well beyond our power to be able to control it and manipulate it for good purposes is a wonderful and admirable trait and skill. If you lack that and you get behind the controls of a bulldozer or a crane or a giant hydraulic machine of any kind, and you cannot govern it, you don't know how to limit it and use it for good, it can become an enormous agent of destruction.

That's what a kratos means. These people who are kratos, A-K-R-A-T-E-S, are ungovernable. And it is primarily they cannot govern themselves.

In James, when it says the man who can control his tongue has brought his whole body into subjection. If you can control your speech, what you say and how you say it, it's not just what we say. Often it is how we say it.

To govern that is a reflection of self-control, which is at the opposite end of love in the list of Christian virtues, the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, self-control. A kratos means to be in the grip of a habit that we cannot break. You become enslaved to a pattern of behavior, to a practice, to a substance, to a habit, and it controls you.

You are no longer in control, you are being controlled. This is what it means to be a slave from sin. And Paul cries and sorrows over those who had been delivered out of the slave market of sin, transferred from darkness to light, and then voluntarily walked back in and allowed themselves to once again be controlled by sin, when the Lord Jesus died to break the power of sin and to free us from that slavery.

And you voluntarily go back and become a pierced ear slave to sin. It's voluntary submission, voluntary slavery to fallen practices and ungodly behaviors. That is the road to ruin.

No one can take control of anything if you can't take control of yourself by God's grace, in God's strength and power. Self-control is a fruit of the spirit. If we lack self-control, we lack everything else, because we cannot stop ourselves from sinning.

We can't stop ourselves from doing any of these other things. I have a book called The Art of

Self-Control, and it's a hollow book, and inside you put all of the remotes for the TV. But I've often thought it's doubly significant because it's a tongue-in-cheek reference to remote controls.

But do I practice the art of self-control when I open up that book and grab the remote and choose to watch something on TV? What do I allow through the eye gate and the ear gate? What do I tolerate? What do I accept uncritically and without thought? The next word here, without self-control, it says brutal in verse 3. And this can be translated savage. This is a nemeros, A-N-E-M-E-R-O-S. And it is used of animals that are untamable.

I've before, but it really fascinates me. The entire time I was growing up, I don't mean constantly, but every time I would think about this subject, I couldn't figure out why people in Africa didn't ride zebras the way people in Europe and eventually in America rode horses. They've got zebras.

Why didn't they, you know, and this, you can pull wagons, you can pull plows. I mean, this is an engine of civilization. And when you read the books, 1491 and 1493, and you read Gun, Germs, and Steel, and some of the other books that talk about why things are the way they are on different continents, in different cultures, it always puzzled me.

They never used zebras the way Europeans and later Americans used horses. Why not? They look so similar. Well, it turns out that zebras in their nature are untamable.

They are wild. And people who have tried to tame zebras have gotten bit. They will literally kill themselves to get out of a corral or a stockade.

Horses will adjust and say, well, I guess this is a fence I can't jump and I can't break down. And they will become pacific. They'll become content to dwell within whatever structure you put them in, a stall, a corral, a fenced-in pasture or whatever, not zebras.

They have made, they are so strong and so dedicated to escape. They have made palisades. You remember George Washington's fort and it's nothing but vertical poles right next to each other, woven together to keep out an invading force.

They would make corrals like that in Africa and put zebras inside and the zebras would beat themselves against it until they died. They are untamable. They have eventually using cattle prods and things.

They have gotten some of them to be somewhat compliant, but it's like people who tame wild carnivores. You never know when they are going to suddenly assert their wild nature. And people said, oh, this bear is tame.

We have people taking pictures with this bear or this lion or whatever, but something happens and suddenly the lion kills the high school girl that wanted her yearbook photo taken with this lion. Suddenly a bear, oh, I live with the bears. I have been out here for years.

I know their names. These people would go out and want to document bears for people and then one day they come out there and find his sleeping bag and he has been eaten by the bears and he didn't see it coming because they are never tamable. There is always that intrinsic wildness that cannot be overcome.

Well, that's what Anemoras describes. It is used of wild animals that can quickly and impulsively, without warning and without notice, descend into complete savagery and viciousness. People have to be careful if they have a dog that's got pit bull breeding because pit bulls were bred for savagery.

And you say, well, but it's a dog. I'm going to dog whispering and I'm going to tame it. If it's got pit bull blood, you have to be so careful because under the right conditions, they are suddenly out of their minds.

They don't know anything. They don't recognize anything. They just have an instinct to attack and to kill.

And it can come from nowhere. And countless people have been killed by people's pet pit bulls that nobody thought were going to do it. Little toddlers have been savagely killed by pit bulls that there is an element of innate nature that cannot be overcome in some animals.

It is a savagery that doesn't have sympathy or sensitivity. It just becomes blind and mindless. People can be savage when they encounter something that they really detest or hate or disagree with.

And they can be pitiless. Again, you're back to these roving gangs of teenagers. They don't rove the neighborhood.

They rove social media. They're on Facebook and TikTok and some of these other venues, Instagram, and they will gang up on someone. And it is the attack of the hyenas.

There's no stopping them. There's no reasoning with them. And they find joy in being part of a pack that is savagely decimating some other person.

There are people who, in the treatment of others, are entirely lost to human sympathy. It just disappears. That's on Amoros.

Brutal. The next alpha privative is despisers of good, despisers of that which is good. This is another alpha privative.

You have *aphelagathoi* and *agathos*, that's the Greek word for good. *Philos* is the word for love, not self-sacrificial love, but the embracing, accepting, I like this, I'm going to promote it, I'm going to assemble with it, I'm going to stick with it and fellowship with it. This is fellowship love, embracing love, appreciation love.

So you love, fellowship, and embrace *agathos*, that which is good. Feel *agathos*. Well, take that

away.

Have a lack of appreciation. When you see good, you don't recognize it and you don't appreciate it. Lack of capacity to appreciate that which is good.

It is the opposite of those things that are true and honest and noble and right. You find no value in it at all. What an awful thing as a believer to fail to appreciate the goodness of God, the goodness of Christ, the goodness that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to cultivate within ourselves and to appreciate and encourage and support in others and to be blind to it.

You remember those who are blessed because they do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful. This is the way to sear your conscience with a hot iron so that you can't recognize good. And those who cannot see good when it comes, when it appears, when it is evident, when it is in practice, when it even benefits you personally and you just can't see it, that is this word, *afilagathoi*.

To not just lack it, but to denigrate it and despise it, to dismiss it. Despisers of what is good. Then the next word you have there is traitors.

Now you're going to have a couple of pro words. Instead of being *onty* or against or lacking a thing, you are for it. And so the next one is *prodotai*, P-R-O-D-O-T-A-I.

This is the short O. You have no love for good things. You have no love for good persons. And then people will be treacherous.

The next word here is traitor or treachery. This was written by Paul when Christian persecution was starting to multiply, the Roman world was beginning to react against Christianity. You're in the days of Nero, you're in the days of Colosseums.

And this is a couple of decades after Paul was just chasing down Jews who had converted to Christ. Now you have Jew and Gentile Christians and the Roman Empire is beginning to wake up to the fact that these people worship a God who is not Caesar and they're becoming a social problem. There are so many of them and there is this lack of loyalty to Rome and lack of loyalty to Caesar and Rome is now beginning to take notice.

People try to read this back into the crucifixion of Christ. The crucifixion of Christ was not Rome reacting against Jesus. That was Rome as cooperating with the Jews who were reacting to Jesus.

The Jewish corrupt treacherous leadership, this is not anti-Semitism, this is a time in the history of Israel where its own leadership couldn't see good when it came. The Lord Jesus was good, they couldn't see it and they betrayed him to the Romans, they slandered him to the Romans, they lied about him to the Romans, they said he is a threat to Caesar and you have got to crucify him. It was an entire falsehood.

It embodied so many of these behaviors and it was the Jewish leadership in the grip of these

sinful and evil patterns of behavior that put Christ on the cross. Rome didn't look and say I think he is a threat to Caesar and a threat to good order and discipline. Jesus never told his followers to resist Rome.

He said if a Roman soldier asks you to carry his pack, carry it beyond the required one mile, carry it two miles, be submissive to the rule over you. He never promoted sedition or insurrection, but the Jews lied about him and they manipulated the local Roman government into crucifying the Lord Jesus. Caesar didn't know anything about Jesus Christ, they manipulated Pilate into putting him on the cross.

But this treachery is a dangerous thing to be a betrayer of those to whom we ought to be a blessing and a support. So this treachery and betrayal of fellow believers to Rome in one's own self-interest, I am so afraid that they are going to take my stuff, I will give up the names of fellow believers. At this time, one of the curses in Rome was informers, in Latin they are called *deletores*, that we talk about deleterious behavior and so on.

Deletores, the Roman historian Tacitus said, he who has no foe, no formal enemy, was betrayed by his friends. He hasn't generated any enemies, but his own friends will betray him based on their intimate knowledge. And remember the one who has broken bread with me at the table, has lifted up his heel against me, it was Judas who betrayed Jesus to the arresting party.

There were people who would revenge themselves on others by informing against them. You got a business that's a competitor, so you'll say something bad about them and get them in trouble with the law for your own benefit. This again overlaps with and is an expression of so many of these other character traits.

People feel like somebody did them desperate or did them wrong or didn't consider them enough, and so they would want to revenge themselves on them in some way. So Paul is not just talking about being a faithless friend, failing to show up as a friend in need. This is people who hold a grudge, decide they want to pay back an old score, and when an opportunity presents itself, they take advantage of a vulnerability.

They talk up a weakness or they get you in trouble for their own benefit and to implement some form of payback. It's a horrifically self-centered and unloving attitude. The next thing here is to be headlong.

This is another pro-word. You're pro-dotes. You're going to actively harm someone else, and you're pro-petes.

These things alliterate and have such a beauty in Greek. It's fun to just read these words in Greek because they just ring. They repeat.

They just go around the carousel and look at each horse with its similarities and its differences. It's all part of the same carousel, but there are differences and aspects that each one represents. Pro-petes means to be headstrong or headlong.

You just rush in where angels fear to tread. You don't consider. You don't plan.

You don't take things into account. It is to be precipitate or to be reckless. Describes a person who is swept on by their passions, who is impulsive to such an extent that they act and react on impulse, and they don't stop and think.

We as believers should be thoughtful. Take a beat. Stop before we speak.

Stop before we decide. It has been said that there's more harm done by lack of thought than by almost anything else. We speak before we think.

We act before we think. We would be saved from hurting ourselves or hurting others and from wounding other people if we would just stop and think. The next word is to be inflated with conceit.

You could translate this as someone having become swollen-headed. It doesn't happen in the moment. You're a fathead.

It happened in the past, and now you are expressing your fatheadedness. So it is to be inflated with a sense of importance. People become self-important when they gossip, self-important when they want to communicate something bad about someone else.

Many times this is unconscious, but it is a manifestation of insecurity. If you feel the need to impress someone, to try to be viewed as important or considered important because of what you do, what you have done, what you say, or what you have learned, this is often an appeal to authority. Swollen-headedness.

Well, don't criticize me. Look at my bona fides. Somebody wants to criticize the military, and somebody will speak up because they have military experience and say, well, you can't say this or say that about me.

I've been in the military, and you haven't. I saw an episode of a program. If you ever watch Doc Martin, there's a point at which his Aunt Ruth is talking to his mother, and his mother was a bad mother.

And Aunt Ruth is making a cogent observation about his mother's belated interference in Doc Martin's life. And she says, you can't talk to me. I'm his mother, and you've never even had children.

And then she stomps off, leaving the grandchild behind in the pram because she hasn't been a grandmother. And she walks off and leaves the child with Aunt Ruth in her self-importance, her fat-headedness, and her diminishment. And this is why it is entertaining to watch well-written material, because it reflects elements of real life.

And you can be warned. This is why the Greeks went to tragedies, because you go and view things on the stage that the characters perpetrate and see their fatal flaws and so on. And then

you have a catharsis.

You consider yourself and say, is there some way in which I am like that, and can I clean up my own act? So we do not want to be undeservedly self-important. The Lord Jesus himself, the Son of God, said, take my yoke upon you and learn from me. I am meek and lowly in heart.

If anybody had the right to stand on their laurels, their experience, their status, their relationships, it would be the Lord Jesus. And he said, learn from me. I am meek.

I am lowly in heart. I don't browbeat people with my status and experience. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

We have seen this. I've used up my time. I was going to start chapter four, actually not chapter four, but chapter three, verse 10, which is like a new chapter.

This would have been a great chapter break here, because having detailed the perils that come in latter days, whether it's the latter days of our Christian experience, our actual lives, or the age proper, you have carefully followed. The word carefully follow here is a word for disciple. You have been my disciple in, you have been my follower in.

What does that mean? Paul says, follow my example. In other places, we'll see these passages next time. Paul says, look at me and do what I have done.

And he says, Timothy, you have done this. What exactly does that mean? What does that tell us in terms of our effect on one another? What is the nature of discipleship or of an effort to make disciples? As Jesus told his own 12 in Matthew 28, 19, and 20, make disciples of the nations. How did they do that? What does it mean to be a disciple? What are the characteristics of a disciple? What is Paul's role with regard to Timothy in discipleship? It's a fascinating topic, much discussed, but not as commonly understood.

We'll pick that up next time. But our encouragement from the word of God this morning is to look at this description in the first part of chapter three. And rather than decrying and sorrowing over the state of the world, to look at ourselves and try to make sure that we can take the leading A off of these descriptions and be those who are loving, loyal, faithful, obedient, positives and not negatives, a blessing to others, not a detriment.

Be those who reflect the presence and the power of the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the purposes of God the Father in this life. It's powerful for personal application because we have examining ourselves as a goal. Examine ourselves, see if we are in the faith.

The only people we can fix in the light of these descriptions is ourselves, by God's grace and in God's power. Father, thank you for granting us insight into our own hearts and souls. We are subjective.

Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, as it says in Jeremiah. And we

are no more tragically deceived than when we deceive ourselves. We pray that by the presence of your spirit and with the light shining from this portion of your word, we can see and correct whatever faults we may have in light of these truths, that we can grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, more fully represent him in this life and on this earth, and redeem the time, even though the days are evil, so that we will be prepared for service and function now and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.