

Ephesians 13-11-03a

This is Sunday, the 3rd of November, 2013. We continue looking at the letter that Paul the Apostle wrote to the Laodicean church at the same time that he wrote to the church at Colossae, which has come to us as the epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians. We pick up in chapter 2 this morning.

We pushed through from chapter 1 verse 17 last time, all the way through to verse 10 of chapter 2. We're going to back up a little bit. We've seen the big picture. We're going to look at some of the details in this particular section, but we won't be reaching back into chapter 1 much further than verse 20 or 21, because we're going to be looking at what Paul says about us in particular in this first portion of chapter 2. Let's take a moment to focus our concentration, clear the decks in our souls, ensure that we don't have any unconfessed sin or issues or distractions that might keep us from benefiting from the teaching ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we look at these things together.

Shall we pray? Thank you, Father, for allowing us this privilege, the opportunity to assemble publicly. We are not harassed. We are not in any fear of our physical safety.

In this time and in this place, we have complete freedom to pursue our life before you, our fellowship with one another, and our understanding of your Word. We know that there will come a day when even the public proclamation of your Word and parts of it in particular will be forbidden. We have not yet reached that day, but we know that it is coming, and we pray that we can avail ourselves of this opportunity and this time to grow in grace and knowledge, to teach our children to live in this time and in this place the life that reflects your glory and brings credit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask for insight and personal understanding of the passage that is before us, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, that each of us will come away challenged, motivated, encouraged, and if necessary rebuked and corrected in our daily life before you. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified. We pray it in His name, Amen.

Let's just read this to load up the data, the statements into our minds. Beginning at verse 15 and going through chapter 2 verse 10, Paul says, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, we're talking to a group of believers that are getting with it. He doesn't say, when I heard of your disobedience and apathy, when I heard of your divisions and contentions, when I heard of your profligate and immoral lifestyle, he says, I heard of your faith and your love.

And I now pray a particular kind of prayer constantly for you because you are the ones who get it. You are narrow road, straight gate believers and this is my prayer for you. I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Father of glory, may give to you a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the detailed, experiential, been there done that knowledge, epinosis, since or because the eyes of your heart have been enlightened.

That's a participle. It precedes what he's talking about. This has already taken place.

You've been given the enlightenment. You've been given the eyes to see for the purpose of knowing what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and the exceeding greatness of His power. Three things.

Your eyes have been opened. You've been given sight. You were blind.

You were carnal. Carnal mind can't understand the things of the spirit, but you have already been given the ability to perceive. The scales have fallen away.

The blindness from birth has been removed. The eyes of your heart have been opened, not just so that you can see angels or see clouds and halos and harps or so that you can see visions of rapture bursting on your sight. There's a specific thing you're supposed to see.

So that you may know, first of all, the expectation, the potential of His calling. So here's my question. Do we know this? Paul says, I pray that you'll come to know this.

And God opened your eyes so that you could know it. So do we know it? Well we should, because we've been studying it now for many weeks in this book. What is the potential? Remember the first part of the chapter, verses 3-14 in the little seven-branched candlestick that I suggested to you? Do you remember those so that's? You're in Christ, so that? We don't have time to review it, but that's the hope of your calling.

Paul says, I've reviewed this for you and I'm praying as I give God thanks for you that this will become an experiential knowledge for you. I've put it on paper, but that's not epinosis. You hear what I'm saying? You hear what the Apostle Paul is saying? He has spent 11 verses, one complete sentence in Greek, detailing the hope of our calling.

Has that become experiential knowledge for us? Does it make a difference? Did it make a difference this past week that you're in Christ? Did it come to our minds? Did it affect how we think and how we act? If it didn't, Paul's prayer is not yet fulfilled in you and me. Paul says, I want you to know the reality of what I have just described in these preceding verses. Now we may need to go back and review that a little bit.

We may need to get out our notes. If you didn't take notes, shame on you. But the audio is there.

You can go back, just read the passage. You can get it just by staring at these verses. It's not deep, it's not high up in heaven where you've got to ascend, it's not down in the depths where you've got to go to Sheol to find it.

It's near, look it over, look at the in Christ, look at everything God has done. And then we must ask ourselves this question, hear me now, we must ask ourselves this question, is this making a difference? We've spent weeks now clarifying and coming to an understanding of what Paul said in the first half of chapter one. If it is not making a difference to you, if it is not making a difference for you, maybe that's why Paul is praying.

I pray that you will come to know. You're a person of faith, you're a person of love. You're obviously one of those people if you are here listening to the sound of my voice because that's the only reason to come.

We don't have a technological light show. We don't have a vast choir to lift you on balmy waves of emotion. We've got good, solid, traditional Christian music.

We have hopefully good, solid, traditional Christian teaching of the word of God and that's why we come. Faith and love. If you're here, chances are you qualify for this description to the sanctified ones, the faithful.

Having heard of your faith and your love, this is what I pray. You've got to move. You've got to go forward.

You cannot move and go forward if you do not come to know the hope of your calling. You can't. That's why he has spent this time and all of these Greek words talking about it.

Can you list any of those benefits of being in Christ without looking back at your notes? Can you remember them? Do they come to your mind? You know, because I'm in Christ, fill in the blank. Can you do it? Can you remember any of the so that's? What was the purpose of God putting us in Christ? So that what? Can you remember any of those? If you can't, go back and review because you're not going to move forward into these wonderful realms he's talking about. You are not going to be able to live the life of integrity that we just saw in our Proverbs 10 passage.

If you can't do this, you must know these things and not just head knowledge. It's got to be daily experience, knowledge, Epinosus. You must come to know it has to make a difference.

Just ask yourself the question. I've been listening to Ephesians now for weeks. I've been slapping myself trying to stay awake in that class for weeks.

What do I know? What makes a difference on the Tuesday afternoons and the Wednesday noons and the Thursday mornings and the Friday evenings? What makes a difference to me out of that Ephesians study? If none of it's making a difference, something needs to change. It has to be Epinosus. That God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit that is characterized by this functional wisdom that informs what we do and how we think and what we say.

Functional wisdom, Sophia. This isn't abstractions. This isn't Gandhi sitting by the road thinking deep thoughts.

This isn't Aristotle. This isn't existentialism. This isn't Walden Pond.

This is functional wisdom. I turn the key and my car won't start. What's the functional wisdom? It isn't grab the cell phone and call the tow truck.

It's crack open the hood and see if there's something I can fix. Maybe I've just got a loose battery cable. Maybe all I need to do is give that thing a tap to get it into more contact, go back, turn the key, and now I start.

Functional wisdom. I've done something practical, something useful. I've saved money.

I didn't have to call, you know, \$125 tow truck. Functional wisdom, Sophia, that God will give you the spirit of functional wisdom and church age knowledge, revelation. This is the dynamic, powerful realization of who we are in Christ as church.

It's new. It's revealed. It wasn't given in the past.

Angels have been watching human history, waiting to see what God would reveal. There are some things that are still not revealed. The church was a mystery and now it's revealed.

Who can quickly name a mystery that's still a mystery and hasn't yet been revealed? I'll give you a clue. Seals, trumpets and bowls. What has not yet been revealed? The voice of the thunders.

It's still a mystery. God has an unfolding plan. You and I are going to be upstairs watching the unfolding in the tribulation period and we're going to be like the angels.

The angels were watching for the revelation of the church. I'm going to be up there watching for the revelation of the thunders. God is hiding that information because it's classified top secret.

If it gets compromised and revealed, that's going to give Satan some sort of an edge that he should not have. So God says, no, it's under wraps. And God has no security breaches in his system.

Now there might be, you know, Gabriel and Michael, there might be a few archangels and a few seraphim or whatever that might know what the thunders are going to say. The thunders are probably angelic personages. They may already have their orders and know what they're supposed to announce.

But nobody goes to WikiLeaks in heaven. Nobody pulls a Snowden and reveals a bunch of stuff in heaven. The security is perfect and it's a mystery not revealed.

This mystery has been revealed. So do we know it? We're supposed to know. We have the

security clearance and it's a part of our duty.

We have a need to know. And so it's been revealed. You can't do your job without this knowledge.

We cannot function effectively without this knowledge. So we need it in our human spirit. We need a spirit characterized by functional wisdom and church age revelation so that we can do this epinosis thing.

It's not going to make a difference. If you don't remember, they can send you the orders if you don't read them. Send you the information.

Here's the five paragraph order. Here's the situation. Here's the enemy.

Here's your assignment. Here's what you're supposed to do. That's the revelation.

If you don't know that, if you don't think about it and remember it, if you don't concentrate on it and figure out what it means in practical terms, you have no epinosis. You can't get there. How can you serve? How can you progress? How can you attack? How can you move forward? How can you seize the high ground if you don't pay any attention to your orders and to the situation that is revealed in them? That's spirit of wisdom and revelation in the epinosis of him.

So that you will know the hope of his calling. He's just detailed that, but it's got to be a real knowledge, a functional knowledge. What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? We are the inheritance that God the Father is giving to his Son.

It is the bride that is being given to the Son by the Father. We are a special, unique people. Nobody else in history, not the pre-flood individuals, the antediluvians, not the post-diluvians, not the patriarchs, not Israel, not the millennial saints, not the tribulational saints, not the angels, high, low, medium, no other people but you and I in this age, and all of those who come to faith in Christ in this dispensation, compose the body and bride of Christ.

That is the inheritance, the body and bride, that he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, be a people zealous of good works, those works which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them. All of that is straight out of Scripture. That's us.

It's a rich and glorious inheritance. The Lord Jesus Christ is as excited about receiving us to himself as any groom is, as any bride and groom are to be joined together in holy matrimony and to live their lives together, grow old together, spend their lives together before God. It's the greatest joy you can imagine.

And that is the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ's attitude toward us, and it ought to be our attitude toward him. If you care about someone, you think about them. If you care about someone, you

think about them.

Do we return any of the joy and the appreciation that the Lord Jesus has for this gift, this inheritance that his Father is giving him? Do we return that at all? It wouldn't be anything worse, and there isn't anything worse in most people's minds, than unrequited love. You love someone, you just think they hung the moon, they're the be-all and end-all, they're the most interesting, fascinating, attractive person, you can't live without this person, and they look at you and say, you know, is my sandwich ready yet? You're no more interesting than a clerk at the sandwich shop. They don't return.

They're not as interested in you as you are in them. And it's tragic. There are people who think because they love someone intensely, that person must return that attitude and that affection.

And you see this even depicted in entertainment. Someone will just be fanatically obsessed with someone, and they think, well, but you've got to love me because look how much I love you. And it's just not true.

Well, you know, I'm sorry you've developed this fixation, but I don't find you that interesting. It's horrible. You don't want to be that uninteresting person.

Think about the Lord Jesus Christ, who in this dispensation is going to be in the forefront. Who's going to be riding the white horses with Him? Who's going to be descending and making the will of God happen in the eternal future? It is going to be those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, who love Him, who care about this glory of His inheritance. The third thing that Paul prays beyond knowing the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Now this is such a grand concept, the expression of God's power. How powerful is God? He doesn't use creating the galaxies. He doesn't use setting the earth in motion and creating the environment for biological life and the design of DNA and reproduction and all of the intricacies of behavior and the manifest glorious things that you see in creation.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows forth His handiwork. You look around in nature and you see the tremendous scope and scale of His power.

But that's not what Paul uses as the example of His power. It is when He raised Christ from the dead. That exceeds, excels, superabounds and goes beyond all of the preceding things we could possibly think of.

The greatest expression of God's power was bringing the Lord Jesus Christ back from the dead. I was watching one of these science shows where they talk about what happens when you die.

How does your body know you're dead? How does your right hand know when your heart stops beating and your brain stops doing its little electrical dance? How does your hand know that it's over? And they've actually been able to map some of this out.

And there is a cascade, there is a communication that flashes through a body, a biological entity telling it, it's over. And in order to try to defeat death, science is now trying to interrupt that signal. Well, if we can stop the signal from going out, maybe the body can be kept alive long enough to fix the problem.

We can restart the heart, we can re-use the paddles on the brain, get the electrical activity going or replace the brain or something. But we want to stop this cascade. We want to stop this message.

It's kind of like when the trump of God sounds, the dead in Christ rise. Well, this is like the trump of death. When that trump sounds, everything dies.

All right, and it just fails. And they still are trying to figure out the mechanism. Why wouldn't cells, you know, why doesn't your hand just keep going as long as there's some reasonable blood flow? But even when they sever an appendage and keep it on life support, there's a limited time.

They can't do that forever. They can't just keep it going and going because it figures out that it's no longer connected and it will die. Necrosis will set in despite all of their efforts.

So, the power, the working of His mighty power, verse 19 and 20, that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. It's not just that He was dead and now He is alive again and it's the real Him. It's not a copy.

It's not a clone. It's not a manifestation. It's not a memory.

Well, you know, He's dead but He'll always live in my memory. No, this is a genuine return from non-existence, non-life. The Lord Jesus Christ actually died and was absolutely dead.

While He was dead, my understanding of Scripture is He didn't go anywhere and do anything. Death isn't a change of location. Death is a cessation of existence.

And that's why this picture of the working of the mighty power of God is so intense and so over the top. Transferring somebody from one location to another is just taxi service. Well, He left His body on the cross and went to the nether world and preached to the souls in chains, spirits in prison, and then He came back and that was the resurrection.

That's no great mighty power. What's mighty power is cessation of existence of a person and a personality and then a return to existence of that exact same person. Not a copy, not a clone, not a similitude, but that person.

Not existing, that's death. Existing, non-dead. It's the greatest thing God has ever done according to Scripture.

It is the pinnacle, the apex, the absolute greatest. Not only that, but the Lord Jesus having been assigned the guilt of all the sins of the world, having taken them onto Himself and having paid the penalty for them, how can the person who now bears the guilt and the penalty of all of that sin, every sin ever committed, past, present, and future, poured out on Him and judged, how can that person sit at God's right hand? It's the farthest possibility from anybody's mind that that level of guilt and sin and corruption and rejection and judgment could move inside the circle of the seraphim and sit at God's right hand. Acceptable, co-equal and co-eternal once again with the Father.

How can that possibly be? Well, it's a manifestation of God's power. And it's so far beyond us that it's an amoeba trying to understand the space shuttle. All we can do is be told that it's great.

We have no concept of how great that is, how difficult it is. The highest angels have some glimmer, some glimpse of what God accomplished when He did that. We have no concept.

We have no ability to even begin to understand it. We just are told it and we take it on faith. We can't appreciate it, can't begin to get within 10 miles of the hem of the garment of that accomplishment that God did.

That's the power He worked in Christ and seated Him far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. Now pay attention to verse 21. He is seated above principality, power, might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age which is to come.

Put all things under His feet, gave Him to be head over all, to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Now, no chapter break and you. See where it says He made alive in italics? My suggestion, scratch it out.

It boogers up the flow of thought. It's not time for that thought. That's why Paul didn't write it.

If Paul wanted to say He made alive, he would have wrote He made alive. He would have written it and he didn't. I smell burning plastic.

Is that okay? He made alive should not be there. As long as it's not my laptop, I'm fine. If it's a candle going down, I just don't want anybody's piano to catch fire.

There's some burning plastic smell I'm getting. It's not the laptop so we're all right. But look at chapter 2 verse 1. And you who were dead in trespasses and sins.

This is what is called in Greek a periphrastic. That's one way of looking at it. There are actually two choices here.

You can take this as periphrastic. You can also take it as a participle of concession. This is a present participle.

You being dead. Being. This is Amy which is the verb to be.

As a present participle. So what's the present participle of a verb of being? It's being. You being dead.

In a continuous state of death. Now we just talked about the incredible power of God in raising Christ from the dead. And you being dead.

Now how dead were we? In trespasses and sins. Trespasses and sins. This is the corruption.

This is the cursed soil in which we're buried being dead. We are dead in trespasses and sins. Inescapably so.

Irrevocably so. In which you once walked. Now my question is who is the you? Because look at verse 3. Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves.

Now why does He switch from you to we? Well I'll tell you where we're going. In verse 11. Remember that you once Gentiles in the flesh.

That's the you. The commonwealth of Israel is we. So look at verse 13.

In Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near. Which is the commonwealth of Israel. The commonwealth of Israel is near God.

Gentiles are the you who were far off. Then look at verse 14. He Himself is our peace who has made both of us you Gentiles who were far off and we Israelites who were near one in Christ.

That's where He's headed. Okay? So this isn't just sort of an unconscious shift of pronouns. You who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world.

Israel has always had a similar problem. A need for salvation. A need for redemption and so on.

But unlike the Gentiles, they were operating in a sphere of traditional relationship with God. There's the tradition that we are the people of God. There's the history that we have the Word of God.

There's the history that we are His special people. So the fallenness and corruption that Israel walks in is of a different kind. Same need.

Same requirement for redemption by Jesus Christ. But it's a different place to come from. They're near but still not there.

You can be near and still miss it. You can be standing on the dock when you're supposed to be on the ship as it sails across the Pacific and you have missed the ship just as much as if you were in Milwaukee. Ship is pulling out of the harbor at San Diego and you almost made it.

You got there and they just pulled up the ramp and weighed anchor and they're heading out. Could you not wait two more minutes? Two minutes I would have been on. You're near but you missed it.

Well, you could be here in Dallas and the ship sailing from San Diego and you're far and you've missed the ship. Near or far, you've missed it just as much. You're still not aboard.

That's what Paul is talking about. There is a nearness and there is a distance. Both of which are remedied in Christ.

Now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near, as near as Israel. But He Himself is our peace who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation. Verse 16, that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross.

It doesn't matter if you were far or if you were near. What counts is that God has made you one in the body. But it's important to see where He's going because there is going to be a distinction all through the first part of chapter 2 between Jew and Gentile.

And if we don't have some sensitivity to it, we're going to garble the message. But as we saw last time, He starts with the power of God in raising Christ from the dead. And He says, you need to come to know that.

I pray that you will come to know that. Why? Because if you appreciate the power that raised Christ from the dead, you, being dead, are going to experience that same power. Christ was dead.

Look what God did with Him. From the dead, guilty of all the sins of the world, found a way to sanctify Him, qualify Him, raise Him from the dead and seat Him at His right hand. You, this is sort of an a fortiori argument.

If God's power can raise Jesus Christ from the dead, having borne the sins of the entire world, having died a bigger death than any other person has ever died, being the God-man to slay the God-man in judgment for all of the sins that have ever been committed by the entire human race, that is a death of a magnitude we can't even comprehend. And a guilt and sin that we can't even comprehend. God's power raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand.

Now He's going to say, if you can come to appreciate that, you, being dead. And what kind of death? He's going to describe it in these next verses, and we'll see it when we come back from the break. But here's the idea.

Looking at Jesus Christ gives us hope. It's the hope of our calling. It's the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

It's the magnitude of the power of God raising Christ from the dead. How do we get that knowledge? When we look and see what God has done in Christ, He is our example. He is our peace.

He is our righteousness. He is our sanctification. And when we appreciate what God has done in and through and for Jesus Christ, that is going to motivate us.

That is going to clarify for us exactly where we are and where we need to go. It's essential. You can't figure it out.

You're not going to know how to act in the battle if you don't open your orders and read them. If you don't get the situation report. If you don't know where the enemy is.

You don't know what direction you're supposed to advance. You don't know what your supply and support is. You don't know who you're supposed to tie in with on either side.

You don't know how far you're supposed to advance for how long, with what mission. We have to know these things if we're going to be effective. Otherwise you're going to get yanked out and somebody who can do those things is going to replace us.

It is true. And Paul says, I pray that you will come to know these things because you were dead. You Gentiles.

That's us. We didn't grow up in Judaism. We're Gentiles.

And our aeon, our philosophy of life isn't rooted in traditions and superficial claims of God and relationship to Him. We come from a much darker place, a much greater distance. And in many ways we can relate to what God did for Jesus Christ even more fully.

Jesus wasn't near to the Father when He died on the cross. He was as far as an individual can get. God turned His back.

God forsook. Israel, even unregenerate and disobedient Israel could say, well we've got the presence of God. We've got the law and the prophets and the writings.

We've got a traditional, historic, even hereditary relationship to God. Abraham is our father. They have more difficulty relating to the distance between God and the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

We can appreciate it more fully because we're coming from that distance, alienated from the life of God. And that's what he's going to talk about here in chapter 2. And all of this is designed to motivate us. If God has done this much for us, can we not find the motivation on a daily basis to care about it and to act and live in the light of it? Well, we'll see this more fully when we come

back from the break.