

Ephesians 13-12-15a

This is Sunday, the 15th of December, 2013. We continue our study in the book of Ephesians. We resume in chapter 2 in the vicinity of verse 19.

Let's take a moment as we approach this portion of God's Word to go to the Lord in prayer, ensure that our individual hearts are prepared and receptive, that God the Holy Spirit can be our teacher, and that collectively we can worship God together through honoring the truth that is contained in His Word. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful beyond words, beyond any ability to express, for Your grace and Your mercy on us in sending the Lord Jesus Christ, incorporating us into the eternal plan and purpose that You have put together for the ages to accomplish so many purposes and to reflect Your glory and Your character in so many ways. You could easily make the demonstration and then dispense with the materials, but instead You choose to redeem us, to give us eternal life, to take us unto Yourself and to grant to us the privilege and the opportunity of dwelling with You throughout the ages to come.

We are thankful for that. We are thankful for the Lord Jesus and His willingness to come and grant these amazing gifts to us. We pray that as we study this part of Your Word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will make it real to us, will impress upon us its importance and its pertinence in our individual lives, that we can see clearly how best to invest and to use the time and the opportunities that You've given to us in what remains of this life to prepare us for the next and to reflect Your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus.

We pray it in His name. Amen. Well, we have seen this fascinating unfolding sequence of events that Paul describes really beginning up in chapter 1. I mentioned that I think the chapter break is a bit unfortunate, but in Ephesians chapter 2 we see this alternating use of pronouns beginning in verse 1. At least it's a convenient place for us.

But if you look back up at chapter 1 verse 22, just for a moment, I'm not going to go back and review everything, but we need to see it because we're going to see another beautiful symmetry this morning in our passage. What is it that is the last thing mentioned in chapter 1? God has put all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and has given the Lord Jesus to be head over all to the church, which is what? His body. His body.

The fullness. It completes Him who fills all in all. When it says the fullness, it completes Him.

In the plan and purpose of God, and this is one of the sort of mysteries of the Trinity and of the incarnation and the fullness of deity in bodily form, Jesus Christ is the fullness of deity in bodily form, but He is not complete, according to this passage, until His body and bride, the church, are complete and united with Him. There is a sense in which. There is a sense in which Jesus is, always has been, and always will be perfect in His deity.

There is a sense in which Jesus was sinless and perfect in His humanity, but the Lord Jesus was

not perfect until He was raised, and He is not perfect and full, doesn't have the fullness, until His body is complete and is united with Him. This body, the church. This is one of those truths that our human minds have to really reach to comprehend.

But the important thing here is body. Just get the word body out of verse 22. This is hasoma.

Tasoma. We talk about psychosomatic problems. Have you ever heard of that? My foot hurts because I've got a bad thought.

It's all in my head. It's all in your head. It's psychosomatic.

You think you ought to have a tummy ache, so you do, but it's generated by your psyche. Your psyche is putting pain in your soma. Psychosomatic.

Well, that's soma, His body. The church, which is His body? The church defined as what? The body of Christ. Now, you remember a couple of weeks ago, last time we addressed ourselves to this, you is who? You is who? Chapter 2, verse 1, And you who were dead and trespasses in it.

Who is the you? These are the Gentiles. These are those who were far off. And He defines it.

You were dead in trespasses and sins. You were dead in two things. Now, trespasses, this is paraptoma.

This means you have transgressed. You have crossed a line. There's a line, there's a rule, there's a law, there's a moral standard, and you have lapsed.

You've crossed it. You've fallen short. Sins, this is hamartia in the plural.

This is an offense. If you want to try to contrast these, why do we have them both? Because you notice, later on, when He talks about we, He says we were, down in verse 5, we were dead in trespasses. How come we weren't dead in trespasses and sins? He says we were dead in trespasses.

Well, we'll get to that. But up here, you were dead in trespasses and sins. And you've got these two words, paraptoma and hamartia.

Paraptoma is crossing a line, failing to meet a standard. Hamartia implies, suggests, connotes more of a willful action. You can be trying to play a piece of music.

You've got the sheet music in front of you, and you're trying to play it, and you say, okay, finger hit a B-flat, and it misses and hits an A-flat, and it sounds awful. You weren't trying to fail the standard of the music. You weren't trying to transgress the will of the composer.

You just are human, and you make mistakes. If you go in there and say, I know that my recital piece is Moonlight Sonata, but once I get to that piano bench, and everything quiets down, and

they say, you may begin, I'm going to play Henry's Henry. And I don't know if you've ever heard Henry's Henry, but that is the most offensive piece of non-music finger exercise you've ever heard.

It's just left hand on the black keys, right hand on the white keys, because it's supposed to sound like the cacophony of a hen house. And it is awful. If you want to hear it, I'll play it for you on the break.

One of the five songs I know is Henry's Henry. I'm going to willfully change the tune. I'm going to play something I'm not supposed to play.

I'm just feeling a little rebellious, or I've got my own agenda. I really think this would be better. I think these people need to hear Henry's Henry.

I think it's overlooked. I find it to be one of the more imaginative and expressive pieces of music. I'm just going to play that.

That's hamartia. You've got more willfulness involved, for whatever reason. There is a way that seems right to a man, but it's hamartia.

It's actually sin. It is the self-expression of a corrupt nature. It's not, those of you that have been midshipmen or know a midshipman know that we had to memorize the words of John Paul Jones, and one of the things he said is that a good naval officer needs to distinguish between well-meant shortcoming and heedless or stupid blunder.

Heedless and stupid blunder, that's hamartia. Well-meant shortcoming is more your paraptoma. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

Paraptoma. The spirit is cantankerous, ornery, and corrupt. That's hamartia.

You see the difference? That's why the two of them are given together, because it doesn't really matter if you meant well or not. You have failed. Either way, you fail.

You were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked. This was your lifestyle. This was your manner.

This was typical of you. According to the course of the world, the prince of power, the heir of spirit, works in the sons of disobedience, these things you were just enmeshed in, that you couldn't get out. You are a small dinosaur in the La Brea Tar Pit, and all you're going to do is sink.

Your bones to be found later. You're not going to escape. You're not going to walk away.

You are hopelessly trapped in the course of the world and these other things. Among whom in these sons of disobedience, this is the world at large. These are the continents.

I talked about earlier, full of all the people that have been given over to Satan because that's their choice. And God knew it ahead of time. He put them everywhere else.

And Satan, you've got the whole continent of South America. You've got the whole continent of North America. You've got the continent of Asia.

You've got Australia. You've got New Zealand. You've got the Arctic, if you can find anybody up there.

Antarctic, if you can find anybody down there. You've got the islands of the Galapagos, if you can find anybody there. Anybody you can find, every place all over the earth, they're yours.

Do with them what you will. They have all rejected me at the point of consciousness of existence and conviction. They don't want anything to do with me.

They're yours. Do with them what you will. These are the sons of disobedience and the spirit, small s, that works in them is the spirit of rebellion, the spirit of animosity toward God.

That's the spirit. Among whom we, Paul says, also once conducted ourselves. We were supposed to be the chosen people.

We had the curtain partitioning off the world. You're inside the camp. Inside the camp is a separate standard.

You've got to be holy. If you transgress that standard to a great enough extent, you are outside the camp. Remember what God said about Miriam when she was complaining about her brother Moses? She was struck with leprosy, and Moses interceded on her behalf, and God said, she's got to at least stay outside the camp for seven days.

If her father had spit in her face, she would have that level of separation. And she's going to pay. There's going to be some judgment for this because I will not stand for this willful disobedience in the camp.

And she's got to have a time of separation before she can return. Time to think. Time to contemplate.

Time for there to be a penetration of the truth to make a change of mind. So here is this camp. Inside the camp, God has his small, microscopic percentage of the human race that he has said, Satan, you can have all of them except these.

These are mine. This little group right here, the sons and daughters of Abraham. This one guy, I'll just take this line for myself.

You can have all the rest of it. Let's see who wins. You take the whole world.

I'll take this little group. Let's see how it turns out. All of these ancients said, where are the Maya? Where are the Inca? Where are the Aztecs? Where are the ancient dynasties of the Chinese? Where are all of the ancient peoples? Where are the ancient Egyptians who built the pyramids? There are people who call themselves Chinese today, but look at them.

They don't have the attainments and the grand scope and scale. Even now, the communist China, in its efforts to expand itself, has blown itself up like a puffer fish and is about to collapse internally because Satan can't make it go, can't make it work, never has. The Hittites are gone.

All the ancient civilizations are gone. What's the one people that has still survived with their heritage and their knowledge of who they are intact? It's the sons of Abraham. The Jews scatter them around the world, tear them up, throw them around.

They still know who they are. They still remember their heritage. Even as unbelievers, they know who they are because the stamp of God's impremature on them is so strong.

And there is going to come a time where within that group will come those who believe, and that is going to be the final spike through the heart of Satan's whole argument in the grand scope and scheme of angelic and human history. But, this is what Paul is talking about. Verse 3, "...among whom this entire world full of Satan's experimental lab rats, we conducted ourselves, and we failed." It looked like God wasn't going to do any better than Satan.

We failed. The lusts of our flesh tripped us up. We fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we were by nature children of wrath just as the others.

It looked like there were no winners. The human race is just a lost cause. You give creatures free will, it's hopeless.

Satan couldn't get his stuff to go, and he says, well, remember what he said about Job? When God pointed out Job, the one guy that seemed to be cross-grained to everybody else on the planet? And God says, have you considered my servant Job? The one guy? And Satan says, he'll fail. Let me toy with him a little bit. He'll fail.

Your stuff's not any better than mine. That's the Job argument. Your relationship with you isn't helping him anymore than it's helping all the people that have risen and fallen and all the eons I've been trying to make them go.

So this is kind of the sour grapes thing. Instead of trying to scratch his head and say, you know, maybe my whole assumption is wrong here. He says, no, your thing will fail also.

And it is beyond, the Bible doesn't even put it in the book of Job, what Satan thought after Job survives the test and seeks after God in the midst of his suffering and in the midst of his losses, in the midst of all this catastrophe. You can't kill that spark of positive seeking for whom? My Redeemer. I know my Redeemer lives.

I know I will see him. It is my relationship with him that seems to be disrupted. That's what bothers me.

It's not the loss of my stuff. It's not even the loss of my kids. It's not even the yak yak of my wife.

It is the loss of my relationship with God. Where is the Lord? Where is a mediator that would allow me to come into his presence? I want restoration of that communication and that fellowship that I seem to have lost in this circumstance. That's what kills Satan's argument.

And God brought it up. I told you before, you remember there was a pastor around here that had a whole series called, When Satan Calls Your Name? He didn't read the book. God called Job's name.

Satan didn't say, Well, I noticed you've got a servant, Job. Why don't you let him... God said to Satan, Where have you been? I've been walking up and down to and fro in the earth. Why? Because it's all his.

And he's been walking around trying to get it to go. And God said, Well, while you were walking around up and down, did you notice my servant, Job? God called Job's name. And Job stood up.

And one guy overturned the argument of the entire world because of his love for God and his faithfulness to God in the midst even of his own failures. He never lost his desire to see, to know, to communicate, to have fellowship with his Redeemer, with God. And he was a tiny... This is the tiny piece of uranium that outpowers all of the wood, hay, and stubble of the earth.

Same thing here. Among whom also we conducted ourselves, lust of the flesh, desires of the flesh, and of the mind. We were by nature children of wrath, as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, the few, the called, the chosen, even when we were dead in what? Trespasses. Because the problem in Israel wasn't so much the willful sin of the high hand, although it existed, but it was an inability. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.

Paul talks about it in Romans. With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. Who will deliver me from what? Paul says.

Remember that in Romans 6? Who will deliver me from what? The body of this death. I love God with my mind, but my flesh keeps failing Him. What I want to do, I don't do.

And what I don't want to do, that's what I do. Trespass. Falling short.

Inability. Do we not experience this? We hurt somebody close to us. We didn't want to do that.

We look back on it. We're full of regret and remorse and angst and apology. But we don't do what

we want to do.

We're not our best selves. God who is rich in mercy, because of His love with which He loved Israel. Jesus Christ was sent as the Messiah.

To whom? The lost sheep of the world? I am sent only to whom? Lost sheep of the house of Israel. When we were dead in trespasses, we weren't dead in the sense of no knowledge or relationship with God. We were dead in the sense of trespasses.

Can't produce the fruit. Can't fulfill the demonstration that God is ultimately going to make about the difference between Satan and God. The difference between the creature and the Creator.

Difference between God's absolute holiness and righteousness and the best that a creature separate from Him can produce. And Israel, even though they had formal relationship and covenant relationship, didn't have active relationship. And that requires the presence of the Spirit.

And so few people reached the place where God could grant the Spirit. People like David. People like Daniel.

People like Job. People like Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada. People like Joshua.

People like Joseph. People like Jacob. Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive, how? With Christ.

In Christ. That's why that great power of the resurrection was talked about in Ephesians chapter 1. Made us alive together with Christ. Now, verse 11.

Therefore, all of these things that we talked about in that first part of the chapter, therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands. At that time, you were without Christ. Right? He seems to be going back and rehearsing.

Now, if you don't have any qualms about marking in your Bible, go back up to chapter 1, verse 22. See where it says his body? Circle that. Remember in chapter 2, verse 3, we conducted ourselves in the lust of the flesh.

Circle that. Fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Circle that.

Then in verse 5, made us alive. Circle that. Now, verse 11.

You, once Gentiles, where? In the flesh. Circle that. Called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands.

Remember, the distinction was two different kinds of flesh. You've got circumcised flesh and uncircumcised flesh. You've got flesh that is far off.

You've got flesh that is near. You've got flesh that is subject to the course of the world. And you've got flesh that is trespassing, even though it's near.

Make sense so far? You are without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, no hope without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Verse 14.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both, one, the uncircumcised flesh and the circumcised flesh, the flesh that was drifting in the course of the world and subject to the spirits, sons of disobedience and all that, and the flesh that was near, but transgressing and failing the law. If you fail in one point, you have broken the whole law. Having abolished where? Verse 15.

Now we begin to see it. Where did He abolish it? In His flesh. What fixes the Gentile flesh that's uncircumcised and the Jewish flesh that is circumcised, both of them failing, falling short of the glory of God, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Romans 3.23, right? Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments in ordinances, so as to create in Himself, in His flesh, in His, shall I say, body, in His body one new man of the two, thus making peace that He might reconcile them both to God, where? In one body through the flesh. Why did Jesus have to bear our sins in His body on the tree? Because the flesh is the problem and the flesh is the solution. It's the body of Christ.

This is what Jesus was talking about. Remember in John when many people went back from following Him? It's John 7. Remember that? Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, this is My body which is broken for you. Take, eat, do this in remembrance of Me.

What is the importance of the body of Christ? This is the importance. Because it is the unaided flesh, it is the flesh apart from the Spirit that cannot please God. By the works of the law shall no... What be justified? No man.

By the works of the law shall no soul be justified. What does it say? By the works of the law shall no... Say it. Flesh.

Try again. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. No flesh can be justified.

Whether you're far off in the course of the world or whether you're near trying to do the works of the law, no flesh can be justified. It takes the body of Christ. Now, what are the two words you think of immediately when you think... If I say... Remember how they have these little psychology tests? I'm going to say something, you say the first thing that comes in your mind.

Now, you should come up with two words when I say Ephesians 1. Ready? Ephesians 1. In Him. Let's try it again. Let's try it again.

Ephesians 1. In Him. One more time. Ephesians 1. In Him.

That was the seven branch candlestick, right? That's all of the things that God has given us in Him. What does it mean to be in Him? What is the church? Ephesians 1.22. The church is His what? Body. What is His body? His flesh.

What has He done in His flesh? He has solved all the problems of the flesh that the Gentiles had, that the Jews had, two different kinds, equally insufficient, equally dead, equally disobedient. So, how great is it to be in the body of Christ? It's huge. It's everything.

Paul has spent a chapter and a half now to bring us to this point. Look at what you circled. The church is His body.

We conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh. You were trapped in the desires and deeds of the flesh. You were dead in the trespasses of the flesh.

But you have been made alive together with Christ. Christ's bodily, physical resurrection is important. He's not a vision.

He's not a spirit. He's not an apparition. He's not a phantom.

He's not a sprite. He's not a shade. He's not a ghost.

He is physically resurrected. Put your finger in the holes, Thomas. Watch me eat this fish and honeycomb.

Look at me cooking breakfast by the sea. I am made of flesh. But it's resurrected flesh.

It is sanctified flesh. It is flesh that when we become body of Christ, we share in that sanctification. And it doesn't matter what kind of flesh you used to be.

It doesn't matter if you were far off in the course of the world. It doesn't matter if you were near as a Jew. The enmity has been broken down.

The middle wall of separation, having, verse 15, abolished in His flesh the enmity. Now, is this His physical, supernaturally resurrected and glorified cells? What flesh is it talking about here? His body, which is the church. It is in the church.

So how should we look at each other? What is the new power to fulfill the second commandment for us? What's the second great commandment? Oh, come on now. You all are so slow this morning. What's the first great commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

What's the second great commandment? Love your neighbor as yourself. So what can we now do because we are in this flesh and the middle wall of separation and partition has been broken down? Can you hold somebody's trespasses against them? Can you hold

somebody's drawing away into the world, you know, well-meant shortcoming? Can you hold that against them? No.

We are in the body of Christ and in His flesh. He has broken down the wall of separation, abolished in His flesh the enmity. What was the enmity? How did Jews feel about the Gentiles, the uncircumcised? Well, how high a nose could they lift? How far down could they look? It was huge.

And what did the Gentiles think of the Jews? Have you ever heard the term anti-Semitism? That is broken down. That is abolished where? In His flesh. Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, it says that is there, scribble that out, the enmity is not the law of commandments contained in ordinances.

These are a series of things that He has abolished. He has abolished in His flesh the enmity. He has abolished in His flesh the law of commandments.

Who are the commandments for? Jews or Gentiles? Israelites or? It's Israel, right? That's the commandments. What about the ordinances? Read Psalm 119. How many times do you see interchanged His commandments, His ordinances, His statutes? All of this is Israel, right? He has abolished the commandments.

These are largely moral, right? Do not covet. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness.

The ordinances, this is your whole Levitical system of worship, it's abolished in His flesh, the enmity. Now, who was generating most of the enmity in the ancient days? It was Israel. They said, well, we've got to keep ourselves pure.

We're separate. We're distinct. And so boo on you and hurray for me and the laws and ordinances.

The Gentiles just said, well, what a bunch of stuck-up self-righteous. They think their God's the only God. I've got 12 gods.

I like my 12. There was a lot more. Most of the enmity was on the Israelite side, on the Jewish side, because they were haughty about their faith and they thought they had access to the one true God, and yet in their flesh they were violating these statutes.

Jesus abolished in His flesh the enmity. He abolished the law of commandments in ordinances. Now, Jesus said, I've not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

So in what sense has He abolished in His flesh the law of commandments? He has abolished the self-righteousness. Remember the seven woes He pronounced on the Pharisees, all their self-righteous posing and carrying on? So as to create in Himself one new man from the two. What is Paul's point here? Your new relationship, this new body of Christ, is not related to keeping the

law.

You're not joining Israel and coming under the law. God has, through Christ, set aside the law and the ordinances. This new entity isn't defined by the law, it's defined by Christ.

When you came to Israel in the Old Testament, you came under the law. When you came to the patriarchs, you came to the knowledge of God, the original, very simplistic, sacrificial ordinances and so on. Now, when you come to God, you don't come under the law, you come into Christ.

That's what he's saying. He abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments and ordinances. That's what you used to have to come to for a relationship with God.

That's gone. He creates in Himself one new man of the two, making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross. This body of Christ is the body that has paid the penalty for sin on the cross.

His body on the cross, raised and glorified, is His body in the church, raised and glorified. And when God looks at that body, He says, that's a body that has paid the penalty. There is no more sacrifice for sin.

The penalty has been paid. He is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only, also for the sins of the whole world, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Why? When God looks at the body of Christ, He says, that body has paid the price.

That body has paid the blood price. It's a beautiful thing. It's the body.

All of those things you circled, you connect. It is the body, the church. That's the complete Christ.

When God looks at Christ, He sees Him and He sees His body. And His body has paid the price. We have redemption through His blood, because we are in His body, and His body has paid the price.

He bore our sins in His body. It never made sense to me when I was little. I kept thinking, well, you know, I thought it was like a spiritual sacrifice, and it seems like if people could just be killed for their sins, well, you could be killed, and then you could be raised, and you'd be okay.

Why didn't God just put all of us on the cross, and then raise us up, and we can all go to glory, because, you know, it must be like a spiritual thing. This is what it is talking about. He is our peace.

He is reconciled both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. In removing the penalty, and removing that stain and that guilt of sin, He has removed any basis for judging, or separation, or down-the-nose-looking within the body. The two are one.

We are the same. There is no difference. There is no Jew and Greek.

There is no male and female. There is no basis for a feeling of superiority. We are all purchased possession.

We are all redeemed. We are all in this body, which is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Well, this brings us to verse 17, where we will return after we take our break.

Thank you.