

Ephesians 14-01-05a

This is Sunday, the 5th of January, 2014. We're in the letter that Paul wrote to the Laodicean church, popularly known as Ephesians, and we have arrived in chapter 3. We'll take a moment to dedicate our time and our study to the Lord, and then we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for your watch care over us, your provision that you made for us, the protection you've provided, the challenges that you have sent our way to give us opportunities for growth and for application, to exercise our faith, to grow strong, and to appreciate you and the Lord Jesus and the ever-present Holy Spirit within us.

We thank you for our fellowship. We thank you for each one who is here, each one that participates with us, whether near or far, for the prayer support, for the encouragement, for the fellowship and the enthusiasm, the inquisitive nature and the appreciation for the truths of your Word that unfold as we move verse by verse and chapter by chapter and book by book. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus who has made it possible for us to live this life that is transcendent, that rises above the mundane and the earthly and the temporal and the temporary.

We thank you that in Him we have so many wonderful blessings, and we pray that as we look at this portion of your Word this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will bless it to the nourishment of our souls, that we will move forward in the time that remains to us with a renewed vigor and a renewed sense of mission and purpose and a fresh appreciation for you and for the Lord Jesus. We pray it in His name. Amen.

In this book we have seen in just a 15-second review, chapter 1, in Him we have so that. Remember that? God has given us so many things in Him, in Christ, and they are detailed for us. There are seven major things that are listed, and they each have a purpose.

We reviewed that, and Paul prays in the latter part of the chapter that we will come to know three things. That God will give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the epinosis of Him. Wisdom is the practical skill of application that makes a difference in our lives, and it is the apocalypsis, the revelation of these new mystery truths about which he is going to have more to say in chapter 3. In epinosis, experiential knowledge, this is what we do in the body, as we just saw in our 2 Corinthians 5 memory verse.

We will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ and be evaluated on what we have done in the body, whether good or bad. That is epinosis. To what extent did we act in the light of what we are taught, what we learn? God the Holy Spirit is here to make it real to us, to give us the ability to do it.

So, really the bottom line question is, and we could ask ourselves this question, how distractible am I? I am getting so distractible, it's pathetic. I start out on a thing, and remember that little cartoon deal where there were dogs and every five minutes or so a squirrel would go by and

somebody would yell, squirrel, and they were all looking off in the other direction. My brain is just turning into a squirrel brain.

Every time I set myself on a mission, let's say I'm going to go out and get a tool out of the garage. Open the door, walk out into the garage, oh look, there's that battery I took out of the uninterruptible power supply that was beeping at me the other day. I need to take that thing and put it somewhere so that we can recycle it.

It's sitting here in the garage taking up space. Oh look, I've actually got three of those now because here's two others that I replaced. Let me go take those and, you know, one of these is still good.

I really ought to put a charge on that. Where's my charger? I go looking for the charger. As I'm looking for the charger, I trip over a stack of wood.

I think, you know, I've been tripping over this stack of wood. I'm just going to move this wood out here. But to get to it, I've got to move this.

This trash can really needs emptying. I need to go carry this out. And after I've been out there about five minutes, I can't even remember why I came out there.

It's just a Disneyland of distractions. I ought to sell tickets and people could just amuse themselves. I mean, if they were built like me, wander around and just go from one thought to the next.

And in the meantime, maybe I've left water running into a pan or something in there, you know, thinking, well, I'll just run out there right quick and grab that thing and come back in. I just need a funnel. Went out there to get a funnel, come back in, and, well, hot water's been running for 15 minutes while I was moving batteries and emptying trash cans and stacking cardboard out on the alley.

I think, what does it matter with me? I'm young and senile. I don't even want to imagine what I'll be like when I'm old. We are distractible.

We are so distractible. Well, think about this in spiritual terms. Come to Bible class, see the verses, hear the concepts.

It's so clear. It's so fresh. It's alive.

God, the Holy Spirit, brings it alive as we read it, as we look at it, as we think about it. We compare Scripture with Scripture. We see the wonderful curtain pulled back, and the glories of the cathedral of God's plan and purpose are revealed to us, and we're awestruck, and rightfully so.

Then we turn around. We hop in our Volkswagen and putter-putter away, and here's traffic, and there's pedestrians, and I've got errands to run and stuff on the way home and hope the roast didn't burn, and the vision fades. The purpose and the information recede, and they come back, particularly in times of crisis.

Oh, Lord, so-and-so is really sick. Oh, Lord, I'm looking at my balances in Quicken and stuff's not adding up. Oh, Lord, got a problem here, got an issue there.

And crisis is the only thing that seems to really, you know, draw our attention back. And if I hear, you know, water dripping in the floor while I'm out there in the garage, that will bring me back in, and I suddenly realize what I'm supposed to be doing. We want to do better, don't we? Wouldn't it be a wonderful New Year's resolution to be less distractible, especially in the spiritual realm, to remember who we are and why we're here frequently through the day? Now, God has left us in a world of tasks for a reason.

We're not supposed to sit in Bible class all day long. We're not supposed to think holy thoughts and run around, you know, being pious all the time. We have stuff to do.

But as we do, we do it. This is one of the things that Marines appreciate about the Marine Corps, is it is difficult no matter what you're doing, no matter where you are. You can be in the field, you can be in garrison, you can be doing something sublime, you can be marching in a parade in one of your best uniforms, or you can be out there grunging along, doing grunt stuff, but you never forget you're a Marine.

You're in a Marine uniform, you're doing Marine stuff all the time. It's a 24-7 identity, and this is why it's almost impossible to shed it even after you're long gone. It just becomes such a part of your nature, becomes a part of your thinking.

You think like a Marine. You want to accomplish tasks like a Marine. You want to give it that extra effort.

If you're polishing something, you're not satisfied until it is as polished as you can make it. If you're chipping paint, you're not satisfied until every little bit of paint is gone. If you're cleaning something, you clean it just a little bit better than somebody else would, because, look, this is the way we do things.

We strive for quality. We strive for perfection. We strive to do it the very best it can be done.

I want to know when somebody comes after me that they're going to see that a Marine was here and did this. It's just an ethos. It's a commitment.

It's a way of thinking. Well, that's what our Christianity should be. That's what our relationship with God through Christ should be.

It should permeate us. It should drive us to be just a little bit better and a little bit more in everything we do. Our commitment, our level of dedication, because what we do, we do as unto the Lord.

Right? Well, how does this happen? It's great to talk about it. This is another thing that, you know, this time tomorrow, will any of us be thinking about it? That's a challenge. It's 9.50 a.m. on Sunday, and we're talking about all these wonderful concepts.

How about 9.50 a.m. on Monday morning? Are we still going to think what a great concept this is, and will it make a difference in the way we live? Well, it ought to, and it can, but we have to make it a priority. We have to let the power of God's Word and the presence of God's Spirit make it so. This is what Paul is talking about.

This is the opportunity that has been extended to the Gentiles. This was an opportunity to live a life dedicated to God, permeated by God, reflecting and showing forth the glory of God. What do you think being a light to the Gentiles was? What was the light source? Well, we've got some great light sources now.

You know, we've got these flashlights for Christmas, and man, those things, you've got to be careful where you point that thing. You can put your eye out. Mom used to say, don't run with scissors and take those arrows outside.

Now it's like, be careful with that flashlight. It's like when they first came out with the laser pointers. What's this thing? You're wearing a patch.

But the light source is important, isn't it? We swapped out some light bulbs, trying to make a difference in comfort level. There's a difference in incandescent bulbs and fluorescent bulbs. There's a difference in LED bulbs.

There's a difference in the design and whether it's a point source of light that can really dazzle somebody that's got cataracts. It makes a difference if the whole light bulb glows and it's more of an area. It makes the shadows softer and so on.

It makes a difference what the light source is. What's the source of the light to the Gentiles? What light is it? Is it a light of morality? Is it a light of goodwill toward men? Is it a light of, aren't we admirable people? Aren't we pitiable people? Aren't we the suffering servant of God? And look how we were persecuted and hounded down through the ages. Is that the light? What is the light to the Gentiles? It's the presence and power of God, right? That was Israel.

That was Israel's privilege. That was their stewardship. That was their mission.

It was their function. It was their identity in the Old Testament age. In this letter that Paul is writing, and he says, That was us.

That was we. But we kept failing. We kept being mired in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

And we're by nature children of wrath because we failed the mission. We kept garbaging up the lens and the lampshade got so dark that the light was under a bushel. It couldn't shine to the nations.

What has God done in Christ? He has transformed. Because now the future promise of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the new covenant that God would make with Israel, with the northern and southern kingdom, with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. He has done it now.

And He's extended it to everyone. It's not restricted to Israel. In Him, that middle wall of separation has been broken down.

In Him, you, Gentiles in the flesh, once called uncircumcision, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Now this was a big deal when it happened. It happened in Paul's lifetime.

And Paul's writing about it saying this is a huge thing. This is like the exodus. This is like the flood.

This is one of the major turning points in human history. What are our major turning points in human history? Leaving the garden. That was a major turning point in human history.

The flood. That was a turning point. Tower of Babel.

That was a turning point. Abraham and the covenant that God made with him. I will make you a great nation.

Your descendants will be innumerable. That was a big turning point. Slavery in Egypt and then the deliverance in the exodus.

That was a turning point. The inception of the nation. The throne of David was a major turning point.

The building of the temple with Solomon. The David-Solomon era was a huge turning point. Unfortunately, it was a downward turning point.

The carrying away into captivity was a turning point. One of those marked out in the Gospel of Matthew, a 14-generation marker, carrying away into Babylon. The coming of the Lord Jesus, the biggest turning point in all of human history.

The day of Pentecost, a turning point. The destruction of Jerusalem, a turning point. This idea, this change at Pentecost, when the age of Israel is set aside, the function and the purpose and even the existence of the nation of Israel is set aside in favor of what you and I are a part of, that's a big turning point.

So, that's real interesting if you're living at that time. You say, wow, we're experiencing a turning point. Isn't this something? I'm in the exodus generation.

This is really something. I'm Shem and I rode across on the ark. This is a big turning point.

That's really something. Or maybe Mrs. Shem. How come they didn't give the name? Well, I just wonder why they didn't give the names of the wives.

I mean, you'd think these would be some pretty important people, wouldn't you? I mean, there's only eight people and none of the women are named. Well, maybe we'll find out later. But it's just, I mean, everybody is descendant from these four women.

It's like not knowing your grandmother's name. But there's a reason for it. So, in the day, I could see this Ephesians thing being a big deal.

This book, this letter to Laodicea, its companion to Colossae, and its other companion Philemon. You remember that this was a bag of three letters. Laodiceans, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philemon. We know that because, what's Philemon all about? Hello Philemon, this is your buddy Paul. I got this runaway slave Onesimus.

He's become a believer and I'd love to keep him with me, but I don't want to do that without your permission, so I'm sending him back to you, not as a slave, but as a brother. And if you can find it in your heart to send him back to me, that'd be great, because he's a great help to me in my work, but I don't want to presume on our friendship by keeping your slave, and I also want you all to be reconciled face to face as brothers in Christ rather than master-slave. That's the book of Philemon.

Well, Onesimus is mentioned at the end of Colossians, and this letter is mentioned at the end of Colossians as well, and they're all of a piece. The same people that are mentioned conveying greetings, at the end of these letters, it's all the same people. Timothy's there, Aristarchus, Epaphras, etc.

This is a bag of three letters. At the time. Wow.

Age of Israel is over, age of the church. Here's the Apostle Paul giving the announcement. The Apostle Peter is confirming it.

The sheet's been let down. Arise Peter, kill and eat. What God's called clean, let no man call

common.

We get it. The Gentiles are in. This gets met with two different reactions.

Like all great truths in Scripture, it is either embraced or it is emphatically and bitterly rejected. That's why in chapter 3, Paul says, for this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus. Why is Paul a prisoner? Can you imagine me standing up here and teaching the Word of God, giving my understanding of what it means, what it portends, and there's a commotion at the door, armed individuals come in, grab me, and drag me off, and put me in a cell, and keep me there.

Because of what I say here. By the way, that day is coming, in my opinion, in the not too distant future. Somebody teaches certain portions of the Word of God, it will be labeled as hate speech, and people who do it will be arrested, tried, convicted, sentenced, and imprisoned for teaching the Word of God.

We think that's just so primitive and so backward in parts of the historical past. I'm telling you now, it's coming. You can see the foundation for it being laid now.

You will not be able to teach parts of the Word of God that people are going to label as hate speech. You will not be able to teach what the Bible defines as immorality, what the Bible defines as an abomination, without risking imprisonment in this country in the not too distant future. It is coming.

I'm telling you, it's coming. Well, this is what happened to Paul. Paul preached something that people didn't like.

Let me read you something. And the reason I read it is not just because it tells us why Paul says, I am the prisoner of Christ Jesus. This is an attitude that is already aimed at you.

Whether you know it or not, there are people who think exactly this way about you right now. Right now. Your beliefs, your views, your relationship with God through Christ causes people to think this way about you.

Now, people say that nobody is as pacifist and easygoing and harmless as Judaism. When people are throwing rocks at the Abrahamic religions, well, you know, those Muslims, they're sawing off heads and blowing things up and killing one another, and anybody else that gets in their way, they're just murderous. And the Christians are just as bad.

Look at the Inquisition. Look at the Crusades. They just throw us in and claim we're just as bad.

But you have a hard time finding anybody that really gets angry at the Jews because they are usually the victims. You don't find a big Jewish terrorist. I mean, there's a little bit, mainly the Palestinian Zionist thing, but they'll usually recognize that that's more nationalistic than religious.

However, I want to read you something because the attitude that was expressed toward the Apostle Paul is still present in the same community, and it is just as virulent as ever, and it pertains to you. This is the article on Saul of Tarsus, known as Paul, the Apostle of the Heathen, in the Jewish Encyclopedia. You can pull this up at jewishencyclopedia.com. Just go to Saul of Tarsus article.

It begins by giving the details of his birth somewhere in the decade either preceding or following the birth of Christ. Died after 63, AD 63. Talking about the letters that are partly considered to be spurious or falsely attributed to him, Galatians, Ephesians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus and others are considered to be in part or in whole not the work of the original.

But listen to this now. Now remember who is writing this. Where am I getting this? Jewish Encyclopedia.

Now, was the Jewish Encyclopedia written thousands of years ago? It was written within the last century. This is the second. They've got like a 12-line little deal.

The actual founder of the Christian Church as opposed to Judaism, born, etc. Here's the section. Not a Hebrew scholar, a Hellenist.

Saul, whose Roman cognomen was Paul, was born of Jewish parents in the first decade of the Common Era at Tarsus in Cilicia. They give references for a lot of this. I'm going to skip.

The claim in Romans 11.1 and Philippians 3.5 that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, suggested by the similarity of his name with that of the first Israelitish king, is, if the passages are genuine, a false one. No tribal lists or pedigrees of this kind having been in existence at that time. Nor is there any indication in Paul's writings or arguments that he had received the rabbinical training ascribed to him by Christian writers, ancient and modern.

They're saying he wasn't trained in any Hebrew stuff at all. He didn't receive that training. There's no indication that he'd received rabbinical training ascribed to him by Christian writers, ancient and modern.

Least of all, could he have acted or written, as he did, had he been, as is alleged in Acts 22.3, the disciple of Gamaliel. Possibly, that's got to be a total lie that he ever sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the mild Hillelite. His quotations from Scripture, which are all taken directly or from memory from the Greek version, betrayed no familiarity with the original Hebrew text.

The Hellenistic literature, such as the Book of Wisdom and other Apocrypha, as well as Philo, was the sole source for his eschatological and theological system. Notwithstanding the emphatic statement in Philippians 3.5 that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a rather unusual term, which seems to refer to his nationalistic training and conduct, since his Jewish birth is stated in the preceding words of the stock of Israel. He was, if any of the epistles that bear his name are really

his, entirely a Hellenist in thought and sentiment.

As such, he was imbued with the notion that the whole creation groaneth for liberation from the prison house of the body from this earthly existence, which, because of its pollution by sin and death, is intrinsically evil. And he gives Galatians, Romans, Corinthians. And compare that to Philo, who says some of the same type of things.

As a Hellenist, also he distinguished between an earthly and a heavenly atom, and accordingly between the lower psychic life and the higher spiritual life attained only by asceticism. His whole state of mind shows the influence of the Theosophic or Gnostic lore of Alexandria, especially the Hermes literature recently brought to light by Reisenstein and his important work *Poimandres*. And he believed in the mysteries or sacraments, a term borrowed solely from heathen rites.

His epilepsy is the next section. There is throughout Paul's writings an irrational or pathological element which could not but repel the disciples of the rabbis. Possibly his pessimistic mood was the result of his physical condition, for he suffered from an illness which affected both body and mind.

He speaks of it as a thorn in the flesh and a heavy stroke by a messenger of Satan, which often caused him to realize his utter helplessness and made him an object of pity and horror. It was, as Krenkel has convincingly shown, epilepsy, called by the Greeks the Holy Disease, which frequently put him into a state of ecstasy, a frame of mind that may have greatly impressed some of his Gentile hearers, but could not but frighten away and estrange him from the Jew, whose God is above all the God of reason. If you haven't detected the dripping condescension and sarcasm in this article, it may come across better if you just read it and take your time over it, but this thing just drips scathing condemnation.

It's like, how did this guy ever get anything done? The conception of a new faith, half pagan and half Jewish, such as Paul preached, and susceptibility to its influences were altogether foreign to the nature of Jewish life and thought. For Judaism, religion is the hallowing of this life by the fulfillment of its manifold duties. See Judaism.

In the Encyclopedia, Paul shrank from life as the domain of Satan and all his hosts of evil. He longed for redemption by the deadening of all desires for life, and strove for another world, which he saw in his ecstatic visions. The following description of Paul is preserved in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, an apocryphal book which has proved to be older and in some respects of greater historical value than the canonical Acts of the Apostles.

And so here's how Paul is described in the Acts of Paul and Thecla. A man of moderate stature, with scanty hair, crooked legs, blue eyes, large knit brows, and a long nose, at times looking like a man, at times like an angel. Paul came forward and preached to the men of Iconium, Blessed are they that keep themselves chaste, unmarried, for they shall be called the temple of God.

Blessed are they that mortify their bodies and souls, for unto them speaketh God. Blessed are they that despise the world, for they shall be pleasing to God. Blessed be the souls and bodies of virgins, for they shall receive the reward of their chastity.

It was by such preaching that he, quote, ensnared the souls of young men and maidens in joining them to remain single. This section is anti-Jewish attitude. Whatever the physiological or psychological analysis of Paul's temperament may be, his conception of life was not Jewish.

Nor can his unparalleled animosity and hostility to Judaism, as voiced in the epistles, be accounted for except upon the assumption that while born a Jew, he was never in sympathy or in touch with the doctrines of the rabbinical schools. For even his Jewish teachings came to him through Hellenistic channels. And I go on to flog that horse for a while.

His personality. To judge from those epistles that have all the traits of genuineness and give a true insight into his nature, which of course is an arbitrary choice, Paul was of a fiery temper, impulsive and impassioned in the extreme, of ever-changing moods, now exulting in boundless joy, now sorely depressed and gloomy. Effusive and excessive alike, in his love and in his hatred, in his blessing and in his cursing, he possessed a marvelous power over men and had unbounded confidence in himself.

He speaks or writes as a man who is conscious of a great providential mission, as the servant and herald of a high and unique cause. The philosopher and the Jew will greatly differ from him, with regard to every argument and view of his. But both will admit that he is a mighty battler for truth and that his view of life, man and God is a profoundly serious one.

Let me just give you one other part of this, because it pertains to our passage talking about the unity of Jew and Gentile. Before the authenticity of the story of the so-called conversion of Paul is investigated, it seems proper to consider from the Jewish point of view this question, why did Paul find it necessary to create a new system of faith for the admission of the Gentiles in view of the fact that the synagogue had well nigh two centuries before opened its door to them and with the help of Hellenistic literature had made successful propaganda as even the Gospels testify? Various commentators, in order that they may reserve the claim of universality for Christianity, deny the existence of uncircumcised proselytes in Judaism and misconstrue plain Talmudic and other statements referring to God-fearing Gentiles. The very doctrine of Paul concerning the universal faith of Abraham rests upon the traditional interpretation of Genesis 12-3 and upon the traditional view which made Abraham the prototype of a missionary bringing the heathen world under the wings of the Shekinah.

This is the Jewish view. Abraham was a missionary. This is what they claim is their view.

As a matter of fact, only the Jewish propaganda work along the Mediterranean Sea made it possible for Paul and his associates to establish Christianity among the Gentiles. If it hadn't been

for those Jews, by the way, of the Diaspora, going out and establishing synagogues among the Gentiles, Paul could have never done his work. That's what they're saying.

He's kind of cobbling on and distorting the work of the Jews that had already gone out in their wonderful Abrahamic missionary work of bringing the Gentiles to the Shekinah. So he's a corruptor and a defiler and a messer-upper of their wonderful work of bringing in the Gentiles. That's what they're claiming here.

It is exactly from such synagogue manuals for proselytes, talking about the didache and so on, the didaskalia, that the ethical teachings in the epistles of Paul and Peter are derived. All of Paul's stuff is derivative from the Jewish synagogue people. He stole from it and distorted it.

That's where his epistles came from. Jewish proselytism had the Jewish nation as its basis. The proselyte on whom the Abrahamic rite was not performed remained an outsider.

It was therefore highly important for Paul that those who became converted to the Church should rank equally with its other members and every mark of distinction between Jew and Gentile should be wiped out in the new state of existence in which Christians lived. The predominating point of view of the synagogue was political and social. That of the Church, eschatological, prophetic.

May such as do not bear the seal of Abraham's covenant upon their flesh or do not fulfill the whole law be admitted to the congregation of the saints waiting for the world of resurrection? This was the question at issue between the disciples of Jesus and those of Paul, etc. Well, you can read this entire article for yourself if you've got a strong stomach. But this animosity, this rationalism, this belief that the Judaism of Paul's day, which persists down to the present day, really has the truth, and all of this other is despicable, it's derivative, it's secondary, it's a corruption, it's a cancer that ought to be cut out, it should have never been attached to Judaism in the first place.

And the vilification of the messenger. Notice how they haven't said a lot about the message. Paul is an epileptic daydreamer with a penchant for fits and grandiose visions of himself.

And he wants to build a group where people don't have to be circumcised. He's not really a Jew. Look at where he was born.

He's from Cilicia. He's the only apostle that wasn't born in the land of Jesus. And he didn't even agree with Jesus.

The disciples of Jesus thought everybody ought to be Jewish and be circumcised, and he didn't. Just be aware, this is a modern reincarnation of the very same Pharisees that rejected Paul, the very same Judaizers that kicked him out. This is why he is a prisoner of the Lord Jesus.

It's easy to gloss over. Well, he ran into opposition and got locked up. He is preaching into, he is

facing on a daily basis people with this attitude.

And I haven't read you the worst of it. It is dismissive. It is disdainful.

It mocks and derides. It sees itself as rational and Paul as crazy. And everything that came from Paul as just ridiculous.

Therefore, what is the Jewish view of Christianity? The deeper you get into formal Judaism, the more fully it partakes of this attitude. Well, what does Islam think of Christianity? What does the secular world think of Christianity? I am telling you, we have had a wonderful season of non-persecution in which we have lived. But the foundation is built and the superstructure is going up for a fresh hounding of Christianity.

We are too intolerant. We are too absolute. We believe things about people that are just very insensitive and wrong.

And even those values that people are applying to us are Christianity turned on its head. There was no value for the individual endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights except from the Christian point of view. Well, now people are taking that, claiming it as their own, turning it on its head, and using it as a bludgeon to beat Christianity out of the public arena.

Well, we are more tolerant than you. We are more flexible than you. We have taken the best of your stuff and we are kicking you out.

It drips all through this article and others like it. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, on behalf of you Gentiles, if you believe what God communicates through the Apostle Paul, you are subject to the same derision. Jesus said, You will be hated by all men for My name's sake.

He wasn't kidding. Don't think that because we are in a little pocket and we are somewhat insulated that these attitudes don't exist and that they are not actively building structures in governments, in societies, in laws to eradicate active Christian faith, genuine Christian faith. You have enemies on this earth, in the flesh, with this attitude who would like nothing better than for Christian assemblies to cease.

It has happened in Europe. There are countries where there is not a church congregation left in the open. It has been taken over by one thing and another.

Well, Paul is not kidding. Once he mentions this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, and I said a week before last that... Maybe it was last week. Was I here last week? I was.

When I skipped over the big M dashes, he says, For this reason, I, Paul, write, Well, this inclusion, this section we are looking at this morning, the reason it comes up is because of what

he says here, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. And as soon as he completes that thought, he breaks off because he needs to talk about it. That is why we have broken off and talked about it.

It is important that you realize, yes, we wrestle against principalities and powers. That doesn't mean that the principalities and powers are not moving pawns and chess pieces around on the board of human beings and laws being passed and ordinances being passed and attitudes being taught to children that make us just as much a pariah as Paul is in the Jewish encyclopedia. Don't think you are not hated because you are.

You are hated for what you believe. You are hated for what you stand for. You are hated because you take this book as the inspired word of God.

There are people who hate you and everything you stand for. And it is important as we live our daily lives to remember that there is a lot at stake, whether we are motivated, whether we live and remember who we are and have a genuinely Christian attitude. Wouldn't it be great if Christian had the same sort of identity and motive force as when you say marine? When somebody says, you know, call the marines or that's a marine, there's so much that is implied.

Wouldn't it be great if the word Christian spiritually meant the same thing? Oh, they're a Christian. Same level of commitment, dedication, striving for the best and the utmost. 110% all the time.

Well, I hope that's what Bible church means to us. I hope that's what the name of Christ attached to us means to us. We don't flag, we don't fade, we don't fail because this is a conflict.

It is a warfare. And don't think because we don't always hear the sound of the guns or the snap of bullets hitting the wood around us, that it isn't real, that it isn't active and that it isn't potentially dangerous if we're not prepared. And if we're not ready to not only hold, but advance, advance the cause of Christ and shine the light of God that was originally a mission given to Abraham and his descendants and is now given to us.

We are the body of Christ. We are the fullness of deity in bodily form on this earth. And we will be here until we're taken out of the way and that's when the antichrist is going to be revealed.

So what we do matters. Small things matter. Attitudes matter.

Words matter. Daily decisions, small and great, matter. This is a conflict and it's a no-kidding conflict.

And every once in a while we need a little situation report, a little reconnaissance report on what the other side is thinking and doing. Turn on the evening news and watch and see what happens if you stand up and say anything related to your faith. People are made examples to try to browbeat and humiliate and discourage the rest of us.

Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back we'll return to chapter 3 and see what Paul says even as he faces this kind of opposition on a daily basis up close and in person, in the flesh, as he travels and as he is imprisoned and hopefully they're hoping to restrict his movements and restrict his ministry. But God reverses that as he does with us.

Let's pause here and take our break.