

Ephesians 14-03-02a

This is Sunday, the 2nd of March, 2014. We're in the book labeled in our Bibles, Ephesians, the Laodicean letter that Paul wrote and put in the bag along with Colossians to send to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. We are resuming this morning in the latter part of chapter 3, verses 14 through 21.

We'll pause at this point, dedicate our time and our concentration to the study of God's Word, go before the Lord in prayer and ensure that we're teachable, that there's no unconfessed sin or other distraction or impediment to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit because that, of course, is what makes it all happen, what makes it effective and what makes our time a good investment. Shall we pray? Father, we're so grateful for the opportunity to spend this time together in fellowship and in the study of Your Word. We ask Your special blessing and attention to the needs of those who are under pressure of various kinds, whether they are battling illness, whether they are in circumstantial straits financially or situationally or relationship-wise.

We know that there are many in our congregation and in our church family, both here and our extended group, that are in the very center of Your will and in the center of Your plan and in that place are facing challenges and learning opportunities. And we ask Your grace and the ministry of Your Spirit to call to their minds the pertinent truths and the operative doctrines and principles and promises so that there will be a clear opportunity to claim them by faith, to be strengthened with might in the inner man, as it tells us here in our passage, so that we can all, supporting one another and individually following the Lord Jesus, reflect His glory and yours. We pray that our study this morning will contribute additional insight and truth for all of us to carry in our souls, that God the Holy Spirit can speak to us, lead us and guide us, and help us to stay on the narrow road that leads through that straight gate of life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Ephesians 3, verse 14 resumes a thought that was interrupted after verse 1 of this chapter.

We saw this last time. And the occasion for the interruption was the circumstance of imprisonment that Paul was facing at that time. This is considered to be a prison epistle along with Colossians.

We don't know the exact nature of the incarceration, but it was of sufficient concern that Paul felt the need to reassure his readers. Those who would hear this letter read, he was concerned that the nature of his incarceration was so dire that they would lose heart, that they would be discouraged by it and be distracted by it. And that's why in verse 13 he says, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you.

So whatever it was, this wasn't just mild house arrest. This wasn't sort of limited freedom or don't leave the city. It wasn't like someone living in a city of refuge in the Old Testament.

This was something so extreme that people in distant cities who heard of it were tempted to lose heart and to think that maybe the whole enterprise was imperiled. The whole Christian witness and ministry, Paul's apostolic function would be ended or greatly curtailed and they were terribly discouraged. And so Paul spends this dozen or so verses encouraging them and explaining that adversity and pressure and circumstantial resistance and friction is a part of God's plan and is a way to reflect God's glory.

So this is the nature of the interruption between verse 1 and verse 14. But he resumes the thought in verse 14. For this reason, and this reason goes back to chapter 2 and chapter 1, because that's how he began chapter 3. He's not saying to the intent that the manifold wisdom of God might be in a note for this reason.

He's not referring back to the immediately preceding context. He's referring back to chapter 2. Now, pop quiz. We're trying to remember.

We're trying to be familiar with our own Bible. We're good Bible-studying, Bible-believing Christians, and we want to be able to navigate God's Word with some felicity, with some knowledge. So we should know in general where major things are.

We know what's in Genesis. You know the creation story. You know that the flood begins.

The flood story begins. This is basically chapters 6, 7, and 8 in Genesis. You should know this.

If you don't know this, go back and review it. By the way, there's a great book. I have it on digital, but I borrowed Laurie's hard copy of it, which is Wilmington's Guide to the Bible.

It's got great outlines for every book of the Bible. It tells you the theme, a key verse, gives you a quick outline of the substance. And when the girls were younger, in our evening readings, we went through every single book of the Bible, and we tried to memorize Genesis.

What does the Wilmington's Guide say is the key verse? Just a little bit about the book. What are some of the really important chapters to be able to find quickly? Where does the story of Joseph begin and end? How many chapters are devoted to that? Just the broad structure of the book. This is your Scripture.

This is our gift from God. We ought to be able to go there. You don't have to necessarily... I'm no good, as most of you know, with remembering a lot of specific verses.

I can generally give you the chapter, but I don't always remember the verse. But you should know the chapters. You should know the love chapter.

You should know the faith chapter. You should know where Jesus Christ speaks directly to the church. The only place in the Bible where Jesus speaks directly to us, as church-age believers.

There's only one place in the Bible that happens. It's two chapters. And it's all red ink.

And it's not in the Gospels. So we want to know these things. And in the books that we're studying, we should have a grasp of the outline.

You remember when we did Isaiah? And there is an overall structure. Because it mirrors, happily for us, the structure of the English Bible in terms of number of books and things, it should be easy to remember. Can you remember how many chapters are there in Isaiah? Sixty-six.

That's how many books there are in the Bible. Where is the great hinge point in the book of Isaiah? Well, where does the Old Testament end? How many books? Thirty-nine. And right at chapter 40, you have a new section there.

And then you've got chapters 40 through 48. Then you go from there on through 66. And you've got that... It always reminds me of the back of a book where the signatures are all sewed and glued.

It's the backing that lets you open it up and see the first part and the second part. And the rest of it is like the New Testament. And so these are helpful things.

Well, in the letter to the Laodiceans, the book of Ephesians, there is structure. And we've seen three chapters so far. You should know, since we're in this book, what these chapters represent.

You should be able to rattle it about. If I say, what is the theme in one phrase of chapter 1? You would say, in Him. Right? In Him.

That's chapter 1. In Him we have. And we have an incredible list of benefits and blessings and positional truths and privileges and opportunities and potentials in Him. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

In Him we are elect before the foundations of the world. In Him, in Him, in Him. That's Ephesians chapter 1. In the middle of the night you should be able to wake up staring at the blank wall saying, Ephesians chapter 1, in Him.

You must know this stuff. This is your heritage. This is like a marine sentry not known as general orders.

You've got to know these things. Chapter 2. In Him, unity. There used to be separation, Jew and Gentile, Israel and everybody else.

But in Him, God has reconciled all things. All things reconciled in Him. That's chapter 2. This is not only laterally, Jews and Gentiles, but vertically, heaven and earth.

All things have been reconciled in Christ. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is why the

Jehovah's Witnesses are so screwed up.

They want to believe that Jesus was crucified on a stake. Did you know this? They make all these etymological arguments about, well, you know, it says He bore our sins in His own body on the wood. They don't want to say it's a tree.

You go to their pictures of Jesus at the crucifixion and there's like a telephone pole and His hands are nailed over His head and His feet, of course, all on a vertical. Well, this is not helpful and it's not accurate. And one of the great things about the cross is it reminds us that the primary emphasis is vertical.

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ was for God and to God. And the cross is such a beautiful picture of this because you can't have the cross piece without the vertical. The vertical holds up the cross piece and the vertical is the work of Christ Godward.

That's primary. But necessary and accompanying it is the horizontal. And this is what happens on earth.

And God in Christ reconciled heaven and earth and reconciled all people on the earth. Made it possible. Made it potential.

Made it available. And that's chapter 2 of Ephesians. Now we don't have this distinction.

You who are far off have been brought near. We who were the first to hope in Christ are now joined by all of you Johnny-come-lately Gentiles. And there is a new program in Him.

Everything is made new. We are a new creation. So that's chapter 2. So we come to chapter 3 and He says, For this reason.

See how helpful it is to observe the structure of the book because when you come to chapter 3 and He says, For this reason. You know exactly what the reason is. For this reason because in Him God the Father has done so many things and in Him everything on the earth and everything in heaven has intersected and come together and been completed and fulfilled and made possible in terms of relationship with God and positive reflection of His glory.

For this reason, Paul says, I and then he says I'm a prisoner and he explains the prisoner thing but he resumes this in 14. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You've got a text note there that says of our Lord Jesus Christ may not be in the text.

When you see in you text that's the Nessel-Allen United Bible Society N for Nessel-Allen U for United Bible Society UBS text and what this is is that as you, I'll just review this most of you know this already but there are two major text strands underlying all English Bible translations. One of them is the Western text the Byzantine text. Western and Byzantine is what it's called and what this is is by far the most commonly copied Greek texts and they circulated in the Western world in

the Roman Empire, Rome and westward toward England, you know, Southern Europe and all of that.

That's, and even in Asia Minor and all that. This was copied, copied, copied, copied and they think because it was so much more copied and there's so many generations that there were lots of errors that crept in and marginal notes that a scribe might write. Like this might have been somebody's personal text that we're looking at here might have been reflected in a Greek text that was somebody's personal copy and as they were studying just like you do in the margin of your Bible they wrote out here I bow my knees to the Father and it might have gone down to verse 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

That makes sense, doesn't it? The Father, the whole family in heaven and earth is named. And then somebody might have been looking at that and thought, well, he's really the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and they kind of put that out in the margin. The guy dies, his protege picks up his old tattered manuscript and is going to make a copy and he thinks that that's a correction instead of a personal note and he incorporates it right into the text and that gets copied, copied, copied, copied and so pretty soon you've got 45 or 50 copies that have this emendation or this note that got incorporated in.

Well, the other text tradition that's the Western and Byzantine copied, copied, copied, proliferation just hundreds, thousands of copies. The other text tradition is what underlies the Nestle-Alland 26, 27 I think the 28th may be coming out now Greek text and this is based on the Alexandrian text type which they dug up from the Alexandrian Christian communities it got buried in the sand down in Egypt basically I'm shortening and summarizing here greatly but this is a much more sparse text it had no contact with this Western Byzantine or very little for most of the books and so it tends to be shorter it tends to be harder and generally the harder reading is to be preferred because scribes would try to smooth out and make sense out of things by well, let me just add a word here, it'll help and so often it is the preferred reading because we figure this is probably what it originally said and I can see how this Western text came to be somebody was trying to fix this hard reading however, the problem with that is you'd say, well, let's just always use the UBS Nestle-Alland problem is these guys were ascetic and they had their own theological axe to grind in a word and so sometimes they and you can see where they've actually done this it's provable they took stuff out of the text because they didn't like it and so it is equally possible that when you come to this verse for this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named they say, wait a minute if I leave this the way it stands it sounds like God is the Father of the angels I don't have any scripture saying God is the Father from whom the whole family in heaven is He the Father of the angels? or some other theological objection and so they might say, you know what there's been plenty of Lord Jesus Christ in here I'm just going to slip that one out or their eye might have skipped from one word to another and they skipped it and it got left out, whatever but this is why you have these two text types and so as you go through any given book generally speaking there are a few

exceptions like the book of Revelation the text traditions are entirely different but in most of the New Testament you're constantly checking these two against each other and trying to find the most likely original reading in this case, and there are two of them here there was one back up in verse 9 as well where through Jesus Christ is not in the shorter, sparser text the sense of it does not change I don't, I'd be laboring it now because often times you will see me skip these text notes and if I skip it, it's because it doesn't make a material difference and just to let you know, if you say well wait a minute, there was a text and you didn't say it if I don't talk about it I don't see that it makes a material difference the marginal note that someone might have written in there is probably valid so it doesn't affect the sense and in almost, I would say better than 90% of the cases the differences between these two texts don't materially affect the sense and so it's good to know it's good at my level to know but if I don't bring it up to you I just give you the rationale, that's why so I read it as it stands in our text because there's no good reason to take it out sometimes somebody will add something in there and it really is a distraction and then I'll say you need to line that out it doesn't affect the flow and it doesn't affect the meaning it is true that the Father is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ however, look at the connection to verse 15 I bow my knees to the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named the whole family and if I were going to express an opinion about whether of our Lord Jesus Christ belongs in verse 14 or not probably not because Paul's point here is God is the Father of the family that the whole heaven and earth contains you will note however for purposes of application and your own personal knowledge of how things work that prayer on the part of Christians is always addressed to the Father you will find no case Paul records many of his prayers I did an extended study one time on Wednesday nights at another church years and years ago where I went through the prayers of Paul every recorded prayer of Paul in all of his letters and in no case does he pray to anyone but the Father doesn't pray to the Holy Spirit doesn't pray to the Lord Jesus always without exception prayer is addressed to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit always without exception if you hear anybody saying dear Jesus pray for them pray to God the Father that they will learn how to pray because it is not right pray to the Lord Jesus oddly enough you think well but He is my Savior prayer is addressed to the Father read Hebrews chapter 10 He has made a new and living way He is the gateway to the Father read John 14 6 I am the way the truth and the life no man comes to the Father but by me our relationship is with the Father and I've argued in the past you occasionally see things there was a pastor that had a big long study called the Christ centered life and nothing wrong with that if you understand that the Christ centered life is actually a life that brings you to the Father Jesus Christ is the way to the Father and we are Christians but the reason we are in Christ is the privilege and the access that it gives us to the Father if you stop at Christ the Lord Jesus has not accomplished His goal I am the way to the Father and no man can come to the Father but by me and the goal is to come to the Father don't stop at the door I worked that you were hot or cold but being lukewarm I will spew you out of my mouth go in it's the Father with whom we ultimately have our relationship through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit that's reflected in prayer so He says I bow my knees to the Father if we are supposed to talk to Christ wouldn't you think Paul at least

one time would say well I was talking to Jesus last night or I was praying to Jesus on your behalf he never says it never even gets close to it the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named now I find this very interesting if somebody says well you seem to be religious what kind of faith do you have are you a Buddhist or a Hindu what do we say I'm a fatherite I'm a Petrian I'm a I'm a paterfamilia what would you say how do we identify ourselves we are Christians Christians so why does Paul say here that the family in heaven and earth is named for the Father what is the Father's name careful now what is the Father's name Moses asked him didn't he when they asked me where did you get this news whom shall I say has sent me what was the answer you will say I am has sent you I am that I am this is the name of the Father that's the name he has given us now do you call your father by his given name I mean I see little kids doing that now and it just creeps me out I promise you in my entire life talking to my father I've never addressed him by his first name I don't call him by his that name I call him by my relationship name with him because I have that privilege and there's only 3 other people that do I and 3 other people have the privilege of calling my father by this particular familial name some people call their paternal ancestor they call him Pop they call him Dad they call him Father you can call him a lot of things but you don't typically call him by his given first name right I mean it's just weird unless you're in a blended family and the guy came late well Jim you know normally when this is our father that we love this is the name that expresses relationship this is what Paul is talking about we don't go and call God by his given name the Israelites actually understood this this is why they substituted Adonai for Yahweh in their scriptures they recognized that God's personal name isn't something to be demeaned by overuse and I think that was a great expression of reverence I'm not one of these that spells God with a dash in the middle because it's too holy to say but I think they were on the right track in reverencing God and not having his name be a commonplace for us the name from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named is Father how did Jesus tell the disciples to pray oh great I am oh Yahweh Jehovah Sabaoth Elohim what did he say when you pray pray this way and what's the first thing he says our Father our Father that is how the family addresses God and this is the defining why is this important why does it matter oh you know God doesn't care oh Holy Spirit hi there Jesus I just thought I'd come and say hi you know operator give me Jesus on the line you know this sort of thing it's very casual it is very I think in some ways presumptuous to be so cavalier and so unconcerned when you approach the mighty God when all of the prophets ended up on their face when they heard the voice of God or had a vision of the presence of God and they were immediately repenting in dust and ashes when Peter recognized that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God he said depart from me I'm a sinful man you could see him just scrambling to the other end of the boat and we need that reverence in the same way that we should respect our parents from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named our Father in heaven hallowed be your what? name sanctified set apart in a category by itself revered the object of awe and respect I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he certainly is that but primarily here from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named this beyond formal address in prayer and protocol should be our defining thought what defines you I was helping Elizabeth with

an assignment this weekend one of her major papers it's part of her final grade and in this major that she's studying it's all human relationships, family development and things like that so one of the things they said as well as you're entering into this define yourself who are you, what brought you to this major, what makes you want to be a professional in this field and so the very first question is write a paragraph explaining who you are seriously? I mean you've got to try to define that, you've got to try to narrow it down some way because the assignment, by the way they don't call them assignments anymore, it's not an assignment, it's a rubric read the rubric the rubric tells you how to write your paper how to construct the features of what you turn in they don't call it an assignment why is it a rubric? I don't know but doesn't rubric sound more mysterious than assignment and a lot of these are very poorly written because people cannot communicate in writing anymore even college professors so they write these vague self-contradictory incoherent assignments and then you get graded down because you didn't give them what they wanted because you can't read their mind and they can't express their mind on paper be that as it may this assignment, first question write a paragraph explaining who you are well my first thought, her first thought well I'm a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ I'm a child of God in heaven we say a child of the king as long as you remember which king we're not a child of the millennial king we're a child of the heavenly monarch the heavenly authority over all things but he's not our king and while I love the song, child of the king I have to constantly parse that because we are a child of the father not the king to us the defining relationship is not he is my king the defining relationship is he is the father from whom I get my name we still have this tradition when you're born into a family you take your father's last name when we are born into the family of God we are marked with his name we have that seal that the Holy Spirit places on us it marks us with the name of God but he is our father bow my knees to the father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth that includes you and me it's interesting we are part of a family that is both in heaven and on earth and family is good when the chips are down you turn to family you lock your keys in your car you get in some sort of transportation dilemma you have to flatten those spare your phone is out of juice roadside assistance a couple three hours away dad is only 20 minutes away who are you going to call? it's not the ghost busters it's dad buster it's your mother it's your father, it's your family who do you rely on for comfort and encouragement you go to your family you go to your siblings blood is way thicker than water and as a point of application here as we go to the break remember that when Paul says I bow my knees to the father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that's your family that's my family we are connected eternally with the redeemed through the Lord Jesus Christ we are connected, we are part of something bigger than ourselves and there are wonderful privileges and advantages that pertain to that relationship don't forget it don't think I'm alone, I'm abandoned I'm isolated I am forgotten I'm ignored you're not, you're family and God the Father listen if he knows when any of these billions of birds falls out of the sky have you ever been to some of the parking lots out here in the evenings and seen these, it looks like a Hitchcock movie I was at Target the other day and I could not believe there were at least, I would say conservatively, about 9 million birds everywhere every single edge of the building every power line on the cars on the ground it was like a plague of locusts there were

these black crow looking birds an infinitude like the descendants of Abraham well we are not alone, we are connected and it isn't something to take lightly it isn't something to ignore through the Lord Jesus Christ we have a permanent, eternal connection to the household of faith to God the Father God knows when any one of those 9 million birds goes horizontal goes feet to the sky God knows how does he keep track of these birds but I promise you if he can keep track of any one of all of those birds he is way more interested in you and in me so it is self pity it is arrogance and it is subjective to think I am all alone I am out in the wilderness here by the brook and there is no water not so God knows exactly where each of us is at all times He knows every intimate detail of our circumstances He knows the thoughts and intents of our heart He is our Father and we are in a family permanently so we are loved we are important we are woven into the fabric of God's plan in a very integrated way don't sell that short there is a reason why Paul mentions this here hard on the heels of prisoner of the Lord Jesus and my tribulations for you don't lose heart, why? when I pray to the Father I remember that He is the defining name that makes this family what it is and it is a powerful thought it is a powerful truth to sustain us when a cloud passes in front of the sun and things seem a little dark we will pause here and take our break when we come back we are going to pick up with the content of this prayer there are infinitives here there are five things organized under three headings and it is a powerful powerful request and we will see the details when we come back