

Ephesians 14-03-30a

This is Sunday the 30th of March 2014, the book of Ephesians which preserves for us Paul's letter to the Laodiceans, traveling in the same pouch with the letter to the Colossians. We have come in our study to chapter 4 and we resume this morning at verse 2. We'll take just a moment to dedicate our time and ourselves to the understanding of God's truth, recognizing the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Let's pray.

Father we thank you as always for this privilege, this opportunity to spend time together in fellowship, being built up and encouraged in each other's presence through our conversation, through our love expressed for one another both spoken and unspoken, both in words and in deeds, in praying for one another and support for each other. We thank you for this passage of Scripture and the truth that it contains for us. We pray that our study this morning will not just be a lecture, it won't just be a sermon, but that the word in this portion of Paul's letter will come alive and will be meaningful, will be helpful, will be an encouragement and an inspiration to each one of us in the days ahead.

We pray for those who have the rule over us. We know that there are many winds that blow both nationally and internationally and there are those in our government who still seek to exercise their responsibilities in the light of your word. And even though the trend is not encouraging, we pray that your hand of blessing will remain on our nation to the extent that we qualify and to the extent that it can be preserved so that we can pursue your will and your purpose and that the light of the gospel can shine to those who do not yet know your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name. Amen. We pick up our study now in Ephesians chapter 4. You will remember that this section of the letter begins with Paul resuming his thought.

He has stopped a couple of times to expand ideas. Most recently, he is resuming what the content of his prayer is. So it's really helpful if you are interested in a good prayer life, knowing what a good prayer is, how to pray effectively.

It's great to study the prayers of Paul. We have a number of them recorded and I just offer this as a quick thought, as a quick observation. There are a lot of ideas about what makes a healthy Christian life.

If you go look at the books that are in the bookstore, you read articles in journals and magazines, you look at the television, you watch the radio, whatever it is. I'm just seeing if you're paying attention. Some of you are kind of not really focused yet and believe me, I understand.

But think about this. A lot of opinions about what is and isn't a healthy Christian life, right? Does everybody you know in the Christian world think that you're a healthy Christian? Well, you know, I just don't see a lot of knocking on doors. I don't see a lot of profligate work for charity or whatever.

Whatever the standard may be. Is there somebody in your periphery that you suspect might think you're just really not an on-fire-for-God Christian because their standard is different? Many times the standard, quite often the standard is well, if you're not evangelizing, you're not a healthy Christian. There was a book written by the founder of the Navigators, Dawson Trotman, called Born to Reproduce.

Bless his heart. Love Dawson Trotman. God has done wonderful things in and through the Navigators, in some cases in spite of themselves, but a lot of good has been done.

Dawson Trotman is going to have many stars in his crown, don't get me wrong. But Born to Reproduce is not a title I would put on any book having to do, sharing the gospel is important, but I mean you wouldn't say that about hardly anything. You know, became a Marine to recruit, you know, became anything to make more of the same.

It's an important element. It's an important responsibility there of those who are given that gift. God considers evangelism important enough to take certain ones of us and give us a gift specifically targeted at that function.

Don't get me wrong, I love evangelism. Every single one of us was evangelized by somebody, praise God. But it is not our purpose.

It is not our fundamental mission. But there are so many people in the world who have made it the mission. Why? Because it's easy.

You say, oh, I don't think so. You think about it. It's easy.

It's a cop-out. All I have to do is get over my initial sense of good manners and sense of the right of other people to their privacy. I just learn how to trample on that.

It's kind of like learning to smoke. You know, initially your body says, what are you doing? Get this, you know, smoke bad. Cough, cough, you know, eyes watering, turning green, throwing up.

But people learn to suppress that and become inveterate smokers. Well, we have a God-given natural respect for other people's privacy and right to make their own decisions. And you can learn to trample that down just like you overcome the natural aversion to, you know, rolling leaves in a piece of paper, setting it on fire and sucking the results into your face.

So once you do that and get over that part, it's about as easy as smoking. I mean, you can just... And it doesn't matter what the result is. If you say, well, you know, I did a little event.

I shared the gospel with somebody this week. The guy that was sacking my groceries, I asked him if he was a believer. The person I rode up in the elevator with, I asked him if they were a believer.

And pat yourself on the back. What a good boy am I? Now, I'm not saying that everybody has that view. I'm saying it is an easy slide because a couple of these episodes and it is easy to give yourself a pass and say, I'm being spiritual.

The Christian walk, the Christian life is a minute-by-minute thing. And you don't get to give yourself a free pass and say, well, I'm doing okay because day before yesterday I did X, whatever it may be. There's people who think, well, I write a big fat check to the church every week and the church does all the spiritual stuff so I'm off the hook.

That doesn't cut it either. Our life before God is the thoughts and intents of the heart and you don't get a pass on that by what you do. You are what you think.

It is the thoughts and intents of the heart that will be judged on the day of Christ Jesus at the bema, the judgment seat of Christ. It is motivations. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

And so he will be judged. That's a much higher, harder standard. We succeed in that by paying attention to what Paul says.

And so as he gives his prayer, this is a great view of what the content of our thinking should be. It's an outward view. It is concerned with others.

I pray that God will do for you, Paul says in chapter 1. The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened, I pray that God will help you to see the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, the effectual working of His power, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that God will use your open eyes and be able to show you these things. We've been unified.

He prays that we will be able to get along with one another and not have divisions and grudges and holding back and exacting penalties and inflicting punishments. That's all of chapter 2, that we have been made one in Christ. The middle wall of partition has been broken down.

Sin is forgiven. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Do unto others as you would have the Father do unto you when it comes to sin.

For this reason, he says in chapter 3, I Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus. And then he goes and talks about that. Don't feel bad for me.

Don't feel like the circumstances are somehow hindering the gospel. God is using these circumstances. God uses hard times.

Our effectual prayers are not, oh God, please remove these hard circumstances. Our prayer, like Paul, ought to be, oh Lord, please bless and encourage and sponsor growth and appreciation in and through these circumstances. And once they are objective is accomplished, then remove them.

If illness is designed to bring understanding, then Lord, please bring the understanding so that the illness can be resolved. If weakness is necessary so that your strength can be made manifest, oh Lord, manifest your strength so that that weakness can pass and we can move on to learn other things. We pray this for ourselves.

We pray it for one another. He prays that we may be able to comprehend in verse 18 of the last chapter, with all the saints, the width and length and depth and height. It is about comprehension.

It is not what we do. It's about what we understand and how we think in the light of our understanding, because thinking drives action, right? What you think drives what you do. I therefore, chapter 4, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, plead with you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.

And then we saw last time, the first word in verse 2, meta, with. This is the process, like metamorphosis, meta noeo, change of mind, change of life, going from the mundane, the earthly, the temporary, the dust to dust, into eternity, into eternal things. How do you walk worthy of the calling? Is there anybody that really doesn't want to walk worthy of the calling? Yeah, I know I'm saved, but I really am not interested.

I want to show up in glory. I want to be face-to-face with the Lord Jesus, having done nothing to appreciate my salvation. He saved me.

That's really kind of on Him. I accepted it. I know He's there.

Yes, thanks Christ for dying for me. But in terms of the calling, walking worthy and expressing any kind of appreciation or thankfulness or wanting to fulfill my purpose and the reason for which the Lord Jesus saved me, seriously, you're not interested in walking worthy? What's the matter with you? Wake up. Every one of us should be highly motivated, should be dedicated to figuring out how to walk worthy of our calling.

Well, here's the instructions, verse 2. This is how you do it. Do you want to walk worthy of the calling? Do you want to show up at the judgment seat of Christ and be approved? Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Well done, brother or sister.

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren, and He is going to share the inheritance with those who figure this out and get with the program. Verse 2, pay attention, verse 2 is the way to do this. You want to know how to live in a way that pleases God, that is as plain as it can be possibly made.

With all typeno-phrosyne. And we spent all of last Sunday looking at that word and what it means. Remember, typenos and phrosyne from phroneo, thinking.

What kind of thinking? Well, we move forward today to the second word which is gentleness. We

covered typeno-phrosyne. We're now going to cover the second word which is prautetos.

Prautetos, P-R-A-U-T-E-T-O-S. Did I spell typeno-phrosyne for you last time? T-A-I-P-E-N-O-P-H-R-O-S-U-N-E. Typeno-phrosyne.

This is opposite. Typeno-phrosyne was something the Greeks looked down on. Kind of like today.

You know, you shouldn't be ashamed of anything. You should be proud of things that people used to be embarrassed about. You know, I've made mistakes and look at me.

I'm proud of them. I'm on a terrible road and I'm proud of it. Look at some of the lyrics of rap music if you have a strong stomach.

I abuse women and I'm proud of it. I look at them as objects and I'm proud of it. And of course nobody can criticize this because to do so is labeled racist.

And as soon as somebody throws the word racist, you're done having any kind of a rational argument because despite its lack of truth, you can't get a word in edgeways. As soon as anybody yells racist, logical debate is over. Doesn't matter how you demonstrate, how many ways you say, look, I'm not, this has nothing to do with color.

This has nothing to do with origins. This has nothing to do with genetics. This is about objectifying women and denigrating them and treating them as, you know, horrible.

Well, that's just racist to say that. So rap music gets away literally with murder and talking about murder in their lyrics. Nobody can criticize the lyrics of rap music because to do so is racist.

Well, in the Greek world, typanos, humility, was looked down on because the Greeks, masters of the world. They thought, why should I be humble about anything? Why should I be reserved about anything? We're, you know, we're on top. Alexander the Great and now we're, you know, the Romans dominated the world, conquered everything and everybody, built roads, had great engineering, and they, of course, any Roman citizen would take credit for everything that the Roman Empire had done in the same way that today atheists will take credit for everything science has done.

I'm an atheist, therefore, I get credit for every, you know, the airplane, cell phones, Xboxes, TV, you know, running water. It's all science and I'm an atheist and I get credit for that. You're a Christian, you're living in the mythological past, you'd prefer to be out there in a cave watching sheep or something and, you know, your faith came about when only one percent of the knowledge was available to the world, blah, blah, blah, etc., etc.

They take credit for it. Well, the Greco-Roman world took credit for the conquest, the advancements in civilization. They had running water, they had sewers, they had hot baths.

They said, look at us, we're Romans, so what's to be humble about? You know, there used to be a marine bumper sticker that said, it's hard to be humble, you know, when you're the something. It's hard to be, when you can't remember. Something about, well, there was a, you remember, who was the guy that had the, who was the guy that had the, ah, I can see his face, Mac Davis.

Mac Davis had a song, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. Remember Mac Davis, probably long gone now, but, oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. I can't wait to look in the mirror, because I get better looking each day.

To know me is to love me. I must be a heck of a man, etc. Well, this is how the Greco-Roman world felt.

And so, Taipanofrasune wasn't favorable. It wasn't a good thing. They thought, well, that's ridiculous.

Paul says that believers should be expressing humility. It was counterintuitive and countercultural. It was antithetical to that world.

It's the opposite of pride. It's the opposite of arrogance. It's the opposite of arrogating to yourself credit that you really don't deserve.

I took an online IQ test and it told me I'm smart, so boo on you. You know, this sort of thing. Not false humility, but genuine humility.

By the way, humility is one of the keys to promoting unity. Why do people get crossways? It's hard to be unified. It's hard to maintain relationships if you get your back up and let your pride get the better of you.

Well, I don't deserve that. Me, myself, and I find that that's offensive to us. Humility recognizes there's nothing that anybody else does that I am not subject to myself.

We're made out of the same clay. We struggle with the same forces of darkness. We wrestle with principalities and powers.

We all have a fallen, corrupt nature. Seriously, I am so much better that nobody would ever find fault with me, but I'm going to find fault with others. It's arrogance.

Taipanofrasune eliminates that. By grace you have been saved through faith, lest any man should boast. Taipanofrasune is the opposite of that boasting.

I'm better, therefore I'm qualified to judge. We are all forgiven. We are all victims of God's grace, and we should look at one another the way God looks at us.

In Christ, undeserving but there anyway. That's Taipanofrasune. Well now we move on to Praotetos, and one of the best ways to see what this word means is to look at it in its context in

other places.

Keep your finger here, but turn back a little bit to Galatians. Just a couple of pages back to Galatians chapter 6. In my Bible it's just two pages back. Galatians chapter 6, verse 1. Paul is writing.

Remember what the problem was in Galatia? You need these big idea concepts for the different parts of the Bible, different books of the Bible. What's the big problem in, oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? What was their problem? They were trying to be righteous by the works of the law. They had a bunch of Judaizers there that were teaching them, well, yeah, Christ is good and Christianity is good, but that doesn't do anything to take away the law of Moses, and you still need to be in the law and following the law.

You've got to amalgamate. This would be like coming to faith in Christ as a Catholic and saying, well, what you've got to do is combine them. You can do all the stuff you're doing in your Bible church, but you also need to pay attention to the Pope and the bishops and the cardinals and the priests and the holy smoke and the robes and the stained glass windows and the Virgin Mary.

I've got to put her right up there. She's the co-redemptrix. Mary's a big, pray to Mary, pray to the saints, have a St. Christopher and hang it on your car so you'll have fewer accidents.

I want to tell you how many cars I've seen in the junkyard with a St. Christopher still wrapped around the rearview mirror. I'm thinking, seriously? Did you think that was going to work? I have seen St. Christopher medals in the junkyard on the car that's all crumpled up, and I'm trying to find one unbent piece. And people didn't even bother to take it off of there.

It's like, well, that didn't work, so they left it. And it's swinging in the breeze in the junkyard, no wind blowing through the broken, anyway. You don't pray to saints.

You don't pray to saints. But can you imagine if somebody said, well, you need to do all of that and, you know, do the stuff you're learning in your Bible church, both and. That was a problem in Galatia.

And Paul says, you're foolish. Who has fooled you? Who has bewitched you? Who has hypnotized you that you would think that this could work? All things are made new in Christ. And so when he gets to chapter 6, and of course, this is going to create even more dispute and more finger-pointing within the church.

So he says, brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, and this is an interesting turn of phrase, don't you think? If any man is overtaken in a trespass, it doesn't say if any man trespasses, it says, are you overtaken in the trespass? If you get caught. Interesting, no? If any man is caught in his trespass, everybody trespasses. But a lot of people are good at, you know, doing the fan dance and you don't know they trespassed.

It's a secret. Nobody found out. I successfully dodged the surveillance and nobody knows what I have done.

But this guy got caught. It's in the open. Did you hear what, you know, Rupert did the other day? I pick Rupert because I don't know anybody named Rupert.

Rupert got caught doing something he should not have done. If any man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one. Restore him.

He got caught. He was doing wrong. You who are mature, you who are operating in the power of God's Spirit, rebuke him, judge him, castigate him, excommunicate him, hold him up for ridicule and vilification in the church.

Is that what it says? If you're spiritual in the church, restore such a one. How? Proutetas. This is actually the adverb form of the word, but it's the same word.

Proutetas. Gently, sensitively, not setting yourself up as judge and jury and, well, Rupert, I would never do such a thing. A bunch of raining down of guilt and shame.

Restore such a one gently in a spirit of fellowship, in a brotherly spirit of restoration, a familial spirit of, you know, you messed up, but look, let's help you get back on track. Positive. We're on the same team.

You've got a team member that passed the ball to the enemy and they went and made a basket. Okay, let's help Rupert not do that in the future. He was supposed to set a pick and he didn't and you got blocked and they went down and scored more points.

Let's teach Rupert how to set a pick. Let's teach Rupert how to pass the ball. Let's teach Rupert how to not double dribble or how to not mess up throwing the ball in from out of bounds.

Let's help him. Let's make him better. I've told you before, this is one of the things that I really missed out on when I was in grade school.

Most sports, if you're going to play high school sports, you start out playing in grade school and the guys who play in the 5th grade play in the 6th grade. Guys who play in the 6th grade play in the 7th and it just moves forward from there. And if you weren't able to make the team in the 5th and 6th grade, you can pretty much, you know, unless you're kind of a wonder kind or some sort of insanely talented person, you're not going to just walk on and join the team.

And in grade school, if someone does not do the Proutetas, if they're not gentle with you, if they don't work with you and try to help you develop your potential, you can have some athletic ability, but if somebody doesn't help you, if they just say, well, you're no good and, well, this guy played in the 4th grade, I'm just going to work with him, you don't get included. You don't get trained. I went out for baseball.

Nobody explained the game to me. I was in the outfield, naturally. That's where you put people who don't know what they're doing.

Well, here comes the ball. It's a grounder. I pick up the ball.

I have no idea who to throw it to. Why? Nobody told me. Nobody explained the game.

You know, when there's runners on base, you want to see which one's ahead and throw the ball to the base ahead of that guy so that somebody can throw him out. It's simple, but nobody explained it to me. And so everybody's raining all kinds of abuse and shame on me because I catch the ball, and I just threw it to the middle of the field.

I didn't know where to throw it. I just threw it. I thought, well, somebody that knows what they're doing will pick up the ball.

Well, it's too late. The guy is on base, and I'm the bad guy because nobody had that Proutetas, inclusive, let me help you attitude. Do you want to be the believer that nobody bothers to support, that nobody bothers to encourage, that nobody bothers to treat as a brother or sister? Do you want to seriously be the person that's on the outs? Well, then don't be that person that treats others that way.

This is what Paul is saying. This is a humility that doesn't hold people's mistakes, conscious or unconscious, against them. It is a spirit of restoration.

Look at Galatians 6, verse 1. Restore this person who is caught in an offense. Restore this person. Restore them with this gentle spirit, this encouraging, wholesome, let's mend the breach, let's make this better.

This is what we're supposed to be. Do not get to the judgment seat of Christ without this attitude. You cannot walk worthy of your calling if we can't solve this problem, if we can't develop this skill.

We should be here for each other regardless. It doesn't matter how offensive the offense is. How much better is the Lord Jesus going to judge us to be if we're little tin pot, you know, district court judges raining down the maximum sentence on each other, or if we absorb a wrong, if we overlook a fault? Look at the Lord Jesus traveling around with Judas for three and a half years, never said a word against him, recorded in Scripture, in the whole three and a half years.

Did Jesus know that He was stealing out of the money box? Did Jesus make an issue out of it? Did He say, well, we're going to have a council of the twelve here, all you apostles, all you disciples gather around. Judas, there were twenty-five shekels in the box and now there's only twenty-three. Explain yourself.

What do you think, Eleven, what shall be done unto the man who knocks the Bible off the platform, who pilfers the money? What shall be done? Did the Lord Jesus ever do that? Why?

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. That is the calling. And we are now the body of Christ.

We are Christ on this earth. So what should we be doing? The same thing He did. And so again, the question is, how do I walk worthy of the calling with which I was called? This is how.

I need to get over myself. I need to take myself off the dais, off the pedestal, off the platform, stop feeling like I am the injured party and I have a valid case and it should be judged in my favor. I'm the plaintiff and the defendant should be punished and retribution should be inflicted and remuneration should come my way.

Forget all of that. This attitude is one that looks at the bigger picture. What's more important, my petty desire for justice or the unity of the body of Christ, the reflection of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the forward progress of God's plan and purpose? Do I really want to stand there and say, but wait a minute.

That's what *prautetos* means. You find it also if you turn forward a few pages to 2 Timothy 2.25. And it's interesting because the context here is very similar to what we saw in Galatians. 2 Timothy 2.25. We start in verse 23.

Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes. Now do people think that they're right when they dispute? Most of the time yes. Sometimes in the midst of the dispute you begin to suspect that maybe you're wrong but now you've got a safe face.

Well, I may have a point but hey, I don't want to lose this argument. That would make me look bad. You can't just stop and say, you know what, I think you're right.

Gee, sorry. That's rare. That's a genuine humble person.

Most of us have the instinct to fight on until the last dog is hung. Even when we begin to think, my fort has been breached. My gates are broken down.

I look like the ending in one of those Lord of the Rings movies. But I'm going to fight on to the last man because it's too embarrassing to admit that I was wrong. And I've made way too many strong statements in this argument to back off and say, oops.

Well, avoid foolish and ignorant disputes knowing that they generate strife. What is the goal? God doesn't want strife in the body of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is not interested in us striving with one another.

Even when we're quote unquote right. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach. Have you ever noticed how when you make too strong of an argument, you really can't convince or help the other person come to an understanding and agree with you? I have this problem.

I rain so much vindictive on somebody, vindictiveness on someone. I mock their position so thoroughly that even if they wanted to agree with me, they can't because I've been insulting. That's not able to teach.

You want to point out where something has gone awry in a way, leave a path where the person can agree with you. How do you do this? A gentle spirit. Leave the person a way to learn.

If you're actually right, do you just want to win the debate or do you want to bring that person into the fold with you in that right understanding? That's what this attitude of *prauteitas* and *taipaenophrasune* mean. When you work them together, it makes us able to teach. What's the result? You're now in harmony and you both have a better understanding if you are able to teach this proper view instead of condemnation and conflict and strife.

You say, look, let me try to explain this a different way. Maybe this will make it more clear. Gentleness, not generating conflict, not contradiction, not condescension.

Don't put someone in a position that you make it impossible for them to agree with you and it's so easy to do. Trust me, I'm an expert. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel.

If you find it degenerating into a quarrel, just stop. This takes self-control. This is humility in the genuine sense.

You have the strength to stop yourself from a fruitless debate. Just stop. Let the other person have the last word.

If it's going nowhere, now we're talking about in the body of Christ here, we're talking about prioritizing. Hear me now. We are talking about prioritizing unity at the expense of our rightness.

I would rather we be unified than I be right. I would rather we be unified than I be right. I do not want to disrupt relationship just so that I can prove to you that I really was right.

Now, we're talking about the area of non-essentials here. Obviously, if somebody starts saying, well, I want to worship the Virgin Mary in church. Look, I'm going to disagree with you and I'm not going to forsake that issue for the sake of unity.

Obviously, there are boundaries. There are parameters within which this functions. But on non-essentials, you know, who left the cap off the toothpaste? Give it up, okay? You think I did something for a bad reason and I really didn't? Fine.

I'm not going to sit here and quarrel with you in an endless round of self-justification. That's fine. If you know me well enough, you'll know or you'll find out that that's not how I roll.

That's not what I do. But you'll have to find it out experientially. I'm not going to sit here and quarrel with you trying to vindicate myself or trying to vindicate my position.

See it? You go over to verse 25, in humility, praotetos, in humility correcting those who are in opposition. We do the correction, but humbly leave them a path to agree with you. Is this important? You cannot walk worthy if you don't practice this.

If you don't develop this skill, you don't have a worthy walk. You're not going to survive the judgment seat of Christ with any kind of reward, inheritance, or opportunities in the future without this skill. This is important.

This is how you walk worthy. You don't do this, you don't have a worthy walk. It's that simple.

But notice what precedes it, typeino frasune. We've got to get off our high horse. We've got to get off our self-important binge and recognize that we are working for something larger.

The unity of the body of Christ is precious. Don't sacrifice it over something minor. Don't sacrifice it over something that is all about me and not about Christ.

I am offended. I am wounded. I was injured.

I was treated in a despicable way. Seriously? You think about the Lord Jesus on the cross and this is what you're worried about? His desire that the body of Christ be unified, that we love one another, that we teach one another, that we help one another, that we grow in grace and knowledge. You're going to throw all that over because you've got a point? This is what we have to get over.

There is no worthy walk without it. Let's pause here and take our break.