

## **Ephesians 14-04-18a**

This is Friday, the 18th of April, 2014. It's my grandmother Betty's 110th birthday. Happy birthday, grandmother.

We continue our study in the book of Ephesians, resuming in chapter 4, verse 3. And I know you were expecting Kings and Prophets, but I'm doing Ephesians because I've got a thing on my mind. You know, I prepare both of them all week long, and sometimes one of them just surges to the front and demands to get out. So we're doing Ephesians.

Because Sunday, by the way, the day after tomorrow, Resurrection Sunday, we'll be having a special. So rather than lose my Ephesians lesson, I thought I would do it tonight. So there's method to my madness.

I don't have complete Alzheimer's yet. Anyway, we'll be in Ephesians chapter 4, so you might turn there. And I apologize if I'm messing up anybody's notebook.

Let's take a moment before we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we're grateful for the time that you grant to us on this earth and the provision that you make for us, the challenges and the blessings that you program into our circumstances to provide us opportunities for application, for wrestling against the principalities and powers. We know that they have been subjugated, they have been defeated at the cross by the Lord Jesus, an event that we celebrate this week.

And their only remaining usefulness is for our training and our instruction. You put us in this world to oppose and to overcome the inherent sin that we have and the sin that surrounds us in this world. We thank you for your grace and your wisdom in granting us these privileges and these opportunities.

And we pray tonight as we study this portion of your word that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and will minister it to each heart so that each one of us will receive a blessing and be strengthened and encouraged for the time that remains to us in this life as we in particular this weekend celebrate the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, his work on our behalf, and most importantly, his resurrection from the dead that provides us great hope and the opportunity for life with you in the eternal future. We pray that you will bless us as we spend this time of fellowship in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, Ephesians chapter 4, just by way of a quick summary from not quite two weeks ago, a week ago last Sunday we were in this chapter, and what we know by way of broad context, I say no, this is my firm belief, is that this is the letter to the church at Laodicea, traveled in the same pouch with the letter to Colossae. Colossae was a town about 15 miles to the east roughly of Laodicea, and Paul wrote the Colossian letter and this letter at the same time and indicated that they should be read together. The recipients should basically trade letters because they are complementary, and as we have gone through the first three chapters, we've seen often that there is a similar idea

expressed in slightly different terms or in a different way in Colossians.

The other interesting thing about this, of course, is that this is not the only letter to the Laodiceans. There is another New Testament letter to the Laodiceans, and we'll be looking at it a little bit later this evening. But having covered in the first three chapters the foundational truth that undergirds his exhortations, the Apostle Paul now turns to the encouragement to action in chapter four.

Chapter one, he outlined in beautiful detail and wonderful seven-fold symmetry all of the blessings and provisions and potentials that we have in Christ, in Him, in Him, in Him. Some of you may have that circled like I did in my Bible, all of the in Hims as you go through. And this reminds us that we are saved by grace through faith.

Everything that we have comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him all of these things pertain. We are elect in Him.

So much trouble could have been saved in terms of Reformed theology and Calvinism and whatnot if believers who have gone down that road had simply understood Ephesians chapter one. We are elect in Him. The Lord Jesus Christ preexisted the foundations of this world, and God chose Him.

And because we are placed in Him at the point of salvation, we come to share that election. We are elect in Him before the foundation of the world. He's the one that existed beforehand.

He's the one that was chosen beforehand. And we share the wonderful privileges of sonship and inheritance and destiny that God assigned to the Lord Jesus. The church is who we're talking about.

The church is the bride of Christ. Currently the body of Christ will one day be in fulsome revealed glory, the bride of Christ. And the picture of marriage is very significant because, as it says in Genesis, when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, the two become one flesh.

The body of Christ and the bride of Christ are called that and are that because of this in Him truth. The two become one. And united with Christ, God apportions to us, appoints to us, imputes to us these wonderful attributes and privileges that belong to the Lord Jesus so that He is now the firstborn among many brethren.

And He has the spoils to divide among the strong. All of these things in chapter 1. Chapter 2, a reminder from the Apostle Paul, that the former paradigm of a national people of God that pertained in the Old Testament age, you had a family and then you had a clan and then you ultimately had a nation associated with God. This is where the people of God would reside and where those who were interested and came to faith would come.

They were the light shining to the Gentiles in the Old Testament age. But in this age, God has made the two one. It is a new construction.

It is a new situation. And now national origin, heredity, in the physical sense, make no difference. We are all one in Christ.

And those who were afar off have been brought near. And under the blood of Jesus Christ, through faith, anyone can be the people of God. And it has universalized.

There is no longer the geographical limitations. At the culmination of the ages, at the right time, with the spread of the Roman Empire and the universalization and globalization of commerce and travel and culture, this is when, having prepared civilization for it, God made the gospel and faith ubiquitous. You didn't have to come to Israel.

You don't have to come to Jerusalem. You don't have to find the temple and the Holy of Holies and the presence of God there. Now the presence of God is in us.

We are the temple. We are a residing place for all three members of the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit potentially reside in us.

Chapter 2. In chapter 3, Paul goes on to say, for this reason, as a prisoner, he is not discouraged. He is not depressed. He doesn't feel encumbered or limited because his knowledge of these wonderful truths, the impartation of this mystery, that the Gentiles, in verse 6, should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promising Christ through the gospel.

Now, one of the reasons I'm reviewing this again is, how many circles can you draw and say, this is in Christ? Is there an in Christ here? And there's another group of people over here that are in Christ. And there's another bubble over here that's in Christ. There's only one circle that defines in Christ.

It is the Christ circle. When you are inside that circle, you are in Christ. Outside that circle, you are not in Christ.

There's just one definition. There's one border and it is in Him. There's one.

There's one Lord. People say, well now, wait a minute. Especially in this day.

There's the Jews and then there's the Gentiles. There's the circumcision and the uncircumcision. There is another definition for people of God.

And Paul breaks that down in chapter 2 and in chapter 3. And he says, not anymore. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither male nor female.

There is neither bond nor free. We are all one in Christ. Now there is a purpose in that.

And this is what we're getting to in chapter 4. We have seen, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. And we've spent three weeks now looking at what that calling is. You remember what it is? Remember we had a little pop quiz? What is your calling? And you answered it, right? You know what your calling is.

Short answer, grow in grace and knowledge. Be in Him. Exploit all of those potentials that Paul has described.

Don't forget its importance and exchange it for a temporary, momentary mess of pottage. It's our inheritance. It's our heritage.

It's our destiny. It's our opportunity. It defines us.

We have no meaningful definition apart from this. This is why we are here. Now, what is one of the quickest ways to lose sight of that truth? What is one of the quickest ways to lose sight of the calling? To remember the calling.

To remember who we are and why we're here. We are the body of Christ on earth. The incarnate Christ was crucified, which we commemorate this week.

He was buried. He rose again. For 40 days He appeared to His disciples.

And then He left on the day of Pentecost. Right? 50 days total. And then He's gone.

That body left. So, where is Christ in the world? You are it. We are it.

We are the presence of Christ on this earth. We are His body. How did the Lord Jesus do the wonderful, miraculous things that He did in His incarnate, first advent ministry? Did He use the power of the second person of the Trinity? By what power, by what authority did He do those things? What was the power? When people blasphemed and said He was doing the work of the devil, what did Jesus say? You're blaspheming whom? The Holy Spirit.

Right? To misattribute, to misunderstand and misconstrue the power by which He cast out demons and ascribe it to Satan. He said, you're blaspheming God's Spirit. Because it was in the power of the Spirit that He did those things.

He, that body, has gone. What body is here now? Us. And what is the power by which we accomplish God's plan and purpose in this life? The Holy Spirit.

Right? It's the same. It's just a much more various body than it was before. It's much more ubiquitous.

Instead of one person traveling around in Judea and Galilee and Samaria, now look at all of us. We're everywhere. Much more difficult for Satan to drag all of us out in the wilderness and tempt us.

Much more difficult for Satan to get rid of all of us where there's too many of us. So, he's got to have his hench-demons. They're not henchmen, are they? They're hench-demons.

His factotae. His little denizens out there. His lackeys.

Of course, you don't want to go too far down the road in insulting the enemy. That's not right either. Here's the point.

Here is the point. This is our calling. We are here to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in His fullness.

Objective thinking. Objective behavior. Not subjective.

Philippians chapter 2, let this mind be in you. If you're the body of Christ, what operates the body? The mind. We hope.

We trust. There are various maladies and nervous system disorders where you lose control of your body. And the mind cannot control tremors or cannot operate limbs.

You're paraplegic, quadriplegic. You lose the connection between the mind and the body. Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus.

Kind of makes sense, doesn't it? If we are His body, we want to be functioning in the same way He did. What mind did He have? What kind of thinking defined His behavior while He was here? That should define us. And that's why we have memorized and gone over countless times Philippians chapter 2. Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus.

Who did not think in proud terms. Emptied Himself. Took on the form of a servant.

Came in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself. He humbled Himself.

Ephesians chapter 4, verse 2 and 3. Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called by means of, with. This is how it's done. You dig a hole with a shovel.

You walk worthy of your calling with these attributes. This is, as I've said many times, I love how God tells us not just what to do, but how to do it. Walk worthy of your calling.

See you later. What? Here's how. With, by means of, lowliness.

Taipeino frosune. We spent two weeks looking at that word. And gentleness.

We looked at that word as well. Last time we looked at long-suffering. We saw taipeino frosune.

We saw prauteitas, which was gentleness. And we saw long-suffering last time, which was

macrothumia. Bearing with.

Which is the next term. This is our fourth term. This is anekomai.

Anekomai. Now, when you look at these four words. Lowliness and gentleness.

Long-suffering and bearing with. Think about those four terms. Lowliness and gentleness.

Long-suffering and bearing with. What is the sphere in which those attributes operate? What is the point of contact for these attitudes? It's one another. There is really no such thing as lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering and bearing with.

If you are Robinson Crusoe and there's no Friday. Right? There's got to be somebody around. You can't be the last guy on the life raft floating in the middle of the ocean.

And talk about long-suffering toward other people. Now, you can say I have suffered a long time floating around here. I saw that movie with Robert Redford.

It's a movie starring Robert Redford, produced by Robert, written by Robert. It's just Bob did the whole thing. And he's the only guy in it.

You never see another soul. And he spends most of his time kind of grimacing. And floating and watching his situation deteriorate and go from bad to worse.

It was interesting. I don't recommend against watching it. I also don't recommend rushing out to see it.

If you've got nothing to do and you're not put off by Robert Redford, then you could watch it. But he was by himself. In the whole movie, he's by himself.

So, in terms of these attributes, it does not apply. It does not pertain. It's moot.

You can't, I mean, unless you're schizophrenic. If you're a multiple personality and you're talking to yourself, I suppose one part of you could be arrogant and dismissive and intemperate toward the other. But these are one another attributes.

Now, this is really important. This is what we're coming to. Pay attention now.

What did we see? Lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, macrothumia. And now this on echo, which means to endure. Now, if we're talking about enduring, are you having a good time? Oh, I got that piece of cherry pie and I endured all the way to the end.

I got that peach cobbler bluebell bowl of ice cream and I endured the entire thing. We're not talking about pleasure. We're not talking about happy times here, are we? Endurance means there's something wrong.

There's friction. There is some sort of caustic, uncomfortable situation. When you endure, by definition, things are not right.

In an ideal world, we wouldn't have to endure anything. So, is the situation where things are not going like we would like them to, is that an excuse to not endure? It's an oxymoron. We are commanded to endure.

We are commanded to have endurance, which means there is a situation that is unpleasant and it is going to continue. It doesn't say, well, if you ever feel like you're going to have to endure, fix that situation right away. Get rid of that burr out from under the saddle.

Get that piece of sandpaper off your skin. Get that thorn out of your foot. The whole idea of endure is it's unpleasant and it's going to stay that way.

Now, this seems simplistic, but many times we don't really get back to our basics and think in simplistic enough terms. When something is uncomfortable or unpleasant, this is just like an itch. Did you ever get an itch right in that spot between your two shoulder blades where you can't reach this way and you can't reach this way and there's nothing sharp and protruding anywhere near you, there's no corner of a wall, you know, an external corner, and it's just there and you almost go wild thinking, I've got a pencil, can I get something? This is the advantage of being married.

When you're married, there's a person available to hit that spot for you and it's one of the primary benefits of marriage in many people's opinion. But we think this situation must end. This situation must be over with.

Well, that may be something devoutly to be wished, but this is the occasion for endurance. You have need of endurance, you have need of endurance, so that after you've suffered a while, you inherit. Endurance is tied to inheritance.

You can't endure if there's nothing to endure. So when there is something that needs to be endured, think not, wow, what a big problem this is, but well, here's my opportunity to fulfill what? My calling. If I am called to endure, how can I fulfill my calling if there's nothing to endure? What this should do is help us restore our objectivity about problems, about difficulties, about the imperfect and the non-ideal.

You can look at it two ways. You can begin to climb the ladder of self-importance and self-centeredness and self-pity and arrogance and say, how dare circumstances do this to me? How dare people do this to me? Evidently, something in the universe has forgotten who I am and how important it is that I not be discommoded in this way. What is going on? That my pre-Copernican universe where everything revolves around me is somehow being vibrated out of balance.

This must be corrected immediately. Call the guards. Eject the malfeasance and the miscreants

and whoever it is that's causing this problem.

Get them out of here right now because obviously I am perturbed. We've got to slow down on this knee-jerk corrupt human instinct and stop and think. This is part of my calling to endure, to bear with, to be gentle and to be lowly.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the Taipanos, the lowly. How are you going to get grace if there's never an opportunity to decide to be lowly, to decide to think in non-arrogant, non-self-centered, non-self-pitying terms? How are you going to get the grace? God gives grace to the lowly. If you don't have an opportunity, how are you going to get the grace? Hands up everybody that doesn't need God's grace.

Don't have to be lowly because I don't need the grace. That's just absurd. All of us need God's grace.

Well, it's going to come when we maintain an even keel and remember objectively these four things. Now, when you go to the next verse, which is our verse for tonight, verse 3, remember the four things. Lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, and bearing with are all one another terms, right? And why are they important? And why does Paul mention them here? Look at verse 3. Endeavoring, this is spudazzo, this is the athlete straining to jump the maximum distance, to run the fastest time, to push himself to the very limit of excellence.

Spudazzo, striving every ounce to do what? To keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the Spirit. What is it that defines the body of Christ? What is it that enables the body of Christ, both in His first advent as an individual and in His present occupation of this earth? What is it that animates the body, enables and empowers the body? It's the Spirit.

And what is it that disrupts the effective ministry of the Spirit in the body when the body is not united, when you start drawing separate little bubbles and saying, well, some of us are in Christ over here, some of us are in Christ over here, some of us are in Christ over here. The Word of God says, no, there is one circle, there is one in Him. That's what chapter 2 and chapter 3, this huge foundation that Paul built underneath chapter 4 is all about unity.

How important are the one another commands? They are critical. You cannot fulfill your calling. You cannot walk worthy of the calling without these four things that all contribute to what? The unity of the Spirit and the bond.

Sundesmos. This is used throughout the Greek speaking world, even before the time of the New Testament. You have a dock and you have a ship and you have a sundesmos that links the two together.

Paul, whenever he talks about his bonds, it's desmoi, it's desmos, it's like handcuffs. It links two things inextricably together. The bond of peace.

Now, how arrogant is it when God says the priority, the calling is to stick together and to be united. Don't divide over Jew and Gentile. Don't divide over economic status.

Don't divide over class. Don't divide over race. Don't divide over origins.

Don't divide over appearance. Don't divide over economics. God says don't divide, don't divide, don't divide.

Corinthians, I hear there are wars and divisions among you. It shouldn't be so. What's the matter with you? You're even taking yourself to court letting unbelievers judge you.

Do you not know that you will judge angels? Paul just practically explodes in Corinthians when he finds out that there are wars and divisions among them because the message, the calling is unity. Now, we say, I think that's great. I think as long as nobody argues with me, unity is a wonderful thing.

As long as there's no differences of opinion, as long as everybody does things my way, I love this unity. Unity is great. I say what happens.

Everybody agrees with me. That's my definition of unity. To sacrifice unity on the altar of my ego, my sense of hurt or my sense of injustice, this person didn't give me my due.

I didn't feel like I was important in that equation. I was slighted. I was set aside.

I was overlooked. I was unappreciated. I was maligned.

I was falsey. I was, I was, I was. You notice the preponderance of the first person pronoun.

I, I, I. As soon as that pronoun starts hitting, division springs up. And a root of bitterness. You know, little grass roots getting into the crack of a mighty granite block can split the thing.

Grass can split granite. Just gets into a crack and divides. This is what Paul is.

This whole letter has been built to bring us to this point. Walk worthy of your calling. How? It is operational.

It is how we treat one another. And it cannot admit pride. It cannot admit self-centeredness.

Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus who emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, and came in the likeness of man. Humbled himself and was obedient to the cross. Suffered inhuman amounts of injustice and affliction and opposition.

Let this mind be in you. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. So, what is the, what is the application of this? Most of our problems in this life are people related.

Are they not? Even when something breaks, you say, well, who was supposed to fix that? Or who was supposed to keep that from breaking? Or, you know, why did this happen? Why did that happen? How did this accident occur? Who left that there? There's always a who lurking somewhere in the shadows of most of our problems. And we immediately start this thinking process. And at the point that the thinking starts, this is where the Spirit of God and the Word of God within us should act and should be applied and should be factored in.

Endeavoring. This means it's not automatic. It doesn't say waiting for the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, does it? It doesn't say, just stand still and it will fall on you.

Spudazzo. Athletes train. Athletes push.

Athletes work to get better and better at a thing, don't they? And spudazzo is an athletic term. Striving. Working.

Practicing. Training. Making it a goal.

Did you see some of those back when they had the Winter Olympics going on and they'd do the biographies of these athletes and the years they spent training? And the dedication, the hours every day, just countless hours. It defines their whole life. That's spudazzo.

Striving. Endeavoring. For what? The priority, the overweening, overriding priority is unity.

Do not be the agent of division. Anytime we are an agent of division, it is pride. And we have lost these four things.

We're no longer lowly. We're no longer gentle. We're no longer long-suffering.

And we are no longer bearing with. Now, we don't have the ability to do those in the flesh. Where does the power to do that come from? It's a supernatural power.

How did the Lord Jesus bear with and remain gentle and lowly? Remember the prophecies in Zephaniah where it says, Behold, your king comes lowly riding on the foal of a donkey. Remember that? Of all of the things it could say, lowly. The one personal attribute in that prophecy about the Lord Jesus, Behold, your king comes lowly.

Our task for the rest of today and for tomorrow, the rest of the weekend, and for the future, is to walk worthy of our calling, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. That unity and that bond is with each other. Nobody else.

It's not talking about stay united with God. It's not saying, you know, united with some grand philosophy or some impersonal set of standards. Keep yourself chained to this ethical concrete block.

It's not what it's talking about. Unity of Spirit and bond of peace, that's us. That's we.

That's each other, right? Verse 1, walk worthy of the calling. Verse 3, endeavoring to keep the unity and the bond. The how-to is in between those four attitudes, which are fruit of the Spirit.

It's the mind. It's the Spirit of God in us that enables us to do this. So we know the skills.

We know the fundamentals and the basics for how to experience and benefit from the power of God in our life. Spirit of God, Word of God. But it has to be cultivated.

It has to be pursued. Spoudadzo is an active verb, not a passive verb. It will not happen automatically.

If you think, well, that all sounded good. Now I'm going to get right back to business as usual. It's not going to happen.

We have to focus. You don't get to be an Olympic athlete by sitting around looking at a pair of skis or thinking, wow, look at those parallel bars. I bet if I jumped up there, you know, I could win a medal.

It's doing it and striving and getting better at it. Spoudadzo, striving. That's verse 3. We'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, verse 4, we have the explanation. It's interesting. It's almost ironic that unity is described in so many different ways.

It's one, but there's like six different descriptions of what oneness is. That's what we'll see when we come back.