

Ephesians 14-06-29a

This is Sunday, the 29th of June, 2014. We're in the book of Ephesians, Paul's letter to the Laodicean church, which was shared and exchanged with the group at Colossae and ultimately with the rest of the Greek speaking world and through translation into Latin and into English, for our benefit. We'll be resuming this morning in chapter 4, verse 25.

We'll take a moment, as is our custom, to pause and give each of us an opportunity to go before the Lord in prayer and ensure that the time we spend together will be meaningful, that God the Holy Spirit can be our teacher, that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work, which includes being a blessing and receiving a blessing in our fellowship this morning. Shall we pray? Father, we are thankful every time we recognize the great truths that define us as Your children, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, with all of the privileges that pertain to being in Him and sharing those things which we could never obtain or accomplish on our own, His righteousness, the peace and the sanctification that are our heritage, particularly in this age where we have the fully expressed presence of Your Holy Spirit in our midst and in our souls. We thank You for being granted the privilege of living in this time, of being able to explore and exploit these potentials.

We thank You for the truth of Your Word and the illumination that it sheds on these realities for us that transform our lives from being merely an ephemeral footnote in the great cosmos of the physical universe, instead of being merely grass that grows up and withers and fades. You have granted to us eternal life, significance, existence, consciousness, purpose, and service that transcend and follow after this life in ways that we can only understand the suggestions of in this limited time and this limited space. But in this life You have granted us supernatural enablement through the presence of Your Spirit, the power of Your Word, through the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who communicates to us Your character, Your love, Your grace, Your compassion on us.

What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou visitest him? You have made us lower than the angels, and yet in the Lord Jesus You have crowned us with glory and honor. We're so thankful for that privilege, for the identity that we have as the body of Christ, one day to be the bride of Christ and to be those who are fitted for service and for even greater opportunities in the life that is to come. We pray that as we look at this portion of Scripture together, that God the Holy Spirit will make it clear to us, help us to see what it means in terms of our responsibilities and our opportunities.

We pray that as we continue to live in this country as those who recognize its foundations and its ideals, which are rooted in Your Word and with respect and honor toward You, that we can continue to reflect those things even as our culture and as the general trend seems to more fully depart from those origins and those principles and those ideals. We pray that we can be a reflection of Your glory, that people will see us and ask us a reason for the hope that is in us so

that we can testify and we can witness to the tremendous blessings that we have from You through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name.

Amen. Ephesians chapter 4 has turned the corner as we have noted several times previously from the theological truths of the first three chapters into application. Paul has emphasized his great desire that we understand what all of this means in terms of what it works out to in our lives.

Now, when the health care laws were changed in the last few years, unlike many other law changes, unlike many other issues that come and go in the political world, this one really created an impact felt by nearly everyone. It changed the way we do things on a daily basis. And for that reason, it became a very intensely debated issue over which people have strong feelings.

I want to be able to have certain choices and certain options. I want to be able to obtain my health care at a cost that I consider to be reasonable with options that I consider to be reasonable. And if someone starts changing the landscape of those things, we feel it and we act and react.

We begin to look around. Do I need to get on the web and sign up for one of these government plans? Do I need to check with my current health insurance company and find out whether my plan is going to be good and will still be here in years to come? It makes a difference. Something comes up and we are concerned enough to investigate, to inquire, to find out, what do I need to do? When we know that a storm is coming, particularly people who live on coasts and they see the radar and here comes a typhoon or here comes a hurricane and there's potential for damage, people immediately feel motivated to act or to react.

You see people on the coasts going out and buying sheets of plywood to protect the windows of their home. They buy extra fuel. They buy extra food.

They get hurricane lanterns and they make preparations because based on information that is given to them over the news, an issue has personal significance. It is personally motivating, right? You can see the parallel in this passage. We have been given information in this letter by the Apostle Paul that should produce the same kind of response in us.

This is not theology to print out in a nice font and hang in a frame on the wall. These things have to make a difference. This is a storm warning.

This is a fundamental change in the way a normal human being would think. And he's going to really point that out. We've seen it in the first part of this chapter 4, particularly as we've gotten to the middle of it, beginning in verse 17, this I say therefore and testify that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.

Nobody wants to enter into a time of crisis unprepared. There's taking a course and they're talking about storms and tsunamis and that. And there's a picture in her book of a guy standing

on a pier looking at this giant tsunami wave.

He's standing there looking at it. Well, the book goes on to note the man was one of the fatalities when that wave struck. But here's a picture of him standing there looking at the wave.

You don't want to be this man. I think that's a sufficient introduction to our subject. We want to be prepared.

Paul is straining every fiber of his intellect and his spiritual gift of apostle to tell us how important this is. This isn't just, hey, you know, I went to church on Sunday. I think we were in Ephesians somewhere.

This is really important information. It needs to wreak a change so that a change has been wrought. It's like a free English lesson.

We wreak today. It was wrought yesterday. Wreak, wrought.

Change is wrought. It's not. I wreak it today.

I wreakified it yesterday. This needs to make a change. I think we can all agree on the tenses of make.

This is why you raise offspring. So that as your mind goes, they can begin to hold up your arms. This needs to make a change.

I think we grasp that idea. Yes? It needs to make a change. No longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.

How different is my life from my next door neighbor who does not go to church? How different is my life? He's out there mowing his lawn. I'm out there mowing my lawn. He's out there looking at the death of his grass due to the watering restrictions.

I'm out there looking at the death of my grass due to watering restrictions as it rots away, R-O-T-S, from the sidewalk back toward the center of the yard. What's the difference? Is there a difference? Should there be a difference? Paul says, no longer walk as the unspiritual walk. That's what the Gentiles are to those who are now church, especially to the Jewish believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have jumped dispensations.

No longer Old Testament saints. Now they are body of Christ. No longer walk in futility, in uselessness.

It seems great, but it has no substance. It has no lasting value. If someone says, I see that you've got \$100 there.

I'll offer you two \$100 investments. To my left is a pile of toilet paper worth \$100. To the right is a

tiny table on which is a tiny piece of gold, the value of which, based on the fraction of an ounce of gold that it contains is \$100.

Do you want the gold or do you want the toilet paper? The answer to that question is, it depends. What is of value to you? What is the need of the moment? The need of the moment here is for us to walk worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have an eye to the future, to understand what is important. It makes a difference.

It makes a difference. Futility of the mind. Imagination is a wonderful thing.

People can live in the world of their imagination, can have imaginary friends when they're little, hopefully only when they're little. Imagination can be a great thing. I do not want a doctor living in the world of his imagination while he's fixing something that's gone wrong with my physical body.

I don't want him imagining that he's in Rome having a nice spaghetti dinner when he's trying to perform an operation. That would be him living in his imagination. I don't want someone falling in love with me who views me in terms of their imagination.

They imagine that I'm Prince Charming in shining armor on a white horse, that I'm something that I'm not. You do not want to fall in love with someone who is a product of imagination. This is now one of the biggest problems with dating because so many people, I mean it's always been a problem in the sense that people will put up a false front, but it's gotten a lot worse in the world of online dating and social media.

There's even a word for it now. It's called catfishing. Catfishing is where someone who wants to find romance will create a false profile.

In their profile, 22 years old, they weigh 110 pounds, they play tennis, they ski, they like long walks on the beach, when in fact they are 45, they weigh 250 pounds, they are 15 pounds, and they haven't seen a beach in many years. Catfishing, it is putting an imaginary object of desire out there to deceive someone into relationship. What they hope I guess is that they can develop this thing far enough along that when reality hits, if ever, they can somehow have a grip on these people or they won't run with both hands in the air in the opposite direction.

But it's deceit and it is so much easier in a world like we now have where there is so little face-to-face contact in social life. We are increasingly looking at each other's thoughts expressed in text, in little screens and so on. What this has done is multiply the opportunities for artifice, for deception.

That's what Paul is warning us against, beginning in verse 17, putting off futility of the mind, darkened understanding, alienated from the life of God because of ignorance and blindness, insensate, unable to feel what they ought to feel, which by the way is a reminder that emotions and feelings are legitimate, God built them into us, but they should be subordinate to our intellect,

our knowledge. The easiest illustration in my mind is always the fact that we are the order that was given on D-Day when the ramps of the landing boats fell and those in charge said, move out into withering machine gun fire. All of your feelings as you see guys being chewed up on the beach is to do anything but go forward.

That's what feelings say. Reason and mental discipline say, forward. That's what feelings say.

Reason and mental discipline say, this is my purpose, this is why I'm here, I will have to entrust my life to the hands of my Creator and do what must be done. We face lesser examples of this every day. There are things that must be done that we don't feel like doing.

More and more we are encouraged to live a life based on feelings. Do what feels good. There is a belief that there is a way to get a job.

I heard a radio program, I dusted off my Zenith trans-oceanic and was listening on the bands across. Shortwave isn't what it used to be. By the way, Voice of America just lost the last of its funding for English language broadcast to Asia.

The last broadcast will be tomorrow. Voice of America will pretty much be off the air. Broadcast since back in the 1940s and even earlier, the American way of life, American viewpoint all around the world via shortwave.

Shortwave is still one of the primary media sources of information in Asia, in Africa, and elsewhere in Europe. But in this country, because it is so little known and because of budget constraints, we're spending money on other things, but we're no longer broadcasting. And this is a decision that many shortwave broadcasters have made.

Radio Netherlands, their great transmitter in Bonaire shut down years ago. BBC stopped broadcasting. That was my only source of news when I was in Lebanon in the early 80s was the BBC and Voice of America.

Neither one of those are broadcasting any English in any appreciable amounts. They say, well, it's all on the internet. You ask yourself the difference in poor portions of the world, how many people can set up a PC and get decent bandwidth for the internet versus having a portable radio that picks up shortwave on a strong signal.

It's night and day. And what they've effectively done is lose a way of getting information into the hearts and minds of people who aren't sitting in a condo with cable. I think it's a huge mistake, but it's only one in a landscape of mistakes.

But it is important to recognize what is true and what is false when you're trying to get a job. And this is one of the things I heard on my radio on one of the few remaining broadcast channels. There's so much advice encouraging people to follow their dreams.

15 ways to get your dream job, 15 ways to dream this and dream that. And they said, this lady who is an expert in the area of employment, advises people on resumes, how to present yourself, how to do interviews and so on, said, don't be fooled by this notion that dreams have anything to do with getting jobs. They don't.

And this is one of the things that people take like Cheetos instead of steak. It doesn't help. An employer, a prospective employer, isn't interested in your dreams.

He's interested in his needs. And you have to be the person that meets those needs. He could care less about your dreams.

And that's the person that is gonna make the decision. You don't make the decision about where to work. The employer makes the decision about who to hire.

And you've got to think in those terms when you present yourself and you have to be realistic, not only in the sense of what you can do and what your experience has been, but what your potential is. And if you have potential and you can present yourself, not only in terms of your past education and experience, but what you know you can do, that's a good thing. But if you go in and say, well, I've always dreamed that I could sit at a desk and think deep thoughts and have coworkers come by and hand me coffee, and that's my dream.

There's no reality in that. There's no future in that. Well, as we pick up this morning in chapter four, verse 25, Paul has just told us that it is essential that we no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, that we put off, in verse 22, concerning former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt, how? Deceitful desires.

We desire a thing and our mind, our soul tells us, if this desire is fulfilled, I'll be happy. If this desire is fulfilled, my life will really have substance and quality that I desire. If I can just fulfill this, it's deceitful.

It is a deceitful passion. It is a deceitful wish. It's a deceitful vision that we have.

People do this. I remember in high school, somebody would get a crush on someone in either direction. Girl would get a crush on a guy, a guy would get a crush on a girl, thinking, you know, if I could just, a guy looking at a pretty girl and thinking, you know, if I could just get her to notice me, if I could get some excuse to develop a relationship with her, and in the other direction, some girl looking at a guy and think, you know, he's this, he's that, if he could just notice me, if I could, you know, join the same club and get some common ground, and that is the person of my dreams.

Well, as a disinterested third party, and most of you have probably had this experience, you see the person with the crush, you see the disinterested object of that crush, and because you know the object of the crush well, especially if it's you, you know that that person would not be happy if

they actually knew. They've got a vision. They've got a false impression.

They've got a false expectation of how happy they would be with this person. People can't make you happy. Relationships with people are best when they are between two happy people.

Be a happy person. Don't expect your happiness to come from someone else because we're all fallible. We all disappoint.

We all look better than we are, even to ourselves, and you cannot get happiness through relationship. Relationships with other people work when the people themselves start out happy, so how do you get happy? You know, Bobby McFerrin had that song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." It's a nice thought, but you can't just say, "Oh, well, put on the record, you know, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Okay, I can do that. We can't.

There has to be something inside us, and this is what Paul is talking about. This is how to be happy. This is how to achieve our purpose.

When you are happy, when you are fulfilled, when you are on mission and fulfilling your purpose, God will arrange the minor details of our lives, relationships, employment, provision, enjoyable, gratifying pastimes, both substantial and insubstantial. God is our Father. He loves to put presents under our Christmas tree, but He's not going to do it when we're messed up and we need a doctor visit.

He's going to do it when we're healthy, when we have capacity to genuinely appreciate not so much the gift as its source. That's when God can give. That's when God can provide, is when we are balanced, we're stable, we understand that He is the source.

This is what Paul is driving at. When he says, don't walk like the Gentiles, leave that behind, put off the old man with his way of thinking. Compelled, drawn, seduced, allured by deceitful desires.

Desires promise a lot, desires deliver nothing. Substance satisfies. Put on the new man, verse 24, this is what we looked at last time.

Put on the new man created kata theos, according to God, true righteousness and holiness. That brings us to verse 25, therefore putting away lying. That's not the best translation.

This is apothythemy, does that ring a bell, apothythemy? Look back a few verses. Verse 22, that you put off concerning your former conduct, the old man, put off, apothythemy. Tithemi to put or place, apa, away from.

Put, set aside, push away. Pick it up, carry it over here, drop it, and walk away. Put it out of reach, apothythemy.

Put off, that's what you had in verse 22. Very same verb here in 25. Therefore, putting away,

putting aside, putting off, putting out of reach, pseudos, P-S-E-U-D-O-S, pseudos.

I don't have to go into a great word study on this. You know what pseudo anything is, right? Pseudo-intellectual, pseudo-scientist, a pseudonym, fake name, a pseudo-profile when you're catfishing and online dating. Oh yes, my name's Sam, I'm a bodybuilder.

I'm young, I make over \$200,000 a year, I drive a fast car, I like long walks on the beach, I like big crowds of people, I like the nightlife, I want a boogie. Pseudos, lies, lies, lies, none of those things are true. Putting away falsehood, falsehood or that which is false.

Falsehood still sounds like a lie. Well, he told a falsehood. This is putting away that which is not true.

This generalizes it in a way that is accurate to what the Greek phrase means. Setting aside, pushing away, getting out of reach, that which is not true. What does that mean? How does that work itself out this afternoon and tomorrow and the next day? You can't satisfy this by just saying, well, I cannot tell a lie, I chopped down the cherry tree.

It's not a matter of not telling lies. This is a matter of putting away that which isn't true, doesn't comport with reality, that which leaves a false impression, that which leads people astray, that which does not reflect what is genuine, what is valid. Virtue is dedication to what is true, what is right.

And that's what we're being called to. But he goes on to say, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Apophthyma here is an aorist middle infinitive, and the middle is sort of passive in form and active in meaning.

And when you see a middle voice, it has the idea that this is something that you do for yourself. It's almost reflexive. The middle sometimes is reflexive.

So this is putting away from yourself, putting away for your own benefit. This is something that starts inside the self. Before you get around to talking to anybody else, speaking truth to your neighbor, you have to have internally, middle voice wise, put aside any desire to deceive, to deflect the truth, to minimize the truth, to alter the truth, to twist, to spin, to put something in a better light.

This is something that happens internally. That's the connotation of the middle voice. I myself have to dedicate myself to being genuine, being truthful, not varnishing, not painting over, not hiding, not doing a fan dance.

I'm going to walk in the light and what the light exposes, the light exposes. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong. If someone else is right, they're right.

If they are wrong, I'm not going to do some kind of big cover up, putting away that which is

deceptive. That's where it starts. The putting away has to happen first.

It is as though there is a space in our life where truth is supposed to dwell, but falsehood has gotten in there. And it's like your garage. You can't both store everything that's not in your house in your garage and park your car in there.

Putting away that which is stored in your garage, you can now pull in the car. You can't do both. I've tried it.

You can't do it. Put away this human, Gentile, natural, instinctive shading, coloring, messing with the truth. Set that out of reach.

Now you can speak truth. Now you can dedicate yourself to truth. Well, there's a lot more here than meets the eye, especially in our English translation.

So we'll pause there and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see exactly what this means. It's a lot more than verbal communication.

There's a lot more to this. And the Greek-speaking world illuminates this for us in the vocabulary, and we'll see that when we come back.