

Ephesians 14-07-13a

This is Sunday, the 13th of July, 2014. We are in the book of Ephesians. We have come to chapter 4, the section beginning in verse 25 and extending through the end, verse 32.

We'll take just a moment to give each of us a few moments to go before the Lord in prayer, to dedicate our time and our concentration, our fellowship, our hearts to cultivating a better understanding of God's plan and purpose, His instructions to us, the mission that we have as believers in this life in the short time that remains to us here before the Lord Jesus takes us to Himself, either by death or by rapture, which is actually both. But, the time is short and getting shorter, and we want to sprint to the finish. This is our opportunity to see our instructions clearly, to be reminded of the means of accomplishing that mission, and all of it takes place in the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, with the truth of God's Word circulating aggressively in our thinking.

Shall we pray? Father, thank You for this day. Thank You for another opportunity to spend time together. We are so blessed when we are gathered as a group and we are ministering and receiving ministry from those gifts that You have given to each.

We thank You for the encouragement and the motivation that comes from knowing that we are not flying solo. We are in formation. We have those around us who share an appreciation for the Lord Jesus and for the wonderful potentials that He has given us, the ones that we have seen outlined in this great letter that we have been studying these months.

We thank You for this passage. We thank You for the Apostle Paul and his ongoing ministry through the centuries to every generation of believers. We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus who embodies this truth, who expressed this truth, who called the apostles and pastors and teachers to faithfully communicate it down to the day in which we live.

It is just as living and just as powerful now as in the days of its generation, and we pray that it will live and breathe in us, that we will be aware of our identity and our opportunities moment by moment as we invest the time that You have allotted to each of us in the days ahead. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 25 and following says, Therefore putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Personally, I would have made that one verse.

I'm kind of sorry they split 26 and 27 because those two things are conjoined construction-wise in Greek. You can't really understand one without the other. Nevertheless, verse 28, Let him who stole, steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, so that he may have something to give to him who has need.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

That's our context. We've looked at the first couple of verses together. Therefore putting away deceit, sudos, and it's ha-sudos, putting away the deception.

Putting away the deception. What's interesting to me is there are many what they call gnomic sayings. These aren't sayings that came from a gnome, but it's spelled the same way.

It's not the little lawn guy with the pointy hat, you know, travels the world. They take pictures of him next to the Eiffel Tower. You know, there's some little travel gnome that just, I don't know what the reason for it is.

Travel loss, is that their thing? Yeah, well, that's a gnome. You know, he's a little mythical short guy. And they take pictures of him and he travels around.

Well, there's something called gnomic sayings, G-N-O-M-I-C. And these are formal instructions, formal imperatives. And if you look at the ones that the Apostle Paul delivers, they pretty much define the practicalities of the Christian life.

Do this. Remember, in the Old Testament, with the law of Moses, with all of its regulations and requirements, God said, this is the way you should live. Live in accordance with these instructions.

Do this, don't do that, and you will live. Jesus summed up the law of Moses when he was in a discussion about what are the greatest commandments, what are the commandments? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Do this and thou shalt live. Well, these gnomic sayings occur in almost all of Paul's letters. And you could collect these pretty much on one page.

In fact, it has been done. I have a book where they've been collected. And I want to just give you the passages because there's only nine.

There are nine sections in Paul's epistles that contain the gnomic sayings. And it's a little known but useful collection. So let me just give you these quickly because this is one of them.

And so we're doing sort of a categorical study. You remember what ICE is, right? Long years ago, churches like ours, Bible churches that focus on Scripture, a lot of them like to call themselves an ICE church, which stands, it's an acronym for Isagogics, Categories, and Exegesis. Isagogics, what is the historical, cultural, linguistic background for the texts that we have? What is their milieu? What is their provenance? What was going on at the time they were generated? What did the earliest audiences who received these truths think of them? How did they perceive them?

How did they fit into the cultural situation? That's Isagogics, historical, cultural background.

Categories are kind of obvious. Instead of just going verse by verse, you say, well, he's talking about speaking the truth. Are there any other Scriptures that talk about speaking the truth? Let's find all of those and do truth as a category, speaking truth.

Let's look at lying as a category. Let's look at Satan as a category. Find all of the Scriptures and compare them and try to get the many faceted points of view that should help us arrive at a correct understanding.

And of course, E for exegesis, this is the specific recognition of the integrity of God's Word when it comes to language. You can glean a great amount of information, not only from the content, but from the form in which the content is delivered. You can look at the tenses in Greek.

You can look at the voices and the moods. You can look at the way the language is used to get these things across. And it is another channel.

It is another dimension that adds veracity and clarity to the language. It adds clarity to what is spoken. If something is given as a past perfect, something that is accomplished in the past and is finished with results that move forward into the present, that's significant.

But that's an exegetical point. Now because for so many generations, and think about this, I don't know if I've ever heard anybody make this point, I haven't heard it lately, when it comes to exegesis, you think wow, my pastor gives me Greek and Hebrew from time to time, and you just can't get there without it, nonsense. Exegesis is a wonderful complementary, a wonderful tool to use, but you don't need the Greek and you don't need the Hebrew, listen to me carefully now, you don't need Greek and Hebrew to live a godly life.

You think about all the generations of people who didn't have anything but somebody standing up and telling them what the Bible said. They didn't have a Bible of their own. Centuries, the early church, they didn't carry around scrolls.

The people that met in homes and heard Timothy and Titus and the other early pastors teach, and for centuries afterward, they had no Bible. They heard a guy like me stand up who either had a copy himself or had heard someone else read a copy and it was transmitted verbally. How are you going to exegete something like that? Well you can't.

The content is sufficient. The content of the Word of God is what we're after. Exegesis is a tool to refine and verify proper interpretation of the content, but you can get the content, and in the absence of exegesis, God the Holy Spirit guided seeking people into the truth.

God the Holy Spirit doesn't need exegesis to give you the truth. It's a wonderful tool, and in this day and age with the multitudinous collection of texts like Dan Wallace has collected, he's got the Institute for New Testament Texts, I forget the formal name of it, but he has made a mission out

of collecting photographs of all of the 6,000 plus manuscripts of the New Testament text. Any Greek witness, early or late, he's trying to get a copy of it for comparison, for study, to try to refine and get at the original, but you don't need all of that.

So when you say ICE, you don't actually need to know all of the cultural background. Does it help? Of course. You don't need exegesis.

Does it help? Of course. I would say that if you couldn't be ICE, if you had to start discarding letters and you could only keep one, categories. Don't use one scripture to determine your truth.

If the Word of God talks about a subject, it is always going to talk about it somewhere else. There is no significant truth about God's plan and purpose, there's no significant truth for the church age that isn't witnessed more than once. None.

I don't know of any where I can't show you at least two passages, and it is important to look at both of them, so that you don't go off in some weird direction. So of the ICE thing, I would drop the I first, I would very reluctantly and sadly and with great dragging of feet and hanging of lower lip, I would lose the exegesis. But you need categorical study.

If you want to understand the truth of God, there are going to be multiple witnesses. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established. Even the Word of God itself is one of three witnesses.

You have the witness of God's creation, this is where science can help us out. Science in the proper sense is the observation of what God has done in the universe. And it, like scripture, is a limited witness.

I was talking recently, Ken and I were talking about this yesterday. I read a book by a guy in 1909 that was a materialist, and he wrote a book and it's called Science and Materialism. And he's a flaming agnostic, he's a flaming atheist.

But here's what he said, and it's, you got to, sometimes you got to read bad stuff to get good ideas. Here's what he said, and I think it's very perceptive. 1909 this guy's writing, Darwinism's only been around 40 years, but he says, look, we love science, science is the way we verify things.

But he said, look, you can't use science to answer grand questions, grand questions about the purpose of things, the reason that things are where they are. And the reason is this, we are limited. When we do science, we basically use three senses.

We use sight, we use hearing, and we manipulate, we use our touch to feel, we weigh, and we construct things, instruments. But everything that we know comes to us through these sense gates. And we've only got a few senses.

His point was, suppose there was a creature, and we know that there are even some creatures that exist now whose wavelengths of light they can see that we can't. There are, I think it's, don't snakes see infrared? Don't they see heat that we don't see? Who can? Parakeets can see ultraviolet that we can't see. And we are limited to the visible spectrum.

If we want to see infrared or ultraviolet, we have to convert. We have to translate it into something visible that we can see. Night vision, there's animals that can see really well in the dark, we can't, so you got these guys with the green screen.

Everything we know is converted into something that our senses can help us grasp. His point was, suppose there was a creature superior to us that had 12 senses. Suppose you, I just made this up, but suppose you could sense gravity.

Suppose you could look out at a planet and you could see the gravity waves. Suppose you could see magnetism. You look at a magnet on the refrigerator and you can see all the waves in the field.

You can see the torus around a donut magnet. You could see the ends of a North-South magnet and then horseshoe magnets. You could see all the, you know, we have to put a piece of paper on, sprinkle iron filings and say, oh look, here's one slice of this magnetic field.

You can't see the Earth's magnetic field. They shaded in in an artificial fashion in your textbook. His point was, the more senses you have, the more questions you could answer.

But because the universe for us is basically infinite, you would need an infinite number of senses and only a creature with an infinite number of senses could know everything there is to know and answer all the questions. We've only got a few senses and we've only got access to a tiny little particle of the known universe. So how can we possibly answer? This would be like asking an earthworm why the Republicans and the Democrats can't get together on some question.

Ask the earthworm. The earthworm says, look, I've got some dirt in front of me here. I'm going to eat it and I'm going to make a little tunnel here.

That's as much as he knows. Well, this is us compared to the universe. It's a really good point.

Well, in the same way, what we look at in the heavens is a partial witness. What we have in Scripture is a partial witness. What we have from God the Holy Spirit internally is a partial witness.

Any given scriptural declaration about a divine truth is a partial witness. We want to try to gather as many witnesses as possible to get at the truth. This is what a court trial does, right? This is why we don't just look at a couple of passages of Scripture and then go forth and say, well, I'm a Christian and I looked at my Bible so I'm good to go for the rest of my life.

We constantly go back to the witness. We're trying to refine our understanding of the truth, right? Well, truth. That's the subject of Ephesians chapter 4 verse 25 through 32.

This is all about truth. Now, what kind of truth? It's a very specific kind of truth. It is truth that pertains to how we live in relation to one another.

This is not truth about geometry. It's not truth about refrigeration. It's not truth about, you know, earthworms.

This is truth that pertains to how should I treat you? How should you treat me? What should we be doing with respect to one another? It's that truth. Now, there are all kinds of truths that pertain to the Christian life. These gnomic sayings I was talking about.

Do this and thou shalt live. Do this and you will be a successful Christian. What are they? Let me give these to you.

First of all, let's start in Romans chapter 12, 9 through 21. Now, I want you to watch as I give you each of these nine passages of gnomic sayings. Ask yourself this question, what does it pertain to? Does it pertain to how I treat unbelievers? Does it pertain to what I do before God? Does it pertain to how I do my job? What does it pertain to? Just watch and ask yourself, what is this? Number one, Romans 12, 9 through 21, let love, and I'm going to give you a slightly modified translation here.

Let love be genuine. That's how it starts. And see, that's an imperative.

This isn't an abstraction. This is what you are to do. It has imperative force.

Let love be genuine. Hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection.

Outdo one another in showing honor. Never fail, never flag, never fall short in zeal. Be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. That's a really nice summary.

I mean, you could look at that for a long time, figuring out how can I do this, right? Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. This means be sympathetic, feel with others.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited, repay no one evil for evil.

No, toilet papering somebody's tree. Never repay evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gnomic saying, section number 1, Romans 12, 9-21. The second, 1 Corinthians 13, 4-7. Most of these are going to be shorter.

You remember 1 Corinthians 13, right? It's a love chapter. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful.

It is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful.

It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. You notice this is not formally in an imperative mood, but obviously the suggestion is there, walk in love, right? That's gnomic saying number 2, 1 Corinthians 13, 4-7.

Number 3, 2 Corinthians 13, 11-13. Finally, brethren, farewell. Mend your ways.

Heed my appeal. Agree with one another. Live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. Does it make sense? Agree with one another.

How many times have we seen these exhortations to unity? Now, if I think one thing and you think something else, and Paul says, agree with one another, how are we going to solve that? Well, now it's a humility contest. A disagreement, you can attribute this to me. I'm making it up right now on the spot.

A disagreement is a humility contest. We are enjoined, we are exhorted, we are commanded to agree with one another. So if we have a difference of opinion and it needs to be resolved, it's a humility contest.

Who is going to humble themselves? Who is going to give in, opinion-wise? Now, if you're standing up for what is right, that's a different thing. But when it comes to something that is going to create disunity, it's a humility contest. The fourth gnomic saying section in the Epistles of Paul, Ephesians 4, verses 25-32.

That's where we are, so I'm going to give that one a miss right now. Number five, Philippians 2, verses 1-11. We have memorized this, so I'm going to give it just a real quick run-through.

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility. That's why I say it's a humility contest.

In humility, that's how you solve it. I lost my place. Count others better than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, and you know the rest of that passage. That is number five.

Number six, same book, different chapter. Philippians 4, verses 4-9. Previous one was 2, 1-11.

This one is 4, 4-9. Rejoice. Notice how these all have this imperative force.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance, your patience, your balance, your moderation, your stability.

This is a great word study to do in Greek. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand.

How do you maintain this attitude? How do you energize it? How do you put a battery in it and turn it on and light it up? Remember that the Lord is at hand. Consciousness of the shortness of this life and the imminent return of the Lord Jesus is a strong motivation that puts these things in perspective for us. It is a Bible truth that is alive and powerful.

The Lord is at hand. Do you ever notice how little children tend to obey better when their parents are at hand? Do you ever notice how even pets behave better when their owners are at hand? We behave better when we are conscious of the fact that the Lord is at hand. This is part of what Jesus was referring to when he said, The one that has my words and keeps them loves me.

I and my Father come to him and make our home with him. We are at hand. If you're conscious of the living presence of the Lord Jesus and God the Father and the Holy Spirit in your soul, how far astray are you going to go? How arrogant can you get? It's easy to forbear.

It's easy to persevere or easier when we have these things in view. So, let all men know your patience, your forbearance. The Lord is at hand.

Have no anxiety about anything. Got that? You all probably have been doing this all along. It's only me that has been having anxiety problems, right? Everybody else, have no anxiety about anything.

That's the command. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The Lord is at hand in Christ Jesus,

in Him.

These things are doable. Finally, brethren, this is another thing we've memorized. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, gracious, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, to the extent that you find that, think of these things.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you. That's Philippians 4, 4-9. Number seven.

Number seven of the gnomic sayings. Colossians 3, 12-17. This is a close parallel, by the way, to our passage in Ephesians 4. Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.

It's interesting to me that it doesn't say, produce these from your inmost self. You've got to pick them up and put them on. They're laying over here somewhere else.

Pick them up and put them on. You put off the old, you put on the new. You clothe yourself with these garments.

Why would that be the emphasis? Instead of saying, produce from your innermost man these attitudes. Why is it something you put on? What is the connotation here? What do we know about the stuff you put on? Krista and I were comparing colors this morning because we're simpatico. You can take a picture of us and we make a great combination because we blend.

But this is what's outside. This is what you see. You see my shirt.

You see my tie. This is what I put on. So what it is saying is, not only should you have these things, but they should be seen.

They should be evident. They should be manifest to the casual observer. Put on means this is what you wear.

When someone looks at you, that is what they see. It doesn't mean that they don't come from your inmost self. It means that they should be visible.

Don't say, well, I'm kind. Nobody sees it. I'm patient.

It's just nobody sees it. If you are kind and if you are patient, it should be seen. It should be part of you.

There are people that always have a certain look. There's some guy, there's a show called Counting Cars, and he fixes up cars on TV. Well, he's always got this thing.

I must have a real receding forehead because I've never seen him without this dark headband

thing around his head. Well, that's what he puts on. You never think of that guy, Danny, whoever he is, without that thing on his head.

It's just a part of his look. Different people have a look. Some people wear berets.

Some people have straight hair. Whatever it may be. Crystal Gale, a Loretta Lynn sister that used to sing, had this hair that was down to the back of her knees.

You couldn't think of Crystal Gale without this hair. I don't know how she kept her head upright because it had to weigh like 12 pounds. But that was a part of her look.

There are certain people that just have a look that is associated with them. Well, this is the look that should be associated with us. When it says put on, whether here in Ephesians 4 or in Colossians 3, this is what you should look like.

People think of you, that's what they think of. That is your outward manifestation. Put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.

You think, well, how can a Marine be a Christian? Marines are none of these things. Well, that's the challenge. You've got to find a way to do that, which takes precedence.

Do you want to associate yourself? People always want to associate with being an urban cowboy or being a punk or being a motorcycle guy or being this. People want to associate. What do you want to associate with? Do you want to be remembered and known as, well, he was certainly a grumpy old gruff black and white, don't think beyond the one-ply Marine, or do you want to be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you want to be remembered for these qualities? Put it on.

If anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, humility contest. Who's going to forgive first? Who's going to let go first? Who's going to release the point? You don't have to grant the point. You don't have to agree with the point.

Release the point. Let it go. Let it go.

Unclench your hand and let it go. It's not important. Do you ever have some great star spangled argument? And, you know, a day or two later, you think back and think, what was I? Who cares? Why did I turn that into a federal case? It's insignificant.

I'm an idiot. And we are. I am.

Forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, your outermost garment. You've put these on.

That's your underclothing, your kindness and your patience and your compassion and your humility and your releasing of the issue. But your top coat, your outermost garment is love, which

binds everything together in perfect harmony. It's that final outer accessory that makes the whole outfit work.

Put on love. Binds them together in harmony. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. And as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Do everything, word or deed. Every word you speak, every act you perform, every chore you undertake, every mission you accomplish in the name of the Lord Jesus. Giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

That's number seven. Number eight. 1 Thessalonians 4, 9-12.

But concerning love of the brethren, you have no need to have anyone write to you. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. And indeed you do love all the brethren.

But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more. To aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands as we charged you. Interesting, this is one of the things that carries over from the Law of Moses.

You know there are eleven commandments, right? Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. Seventh thou shalt rest. That's two commands.

Six days thou shalt labor. Work with your hands as we charged you. He's repeating an injunction he had already given them once before.

Work with your hands so that you may command the respect of outsiders and be dependent on no one. We are to support ourselves to the extent that we are able. Be dependent on nobody.

Finally, number nine, 1 Thessalonians 5, 12-22. We beseech you, brethren. This is 5, 12-22, 1 Thess.

5, 12-22. We beseech you, brethren, respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Again, be at peace among yourselves. Whatever it takes, be at peace. We exhort you, brethren, admonish the idle.

What does it mean to admonish? It means to call attention to it, rebuke it, say, Hey, not what are

you doing, what are you not doing? Admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak.

Be patient with them all. See that none of you repays evil for evil. Always seek to do good to one another and to all.

There's a distinction, do good to one another and do good to all. As it says in Philippians, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Rejoice always.

Pray constantly. Give thanks in all circumstances. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophesying. In other words, do not despise the teaching of the Word of God, regardless of whether you agree with it.

If it is in fact the teaching of the Word of God, don't despise it. Don't ridicule it. Don't diminish it.

Don't tear it down. Test everything. Hold fast to what is good.

Abstain from every form of evil. If you hear someone teaching and they've got it mixed up, they've gone awry, you think they're out in the weeds, look for what is good and hold fast to that. Let the rest of it go.

Abstain from every form of evil. Those are the nine major gnomic sections in the letters of Paul. There are some minor ones.

There are some parallels. But they mostly reinforce these things, especially in Timothy. Paul tells Timothy many of these same things.

He'll say in several places, teach and exhort and encourage these things. But these are the central passages. If you make a little review sheet out of these and look at it first thing in the morning and try to stick to it all day long, this is what the Christian life looks like.

That's what it looks like. Well, we are in one of these, and when we come back from our break, we will resume our study of Ephesians 4, 25 through 32.