

Ephesians 14-08-03a

This is Sunday, the 3rd of August, 2014. We are in the letter Paul wrote to the church at Laodicea and asked to be conveyed to the church at Colossae. It is, of course, in a timeless way addressed to the entire church.

We know it as the book of Ephesians. We're in chapter 4 and we resume and we'll conclude in chapter 4 this morning at verse 32. Ephesians 4, 32, And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

This will be the verse for our first session this morning. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we will begin. Thank you, Father, for this day and for the blessings that you have dispensed to us day by day, hour by hour, provision, protection, a detailed map of circumstance that provides for us both blessing and challenge.

We thank you for the hidden graces, those of which we are unaware, where you have preserved us from things that we never saw. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for His willingness to leave the realms of glory for our sakes, to humble Himself and take on the form of a servant, to walk in the dust of this earth, to be subject to the earthliness and the materiality of this life with its fatigue, with its hunger, with its thirst, with its oppression, both from internal and external sources.

As a result of this, we know that as our High Priest, He is sympathetic with the things that we face day by day. He has walked in our shoes. He knows exactly what it is like to be challenged in this life, to focus, to remember who we are and why we are here.

He is intimately aware of the life that we live. We know that He sits now at your right hand, even as I speak, interceding on our behalf, representing us before your throne, pleading on our behalf the merits of His own work. We thank you for the tremendous privilege and the standing that we have before you through Him.

And we pray that as we study this portion of your Word this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will impress it upon us in a way that will keep us mindful of the example of the Lord Jesus, of the mission to which we have been called, the purpose for which we have been left here on this earth after our salvation, and that we can run with diligence and with patience the race that has been set before us, that we can finish well, that we can stand before the Lord Jesus on the day of judgment, reflecting credit, reflecting righteousness and reflecting glory as a result of the clear instruction and the divine enablement that you have provided for us. We pray for all of those who join us, both here and at a distance. We pray for those that are further afield in Indonesia and in Africa and in those places where there are believers assembling, seeking the truth of your Word, recognizing the grace and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as those who are called according to your purpose, we join our voices with theirs in thanking

you for your grace and asking your blessing on us as we worship together this morning. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've seen in great detail, we've really slowed down and looked at this first section of application in the book of Ephesians. I do not need to review for you again the content of chapter one, those in him truths, the declarations of unity and constancy and fellowship that bind us together. Bind all of us together in Christ that are reflected in Paul's statements in chapters two and three, the commission that we have been given, the obligation that we have to be loyal, to be aware, to be interested, to be self-sacrificial in maintaining the unity that is our birthright and our privilege as church age believers, as the body of Christ.

It is an overriding priority, unity. There are times when we must put things at a distance. If someone characterizes themselves with these elements that we've seen, anger, wrath, bitterness, evil speaking, that we put away from us.

If someone chooses that path, if this is the characteristic of their life, if they bear a grudge, if they are bearing a tale, if they are a gossip, if they malign, if they judge, if they embrace and pursue a pattern of evil, that is the basis upon which we put away and we have a legitimate need to place distance between ourselves and those believers. But the call is to unity, even if it costs, and it may cost dearly. It may cost, first of all, our ego.

We think, why should I unite? Why should I engage in conversation, in friendship, in fellowship, when this person has committed a wrong? Well, if that was the basis, would we have any fellowship with God? Would we have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus? Would God, the Holy Spirit, be able to stick around when we daily fail and fall short? Well, this is the concept to which we come in verse 32 of chapter 4, having reviewed the incredible work of Christ, the panoply of blessing and privilege and opportunity that is ours because uniquely in this age we have been placed in Him together, not separately, not individually. This isn't the me, myself and I club. I am the earthly trinity about which all the plan of God revolves.

It is the body of Christ about which the plan of God revolves. The plan of God in history, before the foundations of the world, after the foundations of the world, and even after the foundations of this world are destroyed and there is a new heaven and a new earth, the focus as far as we are concerned in the plan and purpose of God is always the Lord Jesus Christ. We are important to God because we are in Christ, because we are the many brethren among whom He is the firstborn, because we are united with Him.

To disunite with one another is to risk disunity with Christ. You see this in Galatians. Do you want to really be an enemy of the cross? Do you want to be fallen from grace? Do you want to be cut off from Christ? It is possible and many, many believers today foolishly, ignorantly, apathetically and indifferently cut themselves off from Christ and they don't even know that they've done it.

There is a false Christianity. There is a deception that they have embraced and they say, I am a good Christian. I am pleasing in God's sight because I have manufactured a standard that I meet and because I meet my self-manufactured standard I declare myself to be a good Christian.

This is the deception and there is nothing worse than being fooled on something that is important. You think something is the case, you invest a great deal and you find out it is false. Ask the people who are connected with the financial schemes of Bernie Madoff or any of these other get-rich-quick schemes where people have heavily invested only to find out that it was a deception.

It was false. It was a pyramid scheme. It was phony.

It was a scam. There is nothing like the internet to spread scams. Hello, my name is Nguba Mbutu, I live in Africa, there is \$26.3 million here and for some reason you are the only person who can help me get it out of this trust.

We look at this and we say who would fall for this? It is just like I wake up in the middle of the night sometimes and the TV is still on and I look and here is some commercial and they have a girl saying, call me up and I will talk to you on the phone and I am thinking the chances of this spokesmodel person being on the other end of any pay for the call phone number is absurd. But they still run those commercials which tells me there must be enough people calling it to justify the expense of the TV time. We are foolish and blind when we fall for deceptions and Paul says in verse 25 of chapter 4, put away the deception, escape the lie.

Satan is a liar from the beginning. Eve ate the fruit based on a deception. She was convinced by the serpent that eating this fruit was desirable to make one wise, that she could be like God, that there was a shortcut to righteousness, there was a shortcut to glory, there was a shortcut that was easier than daily obedience, daily submission, daily dedication to God.

Eat this fruit. It's an instant righteousness. It's an instant wisdom.

Just do this action. It's an easy way. It's a momentary way and this is what modern Christianity often offers from the pulpit in books, in videos, in media, on the radio.

Well do this, tithe and God will bless you, attend and God will bless you, evangelize and you have accomplished it. Let me ask you on any one of those, how long does it take to write a check? You write a check, drop it in the plate, maybe you do it, maybe your tithe is once a month. Just as an example, not arguing pro or con on the merits of tithing but look at it, it's a momentary action.

You do it, well I'm off the hook. I've got another 30 days before I've got to write another check and I'm in God's good books. Or evangelism.

Well if evangelism is the key to a healthy spiritual life, let's say you talk to, being optimistic here, let's say you talk to five people a week, one person a day. You make sure the sun does not go

down before you corner somebody, somewhere, the clerk at the store, the passerby when you're waiting somewhere and you nudge the person next to you, hey do you know the Lord Jesus? Let's say you do that once a day, five days a week. You get a day of rest on Saturday and you're in church on Sunday and everybody in church is already a believer, right? So, or they should be.

Just as an aside, church is not the place for evangelism. That's like saying recruiting should take place at boot camp or at one of the schools in the military. You don't assemble all the lieutenants in Quantico and say anybody want to join the Marine Corps? It's absurd.

You go out. Evangelism takes place when you're outside church. Church is the place you get prepared so you know what to say, how to say it, you have information, you're prepared, you're ready always to give an answer to anyone that asks a reason for your hope, but it is somewhat absurd to constantly evangelize in church or to invite unsaved people to church and try to get them saved.

Church is school for people who are already saved. And this whole model, you don't see Jesus evangelizing in his teaching episodes ever. No example.

You don't see Paul evangelizing in any of his letters to the churches or in any of the recorded sermons that he delivered, for example, in the book of Acts. It is utterly absent from scripture. I defy anybody to show me any place in scripture where when the Lord Jesus or an apostle is engaged in teaching believers, there is evangelism mixed in.

It's never there. So why do we do it in the modern church? Well, because it's easy. You know what? I'll just invite Bob to church, get him to sit in the pew.

The pastor can do the work. The pastor will evangelize. The pastor will convict him.

The pastor will make him feel guilty. The pastor will ask him to come down front and counsel with him. I'm off the hook.

I don't have to give him a reason for my personal hope in Christ. It's easy. It's a shortcut.

That's the lie that has been offered from the beginning. Put away the lie. Relationship with God is a moment-by-moment, hour-by-hour, day-by-day privilege and responsibility.

And there is no shortcut. Is there a shortcut to weight loss? Is there a shortcut to weight loss? Take this pill, put on this electric belt. Now they've got them that aren't even electric.

I saw one the other day where you just put it on, just wear this for two hours a day and you'll get slimmer in the area where the belt is. I could do that with my own belt. You know, you can change your shape.

It doesn't change your weight. It just squeezes it. Any woman knows this.

Any human being pretty much knows this. There's no shortcut to weight loss. Is there a shortcut to fitness? Can you put on that electric deal that makes your stomach muscles flutter? You know, they've got the abdominalizer or something.

It's got batteries in it. It's like that thing they use at physical therapy where it shocks your skin and your skin twitches. You know, it's like putting electricity on a frog leg in biology class and it just artificially makes your muscles twitch.

And they say, look, it's a shortcut. You'll have a six-pack of abs if you put this thing on. It's a shortcut.

No, there is no shortcut to fitness. There's no shortcut to weight loss. There is no shortcut to anything worth having.

And there is certainly no shortcut to healthy, productive relationship with God, or for that matter, relationship with one another. Like every other worthwhile thing, it requires dedication, consistency over time. Dedication and consistency over time.

Can you lose weight if you are dedicated and consistent over time? Yes. Can you get fit if you are dedicated and consistent over time? Yes. Can you improve almost anything? A skill, a hobby, some accomplishment.

You're working on cleaning the house and making it nicer, sparsing out, cleaning the garage. Consistency, dedication over time. These things can be accomplished, right? There's very few things that have a great shortcut.

Well, there's certainly no shortcut in the spiritual realm. Therefore put away the lie. You can't eat the fruit and become instantly wise.

You can't eat the fruit and become instantly like God. It's a lie. Put the lie away, verse 25.

Verse 32, our passage for this morning, flows out of verse 31. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking should be put away from you with all mal-intent. With all bad intention.

That's what malice is. Malice, mal is the core of that, which means bad. Badness toward someone.

A malicious act is one that is designed to hurt, to insult, to in some way have a negative impact on others. Then verse 32, after putting away these things, and notice there is an order. You can't do verse 32 until you have done verse 31.

Put away the negative, then you can perform the positive. There is an order. Many people say, I just don't understand why I can't get into this positive mindset toward others.

You haven't gotten rid of the negative mindset that's in the previous verse. That has to come first. So how do you do that? How do you put away bitterness, wrath, clamor, anger, and evil speaking? Well, it's two-fold.

When it is external, there is the matter of discontinuing association, limiting contact with people who practice these things on a constant basis. If there's someone in the periphery who regularly drags us in this direction with their conversation, there is a simple solution. Want to get together? Sorry, can't do that.

Why? Well, I'm not going to lie to you. I'm not going to fob you off with a white lie or an excuse. The nature of our conversation is such it always seems to turn in a negative direction, and that's just not healthy for you or for me.

And I just think it would be better if we didn't do so. Be honest. Put away the lie.

Don't just say, well, you know, I'm really busy. Maybe we can do it sometime in the future and stall someone off. If you're going to discontinue association, you can do it.

But if somebody asks you why, they are asking you a reason for the hope that is in you. You realize that? If you decide you're not going to continue these kinds of conversations and somebody says, why, why aren't you talking to me anymore? Tell them, speak the truth in love. Maybe this is what they need.

If they realize that people are going to stop spending time with them because of the nature of their conversation, that's going to be a powerful circumstance. Wow, seriously? Somebody doesn't want to talk to me because when they talk with me, everything goes negative? What about that? We do people no favors by lying to them. Speak the truth to one another in love.

Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor. We are members of one another. It is not kind to deceive someone about why you're not spending time with them or why there is a problem.

Speak the truth. Get the issue out in the open and get it resolved. It's going to be a boil under the skin until that issue is exposed and resolved.

Well, in verse 32 now, we pick up with the injunction, the exhortation, be kind to one another. Did you ever rent a VHS tape at Blockbuster? What's the little sticker say? Be kind, rewind. What are they talking about there? Somebody's got to rewind the tape so that it can be played the next time and they're saying instead of leaving it at the end, you rewind it so the next person doesn't have to.

I've always kind of wondered about that. I thought, well, why is it that I'm rewinding all the tapes that nobody else rewound and then I have to rewind my own tape as well? I'm doing all the rewinding. I'm doing all the be kind-ing here because I don't get tapes that have been rewound.

Nobody else reads the sticker. It's a bit of a metaphor for this exhortation, isn't it? We say, well, how's this going to work? I'm the only one being kind. I don't really feel people being kind to me.

Why should I just always be the kind one? One of the things that helps us here is to look at the actual word that is used here. Verse 32 in Greek begins with the word ginomai in Greek, G-I-N-O-M-A-I, ginomai. It is the standard word that means to become, to become.

In English, this sounds like it's a set of episodes, some acts like, well, I've got an opportunity here. I'm dealing with somebody. I'll be kind to them.

It isn't what it says in the verse. The very first word here is a present middle imperative, middle voice. That's the O-M-A-I.

Whenever you see that on a Greek verb, omi, it's middle. This means passive in form and active in meaning, but the reason there are middle voices in Greek is they have something we don't have. We have active, I do the action, or passive, the action is done to me.

The middle voice, the action takes place and it sort of goes in both directions. Sometimes I'm performing it and it is for my own benefit as well as someone else's or it has an effect on me as well as someone else. But the reason they call it the middle voice is you're in the middle between the subject and the object and the action of the verb in some sense goes both directions.

It's either caused by both or it causes something for both. It's the middle voice and we don't really have a good analog in English, but that's what it says. So gin omi, become.

This is a present imperative. The voice is middle. That tells you sort of the directionality of the action, active, the subject is going to send the action to the object, passive, the subject is going to receive the action of the verb, and typically there is no object other than the subject, the subject is the object, middle voice, the action kind of spreads itself around in some way.

But the present is ongoing action right now, right? It's the present. It's not history, it's not mystery, it's the present. You remember that little thing? You can search my refrigerator, you'll never find that one on the magnet collection.

But it is present. So we're talking about right now and it is an imperative. Present imperatives are typically translated, can be safely translated, keep on doing something that is currently happening.

The aorist imperative, start doing something that's not happening, right? So keep on becoming. That's what gin este, it's you all, second person plural, you all keep on becoming something. Doesn't say keep on doing something, keep on becoming something.

Now you would think that whatever it is we're supposed to become would be the next word in the verse, but it's not. He says, you all keep on becoming, eis alelus, eis literally means in the

material world, in the spatial sense it means into. In the conceptual sense it means unto, with a view toward, looking at.

Keep on becoming with a view toward alelus, one another. And he puts this at the beginning, this is a very specific kind of becoming. Keep on becoming with respect to one another, looking at one another, with a view toward one another, which is what we've been talking about in this whole section of the letter, right? Keep on becoming with respect to one another, crestoi, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-I, crestoi.

Peter says, taste and see that the Lord is crestoi, it's so close, or crestos actually in that sense because it's an adjective. Taste and see that the Lord is crestos, and it's so close to crestos that a huge group of manuscripts actually say that, and you can find Bibles that say, taste and see that the Lord is Christ. But crestoi, crestoi here is a noun, so what does crestos mean? What does this mean? It's translated kind, but here crestoi, the O-I, that's the masculine plural for Greek nouns, crestoi.

So this keep on being something ones, keep on becoming something ones, expand and grow in the area of this attribute, which is loosely here translated kindness. That's not really what crestoi means. Would you translate it in Peter, taste and see that the Lord is kind? Well, he's compassionate, but kind is so general and kind of beige in terms of really describing anything.

What does kind mean? We need some context. So for this first session, what have we reviewed? There is an order. There is a context.

What is the context? We are in Christ and we are therefore responsible to Him first and foremost and through Him to God the Father ultimately. That's our vertical relationship. That's what this whole letter introduced and established in the opening sections.

There is a strong exhortation to unity and to loyalty and to self-sacrificial dedication to one another on that foundation. That was the second big emphasis. Now based on that, we are being exhorted and encouraged and indeed commanded with imperatives to be and do certain things, to get rid of certain things and to embrace and encourage other things.

So what is it? We have to get rid of some things so that we can do this. We have to put away lying. We have to speak truth.

We have to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking so that we can become Christos. And this really is the culmination. This is a good place for a chapter break because thematically, conceptually, grammatically there is an ending point at this verse.

And this sums up and culminates the argument that Paul has been making and it's important for us to understand it. We have to paint the context in our mind. Because I ask myself, how am I supposed to do this? It's one thing to tell me to be something.

How do I do it? Paul has given us the roadmap. First of all, step back and look at the big picture. You are in Christ.

These other believers are in Christ. We have privileges. We have provisions.

And we have responsibilities in that context. This sets an objective stage. Don't be thinking about, well, but I'm wounded, I'm insulted, I'm hurt, I'm shortchanged, I'm negated, I've been belittled, I've been cut down, I've been made small.

I was, for some bizarre reason, looking at a good housekeeping magazine and there was an article in there about Sheryl Crow. And one of the themes that came out in this interview with Sheryl Crow, the singer, is that her first several relationships failed because she was with famous people, celebrities. And every time she would get close with them and spend time with them, she started feeling small.

Somebody has to outshine the other because there's this ego thing. And she always ended up being the small person. And she didn't like feeling small, and so she would go away.

I feel belittled. I feel lessened. I am the wind beneath your wings.

I am the air under your armpits. It must be cold there in their shadow and all this kind of stuff. And there's a bruised ego involved.

Put away the lie. That is not what life is about. That is not the measure.

That is not the standard. But we've got to be objective and offload the subjectivity, the self-centeredness, the need for self-gratification. If the Lord Jesus had had any of those elements, there would be no cross.

There would be no salvation and there would be no resurrection. And there would be no future for us because there would have been no future for Him. If He had not done what is described in Philippians chapter 2, not thinking equality with God a thing to be grasped, He let go.

He emptied Himself. He took on the form of a servant. He was self-sacrificial.

Let this mind be in you because that's the mind that was in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul has been describing here. You've got to offload, put away, let go.

Because it's all ephemeral and temporary anyway. Who cares what people think when they're all dead? Somebody was agonizing about the opinion of people back in 1872 in Kansas. Well, they're dead and everybody that had an opinion is dead.

Who cares what anybody thought about anybody in Kansas in 1872? Well, this now is going to be 1872 Kansas when we're all dead and gone. What is going to remain? What is going to survive?

What is going to be judged at the judgment seat of Christ and go into the eternal future? Whether or not we can listen to these words and follow them, commit ourselves to them. That's what lasts.

That's what counts. The fickle good opinion of people or bad opinion of people is utterly inconsequential. It does not matter.

But the lie is this is a shortcut to happiness. If I can get the people around me to hail fellow well meet me and think well of me and speak well of me and say my name when I walk into the room, this is happiness. That's the apple hanging from the tree.

That's the lie. Shortcut to success. Shortcut to happiness.

Nonsense. Paul is giving us the long-term eternal life aspect of this. So, certain context and a certain sequence.

Hear me now. If you really want to do this, if you want Ephesians chapter 4 to make a difference, if we want it to have an actual effect in our lives, this is the way to do it. It's not mysterious.

It's not ephemeral. It's not out there. We all can do this right now.

Stop. Think about the context that Paul has established in these chapters. It's not like we don't know what it is.

It's not like we can't review what it is to be in him. What it is to see the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's not hard.

We've been over it and over it and over it. You have this in your heart. God the Holy Spirit can paint this picture instantly.

He can paint the backdrop instantly. That's first. Second, what is the sequence? There are things that we have got to purge out.

That we've got to show the door. That we've got to remove. If it's buried, exhume it.

Put it in the hearse and tell it to drive out of the county. It has got to go. Put away the deception.

Put away the falsehood. Put away the grudge. Put away the ill feeling.

Whatever it may be. You're never going to succeed in this. And it is going to be disastrous and calamitous on the day of judgment.

If we don't do this. Find the impediments. Find the weight and the sin that so easily besets us.

Identify it and shove it away. Put it away. All bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking.

Put it away with all malice. All malice. Not most malice.

Not part of the malice. Not just the malice that I think is probably not justified. But hey, I've got some justified malice.

No, all malice. Put it away. It's not worth it.

Do you want to stand there on the day of judgment, you and your malice? Me and my malice. All alone and feeling blue. That's what it's going to be.

Seriously? This is what you want to carry with you in eternity? Well, you know, I was right. It's hopelessly foolish to do this. Put it away.

Then we come to verse 32. Now we are equipped. We've got the context.

We've got the background. We've got the foundation. And we have removed the obstacles.

Taken them away. We're not interested in a shortcut. We're interested in becoming Christos.

What is Christos? It is a hugely important word. It's very well documented in Scripture. And kind doesn't even begin to touch it.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, what is it we are to become? And how do we become it? This will occupy us for the second session.