

Ephesians 15-05-03b

As we draw to the end of our study of this great letter of Paul to the Laodicean church that is popularly known as Ephesians, and again that's because many of the later manuscripts had en epheso back in chapter 1, verse 1, to the saints who are en epheso, but since the 14 and 1500s we've discovered many other better and older manuscripts where that phrase is lacking and the common understanding is that this was a circular letter that was designed to be read in many churches, maybe in the Lycus Valley or in Asia Minor. That isn't really a helpful conclusion because all of the letters are intended to be read by the churches, and this one no less or more than the others. But it is clear from the content, from the carrier, from the occasion that this and Colossians are a companion set and that this is the Laodicean letter.

And because of that, and because we know to whom it was written, we have a little bit of additional information in terms of how they reacted and what the outcome of it was. But what were they to draw from this letter? They didn't have a written copy that they could take home and examine in detail such as we have done to spend time reflecting and meditating on each phrase. Tychicus probably stood in front of the Laodicean assembly and read them this letter.

Now they were far better equipped than we to take in, absorb, remember and reflect on a verbal presentation of that nature. There is a common idea, Zoe. There's a common idea that there is, Zoe is the Greek word for life, that's the reason I mentioned it just in case you were wondering.

It has nothing to do with the cat clawing the screen there behind Diana. But there's a common idea that the ancient people were just kind of duffers. You know, well they didn't have science, they didn't have iPhones, and so they just weren't too smart.

And as we've noted many times, they were literally head and shoulders above us in terms of their capacity, which they began learning as small children. Because they didn't have any of the aids for the handicap that we use, we have to write things down on paper. A big chief tablet and a pencil is what I used when I was little.

And we graduate to ruled notebooks and ballpoint pens, and in the days shortly before us they used fountain pens. But we store things externally because we've got all of this technology, and just like taking a child and putting them in braces around their legs and arms and giving them artificial strength, you don't build your own strength when you're constantly assisted from the outside. Your child, it's a miracle to me that some toddlers ever learn to walk because we as parents want to carry them everywhere.

It just feels so good. And I understand now why people want to be grandparents, because as a parent when your kids grow too large to pick up, you miss it. They just, there is such an incredible, I did not see it coming as a single guy and even as the first three years we were married, we didn't have any kids.

And I thought, man, this marriage deal, this is as good as it gets. And then when we had children and babies and toddlers and little ones that you pick up and carry, there is a sensation, there is an experience of carrying a little child like that, one that belongs to you, that you can't know it, you can't enter into it until you've done it. And it's a miracle to me that our kids ever learn to walk.

I just wanted to carry them everywhere. The minute I got home, I just carried, had two of them, one in each arm, nice balance there. Just carry them around.

Feet never touch the ground. Well, they don't learn to walk if you don't let them out sometimes. Because of that, it is similar in our mental abilities.

And we wrongly judge others by ourselves. It is usually a mistake to judge others by yourself. This is a common place in the world of materialists.

They assume the worst because they assume that you're doing what they would do if they were in your place. And we make the same mistake. We sometimes are too trusting, we are too optimistic because we assume that others are doing what we would do in their place as healthy believers.

And we've got to pull back from that. It is generally a mistake. And this is just a Samism, this isn't in the word of God.

But in my view, it is generally a mistake to judge others by yourself. You don't know the hidden mechanisms and inner workings of their chronometer. You don't know what it is that makes them tick and makes them go.

And this is why people are constantly surprised. I just can't believe. Well, the reason is because you assumed that others are like you and many of them are not.

Some of them are, but you've got to know that from experience. I say all of that to emphasize that these people, yes, they didn't have manuscripts and they didn't have computers and they didn't have recordings and they couldn't go back and review, but they had an incredible ability to record, remember, and review mentally what they had only heard once. Someone would stand up and give an oration.

This is why modern scholarship just can't abide the notion that the gospel accounts are valid. Well, they weren't written down until years after the fact. How could they possibly quote Jesus verbatim on what He said? And these were all manufactured tales made up later.

They're judging others by themselves. They wouldn't have the ability to remember as John remembered, that which our eyes have seen, that which our ears have heard, that which we have handled, the living word of God. John had an incredibly retentive memory.

We're shocked and amazed now if somebody has a near photographic memory and can

remember and review what they've seen and heard. It was a commonplace in the ancient world. Most people had that.

We are helpless, handicapped cripples compared to most of them. So Tychicus stood and read this letter and the people in Laodicea and then in Colossae and then in the rest of the churches in the community and eventually the churches worldwide had access to this material. But in the early days, it was read to them.

In many cases, read once and that's it. And they could go back and remember. This is why there will be chiastic structures.

This is why there will be allusions that are very incomplete because the speaker knows that everybody's brain works this way and he'll say as it is written, you know, that it might be fulfilled that was spoken by the prophet and he just gives a brief note and they say, well, that doesn't fulfill what you're quoting from the prophet. Well, that's because you're a modern day moron and you don't know what those people knew at the time that that's just the that's the reference as the prophet wrote back in Isaiah 53, as the prophet wrote back in Isaiah 9, as the prophet wrote back in Psalm 21, as the prophet wrote, as it was recorded in the scripture. And he's given the the little mental tabulation, the little the reference, the index marker.

And we just we're just, well, he's obviously made a mistake. What he's saying is he shall be called a Nazarene. What are you talking about? Well, anyway, here's the point.

As Paul concludes this letter, knowing that it is going to be read, Paul wrote to be read aloud. This is another thing we've lost. We read, we stumble through.

The reason we take so long to get through books is we're modern day morons. We're not sharp enough. I can't stand up here and read the letter.

And us, any of us, me first and foremost, can't begin to get out of it what the original recipients did. We're just not built that way anymore. We are cripples.

We're so proud of ourselves with our technology. Our technology has made us weak. We're mentally weak.

We're lame. We're halt. We're blind.

And we need all of this help to get to the place that these people were on one hearing. This is why Paul, knowing he is going to be read, can put these beautiful symmetries into a letter. For example, and I don't have time to exhaust them here, but look at our last page here.

If your Bible is like mine, Ephesians 6, 12 through 24 is on the last page. My last page is right here, and then comes Philippians. And just looking at this page, I just start at the top.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. If I were a Laodicean in the first century, if I were a Colossian, if I were any of the other early types that had a decent human mental capacity, particularly enhanced and enabled with the Holy Spirit of God, I would remember that Paul, back in chapter two of this letter, and they didn't even have chapters and verses to help them, but they would have recalled immediately, you who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, that connection would have instantly been made in their minds. That was then, this is now.

Formerly, you had to walk, you had to live according to the course of this world, the mundane, materialist, short-term view inanities of people who have no spiritual cognizance whatsoever. You were dead in trespasses and sins. You were trapped in them.

You had no deliverance, you had no escape, there was no door out. There was no opportunity to pull yourself out by your own bootstraps. You ever seen the quicksand movies? It's largely a fiction, but people in the quicksand and they're sinking and nobody can get to them.

They're being sucked down and they just disappear. You see their nose and bloop, that's the end. They're gone and they can't help themselves.

In the few cases where there actually is quicksand, they tell you don't struggle because the more you struggle, the faster you sink. There's only a handful of places where there is genuine quicksand. There are a few, but it would be the same if you fell into the La Brea tar pit.

It might be an honor for somebody to dig you out of there thousands of years from now and mount you in the museum next to some other unfortunate animal. But among whom we all once conducted ourselves in the desires of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath. Children of wrath.

And then of course in the middle he talks about coming to the standard of a mature man. You've been delivered, you've been saved, and until we all come to the standard of a mature man, we were children of wrath, we're going to be mature believers of accomplishment, of fruitfulness, of meaningful reflection of the glory of God. We were once in darkness, we were trapped in a system run by the prince of the power of the air.

And Paul says, remember in chapter 6 verse 12, remember what I was talking about several paragraphs back? We're not children and we're not trapped in that. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against these principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Therefore, take up what you didn't used to have, and you now do.

You've got armor of God, don't forget the change from being dead in trespasses and sins and being alive in Christ. In Him we have these assets, don't forget. Put on the armor.

You're not just delivered, you're not just standing on solid ground, you're not just in the light, you're not just alive, you're mature and you've got tools, you've got resources, you've got assets, you've got things you can do to be effective and accomplish a purpose. It is a night and day difference, and it goes from the early part of the letter to this last part of the letter. And Paul intended and expected that people would remember that earlier coverage.

He says in verse 18 on this page, and I'm just taking a few typical examples. Take the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. He really hammers on this prayer deal, right? He says, you need to pray, pray always, pray for everyone, pray all the time, supplicate, make supplication for all the saints, and pray for me.

Make supplication for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I can continue to do what God has called me to do. What does this hark back to? Think about chapter 1, I also, verse 15, after I heard of your faith and your love, I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. I pray for you.

Here's what I pray for you. And remember when you go over a page and you get to chapter 3, verse 14, he mentions it again. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember how he's wrapping up the letter? How did he begin the letter? Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, there's the Lord Jesus and there's God the Father. I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father, to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, writing to believers, not an evangelistic effort, writing to saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, grace and peace, God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how the letter begins.

God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. How does the letter end? God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace. Verse 23, peace. Verse 24, grace.

Right in the middle, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the middle of the letter, in 3, 14, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying to the Father in the name of the Son.

We know this is the constant, unvarying pattern of prayer. You can't hardly find anybody now that prays to God the Father. Everybody wants to pray to Jesus or pray to the Holy Spirit.

I can't even hear anything after that. As soon as somebody says, dear Jesus, I just, there's this reverberating noise in my head and I can't hear anything else until I hear, in your name we pray.

You're talking to Jesus in his own name? It just, I, well, that's when I can confess my sins and do my own prayer.

I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, verse 16, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man. What have we been talking about in chapter 6? Strengthened with might. You've got a helmet, you've got a solid foundation, you've got a breastplate, you've got the girdle about your waist of truth, you've got the sword, you've got all of these assets.

I pray, Paul says, that you will be strengthened. I'm not just telling you about the armor, I pray that God will help you put it on and remember that it's there and operate it properly. Nothing worse than a bad helmet.

I told you before about my football helmet. I could have been such a great scholarship earning football player if I had just had a decent helmet. I attribute all of my failures, which were many, on the football field to a terrible helmet.

I could not see, I could not hear, I could not run without the thing rattling all over my head and buffeting me about the ears and eyebrows. I couldn't hear anything. As soon as I started running, I couldn't see anything.

How effective can you be as a defensive end when you are blind and deaf? I think it was probably great entertainment for people watching me from the stands. Let's wait for this next down. Watch the guy on the left end over there.

He's just running amok. It was a terrible, terrible helmet. God says to us, you've got sight and you've got the hearing of the ear from Him.

That's what God the Holy Spirit gives us is perception beyond our inadequacies. So Paul prays that God will grant according to the riches of His glory for us to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. The inner man puts on this armor.

By the way, something else about armor that I haven't mentioned up to this point. If you think about it, for every piece of armor there's two ideas. Think about the breastplate.

There's two ideas about the breastplate and every other piece of armor. That is, what is its consideration on the outside? What sort of attack is it designed to counter? That's the outside of the breastplate. What's on the inside? What is the breastplate protecting? If your kneecap was the most important part of your body, the breastplate would be on your knee.

It's on your breast, it's on your chest because your heart is what's important. And so it has a two-fold idea. A, there's a specific kind of attack that it is designed to deflect and protect you from.

And B, there's a specific part of you that it is designed to preserve. So there's an outer aspect and

an inner aspect. What about the helmet? Well, what does the helmet protect you from? There are specific things.

The helmet's got to be thick enough that if somebody is swinging one of these swords, it will not penetrate. I mean, if you had a helmet made out of tinfoil, then you have not given consideration to the type of attack. Well, my brain's important.

I'm going to wear a tinfoil hat. You've got to consider the kind of attack, and it's got to be strong enough to defend against that. And you don't put it on your elbow, you put it on your head.

Your brain's not in your arm, your brain is in your cranium. So it's got an outer and an inner aspect. Paul says, I pray that God will grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Who's this letter written to? See, we're in the middle. There's the beginning and there's an end.

We're in the middle. And he says that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Who did he write to? The saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.

You're in Christ. I pray that He may be in you. This tells you, if this is a prayer of Paul, not all believers have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith.

This is something we attain to. And Jesus talked about this back in John 14. The one who has my words and loves me, I and my Father will come to him and make our home with him.

I am with you. I will be in you. Through the Holy Spirit, that you may be able to comprehend with all the sanctified ones, the width and length and depth and height.

That goes back to chapter 1. That you may know all the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. He's been given to be head of the church. That you will come to know those three great things in chapter 1. The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints and so on.

Comprehend the width and length and depth and height. To know the love of Christ that can't be known. Passes knowledge.

There is a knowledge that is more than academic. And we've talked about this. You can read.

You can watch. You can look at YouTube. You can see other people.

You can watch other people carrying their little toddlers around. But until you carry your own, you don't know what it's like. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

This is not a knowledge that can be transmitted. It is a knowledge that is gained by experience. That's knowledge that passes knowledge.

Filled with all the fullness of God. And that goes right back to 1. That you may be filled. His body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

So this summary section here in chapter 6, that's what we're looking at. It comprehends and reviews the entire letter. And these are some of the main themes.

This is what they were supposed to take away. This is what they were supposed to remember. You are in Christ.

Your goal is for him to be in you. You want to be strengthened with might in the inner man. You want to function effectively.

The first half of the letter establishes the reasons and the basis and the opportunity. And the second gives examples of application. And that is what it was supposed to do.

The word agape in this letter is very prominent. About one-sixth of all the uses of agape in all of Paul's letters are in this one. And he wrote a lot more than what is here.

It's disproportionately large. It begins with love in chapter 1, verses 4-6. And it ends with love in 23 and 24.

Love with faith. Love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The relationships of the body.

Because we are in him, we are together. We are united. It is a very common theme.

And this is inherently, understanding this, think about it. If we're in Christ and we are members one of another, the Jew-Greek thing is behind us. We've been reconciled.

Those who were the first to hope in Christ have been joined by Gentiles. And you put all that aside because unity is paramount. You are one in him.

The Spirit makes us one. We are one in the Spirit. We are one in the Lord.

It's a very prominent theme. And because of that unity, you don't want to start establishing a lot of vertical distance. Husbands, don't establish a higher plane of existence for yourself from your wife.

Masters, don't separate yourself on the basis of your authority from sympathy for and respect for and love for your slaves and vice versa. Children, obey your parents. Honor your father and mother.

And parents, don't establish a distance where you're no longer sympathetic to and on the same team with your children. Unity, unity, in love, in him, defined by in him, limited by in him. Very prominent theme.

So the overall emphasis here is what God's purpose is in the Lord Jesus Christ and how we fit into that purpose as a group, as an entity, the church. Well, how did this turn out? Flip over to Revelation chapter 3. Revelation chapter 3. Now, we have studied this in some detail. It's been a long time ago and I am probably going to return to this study of the letters to the seven churches.

Very quickly, the Lord Jesus delivers to John messages to seven churches in Asia Minor. Kind of reminds you of what we've seen in Micah of those villages. There's a little message to each village, but every village hears the message to every other village.

And the people in Jerusalem hear all the messages because the leadership is being targeted for their failures. Same thing here. Jesus doesn't have John write, seal, and send seven separate letters.

He says, here is my message that the other six churches are going to hear what he says to Ephesus in chapter 2. And many times when people finish Ephesians, they come to this part, the first one in chapter 2. Oddly enough, it is the last one in chapter 3 that actually pertains. And oddly enough, when you think about, especially kind of the conclusion of Ephesians, and he's talking about the armor of God and stand against the forces of darkness, what do you think? Well, Jesus is going to evaluate how well did you do in the battle against Satan, the synagogue of Satan, the representatives of Satan, the Jezebel that does Satan's work. And nearly all of the other letters talk about, well, you're in this conflict.

Look at verse 2 for the Ephesian church. I know your works, your labor, your patience, that you cannot bear those who are evil. You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not.

You have found them liars. You have persevered and have patience and have labored for my namesake and have not become weary. You've been in a battle, you've been in a conflict, and you've held up.

Good job. Look at Smyrna. Of course, you remember that one.

I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you're rich. The blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not. They are a synagogue of Satan.

Don't fear what you're going to suffer. You're going to be tested. You're going to go into 10 days of tribulation.

Keep your armor on. That would be a great thing, you know, to come back to with the Lord Jesus for the Laodiceans. That's not what he says.

In Pergamos, in verse 12 of chapter 2, these things says, he who has the sharp two-edged sword. Well, there's a great tie-in to Ephesians. Let's talk about how well you did with that sword of the Word of God.

You're there where Satan's throne is. You held fast to my name. You did not deny my faith, even in the days in which Anabas was my faithful martyr.

That's not to this church that Paul has written to. You would think, what a great tie-in. Jesus is evaluating how well they use the armor.

Look at Thyatira in verse 18. These things says the Son of God, eyes like a flame of fire, feet like brass. I know your works, love, service, and faith, and your patience.

And as for your works, the last are more than the first. You've achieved righteousness. You've cared for one another.

Nevertheless, you fell down. You dropped your sword. Jezebel got in, and in your struggle with the principalities and powers, this evil doctrine has perpetrated itself.

And I'm going to have to step in. But it's a doctrinal issue. Verse 24, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, the opponent, the enemy, the prince of the power of the air, the prince of darkness, in which we all once walked.

And now you've been delivered, and we're wrestling against the principalities. That would be a great tie-in. It's not for the Laodiceans.

Chapter 3, Sardis, seven spirits and seven stars. Be watchful. Strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.

I've not found your works perfect before God. Keep strong. Keep that armor on.

Don't let it drop. You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, the stuff that they have put on. Watch out, I will come upon you as a thief, and so on.

That's not what he writes. Philadelphia, in verse 7 of chapter 3, the one who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, shuts and no one opens. I know your works.

I've set before you an open door. No one can shut it. You have little strength.

You have micros dunamis. You have small potential. There's always been sort of a debate about, is he saying they have little strength and it's a criticism, or you have a little strength and you've done well with what you had, with the opportunities you had.

You maximized it. This is like Paul in chains. He can't do everything he would do if he were free, so he does as much as he can in his fettered condition.

And really, the latter is more the idea here. And Jesus says, you've been constricted. You've only had a little potential, but you've done well.

I'm going to open a door in front of you so that you can walk through and do much greater things. Don't be concerned that your opportunities have been small. I'm setting an open door before you.

And for you who are faithful and you who are overcomers, when I put this door in front of you and you walk through, you're going to have greater opportunities than you could imagine that you haven't had in your earlier life. And that's kind of the idea here. You have kept my command to persevere, and I will keep you from the hour of trial.

Well, this doesn't really seem to reflect Laodicea either. So then you get to the Laodicean church in verse 14. To the messenger of the church of Laodicea, to the pastor, write, these things says the amen.

What's the last word in Ephesians? Amen, right? These says the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. What did Paul emphasize in his letter? God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. I bow my knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace and grace, love with faith from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus says, I am the truth, I am the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, God the Father. I know your works, and it has nothing to do with armor, it has nothing to do with wrestling, it has nothing to do with relationships in terms of did you submit to your husband, did you love your wife, did you obey your parents, did you frustrate your child, were you a good slave, were you a bad master.

The entire content of the book, you say, hey, wait a minute, I don't think this pertains, I like that Ephesian letter, I think that much more connects back to the issues that Paul addressed that characterized this group that were needed to be covered and you would expect Jesus would evaluate, well, how well did you do given the ministry of the apostle I sent to you with this message. What is the content of this letter? I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

And you remember when we went through this letter in Laodicea, they had the cold springs and they had the hot springs and cold water is good for refreshment, for invigoration and so on. Hot water is good for medicinal purposes, for soaking in and trying to be vivified. You know, when you get an injury, it's always the great question, well, do I heat it or do I cool it? Do I ice it or do I warm it up? You know, some injuries want one and some the other, some are alternating between one and the other.

I wish you were either cold or hot. You're just lukewarm. You're not good for refreshment and invigoration.

You're not good for restoration and therapy. You're just, you're like bland insipid tap water. You're like warm beer.

You're not good for anything. So I will vomit you out of my mouth because you say, I am rich, I have become wealthy, I am in need of nothing. Sounds like Micah, doesn't it? All those people that got the respite from God's judgment and had the opportunity to grasp their spiritual opportunities and instead, they just go right back into materialism.

They want to build towns and add field to field and they're riding to prosperity on the backs of the poor. They're insensitive. And God says, I will judge you.

Micah is sent to tell them, I've given you this opportunity to turn and all you're doing is just acting more and more like a Canaanite. You need to shave your head like a Canaanite and be sorry like a Canaanite because you're acting like a Canaanite. It's all in Micah, looking at on Friday night.

So you don't know that you say, I'm wealthy, I am rich, I have need of nothing. And you do not know that you are poor and wretched and miserable and blind and naked. Not necessarily in that order.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire that you may be rich and white garments that you may be clothed. And yet there is a direct connection between this letter from the Lord Jesus and the Ephesian letter to Laodicea from Paul. What is it? Not only did they not take to heart the importance of the spiritual conflict, not only did they fail to put on their armor and stand in the evil day and having done all to stand, they did exactly the same thing that Israel did that we've seen in Amos and Hosea and Jonah and Micah.

They got self-involved. They became self-sufficient. They were self-centered.

They pursued selfish gain, selfish comfort. Paul spends this entire six chapter letter pleading with them to be objective. Look at where you are in Christ.

Look at who you are in relation to one another and look at your opportunity in the spiritual conflict. What did they do with that tremendous opportunity? They became secular humanist materialists. They are oblivious to the conflict.

Why do you think Paul wrote the letter under the influence of the Holy Spirit? Why do you think God sent them that truth? Because this is what they needed to hear. This is what they needed to respond to, to observe and interpret and apply. And they had the mental ability to do so.

And Paul wrote them a brilliant letter. And he said, not just this one, but I got one to Colossians in the same bag. Read that one also that says the very same thing in sharper, more terse terms.

They got this message because they needed it. And when they heard it, they fumbled it. It apparently ran off like water on a duck's back because Jesus says, you're not a warrior.

You're not in conflict. You're not battling with the synagogue of Satan or Jezebel or doctrine or anything else. You're sitting around saying, we're fat and sassy.

We've got everything we need. We're good to go. And you don't even know that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked spiritually.

Not only do you not have your armor on, you haven't got your clothes on. Not only are you not feeding on the bread of life and drinking the living water, you are starved. You're miserable.

You are blind. It's tragic. You're wretched.

I counsel you. He doesn't say, go find the armor of God and put it on. He doesn't say, you need to remember that you're wrestling against.

They're not even at the point of being able to do that. He says, you're laying on the gutter like a beggar and you need to buy from me gold refined in the fire. And that buy from me is a fascinating statement when you think about sovereignty and election and all of these other issues and the great divide between believers who understand how salvation works and how decisions before God work.

Because these people are poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, right? So would you walk down to a homeless person that hasn't got a penny in his pocket and say, you need to go buy some gold. Hey, Freddy the freeloader, you who have nothing and owe everybody huge amounts, go buy some gold. With what? Yet Jesus tells these poor, wretched, miserable, blind, naked people, buy from me.

He doesn't say receive from me, hold out your hand and let me give you. He says, buy. Why does he say that? Because even in this condition, they have the capital to lay hold of the gold of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is free will. You can come to the Lord Jesus and with your faith, with your conscious decision to believe, to trust, and to obey, you can receive from the Lord Jesus gold refined in the fire and then you'll be rich. You can receive the white garments of righteousness by faith.

You can receive them. You go and purchase the gold refined in the fire. This is faith under pressure, faith despite judgment, faith that has been purified of earthly contamination, righteousness.

Now you've got clothing, white garments of righteousness. And the shame of your nakedness, we had this phrase exactly in Micah. Remember that? You people in beauty town are going to walk out naked and ashamed.

Remember that? That the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed and anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. Anoint your own eyes with eye salve. He doesn't say lay there passively and helplessly and wait for God to, in his inscrutable will, decide to unblind you.

He says, you get some salve from the same place you got the robe and the same place you got

the gold and you rub it on your own eyes so that you can see. This is human responsibility. But they're back at square one.

All of the wonderful potential from their response. Paul says, I've heard of your faith and love. And this is why I pray for you.

They began well. You think about Galatians, you began well. Who hindered you? Who tripped you? You were doing so well.

Same thing in Laodicea. Paul says, I've heard of your faith and your love. And I pray that this will grow and expand, that you'll build on that, that it will become something terrific.

Here's where they ended up. This to me would be the most tragic thing if after our study of Ephesus, we did the same thing. Well, very interesting.

Great study, learned a few things in there. And we end up wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Therefore be zealous and change your mind. I stand at the door and knock. It's real interesting when you look at the previous church in Philadelphia.

Jesus says, you've done well, even though your opportunities were limited and your potential was small. I set before you an open door. Just walk through and you're gonna be pillars in the temple of God with his new name and the name of God written on them.

Jesus sets in front of them an open door. In this church, there is a shut door that has been put in front of Jesus. And he's banging on it.

I'm standing at the door that you have shut and I'm knocking. You come and open the door. Philadelphia, Jesus sets before them an open door.

Here, Jesus is standing in front of a shut door. These people, despite the ministry of the apostle Paul and two inspired letters, Ephesians and Colossians, shut the door. And he says, look, I didn't just walk away when you slammed the door.

I'm standing here knocking on it. You need to open the door, change your mind. Let me come in and sit down with you and reestablish the in him.

Us in him, he in us. Get that personal relationship reestablished with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. And let's build back to the point where you can be the fullness of him who fills all in all.

You can be the body of Christ. You can be those who fulfill and exploit all of these potentials. But it starts with getting face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ and getting reorientated, as they like to say.

To him who overcomes, verse 21, I will grant to sit with me on my throne. This was the privilege of victors in battle. Now you're tying back to the armor of God.

Who would sit with the emperor on his throne? Victorious, conquering soldiers, generals who had gone and waged long and faithful campaigns on behalf of the empire would come back in triumph, in victory, and would sit next to Caesar on his throne. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. And what does that mean in practical terms? Where is Jesus actually seated with respect to the father's throne? At the right hand.

You will be seated at the Lord's right hand. This is the right hand at the banquet table. This is the right hand at the time of administration and function.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches, to all seven churches. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to Laodicea and to Colossae and to the rest of those churches in that time and this. It is spoken to us all.

It's such a powerful exhortation. And you've got a triple whammy. You've got Ephesians and you've got Colossians and you've got the Lord Jesus himself in Revelation two and three, a threefold push, a threefold appeal, a threefold challenge to live the life of faith in Christ so that he can be in us and the fullness of God's plan and purpose can be revealed, can be accomplished and can be exploited now and in the ages to come.

Who would not jump at that chance? There are Old Testament saints who longed to be where we are, longed to have what we have and be able to do what we can do. It is pretty much all a matter of awareness for us to remember it and to have the reality of it be impressed on us on a daily basis. When it isn't real to us, we don't pay enough attention to get it done.

And I don't know about you. I do know about you. You, like me, do not want to show up at the judgment, wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked and have the shame of your nakedness exposed.

I counsel you, Jesus says, buy from me gold refined in the fire. That's our remedy. That's our opportunity.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for this great letter and its related passages, the truths that are communicated throughout your word, Old Testament and new.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will do his wonderful, gracious work of impressing these things on our hearts in a way that will result in change, in growth, in our being able to exploit these potentials to the fullest extent so that your glory is reflected in Jesus Christ and in us. We pray

these things in his name. Amen.

Amen.