

Ephesians

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Date: 13 December 2015

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[0 : 00] Well, you will take your scripture sheet. We are going to begin a new chapter today. And I just want to reiterate something that I know we have mentioned in time past, but it always bears repetition when we come to a situation like that.

And it is to ignore the chapter divisions, because, as you will realize, about 500 years ago, there were no chapter or verse divisions in the Bible at all.

These are all man-made. They have nothing to do with the inspiration of the text. They are something that simply was added by man with the wisdom of man in an effort to make the location of various biblical texts more accessible.

In other words, it just gave them an address so that you can look them up. And I've often thought what a frustrating thing it would be for a preacher to have to stand before his conscience and say, all right, folks, I want you to turn now to about halfway through Isaiah.

That would be very difficult. So we've got chapter and verse divisions, and that simplifies things, and we can just go right to it. I am amazed, however, to realize that there are many people who have been Christians for a number of years who cannot find a reference in the Bible without going to the index.

[1 : 24] Now, something's wrong with this picture. We ought to have committed the location of those biblical books to memory a long time ago, so we don't have to go to the index and find out where Hosea is, you know.

So I say that. Guilty. Guilty. Okay. And it's not as difficult as you might think to memorize some of those, especially when you hear some of these little five- and six-year-old darlings from the kindergarten Sunday school class rattle off all 66 books of the Bible.

And that just makes some of us adults sit there kind of red-faced, you know. But they prove that it can be done. So here we've got another unfortunate chapter division, and it begins with the word therefore.

And you've heard the old cliché, I'm sure, many, many times. Whenever you come to the word therefore or wherefore in the Bible, you always want to stop and see what it's there for because there is a connection.

And all that means is Paul is not actually beginning a new thought here as chapter 4 opens. It's not the beginning of a new thought at all.

[2 : 35] He's reaching a conclusion. And that's the whole basis for the use of the word therefore. And what it means is, in light of everything I've been telling you up to this point, here is what you are to do about it.

This is the outcome. This is where we go from here. So he is summing up his argument. He isn't beginning a new chapter. And I just wish there were some way to do these chapter divisions over because I think they could have been made a lot more judiciously.

But they are there and we are stuck with them. So we just have to learn to live with it. But continuing on now with chapter 4 and verse 1.

I therefore, or this is the reason why I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you. And the word beseech is a strong word in the Greek.

And it conveys the idea of I beg of you. I plead with you. I implore you. Paul is putting all of his emotion into this because he fully realizes what is at stake.

[3 : 44] And what he is trying to do through the Spirit of God is motivate the reader to comply with what has been written because it is extremely important to do so.

That's why I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, implore you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

All this is, is a plea for these people to be what they are. To act out what Christ has wrought in them.

It is a plea for them to make their outward walk equal their talk. And it is shoe leather Christianity.

It is the kind of thing that makes a difference in your life and impacts those around you. The walk, of course, simply means your lifestyle.

[4 : 48] It means the manner in which you conduct your daily living. That's your walk. And when we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, look at some other alternate renderings of that.

Excuse me. To live lives worthy of the call that you have received. Or to live lives worthy of the summons you have received.

Taylor renders it. To live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen for such wonderful blessings as these.

New English Bible says, As God has called you, live up to your calling. And it goes without saying, Paul is fully recognizing here our ability to do this.

Never forget, guys. God never makes demands of his people that he has not equipped them to beat.

[5 : 56] God is not unreasonable in his demands. He doesn't make imposition or demands upon us that we can't fulfill, leaving us hand-wringing and saying, Well, I just can't do that.

Yes, you can. Yes, you can. Now, we may say, I don't want to do that. And be honest about it. But we don't have the cop-out excuse, I can't do that.

It's beyond me. Because it isn't. There are no unreasonable demands made. So, we have the capability of walking in a way that is consistent with our profession.

And this is all he's asking, really. But it's quite a bit. Because we've often made the statement, God has no greater asset on this earth than a believer in Jesus Christ who is walking in the Spirit.

That's the greatest ally that God has. And God has no greater liability than a believer who is walking in the flesh and living a life that is contrary to his profession.

[7 : 14] And we all know there's plenty of both kinds around. This is serious business. And it's something that the Apostle is addressing here with great sobriety.

With all lowliness. With perfect modesty. With perfect humility. Now, our humility and modesty, neither one, are perfect. But rather than a word perfect.

You know, perfect just doesn't allow for any margin at all. I would prefer to render this with consistent modesty.

Because there are times when we all drop the ball. There are times when we all screw up. Because it is inherent in our flesh to sometimes act out of the flesh without even thinking about it.

We just kind of knee-jerk reaction. We say the wrong stupid thing or do the wrong stupid thing. And we're all capable of that. And we just need to recognize that.

[8 : 15] But what our maturity and growing in grace ought to do by way of effect is, it ought to make us exhibit more and more of the spirit and less and less of the flesh.

And nobody has any illusions to arriving at the place where we can say, Hey, here I am, world. I'm a finished product. Look at me. Well, that's not the kind of modesty and humility that Paul is talking about here.

Because he himself in chapter 7 of Romans indicated that he has within him this old nature that wants to do the thing that I know I ought not to do.

And yet, I'm pulled in that way. And I want to do that thing. And I have this war within me, this struggle that goes on between this old man and this new man for who's going to rule the roost.

Who's going to call the shots. And what spiritual maturity does, more than anything else, is it enables us to manifest the Christ-like life more than we manifest the flesh-like life.

[9 : 32] And this is why growth is so important. Because just as a newborn baby needs nourishment and growth, so a newborn babe in Christ needs spiritual nourishment and growth so that the end result can be realized.

And what is our end result? What is it that we are aiming for? More than anything else, it's to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And my evidence that I have not attained that is that nobody has yet ever mistaken me for Jesus.

Nobody's even come close. So, that means there's an unfinished product here that is in process and it's still moving on.

As Paul would say when he wrote to the Philippians, I press on, press forward for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And that simply means that we labor and we strive to attain that for which Christ saved us.

[10 : 39] And that is maturity and conformity to his image. And that is the most priceless gift that we can give God and we give it out of appreciation. With all lowliness and meekness.

And please understand, guys, in this day of macho expression and he-manism and all the rest, meekness is probably a word that is not favored too much among the male population because they don't understand it.

Too many men think that meekness is weakness. And it isn't at all. Meekness is strength that is under control.

And there's a huge difference. One of the best definitions I ever heard of meekness was about a horse. And the one who made the statement was Eddie Accaro, who had won the Kentucky Derby I don't know how many times and was one of the winningest jockeys ever to mount a horse.

And when he was asked about a certain horse that he had ridden, and I don't recall if he was a Kentucky Derby winner or not, but I remember Eddie Accaro making the statement, he is about the meekest horse I have ever rode.

[12 : 05] And what he meant was that the horse was powerful and strong, but the horse was completely at the disposal of the jockey.

And he would do whatever the jockey requested of him, whether it was to hold up or to break forth or whatever. That was a horse under obedience and under direction.

And that's the way we are supposed to be when it comes to a submissive spirit to the Lord. We are to have that kind of spiritual meekness where we are kind of like in a neutral position that makes it easy for God to move us in any direction he wants.

Because we are not committed to one particular thing, we are committed to his thing, and we are available to his leading and his direction.

That's the meekness here. And the loneliness and the humility is something that ought to characterize every one of us. You've heard me tell the old joke before about the book that I'm going to write about the world's ten most humble men and how I chose the other nine.

[13 : 19] Well, that's the opposite of what Paul is talking about here. You know, I say this with all sincerity.

This is something that I, very simple conclusion I came to a long, long time ago. Anybody who is a believer, who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and has a problem with pride, just doesn't know who he is or where he's come from.

Because if you understand, if you understand who and what you were before Christ, and who and what you are after Christ, there is not one iota of basis for pride anywhere.

We ought to be among the most humble people in the world. And yet, humility can be deceptive. Because if we're not careful, we can become proud that we are so humble.

We can become proud of our humility. You know what that's due to? That's due to the deceitfulness of the human heart that Jeremiah spoke about back in 17:9.

[14 : 36] The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? And the man who has convinced himself that I am truly a humble person has pride lurking somewhere.

You can be sure of it. And all it takes is the right kind of instance to bring it out. So, it is a deceitful thing. And it is a destructive thing. Because it is that vice that goes before the fall.

And pride is the thing that caused Lucifer to fall. And it's contributing to humanity ever since. With all lowliness and meekness.

With long-suffering. Forbearing one another in love. This long-suffering means exactly what it says. It means you suffer a long time.

Another way of putting this long-suffering is putting up with someone. Tolerating someone. I don't know how aware of it you are.

[15 : 39] But the liberal community of Layton and the political correctness has actually taken it unto themselves to even redefine some dictionary words that have been there for hundreds of years.

And one of the words that has suffered the most abuse at the hands of the politically correct is the word tolerant. Tolerant.

It is amazing what they call intolerant. And their new definition essentially is this. If you disagree with me about anything, you're intolerant.

That is so contrary to the standard basic dictionary definition that has existed for hundreds of years. You just wonder. That is supreme arrogance.

When you take it unto yourself to try and redefine a word that has been established in the English language for who knows how long, to make tolerant mean something other than what it means, a complete opposite?

[16 : 45] You know what? To tolerate something means to be willing to put up with something even though you do not agree with it.

That is tolerance. It means I do not agree with you, but I am not going to kill you over it. I am not going to make a big issue of it. I mean, you have got your opinion about things.

I have got my opinion. And we disagree about some things. But that is okay. I am willing to put up with that. And that is what tolerance means.

It does not mean you have to agree with people. And sometimes we have to just agree to disagree. And that happens, I think, a lot probably in marriages because, you know, a wife, a woman, she really does have a mind of her own.

And sometimes that mind reaches a different conclusion than what your mind does. And it does not necessarily mean she is wrong or that you are wrong.

[17 : 51] But it means you are different. You see things differently. You have got a different take on it, a different opinion. So, what are you going to do? Well, file for divorce.

Of course not. Sometimes you just have to say, honey, I think you are wrong about this. But I respect your opinion. And I am glad you respect mine. And we will just agree to disagree.

There is nothing wrong with that. And everybody remains harmonious. And you still love each other just as much as you always did. But it doesn't mean you have to come over to my side and see everything exactly as I do.

Because if you don't, you are wrong. And that is an unfortunate, that is bigotry. That is a genuine definition of bigotry. And that is the kind of thing that scripture condemns.

Long-suffering, forbearing one another. It means you put up with one another. You know, let's just be honest now.

[18 : 54] Can you think of anybody in your memory who is a source of irritation to you?

You find them irritating. Probably so. Have you ever considered the possibility that you might be equally irritating to them?

So, if you are not going to come to blows, you just grin and bear it. And you say, well, you know, that is just so and so.

He is different than I am. He sees things differently. But that is okay. Because if we apply what Paul provides here as the overall directive, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

That is the key. In love. And that too is a word that suffers from misdefinition. Love is not an emotion.

[20 : 04] It is not a feeling. Love may be accompanied by feelings and emotions. And that's great. Feelings and emotions are wonderful things.

And I don't know that there is anything more wonderful than the feeling of being in love. And the heart strings that go along with it. But that's not what real love is.

That's what romance is. And that's a good thing. But don't mistake it for love. Because love, that is a biblical love, the agape love, is a love which says and does the things that are in the interest of the object of your love.

That's biblical love. And that is an act of the will. We are not to love someone because we feel like loving them.

We are to love someone because it is our responsibility to love them. And you know something? You may not like them. We are not called upon to like people.

[21 : 12] We are called upon to love them. And personalities clash. And sometimes there are people that you just try as hard as you want as you can. You just can't get to like that person.

You don't relish being in their presence. And if you see them coming your way and you have a way of escape, you may take it. But if you have opportunity to speak to them or to act on their behalf, you need to be motivated by love.

And love means that you do what is in the best interest of the object of that love, whether you feel like it or not. Now, that is a powerful thing.

But, fellas, that brings into play our will and not our feelings or our emotions. Because a lot of times we don't feel loving towards somebody, but we're obligated to do the loving thing.

Joe? That's the key, loving thing. It's an action thing. It's the action thing you do for example. It's what you say to them. Absolutely. It's action. Absolutely.

[22 : 17] Absolutely. Mark. Forbearing one another in love. Yes? I've got what I call a commandment. Okay. And I've got a complaint when I was holiday for 60 years.

Okay. Now, I'm going to stop you right there and ask you. I'm going to ask you to speak up a little more because part of my being discombobulated is I forgot my hearing aids this morning.

I'm telling you. I've got... I'm a mess this morning. I'm lucky that I'm clothed and in my right mind. Well, I'm clothed anyway. Okay. I'm speaking up because I've got my hearing aids.

Okay. Okay. Now, he wrote this verse in the Bible about throwing pearls to swan, right?

Yeah. Yeah. And at what point do you say, I can't do this anymore? He's saying, I can't continue to be supportive.

[23 : 27] He's saying, I'm not a lifestyle. Yeah. I have a change. So, do you just keep at it?

Do you keep at it? Do you keep at it? Or do you stop throwing and just... Well, you're talking about communicating information that falls upon persistently deaf ears, huh?

There you go. Yeah. Okay. Well, there is a sense in which we can, you know, do that, casting pearls before swine. And the idea is a pearl is something of beauty, something of value.

So, what appreciation does a hog wallowing around in the mire have for a pearl? Well, it probably eats, since they eat everything, anything.

The idea is it has no appreciation, no ability for it at all. And I think the expression that our Lord is giving there is pointing out how fruitless and pointless it is to try to convince someone who does not have an ear for the truth.

[24 : 42] In fact, this is a statement that our Lord makes repeatedly in the book of the Revelation, and it's really significant that he makes it there. Because the backdrop of almost all the book of Revelation is the persistent lack of repentance on the part of humanity.

And after God provides one test, one trial, one calamity after another, man persists in his rebellion and unbelief. And the phrase that the Lord uses so many times in the book of the Revelation is not a very encouraging thing.

But it is, he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear. And there are people who have ears not for hearing. They're just for holding their glasses on.

But they're not for hearing, you know. And that's kind of like casting your pearl on the fourth line. And our Lord said, he who would be ignorant.

In other words, he who wills to be ignorant. Let him be ignorant still. And Peter addressed that in his second epistle when he talked about men who are willingly ignorant.

[26 : 03] Now, fellas, that is a really sad plight to be in. Because we are all ignorant just about different things.

But every one of us here has great space of ignorance about us. Because there is so much about so many things that we don't know anything about.

And in all of those areas, we are ignorant. But for somebody to be willingly ignorant is the position of, I'm not interested in facts because my mind is already made up.

That's somebody who is willingly ignorant, who wants to stay that way. They are not open or subject to truth. And you feel like you're beating a dead horse.

And yet, at the same time, I need to mention this. Each time a person hears a modicum of truth, it is something that is lodged in their soul or in their spirit.

[27 : 12] And eventually, they're going to have to deal with that. Either through repeated denial or whatever. But, fellas, the basis upon which we make decisions about anything and everything.

The basis upon which we make decisions about anything and everything. Always lies in information. Data that is received from whatever source, whatever avenue, however it comes.

And that goes into our inner person. Into our brain or into our mind. Into our spirit. And it lodges there. Because each of us is a depository of everything that we have experienced or learned or heard over years.

Sometimes we have great difficulty with the recall. But it's there. And it forms a pool. A pool of data upon which we act and make decisions and so on.

And as we go through life, we are constantly adding to that data with new information. And sometimes it confirms what is already there.

[28 : 25] And sometimes it conflicts with what is already there. And that sets up a struggle within. And this is almost always something that takes place when one hears spiritual truth that is contrary to what they've always believed.

What was the statement? I read it just the other day. I thought, oh, man, how powerful that is. I told myself I'll never forget that. Now, here I am trying to remember. Let me see.

It went something like this. It has to do with being able.

Now, it is far more difficult. It is far more difficult to embrace new ideas than it is to confirm the old ideas in our mind.

And when we hear something that conflicts with what we have always believed, we almost automatically reject it. And this could be what's going on in the life and heart of the person you're talking to.

[29 : 42] Because this individual, whoever it may be, already has a depository of information within them. They've got a bank in there. And they've been making deposits in that bank that has built up the total that is in there.

And it is information and attitude that principally goes in one direction with which they are comfortable. And when they hear new information that conflicts with what's in their bank, the tendency is to take this new stuff, which is minor in comparison to the major that's already there, and dismiss it.

And that goes on a lot. So, the only thing that can overcome that is the repeated hearing of the new stuff that begins to chip away at that old reinforcement that is there.

And we're talking about perhaps a long period of time. Maybe years may be involved. And it may never develop because they may struggle and fight against it and shore up the reservoir of the old stuff that is there and make it more resistant to the new stuff coming in.

And a lot of times people do that because they look forward to what the implications are if they embrace this new stuff they're hearing, and they don't want to go there.

[31 : 17] They don't want any part of that because they know that if they do, that will make demands upon them that they don't want to fulfill. So, what it boils down to is very often the resistance comes not from lack of information, but from lack of will, and from a determination to maintain one's own position, regardless of what the new information is or how valid it may be.

And I've heard people say things like this. Well, you may be right, but this is what I've always believed. Well, I respect that.

You know, I would not force my will on them or make them change their mind if I could. But it just goes to show you how deeply entrenched we can become in our positions.

And more often than not, they are maintained and born out of a comfortableness with what's familiar to us.

They are maintained out of emotion rather than out of reason or logic or intellect. We just know that this is where my comfort zone is, and that's where I'm going to stay, no matter what you say or no matter what the Bible says or no matter, you know.

[32 : 39] And that's he that would be ignorant. Let him be ignorant still. So that's all I can say. Other thoughts or comments? Larry. When we don't like someone, are we judging them?

When we don't like someone, are we what? Are we judging them? Well, if we don't like someone, are we judging them?

That's another term that is a hot potato item like the toleration thing.

And there could be a variety of things. Yeah, probably. We judge all the time. We do. We do. You cannot live a life that is normal without judging, you know.

And when the Lord said, I think it's Matthew 7, first verse or maybe it's 6, judge not that you be not judged, that's got to be one of the most frequently misquoted verses in all the Bible because the Lord never meant, certainly never meant, you're not supposed to judge anyone about anything.

[33 : 56] Well, that's ridiculous, especially when the Bible counters that in so many ways. And where in John, for instance, I think it's 14 or 15, if it hasn't moved, he said, judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Well, now listen, Jesus isn't talking out of both sides of his mouth. He's not contradicting himself. But he's talking about judgment that is a righteous judgment. When we are judgmental towards someone, if we have a judgmental spirit, it simply means that we are willing to form conclusions and positions about a person when we don't know all the facts involved.

And if we did, we'd probably be a lot more sympathetic and a lot less judgmental. I read a thing the other day, and it was just one of these that was in a store that had a bunch of signs, you know, and with little sayings on it that are very popular now.

And this one went something like this. Be kind to everyone you meet. Everyone has issues they're struggling with.

You know, there's a lot of truth in that. We're so easy sometimes and quick to dismiss somebody on the basis of appearances, and we just don't know what's involved.

[35 : 30] We don't have all the facts. Yeah, we don't have all the facts. And that's why judgmentalism is a curse, and it's something that Christians ought not to engage in.

We ought to always be willing to cut our brothers some slack, because you don't know what he's dealing with.

You're not in his position. You don't know what his struggles are, what his concerns are, and it's very easy to come down on someone and be critical and judgmental when you just don't know what they're dealing with.

And if you did, you'd have an entirely different attitude toward them. And there's a lot of that that goes on across this country. And it is one of the great divides that is wrecking this nation now, when people do not have an empathy and an understanding for others.

And it's just, it's critical. And for Christians, for Christians, it ought to be automatic. We ought to be eager and willing to forgive.

[36 : 39] And Paul's going to be talking about this later on in Ephesians 4. One of my favorite passages is where we are to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.

And man, what a breath of fresh air that would bring. Kevin? Yeah. Remember what he said? The Bible says we give 77 times 7. That's a whole lot of time.

77 times 7. And there are some people who will count. Oh! I mean, and your person said you never leave your persevere, but you have to remember that maybe these persons, what they're going through, God is using them to let them go through that.

So one day that will bring glory to the earth and to salvation. Amen. Where you'll be like, what? And then some of the people around them will say, what? There's got to be a God up in heaven if he doesn't turn him around.

You know what I mean? People start running to Christ. Well, it's just a church. But I appreciate the way you started this. That's not because you gave the divine revelation of the certainty, the certainty of Christ, the big three, the divine mark.

[37 : 57] You know the big three. You remind me about the big three. Can I read it? Sure. Absolutely. From what you see, it says, this is he, everything you spoke on.

Wait, let me read this thing. Right, brother? You came up. You came up. Woo. I said, Lord, how much you take me to this. It said, I there for the prisoner of the Lord beseech you. And everything that goes wrong with it, it said that he was worthy of the vocation, wherewith he are called, with all lowness, with perfect modesty, with perfect humility, and meekness, and gentleness, with all the forbearing one another in love.

But he went to the beginning. He said, I, the prisoner of the Lord beseech you. That's the beginning. And it says, the certainty of Christ.

It says, this is he. This is 1 John, the fourth chapter. You know where I'm going to go tomorrow. It said, this is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood.

And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is true. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.

[39 : 08] And these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. And these, that these three agree in one.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. Amen. For this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.

He that believeth upon the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him alive, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that haath the Son hatheth life, and he that haath not the Son hatheth not life.

Amen. Pretty much something. Amen. A fitting conclusion. And all the brethren said, Amen. Amen. Amen.