

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 25, Intercession for Unity, Ephesian 3

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 25, Intercession for Unity, Ephesians 3.

Welcome back to our Biblical Studies lecture series on prison epistles. In the past few lectures, we have been looking at Ephesians.

In looking at Ephesians, we looked at the introduction and went through what I call a breathless invocation. And then, we covered some parts of what Paul desired and expressed in prayer for the church. In chapter 2, we discussed some key features, and if you remember that conversation, I introduced you to a few things in that chapter.

I drew your attention to how salvation came about and how we are reminded of the pre-Christian state. Paul was clear enough to state that in the pre-Christian past, one is actually subject to the detests of this world, to the prince of the power of the air, and to the flesh. Consequently, the one who is not a Christian stands as an object of wrath by their very nature.

Just when one was thinking Paul is going to say, therefore the person deserves strict judgment, harsh judgment, the judgment of some sort from God, he comes in to show in verse 4 of chapter 2 how God, who is rich in mercy, reaches out to human beings in that state with love and grace. He would then make the profound statement that would be part of many doctrinal statements, that it is by grace we have been saved through faith. After establishing the nature of salvation by grace, he did not want his audience to actually think that salvation is all about me and God alone.

He brought the sociological part of salvation to emphasize and show them how their salvation should affect their sense of community. He showed some Jewish stereotypes that normally are ascribed to Gentiles, and he reminded Gentiles in reality of how their past would be described. Then he went further to show how, in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have become one.

If you remember that part of the lecture, I drew your attention to how, in that oneness, people who were alienated from the citizenship of Israel have now become members of the household of God. Together, they are all building a dwelling place, a place where God himself will find it suitable to dwell among them. In chapter 3, we started covering a few things specifically about the mystery that was hidden for ages and is now known.

Paul underlined the privilege that he has to be the one, to be the career, the agent to actually administer and show people about this mystery of God. The mystery is that Jews and Gentiles can now be co-heirs and sharers in the promises of God. Paul, still building on this theme of unity, paused and then moved on in verse 14 of chapter 3 and began to intercede or, to put it differently, showed his intent and the areas that he covers when intercedes for the church so that they would know what his desires are for them when he comes before God.

When Paul writes a prayer, his intention is not to impress the congregation with his knowledge of how to pray. I don't know about you, but I've been to services where people write prayers for the people present at the service than they are to talk to God. That is not Paul's intent.

In fact, Paul will direct people about the need to communicate to God in prayer. And so in his intercession, what he's actually saying is, first, let me remind you about what I pray for and then occasionally bless them in the form of benediction to actually say, I ask God right now, even as I write, that these things come alive in your situation. From this point on, I would like to get us back to reviewing where we ended the last lecture.

From verse 14 of chapter 3, Paul began by saying, For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. I left you with imagery for you to think about when we ended the last lecture relative to this particular prayer. I left you to think about the fact that Paul prays that he may grant, that God may grant out of the riches of his glory, that the church will be strengthened in the passive, and that they will be filled to the fullness of God.

So, let's unpack that a little bit. Petition to Grant In Paul's writing and asking that God grant them, he actually prays that God may grant them that they may be strengthened with power. And this, he underlines the means by which this strength could be given them, through the spirit.

The sphere or the locus where this should take place should be in their inner heart. Again, let me just pause here and really refresh your mind on how some of the things we have been covering in this letter have been unfolding. Paul has consistently been showing multiple dimensions that are important in Christian living.

He has shown his believers that their salvation needs to be understood in a comprehensive sense. There is a spiritual dimension where God takes them out of the powers of darkness and their control. He touches on the cognitive dimension and sometimes prays that they may know.

If only they knew some things, some great things would happen. He has mentioned the importance of understanding that the center of their lives, their heart, the seat of their feelings, and sometimes the center of their emotions and moral reasoning, their heart, becomes an integral part of how they perceive their Christian life. In other words, Christian living or Christianity is not about going to church and getting back home.

In fact, Christianity is more than that. It's more because Christianity entails a person taken from deplorable states where so many aspects of the person's life have been affected negatively. And God saving the person from the control of the forces of evil, from very bad reasoning and moral choices, from a community that is likely to influence them to destruction, and bringing them into a renewed mindset, a place where he, God, is a spiritual agent in charge at work in every aspect of their lives, so much so that their whole life be affected in that regard.

Here, Paul prays that they may be strengthened with power. And this power comes through the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit's work here, note this: if you come from a charismatic or Pentecostal background, the Holy Spirit here is not that you may bust out and begin to speak in tongues, or you may show off certain spiritual gifts that you have, or you may tell other people what gifts they don't have that you have that make them less of inferior.

No, his prayer is that, first and foremost, they may be strengthened with power so that their inner person will be a place where strength dwells. They will have the resilience and strength that God himself supplies his people so that their Christian life will not be laid out of some form of hollow in their hearts but filled with a sense of power. In America, I like one particular expression: they call it the gut feeling.

It's almost like, I feel it so. Now imagine God's power filling your heart, giving you that sense of oomph and confidence to get up in the morning and face life to the glory of God. Paul prays, knowing that they might be weak in that area because of their surrounding religious contest, because of the moral decadence surrounding them, because of the hard choices, and sometimes some degree of alienation they may feel in society for choosing to follow Christ and not indulging in what the rest of the world call good.

Paul said that if it was a time of weakness, he prayed that God may grant them this strength, and he put it in the passive to say, not that they could do it themselves, but they could avail themselves so that God would do this work in them. It is not strength

that they could earn or acquire by themselves, but that God alone will do it, and that is why the introduction of the spiritual agency becomes important, that it is God who is doing this through his spirit. In the inner being, not outward manifestation at this point.

When he prays that God may grant, he prays for Christ to dwell, that Christ may make a dwelling, his dwelling among them. Wow. He prays that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, verse 17.

Again, observe the inner dimension so that Christ may find a dwelling in your heart. If the heart is consumed or filled with darkness, that could not be the residence of Christ. And if Christ would ever find residence in one's heart, that person would have to be able to make the choice by themselves to let Christ in.

One of the things we are going to be finding, especially from chapter 4 onwards, is personal responsibility. I've often said that Ephesians chapter 1 to chapter 3 sounds like a very, very Calvinist theological framework. And in the society of biblical literature, I am known for provoking my colleagues on this kind of subject.

Then I showed them the box on the other side. Chapters 1 to 3 are all about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit at work. But here, implicit in this is personal responsibility.

That Christ may dwell in them. God may give them the prompting that they need to be able to avail themselves, open themselves up, and make Christ find a dwelling in their hearts. Remember, the first one is the inner man, here, too, in their heart.

We should work on the inside so that when we get to chapter 4, which talks about ethics, we can now look at how things would work on the outside. True faith in your heart is where Christ may dwell. He prays here using two key languages I mentioned in this letter series when we were looking at Colossians.

One is botanical or agricultural language, and one is architectural language. That they may be rooted in agricultural language. To have the imagery is to have a fertile ground from which something is growing.

And because it's growing from that fertile ground, the roots can go so deep and hindered by rocks or obstacles. So that trees or plants can grow to their maximum potential because of the nature of the soil and how it has been tilled and prepared for agricultural purposes. Paul said, as he prays that God may grant them to be rooted and that love will be the matrix, the platform, the place where they will grow up.

Can you imagine if all of us are growing in the spirit of love? Almost all the time. Would we second guess what the other person is saying? Would we be mean to each other? Let's talk about a positive. Would we be honest with each other? Would we know that when the other person seeks to correct us, that they have our highest interest and the interest of our community at heart? Would we indulge in self-justification and self-righteousness just to show that we are special? If they are rooted in love, then right there, the foundation of unity in the body of Christ will unfold.

Using the architectural language, he uses the imagery of foundation in terms of building a house and how a solid foundation determines the integrity of the structure. Here, he says that they may find themselves in that place where they are so firmly established that as they grow in their walk with Christ, no storm can move them. Remember that image of the storm because we'll come back to it in chapter four.

Nothing that comes from the outside will be able to move them. If you have lived in earthquake zones, you know that a solid foundation makes a difference. If you have lived in some of the third-world countries where they build houses with clay and sometimes little to no foundation, you may also have observed how horrible it is to see tropical rainfall really just going a few hours more and literally washing homes away because the foundations are weak.

Paul said that may not be the story of this group and that they may be rooted and established in love. This agriculture and architectural metaphor are all meant to show his intent and the things that are so important to him as he prays for them as a community of faith. Coming back to the prayer request, he prays that they may be strengthened.

Moving on from what he had already said, he prays that they may be strengthened to grasp collectively the width, length, and depth and that they may be strengthened to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge. So, he has talked about all these, the strength that they need, and using architectural and botanical language, but here he comes in and says now he is praying that they may be strengthened to grasp how wide, how the width, the length, the height and depth of what. This is where an issue pops up.

As you draw your attention to the fact that in Greek, that expression has no object, and so when translators are working around and say it may be referring to love, they are picking love from the second part of the clause after the conjunction end. And so the question that emerges is this. What width, length, height, and depth is Paul talking about? I will bring your attention to more of that later, but let me get back to the part where he says to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge.

In other words, if you are rooted and actually established in love, now he also prays that you may know the love you have received. Do you know that we can only give part of what we have? We can't give what we don't have. And if we have not received love, how can we give love? Paul is concerned from the very first chapter of Ephesians about where knowledge is lacking, whether it is knowledge about near salvation, knowledge about the power of God, or knowledge here about the love of God.

The church will live lives that are mediocre, not to the level that God expects of them or that God is able to give them, and not to the maximum potential because they don't know what is available to them. And here he prays that they may be strengthened to know intellectually and spiritually to have a feeling of the love of God. Love is a virtue of passion in Greco-Roman antiquity.

It's a virtue that shows affection. That's why it's difficult to actually sometimes explain what love is. It is a feeling that is shared by people.

When you meet someone that you truly love, and someone says tangibly, what can you say you are experiencing right now? You may try in words, but you may still fall short in your ability to articulate clearly what you have for one another. Love when it is working well, and it is acknowledged. We find a sense of security.

We find a sense of pleasure. Even in disagreement, we could laugh because there is that sense of security that we love each other. There is nothing we are losing here.

We are just sharing and thriving in the spirit of love in a community. That is why Paul asks that God may grant them the ability to know. To know the love of God because the love of God is hard to comprehend.

The magnitude of God's love is hard to comprehend. In chapter 2, when he talks about the greatness of God's love, here he says that love surpasses all knowledge. In other words, we don't have enough hard drives upstairs to be able to store all the aspects of this love that could be known.

It is so vast. It's so deep. It's so wonderful.

Sometimes, it seems as though we just have a glimpse of what that love is. We walk as if we are orphans who don't have a father who deeply cares for us. We walk as if we are people who are stuck on an island, walking in loneliness, living in loneliness.

We are actually, in fact, people who are deeply, deeply loved, whose father is always ever present in their space, and who would wish they knew what he is doing on their behalf when they are not aware. I've often thought about this in terms of how my

children were growing up. I was the kind of father who said, I want my wife to sleep in the night.

I don't need a lot of sleep at night. If I want to admit it, I am very close to being a workaholic. And so, I need hours to work, and I would say, You sleep, and I will take care of the children in the night.

My children don't have to know what I am doing in the night on their behalf. They don't know that I am trying to get their food at the right place. They don't know, just before I expect them to wake up at night when I come in and put on a second diaper if needed and position all the stuff I need.

All they need to know is that when they are hungry, they will be fed. That's all the child needed to know. It was always that sound that my two daughters always would use as if they consulted each other.

That, as a father, gives me so much joy as I see them growing up and I share this story with them. They would get up from their crib, and they wouldn't like to wake mom up. And so, I hear their voices.

I wonder, who taught them this? Dad. Dad. Dad.

That's all they needed to know. Paul said if only the church would know the love of God for us. The heaviness, the sense of loneliness, and the sense that nobody cares about us will all fade away.

The love of God that surpasses knowledge is what he prays that they may know. And in the last part of this prayer, Paul will pray for them to be filled. But before then, let's try to answer the question, what is the object of the four dimensions? The width, length, height, and depth.

Because I just spoiled your memory verse by telling you that there is no object because you memorize it with love. Well, one of the views says that it refers to the power of God. The width, length, height, and depth refer to the dimensions of the power of God that is available to the church.

Those who hold this view refer to some magical tests and magical patterns in which sometimes powers are invoked considering all those aspects. And so, they will say, this is actually an expression of the vastness of God's power. So, if we are translating it into the English Bible, we should just leave it alone to say that they may know what width, length, height, and depth are and not try to supply love because love is not there in Greek.

Because what is actually supposed to be in the background is to know the power of God. Well, the lack of direct objects to this particular line in Greek is also the reason why this particular view should actually bring us into serious questioning. Because if God's power is what is at stake, knowing how Paul writes and argues in Ephesians, that would have been known, that would have been supplied.

But that's not what we have. That is why I regard this particular view as not convincing. The direct object is not clearly stated, the power of God is not an issue in Ephesians, and Paul would not be afraid to tell them what the power of God should be about. Some said the width, length, height, and depth refer to the mystery of salvation.

Have you heard about that? Has any of your Bible translations actually told you something like that? No, they don't. I can almost tell you, not when you read your Bible in English. They don't bring that.

Oh, but in scholarship, this is a hot discussion. You are not going to see only two pages written about this in commentaries. Sometimes up to ten pages are devoted to this particular conversation.

But there is no such clear reference in this immediate paragraph. So that is something to think about. That is something scholars are exploring.

But that is still something that more and more scholars say that particular one is problematic. Still, there are some who say reference to the power of God is a possibility. Some say, and a good number of scholars think, that the reference should be to the manifold wisdom of God.

So when Paul writes what the width, length, height, and depth is, he is actually referring to the vastness and the comprehensive nature of the manifold wisdom of God. Again, there is no direct reference. And we don't know how we can make this, except that the verses prior to this particular verse have been talking about the mystery and the greatness of mystery and knowing about the mystery.

And so, you could make that inference. And still, to some degree, one could still raise the question of whether we could actually think about it in terms of the wisdom of God, given what Paul says specifically about knowledge and the wisdom of God in the very immediate context, even the second part of the sentence. More and more scholars have leaned towards supplying an object referring to the matchless love of Christ.

This is why when you read your English Bible, as I am reading from the ESV, you will actually read something like this in verse 18. May have strength to comprehend with

all the sense what is the breadth and length and height and depth. Actually, the ESV doesn't supply the love, which is good.

And then the second part, it supplies it, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. So, in some translations, when they go like that, they supply the breadth and length and height and depth of love, of God's love. The reason they do that is they believe that they could decipher from the immediate context of this passage the love of Christ.

But I also want you to know that there are multiple views on this because in the words of the Greek, the object is not supplied. So, if you pick up a translation in English or in another language, and they say all these four dimensions refer to the mystery, to the wisdom, to the power of God, don't be upset about it. Just know that there is an ongoing dialogue.

You also see some English translations like the ESV I just looked at, which doesn't even supply the object, and yet the translations I memorized some of this passage from have love as the object. You know, sometimes being a scholar is very tricky because I feel like it spoils the show for us. When you get your favorite verse, you come and discover something that just spoils the show.

You don't know how to unlearn it. The good news is this. Whatever dimension we take here points to what God is doing.

The love of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the mystery of God. More likely, I will lean towards love being the main thing in the conversation here. But if this vastness of God's love is what is in view, can you imagine a believer in Ephesus and the vicinity reading this letter and saying, Do I have any reason to feel unloved? Yet how many of us who have ten Bibles in our personal library and who can read this verse in multiple translations still see ourselves in a situation where we don't feel loved?

We feel lonely. If we understand this, we could be alone and not lonely. There are two different things.

We could be alone knowing that we are deeply, deeply loved, and be filled with contentment, joy, and peace on the inside. That is Paul's prayer for the church that these things may become real for them.

And his last part of that petition is a petition that they may be filled with the fullness of God. Being filled with the fullness of God is a complex expression, and we cannot really explain the nature of it. But it is clear that what Paul is asking here to happen for the congregation is something that is going to be their good.

And if they grasp this since all the expressions are put in the plural as a collective instruction for them, if they are all-knowing this, if they are all accepting this, if they are all being strengthened individually and collectively in this way, then the community is set up perfectly to build the church together as a community of faith where the love of God is present, where the power of God is at work in the inner man. When people are filled to the extent that they are filled with the fullness of God, their speech, their interaction, and their demeanor reflect who God is. And so their mutual interaction is not one with discord and contentions but is one with appreciation and love, even where disagreement and frustration come.

Paul is after something here. After saying all these things in writing, he could not stop but burst into what has become one of the important doxologies in our Christian tradition. And so, he could write in verse 20, Now, now, to him who is able, note he is not disabled or unable, he is able to do more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout generations, forever and ever. Just look at the text in your Bible carefully, please. Just look at the words, and if they are in your Bible, you may underline them.

Able. He is able. You can underline the word ask or think.

He is able to do more abundantly than we ask or think. And then, if you have a color, you can mark it with yellow, according to the power at work, not somewhere else, but within us. According to the power at work within us.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Let me unpack this a little bit here. In this doxology, we see Paul actually pointing out that God is able. He is not limited.

I have often said that our brothers and sisters, who, out of no fault on their own, are physically challenged, are sometimes treated as if they are unable, and society imposes restrictions and perceptions and defines them as if they are less than human. For God, they are able to do more. And it is in that context that when you think about God's ability, you know he is able to do his work in his creation.

No matter physical challenges, ethnicity, race, height, age, or whatever size, God is able to do what we can ask. Think about how much you can ask. You know, in one church session, I asked the audience to pull up a sheet of paper and talk about this passage in a teaching session.

And I said, now write everything you want to ask. One woman said, only on one page? And I said, oh, is one page not enough? Oh yeah, because it turned out that she already realized that. There are so many things she would like to ask.

Even though she would not tell me where she would keep them, she's a married woman whether her husband is going to be happy that all those things come home or not.

But Paul's point is that whatever we think we can ask, God is able to do that. He's able to do more than we can think. Think about your imagination.

Don't ask the teenagers. Because they will have all kinds of sports cars and all this kind of stuff that they think, they want to imagine some new thing that exists. But Paul says, even more than what you can think or imagine, understand that God is able.

And he's able to do them. Not that he's saying God is just going to dash it to you. He is just, in this doxology, expressing the ability and the capacity of God to do what he wants to do and the limitations of human beings and how we cannot even comprehend the greatness of God's power, the vastness of his wisdom, the riches of his storehouse that he is able to make available to his people.

To him, who is able to do with power that which is exceedingly beyond all we can ask. According to the mighty power at work in us. Have you thought about in us? Have you thought about the fact that God is able to do this in you? That he's not planning to do it in her, in him, in them, in that place.

But he's able to do this in you. In the early part of the prayer, I was very deliberate in drawing your attention to two keywords. The inner person and the inner heart.

He says God is able to do this according to his power at work in you. Do you understand the power of God at work in you? Paul said earlier on in Ephesians that it is that power that is able to infuse those who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and give them the grace and power to rise up and be in that standing with the resurrected Christ seated in the heavenly places. It's the power that is at work in you.

Do you understand that? Being a Christian, it's not as though you are this robot that God picks up and uses anytime, anywhere he likes. But that he actually comes in, equips you, empowers you to live life, does what he has called you to do, and enables you to live the fullness of life to his glory. Not with an individualistic mindset but with the understanding that he is a God of all the members of the community and beyond.

He's the God of creation. And he has prepared us to do good things, Ephesians 2:10, ahead of time. He's able to do that work if we activate and understand his power at work within us.

And I like the final inscription of praise. To him, to that great God, be the glory in the church. The word glory can translate to honor.

To him, all honor should be due in the church and in Christ Jesus. Not only today, not only tomorrow, not only in the first century of Asia Minor but forever and ever. I like it.

My children sometimes laugh at me when I use the Greek words eis, ton, ion, ton, and Iona in Greek. Translate in English forever. From this age and to the age to come.

Paul has set the church up perfectly to understand God's power is at work to bring unity in the body. They also understand that they have a personal responsibility to make this unity really clear and real in the church. So, let's move to chapter four.

And let's begin to look at how Paul is going to begin chapter four in that regard. Remember, we have been discussing this topic: United We Build. In chapter four, Paul will begin and say, I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. That is how you begin chapter one. You begin and just show that they have been called to something.

They should live up to that calling. And by the way, they have been called to unity. And if you look at those three verses of chapter four, it is intriguing to find out that Paul is not asking the church to begin to live out to promote unity.

No. He is saying the unity is already there. If anything, their life is disturbing the unity God has created.

So, they should do everything to maintain or keep that unity. Do you remember in chapter two? He has made Jews and Gentiles one. Chapter two, verse 19, they have become members of the household of God.

Chapter three, the mystery of God, is that Jews and Gentiles are now sharers of the promise of God. They are members of the body. That unity is already there.

It's a unity that is supposed to be natural. It is almost like saying this. You are siblings.

You are expected to get along. So, get along. You know, I always thought that no matter what happens with siblings, when they fight, they will come together.

Until I came to America I realized that siblings can fight and not actually have anything to do with each other. Paul is saying something that if I think about it in

siblings' terms from my upbringing in Africa, we always had the expression that blood is thicker than water. So, we could fight.

We could have hot, hot arguments. Or we will have to sit down and resolve it. And if we don't resolve it and there is a funeral in town, which traditionally all of us have to be there at the funeral, it must be one of the first things to resolve, especially if the deceased is part of that contention.

Before we bury the body, blood is thicker than water. Imagine Paul carrying that concept and saying, you are called to peace.

That is your DNA. You are called to be in unity. Keep it.

But let me introduce you to the structure of this sentence from verses 1 to 16, which will be perhaps something we will unpack more in the next lecture. Just look at some portions of it here. In these verses, especially from verses 1 to 6, Paul makes the transition from chapter 3, which deals with issues that are more theological in nature, 1 to 3, and moves on to general admonition from verses 1 to 16.

Excuse me, verses 1 to 6. And when he introduces the theme of unity in 1 to 3, it's as if he couldn't hold himself back. So, he goes on to give some general admonitions and says, but notice, notice, notice on unity. In verses 7 to 16, he provides a very strong theological basis for the unity he's been talking about all this while in the letter.

Let's look at verse 1 quickly. In verse 1, I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. It is a call from one who has been in prison for the calling.

Now, look at what Paul is doing here. You gloss over this very, very easily in your private times. You may not realize that when he says, I, Paul, a prisoner.

He's not beginning the letter here. He is tying their hands behind their back, friends. And he's saying, guys, listen.

I am in prison because I am living up to the calling. Now, therefore, I urge you to live up to the calling to which you have been called. It is a calling that calls for a worthy walk.

It is a great calling, and it has set expectations for moral behavior and community interaction. Nowadays, we find in many churches the notion that Christianity can be morally neutral. That is never the model of the early church.

Christianity has set defined values, norms, and ethics. These are things that define members of the community for who they are as children of God and have clear stipulations for how they live their lives morally. And Paul will unpack some of that in chapter 4 and move on and do that to the end of the book.

They have been called to something, and they should live as those who are worthy of being called the children of God. Of being called followers of Christ Jesus. They need to know it's a call that comes with some obligation.

It is a call to new identity, unity, and community. He put it this way. To walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness and with peace, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

The means for maintaining this unity in verses 2 to 3 is this. With humility and gentleness. With patience.

By bearing one another in love and and being eager to keep the unity of the spirit. If you can put all in that cup, if you can follow that through and make it real in the church, then the unity of the spirit will be clear and activated to the highest level in the church.

The words used here are so important. The means to maintain this unity are so important. I just want to draw your attention again to some of the key things you want to know about how Paul uses these words.

For instance, the word humility. The word humility used to be, in fact, a negative word in classical Greek. It has a sense of lowliness or lowly spirit that people even mock those who are lowly because it's a culture that if you have to have some kind of self-glorification to show you say big things about yourself, that is a joke about the American and the British.

And they are asked to introduce themselves. And the British attitude is, you know if I say some great things about me, they will say I am proud. So, the British say, my name is Mr. St. Saul, and I'm from England.

You may want to know that I like football, which actually he meant soccer, and left it there. And then he moved. The American comes.

Please may you introduce yourself. My name is Mr. St. Saul. I finished this school.

I went to that place. I went to this place. In fact, I work here.

I make millions of dollars a year, and I do all this. There are big cultural differences. I'll tell you how these cultures play out in the early church as we end this part of the United We Build session.

What is actually happening in the context is the word humility was a negative word because it sounds as if people are not; they are too lowly. It sounds as if they are not confident in themselves. That is why they exhibit this trait.

But the early Christians would turn it around and make it a virtue, not that they feel weak in themselves, but that they know who they are and they have no reason to impress the world. In fact, they don't have to impress the audience, which is actually gratified by things of the flesh. And so, knowing who they are, they develop this inner attitude of humility by choice, not because somebody is suppressing them, not because they have lost a sense of identity, but because they refuse to be braggarts.

Culturally, that was counter-cultural. Now, they would do well in today's times, and they would do well with the British. They would not do well in America.

You need to be able to speak out for yourself in America. In England, you have to be careful because once they detect some degree of arrogance, you lose your job. You lose the prospect of having that important position.

This cultural difference can be imagined in this sense when we think about what Paul is saying as the means to hold onto unity. Second, he says gentleness is important. Gentleness here has nothing to do with looking good aesthetically, but it is a demeanor of politeness, meekness, and mildness.

As Frank Timmerman puts it, the two terms together, humility and gentleness, then refer to an attitude that both recognizes one's true position before God and is willing to be kind and gracious to others even when circumstances might excuse one from showing these qualities. One of the key qualities Paul brings here as a key ingredient to keep that unity alive is patience, which can be translated as perseverance or persistence. It is persistence that is expressed in more of a matter of conviction when one is under pressure or in difficult situations.

In other words, if they are going to be under strict pressure, what is going to keep their unity alive is not to wear out, lose control, and misbehave, but they are able to bear up one another with this patience. Do everything, eagerly, do everything to keep the spirit of unity. In summary to this lecture on United We Build, Paul, in his prayer, has prayed for the church that they may understand the comprehensive nature of God and what God has available to them.

In the doxology, he unwraps the greatness of God and the ability and capacity of God to do much more than what we can think or ask. And ends by saying, to Him be glory

in the church and in Christ Jesus. In the last few minutes, I drew your attention to how he makes the transition from there to chapter 4, verses 1 to 3, calling them to keep the unity of the spirit with humility, gentleness, politeness, meekness, and with that sense of patience for one another because they were needed.

If you have been in this church for a while, you know there are a lot of opportunities, as I like to say, to allow the fruit of the spirit to develop in you. People will test you. Troubles will come.

Pressures will come. I hope and pray that as we go through these lessons and think about some of these teachings that Paul had for the church, you personalize it and begin to realize that this is true for you, especially if you are a Christian, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We all may come to terms with this.

We should do our best to keep the unity that is so needed in the church. Not out of emptiness but understanding the power of God at work in us, allowing and availing ourselves to be strengthened to be the instrument, the social engineers that God will use to build the church, to bring people who are in contention together in our world that is marred with all kinds of dissensions and contentions, all kinds of bickering and disunity. May God help us to glorify him as we put his work to the real world to show people that indeed we, whom he has called, are the true agents of peace in the world that know no peace, both at the individual level and at the social level.

Thank you. I thank you again for joining us in this discussion, and I hope that you continue to learn with us and pick up some things not only for your cognitive development, as Paul expresses in his letters, but that it may be real experientially in your own life and the way you live your Christian life with others.

Thank you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 25, Intercession for Unity, Ephesians 3.