

PM Ephesians 3:14-4:16 "Be completely humble and gentle"

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[0 : 01] Our scripture reading this evening begins at the last part of Ephesians chapter 3 and runs into chapter 4.

! So we'll start reading at Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 14.!

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.

[1 : 23] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. I, therefore, a prisoner for 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.

There is one body and one spirit. Just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

[2 : 40] Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men. In saying he ascended, what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions, the earth.

He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

For building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

To mature manhood. To the measure of the stature and of the fullness of Christ. So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

[3 : 44] By human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head.

Into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped.

When each part is working properly. Makes the body grow. So that it builds itself up in love.

May God add a blessing to that reading of his word. Let's sing. Offering an invitation with hand and finger as it were.

Pointing out of the poster. Pointing specifically at you. Your country needs you. Volunteer.

[4 : 51] I had a similar feeling. A pointed at feeling. When I read Ephesians 4. In the middle of last year in my quiet time.

And each morning for months. Whatever else I read. I would come back and re-read verse 2 of Ephesians chapter 4.

And each time I read it. I felt that hand and outstretched finger. Pointing. Not above me or beside me. But at me.

Be completely humble and gentle. That's what it said in the NIV. Be completely humble. And it wouldn't have been so bad if it hadn't said completely. Completely. You see we can all I'm sure muster up some humility and gentleness from time to time.

[5 : 52] On a good day. But completely. That is a big ask. And I sought solace by reading it in every other translation which I could find.

That didn't seem quite so personal. So the King James Version says. With all lowliness and mercy. With long suffering forbearing with one another in love. The ESV says. With all humbleness and gentleness. The New Living Translation. Always be humble and gentle. The Good News Translation. Be always humble, gentle and patient. The RSV with all lowliness and meekness.

And in my head at least. These other translations blunted a little. The NIV imperative. The finger pointing at me.

That I was under orders to be completely humble and gentle. I'll come back to this later.

[6 : 55] But let's keep this idea in our minds as we meditate on God's word for us tonight. From Ephesians 4 verses 1 to 6.

Now it seems probable that Paul authored this book while he was in prison in Rome around 60 AD. And that explains his opening remark in chapter 4.

As a prisoner for the Lord. Now every word of scripture matters. Even the little ones. If this is said of.

As a prisoner of the Lord. Rather than for. As a prisoner for the Lord. We would have had quite a different thought process here.

Because in truth we are the Lord's servants. His slaves. And in a sense prisoners. Willingly so. Whom else would we rather serve?

[8 : 02] Where else would we rather be? In that Paul knew that God was leading him literally through many dangers, toils and snares.

I mean his personal encounter with the Lord Jesus had left him in no doubt. That he had been appointed as a servant. And a witness of what he had seen and would see of Jesus.

Acts 26.16 In that sense he was a prisoner of the Lord. But part of that witness that was his commission.

Was two years of incarceration in that house in Rome. During which he preached the gospel to all of the many people who came to visit him. And where he wrote several of his best loved epistles. Undoubtedly he was a prisoner of the Romans there. But he was a prisoner for the Lord. His imprisonment had purpose.

[9 : 08] Meaning. And was rooted in his Christian service and call. What he was about was for Jesus' sake. Now those first six verses of Ephesians 4.

Which I am going to read again shortly. They contain a string of words. Which transport us from darkness to light.

Which take us on a journey of grace. So I am going to list these words first of all. Lord Jesus.

Walk. Calling. Humility.

Meekness. Long-suffering. Forbearing. Love. Eager. Unity.

[10 : 12] Spirit. Bond. Peace. Body. Hope. Faith. Baptism. God. Father. Let's read it in full and drink it in.

I'll read in the ESV this time. I therefore. A prisoner for the Lord. Urge you. You.

You. To walk. In a manner. 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. There is one body.

And one spirit. Just as you were called. To the one hope. That belongs. To your call. One Lord. One faith. One baptism.

[11 : 16] One God. And father of all. Who is over all. And through all. And in all. But now I'm going to go back to verse 2.

As we have it in the NIV. I can't avoid it. Do you see? Because the finger is pointing at me. Be completely humble.

And gentle. Be patient. Bearing with one another in love. Well God willing. I'm going to spend a few minutes. Thinking around this subject. And I acknowledge that you. Here may be different from me. But I know that humanly speaking. I cannot fulfill that command. About humility. And gentleness. In the way it has been demanded of me. To tell you the truth.

I can't fulfill any of it. As it has been demanded of me. Humble. Gentle. Forbearing. Long-suffering. Loving. Completely.

[12:15] Let's think about these words. Humble. Well that's the very word that Jesus uses about himself. In Matthew 11.29.

Remember it's ingrained into us from childhood. In the King James Version. Come unto me. All ye who labour and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you. And learn of me. For I am meek and lowly. That's the word humble. Lowly. In heart. And ye shall find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light. It's that word lowly. The same Greek word translated in what we've been reading in Ephesians as humble.

Well that helps me a bit to understand. Humility or lowliness is what Jesus showed.

[13:13] What he was when he being in very nature God. Did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather he made himself nothing.

By taking the very nature of a servant. Being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man. He humbled.

Same word. Humbled himself. By becoming obedient to death. Even death on a cross.

Humbled himself. It's the same word in the original Greek script. As lowly in Matthew 11. And as we've read in Ephesians 4.

2. And this humbling. Set a bar.

[14:15] So high for Jesus. To scale. Yet so low. For us.

For our salvation. For our salvation. This bar has been set so low. That there are no depths of sin and awfulness. Which we may have reached in our disobedience and fallenness.

That Jesus in his love has not gone lower still on the cross. So that he might lift us up. Are you that humble? Am I?

Jesus was. And we read just as plainly in 1 Peter 2 and 21. To this you. That is us here tonight. We're called.

Because Christ suffered for you. Suffered for you. Leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. We must resist the temptation to protest. That that verse only refers to Jesus suffering for doing good.

[15:14] Because that is merely one part of the humility which he showed. God. I wonder if scripture gives us any other humility clues.

Well we read in Numbers 12. That Moses was the humblest man more than anyone on the face of the earth.

I'd like to read a short chapter from the book of Numbers. And noting as we read it that the ESV says meek instead of humble.

As it's translated in the NIV. If we look at Numbers chapter 12. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.

Because of the Cushite woman whom he had married. For he had married a Cushite woman. And they said. Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?

[16:19] Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek or humble. More than all people who were in the face of the earth.

And suddenly the Lord said to Moses and to Aaron and Miriam. Come out you three to the tent of meeting. Come out you three to the tent of meeting. And the three of them came out.

And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud. And stood at the entrance of the tent. And called Aaron and Miriam.

And they both came forward. And he said. Hear my words. If there is a prophet among you. I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision.

I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth.

[17:23] Clearly and not in riddles. And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.

And he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent. Behold Miriam was leprous. Like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam.

And behold she was leprous. And Aaron said to Moses. Oh my Lord do not punish us. Because we have done foolishly. And we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead. Whose flesh is half eaten away.

When he comes out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried to the Lord. Oh God please heal her. Please. But the Lord said to Moses.

If her father had but spit in her face. Should she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut outside the camp seven days. And after that she may be brought in again.

[18 : 25] So Miriam was shut outside the camp seven days. And the people did not set out on the march. Till Miriam was brought in again. After that. The people set out from Hazereth.

And camped in the wilderness of Paran. What an extraordinary narrative. We should note first of all. That it was from his own siblings. From his nearest and dearest. That Moses had to endure jealousy and vitriol.

It was from within his own family. That the greatest challenges to that humility of his arose. Is that not the way it often is?

With family and with friends. How we receive and react to unjust provocation from those closest to us.

[19 : 27] Seems quite important here. The second thing we notice is that. It was God who was in Moses' corner. And spoke out for him.

Moses did not react himself to the provocation and the malice. The third thing is we see that another praised Moses and not his own mouth.

Proverbs 27 and 2. And the one who did the praising was God. And we also see. That when the innocent and humble are abused.

It is God who repays. Not the humble him or herself. Those were three nuances of response by God.

Reaction, praise and physical response. But we also see. That the words of the humble person. Are echoes.

[20 : 25] Of the words of the Lord Jesus from the cross. Father forgive them. They know not what they are doing. And they are echoes of the martyr Stephen as he was dying.

And Lord lay not this sin to their charge. So Moses. Humble Moses. Cries to God. On behalf of the person who had just been verbally abusing him.

Oh God. Please heal Miriam. Please. Please note that God speaks to the humble. And answers his or her prayers.

Because those prayers are actually in alignment with God's will. In Psalm 34, 4-6. We have this wonderful statement.

I sought the Lord. And he answered me. And delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant. And their faces shall never be ashamed.

[21 : 31] This poor man cried. And the Lord heard him. And saved him out of all his troubles. Now was that poor man in the psalm there.

Completely humble. When he cried to the Lord. Was Moses. Fallen Moses. Completely humble. Was Stephen.

Completely humble. Were Paul. Peter. John. And so on. There is none righteous. No. Not one. Except the Lord Jesus himself. So before our bruised reeds break.

Or our smoking wicks are extinguished. Let me assure you. That for all we hold. Everyone I have named. From Moses to Paul in high regard. They were fallen sinners.

But there in our. All sufficiency. Must be in Christ Jesus. We cannot do any good of ourselves. It's only by being clothed.

[22 : 34] In the perfect. Perfect. Mark you. Righteousness of Christ. That we can approach the mercy seat. But rest assured. We can.

Because the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Caused. That splitting. Tearing apart. Of the veil of the temple. From top to bottom.

So that by his blood. We can enter the holy of holies. And we can be. Perfectly humble. Invested. In Jesus attributes.

Alone. Not our own. But the process that we are. Currently going through. Is what 2 Corinthians 3.

Describes. Now. The Lord is the spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is. There is freedom. And we all. With unveiled face.

[23 : 33] Beholding the glory of the Lord. Are being transformed. Into the same image. From one degree of glory. To another.

For this comes from the Lord. Who is the spirit. Remember friends. That when we ask the Lord Jesus. Into our hearts.

When we confess with our mouths. That Jesus is Lord. And believe in our hearts. That God raised him from the dead. We shall be saved. In that moment.

We are sanctified. It's what the theologians call. Definitive sanctification. It is done deal. But there is also that process. Going on of progressive sanctification.

Where I am becoming more like Jesus. As the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised. Works the mighty work in my heart. And in yours.

[24 : 30] And as that happens. My feeble and inadequate humble. Becomes more and more like his humble. Till that day.

That day comes. When I see him. As he is. Completely humble. And I find to my astonishment.

Can it really be. That I. Am just. Like him. So. Be.

Completely. Humble. And gentle. So gentle. The Greek word used here in Ephesians 4. Is variously translated in.

Different versions of the Bible. As gentle. And meek. And we find that. Self same Greek word. Used in Matthew 11.

[25 : 28] What we automatically think of. As meek. And lowly in heart. And again there. We have it translated in different versions. As meek, humble or gentle.

This can be quite confusing. Because the English synonyms. Are struggling. At different parts. Of scripture translation.

To reflect what is being said. By distinctly different words. In the original Greek language. But where we read here. That Jesus is meek and lowly.

Or gentle. It's a beautiful word. It's a beautiful word. Which can be used. To describe. A light. Caressing breeze.

On someone's face. Or a gentle voice. But in classical Greek. The analogy. To use. To define gentle.

[26 : 25] Was that of a magnificent. Fighting stallion. But one that has been broken in. And can be controlled.

So gentleness. Is strength. Under control. It's not a weak word. William Barclay describes it as. Characterizing. Perfect. Self-control. Which is essential. If we're going to be. The servants. Of others. And one other thing.

Possessing meekness. Confers great blessedness. Remember that beatitude. Which says. Matthew 5.5. Oh the blessedness of the meek.

For they shall. Inherit the earth. So gentleness. Meekness. Comes with promise. And though that undoubtedly.

[27 : 26] Refers. To eternity. To the new heavens. And the new earth. It refers. To the present. As well.

Remember how Romans 6. Finishes. The wages of sin. Is death. But the gift of God. Is. Not just. Will be. Though that. That's true as well. But the gift of God. Is. Is now. Eternal life. In. Christ Jesus. Our Lord. So. Meekness. Comes. With great blessing. But we're building a picture here. Combining humility.

With gentleness. That's a picture of willing. Servanthood. Self-abased. Because we so choose. To behave in that way.

[28 : 24] Not because of our own self-control. But because of the operation of the Holy Spirit. In our hearts. For lo and behold. When we turn to the fruit of the Spirit.

Outlined in Galatians 5. We find meekness. Gentleness. Featuring large in that fruit. Of course. It finds its perfect expression.

In the character and life. Of the Lord Jesus. But again. We are to be. Like him. Be completely humble and gentle.

Says Paul. But he's not done with me yet. Be patient. Oh dear. Be patient. No wriggle room there folks.

How patient are we then? Driving. All gays being avoided.

[29 : 24] Waiting for the family to have a wee faff. Before we set out somewhere. Waiting for dry weather. Waiting for the chicken to marinate.

Waiting for the jam to reach setting point. Waiting for the man. Waiting for the man. We could easily multiply these areas of need for patience. Could we not?

But. Motes and beams. Specs and planks. We are all generators of the need for patience. In others. And Christ Jesus tells us this whole issue is really important. He says in Matthew 7.12. He says to generations of those who need patience and who create the need for patience in others.

So in everything. Do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the law and the prophets.

[30 : 25] Excuse me. Do we see the monumental importance of this? But if we limit these thoughts to interactions between neighbours and other human beings.

We are seriously missing the mark here. Because. This Greek word translated. Patience. Is nothing less.

Than part of the character. Of God himself. Because as we. Think about his dealings. With his chosen people.

Israel. And all their backsliding. And recidivist behaviour. This grace of patience. Of long suffering. Of endurance. Without immediate retaliation.

Is of the essence. Of the character. Of God. And if that weren't so. We would all have been destroyed. And cast out.

[31 : 32] Long before this. Here. Are. A few instances. Of God's patience.

I'm going to look at. Old. New Testament ones. First. And then at some Old Testament ones. In Romans 2.

Verse 4. It says. Do you suppose. O man. You who judge. Those. Who practice. Such things. And yet. Do them yourself. That you will escape.

The judgment. Of God. Or do you. Presume. On the riches. Of his kindness. And forbearance. And patience. Not knowing that God's kindness.

Is meant to lead you. To repentance. 1 Corinthians 13 and 4. Love. Is patient. And kind.

[32 : 31] 2 Peter 3 and 9. We don't. Overlook. This one fact. Beloved. That with the Lord. One day. Is as a thousand years.

And a thousand years. As one day. The Lord. Is not slow. To fulfill his promise. As some count slowness. But is patient. Toward you. Patient.

Not wishing. That any should perish. But that all. Should reach. Repentance. When we look.

Into the Old Testament. To our amazement. We will find. That there is a recurring phrase. It's.

It's. It's almost like a. Like an emblem. It's almost like a slogan. We can find. The same words. In Psalm 86.

[33 : 30] In Joel chapter 2. In Nehemiah chapter 9. In Numbers chapter 14. In Jonah chapter 4. In Psalm 103.

And it goes something like this. Return to the Lord your God. For he is gracious. And merciful. Slow to anger.

And abounding. In steadfast love. And he relents. Over disaster. Psalm 86. But you oh Lord.

Are a God merciful. And gracious. Slow to anger. Abounding. In steadfast love. And faithfulness.

The same thing. Is being said. Again. And again.

And again. And again. Because. These wonderful people. Under inspiration. Of God's Holy Spirit.

Are quoting. From scripture.

[34 : 24] This all kicks off. In the book of Exodus. And I'd like us just to. Take. One wee minute. To read a few verses. From Exodus chapter 34.

This is one of the pivotal moments. Not just in the Old Testament. But in all of history. Moses has been told by God.

To cut two new stone tablets. And he did what he was told. Verse 4. So Moses cut. Two stone.

Two tablets of stone. Like the first. And he rose early in the morning. And went up. On Mount Sinai.

As the Lord had commanded him. And took in his hand.

Two tablets of stone. The Lord. Descended in the cloud. And stood. With him. There. And proclaimed.

[35 : 22] The name of the Lord. The Lord. The Lord passed before him. And proclaimed. The Lord. The Lord. A God merciful and gracious. Slow to anger.

And abounding in steadfast love. And faithfulness. Keeping steadfast love. For thousands. Forgiving iniquity. And transgression. And sin. But who will by no means. Clear the guilty. This. This moment. This moment. Where God. God. In his grace. And goodness. Declares his name. This is who he is. This is essence. This is I am. This is being. This is everything that matters. And what we have. Is an insight. Into the very heart of God. Someone has described this. As being like a triangle. Like a pyramid.

[36 : 18] Pyramid. And at the bottom. We have got on the one hand. The forgiving nature of God. And the mercy. And the grace of God.

And then. Going up the sides of this pyramid. We have got keeping steadfast love. And slowness to anger. This patience that we are thinking about.

But at the pinnacle. At the very top. Is who God is. Abounding.

In steadfast love. And faithfulness. John in his letters.

Simply says. God is love. In the book of Exodus. We have it. Described for us. In heart searching.

[37 : 22] Greater detail. And we have to grapple. With the wonder of God's grace. That he abounds.

In love. Which doesn't give up on us. It is steadfast. He is faithful. We are the ones. Who let him down. He does not let us down.

Ever. And we are left with the inescapable conclusion. That if God shows long suffering patience towards us.

In all our fallibilities and failings. We. If we are going to be perfect. Even as our heavenly father is perfect. Matthew 5.48. We must.

We must. Show that same long suffering patience. To our fellow sinners. Be patient. Be patient. Bearing with each other.

[38 : 19] In love. Bearing with. Or forbearing with. Alternatively translated as enduring. Putting up with. Listening patiently to. Through. This seems like an extension of the one main idea.

We have to. Put up with. Not things. Or the weather. Or the stock market. Whatever that is.

But with people. With others. It's. People who preeminently matter in God's sight. As the pinnacle of his creative genius.

Made in his own image. With the capacity to choose. So the putting up. Or the putting up with.

Is primarily. With people. But it's. Particular people. It is. One. Another. Paul is telling us.

[39 : 23] With crystal clarity. That Christians. Fellow members. Of the body of Christ. Are to put up with each other. They're to listen patiently to each other.

They're even to endure each other. And they're to do this. Firstly with patience. With the same patience that God shows towards us.

And secondly. They're to do this with love. And that's with the same love that God shows towards us. After all God is love. And he first loved us.

So that we might love others. In a way as close to his love. As we can be changed into. By the work of his Holy Spirit in our souls. So when I step back.

And I look again at this challenging verse. I find. I find. That I'm being ordered. Five times over.

[40 : 21] To be like God. To be like God himself. In my humility. Gentleness.

Patience. Forbearance. And self-giving love. And that would be. Completely. If I turn to the start of chapter five.

I'm then confronted. With much the same message. That I have to follow God's example. Let me read those verses. Chapter five. Verse one. Therefore be imitators of God.

As beloved children. And walk in love. As Christ loved us. And gave himself up for us. A fragrant offering.

And sacrifice. To God. That's the start of a section. Called walk in love. Which goes on to be. Quite definitive.

[41 : 20] About many ways. That not walking in love. Can be avoided. And many ways. That walking in love. Can be embraced. But the message is.

That I must become. More like Jesus. Taking God the Father. And Christ Jesus the Son. As my examples. And that I must walk the walk.

Not just talk the talk. That I must walk with God. And all this by the power. Of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Who wonderfully. Comforts me. In my disquietude. At the magnitude. Of the task I face. Who teaches me. With great patience. Who reminds me.

Of Jesus teaching. Who assures me. Of his love. Who energizes. And inspires. And encourages us. That faced with an injunction. To be completely humble.

[42 : 15] And gentle. That all is not lost. That he will lead me. He will work to refine me. And conform me.

To my Savior's likeness. What did I do to deserve. All this attention. Absolutely nothing.

This is all. Of grace. God's grace. God's grace. But. When looking to Jesus.

You and I. Strive. Onwards. And upwards. Something wonderful happens. Something. Very much. Unlike the history.

Of the church. In Scotland. These past four centuries. We find ourselves. Keeping. The unity. Of the spirit. Through.

[43 : 10] The bond. Of peace. Because rest assured. There is only one body. And one spirit. One hope. To which we are all called.

One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One God. And father of all. And can you get your head around this. That the one God. And father of all. Is over all.

And through all. And in all. But we have choice. That is the way. God made us.

We have capacity. To choose. Wisely. Or foolishly. For good or ill. And this brings us back. To Paul. In prison. His liberties.

Curtailed. Chained. Twenty four hours a day. To another human being. Physically chained. But spiritually free. And he adjures us.

[44 : 05] To make good choices. To use our freedom well. Our freedom of body. And of mind. And of spirit. To walk worthily. To live a life.

Worthy. Of the calling. That we have received. We are so privileged. Let's never think lightly. Of these things. And so.

Quench the spirit's work. In our lives. Because all this is to be. To God's glory. And praise. He wants us. To be like his son. So that he can have fellowship.

With these works of his hands. Who so. Show the humility. And gentleness. And patience. And forbearance. And love of Christ.

That they are. Eternally like him. Who loved them. And gave himself for them. May God bless his word.

[45 : 05] Let's pray. it