

Ephesians Chapter 3

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[0 : 00] Good morning! Well, thank you all for being here this morning. Appreciate your presence very much. I got my day started off in a very unusual way this morning, and it was such an uplifting thing.

It was just incredible. My day has already been made just on the basis of what I saw this morning, and you get a chance to second that. So again, thank you for being here.

What I'm talking about is a friend of ours sent an email. Actually, she sent it to my wife. It was a girl thing. But she said, be sure to check that, Marie. So I thought, well, that looks interesting, and I checked on it and clicked on it.

And I can't tell you what the exact name was, but it's something you've got to look for and find. And if you don't, I'll have more information next week. I am not particularly at all an opera buff.

I don't particularly enjoy real highbrow music. I guess I'm more of Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett and kind of, you know, the popular music. But this was one of the most remarkable things I have ever heard musically.

[1 : 25] And I didn't understand a word they said. It was the magnificence of the human voice. You're probably, even if you're not like I'm not, a real opera fan, but you may have great appreciation for the voices of Andre Bocelli, Placido Domingo, and Pavarotti.

And finally, this video was of their three sons. And they all looked about the same age.

And it was incredible. It was in a setting, I don't know where it was, probably Italy. And it was like an outdoor setting with a huge covering and a full orchestra.

And these three young men singing a song, obviously in Italian, that just brought me to tears. And I didn't understand a word they were saying.

I don't know. The beauty of it, the human voice is... I'm reminded of a comment that I heard quite some time ago.

[2 : 47] A famous conductor was being interviewed. I don't remember whether it was Leopold Stawowski or who it might have been, which one.

But he said, you've conducted orchestras all over the world for the last 40, 50 years, something like that. He said, what's the most beautiful instrument you've ever heard?

And without hesitation, he said, the human voice. Isn't that something? God has constructed these bodies, these voices, these voice boxes and vocal cords, these voices in a way to make incredibly beautiful sounds.

And he's also created us with the ability to hear them and appreciate them. And it just points out once more that the magnificence of creation, the intricacy with which God has put it all together, it's just absolutely mind-boggling.

Yeah. So all I can say is, I don't know if it's on YouTube or not. I don't remember where she got it, but it was just an email thing. She said, open it. And I did this morning at about 5.15.

[4 : 08] And boy, it brought me to tears. I played it three times. When Marie got up, I watched it again with her. And it was really something. Send it to us. Pardon me? Send it to us.

Well, I... If your email addresses are in the directory, I'll do that. I'll see that you get them. But it was just so heartwarming. And these young men, they all look like they were maybe in their mid-20s or something, you know. Just real...

Mark, one of those, what you said about the voice, one of those conductors, famous conductors said, the human voice is the most beautiful, but it's the hardest to learn.

I can believe that. Yeah. Yeah. The hardest to learn. Yeah. Dan? Mark, if you send it to me, I can forward it to the group.

Oh, great. I'll do that. Yeah. Technologically challenged as I am, I'll be doing good to get it to Dan, but he can take it from there. Yeah. Okay. That'll be great. Well, we're going to have a word of prayer, but I want to remind you that today we begin a new study. Except, I don't have any idea what it is.

[5 : 23] And this is something that you're all going to have to decide, because when I made that little blurb to put out there for the men to see, you know, in case anybody else is interested, I mentioned that they would have a vote in choosing what the material is going to be. And we haven't decided yet what that's going to be. So you need to think about it. I guess we don't need to make a decision this morning, but we probably ought to at least talk about it this morning. And maybe form a decision next week or take your input today or whatever. What, Rod?

Next book's Peter. Do you want to just keep driving and going? Well, we could. That's a possibility. Something that I've been enamored with for the last few weeks, and I never particularly thought I would, simply because I thought I really had, you know, a pretty firm handle on it. But as it turned out, once more I was wrong and I didn't have the handle that I thought I had. But I'm talking about something so outstanding and so simple and so common and yet so incredible as the miracles of our Lord. It's something to think about.

A.T. Robertson in his Harmony of the Gospel includes all 33 of them and they're harmonized. It's something to think about too. Joe? I was thinking about Paul's meaty letters. His meaty letters that he wrote later.

The ones that go beyond the basic salvation to the Corinthians and Romans, the meaty ones. And I was thinking maybe of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians 2 which goes into the rapture, but that was just another idea. Okay.

Those meaty letters. The more mature letters meant for more mature Christians. Those meaty letters that he wrote. They've gotten the higher of the later revelations that you see. Okay.

Something to think about. Gary? I keep thinking about Acts because it's such a transitional book and man, it's packed with everything.

[7 : 39] Oh yeah, you're right. It is. And these are all great suggestions and I love the Acts because it is so explanatory. But a couple of years ago we went through Acts. Remember chapter by chapter verse by verse we spent, I think we spent probably the better part of three years going through the book of Acts.

So I'm a little, a little reluctant to do that again, but I'm still open to suggestions. So, like I said, I want to, I want to scratch where people itch. And if you would, if you would prefer, my, my favorite thing is verse by verse exposition. That's, that's my favorite. And some, I had a pastor friend asked me one time, said, why, why do you, why do you go through the Bible verse by verse? And I said, I said, cause that's the way it was written. That's the best answer I could think of. And you get the full scope, you know, you get the context. But at the same time, I don't care whether you're in Genesis or Revelation, you're in for a treat if you just get into it. And, and, and I would be open. It doesn't have to be, if it doesn't have to be a book of the Bible, if you know, even though that's my favorite, but any subject in scripture is, is up for discussion. And if you want to do something topical, some subject matter, that's okay too, but we'll, we'll get your, we'll get your input and then we'll have a, we'll have a final vote on it. But let's, let's pause now for a word of prayer. Thank you, Father, for this new day and for all that it holds. And thank you for being at the very center of it. We look forward to whatever you have for us in the future. Anything that comes from this remarkable book will be a blessing and a benefit to our spiritual person we know. So we pray that you will give us wisdom and understanding as to what would benefit the greatest number of men in the greatest way. And we look to you for direction that you will provide in the hearts and minds of each of them so we can settle on something in the very near future. Thank you for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly for the day that lies ahead and for all that you have accomplished in us and through us because of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. Something that is just kind of current with what's going on in our world today. And it's from Lou Rockwell. It's a something that Roger Neff has passed on to me. The kind of stuff that's going on today is just just amazing. Just here's an example. A lot of the we hate America and Americans, millionaires, who play pro football and their woke fans have been acting more indignant than usual since the Jacksonville Jaguars offered Tim Tebow a one-year contract if he makes the team. Tebow has been out of pro football since 2012 while he tried his hand at baseball, having ascended up the New York Mets minor league program before retiring from that last year. Those on the left are upset

because Colin Kaepernick, who is reportedly writing a book with a convicted cop murderer and who has also been out of pro football for years has not been offered a contract by any team. They are screaming, wait for it, wait for it.

They are screaming white privilege. The real reason from a business perspective is that Kaepernick pisses off at least half of the entire country, whereas Tim Tebow, a devout Christian who prays to God in public after every game only pisses off a small number of loud mouth Christian hating bigots. So go figure. I'll tell you this crazy, crazy world. Amazing. This white privilege thing has gotten to the place now where we are supposed to be repentant and apologetic for having been born white. Shame on you.

[12:10] And there ought to be something that we can do to equalize things. But this is just how crazy stuff is getting. You know, it's just plain nuts. Dan? Mark, I would really like one of the subjects maybe for today is how as a Christian do we walk in this environment?

Okay. Okay. Well, that's good. Thank you.

Something to think about? How we are to walk in this world today with things the way they are? Kind of stuff right there. Yeah. And Paul said that we are to walk circumspectly.

And that word circumspectly comes from our English word circum, which relates to the idea of circumference, which means the distance around. And the spectly part comes from the Greek, which has to do with seeing, like as in spectacle or spectacular or something that is seen. And when believers are called upon to walk circumspectly, it means that we are to conduct our lives in such a way that we reveal ourselves to be the same no matter at what part of our life people look at. So that we look the same all the way around. And the opposite of that, of course, is what we would call hypocrisy. So that you don't look the same all the way around. Because to this person you look this way, to this person you look that way. And we are to be what we are to everyone all the time, all the way around. Which is the position that Christians are supposed to imitate. And that is nothing more than being conformed to the image of Christ, is revealing Christ.

[14:27] And as I have often told you before, I have not mastered that by any means, because nobody has yet ever, ever mistaken me for Jesus. So we've got a lot to, we've got a lot of improvement to do, do we not? So, okay. Anything else anybody wants to mention?

Well, along with what Dan was saying, you know, it's almost like, be silent and be thought of Christian, because we don't make a lot of noise. Yeah, well. And all this things that's happening today. Yeah, you're right. Christians are reluctant to offer any kind of pushback, because, because I think, I think in the, in the mindset of the average Christian Christian, there is a misunderstanding of the word meekness.

And, fellas, I'll tell you, meekness is not a synonym for weakness. Meekness means strength under control.

Meekness means strength under control. I remember hearing Eddie Arcaro, who was a world famous jockey at one time, talking about a particular horse. And he said, he called the horse by name, and he said, and he was a derby winner with that horse. I don't recall which one it was, but he said, he's the meekest horse I've ever ridden. And that was a real compliment coming from a jockey. And what that means is, that particular horse had incredible strength and endurance, but it was under control and at the beck and call of the jockey. Isn't that something? That's, that's what we are supposed to be, is men of strength and vitality and perseverance, but under control of the one who holds our reins.

And I don't know that there's a greater compliment that could be paid to a horse or to a human being. Moses, Moses was referred to as the meekest man in the world. And yet, nobody could confuse him with weakness, for sure. I mean, he, he knew how to, he knew how to take care of business. Yeah. Joe?

[16:55] You know, if you look at the life of Jesus and Paul too, they didn't really spend any time criticizing the government that they were within. Like Rome. I mean, like they were unfair, or they were doing this or doing that, and they were treating people this way, treating people that way.

They didn't spend any of their time in their letters or their speech talking about the government that was around them. True. That they were citizens of. They didn't spend any time on that at all. And Paul acknowledged that, that as believers, we are to be obedient to the powers that be because the governments are ordained of God. And there is such a thing called civil disobedience and passive resistance. And we are to engage in that when the occasion calls for it. And this is the principle set forth in the book of Acts, particularly chapters four and five, when the apostles were

called on the carpet for preaching and teaching the resurrection of Christ. And the religious establishment called them the task and said, listen, we forbid you to speak in this man's name anymore. You've got to be silent. We don't want to hear any more about this. And Peter spoke up and said, this is something that you're going to have to decide as far as we're concerned. The issue is whether we are to obey man or God. And then Peter said something that is just so priceless. Peter said, we cannot help but speak speak the things that we have seen and heard. We couldn't be quiet even if we wanted to, because we know too much. We know what we know. And we cannot withhold it. So you'll just have to do what you're going to have to do, because we're going to have to do what we've got to do. And they ended up beating them, flogging them, threatening them and everything else. And there is a key because

Christians, Christians are to stand for the faith and stand for the truth. And we are not to oppose the government in that basis. But we are not to shrink in fear from the government because we have a higher government to which we must give obedience. And at the same time, we recognize that the powers that be may exercise temporal authority over us, because that's what government is. And that means that as Christians, we need to stand for the truth and proclaim the truth and be willing to suffer the consequences when Caesar disagrees. And that might mean ostracism, ridicule, imprisonment, who knows, whatever.

But it's a price that we need to be willing to pay. So we contend for the truth. And if Caesar doesn't like it and wants to punish us, we need to submit ourselves to the punishment. And that's what martyrdom is made of. And I don't know that any of us are going to qualify for that. But who knows with the rapidity with which things are happening. Yes.

[20 : 19] And didn't the Christians back then get blamed for a lot of the bad things that were going on? Oh yeah. Just like today we get blamed for being racist, you know, and things like that. Really, they weren't Gilead because Nero, the Roman Empire, he blamed them for the burning of Rome or something, that they started the fires or something. Right, right. We get blamed for all things that we didn't do.

Our Lord talked about, bless those who falsely accuse you and persecute you and so on. So we are, we are subject to persecution by those who hate us and our position, but we are not permitted to respond with hatred in return. We are to respond with love. And you've got to keep in mind that basis what we're talking about here, we're coming from two different worlds. And you've got to remember that as a believer in Jesus Christ, you now belong to a different world than the one you used to.

And you used to belong to the same world as those who oppose us. And you need to keep that in mind. So, but there for the grace of God go I. And the Apostle Paul, of course, is the greatest example of that.

And I can imagine that the anguish of soul that this man felt when he had to replay and relive the incident of the stoning of Stephen when he held the garments of those who rained down those stones on Stephen's body until he was dead.

And I can imagine that Paul relived that scene many, many times. And he talked about having been a persecutor and aggressor and he persecuted the church of God.

[22 : 12] And he did so, he did so with pleasure. That means he enjoyed inflicting the pain and punishment on those people.

And he's probably the number one example of the fulfillment of what Jesus said shortly before he was betrayed. He told the apostles that the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing God a service.

And that has been that way from the beginning, you know. Those who crashed those 747s into the World Trade Center about 20 years ago thought they were doing God a service too.

So all kinds of things had been done in the name of God, in the name of Allah and whatnot. And God had nothing to do with it. But there again is the principle that comes into play of the human volition that God has given to people.

Because you would think, from a human standpoint at least, you would think that when people set forth to do things and that do them in the name of God, when it really isn't in the name of God at all, in fact, it would be under the guise of Satan, you would think that God would step in there and say, No, you don't! Not in my name you don't!

[23 : 46] But he didn't do that. Why didn't he? Because if he had, he would have retracted, he would have recalled the human volition that he gave to those people who were going to carry out

something in his name.

So God had to, let me put it this way, God had to suck it up. When evil men were doing things in his name and ascribing the motivation to him.

And the Inquisition in the 12th and 13th centuries, just one example of that. But there are many, many more where man has brutalized his fellow man because of his belief or convictions or whatever.

So anything else? Any other comment? This is just a kind of a hodgepodge thing I'm putting together and this is why I've given you this because it's so critically important. And as you open the whole thing up, you will see it looks like it's almost kind of confused the way it's put together. And that is by design because what it is designed to do is to show you in bold relief, as you open it up all the way, the third section over, which is referred to as mystery.

[25 : 09] That is this mystery section here, this third section over. That's where we are. Now, that's who we are. That's what we are.

We fit in this mystery. We are not in these other pictures. And as you fold this one thing back again, then you get nothing but prophecy and the mystery is excluded.

And what we are saying is, the mystery, as it appears here, is just an add-on, or maybe we should say an add-in, and it is actually, and I want you to think of it in this term, because this is exactly what it is.

This mystery, which is also known as the church age, or the dispensation of the grace of God, it is a parenthesis.

And if you keep that concept in mind, it will help you to understand this whole issue called the parenthesis, the mystery. And the reason it's called a mystery is because it is something that is revealed or disclosed only if you have the key.

[26 : 25] If you don't have the key to the mystery, it remains a mystery. Probably the best synonym for the word mystery is secret.

Think of that. Secret. A secret is something that is known only by, well, someone has said that you can have a thought or an issue in your mind that no one else anywhere knows about.

That is a secret in your heart and mind, whatever it is. Nobody knows about that but you. And this ties in with what Paul said when he wrote to the Corinthians and said, No man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him.

Every one of us here has secrets. they are known to you and you alone. Nobody else knows them. But the moment you relate that to one other human being, the secret is out. It's out. It's no longer a secret for that one person because now more than one person knows it.

[27 : 41] And this secret is what the ministry of the Apostle Paul is all about.

He was brought on the scene for the sole purpose of disclosing a brand new thing that had never been revealed before to anyone.

Well, let's go to Ephesians 3. That's probably the best place. This is the most definitive place in one fell swoop where you get a real solid expression of this and it is so key.

It is so key and so important and yet it is so overlooked. I'm talking about Ephesians 3 and I'm not going to read the whole chapter but we'll just read a few verses here.

And he opens chapter 3 and he's talking about his stewardship. Now stewardship is an Old Testament concept that goes all the way back and you will recall that when Joseph was sold into slavery and ended up in Egypt, he served his time in prison and everything and God was cultivating the man and finally he got released and he had the dreams about the seven years of famine, the seven years of plenty and so on.

[29 : 01] And because he was able to predict that because God had revealed to him what those seven years was all about and he related that to Pharaoh and sure enough that's exactly what came to pass.

Well Pharaoh wisely elevated Joseph who was a former jailbird, elevated him to the position of steward.

he became the steward he became the steward of Egypt and a steward was one who was entrusted with the responsibilities and the decisions of his master.

He was a manager. He was a facilitator. He carried out the wishes and the needs of his master always keeping in mind that he was subservient to his master and he made decisions based on what was good for the master.

In this case, what was good for all of Egypt. Well, Paul, Paul, in the same way that Moses, in the same way that Moses was a steward of God for the nation of Israel, Paul, the apostle, is a steward of God or an administrator of the affairs of God for, well let's let him say it himself.

[30 : 31] For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, this is one of Paul's letters that he wrote when he was in incarceration.

He wrote this when he was in, under house arrest. He was in, in Rome and he was living in his own rented villa.

He had certain privileges because he was a Roman citizen and that gave him certain, certain privileges that others did not have and he had somebody chained to him, a guard chained to him for, I think it was six hours at a time and every six hours they'd change a guard and Paul was talking about being in bonds.

This is what he's talking about here. The prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles. Now notice, and this is really important, for the sake of you Gentiles.

In other words, he's saying, he's saying to the Gentile audience that he was addressing this, I'm in prison because of you people. Because of the call that God gave me to you, that's why I'm in prison.

[31 : 40] Now he's not complaining, he's just stating a fact. For the sake of you Gentiles, indeed, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship or the administration of God's grace which was given to me, Paul, for you.

that by revelation, by divine disclosure, there was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief.

And he just mentions that back in chapter 1 and verse 9, but here he's elaborating on it a little bit.

And you've got to keep in mind when he says that this revelation was made known to me.

Now, fellas, that is as singular a pronoun as you can get. It wasn't made known to us. It was made known to me.

Personally, individually, exclusively, there is no reason to believe that anyone else other than this man had this information that he was called upon to dispense to others.

[33 : 03] It was not noised abroad. It was exclusively revealed to Paul and he's going to talk about that when he writes in the Corinthians he talks about the abundance of revelations, plural, that were given to him by the risen Christ after Christ went back to heaven.

So, what he's talking about here is additional information that Jesus did not give, deliberately did not give to the twelve apostles when he was here on earth before his crucifixion.

This is an enormous distinction that must be made and kept in mind. Let's go on and let him explain it. And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight.

Do you get the impression that he is personalizing this? Well, he is. Do you know in at least three different places and we won't go to them now but if you want to pursue it we can.

Paul refers to this information he's talking about, this mystery, he calls it my gospel. Now you read that and you wonder, oh where does he get off calling this my gospel?

[34 : 27] It wasn't Paul's gospel. Yes it was. When he calls it my gospel he doesn't mean I originated it. He doesn't mean I thought this up but he means this information was given to me specifically to relate to others and it did not exist before for anyone until it was revealed to me.

But again let him tell you that. He says understand my insight into the secret or the mystery of Christ which in other generations and what other generations could those be other than past generations?

I mean it goes all the way back. How far back do you want to go? Other generations even in the first generation I guess we'd say you know this is something that Adam didn't know anything about.

And we could also say Moses didn't know anything about this. We could also say Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel none of them knew anything about this.

They didn't write about it. They didn't hint about it. They didn't predict it. It's just not there. Joe what? Of course Jesus did obviously. Jesus obviously knew. We're getting to that. And he revealed it.

[35 : 44] That's coming up. Okay. And he says which has now not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

And some think that this indicates that there was a corporate reception of this information and there was but not until Paul revealed it to them.

and when he revealed it to them then everybody knew it. Everybody that he revealed it to including Barnabas including Silas including everyone else wherever they went and preached including the

twelve.

The twelve are going to be updated regarding this information when Paul meets with them in Antioch and that too is going to be a part of their message and I don't get the impression that they ever really picked up on that or delivered that as part of the message because Galatians two makes it quite clear that there was a division of labor and that the twelve gave their blessing to Paul to go to the Gentiles and that they would continue the ministry Christ gave them before he ascended back to heaven and that was to Israel and the twelve would go to the circumcised and Paul would go to the uncircumcised which of course is the Gentiles so let's go on to to be specific what I'm talking about in particular is this that the Gentiles a Gentile is a non-Jew a Gentile comprises ninety nine and eight tenths percent of the world's population that means the remainder two tenths of one percent not one percent two tenths of one percent is

Jewish that's a real minority so almost all of us are Gentiles to be specific that the Gentiles are fellow heirs that means on the same plane fellow heirs and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel well how is that really different from the way it was before well just look across the page at verse 11 of chapter 2 therefore remember that formerly you the Gentiles in the flesh that is Gentiles as you were born who are called uncircumcised that's just another name for Gentiles the uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision which is just another name for the Jew which is performed in the flesh by human hands remember that you you Gentiles you non-Jews were at that time separate from

[38 : 58] Christ excluded from the commonwealth of Israel strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world that's another way of saying you folks were as bad off as you could be I mean you didn't have anything going for you and what were they they were all steeped in idolatry worship all kinds of phony gods and deities and you name it and every kind of profligacy and corruption that you could imagine that's what they were steeped in and it was pretty bad and everything changed with the next two words but now and that word but in the Greek is a strong adversity and it means something radical has happened to change what I talked about before formerly without God separate from

Christ all the rest of it but and a big change but now in Christ Jesus you Gentiles who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ for he himself is our peace who made both groups Jew and Gentile into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall wow this is what Paul is going to conclude this in Romans 2 when he says for there is no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God Jew and Gentile they are all in a sad plight and then back over to Ephesians if we may fellow heirs verse 6 fellow members of the body fellow partakers of the promise in

Christ Jesus through the good news and what good news is it not the good news of the kingdom that's what the 12 preached this is a different good news and this is why Paul called it my good news and again I emphasize Paul didn't originate it but Paul was the first to proclaim it and claim it as his gospel because it was really different from the gospel that Christ gave to the 12 and the things that needs to be kept in mind is that the word in both places means same thing everywhere it's used the word gospel means good news the issue is good news about what what is the good news there's all kinds of good news so and so Mrs.

Smith had her baby that's good news so and so got a promotion that's a gospel we don't think of that as a gospel we think of it as good news but fellas listen the word gospel is a term that was in everyday usage by the Greek people before the New Testament was ever even thought of a whole bunch of words that we tend to associate with religious things or spiritual things were in common everyday usage by the Greeks before the Bible was ever written and the word gospel is just one of them and the word apostle we associate apostle with something religious but the word apostle was invoked long before the twelve apostles ever came on board that wasn't a term that was thought up new and made special for them this was an everyday language an apostle is the equivalent of an ambassador an apostle is one who is sent with the authority of the one who sent them that's like an ambassador so there were ambassadors there were apostles there were gospels and we tend to think that people say

I remember hearing my wife tell about this that they had a Bible class one evening and they were trying to make a distinction between the gospels and the point was made that there is more than one gospel and this one fellow was very indignant he said wait just a minute I disagree with that there's only one gospel and the fellow went on I think it was her husband Dave went on to explain

there are multiple gospels and this guy was so angry in a huff and they thought that they thought that they were compromising the truth of God and while it is true guys there is just one gospel for this day and age for this administration of the grace of God for this dispensation there is just one gospel one good news and that is believe on the

[44 : 14] Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved it is that gospel that Paul defined in 1 Corinthians 15 and he says I delivered unto you that which first of all I received how that Christ died for our sins according to the gospel and that he was buried and raised again the third day according to the scriptures so that's the gospel for today and that's the only good news for today in context of becoming related to God but of course you know as well as I do there's all kinds of good news but in context there's only one gospel that brings a man or woman into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ so this is the gospel that he's talking about of which verse seven of which I was made a dispenser according to the gift of

God's grace which was given to me according to the working of his power to me and I don't think Paul ever got over this in fact I'm sure he never got over the fact that God entrusted this gospel to him and he is eternally grateful to me the very least of all saints I do not think this is mock humility I don't think this is false humility I don't think it's an exaggeration I think it is exactly the way Paul felt that he was less than the least of all saints and that's what made this thing so outstanding guys if you understand the concept of the grace of God that means this grace that means this ability of God to save humans is so incomparably great that what was wrapped up in the work that Jesus Christ performed on that cross was sufficient was efficient was efficacious to provide redemption and payment for the sins of the entire human race no exceptions and anything less than that would necessitate Jesus not paying it all Jesus didn't pay for most of it he paid for all of it and this is the burden that Paul will deliver in 2nd Corinthians 5 when he says God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself and this is why

I say to you Paul says in the very next verse I pray you on behalf of Christ in the stead of Christ be ye reconciled to God which means God has paved the way he has flung open wide the gates of salvation by making access to God available through Jesus Christ and that's why I plead with you to make yourself available to that be you reconciled to God it is a plea it is a plea for the individual to exercise the volition the will that God has given him to respond to what God did in Christ in redeeming the entire world and it's a distinction that I've made before lest there be any confusion when Christ died for the sins of the world when he was made sin for all humanity it does not mean of course that all humans are saved but it does mean all humans were savable there was no one not including not excluding

Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin God you you you mean you you mean to tell me that those men could have been absolutely I'm not saying they were saved in all likelihood they weren't but to say that they weren't or could not be a candidate for salvation simply means that the work of Jesus Christ was not altogether efficient and we know that is a lie so the way of salvation was flung open for any and all whosoever will may come and God has implanted into the human psyche the gift of a will and a volition for which you are also held responsible that becomes our basis for accountability that becomes our basis for the final assessment that God is going to exact from each of us he gave us a will what did you do with it we are responsible for our decisions so all of this ties in because

[49 : 40] Christ made the way open for everybody whosoever will may come and you exercise your faith in Jesus Christ and that's the message that Paul is preaching and he says he's made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of his power to me the very least of all saints this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles nobody ever preached to the Gentiles before this is a whole new thing the unfathomable riches of Christ and here it is to bring to light to bring out in the open to show it openly what is the administration or the dispensation that's the doling out a dispensation means you dispense something you give it out this is the dispensation or administration of the secret the mystery which for ages has been hidden in

God who created all things let me tell you fellas if something was hidden in God nobody else knows about it that's for sure and it was in God's plan and in God's person from eternity past that this was going to play out and the only thing that was required was the passing of sufficient time for it to take place and now Paul is saying the time has come and God has revealed this thing now which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things in order that or to the end that the manifold wisdom of God or the multiplied wisdom of God might now as opposed to before was it before no no but now now be made known through the church and what is this church what is this assembly what

is this gathering it is

Jew and Gentile no distinction on the same footing and the same plane there's no distinction between Jew or Gentile bond or free male or female you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus Paul wrote to the Corinthians and this was in purpose made known through the church the church is the vehicle to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places now wait a minute where are they coming at who are these these are spirit beings these are angels these are I don't I don't know but I guess they're fallen and unfallen angels in the beginning as far as we know before God ever created Adam and Eve he created angelic beings and they too were spirit beings they didn't have bodies

God who created them was spirit and he created angels as spirit beings without bodies and we don't know we aren't told how many he created we're just sometimes the description is myriads myriads that's a whole bunch a lot of angels I couldn't begin to put a number on the Bible doesn't put a number on except there's a multitude of angels and they have rank they're a cherub and two cherubs were at the garden of Eden to prevent Adam and Eve from returning they are in the hierarchy of angelic beings there are archangels angels and an archangel simply means first angels means the top of the pecking order same place from which we get the word archaeology and archaeology simply means the study of first things and we talk about anything to do with arch like an arch enemy is somebody's number one enemy well there are archangels and Gabriel is an archangel and he was a messenger to Mary and to

Joseph Michael is an archangel and he is a particular has a particular responsibility for the nation of Israel and found in the book of Daniel and how he was opposed how he opposed Satan and Satan opposed him and the prince of Persia and I still don't understand much about that but there are angelic beings and then and then God created humans and we have that record in Genesis 1 so what happened with the fall of the angels or the disobedient rebellion of the angels we're told that Lucifer was the head angel and he rebelled against God and he recruited other angels to do the same and apparently one third of the angels God created threw in their lot with Lucifer and Lucifer began his deception way back there and his pitch was always the same still is

[55 : 12] I can get you a better deal and a third of the angels went for it and the others remained loyal to the Lord and that created the beginning of what is known as the cosmic conflict or the angelic conflict and it is evil versus good we don't know how far back this goes because we're talking about before time began as far as we know time and space neither one began until Genesis 1 when God created the heavens and the earth and before that time there was no space and there was no time and there was no need for either because it is only the physicality of our bodies that require a time and space in which to exist but immateriality doesn't need time and space and these angels were like God in that he was spirit and they were created spirit beings then he created humans and the text goes on to tell us this is quite a remarkable thing here he says in verse 11 we carried out in

Christ Jesus our Lord sorry verse 10 might be made known the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church that's through these Jews and Gentiles in one body to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places these are the angelic spheres and this means that God has called into being beings that are lesser than his original creation we are made lower than the angels in the sense that we do not have either the wisdom or the power of angels or the knowledge of angels although there seems to be angelic lack in some areas and we could explain that later maybe but let me put it this way none of us none of us is any match for any angel they are superior in wisdom and power and ability and knowledge and everything and we just cannot really compete with or even identify with angelic beings they are of a whole different class altogether and they were the ones who they were the ones who originally rebelled and God has called into being into creation lesser beings called humans and to put it very bluntly guys we are the

B team we are the B team and God is going to use individuals from the B team to best those of the A team and that's going to be the wisdom of God and he is going to put us and our accomplishment on display to show the A team who blew it that they made a bad choice and God is going to resolve the angelic conflict via humanity and the leader of it is going to be the son of God in that triune nature of deity it will be the son who will become one of us with a body like ours capable of dying the whole nine yards and capable of everything that he did it's just the most amazing thing this was he's going to put us on display in our accomplishment of glorifying him to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places this was in accordance with the eternal purpose wow which he

carried out in

Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we Jews and Gentiles have boldness and confident access through faith in him therefore in other words Paul is saying in light of everything that I just told you I ask you not to lose heart don't become discouraged at my tribulations on your behalf for they are your glory God is in control of this whole thing and it's going to turn out just the way he wants it so don't be upset over my tribulations on your behalf it is a price I'm more than willing to pay and you know Paul describes his suffering he describes his persecution but never once never once does he complain about them isn't that something he acknowledges them but he never complains about them and he never charges God foolishly but why don't you do this or why don't you do that and I think he learned his lesson when he asked the Lord for the thorn in the flesh to be departed from you and the

Lord says I'm not going to do that I'm going to give you something that will enable you to compensate and care for that and he gave Paul that extra measure of grace to bear up under what he was dealing with and he said my grace my grace will be sufficient adequate and I tell you this is incredible stuff and I well we hadn't planned to go there but let's get back to the idea any other suggestions about what you might like to pursue let's give us some more thought anybody well you just got into what I had suggested you know the deeper meat of the revelations that were given to Paul and this is one of them right in here well I appreciate that but here by the way guys I want to throw a clinker into this there's something else that we need to think about and that is it never occurred to me before but it did now in light of the indication that we were thinking about you know that we were going to extend to other guys and I don't know if anybody is going to take us up on it or not but we probably ought to be thinking in terms of something that you know in case in case there are a few guys that come in that are interested

[62:12] I have no idea of where they'll be spiritually or biblically and maybe we ought to out of depth maybe we ought to think a little bit about that too so I'm not you know I'm not sure that this would be the best time to go into the depths of some of the doctrines that we all admire and appreciate so much so and yet I don't want to I don't want to be so simplistic that you're all going to be bored to tears because you already know everything we will be talking about I don't want to do that either so something to think about any other thoughts okay next next week we still haven't made a decision but but let's get this to more thought and we'll try to and if anybody wants to talk to me privately or give me a call during the week or anything you know I'm more than open to that so give that some give that some thought too and meanwhile enjoy your breakfast and the rest of the day thanks again for being with us today