

Ephesians 3:1-13

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Date: 23 September 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Now, the first part of this, chapter 3, as we work through Ephesians, the first verse that we see here almost precedes a large tangent.

Paul quite often goes off in his letters on what we might call a kind of sanctified tangent. Obviously, all of the Word of God is inspired. But in terms of, you know, composition, it's the evidence here that Paul is sort of having it transcribed or written down by a secretary or ancient equivalent of a stenographer has been dictated.

As he's thinking and as he's speaking, and the Lord is giving him particular utterance or particular inspiration because we've got here, for this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles.

And then he goes off with a tangent. And the tangent is from verses 2 to 13, because what we're not dealing with this evening, but we will, Lord willing, on a future occasion, from verse 14, when he says again, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's really taking up what he meant to say at verse 1. For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles. Verse 14, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 1 3] So in other words, verse 14 is taking up where the end of chapter 2 finished. He's speaking about the Gentiles, the other nations who are not racially of Israel, that they too are builded together as part of this living temple, living, breathing, as it were, a house of God, testifying to his presence amongst them.

That the glory of God in the world is not any building of stone or gold or wood or whatever it may be. It is the living witness of his people, which no matter how they are persecuted, no matter how they may be killed or martyred, there's always somehow going to be more.

And that, you know, as you'll know the phrase which St. Cyprian is meant to have used in, I think, the fourth century, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. A subsequent bishop later on, St. John Chrysostom, a couple of centuries later, said, you know, the blood of the martyrs is as water to a garden.

It is that which the garden needs. In a dry and desert land, a garden is by definition that which is artificially maintained, watered, irrigated. It is that where the grass, the plants are enabled to grow because it has additional water supplies poured into it to moisten the soil and to bring forth the growth.

So the blood of the martyrs is as water to a garden, St. John Chrysostom said. Now, this is what Paul is saying. It's a living temple that you're part of.

[2 : 4 5] And so he says, for this cause, I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. And then we've got the tangent that he goes off at. And it's that tangent we're going to look at tonight, verses 2 to 13 here, where he sort of goes off at an angle.

But that angle is itself inspired because part of the purpose of it is to demonstrate that although this seems like a new thing which God is doing, bringing in the Gentiles, those who are not of the biological or racial line of Abraham or of the Jews, this is not, in fact, a novelty.

God has not changed his mind because God does not change. Remember what we read in the prophet Malachi? I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

And likewise, in Hebrews 13, we read that he's Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. He does not change. Therefore, if God is bringing now in other nations, when the Jewish people of the Israelites had always assumed that they were exclusively, the only people that the Lord would ever deal with, then it's not that God is someone who said, I'm fed up on you guys now.

You've been so bad. You've been so rebellious. I'm going to turn to others. It's just that when the fullness of time was come, there was an intention all along to make known the grace of God beyond one mere nation.

[4 : 14] It is a new thing which is being done. And that is what Paul is talking about in this chapter, first part of this chapter. It is a new thing, but it is not new to God.

It is that which was always planned, that which was always intended. It's rather like if, you know, if architects or engineers or whatever, that are building a school or office block or whatever, you know, sometimes you see the plans laid out of like phase one, phase two, phase three.

And then they'll build phase one. You think, oh, that's it pretty much completed. No, that's that bit completed. And then they're going to move on to phase two. Maybe when they get the funding or when they get the materials.

Then phase three. And only then is it actually completed. But the intention has been from the very first to complete the whole work. And that is part of what Paul is pointing to here.

In this chapter, in whom you also are building together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. End of chapter two. For this cause, the fact that you are building together as part of this living temple, he would then go on to say, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 28] But before he does that, he wants to emphasize to them that, look, I'm not just making this up, nor is it coming from me. And we need to recognize as well that what is written in the Word of God is not simply coming out of the minds or the heads of Paul or John or Matthew or whoever it happens to be.

It is that which the Lord has inspired and revealed to them. This is the Word of God. This is the writings of God using them to write it down.

But they are not the ones who are the authors of it. Sometimes, you know, if you get an official letter from somebody, whether from the council or the water board or whatever it might be, you might see in the top left-hand corner two or three little initials and then maybe a forward slash and then a number or something.

Now, often these things refer to the person who actually typed or transcribed the letter. But they are not the actual author of it.

They will have been told, if you could write to so-and-so and to this person and that person and then leave the letters on my desk and I'll sign them. And so they do it and they put at the top of it, they'll put maybe their initials and a forward stroke and the number of the letter that it is or something to reference it.

[6 : 47] But those letterings will refer to the person who actually typed up the letter, which member of the admin staff actually did it. But the letter isn't coming from there. The letter will be coming from whoever signed it at the bottom as personnel manager or as head of development or research or whatever it is.

And his or her name will go there and her signature and it doesn't really matter who typed up the letter or who photocopied or who posted it. The fact is it's coming from this person whose signature is at the bottom.

And it's the same with the word of God. Whoever may have been used by God to transcribe and to write down and to publish his word, it is he who is the author.

It is he who stands or falls by the truth of what he has revealed. Jesus said in his prayer for his disciples in John 17, verse 17, Sanctify them through thy truth.

Thy word is truth. And Jesus is the word made flesh. When people say, he that had seen me had seen the Father. If you want to see what God is like, look at Jesus.

[7 : 55] Well, we can't see Jesus. We don't know what he's like. No, but we have a whole Bible that tells us what he is like. Not as a physical appearance. That doesn't matter. But what is his nature and character and disposition?

Because the whole Bible, from start to finish, is about Christ. It is about his sacrifice upon the cross, his death for sinners, and how they are redeemed through what he has done.

This is what God intends to bequeath to us through the death of his son. That is why both parts of the Bible are referred to as a testament. Because they are about the death of the testator.

For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. It's not just coming out of my head. If you've heard, or rather, since you've heard, as you know, of the dispensation of the grace of God which has given me to you.

Word, you know, how I've got this word for you Gentiles. How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote for in a few words. Now, he's not talking about a previous letter to the Ephesians here.

[9 : 01] But rather, he's talking about how I've already mentioned this previously in my letter. And if you turn back to chapter 1, you'll see how at verses 9 and 10, he says, Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the foolishness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him.

Now, this is exactly like what he says to the Philippians, you know, that eventually, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth. But what he's referring to, verses 9 and 10 here, this is what he says.

I mentioned this previously in a few words. Verses 9 and 10 of chapter 1. He had made known unto us the mystery of his will. A mystery is not, oh, a deep, spooky secret.

It's that which was not previously revealed. It was a deep thing that was unknown before, but is now brought out into the open.

And it is not so much that it's a brand new thing. It was always there. And some of you may be old enough, well, not many, some of you may be old enough to remember the children's program, Blue Peter, where there was always a stage where they'd be making some model or craft or whatever, and the person doing it would have this famous, they were showing you how to stick the bits together.

[10 : 28] Then they'd bring out one and say, here's one I finished earlier. And they would bring it out. In other words, an example of, this is how it's meant to look when it's finished. But the only reason they're able to bring that out is because all the while they were showing you how to put together the early stages, the finished product was already there.

It was always intended to bring that out as the final finished product. And so likewise with the Lord, when he gradually reveals his plan bit by bit to his people over the years, what he wants to do is say, here's what I finished earlier.

This is what the finished product is meant to look like. All the nations of the world, people from, elect, individuals from all the nations and tribes and towns of the world are going to gather round my throne and be part of my family.

And this the Lord has revealed through Paul, but as he reveals it through Paul, Paul is able to show, look, this was always the intention.

Some commentators have suggested that, you know, Paul is the means of making this, this new thing known, and he's the instrument of this brand new thing. It's not a brand new thing.

[11 : 42] It's as though he is opening a door which had been closed before, and as light floods into the dark room where before no light could get, or not enough light could get, he says, look, this was always here.

It was always intended. But the Lord revealed this to him, how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote it forward in a few words. This deep thing that was not known by all in Sunday before, but the Lord revealed to him.

Galatians chapter 1, he makes reference to the same thing. Verse 11 and 12, I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And this is the thing, it was his Damascus Road conversion, where the Lord spoke to him and the Lord revealed to him what he intended him to do. And he recounts this in Acts 26, where he's telling again the story of his conversion.

I heard a voice speaking unto me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And the Lord says to him, rise, stand upon thy feet, I will make thee a minister and a witness for the beast things which thou hast seen, of those things in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles.

[13 : 01] Now as we've said in the past, where the Bible makes reference to the people, it almost always means the Israelites, the people of the Jews. They are the people. The rest are the Gentiles, you know, the heathen, the dogs, those on side.

But this idea of the Jews being the people, not just the people of God, but the only people who were really people at all, who were really human at all, because they were the people of God.

But the Gentiles, who previously had been thought of as the scum of the earth, they too are to be dignified with the knowledge and understanding of God, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in thee.

In other words, until their eyes are opened, they are blind. Until they are delivered into the power of God, they're under the power of Satan. You might think, well, that's a bit steep. Come on, the Jews were the people of God.

They had the temple. They had the sacrifices. They had the oracles of God. They had the prophets. Yeah, but almost all the prophets, they rejected, and we know how they rejected Jesus too when he was there, and we know how their track record wasn't exactly brilliant, but leave that aside.

[14 : 27] Yes, they were the people of God, but there is no great virtue in belonging to a particular nation or nationality if we reject the God who reveals himself to that nation.

We might say, for example, traditionally, Scotland was Presbyterian, so we had the Reformed faith. We had focus on the Bible and the worship of God according to the Scriptures, whereas somewhere like Poland or Spain or Southern Ireland, oh, that was Catholicism, and that was all idolatry and superstition and wasn't that terrible.

That may be so, but there's no great virtue in being Scottish if you don't seize the opportunity of the Gospel that is presented to you through the Word of God, and there's no, in being Southern Irish or Polish or Spanish or whatever, where you grew up with a culture of Catholicism.

It doesn't mean the Lord cannot reach into that culture and draw from it those who will nonetheless have their eyes open and be brought to Christ, and you can be a born-again believer from a background of idolatry and darkness, and you can be a lost soul in the depths of hell who grew up with the sound of the psalms of God ringing in your ears, and the Bible being read morning and evening in your family home or whatever, and still, you can be deaf to it.

There is no virtue in the nation to which we belong in and of itself. Patriotism, wonderful thing, great to love your country, great to be proud of it and to delight in it and so on, but there is no virtue in and of itself before God.

[16 : 09] the Lord holds out to every nation the forgiveness of sin through his son, Jesus Christ, and for some, that has become like their national religion.

That's great, but nobody's going to be saved by your national religion. They're only going to be saved by Christ, and this mystery has been revealed to Paul through the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Christ himself.

This is what he's saying. I didn't get this from men. I didn't sit at the foot of a rabbi and imbibe this from his teaching from his mouth. This is from God himself. By revelation, he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote a few words, whereby when you read, you not understand my knowledge and the mystery of Christ.

You can take it. This is from God. It's not from men. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

So was God keeping us in the dark? Was God just saying, oh, I'm not going to tell you this big secret just yet. It's just the time wasn't ready. You can have a child, for example, who is a total whiz kid at maths or at algebra or trigonometry or whatever, but it doesn't alter the fact that in primary one, you're not going to be able to give them six-year studies of advanced higher maths just yet.

[17 : 33] You'll have to start them still in the basic and as they gobble that up and move from step to step to step, they may be very precocious and they may grasp and understand all the senior stuff at a very much earlier age, but they'll still have to be taught it step by step.

There's no use putting, for example, you know, steak and potatoes and chips and vegetables before an infant child who can only eat soft food that's only a couple of weeks old and say, come on, what's wrong with the food I've made?

This is beautiful stuff. This is pride for the steak. Eat it up, you ungrateful child. But it can't. It has to be fed on soft food or still on milk or on baby food.

At that stage, it's just not able to digest even the very best of adult food. It has to be brought on by stages.

And so, likewise, the people of God as a church in its infancy had to be brought on by stages with the tabernacle, with the sacrifices, with the Ten Commandments revealing what God is like, showing them the law and the commandments and how this pointed to the Lord.

[18 : 48] And when the fullness of time was come, then the Messiah came and God was revealed and opened out to the rest of the world too. but this was always his intention as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

That doesn't just mean New Testament people who happen to have the gift of prophecy like Agabus or Philip the Evangelist's daughters or whatever. It's a reference to the fact that this was revealed to the prophets who wrote it down at God's inspiration but perhaps did not recognize the significance of what they had been given.

It's like if, you know, seven different people are each given a piece of something that will fit together, a piece of equipment. You need all seven of them to fit all the pieces together to make the final product.

And each one of its own is no use. But as long as they hold on to the piece they've got and they faithfully bring it to the place where they're all to put it together, it will still work. And so the prophets are each given pieces as it were of the jigsaw.

And the pieces they're given are faithful and true but they don't maybe grasp completely what it was meant to be. And the reason we can say this is that Paul has said in the previous chapter at verse 20 how that the Gentiles are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

[20 : 23] Nothing in this building is like an annex or an add-on or a little bit tagged on the end. There's no afterthoughts with this building of God's living temple.

It is all put together by design. Every bit is in place. Long ago in the days of Isaiah the prophet we read this in chapter 49 verse 6 he said It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved Israel.

I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. It's too small a thing for God just to be glorified in one tiny wee nation.

They will have their days and their centuries when they are the only people of God that God intends God always impended to bring in children from all aspects and all parts of the world of every nation and tribe and town.

Isaiah 56 verses 6 and 7 we read Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it and takeeth hold of my covenant even them will I bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

[21 : 50] Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

Now remember that Jesus makes reference to this verse when he cleanses the temple he says it's written my temple shall be a house of prayer for all nations but you've made it a den of feasts and we tend to contrast at that point the fact that it's meant to be a house of prayer and worship as opposed to a place of commerce and animals and money being exchanged and so on and that's true but in the original context he is not just a house of prayer per se but it's a house of prayer for all people all nations not just the Jews but for all the nations of the world and their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar Hebrews tells us in chapter 13 verse 10 we have an altar where they who serve the physical old temple have no right to eat our altar is that upon which the ultimate sacrifice the Lamb of God was laid down and slain the cross of our Saviour is the ultimate altar that is the means by which we are delivered so as we see from the prophet Isaiah

God always intended to bring in other nations too it was always his intention but it wasn't always known it wasn't always recognised that the Gentiles verse 6 should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel whereof I was made a minister or servant according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power unto me from less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ you see Paul sees the very fact of his own unworthiness as being testimony to how powerful God is if he's able to bring this grace even through the likes of me you say how great must this God be the unsearchable riches of Christ you can never exhaust it it's as though if someone were into say wine tasting or something now I don't know anything about wine but just supposing that there was the most rich and beautiful and flavoured and matured and top notch most valuable expensive wine in the whole world and somebody was given it in basically one of these disposable plastic or polished iron cups and said taste that and they would taste it and say oh this is fantastic this is really good if they knew about wine and somebody else in a beautiful crystal glass was given basically you know sour vinegar and they tasted that's awful but look at the container what a beautiful crystal glass and said this was in basically rubbish but this is the fantastic product this is a rubbish product this is a brilliant container and this is a rubbish container but what are you tasting you're not tasting the container you're tasting the product you're tasting the wine itself and that by virtue of taking attention away from all the beautiful crystal glass the container is nothing the container is disposable that is what all servants of the Lord are we are expendable we are disposable all of us to form a Christ we will only have a very short time in this but the product that we carry within the treasure that we have in earth and vessels is the true treasure and deeds and to me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given and this is the great blessing upon it he is in a position to transmit this grace to those who worshipped the goddess

Diana of the Ephesians those who dabbled in the ochre those who were godless those who had no thought of any supreme being those who were maybe complete worldlings or indifferent or any other variation in between there may be those who were devout Jews in Ephesus and who were just waiting for the Messiah to come and for whom this was good news but all shades and opinions this grace comes to and he says unto me for less than the least of the all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see what is the fellowship that word really means dispensation that which is given it's given by God it's dispensed by God of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God now that's quite a complicated couple of sentences there so let's just unpack it a wee bit well first of all the fellowship of the mystery when we enter into what God has revealed he reveals it to those who are his children it doesn't matter how much we may read and read and read and read and study and so on we cannot convert ourselves we can spend hours and days in our knees but we cannot convert ourselves nevertheless

Jesus says seek and ye shall find and those who truly seek the Lord it's not that oh their efforts will finally break through but when the Lord sees such a heart that truly desires it he will make himself known to those who truly seek him Jesus says seek and ye shall find all that the Father giveth and he shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no one is cast out when the disciples asked him in John 14 he said Lord how is it you reveal yourself to us and not to the world well you just show yourself to the world and Jesus said well if somebody does love me he will come to me he will seek me and my Father and I will come to him and we'll make ourselves known to him nobody can say well God didn't reveal himself to me so what can I do I didn't get Damascus road no lightning fell from heaven so it's not my fault is it did you seek did you ask did you wait upon the Lord this mystery the fellowship of the mystery the fellowship into which we enter is of those to whom the Lord has revealed his grace he has unfolded this mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God you can't get into God to bring it out you can't unpack what is in God only the Lord can bring out the treasury of his grace and share it with us who have been hidden God who created all things by Jesus Christ now this verse 10 sounds a wee bit complicated to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers that means that heavenly angels and demons and so on the spiritual realm whether they're the good holy angels or the fallen angels the demons the devil's followers principalities and powers and heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God now you've got to understand it's not well it'd be known by the church so in all of it the church will come to understand what they didn't understand before no it is that the church is the means by which angelic beings are enabled to see the unfolding work of God you think well surely the angels already know about this you know the angels were you know praising God when Jesus was born and the shepherds and so on they must have known about it no the angels were doing what they're told to do the angels don't know anything save what they are told to do angels being holy messengers of the Lord or fallen angels being demons have no divine initiative they can know only what is revealed to them they can do only what they are told to do they are ministering spirits they're not little denigods who somehow are lesser gods who know lots of things such powers they have they have only from

[30 : 16] God such messages as they are given to reveal to human beings is only that which God doesn't forgive they are simply functionaries spiritual functionaries unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known might be known to them these things these mysteries are unfolded how do the angels learn about these things they learn about them because through the church that is God's people here the story is unfolded and the angels and the principalities and the powers the spiritual beings who don't know what God is going to do who don't know how his plan is going to be unfolded they see it unfold in the life and work and witness of the church of God now what what's our basis for saying okay we've got various places where this is hinted at Colossians chapter 2 verses 14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us which was contrary to us took it out of the way nailing it to his cross and having spoiled principalities and powers that's the that's the sort of demonic angels those who were against his work he spoiled them he triumphant over it he made a show of them openly he showed them their weakness triumphing over them in it in what in the cross this is what he did blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us he nailed it to his cross and triumphed over them in it

Colossians 2 verses 14 and 15 there so he shows the weakness of the devil and his angels he shows that they have no power over his children over his people because by the cross he has put to death everything that could ever send his own children to hell in other words their sin if their sin still clings to them they go down to hell but if their sin is put to death on the cross with Jesus then they are free and they live he is spoiled he has triumphed over principalities and powers these demonic angels he has made a show of them triumphant over them in his cross by the cross the devil is shown to be the demonic powers or the angelic powers the principalities and powers have no power in respect of Christ and they haven't got power to coerce the Lord's children 1st Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 we read without controversy great is the mystery there is that word again mystery of godliness god was manifest in the flesh he was made known in the flesh through his son

Jesus Christ he was justified in the spirit by the power of the spirit he was raised again from the dead he didn't need justification in the sense of being a sinner but he was shown to be just by the power of the spirit he was seen of angels and preached unto the Gentiles when the Lord appeared in the flesh and was born at Bethlehem the angelic hosts beheld god in the flesh when he lived and walked in Galilee they beheld god in the flesh when he was put to death upon the cross they beheld god in the flesh he was seen of angels in a way that in a sense when he was still pure spirit he wasn't seen in the flesh by angels they didn't see him or know him in that way until he was revealed to humankind and likewise 1st Peter chapter 1 verse 12 we read unto whom it was revealed that not to themselves let's talk about the prophets and those from long ago reveal that not to themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you in other words what Peter is saying is that the prophets long ago they were faithful they reported what God gave them to say they gave the message but they didn't necessarily understand the fulfillment of it it wasn't to them that it was all completely revealed they spoke the word they wrote it down at God's command but they didn't see the fulfillment at the end of it but to us no not to them but to us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the

Holy Ghost sent down from heaven which things the angels desire to look into the principalities and powers the angelic beings whether they are holy angels or whether they are demons they would long to understand these mysteries they would want to be able to know why is it this person is saved and that one isn't am I wasting my time with this one trying to get him to forsake the Lord when you know if he's not one of the elect anyway if he is one of the elect maybe is there anything I can do to try and draw him away from that they can't understand they can't get their heads rounded they desire to look into this mystery but they can't and in a sense nor can we can't plumb the depths of this great mystery all we can know is that we are saved by it if we trust and believe in the Lord if you are drowning in the water and somebody throws you a life belt from the ship you don't necessarily have to say well now let me just work out the physics and the chemistry of why it is that this particular circular substance will float on the surface of the water why if I grab onto it will I be held up to stay above the surface of the water and I won't just sink let me just stop here and work out the calculation no you don't have to do that just grab onto it and you will be prevented from sinking if a lifeboat comes along you don't have to think now what are the chances and the probabilities of my actually surviving in that climate of this lifeboat or will I just be worse off if the lifeboat's later on going to sink what is the experience the maritime experience of these volunteers on the lifeboat how will I be sure that I'll get home you don't have to do all these calculations they have come to say get into the lifeboat grab onto the life belt never worry about how it floats or how it's borne up or whether or not these particular lifeboat volunteers have enough experience or training here's an opportunity to live when otherwise you're going to die do you take it of course you do you don't have to understand all the depths of it the angels don't understand all the depths of it but they are enabled to see as God out works his purposes through the likes of us dust of the earth the church as he works his purposes out through the church to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places where there are demons on the one hand or holy angels on the other it becomes known to them as it unfolds by means of how God works through his ordinary mortal people here upon us the church we have that which angels don't have we have things revealed to us that were never revealed to them we have opportunities that they didn't get a fallen angel a demon does not have the opportunity of salvation having rebelled against the

Lord once that is him gone lost damned forever angels who fall do not get saved people who are brought into this world in a state of fallenness have the opportunity to be saved this is a mystery it is something the angels cannot grasp it is something perhaps we can't grasp completely but you don't have to understand the physics and chemistry and nature of the life now just grab it get into the life boat and save your eternal immortal life these things in heavenly places might be known by means of the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord you see the church itself makes these things known they're set forth for a reason to be seen Paul says 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 9 I think that

[38 : 48] God has set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death for we are made a spectacle something to be spectated something to be seen a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men the purpose of our sufferings the purpose of our witness is to be seen so that it is itself a witness it is a spectacle it is that which people can gaze upon and spectate and wonder at for we are made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men and of course Jesus says in Luke 15 verse 10 likewise I say there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that we pent with now often we tend to interpret that verse as though it is the angels themselves rejoicing maybe they do for all we know we don't know exactly maybe the angels are singing and dancing and rejoicing over every same soul but it doesn't actually say that it says it's in the presence of the angels of God now in

Psalm 23 remember what it says you know that prepare us to table before me in the presence of my enemies doesn't mean that your enemies are sitting down and tucking in to that banquet the Lord is prepared for you it's that that is prepared in their presence and the Lord demonstrates to your enemies this is how I treat my child here they are with the seat of honour at my banquet look all you enemies look and see those whom you despise this is the place of honour I give them now prepare us to table before me in the presence of my enemies now anoint my head with all of my cup but theirs doesn't now we may be perhaps reading too much and they say oh as if the angels are standing there glum it's not that I don't think it's just that the angels don't get it the angels are not part of the equation they are functionaries they are spiritual messengers they are heavenly celestial celestial servants but you know they're not the ones rejoicing it says there is joy in the presence of the angels of God so if it's in their presence who is rejoicing I would suggest to you it is God himself who is rejoicing it is the risen

Christ the saviour of the other redeemed with it who are rejoicing and the angels look on and maybe they are delighted too in the same way as which you know if there's somebody in your presence who is joyful and who is just splitting their sides laughing you begin to laugh too not because you understand the joke not because you get it but because the laughter is infectious the joy is infectious you enter into it too but it is not them who initiate the joy there is joy in the presence of the angels of God in other words it is God himself who rejoices over every one sinner that repented why is he or she going to repent because they have received the good news of the forgiveness of sin that if they do believe they can have it it's for them and this is where what may seem to us to be a very long ago and irrelevant distinction well who really cares if you're a Jew or a Gentile who really cares if you are you know an

Ephesian unbeliever or an Ephesian alien or a Jewish Ephesian or whatever it doesn't really matter to us now but the point is that this gospel is not confined in any one place or to any one people if it can be for the Ephesians it can be for the Scots and for the Scalpers and for the English and the Irish and everybody else if it can be for them then it can be for us now because it is just as relevant and just as necessary to us here now as it was to them and to the pagan Ephesians it seemed impossible that God should want to bring them into his fold as part of the children of God to the intent of now there in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed that means which he worked he wrote in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by faith of him we can get in to where the Lord is we can have access to where the Lord is wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you which is your glory his tribulation he's writing as a prisoner says you know I'm not the prisoner of Rome I'm the prisoner of

Jesus Christ it's because of Christ's plan and purpose that I wear this chain it's because of Christ's purpose I'm chained to an individual Roman soldier just now even as I write but that's not because Rome has power over me it's because Christ has power over me and I glory in being his person I desire that you faint not at my tribulations which is your glory because Christ has all things in his power it is the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus in whom now we have boldness we don't have to come oh fearful and trembling to the Lord we come rather in the name of Jesus and that name of Jesus I was going to say is the magic that's not magic of course it is the gracious card by which the Lord accepts us like we're talking this morning about if there's a bouncer on the door the doorman there won't let anybody in that he's recognized but then somebody does know he says yes yes you can come out oh they're with me oh well fair enough they can come in too it's as though Jesus stands before his father says they're with me this one is part of me part of my family I have died for them yes here's all the long list of their sins and there's the payment my blood shed upon the cross God who is a just judge cannot do other than acquit them because although their sins are scarlet they shall be as white as snow no they are red like crimson they shall be as wool because of what Christ has done which is freely offered not only to the Israelites not only to the Ephesians but to us here now in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him what is it

[45 : 25] Romans says for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord that is what Paul is declaring it is not that it's a novelty it's not that it's a new invention it is what God always intended to do by which he is bringing forth and making known to us now in this present day in this present hour not just for the Ephesians but even for us in our life where we are right now nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord bow to God Lord rest part R who