

The Secrets God has Shared with Believers

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[0 : 00] Those are safety features. I want to get those cords out of the way. Well, so far this morning, it's already been eventful. We kind of challenged you on offering to see, right?

And I understand Tom shared that there was an ambulance here and someone was taken away. Who was it? Pardon?

Oh, Melissa, okay. Does anybody know what was wrong? Okay, thank you.

Okay. So why don't we stop at the very beginning. This is not the very beginning. I apologize. That was a preacher's faux pas, not a pastor's faux pas. Preacher thinks that it gets started when he starts, but that's not true.

Okay? Theologically inaccurate. So, but we are going to stop and pray. Melissa Johnson, pray that whatever's going on, that she would be fine and that it would be something that we hear good news back on, and then also that God just gives us a heart to hear the word of God and have it touch us.

[1 : 13] Let's pray. Father, our hearts this morning are quiet before you because we realize our frailty.

We recognize, as Melissa has been taken by the squad, that there's something going on there that needs our prayer. And knowing so little, other than the greatness of your name and the power that you have, we are glad to be able to call upon you and just ask that you would touch our sister and strengthen her and raise her up.

We pray also, Father, this morning that your word would have free course in our hearts and that we would be guarded from sin, that we would listen carefully, and that your spirit would take the beauty of your word and etch it into our lives and cause us to live with joy and power in the Holy Spirit to the testimony of Christ and the cross.

And we're going to give you the glory in advance for what you do in us and around the world. We ask this in your precious name. Amen.

Well, I want you to turn your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 3. We're going to pick up, actually, in verse 6 and work our way through. And as we are studying this passage this morning, I want you to understand that at the very beginning, this passage is one where Paul uses an interesting little statement that in our culture is completely different from the way it was used in the Bible.

[2 : 49] When we think about a mystery, how do we think about a mystery? A mystery is something where there's a key part that we really don't know and we're kind of curious about what's going to happen.

We watch mystery theater. We read mystery novels on occasion. We're looking for some kind of detail that's hidden and not understood and we can't get our hands on it.

In the ancient world, a mystery was completely different from that. A mystery was actually something that was understood only by those who were part of the inner circle.

And they were told the secrets of that mystery. A mystery religion was a religion where only those who were initiated into the group had access both to the information and to the place of worship.

And those who were initiated, they had secret handshake or they had secret signals and they communicated all through this kind of mumbo-jumbo and that was a mystery.

[3 : 53] And in order to be part of that mystery, you had to be invited in and they had to learn all these important things and the mystery was something that was revealed. Paul uses the word mystery four different times in this chapter and we're not going to pick up on all of them because we touched on them a little bit last week, but we're going to move through and understand the secrets that God has shared with us as believers.

And as we look at this passage, I want you to pick up with me there in verse 6. He says, This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

So as we get started understanding this mystery, as I've already pointed out, a mystery in the New Testament, different than for us, a mystery that is not understood.

In the Bible, a mystery is something that only those who are initiated understand. And the fact that Paul speaks about Christ and the gospel as being a mystery is both biblically consistent and also telling.

It announces something. Jesus made it clear, actually, that spiritual truth and spiritual matters are not simply understood by applying human intellect.

[5 : 10] If I were to throw out a relatively simple math problem, if you had been exposed to math previously, 2 plus 2, I'm kind of at my level here. Do you follow me?

But if I did 2 plus 2, most everybody here that's beyond 5 or 6 could say what? 4. And I would say, good job.

If I went a little further than that, we'd begin to kind of weed out those who have not learned all those details, right? Because they were kind of confusing to us. And Jesus made it clear that spiritual truth was not just understood by mere intellect.

Turn in your Bible so we see this for ourselves. Go over to Luke chapter 10, verse 21 and 22. The context is that earlier Jesus had sent out His disciples to preach the gospel, to announce the kingdom, and they returned.

And when they came up, came back, they were really enthused about the tremendous blessing that they had had in preaching the gospel, announcing the kingdom, and seeing God do some miraculous things.

[6 : 16] And they're kind of whooping it up because of what they'd seen happen. And Jesus said, hey, listen, this is the thing that really ought to fire you up, the fact that your name is written in the book of life, that you're a child of God.

And on that statement, He then goes on in verse 21. He says, In the same hour, He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for such is your or was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son, and everyone to whom the Son, what's the next word?

chooses to reveal Him. So how is it that there are some of you sitting here this morning that know who Jesus Christ is? Did that really happen because you had a different intellectual capacity than other people that you work with that when they use the word Jesus Christ, what's their means of, what are they saying?

It's an oath. It's an expression of a curse word or something like that. They don't have a personal relationship with Christ. They don't think in those terms. Why is it that you do? It says here, God in His kindness has chosen to reveal this mystery to you.

[7 : 39] We look over at another passage that makes it clear to us, and if you would, look in 1 Corinthians 2. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 2 through 7.

Chapter 2, verse 7 through 14, and I'm not going to take all the passage, but just kind of touch this. It says, Does that make sense?

Do you think if Satan understood the plan of redemption, he would have partnered with the Roman government to put Christ on the cross?

What's the answer? I mean, when he thought the victory was his, he was actually driving the last nail into his own coffin and his destruction. Isn't that right? And why did that happen?

Here's what it says. If the rulers of this age had understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And as we work our way on down through, look at verse 10.

[8 : 55] These things, God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. And then he goes on, and he says there in verse 12, Now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God.

Why is it that you understand spiritual truth? What's the answer? We understand spiritual truth because of the blessing of the work of God in our lives that has revealed these truths to us, and

they humble us, and they also cause us to be thankful.

And Paul speaks of these spiritual truths, and he says, Listen, it's because of the grace of God that you understand these things and can recognize them to be true. Now, you look here in the passage going back to Ephesians chapter 3, and we need to understand that the mystery Paul wrote about is all about Christ and His salvation.

That's what the mystery consists of, in broad terms. But we break it down in this passage, and there are references to different pieces of it. In one sense, part of the overarching issue is the mystery of redemption, what He did in saving us.

And there is a reference to that mystery of redemption over in Hebrews chapter 3, verse 20. I'm not going to have you turn there, but recognize that when we think about what God has done in saving us, it is a mystery that if we were not told about it, we wouldn't understand it.

[10:22] I want you to think just for a moment. Earlier this morning, as I was meditating and praying about Sunday and the passage that we were going to look at, I was kind of putting myself in Adam and Eve's shoes after they sinned.

I mean, can you imagine the absolute horror that came over their conscience as they thought about the terrifying reality that they had offended the supreme God and creator of this universe?

When we sin, and we sin often, we have kind of a practiced indifference to it because we do it so often. Do you understand that? But for Adam and Eve's conscience to be struck for the very first time in history by the appalling nature of sin, it must have been terrifying.

And God comes into the garden and He's looking for them and they're hiding. Can you just think with me about the absolute futility of Adam and Eve hiding from God?

Have you ever played hide and seek with your kids when they were small? And they hide in the most obvious place.

[11:35] You close your eyes and you count to ten. And then they hide behind the couch and the only part that's really hidden is what part? Their head.

The rest of it's sticking out from behind the couch and all you have to do to give them away or get them to give themselves away is say, I wonder where... And they begin doing what?

They begin giggling. And so you go... If you walk out of the room and say, I'll bet you they've left the room, the little child does what? No, no, I didn't leave the room.

You know, they've got to give it all away. Just imagine the absolute ridiculous idea of hiding from God. And here's Adam and Eve tucked away. Who knows where?

Behind a bush or something like that. And God shows up and... What's going on? And just think about what happens.

[12:33] God covers their sinful flesh with a skin. What did they try to cover it with already? Leaves.

And in that covering was the first indication of the shedding of blood for the covering for sin. And then God makes an announcement.

He says, He says, Listen, You will bruise His head and He will bruise your heel. Speaking of Christ and the plan of redemption.

I know Tom. Tom is teaching on Christ in the Old Testament and one of the very first, the proto-evangelism, it talks about the first time it appears is in that phrase. And it's interesting that when Adam and Eve had a son, their first son, do you know what they expected that first son to perhaps be?

Does anybody know? This is the guy. This is the one. This is the Messiah who's coming. That was their ambition. They were looking for the solution to their sinful heart.

[13:41] And all the way down through the Old Testament, the symbolism of sacrifice, Abraham on Mount Moriah, David when he sacrificed there to stop the plague, the temple built there, and later Christ crucified.

The plan of redemption is a plan that God revealed to us and beloved, would we have figured it out apart from Him telling us and the answer is, not at all. It's a mystery that He's given to us.

A second part of the mystery that we find particularly here in Ephesians chapter 2 is the mystery of His inclusion of Gentiles as His people. Prior to the New Testament, the way for a Gentile to become a part of the family of God was only through becoming a Jew.

And God opens up and reveals to Jew and Gentile that His plan of redemption does not have that complicated layer of Judaism and those laws, but rather it is all of grace.

And apart from grace, there is no salvation. And as we look at the passage actually in Ephesians chapter 3, look where it says there talking about this mystery of the Gentile.

[15:04] Now, it says, this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Now, in the English translation, the hammer blows of what Paul is saying are a little muted for us because what Paul does is he takes three Greek root words and he puts a little preface at the beginning of them to make it very, very clear.

In essence, what he is saying is that Gentile believers are, and he uses the word soon, which means with, he says Gentiles are heirs with. He says Gentiles are members with.

He says that Gentiles are partakers with. And he's talking about the fact that God has taken two and put them together by His grace. And because of that, there is no second-class citizenry in the body of Christ.

We are all together members of the body and the bride of Christ, equally in the eyes of God. The third part of this mystery that we find in the scriptures is that we have the privilege of a personal relationship with Christ.

[16:18] I don't know whether that overwhelms you, but, beloved, it should. The truth of the matter is that apart from Christ, we would be aliens to God, we would be enemies with God, we would have no intimate communion or relationship with God.

And I was having a great time this morning explaining the example prayer that we find in Luke, and we find it in Matthew. How does the prayer start that's an example for us? What do we say? Our Father.

Does that give you cold chills when you stop and think about what that says? Hey, if you know anything about the other religions in the world, they have no idea of a personal, intimate relationship with the Creator and God of this universe.

And we, because of Christ, have the privilege and blessing of being in personal relationship with Him. And, beloved, when we stop and think about that, that ought to quiet our uncertain and frail heart and encourage us to be profoundly thankful in the blessing we have in Christ Jesus.

Let me give you a little sidebar. I read, I just finished up a book called God's at War by Kyle Eidelman. You want to read a good book? That's a good one. Tag it. It's a good one. And as I was coming towards the end of the book, it's talking about the struggle that we have with idolizing ourself.

[17:45] How many of you realize that every day when you wake up, there's this little niggling interest of being an idol yourself? You want everybody to bow to the idolatry of you. And he said, it's actually been amped up on steroids.

Five researchers in San Diego State University have done, I think it is from 1986 to 2007, they have interviewed 16,000 college students about the problem with narcissism.

Do you know what narcissism is? Let me give you the end story of what narcissism is. How many of you remember singing, Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques, Dormez-vous? Here is the contemporary version of Frere Jacques.

I am special, I am special, yes I am, yes I am. Isn't that good? Isn't that a good song? Anyway, some of you probably sang it in school.

But this study revealed that there has been an absolute skyrocketing issue with narcissism. People who are narcissists think such things as if I were in charge the world would be a better place.

[19:01] Okay? Now when you have ten people in the room thinking the same thing, guess what you automatically have? The narcissist thinks when I'm getting my way things are good.

The narcissist is pretty full of themself. Incidentally, the narcissist has profound trouble in lasting relationships. The narcissist by the survey is far more inclined to be dishonest and cheat. cannot sustain integrity in any kind of task. Incidentally, very curiously, these researchers began asking when did narcissism begin to develop into a predominant character of American culture? Guess when it happened? Back in 1980, our culture was swept away by the self-esteem movement. and these unbelieving researchers at San Diego State University began making a correlation between the I am special, I am special, yes, I am, and the struggle with our culture with everybody becoming self-focused and nobody thinking about anybody else but themselves. Listen to me. There is no remedy to be found for that incessant battle other than in a joyful and personal relationship with the Lord of glory and that is why.

[20 : 43] I love the truth of salvation. It delivers me from the absolute tyranny of self-centered living. And as we look at this passage, Paul says, listen, it's my privilege to talk to you about the mystery that God has revealed to us.

I want you to notice something else in relationship to this mystery talking about announcing the mystery and we see that in the passage in 7 through 9 of this gospel, Paul says, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me by the working of His power. Stop just for a moment and think with me. When we find something in scripture, it is there because Paul thought it was a good idea to include. Is that the answer? Or, B, the Spirit of God put it there for our benefit and our edification.

It's there because the Spirit of God thinks it's for our benefit and edification. And so, when we read here that Paul announces this truth in relationship to himself of this gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, we understand that Paul is saying something about those who are messengers.

And put it this way, godly messengers are marked by genuine humility. Paul's declaration here of self-perception is that he's saying, listen, this is what I am and mark what he says.

[22 : 08] I am the very least of all the saints. Now, is he just being, is he just exercising false humility? Let me give you a picture of false humility so you understand what it is.

Just let's say that an exceptionally attractive woman goes into the dressing room and puts on a lovely dress and she walks out and she really does look pretty good, but what she says to her friends that are gathered around is what?

What's she say? Oh, this dress makes me look too fat. She says, this dress probably doesn't look good on me. What is she looking for? Guys, what's she looking for?

What's she looking for? In fact, she's just looking for affirmation, isn't she? She looks at herself in the mirror and she thinks, well, I'm looking pretty good. And what do you think?

I mean, she's looking for someone else to agree with her. She wants someone else to bow at her idolatry, right? And kind of agree with her value. Paul, when he says what he does in verse 8 where he says, I am less than least of all the saints, I want you to understand that he is speaking the truth about what God has helped him understand about himself.

[23 : 19] And Paul saw himself first as an appointed servant. Look at what it says there in verse 7. I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace.

And incidentally, that word minister there is the word from which we get deacon. Paul says, I am a deacon. I am a deacon according to the gift of God's grace.

And God is at work in me. He has given me this responsibility. He saw that his task and his responsibility was not a career choice but something that God had laid on him. I want you to understand also that Paul in his ministry and we see his humility by the fact that he was not an arrogant and combative person.

I want you to turn back just a little bit if you would actually turn forward to 2 Timothy. Go to 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 24 and 25. What was Paul like in ministry to other people in his circle? Chapter 2 verse 24. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 24 and 25. It says, The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but be kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.

[24 : 36] God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth. So what kind of characteristic was Paul displaying in his ministry? Did he thump and strut? Did he walk around with a cudgel letting people that disagreed with him know that there was a consequence for crossing him?

Not at all. He was marked by humility and tenderness and that was the characteristic of his heart because he saw himself as least of the saints. I want you to mark also that his life was marked by an affection for other people.

As you read your way through the pastoral epistles you see that Paul speaks about his relationship with the body of Christ being that like a nursing mother caring for those people.

and how was Paul treated by some of the people that he cared for? Does anybody have an idea? Always favorably, always appreciated, always loved, not at all. In fact, in the very last days of Paul's life most everyone who he had served and ministered to, those that he poured his life in turned away and walked from him.

And here's what Paul says. He says, do not hold it to their charge. He's praying to God and says don't hold it to their charge. I want you to recognize one other thing as you go back to that passage in Ephesians.

[25 : 53] Let's look at Ephesians chapter 3 and pick up what we find there as we continue working through it. He says here to bring to light in verse 9 to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

So we see the humility of a servant but then secondly we see that godly messengers see the gospel as being something for everyone. I appreciate the fact that Paul had no hesitation to make it very, very clear that the doctrine of election and predestination are stated in the gospel but on the other hand what was Paul's attitude towards preaching?

Was there any place that he wouldn't preach? He'd preach in a synagogue wouldn't he? And when he went into the synagogue as his ministry developed did he anticipate that everybody was going to love him and just appreciate the gospel ministry that he has?

Not at all. He appreciated the privilege he had of being the messenger of the gospel and he was not put off by the treatment that he received. Paul preached in prison.

He preached in the marketplace. He preached down by the riverside. He preached to prisoners. He preached to soldiers who were chained to Paul and everywhere he preached I think one of the things that you need to understand about Paul's preaching is that he preached with a passion and an earnestness to see people come to Christ.

[27 : 14] Turn over if you would to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and mark the spirit that he had in preaching. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 20 he says this as he describes his preaching therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you in the King James I think it says we plead with you in Christ's stead so when Paul preached the gospel to people day in and day out whether it was in prison or the synagogue what kind of affection and passion did he have for doing it?

There was earnestness in his voice and there was a desire to see people come to Christ isn't that right? Well let me ask you the question if this is a picture of the apostle Paul's heart when was the last time that you shared the gospel with someone with the kind of passion and affection that Christ shared it with?

When was the last time you shared it with the kind of passion that Paul shared it with? Let me take another step and just ask you a practical question you may not have had some opportunities in the last several weeks right?

Forcing them is not a good idea so when was the last time you prayed with that kind of passion and concern? Let me give you a couple illustrations I was here yesterday with helping with the crowd of people that were babysitting and I know that one of the little babies in our fellowship was sick and the mother went home and I happened to come out from the nursery there were plenty of helpers and I was also over in the gym working in the kitchen there with Pastor Saul and Todd and I'd come out here and I walked and I saw three or four of our mothers that were just kind of huddled together sharing sympathetically and I just I was touched by their affection together for this little child that wasn't feeling well still not doing all that well and so you know what I began praying for that and when you care about something how often do you pray?

You pray a lot praying over and over again for this little child to get better through the day texting him later how's he doing? Well about three times and then I get up this morning to have devotions in prayer and there is a little text at 1130 by the way my phone goes on quiet so that you don't I want to sleep but I fire my phone up and there's so somebody else has got their child in the hospital and what do I start doing?

[29 : 49] I start praying and I'm praying with earnestness when a child is sick how does a parent pray?

How does a parent pray? You tell me Lord if it's your will you take care of them it's up to you I don't care right? Probably shouldn't have had them I remember when Judith and I were relatively young parents I was teaching at a Christian school we didn't have any insurance and our first child for some strange reason had one bout with spiking fevers after another and I can just remember both of us sitting down on the floor next to her bed and just crying out to God that she would live when was the last time that you when you thought about some of the people that are not going to heaven were you struck by affection and burden?

It ought to be that way we come to another part as we think here of enjoying the scope and the part that we have in the mystery of God and verse 10 it says so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known I want to tell you there are some points here that earlier in the week I found myself wanting to preach on Thursday and I found myself wanting to preach them on Friday and I found myself wanting to preach them on Saturday and here it is okay let me tell you number one the body of Christ is supremely important to displaying his wisdom let me pick up on that first part again so that through the church and ponder with me just how poignant and how significant those words are when we read the

Bible we have a tendency to read the Bible in a personal sense isn't that right I read the Bible for Tim Nellie reads the Bible for Nellie and since Nellie is sitting next to Olivia and Olivia is kind of giving me that look don't use my name Olivia reads the Bible for Olivia it's just the way it is do you follow that and that's not all bad but when scripture was written here in the pastoral epistles it was written to be read to the whole body of Christ and they understood it collectively I mean I am very thankful that my finger does not think about itself apart from the body it's attached together it fits and here is the apostle penning these words and he is saying something of profound value to us he's saying so that in the church through the church many of you the church has a place to go that's not right the church is something that the believer is to belong to by

God's divine appointment and each member in the body of Christ has been called and equipped to fit together for his glory and I got to tell you that the church is a far more significant display of his wisdom than creation is think about that with me for a moment we know from the Psalms the heavens declare finish it for me the glory of God but I want to tell you that the heavens and all of creation is a relatively insignificant challenge for the wisdom of God in comparison to redemption does that make sense why is it it tells us in the scriptures that angels clapped and sung for joy as they watched God with simply a word create this universe it tells us and I want you to turn over to the passage and look at it with your own eyes it tells us in 1

[34 : 19] Peter chapter 1 verse 12 that angels when they think about us who are redeemed it says they kind of ponder this and they want to peer in and understand it 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 12 it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things which have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which the angels long to look what's that saying angels who enjoy the presence of the father who can see him in his resplendent glory who enjoy the benefit of the holiness and the glory of heaven are kind of not troubled but they're curious they want to understand what what did you do

God when you saved those people and by the way what makes angelic curiosity more significant is how were all the angels treated who decided they'd try sin number one what happened they were cursed for all eternity in hell and so the rest of them are sitting up there kind of scratching their heads saying I know you're holy I know you're wise I know you're good but what is this this blessing of salvation and beloved I want you to understand that the scriptures declare that before the foundation of the world he had ordained the plan of salvation and he had your name in mind I like that song that says he knows my name right it says that my name is engraven upon his hands well in Ephesians chapter 3 it says that it's through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is displayed so let's talk a little bit about God's wisdom

Paul is writing here about manifold he uses the word manifold to talk about something that is just everywhere you look it is just incredibly wonderful to consider I'm going to oversimplify things just for a little bit but how many of you have heard of pinhead logic or wisdom or pinhead intellect how many of you understand let me use an illustration so that I'm going to cast stones upon people like me rather than people not like me literature majors you know I mean reading the classics reading 20 pages a minute or whatever blah blah blah it's no big stretch do you follow that you want me to read a book I can do that you want me to do a math problem or figure out something engineering wise it's just my brain goes kind of numb okay and that's what I mean by pinhead wisdom or logic you know you're a specialist in a narrow sphere narrow band I see some of you smiling because you understand what I'm saying see

God's manifold wisdom does the literature and the math thing together he gets both parts in fact listen to me he understands it better than any of us put together he was the one who invented it he thought it all up and he thought it'd be entertaining for us to just get it a little bit at a time and and so as we appreciate God's wisdom let's understand the difference between wisdom and knowledge

because it helps us knowledge is the grasp or it is the it is kind of the gathering of bits of information knowledge allows us to learn the alphabet knowledge allows us to acquire some understanding of phonics I'm not going to tell all the details but yeah I will my granddaughter thought that it was appropriate that her parents give her a banana and the banana was not arriving at the adequate pace and so what she tried was a little phonics na-na you know

I mean if you're not getting it break it down to make it simple right na-na wisdom wisdom is more than knowledge wisdom allows a person who has gathered the alphabet and understood phonics to read history and figure out I don't want to do that how many of you understand the difference wisdom allows us to take the data of life and make good judgments and decisions and wisdom allows the believer to realize if I do this I please Christ if I do that I harm the testimony of Christ and I bring heartache on myself and others I want you to understand that Paul speaks of the church as being and follow this the manifold declaration of the wisdom of God he says that

[39 : 48] God intends for the church the gathering together us as a body to be something that causes others to say wow what did you do how did that happen I want you to look at one other thing and ponder with me the thought behind this Ephesians chapter 3 verse 10 it says so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places why is it that God was interested in demonstrating his manifold wisdom in the heavenly places this would be way beyond me but I think it's a good illustration let's just pretend that I would pull down a chalkboard here and it would drop down and I would begin writing some very very complicated mathematical equation a problem and then I began to work through that problem and I came out with the answer at the end most of you probably wouldn't be impressed do you know why here's the answer because probably most of you are marginally like me and math is one of those dark skill sets that should be enjoyed by other people do you follow that but if the room was full of math scholars and professors and the finest sharpest mathematicians in the world and they saw me pull down the chalkboard and then they saw me begin to lay out this just incredibly complex equation and then they saw me answer it they'd say wow that was good see the angels can appreciate the glory of

God's wisdom because they are not as handicapped by their sinfulness as we are and they look at the marvel of what God has done in salvation of taking people like me and taking people like you and drawing us out of the bankruptcy of our heart and making us part of the family of God and then appointing us to be ambassadors for the king and they're sitting up there saying wow got that if the church is so important to Christ and the church declares the manifold wisdom of God what has happened to our contemporary culture church that the church has been marginalized in the lives of so many people today church is somewhere

I go if it doesn't interfere with sports or with my personal self preferences or my vacations my luxuries if the church is so important to Christ the thing that would lead us to diminish its significance is that we have been snared by an idolatry that replaces the glory of God with our own and leads us to profound dissatisfaction and spiritual emptiness and I would plead with you beloved this morning this passage opens up and helps us see that being part of the church is a supremely wonderful blessing that angels kind of look at and say wow and you ought to think that way too let's close in prayer beloved father as we consider the glory of the cross and the plan of salvation that you have revealed to us through the

Lord Jesus Christ we find our joy and our satisfaction today as believers in saying you are our savior and our Lord and our lives belong to you and we do not want to fall into the snare of idolatry that would rob us of being part of the glory and for those who are here today that do not know Christ father it is my plea it is my prayer that your spirit would draw them to the cross this morning that they with humility would be willing to say I stand justly condemned before a holy God and there is no hope for me apart from what Jesus did on the cross of paying my debt and I will gladly humble myself and cast myself upon the mercy of Christ and ask him to save me we pray that in your name amen to him him to to