

OGTC Graduation Messages

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Date: 26 May 2013

[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. I'd like to look at two verses in 2 Timothy chapter number 3.

I'm grateful to be associated with these two men. I'd like their families to know, I think, the world of them. I have a great honor and respect for them. And I would believe, as that song would say, that Jesus is their life.

And because Jesus is living through them, they're good husbands, they were good students, and they'll be great missionaries someday. 2 Timothy 3 and verse number 10.

Before we get to that verse, it talks about a group of men who were charlatans. They were people that had a form of godliness, but they weren't. They were people that appeared religious, but they were men that did not really love God.

But then he gets to Paul speaking to Timothy in verse number 10. But it says, But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecution, and afflictions which came unto me at Antioch and at Iconium, at Lystraum.

[1 : 02] What persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me. I have the opportunity just to take a couple minutes and challenge the church. We know about Timothy here that he first learned of the faith from his family.

And this will be true of these two men here. And their family has taken them to church. And we have had the opportunity to partner with churches that raised them and children's church and the youth ministers that they were in.

And when they came here, they were people that loved the Lord. Bo, if you'll help me, we have a picture. Kyle mentioned in 2005 he was at Faith Factor. And I didn't have a chance to circle it, but as Kyle was about 14 years old, and he was in the top of the second row.

Ben was there, but he didn't make it to the picture. Sure, Kyle was already taller than me probably when he was born, but I remember that about him there. But we've had the opportunity to know these men for some time, and it's just an honor to get to watch them grow in the Lord.

And so at the training center, you can take that down, Bo. Nobody can see it anyway. All right, and so here at the training center, they've had the opportunity to learn doctrine, as it's said. They know purpose. Here in a second we will sing Our Heart, Our Desire.

[2 : 07] And as a church we sing that, and our hearts beat with their heart as the same with Jesus. They've learned about longsuffering as we've served together, getting the opportunity to serve with Ben and his wife in ministry, and also Kyle here working with teenagers.

Then over at Trinity Hill through ministry, they've learned longsuffering. Some of you teenagers have helped Kyle learn longsuffering, and we appreciate your ministry in training missionaries and patients.

And then Afflictions, the missionary friends, the wonderful team that we have, have helped teach them about enduring hardness as a good soldier, and also about persecution. But I want to look at it.

It says here that a manner of life. And I want to thank the church and say, the church, we ought to celebrate tonight this fact that people work hard at making sure the doctrine and training center is taught, that it's pure and it's according to God's word.

But you decide what the manner of life is that they're going to see. You get to decide what kind of fervor they get to see in the ministry. You get them to see how a church should interact with one another. And first of all, I'd just like to say thank you.

[3 : 07] They get to see it as you sing with your big smiles on your faces, the attention given to discipleship, the hours that you put in through a minister or an event coming up. And they've learned something about the manner of life of Vision Baptist Church.

And as they will leave and head to Peru and China, they will continue to learn about what a church should look like as they look back here, because we're a training center in the middle of a church. And we can encourage them.

The things that you do in the ministry and the projects and the events we have throughout the summer, not only is it a blessing to our community, but it helps these two men remember what the manner of life is of people that love the Lord.

And when Jesus is our life, it looks like something. And so, church, I challenge you. As they've learned doctrine from us, let them also continue to learn about our manner of life. Thank you, Bibles.

If you would, I'm not going to preach. I'm just going to give these guys five things that I want to see, steps that they would take today as they launch out. I know they're already doing it. But Philippians 3, 13 and 14, the Bible says, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth into those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[4 : 22] Somebody grabbed a hold of us in Philippians chapter 3, verses 12 and 13, and he grabbed us and he saved us. We were grabbing a hold of him.

Somebody grabbed a hold of us and we're grabbing a hold of him. We're allowed to be in his ministry. And we never arrive. We never arrive. We'll arrive when we see Jesus.

And we'll learn. So here's five things I'd just like to say to you guys real quickly, and I wouldn't even give you the Bible verses. Number one, get into the Bible and get it into you.

I cannot emphasize enough to you how I hope you've read your Bible. Man, I hope by now you're at 20 times at least. I hope you're on a schedule to read it two or three times a year. I hope you're memorizing it.

I hope you're putting it in your heart. I hope you're letting it affect your thinking. I hope you're in the Bible more than you are all other books put together. I hope you get the Bible into you. Number two, I challenge you to work harder than everybody else, trusting God to use your efforts.

[5 : 24] 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, Paul said he knew it was everything by the grace of God. He said, I did work harder than everybody. Some people use grace as a license to be lazy.

We use grace as a promise of God doing something. Number three, be harder on yourself than you are on anyone else. Be harder on yourself than you are on anyone else.

It costs to be a leader. Take up your cross. Put your hand to the plow. Be the example. Pray while others play. Stay accountable.

Get into a mentor relationship and keep the doors always open. Remember, you leave here to be a learner and a servant, not a leader and a know-it-all. Number four, great expectations for you.

I loved that book when I was a kid. It's a book. In case you had never read it, it's a classic. Most of us never even heard of it. But anyway, I love that book. Great expectations.

[6 : 29] So here's some things that you should have. Expect God to do great things with you. I wouldn't step out of here if I didn't know God's going to use me. Not because I'm anything.

Just because I serve a real big God. And the Bible says, without faith it's impossible to please Him. So I'd step out knowing He's going to do something. Number two, I would step out with great expectations of being hurt.

Because you're going to get hurt. 2 Corinthians 12, 15 said, I will very gladly spend and be spent for you. Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I'll be loved.

You might as well understand you're going to get hurt. You're going to get hurt by the people you serve. I can still remember my first dorm vesper, they called it, devotional.

And a guy named Eddie talked at night. Eddie something or other. I don't remember his name. Big old guy. And he had a beard. And looked ugly. And I was scared to death. Brand new in this thing. And he talked about how when you stick your hand out and it gets a bit, eventually you don't want to stick your hand out.

[7 : 29] But a real servant of God keeps sticking his hand out and letting them bite it. Expect God to do big things. Expect to be hurt. Expect to be criticized.

Expect to suffer. Expect to be disappointed. That's part of life. Just get used to it. Don't whine about it. Too many preachers whine too much. Number five, my last one. Dream big dreams.

Do things that constantly cause you to step out of your comfort zone. I was in Morocco and Spain and England in the last two weeks.

And I thought as I was there, I laid in the bed at night and I thought to myself, you know, you ain't done anything yet. You need to step out and take some chances and risk. It's easy to settle down and get old and start forgetting to step out and risk your life.

Step out of your comfort zone. Don't be satisfied. If you don't need God to do it, then you ain't dreaming big enough. If people don't think you're crazy and dreaming the impossible dream, then you aren't dreaming big enough.

[8 : 39] Set goals to make your dream happen. Don't quit. Stay at it until God makes it happen. Dream about things that will please God and fulfill his command.

Dream about a world that needs Jesus and where you might fit into getting the gospel to the world. And as much as it's said that you're going to Peru and China, that's a very small dream.

There's a world. We're never satisfied with one place. We're never satisfied with saying I'll do my part. I will bloom where I was planted. I'll do my little job. I want his name glorified.

And I hope that's your goal. I hope that's your heart. Father, I want to ask you to bless these two men. I thank you for them. Lord, I love them and I believe in them and I'm excited for them.

And I dream about the days that you'll do great things and I know you will. I pray, God, you give Ben the language. I pray, God, that you'd help Ben to be able to express deep biblical truths in Chinese so that people would come to know you.

[9 : 46] I pray, God, that you'd help him see churches started. But more than that, God, you'd help him train leaders. And that men would go out of his ministry to carry the gospel around the world. God, I pray for all of China.

God, I pray for a billion, 300 million of them that need to hear about you. God, I pray that the day would come that Chinese missionaries will be leaving China to go to other places that might seem crazy to anybody else to ever dream.

But I pray you'd do it. God, I pray you'd use Ben in a great way. I pray you'd be with Crystal. I pray you'd just bless him big ways there. God, I pray for Kyle. Lord, I know he has the language fairly well.

I pray you'd help him to learn it real well. I pray, God, that you'd help him to learn the culture. I pray, God, that you'd help him to preach great truths to those Peruvian guys. And I pray, God, that you'd help him in a ministry right now that desperately needs help, desperately needs people behind it, desperately needs people believing in it.

And I pray, dear God, that you'd help him. I pray, God, that you'd give him strength. And, God, I pray you'd give him wisdom. And I pray, God, that you'd come down in great and powerful ways over him. I thank you for Hannah.

[10 : 53] Thank you for her sweet spirit and her desire to serve you. And I just pray, God, that you'd work in their lives. God, I pray for Peru. And I pray for all of South America. It's almost being forgotten by most mission work now because it's more exciting to think of other countries.

But I pray, God, for South America. I pray for all those thousands of people where you seem to be, millions of people where you seem to be reaping a harvest for your glory. And I pray you'd use Kyle and Hannah.

God, I pray you'd bring great honor and glory. And, God, I pray for some young people in this room that ought to be servants and ought to be students and ought to be servants and ought to be servants and ought to be servants and are not. And I pray, God, you'd convict them and get them into place.

I pray, God, you'd send us guys that help us start churches here in America. I pray, God, you'd send us guys to help us rescue some churches. I pray, God, you'd help us send us guys that reach all these other countries.

And I pray, God, that you'd touch our church's heart, that we would really love these young people. That our people would really give sacrificially, pray, and work.

[11 : 54] God, I pray you'd forgive me for getting lazy, for not as burdened for your world. In your name, God, I don't want to back up.

I don't want to sit down and I don't want to get lazy. I want you to use us. God, use vision for your honor and glory. God, magnify yourself through us.

God, let this little church be a shining beacon to carrying the gospel around the world. And I give you praise for it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Turn your Bibles, please, to Ephesians chapter 3.

I will now attempt to say in long form what Pastor Gardner has just put so succinctly and well.

I'm afraid I can't put it quite that well, guys. So I'm going to try to say it in a little bit longer way. We're going to read Ephesians 3 and verses 1 through 13 in a minute.

[12 : 58] You know, many of Paul's books, many of Paul's letters, they start in the mountain. They start in the mountains and the end of the valleys.

What I mean by that is most of Paul's books at the beginning, he's talking about these really deep, important, vast, cosmic theological realities.

He's talking about who we are in Christ. He's talking about what God has done for us. He's talking about the purpose of God from all eternity. But then you get to the end of the letter and what's he talking about? He's talking about anger.

He's talking about bickering in the church. He's talking about respecting your parents. He's talking about husbands and wives and their relationships. So he starts off with these really heady, big theological concepts.

Then he comes down in the valleys and he's talking about life in the everyday. And what chapter 3 is, it's kind of stuck in between these things. So chapter 3 here is kind of like this mountain road that's coming down from these big theological concepts in chapter 1 and chapter 2.

[13 : 59] And he's coming down to talk about all that practical stuff in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Now, when you're on a mountain road, you should really kind of go slow, right? Well, that's what my wife tells me anyway.

I've never paid any attention to that. But we don't have time for that tonight anyway. So we're going to try to come down this mountain fast. And it might be really thrilling. And we might just plummet and crash too.

So hopefully we'll get something out of our glance here at chapters 3, verses 1 through 13. Let's read it together. Let's read it together.

That the Gentiles 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 according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[15 : 26] And to make all men see what is the fellowship 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 and heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that you faint not.

And my tribulation is for you, which is your glory. Now as I said, Paul in chapter 2 has been talking about the status that the Gentiles or the non-Jewish people, in other words us, that we have attained to in Christ.

That in Christ, we who are alienated from God have now been brought into Christ. Look at chapter 2 verse 19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers, foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

So he says, you guys were out. You weren't in. You didn't know God. You were separated from God. You were without hope. You were without God. You were children of the devil. And now you have been brought in and you have been made to sit in heavenly places with Christ.

[16 : 39] You are fellow citizens of the household of God. And now he says in chapter 3 verse 1, for this cause. Because this has happened. Because we have this opportunity.

I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. And then Paul stops. Now there's something kind of tricky here in chapter 3. Now if you remember grammar class. I don't know how many of you guys remember grammar class back in school.

You know, a sentence is supposed to have what? A subject, a verb, and a complete thought. Right? The problem is this verse 1 here only has one of three. It has a subject.

It says, I, Paul. And it didn't say anything. Go on. If you look all the way down to the period down there in verse 7. All the way here you won't find a verb that matches up with I, Paul. Or a complete thought. But if you look at verse 14, what do you see again?

For this cause I. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So what's happened here is Paul starts to say something in verse 1. And he says, now hold on a second.

[17 : 34] I've got to tell you something. And then in verse 14 he picks up his thought. Now why does he say that? Now look what Paul says in verse 1. I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.

Now as soon as Paul says this, he realizes he might be misunderstood. They might not understand what he's talking about. So he says, okay, hold on a second. I can explain to you what I mean by that. Now if you look at verse 2, the first word is if.

We're going to talk about that in a second. Now Paul, what he wants to talk about is this phrase, for you Gentiles. Now the reason Paul has to take verses 2 through 13 to explain this. Is that it seems like Paul is a little too excited about Gentiles.

Don't forget Paul is not a Gentile. But think about what Paul's life looks like to the outsiders. Okay, here's Paul, this crazy little Jewish guy. Running around to all these different cities.

Preaching the gospel to Gentiles, to us. And what happens to him? Well he's beaten. He's stoned. He's flogged. He's thrown into prison. He's arrested. All sorts of terrible things happen.

[18 : 35] But the guy keeps on going. He keeps doing it. And he's, now from the outside looking in, he would say, now Paul, you're a Jewish person. These aren't your people. You're not a Gentile. You're not from around here.

So why is it that you care so much about these people? That you won't stop preaching to them, even though they're throwing rocks at your head. And he doesn't stop. And so Paul has to say, he says, I am the prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles.

And then he has to stop and say, let me explain to you what I mean by that. For you Gentiles. And what we're going to see in verses 2 to 13, Paul explains why it is that he cares so very deeply about Gentiles.

Now, let me tell missionaries. Something you've got to get used to. The fact that Kyle cares about Peruvians will never make much sense to most people.

It doesn't make a whole lot of sense. He doesn't know enough Peruvians to care that much. Right? He doesn't even know that many Peruvians. And Ben, he spent some time in China, but he doesn't speak enough Chinese to really care about that many Chinese people. So it's kind of weird.

[19 : 41] It's kind of strange. Why do you care so much about these people? Let me tell you, this church is a weird church. Because it cares about the nations. We just sang that song, Our Heart, Our Desire.

And it talks about us taking the gospel to the peoples of this world. Now, maybe if you're new here, it's still a little weird to you. Maybe you're kind of, our heart, our desire. I don't get it. They seem to be really excited about it here, but you're not excited yet.

You don't see what it is that makes some people so excited about taking the gospel to the Gentiles. And let me tell you, when you get there, it'll make even less sense.

Because when you get there and you meet some Peruvians, you meet some Chinese people, like Pastor Gardner just said, they're going to hurt you. They're going to hurt your feelings. They're going to make you feel terrible. And they're going to do some terrible things to you. And when that happens, it's going to be even stranger that you still care.

That it still matters to you. So you say, Paul, why is it that you care so much? I'm going to show you three reasons here in this text why Paul seems to care so much.

[20 : 44] Number one, because he knew the glory God had purposed to them, the Gentiles. He knew the glory that God had purposed to them.

Now, in verse two, he says, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you word. Now, Paul, there, verse two, the first word he says, if. Now, why does he say this word, if?

This word, if, functions kind of like this. If I said, if I was talking to you and I hadn't seen you for a while, and I said, you know, I'm the father of Galilee. If you've heard that we adopted. I don't know if you know we adopted.

But if you've heard that we adopted, I'm the father of Galilee. Now, what does that if mean? Does that mean if you haven't heard that I haven't adopted Galilee? No, it doesn't mean that. What it means is, if you don't know that I've adopted Galilee, that what I just said, when I said I'm the father of Galilee, will make any sense to you.

Right? Okay? So, Paul just said, I am the prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles, if you've heard. If you've heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you word.

[21 : 48] Now, here's what Paul says. It won't make any sense when I tell you that I'm the prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles, unless you understand that God gave me grace for your sakes. He gave me grace for you.

Grace, he says in verse 2, to you word, the Gentiles. Now, what is this grace? Look at verse 3. How that, what is this grace? How that by revelation, he made known unto me the mystery.

He made known unto me the mystery. Now, Paul says, there's this mystery, and God told me the mystery. He revealed it to me. Now, it's, I, and this word mystery appears a lot in the New Testament, and it can be very confusing for some people.

Because normally, we say mystery, what do we mean? Something that is mysterious. Something that we don't understand, right? You know, a mystery story is a story about something you can't figure out. But when Paul says mystery, he means something quite different.

Paul, when Paul says mystery, he means this is something that was hidden in the past. But now, it has been revealed. In the past, God's people did not know this.

[22 : 54] But now, God's people do know about it. As he says in verse 5. He says, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men. As it is now revealed unto his holy apostles, that's Paul, and prophets by the Spirit.

Now, this, what Paul's talking about, this mystery, is something that was hidden in the past in plain sight. It was hidden in the past in plain sight. This past week, I was with Steph's family.

That's hard to say. Steph's family. We were on a little vacation in Arizona. And we were in Arizona. And we went on this little tour of this cave thing. And this cave is one of those things that's got all these rocks that are shaped like different things.

And you're supposed to be able to see what they look like. I can never do that. The guy's saying, you see that? It looks like an old woman. I'm like, it looks like a rock. I don't understand. See the candle. Oh, you see the candle. No, I don't see the candle.

And fortunately, we had a Navajo tour guide, which I've waited my whole life to say. I've had a Navajo tour guide. But my Navajo guide, he took a camera. He took our camera. And he said, do you see the bear?

[24 : 01] Do you see the bear? And I said, I don't see anything, man. He said, give me your camera. He took a camera. And he took a picture. He took a picture. And then he showed me on the little preview screen there. And he showed, you see, here's the bear. And he outlined it.

And you know what? I saw it. And you know, as soon as I saw it, the funniest thing, I couldn't unsee it. I looked up. It was a bear. Clear as day. It was a bear.

And I couldn't understand how I couldn't have seen it before. It was so clear. And that is exactly what Paul is talking about in this mystery. There are some things after Christ has come that are so clear to us as Christians, right?

When we look at the Old Testament, there's some things. And they're so clear. We wonder how people could not have understood that Jesus was the Messiah. How they could have taken their Savior and nailed him to a tree. We don't understand how they couldn't have seen that.

But it's because we stand on this side of the cross. It was a mystery that has now been revealed. If you ever reread a mystery story, for those of you who have never heard of Great Expectations, less literary.

[24 : 59] If you've ever rewatched a movie that was supposed to be a suspense thriller kind of thing. You know, the second time you read it or the second time you watch it, it's different, right? Because the first time, all the clues are hidden.

But the second time you watch it, it's all laid bare before you. And you see it all. You see it clearly. You can't unsee it. And so Paul says, this mystery was made known to me. Now he said, okay, what is this mystery?

Look at verse 6. That, this is the mystery. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Now here's what Paul says. You know what the mystery is? The mystery is that God didn't just want to save a little tiny group of people. That God wanted to save people from China. That he wanted to save people from Peru.

That he wanted to save people from Georgia. That he wanted to save people from Morocco. That he wanted to save people from all those places that we just watched in that little movie. He wanted to save all those people from all those different places.

[25 : 56] And he said, people didn't know about that back then. Oh, there were clues. It was there. But they didn't see. But now we have the key and we see what it is that Christ wants to do.

See what he says in verse 6? What is the key? You say, what's this key that lets us see? By, last three words. By the gospel. You know what that means? Christ was revealed.

And when he was hanging on that cross. And when he came down on the cross and he sent us in all the world to preach the gospel to all creatures. All of a sudden it made a lot more sense. All of a sudden we understood. Let me tell you guys. This is what, this is the first reason.

This is the first reason why Paul cares so much about the Gentiles. You say, Paul, you're a Jew. You're not from around here. Kyle, you're not from Peru. Ben, you're not from China. Why do you care about those people?

First reason. Because you know what it is that God wants to do with those people. You know the heights, the glorious heights that God wants to exalt those people to.

[26 : 52] Let me tell you. Ben, you know more. You know more about what a Chinese person should be than what a Chinese person does. You know more about what the ideal Peruvian.

Now you don't understand everything about Peruvian culture. But you know why a Peruvian was made. You know what God made him for. Look at verse 13, the last three words.

Paul says, I desire you faint out of my tribulations for you. Which is your glory? Peruvians. There's some Peruvians that were destined for glory.

There's some Chinese people that were destined for glory. And you know what? You know. And the first reason that we care so much. The first reason that we care so much about this world.

About the nations. Why it's our heart and our desire. Is because we know what God wants to do with them. We know what God wants to do. Sure, some of those countries don't look like much.

[27 : 52] Burkina Faso doesn't look like much. China sometimes doesn't look like much. But we know what it is that God wants to do there. Second. Because he knew.

Why did Paul care so much? First, because he knew the glory God had purposed to them. Second. Because he knew the mission God had given to him. Paul. Because he knew the mission that God had given to him.

Now this revelation. Okay. This mystery. God didn't just come and whisper this mystery. In Paul's ear. Just so that Paul could laugh to himself. And giggle to himself. I'm so smart. I know the mystery that no one else knows.

I figured it out. No. God gave it to him. Why? Look at verse 7. Whereof. This gospel. I was made a minister. According to the gift of the grace of God.

Given unto me. By the effectual working of his power. Unto me. Who am less than the least of all saints. Is this grace given. That I should preach. Among the Gentiles.

[28 : 49] The unsearchable riches of Christ. Why did God give him this grace? Okay. Why did God give you this grace? Why do you know the mystery of the gospel?

Why do you know the mystery of the gospel? And not those Chinese people? Why do you know the mystery of the gospel? And not those Peruvian people? The reason is simple. God has chosen you to go and preach the gospel to them.

This is really important to clarify. There's a fight in missions today. And this church is a church that loves missions. And thinks about missions. And prays for missions. And so I want you to know. There's a fight going on for missions today.

And here's the reason for the fight. You know here in the states. We have a pretty good idea. We have a pretty good separation. We call some people pastors. And we call some things churches. And then we call some things charity organizations.

And people who do good deeds. But there's a certain separation there. Where we say these people are in charge of preaching the gospel. These are the people that preach the gospel to our souls.

[29 : 50] And then these are the people that help us out with our bodily ailments. There's a pretty good separation here. But when you say the word missionary. It's not so clear. When you say to someone.

I'm a missionary to Peru. They might just ask you. What kind of missionary are you? Are you this kind? Or are you that kind? Are you the kind that preaches the gospel to people's souls? Or are you the guy that does these other very good and noble and worthy things?

And we are here tonight because you're that kind. We're here tonight because you're the preaching kind. And you know look what Paul says about this when he's preaching. And you say I don't like that. I think we ought to do some good things.

I think we ought to help people out. We're helping them out. Look what he says in verse 8. That I should preach among the Gentiles.

What? The unsearchable riches of Christ. Can I tell you that is the true prosperity gospel. You know the problem with the prosperity gospel that is preached in so many churches in America and around the world today?

[30 : 53] Is that it is neither gospel nor is it true prosperity. But in Christ when we preach we are offering to them the greatest riches. The greatest treasure that has ever been known to man.

That is that man could be connected to the God of heaven. That he could know God personally. And that's what Paul says preaching ought to be. Look at verse 9. And to make all men see.

Guys I know these two men here. I know them fairly well. And I know they're both men who love preaching. And I don't think we need to worry too much about whether or not they're going to preach when they get to Peru. And when they get to China. If they learn the language.

But when they are preaching. What should you preach? What is preaching supposed to be like? And I hope you're a preacher too. Here in this place where you're at. I hope that you are a preacher.

What is it that we are preaching? We are trying to make men see. See what? The fellowship of the mystery. That word fellowship means something like partnership or being linked up.

[31 : 52] So he says. Paul says. I want you to see. What it means to be linked up to Christ. I want you to see what it means to be the beneficiary of all these riches of Christ. And Paul says all throughout Ephesians.

He says. You have no idea the power and the greatness and the goodness and the love of God toward you. Look what he says in chapter 2 and verse 19. We already read this. Look at verse.

I'm sorry. Verse 4. But God. Chapter 2 verse 4. But God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us.

Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace you are saved. And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Guys I hope that you are convinced that the greatest thing that you could do in Peru. Or the greatest thing that you could do in China would be to preach the gospel to them. To offer them the great riches that are in Christ.

[32 : 48] You know what I hope this church is? I hope this church. I hope that you in your life. That you look like a rich person. That you look like a person that has just been blessed beyond all measure. That you have been enriched beyond belief.

And that shows in your joy. If you don't have any joy in knowing Christ. Then people aren't going to believe that you found any treasure. When you find treasure you get happy. When you win the lottery you get happy.

And if you have received the unsearchable riches that are found in Christ. There ought to be some joy. Let me tell you guys. Sure go and make men see their sin. Make men see their sin.

But more than anything. Make men see the riches of knowing Christ. Elevate Christ. Show Christ. Demonstrate his greatness. And show your satisfaction and your joy in him.

For when you do that it will have greater attraction than any of man's wisdom can contrive. Verse 8 says. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given.

[33 : 48] You know it is a great privilege to preach the gospel. That's what Pastor Gardner just said. We don't deserve this. We don't deserve it. Never fool yourself into thinking that you're doing anybody a favor by being in the ministry.

God has blessed you and he's blessed me beyond anything that we deserve. Even Paul, great missionary that he was, said, I'm the least. I'm the least worthy of such a mission.

But God gave him grace. Guys, we are here tonight because we believe in your mission. We believe that you have been given the task to preach the gospel to many people.

And Paul, this is why Paul cared. You say, Paul, why do you care about the Gentiles, man? You're not a Gentile. You're from another country. You don't belong to these people. These people don't belong to you.

They're not yours. Why do you care so much? And Paul says, you've got to understand. I'm sent here on a mission to preach. I'm sent here. I've got unsearchable riches in here.

[34 : 51] And I'm here to give them out. They can take away all your bags at the airport. They can take everything away from you. But in here, you've got unsearchable riches to be given out. And so, Paul, you say, Paul, why do you care?

He says, because I've got a mission. And if tonight you don't care, let's be honest tonight. If tonight you don't feel anything about the nations, about the Gentiles, if you don't feel anything about bringing the gospel to the world, the problem is you have not realized the unsearchable riches that you're lugging around every day.

Number three, and last. First, Paul knew the glory that God had purposed to them. Second, he knew the mission God had given to him. And third, he knew the wisdom God had displayed to demons.

That's right, demons. He knew the wisdom God had displayed to demons. Now, you say, what exactly is God's end game?

What is he at with all this mystery stuff? Okay, so thousands of years before Christ, he doesn't want anybody to know. Okay, he's hitting it. He's not telling anybody. The Gentiles are going to be in. And now he wants everybody to know.

[36 : 01] Well, make up your mind, God. Which one is it? Do you want it to be a mystery or do you want everybody to know about it? What exactly is it that God is trying to do? And Paul tries to tell us in verse number 10.

He says in verse 9, to make all men see. What is the fellowship of the mystery? And then verse 10. To the intent. In other words, so that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

That is a mouthful. Let's try to explain it here. Let's look at that last part first. He says he is doing all this that he might make his wisdom manifold. In other words, that he might display his wisdom.

Now here's what God wants to do. God wants to prove that he is wise. And not only that he's wise, that he is manifoldly wise. That he is supremely wise. That his wisdom is most excellent.

He wants to prove that he's done everything in the best way possible. That's what God's out to prove. So God's trying to display, he's trying to show the, we're going to see in a second these demons, what he is up to.

[37 : 10] He's trying to show them his plan. Now, you have to understand, for thousands of years before Christ, think about the world. Think back over those Old Testament stories.

You know what it looked like? It looked like God's plan had just crashed and burned. God creates the world. He puts two men, puts two people, not two men, man and woman. Puts them in Eden.

Okay, that was good, right? So he puts them in this garden. And it looks like this is God's beautiful plan that he's going to dwell with these people forever. And then they go and eat the fruit. And it looks like God's plan has been smashed to a million pieces.

And how dumb must that have looked? God, didn't you think about that? Didn't you think that maybe if you put that tree in the garden that maybe one day they'd go and they'd eat it and it would destroy your plan?

And then man goes out and they multiply and it becomes so evil God destroys him in the flood. Now, what do you think is going through the enemy's mind all this time? They are mocking God. They are laughing at God.

[38 : 11] They are calling him a fool. And then, what does God do? He takes the enemy completely by surprise. Now, the enemy is fighting hard.

The enemy is doing everything in its power. If you read the Old Testament, man, the evil forces, the enemy, what he calls here, he calls it in verse 10, he says, principalities and powers in heavenly places.

You say, how do you know that's demons? You look at chapter 6, verse 12. He says, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but we wrestle against those guys. They are our enemy. They are evil powers in angelic places.

And Paul says God is out to prove to them that he is wise. And they are fighting as hard as they can. But suddenly, God's plan takes them by surprise.

Even though they're fighting as hard as they can, Jesus Christ comes. And on the cross, where it looks like God's greatest foolishness, his own son nailed to a tree.

[39 : 08] It looks like the greatest foolishness. In that moment, God's triumph is complete. And a knockout blow comes from nowhere. Now, here's the thing. Why was it a mystery?

Why did God wait so long to show? You know what God wanted? He wanted the enemy to fight as hard as they could. Now, imagine if I said, now Trent always laughs at me whenever I do a basketball illustration because he knows how terrible I am at basketball.

But here we go anyway. Imagine I'm telling you how great I am at basketball. I'm such an amazing basketball player. And I'm telling Robert all about this. And I say, now Robert. And Robert says, well, I'd like to see you play. I'll play against you. And I say, okay, cool.

But here's the thing. I need you to, when we play, you've got to tie your legs together. Just tie your legs together and I'll play against you. And I'm sure, I mean, you'll see how good I am, man. I will, what do you say?

I will game you. I'll beat you really bad. I don't know if that's a thing. And so I'm going to destroy you. What would Robert say? Well, it's no fair. I mean, I got my legs tied together.

[40 : 02] I'm not playing at full strength. And you know what you see in the Bible is that if I really want to show my skills, my abilities, I need to play against Robert or anybody else at full strength.

And here's what God says. I want to show you. I want to show you who I am. I want you to understand who you're dealing with. I want to show you my glory. I want to show you my wisdom.

I want to show you my power. And so enemy, come at me full strength. Come at me as hard as you can. Fight at me with all of your evil.

And then suddenly God's wisdom is made manifest. And it is shown clearly. And he says there in verse 10, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Christ on the cross destroyed the enemy and won the full victory. But notice in this verse that he does not say to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the cross the manifold wisdom of God.

[41 : 09] He doesn't say that. He says that it might be known by the church. Now why is that? Because the church is the visible evidence on this earth that Christ's victory is complete.

Like I said, the whole world is kind of in this chaos, this rebellion against God, at war with God and at war with each other. And then all of a sudden you have the church.

And what is the church? Well, in chapter 2 he talks about the church is this strange place where Chinese people, Peruvian people, American people, Moroccan people, we come together to worship God.

At peace with each other and at peace with God. And you know what the enemy? The enemy is shocked. And the enemy is amazed. And the enemy fears.

Because when he sees the church, what does he know? His time is short. God has already established a foothold on this earth. And he will continue to protect the church and to grow the church and to bless the church until the day when his rule goes over all this earth.

[42 : 17] The Bible says that we do not yet see all things placed under his feet. But we are the church and we have already been placed under his feet. We are already under his control. We are already under his reign. And we await the day that his reign is complete.

And so the enemy, the principalities and powers in heavenly places, when they look at the church, when they look at what's happening in this room tonight, they are amazed.

Because they know this is the foothold. This is the place where the gates of hell shall not prevail. You know, in Iraq and Baghdad, there is a little section of town there that is called the Green Zone.

And that Green Zone used to be the place where the Republic Palace was there. It was where Saddam Hussein, one of his palaces, was there. A lot of government buildings were there. And it was this stronghold. And when the coalition forces came in, some of the strongest fighting, the worst fighting was right there as they tried to get in there and take that place.

But once they took the Green Zone, it became the safest place in Baghdad. And it still is. It's the safest place in Baghdad. They call everything else the Red Zone. That's where you're likely to step on something that's going to blow you to some of the rings.

[43 : 27] But when you're in the Green Zone, you're relatively safe. You know what? The enemy still attacks the Green Zone. They still attack that Green Zone. There was a time in 2008 where it was almost daily for several months.

They were attacking that Green Zone. But you know what? That Green Zone is still there. Surrounded by concrete walls and barbed wire. And it is a foothold. It's a foothold. And it is a, well, it should have been a sign of things to come.

The church is even a greater Green Zone. Because it really is the sign of things to come. This is the place where Christ has already established His rule. In our community, among us, between us as brothers and sisters in Christ, God has already established His rule.

And when the enemy looks at this place, he knows what's coming. He knows it's just a matter of time before it's his head under his foot. He knows it's just a matter of time.

This world still looks broken. It still looks alienated. But the gates of hell shall not prevail against this place. And so, guys, I would encourage you to desire with Paul, as he says in verse 21, Unto Him be glory in the church.

[44 : 36] Do you love God's glory? Do you want to see Him glory? We just sang a song. What I want is to see you glorified. If you want to see Him glorified, stick with the church.

Because the church is the only Green Zone in this whole world. It's the only place where the enemy cannot step his foot. It is the only place in this world where we see the enemy put to shame. He will be glorified as we are committed to the church.

So, three reasons why Paul cares so much. He cares so much because he knows that the wisdom of God is displayed to the evil powers of this world through what's happening in this place.

And so Paul says, man, I love those Gentiles. I love those Peruvians. I love those Chinese people. I love those Moroccan people. Why is it? Man, because I know that when the evil, the enemy, looks at those places and sees what God is allowing me to do in those places, they are put to shame.

And God is shown to be the great and wonderful and wise and powerful and great God that He is. He did it because he knew the glory that God had purposed to them and he knew the mission that God had given to them.

[45 : 41] And that is what Paul means when he says, Verse 1, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you. Guys, you're going to go out from here tonight and we are sending you to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

For those Peruvian people, for those Chinese people, we are sending you to be a prisoner. Verse 13, he says, I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Now, Paul says, you know what? I suffer. I'm a prisoner. I've lost my freedom. I suffer all kinds of things. But he says, Hey, don't get bent out of shape about that. Don't lose heart.

Don't get discouraged. Why? It's for you. It's for you. I'm doing this for you. This is what God, this is the method that God is using to save some Peruvians.

It's the method that God is going to use to save some Chinese people. Guys, do all you can to protect your family. Be good husbands and be good fathers. Love them and do all you can to protect them.

[46 : 46] Don't make them suffer because of you. But suffering will come. And don't lose heart. Don't lose heart. It is a show of your joy in Christ and of your great love for the people that God loves so much that he sent you to them in the same way that he sent his son to them.

Let's pray together. Lord, I know that probably everyone in this room tonight, all of your children, we know these truths.

We know these truths. And yet, for some of us, that care, that care, that concern, that love, it is not there.

That as we look at the Gentiles, the nations of this world, that our hearts are not moved as they ought to be moved. And that is quite simply because though we claim to believe these truths, they are not real to us.

That we do not value the riches that are to be found in your son. That we do not see the mission that you have sent us on. We do not see what great things that you want to do among the nations.

[47 : 55] And we have not seen the plan that you have for triumphing over evil in this age. God, I pray that you bless these two preachers. And as they go out to suffer, they go out to be prisoners.

I ask that you would protect them, strengthen them, that they may not lose heart. But rejoice knowing that their sufferings are for the sake of people that you love and have destined for greatness.

Lord, please make these truths real to our hearts. In Jesus' name I ask. Amen. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia.

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Thanks.