

God is... Wise

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[0:00] Do sit and turn to Ephesians chapter 3. This term we're going through really what is God. God is infinite. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable.

! God is. And it would just be kind of recapitulating. Lots of that.

And so we're going to go on to God's wisdom. There's different ways of preaching that. We could look at all the verses which we've done in many ways kind of through the series.

Try to bring them all together. We would see that God is wise in his decrees and his plans. We'd be able to see that God is wise in creation. We would see that God is wise in his plan of redemption. God is wise in salvation. God is wise in his providence and in the governing of our lives. And you could do that and it would be good to do that. But as I was thinking about it on Friday, I really think that Ephesians chapter 3 takes this wisdom of God, that God is wise and does something quite surprising with it.

[1:20] And so look at chapter 3 verse 10 of Ephesians. The Apostle Paul says, The Apostle Paul speaks about the wonders of the wisdom of God.

And he says to you and I that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

And actually wisdom is one of the major themes in the book of Ephesians, or one of the minor themes. And if you go to chapter 1 and verse 8, He says to you and I that when we became Christians, God lavishes his grace upon us.

And he gives to us wisdom and insight. Our eyes are opened and God gives to us the gift of wisdom and insight. How is it that you came to see the truth about the Lord Jesus and the power of the gospel?

And your need to be saved is that God opened your eyes and gave you wisdom. And then towards the end of the letter, in chapter 5 and verse 15, And the Apostle urges us, because we've received this wisdom from God, He says, because you've received this wisdom, don't continue to walk foolishly.

[2:58] But walk as those who are wise and who understand the will of the Lord. And so it's in between those two things, that you've received wisdom and you are to walk in wisdom.

God has imparted wisdom to God's people. And he exercises wisdom. We are to exercise wisdom by God's people. But the Apostle then expounds to us what is the wisdom of God.

The nature of the wisdom of God. He wants to illustrate it for us. And he does so in the glory and the splendor of that wisdom that God himself possesses.

That is shared with us in the gospel. And it's illustrated in the way we live out the Christian life. And the way that he describes God's wisdom here is remarkable. But what is the wisdom of God about which he speaks in chapter 3 verse 10?

The wisdom of God is, and in the Bible, is the manner by which he fulfills his purpose. It's the way he gets things done. And the wisdom of God is the expression of his sovereign holiness.

[4:06] Of God's wonderful faithfulness to us. His amazing love in how it is expressed and illustrated and worked out in human history. And it's all under the control of God's fatherly eye and his paternal care.

The wisdom of God is how he gets things done. We've seen, haven't we, in this series, as we've looked at it this autumn, that God is infinite. He has no limits with regards to space.

He is eternal. He has no limits with regards to time. And he is unchangeable. And he's all of those things in his wisdom. His wisdom is infinite. His wisdom is eternal. His wisdom is unchangeable.

It's how he gets things done. But you'll notice that in this verse, chapter 3 and verse 10, he describes the wisdom of God in a particular way. He speaks about it not just simply as the wisdom

of God, but he speaks about it as the manifold wisdom of God.

And the word he uses literally means multi-layered, multi-coloured, many-splendored wisdom of God. He wants us really to grasp two things.

[5 : 16] He wants us to grasp that the wisdom of God is far richer and fuller in its expression than we can ever begin to understand. It's like a diamond that glitters in different lights. It's always true, isn't it, that God's ways are above our ways.

It's always true that God's thoughts are above our thoughts. For as his way, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. And he works out his wisdom in a multitude of ways.

This is the many-splendid, the multi-coloured wisdom of God. By using this expression, he wants to say to you there's something really beautiful.

There's something glorious about this wisdom. There are times in your life, aren't there many of you at the moment, there are times in our lives where God deals with us in his wisdom and we feel pain. And that sense of being in the dark. And we look at our lives and we don't know what God is about. But not only is God's wisdom various in the way that it works itself out, but it is always glorious.

[6 : 25] It is a rainbow of God's wisdom. And he wants us this morning to try and grasp something of this so that our spirits would be lifted. That this should bring us a sense of joy as God works out his purposes in our lives, moment by moment, day by day, year by year.

He moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. But there is always something glorious and splendid about the outworking, the multi-coloured tapestry of the wisdom of God.

And as he begins to unfold this great doctrine in Ephesians chapter 3, he tells us that the wisdom of God is primarily seen in one location, in one place.

He says that if you want to see the great living monument to the wisdom of God, if you want to see God's wisdom put on display, put on the big screen, then there's one place that you will find the many, multi-faceted wisdom of God illustrated wonderfully, exhibited powerfully.

And that place, to our astonishment, can you notice it in verse 10? It's the church. That God's purpose is that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God will be made known.

[7 : 50] That is to say, through ourselves. Through the family of God's people. Through all the families of God's people. Throughout the universal family of God's people.

In heaven and on earth. That as people look at the church, the multi-layered, multi-coloured wisdom of God is made known.

And so the obvious question is this. How is it that in the church and through the church, the multi-coloured wisdom of God will be seen? How is that? Well, there's three different ways that are all connected.

In which Paul tells us, God makes his wisdom known through the church. So the first is this. The wisdom of God is made known through the church in its foundation.

In the work of Jesus. In the work of Jesus. The Lord Jesus, he goes on to say in verses 11 and 12. That this wisdom of God is made known through the church according.

[8 : 56] This was according to the eternal purpose. That he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him. And the wisdom of God is to be seen first of all in the foundation of the church in Christ Jesus.

He's telling you and I that what God did in Christ Jesus and through Christ Jesus was not merely an afterthought. What God did in Christ Jesus and through Christ Jesus, he had planned and prepared for before all ages.

It was a timeless, eternal purpose. That God had to send his son. And then sending his son into the world and accomplishing his purposes through him.

He shows one of the bright colours of his multi-coloured wisdom in the church. How does this show us the wisdom of God? Well, in this way.

We need to ask ourselves, who is it that belongs to the church? And again, Ephesians has already told us, isn't it? The beginning of chapter 2. He tells us, who is it that belongs to the church?

[10 : 10] In Ephesus. Or this church for that matter. He says, you were formerly dead in your transgressions and sins. You used to walk according to the ways of the world.

You used to walk under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. And you were without hope and without God. And you were without any possibility of sharing in the promise of forgiveness.

And the covenants of God's grace. And he says, that's what you were. These are the people, he says, you Ephesians. Are you people in IPC eating? You have been brought into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in bringing sinful men and women and boys and girls who were dead to God. Dead in their trespasses and sins. In bringing men and women to God. You were strangers to his covenant. And to his promise. And God has shown his wisdom now in bringing you in.

[11 : 16] How is this so? Well, it's because of this remarkable fact that God has brought us into the church of his son. By one and the same act.

Think about what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. That in the cross. God both punished our sin. And forgave our sin.

At the cross of the Lord Jesus. God exhibits his holy justice. And his gracious forgiveness. At the cross. God both exhibits his wrath against our sin.

And his love for us. In his son. And Paul says, here is the wisdom of God. Displayed in the foundation of the church. In the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bearing our sins upon his body. Upon the tree. Crying out. In a sense of God's desertedness. He bore God's just punishment for our sin.

[12 : 23] And in that bearing of the punishment for our sin. He releases God's heart of love for the forgiveness of our sins. And the redemption for sinners.

And that of course is something that gripped the Apostle Paul's heart and mind. He was always talking about it.

He was always talking about it. That the wisdom of God is to be found in the cross of Jesus Christ. In Jesus and him crucified. And he wants to remind us as he speaks about God's purpose. As being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That it's there. It is to the cross that we go this morning. Firstly to see the wisdom of God.

We sing about it. We confess it. We rejoice in it. All loving wisdom of our God. When all was sin and shame. A second Adam to the fight.

[13 : 21] And to the rescue came. Oh wisest love that flesh and blood which did in Adam fail. Should strive afresh against the foe. Should strive and should prevail.

And Paul says you want to know what the wisdom of God is? You go to the cross of Jesus Christ. We start at that place. Which makes us tremble with amazement.

Where God judges my sin. With a holy judgment. And a terrifying wrath. And yet at the very same time. He stretches out his arms to you.

In love and grace and pardon. That as his son cries out. Father forgive them. He's experiencing both the justice of God.

And he's holding out towards us the love of God. And so there is a place isn't there. Where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet. In the multicolored wisdom of God.

[14 : 22] But do you notice Paul says something else. About this display of God's wisdom. He says this display of God's wisdom. Through the church. Is not primarily intended. For the church.

It's really shocking isn't it. At the end of verse 10. He says. And what is. What is the wisdom of the church. As it's gathered here today. As people who've trusted in Christ. Who is it for?

And it is for the principalities. For the rulers. For the authorities. In the heavenly realms of the church. And again it's a big theme. In the book of Ephesians. He says.

With its foundation. And the death of Jesus Christ. Is its foundation. Is death for our sins. And for our forgiveness. There's a sense in which. The theatre.

Of the church. Is showing. For the realms of heaven. For the principalities. For the angelic spirits. It's. It's focusing.

[15 : 19] Their attention. On what God has done. And he's saying. Look at the multicolored wisdom. It's one of the reasons. Why the angels. Are all over the gospels.

Have you seen that? In the gospels. You can't really read them. Without seeing. The prominence of the angels. Terribly. We do often read them.

Like that. There's this picture. Of the angelic beings. Pressing their. Way. Into space and time. Have you noticed. How prominent the angels are.

In the life of Jesus. That they are the eyewitnesses. Of the wisdom of God. He is conceived. Isn't he? The angels are there. In his conception. The angels are there.

As he steps out. Into ministry. And they strengthen him. In his temptations. In the wilderness. There's an angel. That is sent from heaven. Into the agony. Of Gethsemane.

[16:17] They are there. At his passion of Calvary. It is resurrection. In the garden. The angels announce. That he is risen. And on his ascension. To the right hand of God. They gaze with. Beated breath.

They cannot comprehend. They dare to behold. The wisdom of God. That in his son's. Awful death. Upon the cross of Calvary.

He should be forgiving. Those who are. Responsible for his death. Death. And again. I think. As we suddenly. Grasp this. We are led.

To cry out. With the apostle Paul. Oh the. The depths of the wisdom. And the knowledge of God. How. Unsearchable. Are his judgments. And his ways of past finding out. So the wisdom of God. Is revealed.

Through the church. Because the church. Is founded. On the work of Jesus Christ. Christ. But the wisdom of God. Is revealed secondly. In the members of the church. Can you specifically notice.

[17:14] The confession. Of the Gentiles. Gentiles means. Somebody who is not a Jew. And it's seen in the foundation. Of the work. Of the church.

In the work of Christ. But it's seen secondly. The wisdom of God. In the membership of the church. Through the conversion. Of the Gentiles. While it's true.

That the cross of Christ. Is absolutely central. To the wisdom of God. The conversion of non-Jews. Of Gentiles. Of people like me and you. Is central. To the apostle Paul's.

Exposition of the gospel. In many ways. It's the heart of Ephesians chapter 3. What Paul is teaching. He says.

If you want to. Grasp the glory. Of God's wisdom. In the church. Then recognize. The fact that. In the church. God has done. What no human wisdom.

[18:08] Could do. He's brought into being. A church. Into which. Gentiles. In every place. And at every time.

Have been invited. Through the gospel. And that's the burden. Of the opening verses. Of the passage. Apostle Paul says. God had a plan.

God has a plan. That was hidden. It was hidden. For ages. But that plan. That mystery. Has now been revealed.

He says. It's been made known to me. By revelation. And in reading this. You'll be able to understand. My insight. Into the mystery of Christ. And what is the mystery of Christ. That's been made known.

That in other generations. Was hidden. But now it's been revealed to me. By God's spirit. The holy. And the holy apostles. And prophets. He says. Verse six. The mystery is this.

[19:03] That the Gentiles. The outsiders. The non-Jews. They are followers. Members of the same body. And partakers of the promise. Of Christ Jesus. To be specific.

He says. The wisdom of God. Is to be seen. In the astonishing fact. This is the most astonishing fact. In the history of the universe. That the outsiders. Have become insiders. That the Gentiles. People like you and me. Have become fellow heirs. Fellow members. Fellow participants. In Jesus Christ. With those whom God has called. In days of old.

There's two elements to this. Isn't there? Obviously. The first of them. Is this. That the church shows God's wisdom. Because Jew and Gentile. Are together now. I think that's a truth.

That we've. We've mainly lost sight of. In our time. But if we're to ever understand. The wisdom of God. As it's expounded in the Bible. It's a truth. That we really need to get hold of.

[20:03] It was in a sense. The great truth. For the apostle Paul. As he wrote the Ephesians. That in the gospel. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. As that is proclaimed. The greatest barrier.

Of the ancient world. Between the Jew. On the one hand. And the Gentile. On the other hand. Has been broken down. So that both Jew. And non-Jew. Gentile.

In the wisdom of God. Were now to come to God. Only. And solely. Through the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the. One of the reasons.

Why we have lost sight of this. Is because we are largely. A congregation of Gentiles. Not entirely. But largely. A congregation of Gentiles. But that should make us pause.

That as we read the Bible. And as we have our hearts. Awed. And humbled. At the amazing wisdom of God. That it has been through the Jews. Through the rejection.

[21:00] Of their Messiah. The promised one. Of the Holy Scriptures. Is that the doors. God wisdom. Has opened for us. That God's.

In God's wisdom. God has opened the doors. For Gentile dogs. Like you and I. Because we were strangers. To the promise. And the covenants. We did not have.

The Holy Scriptures. We did not have. The promise of the Messiah. We did not have. The prophet. Pointing forward. To the kingdom of God. We had none of those things. By nature. We were disinherited.

From God's kingdom. By nature. And then. In his amazing wisdom. As he teaches us. In Romans 11. God has taken us. Wild olive branches. And he's grafted us. Into the true church.

Of all ages. Those who trust. In God. By faith. And who believe in his son. The Lord Jesus Christ. He has grafted us. Gentiles in. And so he says.

[21:59] The Jews. At this time. Have been broken off. Because of their unbelief. And he says to you. Look at the wisdom of God. As it works its way out. In history. You should hold your breath.

In humility. He goes on to say. In Romans 11. Do not be arrogant. Do not be proud. Do not take the fact. That you are a Gentile believer. Lightly. He says. Or the day may come.

When God may cast off. The Gentiles. Because of their unbelief. And judgment. And as you remember. He goes on to speak. Of that glorious day. Where not only the Gentiles. But the Jews. Were pressed together.

Into the kingdom of God. Through faith in Jesus Christ. He says. This is the manifold wisdom of God. This is the mystery. That's now been revealed. That I.

A Gentile. Should be brought. Into the kingdom of God. I think he's speaking. Not only of. The fact that God's wisdom. Is seen. In bringing Jew.

[22:57] And Gentile. Together in the church. Church. But God's wisdom. Is also seen. In the fact. That he brings Gentile. And Gentile. Together in the church. His love.

Unknown. Has broken. Every barrier down. So that we are able. To save one another. If you want to see. The wisdom of God. Lift up your eyes. Look around.

Sense. Something. Of the amazement. Of what God is doing. That it should flood our hearts. This morning. As we gather. Lord's day. By Lord's day. That we are the very.

Exhibition. To the realms. And the authorities. And to the heavenlies. And to the angels. Of the multicolored wisdom. Of God. That the angels. Look at IPC. On a Sunday morning.

In every true church. Of Jesus Christ. And they say. Wow. Look what's going on. That we're black and white together. We're rich and poor together.

[23:57] We're highly educated. And uneducated. We're high culture. And low culture. Gathered together. We're employed. And unemployed together. Male and female together.

All one. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. And you only need to lift up your eyes. This morning. In this congregation. As they could do also.

In Ephesus. To see the vivid illustration. Of God's multicolored wisdom. On your service sheet. There is a QR code.

Isn't there? Where it says. If you. Want to. Read the sermon. In a different language. You can go. Download the Breeze app. And not long ago. Chris Kitchin.

Gets a message each week. Giving you. What the languages. Isaboyer. He says this. Dear IPC Ealing. Last week. Your church used 70 languages. Across 24 unique devices.

[24:56] Let me give you the languages. Abkhazian. I don't even know what that is. Persian. Fijian. French. Hungarian. Japanese. Korean. Norwegian. Pagasinan.

Papiamento. Polish. Pashto. Romanian. Thai. Vietnamese. Cantonese. French. And two people download me into English. Each week. There's languages I don't even know.

I don't even. I couldn't even tell you where the country. Like. Pangasinan. I don't even know where that is. If that's you. Come and talk to me afterwards. Papiamento. I've got no clue where that is.

God. And yet this is the manifold wisdom of God isn't it? We should rejoice that God is calling people from every tribe and tongue and nation.

We should rejoice at the growth that we've enjoyed. Because it is the display of the mystery of God. It's why we want church to be diverse.

[26:01] It's that we want to be more diverse. God's grace fills our soul with a desire to see his kingdom extended throughout all the earth. And as soon as the church says I know enough.

We've grown enough. This is it. No more. This is what I want. This is where I'm comfortable. At that point I can tell you what happens. The blessing will just go. Because as you look at the church. As it grows. And as God calls people. From all these nations. And from all these different cultures. There you see the wisdom of God. As Gentile is brought together with you.

Trusting in Jesus. As Gentile is brought together with Gentile. Trusting in Christ. Behold the wisdom of God. And there's a third way in which the wisdom of God is seen. And it's not only in terms of the foundation of Christ's work on the cross.

And it's not only through the conversion of the Gentiles. But in the third place. He says the wisdom of God is seen in suffering. Through the experience of the saints. Paul.

[27:05] He does this doesn't he. He kind of goes from the lofty heights. Of stretching our hearts and minds with great theology. To a very practical matter. Of relevance to the church in Ephesus. And he says. On the basis.

Verse 13 should have a therefore. Therefore. Therefore. On the basis of what I've been saying to you. Therefore. I ask you. Don't lose heart. Don't give up.

Don't be discouraged of what I'm suffering. For it is for your glory. Verse 13. Don't be discouraged by my sufferings. For you. They are your glory.

And what he's really saying to them. Is that the recognition of the wisdom of God. As it's painted. In the history of God's people. And his work through his son.

And the conversion of the Gentiles. We should see God's wisdom. In our own individual personal experience. And that is why he says.

[28:03] When you've grasped the wisdom of God. You will not lose heart. You'll not become discouraged. You'll not give up. Because of what I'm suffering. It's not difficult to see why the Ephesians were becoming discouraged.

And there's Paul. At the start of chapter 3. He says. God has chosen me for a special mission. I'm going to be the apostle to the world. God has chosen me to bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

He's chosen me to be a recipient of this remarkable revelation and divine truth. The mystery that was hidden has now been revealed through me. I'm going to be a penman of holy scripture.

And where is he? He's in prison. He's a Roman prisoner. And he's been arrested because of his work in converting the Gentiles. His mouth apparently had been stopped.

And I think it would be really tempting. For some of those Ephesians to say. Well where's the wisdom of God and all that? It's all very good Paul for you to speak about.

[29:04] Us being a witness to the heavenly realms. But actually your imprisonment has brought enormous shame. There's people saying you're in prison for all sorts of things. Where's God's wisdom in this situation?

If you know the epistles you'll know that Paul not only wrote Ephesians. He wrote Colossians, Philemon and he wrote Philippians. I'm not really sure whether the events that Paul describes in Philippians have happened yet.

In Ephesians chapter 3 he wants them simply to trust in the wisdom of God. And that it will be worked out.

But in Philippians, at the beginning of Philippians he gives us that truth that his imprisonment, him being put into prison, had been the means that God had used to bring the gospel and to spread the gospel into the very palace guard, the Praetorian guard in Rome.

And because of his chains and because of other brothers' chains, those who had been imprisoned in Rome, actually the people who were in prison with him had been converted.

[30:13] That in prison, in the midst of his suffering, the gospel had gone out. And so he's able to say to the Philippians, even my imprisonment is a mighty evidence of the wisdom of God.

That God uses the things that are difficult, the things that are painful, the things that are hard to understand to further the cause of Christ and his gospel. And Paul longed for the Ephesians to know that.

But do you notice he does tell them something. He does say, doesn't he, See the wisdom of God and don't be discouraged because of my sufferings, for which you are your glory.

He says, don't you see how amazing, how tender the wisdom of God is? That in my sufferings, God is bringing glory to his people. My sufferings are a token of how much God cares for you.

My sufferings are a token of how far God is prepared to go in order to bring the Gentiles to the Lord Jesus. And my suffering is a gracious symbol of the wonderful wisdom of the ways God is with his

people.

[31:24] Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says, God's strength is seen in your weakness. Paul says to you, my suffering is the suffering of one who was the most hostile persecutor of the Christian church in all of human history.

And now that hostile persecutor of the Christian church is suffering in a prison in Rome. Don't you see the glory of that? That he suffers now in order to bring salvation to you. And I think it's not difficult to take a step back from this and look at our own experience and the experience of other Christians.

And we might not be able to see it now, but we can see, however painful, the wisdom of God in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can see in the most awful event that's ever happened in the history of the world, the glorious, wonderful wisdom of God. And as we look at the church this morning, we see the wisdom of God in the congregation where Jew and Gentile meet, and Gentile and Gentile meet.

And he shows us his wisdom in his suffering. And I don't know what you're going through this morning. I don't know the pains and the anguish of your heart, but I want to say to you as a follower of the Lord Jesus, it is not meaningless.

[32:50] And he is too wise to be mistaken, he. Too good to be unkind. Edith Schaeffer, this denomination was founded by Francis and Edith Schaeffer, and Edith Schaeffer wrote very, very long books that could really have done with an editor.

But she has this amazing picture of a tapestry. And she says, we stand on one side of the tapestry, on the back end, and there's kind of bits of whatever there is in tapestry.

There's all the colours of blurred, bits of string, and bits of kind of other material, and it seems to have no pattern. And it seems just to be random.

And yet she says, one day God will turn the tapestry around, and we will see God's wisdom fully displayed. And that is the truth for the Christian, that we lay hold of by faith today.

That God is too wise to be mistaken. He's too good to be unkind. And we can trust him this morning. We can trust his sovereign plan at the cross.

[33:57] We can trust his wonderful sovereign plan in the church. And we can trust him with our suffering. And so it's no wonder that Paul cries out, doesn't he, over the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his ways. Can you not trust him? Let's pray.