

Acts 20:24-27 (Bruce Conrad) 203187

Chicago Conference: 2022, Three Aspects of Paul's Ministry (20:24-27)

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Well, let's turn to the book of Acts. In chapter 20. I don't want to read the whole chapter. My thought really today. Bears upon 3 aspects of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. And they believe he touches on those in verses 24. And 25. Through 27, so I'll read those and perhaps we'll drop back. And look at the events that led to the apostles. Statements to these Ephesians. In this passage. Acts 20 and verse 24. But none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course. Leave out with joy. And the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God. The Apostle Paul at this point in his life. At a very heavy heart. He has. He has been on his first journey from Antioch. With Barnabas. Departing from Antioch in the southeastern part of what we call today Turkey. By modern standards, it was not a long trip. They went down to the coast by sea. They went across to the Isle of. Island escapes my. Somebody call it out. Cyprus. Sorry. Went across to the Isle of Cyprus. Barnabas. Paul Barnabas name given first in the early days and John Mark. And there is a man that resists the truth. And Paul led by the Spirit. Declares to him that he's going to be blind temporarily. And he went away blind. Whether this is what so staggered young John Mark or not, we don't know. But they ministered there on the Isle of Cyprus, and then took ship again back to the mainland of Turkey, went up to a different Antioch. And then to Iconium, Lystra, Derby and so on. It was in Lystra where Paul having healed. A man. Let's just turn to it briefly. I don't want to spend too much time in the history. But in Lystra, chapter 14 of Acts. Paul perceives that an impotent man had faith to be healed. And he heals him. He leaps and walks on his feet. And the local people decide that they are gods and they are about to do sacrifice to them, And Paul and Barnabas run in and stop them from this. They move on to Iconium verse 19. And the Jews that were at such resistance to Paul in Antioch and Iconium follow them there. And stirring up the people, they stone Paul, and they dragged him out of the city for dead. And yet in verse 20, as it says, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derby. He retraced his steps. Just amazing. Just amazing. They complete their journey and they go back to Antioch, from whence they had been sent forth by the Holy Ghost.

And there's an interlude in chapter 15 where a certain matter concerning the Gentiles has to be addressed, and they addressed it there. And at the end of chapter 15 they go out again. In verse 36, some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city. There's a difference of opinion between Paul and Barnabas, and Barnabas takes John, Mark and goes one way and Paul and Silas head out. It would appear with the with the Fellowship of the Brethren, they go their separate ways and service for the Lord. They go this time by land and not by sea, and they go, as it says in the beginning of Chapter 16, to Derby and Lystra. Timothy joins their ranks. Later on, Luke, who is the writer of this book, joins their ranks. And you'll see in a certain place it goes from they to we, in and out. And they head W further into Turkey on this second trip. And they seem to be a little bit unsure of the direction of the Lord they head to. There's a closed door here and a closed door in Asia, which is southwest Turkey, where all those seven churches are located that we read about in Revelation 2 and three. And finally, they go all the way West to the coast to Troas. And Paul sees a vision in the night, a man from Macedonia saying, come over and help us. And so he says, aha, how much grander and bigger God's thoughts are, as so, so often than ours. And off the gospel goes from Asia into Europe. What a tremendous passage of that, of that body of water. World history is filled with tremendous passages of water. From from what we call Asia into Europe. To me this was the most. Important of all when a few men with the gospel of the grace of God head across the water, do they see a man in Macedonia to help know? And they show up by the side of the river there where prayer was won't to be made of Jews and you know, the history. Who do they meet first? Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira. They go into Europe, but the first contact that they really have is a lady from Asia, where the Lord had closed the door. And so, you know the story. There's blessing in Lydia's household. Paul and Silas are thrown into prison. In Philippi, the Philippian jailer gets saved, and so on and on they go. They work their way down what we would call today the northeast coast of Greece in those days called Macedonia, Philippi, various cities, Thessalonica, beautiful conversion of souls in Thessalonica, and then again in Berea down to Athens and to Corinth and so on. It's at this point. That Paul determines I need to go back to Jerusalem. What we call our. Our 2020 hindsight we saw Paul. It would have been so good if you had just kept going and gone all the way to Rome. He had it in his heart to go to Rome. And he says so I can't recall the exact place. But after being in Athens, as you know, and he preached there, and some souls were saved, he goes to Corinth, his eyes wide open by this horrendously ungodly prosperous city, and the Lord has to speak to him as if Paul says I'm not staying long here in his heart, but the Lord appears to him in, I think it's in chapter 18. Yes, 18 And verse 9. The Lord spake to Paul in the night by a vision. Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months. After a certain period of time as as we would follow there. He's first going to take by sea and head back across the Mediterranean back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem had such a hold, I should say, really. His His brethren, according to the flesh, as he writes to the Romans.

I could almost wish myself a curse for my brethren, according to the flesh. They had such a hold on his heart. And far be it from me to judge him for that. How patient the Lord is. We read of him, the Lord Jesus himself coming. Looking over Jerusalem as he walked towards it and how he wept. Jerusalem, Jerusalem. How he would have He was capable, and he was desirous of bringing them into blessing, and they would not. And that heart had been duplicated. Reproduced, if I could put it that way, the life of Christ in this. Servant of the Lord and the apostle Paul, and it governed his actions. Perhaps we might say. In a way that was not altogether wise. But again, we have to stand back. Who am I to judge another man's servant? And back he heads, And so rather than go across by sea, because there was word that he would be, he would be. Accosted either getting onto or on the ship and lose his life, he heads up again, the coast up through. Macedonia. And that's where we pick up in the beginning of Chapter 20. Well, I'm sorry I missed some places here. In chapter 19, Paul is in Ephesus. Any leads into the full liberty of the Christian position, some who knew only the baptism of John? And there in Ephesus, he spends two whole years in a certain school outside of the synagogue, and probably over three years with these believers in Ephesus, and there was much blessing. An Ephesus,

being a central city, as I gather for that part of the world, that through that ministry of the apostle Paul the word of God spread throughout all that part of the world and beyond, and there was tremendous blessing. Verse 20 of Acts 19 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. And this is the verse I was thinking verse 21 after these things were entered, Acts 19 and 21. Paul purpose in the spirit when he had passed through Macedonia, to go to Jerusalem. After I have been there, I must also see Rome. There is an uproar in Ephesus. And when it quiets down, Paul heads back east. I'm sorry, back West. Verse beginning of Acts chapter 20. After the uproar was seized, Paul called unto the disciples and embraced them and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts and given them much exhortation, he came into Greece and thereabout 3 months. And this is the time, as I was speaking about, he was about to sail into Syria. He purposed to return through Macedonia, and now he has companions he has. From Asia sopater of Berea, I'm sorry, Into Asia sopater of Berea and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus. Gaius of Derby and Timotheus. Titicus Trophimus, and we assume Luke as well. And they sail away from Philip I, verse 6 after the days of unleavened bread, and come unto throw us in five days, where they abode 7 days. I will skip over the incident that is well known with the young man Utica's who's sitting in the window. While all is long, long discoursing to them, they probably met in the evening. It's not as if Paul spoke all day and into the night. The way I take it, the the Lord's day would have been like a work day to them. Like a Monday would be to us, perhaps. And they discharge their work and their responsibilities, and met together afterwards, and it would have been there in that upper room with many lights. Paul being about to leave and he himself having the sense that he might not be back again ever. That he spoke in discourse to them late into the evening, and as you know, the Utica's in the fall falls down and is taken up dead. Paul goes down and falls upon him like Elijah with the with the with the young lad, or Elisha later on with another.

And his life is in him and he comes back up, and the brethren are much encouraged. The point I review all this for is because as we read in Acts 20 and get down to verse. 13. And we went before to ship. And sailed into Asos there, intending to take in Paul, for so had he appointed himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at ASOS, we took him in and came to my Delini. The Apostle Paul as I perceive it. The weight of his heading back to Jerusalem, the testimony that was rising up around him as to how that would go when he went there. He seems to feel that it may be the end of his life. At the very least, he seems to feel it's the end of his ministry. His whole life was in his ministry. And and so he decides, rather than enjoy. You can imagine what a happy thing it is. For these brethren, when Paul would go to a city, maybe with Silas or Timotheus or Lucas, and go to the next one, he would leave some of these brothers behind to help the new converts and help them get established and for their encouragement. And so as you read through the book of Acts and some of the Epistles, you start to get this picture of these brethren moving and some staying behind and catching up later and being sent back and all of this kind of thing. And to a large measure, I think these brethren were individually or in smaller groups of maybe 2. Staying behind and encouraging these new gatherings of souls as they were established. And So what a happy thing it would have been for them all to come together and to be on that, on that ship together, and to rehearse what had happened into bounce things off each other, as we say. But then as they start to head down the West Coast of Turkey all the way back towards towards towards Israel. Paul says. You guys just go, I'm going to walk. And when we went through this some time ago, we we had the young brothers run it to ground, check it out for us. And this little jut of land that Paul walked across maybe 20 kilometers or maybe maybe 12 to 15 miles, I'm not, I can't exactly recall, but I remember knowing how long it takes me to walk a mile or two or more. I just kind of did the math and it was an all day hike that the apostle wanted to take and he took by himself. But I think this is just one of those indications of his need to be alone with the Lord and how when he gets finally when the ship comes down the coast and he calls for the Ephesian elders who he knew so well from having been with them for the space of three years, and they come down to meet him there and he unburdens his heart. And that's the passage that we read. It weighed on the Apostle Paul. Surely it did. And he realized what a, what a, what a responsibility, what a stewardship had been given to him like no other, like no other. Except for the precious savior himself. And so in the verses we read, as you could see, he characterized the parts of his ministry that he had, he had carried out amongst. The Gentile World. And amongst the Saints as the gospel of the grace of God, the Kingdom of God. And the whole council of God and I would like to spend a little time on on each of them in the time that we have here this morning. But first, we're going to find that these three. Aspects of the truth of God are not distinct from each other. They're interrelated. And there are some verses that when you when you have this in mind that you read other passages of scripture, you see that let me just take one or two First Thessalonians 1. And in our minds we can see. By this point, when Paul is with the Ephesian elders.

There on the South Coast of Turkey. He has already written the first epistle to the Thessalonians and probably most likely the 2nd. He has already written the Epistle to the Corinthians and the 2nd. He wrote to the Galatians, perhaps when he was in Asia at the start of that third journey. He got to Ephesus and he had been in Galatia, and he writes back to them as I take it. He wrote to the Romans, perhaps when he was in Corinth. And so we have the Book of Romans, the Epistle to the Romans, First and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians. And not yet the prison epistles, of course. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians send the epistle to Philemon. How much Paul's understanding of the truth developed. We know that he had what he had by revelation, not by figuring it out. And he could say of the cardinal truths of our Christian faith, of the faith once committed to the Saints, that he got them by revelation. We'll see in Ephesians 3 if we turn there. Let's turn there now hold your finger in first Thessalonians 1. In Ephesians the chapter 3. Verse 2 If you have heard of the dispensation or stewardship of the grace of God, which has given me to you, word, how that by revelation he may known unto me the mystery. Verse 5, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The existence of the Church of God. As being. United together to Christ in glory. By the Holy Spirit, out of Jew and Gentile, making up one body was a mystery hid in God. It cannot be found in the Old Testament. You say, well, I see a picture of it here or I see a picture there, Yes. But I teachers back east to my youth used to say a picture is a picture of nothing until you get the substance of the thing revealed. And once The thing is revealed, you say, that's that picture of Joseph with a gentile bride. That's that picture of Moses with a gentile bride. That's that picture here or that picture here. And really it's more the bride than the body, but still. I always remember those words ring in my ears. A picture is a picture of nothing. Until you get the revelation of the thing, and the apostle Paul received a revelation. A communication from God, not from the Lord Jesus, as he was here on earth in flesh and blood, but after he had been raised and ascended into heavenly glory. And everything he had came from the risen, from the glorified Christ, the mere existence of the Church in its character. That's one body united to him was a mystery hidden God until he revealed it through his to his holy apostles and prophets. And so this explains why, when Paul says, infer to the unruly Corinthians, for I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and break it, and said, this, take eat, this is my body. And Peter could have said, Paul, where do you get off saying that you weren't even there? We were there. It was because of this heavenly character of things which Paul calls in the word of God, the mystery. That this added element of the remembrance of the Lord is the expression of one body. Is given to Paul. Don't have it in Luke 22, Don't have it in Matthew 27 in that character. Another subject though. And so the revelation of the existence of the Church, a mystery hidden God in that way, the characteristic expression at the Lord's table, her destiny to be raised out from among all the rest of the dead. And finally, the Lord taking us into heavenly

glory to be eternally with himself. All of these revelations Paul received back to first Thessalonians chapter one to show. The how the Gospel of the grace of God. The Kingdom of. And the counsel of God are woven together frequently in Paul's ministry, in his expressions, in the space of one verse or two, and so in first Thessalonians one and verse.

Uh. Verse 8 from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Akaya, but also in every place your faith to God word is spread abroad. That's the gospel of the grace of God they had received so that we need not to speak anything, for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. This is the character of the Kingdom of God I believe Paul was referring to in Acts chapter 20, and we'll get to that in a moment, Lord willing. And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. Sandwiched in between the gospel of the grace of God and the whole council of God. Is what Paul called the Kingdom of God. I was helped many years ago when our brother Heinz Brinkman, was still with us. He came to Palmyra where we were and had a series of meetings on the Kingdom and a comment that he made I found very helpful, which is that and I know. This question comes up all the time. I know it does. What's the difference between the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God? And to sort out all these references to the Kingdom, but just briefly, I would say this that there are times in scripture when the expression Kingdom of God is just the broadest aspect of God's headship and rule over all things. Forever and ever. And it's, you might say, the master category. Of the Kingdom of heaven. The Kingdom coming Kingdom of the Son of Man. The Kingdom of my Father, my father's Kingdom. And and other these other aspects that are discreet times and administrations, if I could put it that way. They're all the Kingdom of God in that sense. And sometimes in the word of God, the expression Kingdom of God is used that way. And we ought to be familiar with the fact that there are a number of words in Scripture. The. A number of concepts expressed in words where the word takes on a different meaning according to the context, like the word salvation, for example, or the word sanctification. These words take on a different context, take on a different meaning according to the context, but the aspect of the Kingdom of God. I think for myself that the Apostle Paul is referring to in Acts 20 is the moral response in our lives as a result of having received the gospel of the grace of God. When these Thessalonian people, these people that lived in that city, received Christ as Savior, when they received the message imparted to them by Paul, they obeyed the gospel. And it changed them. And so it was here that they turned to God from idols. To do what? To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. For the sake of time, let's just do one more, for example in Colossians chapter three, well known passage. Colossians 3. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection or your mind on things above, not on things on the earth if you are dead. And your life is hid with Christ and God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. The expression Kingdom of God in many places in Paul's ministry has to do with the practical character of the life of a believer living out that which is now in him. I wish I could say it more simpler than that, but. Verses come to mind like in Romans chapter 14. The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are the practical character of things. In Galatians. Paul points it out to the Galatians in chapter 5. These are the works of the flesh. This is what it is. And those they that practice such things will have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. The same language and I think Ephesians 5 and some other places. And so the Kingdom of God in this sense really is the lived out character in the lives of his own, in this world that we might display Christ. Christ is on high in heavenly glory. You and I are still here.

And once we have been brought out of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of his love. We are now in the Kingdom of God, in morally responsible, and it is our desire and delight to walk here in accordance with that wonderful grace that has been shown to us, going back to Acts Chapter 20. The Gospel of the grace of God. Isn't it striking? That there are times where Paul speaks. The Gospel, Our Gospel. The gospel that he preached. That was identical and in substance no different than what Peter and John and the others preached from the time of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and onward in Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 3 and all of that. But Paul could also refer to what he called my gospel. And you would say, wow, this guy is really something he calls the gospel his. My gospel, he says in Romans. I think it's chapter 2 and then at the end maybe chapter 16. My gospel. What does Paul mean by my gospel? I believe what he means is the character of things that he received by Revelation, not from the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem or not connected with the 12, but from Christ himself when he was heading way away from Jerusalem. And immediately he preaches Christ, that he Jesus, that he is the Son of God. And we don't know exactly when these revelations came to Paul, but we know that they did. And when he refers to my gospel, he refers, He's referring to a line of things that was, you might say, in addition to added to what had already been presented by others. For example in. First Timothy, chapter one. He speaks of the gospel of the glory. Of God, of the Blessed God. And it's a wonderful thing, and Paul stressed it that God has been glorified. The good news, the gospel at its center, is not your salvation or mine. It's God's delight in his beloved Son. And all that flows out of that. Which includes your blessing in mind and that for all eternity. So when we started these very meetings, it was refreshing to my soul with Christ, our theme begins. The Gospel of God is just in the King James. It's a little different. First Timothy 1. A list of unsavory things. In verse 10 and then. If there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, first Timothy one and 10 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. I believe you read it in a better translation, the Darby Translation, For example, it is the gospel of the glory of the Blessed God. God has been blessed. By the great work of Christ in this world, he could say on his way to Calvary's cross. In anticipation of the accomplishment of that work, I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work thou has given me to do. He brought great glory to God and made God, if I could put it that way reverently. He's a blessed God. He's a happy God. He has had his delight in his Son for all eternity. All eternity he was his delight, and yet the Lord Jesus could say, For this cause doth my Father love me. For I lay down my life, that I might take it again. As one brother put it many years ago, it's as if he found a fresh cause to love the sun. And God having been glorified by his Son, and never more fully than on Calvary's cross. It's as if, he says. How do I respond to this? What's my response? He saw it all. The three hours of darkness.

It's All in all. The heavens were turned to darkness. The heavens were like brass above him at Holy One, and he saw it all. He lays down his life, and He's taken down. How do you take a man down? Of a cross. I don't know how you would have done that. I don't think I could have done it. How do you do? We're going to thank Joseph of Arimathea Nicodemus. For the love that they showed. The respect to that one. Put it into a new tomb where never man had been laid. And what is God going to do in response to that? The only righteous response to that was to raise him up from among all the rest of the dead. And he gave him, moreover, the highest place in heaven. Think of it. And that's where he is this very moment, seated as a man. There's one man there. Only one man. In. It's a glorified man. He took a seat there because of who he was. Yes, he took his seat there because of what he has done. And God has rewarded him with the highest place in heaven, Wonderful, the gospel of the grace of God. I was happy that our brother read Ephesians one today. I've been thinking about Ephesians 1A lot lately. And I won't read it myself either, except to say this in passing, because our time is going. When I moved into. Change companies 25 or some years ago. In my in the construction business, my work had been out in rural places where there's usually plenty of room. When you want to build a

big structure, whatever it is, a pier, a bridge, power plant, whatever, as everybody knows, you go down to build the foundation. And we always had the luxury to to just blow it open, you know, just to dig it out. And big banks, wide open space to get down, to start the work in the bottom in the foundation. Can't do that in a big city. When you're building a tunnel or building something because everything's built all around you, you can't. Open up anything. And so some, some guys in the company, I think they invented this. We call it top down construction. And so they build the top first. So they go into a city, densely populated skyscrapers on different sides, and they kind of scrape out the lot. And they build the roof. And then they leave it with a hole and they go down and they excavate a first level and they brace that, and then they build the next to the top floor and down they go. It's it's about the only way you can do it without tremendous cost to support all of this, all of this. Ground that has tremendous pressure. And it's from the top down. When I refuse read Ephesians one, I think of top down construction because that's what it is. It's the gospel of the grace of God from God's point of view. Because we read in the counsel of God that there was an eternal purpose. An eternal purpose. That's in Ephesians 3. In verse I read at the end of verse 10. That he might might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus the Lord, and then in Ephesians chapter One. In verse 11. In whom? Also, we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose. Of him who worketh all things after the Council of his own will. There was an eternal purpose. We all love that hymn. I think it's 142 in deep, eternal counsel. That expression, eternal counsel, is not in Scripture, but. I I think it's OK because as we read there in verse Ephesians 1. According to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the Council of his own will. God had one purpose. He had it from all eternity, and it was to display the glory of his Son as man with a bride, that was one with him in whom he and the Father himself could take delight in, and through whom the fullness of God could be displayed.

At the end of Ephesians one, as our brother, read it to us his body, the fullness of him. That filleth All in all. And to say it reverently, and you almost hesitate to say it, there is that of the glories of God. Which could not be displayed if it weren't for his bride. There are certain glories of Christ, of God's glory in his Son that would not be displayed if it weren't for the bride. We read in Acts 20 again the gospel of the grace of God. Paul could say it's my gospel. It doesn't just. Say justice kind of disrespectful. It's not only the forgiveness of sins that we have as a present possession. It's not only as Paul. Taught in his gospel message that we're justified in him, which is beyond being forgiven. You could be forgiven of all your debts and be dead broke. There you are, wonderful to be forgiven of all that debt, but your debt broke. Justification is more than that. It's the fact that in Christ we now have a life and are looked upon as possessing a life to which sin has never been attached, nor could be the wonderful thing. Isn't it to be justified in Christ? And we could be justified with that more exalted blessing. And yet still God could say, yes, they sinned against me. I forgave them. I even justified them. But that doesn't mean he wants our company. But beyond that, as we get into Romans, Middle of Romans, chapter 5. We are reconciled to God through the death of his Son. And by that, by being reconciled to God, we learn. That he wants our company, and he has accomplished such a work through his son, that he can take the poor fallen sons of men. And through the value of the work on Calvary's cross and the work in your soul. He can bring you back so that there might be joy in you and joy in him, and that there would be reconciliation. A wonderful truth, wonderful truth that we don't speak about that much. And so the gospel of the grace of God, as Paul presented it and could call it my gospel, would include these wonderful aspects, this wonderful fruit from the great work of Christ on Calvary's cross. The gospel, the Kingdom of God, is the outflowing in your life and mind of the grace that we've received. And so we read in Titus that the grace of God, which brings with it salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously and soberly and godly in this present world. And that's the desire of the new nature, and everyone in this room is to walk in that way. But we just need to be. To remember. As we see this truth of the Kingdom of God and its moral character, that that is not the sum and and and All in all of the Christian life. I I am really not in touch with with our brethren. In all of the Evangelical. Circles of our country. But I rely on a brother that's in a nearby gathering who I won't mention, who keeps track of all these things and and he he lets me know. But much of much of the ministry in the Christian of evangelical Christian profession, as I understand it. Is occupied with the gospel of the grace of God as it pertains to you having the forgiveness of sins. And then to the Kingdom of God and its moral aspect. But I would my one of my main points that I hope to get across in this. I've indulged your time now for 50 minutes. Is that we need more than this in order to be here for His glory. We need to take in have an appreciation and understanding of the whole council of God. It is necessary.

Because there's only so much we can talk to one another about righteousness and peace and even joy in the Holy Ghost. My salvation is not enough to keep my heart, nor is it enough to keep yours. God has not only provided A Savior to take our guilty place, but He has raised them to be the object of our hearts, affections that we might be drawn after Him. I've lived in cold places most of my life in New England. Snow is a part of life, as is the mud that follows it in mud season. And we always, you know, we all had rear wheel drive and if you use chains or you got stuck, you you you address the the rear and you you know to push your car along. And if you skidded or lost control, everybody knew how to kind of handle that with rear wheel drive. But guess what? Then they invented front wheel drive, a whole different thing. And you know, the Christian life is meant to be meant to be driven with front wheel drive. It's meant to be attractive. It's meant to me as. The As it said in the I think in the psalmist Psalm, draw me we will run after thee and attractive power. And so it is that we can't just be preoccupied with ourselves and carrying a mirror around. How am I doing? Am I Righteousness is not our testimony. Practical righteousness. Without it we have no testimony, but it in itself is not our testimony. Grace is Grace is the topmost stone, as as as the hymn writer put it. And grace draws us along, not only saved our soul, but draws us along. And Grace has now provided an object for us at the very end of the book of Acts, Acts 28. When I first read it as a new believer, I thought my that kind of ended on a just a drab way. It's like. There's no kind of big concluding statement or or wonderful off into the into the sunset or it just ends if you look at it that way, you look at it. Pulled dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him. But it's years and years later, and maybe I got this from Nick Simon. I don't remember. He spent a lot of time together lately. Is that well, the book of Acts is the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is still here. And he's still working and it's very understandable that it should just kind of, you know, the account trails off because on we go into this very present hour and I I enjoy looking at it that way. But as to the counsel of God? The whole Council of God we learn we. Need to learn? About God's eternal purpose that is centered in his Son. And God has a council that sits to my mind under that purpose as to how that purpose is going to be carried out as we sing in that hymn in deep eternal counsel. And then the Council is carried out and we see that there are there are actions and ways. And we experience them and we see them, and we seek to understand them. But how do we understand them? Without an understanding. Of God's counsel. What God's purpose is as Paul? Was burdened to to summarize his ministry with them because he knew that attacks were already coming to them. They were, as we say in English slang, sitting ducks. They were just from from within and without it was it was going to come upon them as it had come upon him with interferes, without fighting, she said. And it was going to come upon the testimony there, And he knew it, and he felt it. And he could say, I commend you to God and the word of his grace. And he reminded them of what he put before

them, the gospel of the grace of God, the Kingdom of God and its moral aspect, and the whole council of God. In Ephesians chapter one. Sorry Ephesians chapter 3 in closing.

We read this expression. The fullness of. Again. Bob read to us the prayer at the end of Ephesians 1. And that prayer is centered that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. May give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him the eyes of the understanding opened, and so on. In Ephesians 3, it's more the practical side of embracing it, understanding it, enjoying it. And so at the end of Ephesians 3, just in summary. There are a series of that's there. Starting in verse 14 is the prayer I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 16 That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory. To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. Why that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. That ye being rooted and grounded in love, that's the foundation, practically. May be able to comprehend with All Saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge that he might be filled with all the fullness of God. You say? Well, I thought we already were chapter End of chapter one. That's our position. That's the glorious position that the Church of God has been given in God's counsel to occupy. But he wants it to practically to be enjoyed now. And that was his prayer. We pray about a lot of things in our prayer meetings, a whole lot of things. And well, we should. I believe we should add to our prayers these kinds of prayers that we read in the end of Ephesians One, the end of Ephesians 3. In the prayer of one whom Paul could single out as saying that he prays for you, that you might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. It is vital. To being here for His glory, that we understand where we are in the scheme of God's counsel. That we understand that our Christian life, that our spiritual life was initiated by him before the world's were even made. That presently we are part of an entity that is heavenly. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are a heavenly people. And our destiny is heavenly as well. Everything about the essence of your life and mind is heavenly and it is eternal. There's an expression that that I read years ago. I think I wrote it in my Bible. It is in the intimacy. Of the Councils and the Grace of God. That. Fortifies himself. For a battle which he cannot escape. I didn't quote that exactly, right. It is in the intimacy of the councils and the grace of God that man fortifies himself. For the battle that he cannot escape, you're in a battle. And so am I. He can't take the enemy of your soul, can't take your salvation, but he can take your joy of it away, and your appreciation of it away. It's God's desire that the radiancy of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ be appreciated by you and me and displayed in our lives as we walk through this world on our way home. To heavenly glory with Christ. I'm going to read in closing one verse. That, I think, illustrates this importance of understanding. At the end of Luke's Gospel. It just came to me. A little bit earlier in the meeting today. It's when the Lord is walking with the disciples. These two on the way to Emmaus, the going in discouragement away from Jerusalem, and they were confused.

And the Lord draws them out. He says, well, what, what? What are you sorrowful about? And he kind of pokes and prods a little bit to get it, to get it to come out. And then in verse 21, they say, I'm going to read it in the new translation. But we had hoped. That he was the one. Who was about to redeem Israel? We had hope, I think, in the King James it says we trusted. We had hoped. That he was the one he is the one their hope was was not properly situated in their understanding. And if you and I are confused in the way they are, we're going to get all tangled up. With present. Issues that surround us in the culture of the Western world as it becomes darker and darker and darker. And we ought not to be surprised. We were warned. The Lord Jesus warned us, Paul warned us, Jude warns us, Peter warns us, John warns us it's going this way, but the true light already shines. And it's the light that you and I walk in. We need to be armed. We need to be fortified. And the councils of God, that ability to have a sense of what God is purposing in this present age and in your life and mine, will enable us not only to be morally suitable. But also to be a light in a very Dark World.

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