

# Servants of the Gospel

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] If you are a regular attender here at St. Columbus, you know we've been working our way through this letter of Paul to the Ephesians for about six, eight weeks now. And we'll finish up this week and next week on Ephesians 3 and then take a break for the summer.

Paul writes this letter from Rome. He's in prison. It's sometime between the year 60 and 62, 1st century, and he is a prisoner to the evil emperor Nero.

And when you come to chapter 3, I think this is probably the least preached chapter in this letter. Ephesians 2, for by grace you have been saved through faith, one of the most pivotal passages in all the Bible.

Ephesians 2. Ephesians 3, not as often looked at. And I think that's because the big point of Ephesians 3, and especially the passage Douglas just read for us, is down in verse 6.

Paul's talking about his own self-understanding as an apostle and who he is, his identity, what God has called him to do. And then he says, God has given me the mystery, the mystery revealed to him, this plan of God that was hidden in ages past, now unfolded.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] And it's this, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs of the covenant. So God revealed himself to Israel in the Old Testament. And he says, but what God has now revealed is that Gentiles to non-Jewish people, every ethnicity in all the world is also a part of God's plan.

Any believer, any person who believes the gospel becomes a part of the church. That's the mystery. The thing that used to be hidden, but now has now been unveiled. Now, the reason I think that not that, it's not that often that people teach on chapter 3, is because in 2024, you say, I already know that.

There's nothing more humdrum than to say, did you know that Gentiles can also be part of the church? We are mostly a Gentile community. And so everybody says, well, yeah, we're all about inclusion.

We know that Gentiles and Jews are both a part of God's church. This is old hat to me. This is something I've always heard, if you've been around the church for any time.

If you're a human being in 2024 and you are, you know that in every space you walk into, we want to include everybody. And that begins right here. And so I think one of the reasons people don't look at this section as much is because that's the main idea.

[ 2 : 2 7 ] And you say, it's not that striking to me. I already know that everybody's welcome, that anybody can believe the gospel, join the church, no matter what ethnicity they come from. I wonder today what it would take for you to walk out of the service in the middle of the sermon.

Sometimes that does happen. We have lots of tourists that come in and they often will walk out in the middle of the service. So there are things that will get people to walk out.

Maybe you say, I would walk out if you uttered blatant heresy and I would say, good for you, go for it if I do that.

But the thing that doesn't strike us is that when you hear Paul say something like, listen, every single ethnicity is truly part of this one unified body called to love each other.

That is the kind of thing in the first century that people would walk out over. We've talked about this the past couple of weeks. Most people for most of human history have been wildly divided and divided along all sorts of lines, ethnicity, nationality, religion, political persuasion.

[ 3 : 3 8 ] We as human beings divide. We're hostile to one another. We create teams and we don't get along. And that has been the norm of human history. And when Paul comes in and says something like this, it is radical that every single ethnicity in the first century is meant in Christ to belong together in the community of faith.

It's the kind of thing that would have been really, really disruptive and different for people when he first heard this. And that's to say that Paul is, what he's saying here is the big idea of Ephesians. Ephesians 110, remember that in the gospel, this great plan of God in the middle of history, God is bringing together all the pieces in Christ that have been fractured by sin.

Sin destroys, sin separates, sin alienates, sin makes us hostile. And when you come to see the beauty of the gospel that Jesus took that hostility and died for it.

The church is this first great example of God putting all things back together again. He says, in Christ, I'm even going to unite heaven and earth, the invisible, invisible realms together.

[ 4 : 48 ] And really the letter of Ephesians is all about how the church is the first great example of that. The church is the first very visible example of God putting pieces back together in holistic ways, shalom, true peace in ways that have never really existed since sin came into the world.

I think one of the things you can ask yourself every single week as we walk through Ephesians is something like, where else would the people in this room all get together and be able to look around and say to people that many of you don't know, you don't know each other, everybody, that's my brother, that's my sister.

What other space in the world would something like that happen? There is none. The church is the great example in world history of what God is doing in bringing people together. You look across the room and say, you know, I don't know that that many people in this room share my interests, my hobbies.

And see, exactly, exactly, because the reason we gather is because we're united, united to Jesus. That's the most fundamental thing. It's the church.

And so here Paul is saying through his own personal self-understanding of what it means for him to be the church, more things about what it means for us to be the church.

[ 6 : 05 ] And so there are three more things this week. What it means for us to be the church. We hear Paul here saying, I know I'm a part of the church. This is how Jesus brought me into the church.

And it teaches us a few things about what it means for us to be part of the church. So let's hear those three things. There's more than three, lots of detail in these 13 verses that we can't look at. But here's the three that I think really jump out. The first thing he tells us is that if you're a Christian today, if you're part of the church, you are free and in bondage simultaneously.

And then he tells us after that, that if you're a part of the church, you are part of a body that is unified yet diverse, that you are a unity and diversity. And then finally he tells us that we are all servants of the gospel.

So three aspects of what it means to be the community of faith here. And Paul's own self understanding and then our corporate understanding of who we are. First, he says, we are a people free and in bondage at the very same time.

[ 7 : 07 ] So verse one jumps right off the page. He says, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. Now, if you have a Bible, look down at verse one and you will see that there's a dash at the end of verse one.

And then he interrupts himself. And if you have a Bible, you can jump down to verse 14 and see that he picks back up with the same line. So in verse one, he says, for this reason, and then verse 14, he says, for this reason.

And in verse 14, he begins to pray. And so what's happening is that in verse one, he's about to start a prayer. And then he interrupts himself and he picks back up with that prayer in verse 14. We'll see the prayer next week.

So we're about to see what he, why he interrupts himself. But before he interrupts himself, he identifies himself. And what does he say? He says, I, Paul, am a prisoner of Nero.

No, he doesn't say that. That is exactly what you would expect him to say. I, Paul, in chains, in Rome, prisoner of the evil emperor Nero.

[ 8 : 14 ] No, he says, I, Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ. And it leaps off the page if you're paying attention to the precise language, because he is imprisoned in Rome by Nero, yet he says, I'm a prisoner of Jesus.

And he's talking about himself and it's, it's idea that he repeats all throughout his letters and he's talking about us. And it's sort of almost, it's a metaphor.

He's saying something like, Jesus Christ is my warden. Jesus Christ is my prison guard. Jesus Christ is the one who has me in bondage. When in the world could he mean by that? In bondage to Jesus Christ.

And the main idea here, as he's saying to every single human being, every single one of us, subtly, we are all servants. We are all imprisoned.

We are all in bondage. Every single human being has a master. Even if we don't realize it, we all serve a master, we all have a master.

[ 9 : 12 ] And he's saying, Jesus Christ is his master, his prison guard, that we're all in bondage. We're all in servitude to something, to somebody.

Let me, let me try to prove it to you. Do you ever, do you ever lay down at night? It's coming towards bedtime and you say, you know, tonight, I'm going to get in the bed early.

I'm going to read a book tonight. I'm going to get 25 pages of this book I've been meaning to read. And I'm going to go to bed early, right after I read, and I'm not going to look at my phone. And you know, some of you do this, some of you are good at this.

Most of us are not. And you, you say, but tonight's the night, 9.30, I'm in the bed. I'm going to be asleep by 10. I'm going to get up early. I'm going to be disciplined. I'm going to have a great morning. The early bird gets the worm.

And you know, you're laying in bed, you've read four pages, it's 9.30, and all of a sudden you look up, it's 1 a.m. and you are deep into YouTube shorts. You know, you are doom scrolling.

[ 10 : 09 ] You are looking at meme after meme after meme. And you're starting your second Netflix film and it's 1.30. You know, you say, I just really want to have a great morning, but your nighttime self hates your morning self and your morning self hates your nighttime self.

And it's, it's funny because it's true. And the issue is, is that we do not have the self control that we want, our desires deep down within us are all fighting against each other.

We cannot control ourselves. Let me give you a more serious example. Have you ever had the experience where you know that what you were about to do, you're tempted and you know what you're about to do is wrong.

It's sinful. It's a sin against the Lord. You know it's wrong. And yet you just want to do it anyway. And you do it and you don't care at all in the moment about the fact that you know it's active rebellion.

And in that moment, your will is fighting against your intellect. You're bent and you're broken and you're, you're pushing against your own self. And you realize that you are in bondage.

[ 11 : 13 ] You are imprisoned to your own corrupted desires. You can't control yourself. And that's every single human. We all have a master. We're all in bondage. We're all imprisoned.

And Paul actually teaches really clearly in Ephesians two and then three, you've got a master and ultimately that master is self. It's comfort or accomplishment. It's passivity or activity, but ultimately we worship ourselves.

And we see this, we see this most acutely in the corruption of our desires. We do what we want, but we're broken. We're fighting against ourselves. We have no self control.

We're in bondage. One of the great examples of this, the past we while has been to follow the track of the actor Jim Carrey. Most of you will know Jim Carrey, very famous comedian and actor.

So Jim Carrey in 1998, 99 made a movie and it was about his own favorite comedian, a guy named Andy. And when he did this, he, they've made a Netflix documentary about it actually.

[ 12 : 13 ] And when he did this, he decided to fully immerse into Andy's life. And so he for months and months played Andy without ever breaking character on, on the set off the set, 24 seven was never Jim was only Andy spoke like Andy, used his phrases, everything tried to completely immerse himself in that life.

Even the director was frustrated with Jim because he wanted to talk to Jim, but he only ever got Andy out of Jim. And eventually Jim Carrey came out of that when he finished the film.

And he, this is a paraphrase, but he said, whenever I stopped being Andy, suddenly I was back having to deal with me and my problems and my heartache and my desires and my despair over my desires.

And he said, and he said, he entered into depression. He was so sad because play acting for him had been an escape from the things he was chasing, the things that he thought were going to fulfill him that never had.

And in some of you have seen this in 2016, very famously sort of a climactic moment for him. He came to the Golden Globes and the, the announcer at the Golden Globes introduced him as two time Golden Globe winner Jim Carrey.

[ 13 : 32 ] And he came out onto the stage and he says, I am two time Golden Globe winner Jim Carrey. And when I go to sleep at night, I'm not just some guy going to sleep.

Oh no, I am two time Golden Globe winner Jim Carrey. And when I dream, I don't just dream any dream. No sir, I dream about being three time Golden Globe winner Jim Carrey.

Because if I can do that, then I know I would finally be enough. It would finally be true. And I could stop this terrible search for what I know will ultimately not fulfill me.

And then he says, but don't let me convince you that these words are not, these awards are not important. And you see what he was saying? He was saying, I have been chasing celebrity and accomplishment my whole life and it is my God.

He knew it. It's my idol. It's what I worship. And he knew that it was never going to be enough, that he would never be fulfilled. And he said, he read Jim. Now, I don't know where he is now in life.

[ 14 : 34 ] I hope he finds Christ. But he knew that everybody worships something and that we're all imprisoned. Every one of us has religion. It's just what do you worship? And for all of us to some degree itself, our accomplishments, our successes, David Clarkson, an old Scottish theologian and preacher, he talks about this.

He says, when it comes to idolatry, few of us will own this, but nothing is more common that if we think of our soul as a house, our faculties, our intellect, our will, our desires, our emotions as a home, he says, there is an idol set up in every single room, a different thing that we're chasing, a different thing that has imprisoned us.

Paul, we've spent our whole time on four little words, but I want to do that because they're so important. Paul says, I'm a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Every single one of us are in bondage.

And the question is, do you know that today, that you worship something you always do, and you can either be in bondage to an idol, to yourself, or to the real God, the only master that can actually be enough for you, that can actually fulfill you.

And let me ask you, if you're a Christian today, if you are a follower of Jesus, publicly professing faith today, is Jesus Christ your master, not only in words, but functionally?

[ 15 : 59 ] Are you living in the bondage and under the yoke of Jesus? Are you still following another master? Are you functionally under Christ's lordship?

Are you living that way? You see what he will move on, but what he's talking about here is actually the bondage of Christ is true freedom. That's the metaphor.

And at the very end, in verse 13, he says to the Ephesians, please, people of Ephesus, do not lose heart that I am currently imprisoned. And he's saying, you know, don't be worried about it because Nero has got me in chains.

I'm a prisoner of Nero physically, but I am not imprisoned by my circumstances because I'm free. I'm in bondage to Christ, and so in my soul, I'm free.

I'm not a slave to circumstance, not at all, because Christ has set me free. I have a better master. And so if you're in bondage to Christ, you can have freedom from your circumstances.

[ 16 : 57 ] Suffering cannot take away your hope. If you're in bondage to Christ, you have freedom from guilt. No matter what you do, God will say to you, you're forgiven, you're cleansed, you're washed.

If you're in bondage to Christ, if you have a better master, you're free from trying to curate your own identity in this life, from being told by the world, by the culture, you know, you are however you feel about yourself.

And that is true bondage. Being told that your identity is completely based on your emotions and your feelings, that is bondage. But you can have freedom under the bondage of Christ by being told you have an identity that can never be taken away from you.

You have a true master, the only true master that can satisfy. Who's the church? There are people who are in bondage to the true master and thus truly free.

Who's the church? Well, together as well, secondly, and we'll spend most of the rest of our time here. Who is the church? We are both free under the bondage of Christ and we are a great unity and diversity.

[18:00] That's the other thing Paul tells us. All right, if you cast your eyes down to the passage and just notice the language here. In verse two, Paul says, I have the stewardship of God's grace. I'm a steward of the grace of God. Then in verse three, he says, the mystery was revealed to me and I've written about that. So I'm a steward of the gospel.

I know the mystery of God. It's been delivered to me and I write about it. Then keep going. Verse four, he says, you can know my insight into the mystery of Christ.

Verse five, he says, that was made known to me, revealed to me. If you go down to the rest, verse six, verse seven, he says, of this gospel, I was made a minister.

He goes on to say, even I'm a servant or a slave of the gospel. So if you go through, you can start to register that he's saying, God has given me a stewardship of the gospel. I'm a slave of the gospel.

[18:57] I'm a servant of the gospel. I'm a prisoner of Christ. I'm a minister. So he's talking about all the different metaphors for how God has set him apart to deliver the gospel to the world, particularly to preach to the Gentiles.

And in the midst of all that, he's thinking about his own identity. He's talking about himself and you get down to verse eight and he says something very, very important. He says, to me, I am the very least of all the saints.

This grace was given to me, though I am the least. And at that moment, he creates a word in Greek that does not exist. When he says, to me, this grace was given, though I am least in all the church, among all the saints.

And the best way we can translate it, different scholars will say different things, but they say it's something like when we say leastest, the closest thing would be something like, I'm the smallest that would be the literal way to translate it.

It's a word that he creates. We don't have it in Greek. And he's trying to capture this idea, this utter idea that he really is the most unlikely Christian and truly the most undeserving of all the Christians and yet the great apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles, the European world as we know it today.

[20:17] And what he's trying to do there is he's trying to get us to think about his life. Do you remember his life? He's the leastest. Why? Because this man was going around and murdering Christians.

This man was adamant against Gentile and Jew being gathered together in the same spaces. One, he hated Christ.

He hated the gospel and he hated the unity that could be had amidst difference in ethnicity, socioeconomic class based on the gospel. He was the great enemy of that and God encountered him on the Damascus road and changed his life.

The light of Jesus hit him and showed him Jesus really is the master, the real God, and the church is for every type of person. And so in God's great irony, the greatest enemy of that message became the greatest servant.

So he's the leastest among all the saints because he's the least deserving murderer of Christians and now the great apostle to all the Gentiles. Now in the midst of all that, he says the mystery of God revealed through my message is that Jew and Gentile belong together in the church, that we're one.

[21:30] We really are objectively one in Christ Jesus and he's talking here through his own experience about the unity and diversity of the church.

Two ways that that's true. One, through Paul, the unity and diversity of the church. The gospel is for every type of sinner.

There is no one excluded from the hope of the gospel. No matter what you've done, no matter where you've been, Paul can say I'm the leastest because he was the worst, the worstest to carry the language forward.

And yet the gospel entered into his life and changed him and brought him part of the family of God in the most unexpected way. And there is a great unity and diversity of the church because God takes all different types of sinners from all different types of backgrounds and forgives them for all different types of sins and brings them together in one body.

And the second way is he's saying very, very clearly, very simply, that means that the gospel is for not only every type of sinner, but every type of person. Every ethnicity, every race, every nationality,

every political persuasion, every single person, every age and stage.

[ 22 : 44 ] It doesn't matter that the gospel comes and unifies us in the most unexpected ways throughout every single type of culture, society and world history. That's the mystery of God revealed through the cross that God came to save so many people and to bring them all together.

Now, let me give you two practical takeaways of that and we'll start to come to a close. Notice as I say, start to come to a close. Two practical takeaways.

One is that that means that the church, Paul is telling us, is the most unified and diverse movement in all of world history. People love diversity today and there's a lot of good in that, but the truth is that it's Christianity, it's the gospel that creates true unity in the midst of diversity.

And the church is the great example of that until Jesus Christ comes again. There's been nothing like it, nothing like the church in all of world history. And so he's pointing us again for the third week in a row to see that there is a real centrality in this letter and in the Bible to see the importance of the church and the life of the Christian.

That you truly are, if you're a believer today, objectively part of the church, Christ's body, no matter how you feel about it, no matter how bored you get sometimes. You truly are objectively part of the body of Christ and you can't get past it.

[ 24 : 03 ] He's calling us to see the centrality of the church and the life of the Christian and what that means, I think there's a question in that and that's how can we remain laxadaisical about the glory of the church?

How can we be humdrum? How can we be bored with it? When you see what Paul says about it, when you see what Jesus says about it, when you see what Jesus says about us, Jesus Christ became the ultimate stranger, alienated from God, carrying the weight and plight of our sin at the cross so that we might be set free.

He became the ultimate prisoner. He was in bondage. He took on hostility so that he could gather a people together from all parts of life, all across the world, freed from guilt, freed from sin.

He says you can't be laxadaisical about the church. It's central to God's program of what he's doing in world history. Let me get very concrete about this.

For all of us, sometimes we can struggle with our relationship to God's people gathered, to the church, to the local church, the institution, to the church across a nation, like the free church of Scotland.

[ 25 : 11 ] We all have varying relationships to the church. But there's a sense in which we're being called, I think, today to break through that and to really concretely see that God is calling us to love God's people and love the church.

How can you do that? How can you do that in your heart? Here's some simple ways, one, some things that help. Bring your Bible to church and open it up and dig right into the heart of the text every week.

That really actually helps you gather together and gather around God's word. Sing the songs that we sing. Sing the songs that the church sings and look at every single line and try to sing it to God and to each other at the same time.

Pray with whoever's praying from up front or Fridays and Wednesdays when we gather for prayer.

Pray every line in your heart that the person you're listening to prays.

Break through, break through and gather together and join in. And when we do all that, worship God and speak to one another at the very same time. Be the church, Paul is calling us here.

[ 26 : 20 ] Know that it's central. The second thing, and the last thing, is that he's telling us we're a unity and diversity and the implication is that implication, last implication of that.

It's found in verse 10. So if you go to verse 10, Paul says, I've been given the charge to bring the light of the gospel to the Gentiles, verse 10, so that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in heaven.

All right, when he says that little word, through the church, the, here's the word, the manifold wisdom of God. That's a word that literally translates to multicolored or multifaceted.

It's a word, it's a metaphor for a diamond as a way to think about it. And he's talking about how the manifold wisdom, the wisdom of God and the gospel to bring together all sorts of people all throughout world history into one body, one church.

He says it's like a multifaceted diamond where light is being shone through a million ways, a thousand different ways. It's multicolored, it's many dimensioned. You can never get to the depths

of how many dimensions there are to the wealth of the diamond that is God's wisdom in the church. [ 27 : 30 ] One writer talks about how it's like, it's like at the beginning of the Chronicles of Narnia, when the kids go into the home, the great manor house of their uncle, we have so many of these around Scotland, so many great homes, so many enormous homes, castles.

It'd be like going into a home with a thousand rooms and you open the door to every single one of those rooms and in every single one of those rooms there's a new wardrobe, a new treasure, a new treasure chest to find, a thousand rooms.

You can't get to the bottom of it. It never ends. And he's saying the church is multicolored, multifaceted like a diamond because you can go to every single room in the church, every single person, every single nationality, every single place that God has brought the gospel all over the world and hear a new story of grace, a new story of how God is working in somebody's life.

And it's like opening up the door to a whole new treasure chest. One gospel, one people, one baptism, so many facets of the diamond gathered all over the world.

Let me give you one very concrete takeaway of this. You know what that means? The diamond that is the church, the prism, thousand dimensions to it. It means that we are a unity and diversity in that we are gathered around one baptism, one Lord, one gospel, one spirit in so many dimensions, diverse ways.

[ 28 : 53 ] And so that means we should never expect all the churches to look the same. We should never expect everybody in all the church to wear the same clothes or to sing the same songs according to the Celtic jazz or whatever style that a church chooses to adopt.

We should go to all these different places and see the gospel and the worship of the church expressed in different ways. And that's something to celebrate, to rejoice in, because we are a unity and diversity.

Give you a concrete, even more concrete example of this. Every once in a while, I like to wear a tie just every once in a while. Some people like that. Some people probably don't.

Some of you love to wear ties, suits, some of you men. Different clothing represented in the life of St. Columbus. And if you go back 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago, you know that that's different, right? That clothing has changed every decade. And there's such good in that. Look, I myself actually enjoy the tie sometimes.

[ 29 : 56 ] But if you, you know the first time a tie would have been worn, a suit would have been worn in Edinburgh, in church, about 1830. That was probably the first time a suit was ever worn in church.

And you know what that means? That means from the year that Christ rose from the dead all the way till 1830, there were no suits and ties.

And then in 1830, people were in suits and ties. And you know what people said then? These people in their suits and ties, bringing new clothing into the church. What's going on? Innovation, right?

And now we love suit and ties, and some of you love to wear different things. And there's glory and beauty in that, because you see clothing changes. There's a diversity of expression in the local church, in our church, in the church down the street, in the church up the road, in the church across the world.

But it's one gospel, one spirit, one baptism in every single place. We're a unity and diversity. All right, let me close with this. I can only spend about 90 seconds.

[ 30 : 56 ] The last thing Paul teaches us, and we'll get into this next week, is that we are also servants of the gospel. He says we're prisoners of Christ, we're ministers, prisoners, stewards, servants, slaves, all given this message to steward to other people.

He says in this passage we're called to preach, to bring the light of the plan of God to everyone. And so we're going to see next week, we'll focus on this next week, is that he's saying to us here, we are all ministers of the gospel.

It's an every person ministry, stewards of the gospel, prisoners of Christ, stewards of the gospel, all together, every single person. And so the last line here, verse 10, he says this multifaceted diamond that takes diverse expression everywhere we go.

He says God has made known his wisdom to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. Strange language here.

If you look at this carefully, this is what Paul's saying, and we'll end with this. He's saying that when God brings the gospel to all the world, and many, many people from diverse backgrounds come to faith and join the church, that the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places gaze upon that. [ 32 : 14 ] Now what he's saying is this, the people who think that the church is most beautiful are the angels. It's the angels who are looking down and seeing the church, people brought in by the gospel, the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, gazing upon that and saying, wow, look what our God is doing throughout world history in bringing people together in the church.

And we have this in 1 Peter 1.12. Peter says concerning salvation, the gospel preached to you, the beauty of the church, these are the things upon which the angels long to gaze.

Break through our practical materialism and know today that the angels are gazing upon the beauty of Christ's church gathered together all across the world right now.

And they say, wow, look at what God is building, look at what our God is doing. The question today is when the angels say the church is beautiful, not boring, glorious, not humdrum, is that our heart? Can we say that along with the angels in the heavenly places, that what God is doing all across the world, the building of God's people, that's beautiful. That's glorious.

[ 33 : 28 ] Let us pray. Lord, we thank you. We thank you that you have saved us from all sorts of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, nationalities, political persuasions, and collected to yourself a people that seeing your praises in every tribe tongue, according to every tribe tongue language and nation.

And so we pray today that we would see the glory and the beauty of that diverse expression of the church all throughout the ages. Even in our city, we know today that there are dozens of communities from all different nationalities gathered for worship.

We know that there are dozens of nationalities and backgrounds represented in St. C's right now in this moment. So we thank you for that. So we see the glory of what you're doing, Lord, putting people once hostile and fractured throughout world history together again by the power of salvation in Christ.

We thank you that you've washed away our guilt. We thank you for the cross. And we just pray today that we would see the unity and diversity of your church and that we would love the gathering of the saints all the more, Lord.

So strike our hearts with that, we pray. We ask for that. I pray for somebody today that needs to see that they can be forgiven for their sins, like Paul needed forgiveness for what he had done.

[ 34 : 50 ] So I just pray today that you would touch somebody's heart with the words of grace. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.