

Ephesians

The Weakness & Folly of God

Ephesians 3:1-12

May 11th, 2025

I. Introduction: A Spectacle to Angels

The Church is the medium or the microphone through which the manifold wisdom of God is made known, not simply to the rest of the world, but also to the _____. According to the Apostles, the story that God is telling in this world is like a kind of theater production, and we have an angelic audience. What does this story proclaim? What is this audience learning as they behold the spectacle before their eyes? They behold the glory of God. And in particular, as Paul says in our passage, they see the manifold wisdom of God. The Lord's dealings with mankind through this story of redemption makes known for all to see the manifold wisdom of God in the unsearchable riches of _____. All of creation and all of redemption redounds to the glory of God's glorious wisdom in Jesus—and the angels are eagerly attentive to it. The holy angels are astounded by what they see, and they praise God, while the fallen angels are confounded by what they see, gnashing their teeth.

II. The Text — Ephesians 3:1-12

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

III. The Surprising Wisdom of God

God's wisdom is inscrutable to us, and it is also for the angels. God surprises us, not just because we are sinful and our minds are clouded; but God surprises us because God's glory *is* surprising. It *is* unexpected. God is more glorious than even the angels in glory expect Him to be. The powers and dominions and principalities in the heavenly realm, therefore, eagerly watch the drama play out on earth, so that they might see the surprising wisdom of God revealed through His history with us, His Church.

IV. The Weakness & Folly of God

The most surprising and glorious manifestation of God's wisdom is revealed in the message the Church proclaims: the Gospel of Christ _____. By His incarnation and by His death, the Son of God astounds not just men, but angels. God confounds those angels that

rebelled against Him, not by thunderbolts or by a mighty and outstretched arm, but by the _____ born to Mary in a stable and by His _____ upon a cross.

- ***Bait upon the _____*** — The Church Fathers liked to describe Jesus, the God-Man, on the Cross as the Bait upon the Hook. Jesus in His humanity was the Bait. Jesus in His divinity, the Hook. The Son of God hid His divine nature under the veil of our flesh so that as with a giant fish the devil and his cronies might gobble up the Bait, and as they gobbled up the Bait, they gulped down the Hook of God. The consequence of this was utter defeat.
- ***The folly of God, the weakness of God*** — The Cross of Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and yet to men and angels it looks like weakness and frailty, folly and death. It looks like God was outplayed, that Jesus was outmaneuvered. But we are the fools. Mankind and angels alike are fools. God's wisdom is too high for us. The very folly of God surpasses the wisdom of the ages, and the very weakness of God proves stronger than all the combined forces of Jerusalem and Rome, of mankind and demons. See 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.
- ***Rival gods*** — Devils long held sway over the nations: enslaving mankind to lust and fear; enslaving the nations by their awesome displays of power. But then the Son of God came along, and He freed us not by matching His power against the power of demons, but by the _____. Jesus shows that even in His weakness He is stronger than them; even with His hands tied behind His back, He will triumph. He defeated them as a Man, and defeated them in weakness. Though the Lion of Judah, yet He defeated them as the _____ who was slain.
- ***He bound the strong man and took the spoils*** — Jesus defeated them on the cross, rose from dead, and then by the proclamation of this message, Jesus drew and is drawing all men to Himself—all men who were once enslaved to false gods, that is, to the demons. He bound the strong man and took the spoils. For a time, God let mankind grope about in the darkness, and for a time, God let demons play _____. But then in Christ, He put an end to the old world order. He judged the powers and principalities in the heavenly realm. He cast Satan down from his heavenly throne, along with the other rebellious angels. And He gave the command that all the nations now bow the knee to Jesus.

V. Renew Your Minds

First. This is a call to have our minds renewed. We need to rethink what *glory* is. God has made it clear that the Cross of Jesus Christ is the pinnacle of glory. Do not believe the world when it tells you what is good and true and beautiful and attractive. Our minds must be renewed so that we love what is truly good, truly beautiful, and truly glorious.

Second. We ought to be _____ of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The world mocks the Crucified Man. We worship Him. The world calls Jesus weak. We call Him Almighty. The world cannot understand the folly of the Cross, but for us it is life and light and the full display of God's glorious love for His people and for this world.

Third. This is a call to rejoice in weakness. Weakness is no hindrance to the working of God. Paul was content with weaknesses because he did not trust in himself but in the Crucified One who said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). God's wisdom is made known in folly, God's strength in weakness. We, therefore, get to go forth trusting in Him, not in ourselves, while rejoicing in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

VI. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ