

God's Cosmic Construction Project

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[2 : 42] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. my house here in Lenexa. Anyway, we'll see what happens. So the sermon started by just reminding folks that there is a downside of walking slowly through a book of the Bible, in particular of book like Ephesians or any of the pastoral epistles. And that is, is that you could lose the feel of it because Paul didn't write Ephesians to be consumed over three months. Although of course, the Holy Spirit had that clearly in mind as one possible use of the book, but he wrote it consciously anyway, to be heard in one setting, to be read aloud and taken in as a whole. And when you do that, when you read straight through a thing, you will probably hear themes in that quicker reading that you would miss if you're zoomed in too closely. This is just the classic forest trees kind of problem. One of the themes I'm not sure will really emerge through a slow kind of gradual week by week reading of Ephesians is, I don't think it's necessarily obvious to folks how often the concept of the principalities and powers emerge in the book. They actually show up early and they show up often.

In chapter one, verse 21, Christ is exalted over them. And in chapter two, verse two, we were once walking under their influence. This, by the way, one of the things I can't help but do because of the context of, of this, I gotta, I gotta give myself more freedom for rabbit trails.

But, um, I saw this, this video, I think it was today while I was making lunch of a comedian talking about the raid in Venezuela. And he's like, he's like, it's just kind of shocking how fast it happened. He's like special operators let literally left their front, their phones in their barracks, went and grabbed Maduro and got back. And the phones were still like, you know, at 90%.

He just went into this whole thing about how shockingly easy it was to steal the president of another country. Anyway, um, I thought of that passage because, because that's one of the subtle brags of Ephesians to Paul's bragging on the Lord is like, you know, like you were, he's talking, he's like, you were dead in your sins and trespasses and you were enslaved to the passage in which you once walked according to the power of the, the, the, the, of the devil, you were children of wrath, you know, and now you're not, but God in his great mercy raised you together with Christ.

[5 : 49] Anyway, that's a, that's a beautiful thing. Like, well, the devil's like, wait, what? I lost a bunch of people. Yeah. They, they, yeah. Yeah. Jesus came and took him anyway.

Uh, back to the main content here. Who knows how long this is going to take. If I keep indulging in my, um, in my rabbit trails. All right. So yeah, this theme of, um, the demonic principalities, that stuff, it's just, it's just more in Ephesians than people realize in chapter three, verse 10, which is kind of the main text of this sermon. We're told that God is putting on a display for them in chapter four. We're, we're shown at least implicitly that Christ has conquered them in his ascension. And then later on in chapter four, we're told to watch out for the enemy and the footholds he gains through anger and sin. And then finally in chapter six, Paul pulls the curtain back and says plainly, this is really who we're fighting. This is really who we're fighting.

And he, this is the section where he talks about the spiritual armor. It's a great little book that I would recommend to you by a guy named Chris Wiley. Uh, he wrote this little, I almost kind of like a thematic commentary, which if I were going to write a commentary, it'd be, it'd be like this.

It's not so much a verse by verse explanation of every single word, but it's more like, this is what this book is about. And, uh, Chris Wiley wrote a book called the household and the war for the cosmos or something like that. He kind of suggests that this is a major theme of Ephesians, this fighting with or displaying God's supremacy to the principalities and powers.

Anyway, the point is, is that Ephesians assumes a world that is more crowded and more contested and more spiritually charged than we usually imagine. Well, there's another, so that's one major theme and there's another major theme and that is the craftsmanship of God.

[8 : 0 6] And that is actually, um, you know, we have a number of architects and people just involved in the building trades in our church and craftsmanship is a big deal in terms of, you know, these guys and their vocations. And so in the sermon that I preached on Sunday, I went into this whole thing about like, if I could, I would open up a museum, not to a particular form of art, but to just the idea of craftsmanship. And I'd have all these displays. Like I would have a Porsche 911, like the old ones. Um, there's just something about that design that has always grasped my attention.

In fact, when I was a kid, you know, probably 12 or 13, I really kind of almost committed to myself that I would one day own one of these Porsches, like one of these older Porsches.

And you have to remember because of my age, like the, that particular look was, well, I think it's a classic look. You can Google, you know, vintage Porsche 911 and you can see what I'm talking about.

But, um, I remember when I was 12 or 13, I just kind of like, was like, I want to own something like this one day. And then when I was guess 17, I was working a full-time job, plus a ton of overtime. I was probably working 60 hours a week at Golden Corral.

And mind you now I'm, you know, in the middle of Missouri, there's not a lot of exotic cars that are just hanging out there, but I remember driving past this car a lot and I saw an Alfa Romeo graduate, 1987 Alfa Romeo graduate. You have to Google that too. And I, I went and talked to the guy and I was like, how much are you asking? And so forth. And I just, I just worked really hard and didn't spend any money. And I went and bought this Alfa Romeo graduate from this guy. And if you Google it, it has the, it has a very Porsche front end anyway. Uh, all that to say that in my museum of craftsmanship, uh, craftsmanship, one of the things would be a Porsche 911. Another would be an Eames lounge chair.

[1 0 : 3 1] Um, there'd be a few chairs. There's a, there's a craftsman chair that I, a mission style chair that I absolutely love. I'm a big chair guy like to sit anyway, there'd be chairs. A shaker chair would be good as well. And then I talked about this on Sunday. I don't know if people know this, but like Pendleton wool blankets, Pendleton's a company that's been around for a long time out of Oregon.

And they do, I guess you would almost describe as sort of like an adapted Aztec patterning in their blankets and they make other things to some jackets and so forth. And I feel like given the life I've chosen and the income level I've chosen that, you know, a nine 11 is probably out an Eames chair. I'm not sure I actually want to own one of those. I would like to own a Pendleton wool blanket. And, and there's other things too. Like a Zippo lighter is shockingly well-designed. It's, it's to this day. I look at one of those and I think, gosh, like it just nailed it. There's certain Tiffany lamps that I think are amazing examples of craftsmanship.

There's a few multi-tools that I think are shockingly good. Obviously the Swiss army knife, and then some of the early iterations of the Leatherman, but also there was a multi-tool called the Gerber diesel that I thought was just exceptionally well done. Anyway, all that to say, there's just certain things that people have made, but just feel like they were imbued with a lot of care and thoughtfulness. That was, I think probably Steve Jobs' major gift was he was really good at thinking through the convergence of form and function. And that is all very necessary. I know that sounded almost indulgent to, you know, this little side trip on design, but it's actually really necessary to understand one of the first design words in the text in Ephesians. And that's the word *poema*, which means, you know, work, a work of art, a craft, something done well. It appears in chapter two, you read verses one through 10 for you. And just to give you the context and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom you all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he has loved us, even when we were dead in our sins and trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace, you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. That's just crazy. It's crazy. There's two show words. I didn't talk about this on Sunday. I think there's two show words in this section of scripture. One is 310 and one is 27.

In 27, it's God did all of this to show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. There aren't many of these words, but these show words are key. And we know that because in chapter one, we're given the Trinitarian formula where we're told three times in chapter one that we have been saved for the praise of his glory and grace. And we are kept and sanctified for the praise of his glory and grace. And in chapter one, you've got a triadic formula where you've got the father, son, the father praised for the glory of his grace, the son praised, and then the spirit praised.

It's a crazy chapter. Chapter one is a crazy chapter. Anyway, we know that one of the recurring themes is showing. God is doing all of this for the praise of his glorious grace. And by the way, a huge amount of stupidity in our American theology, it's not really that hard to correct. We just need to transfer salvation from being mostly about us because we're awesome and God wanted to save us. Just drop that down a few notches. It's not entirely wrong. It's not entirely wrong. It's just not God's ultimate purpose. God's ultimate purpose is to save us, not because we're worthy to be saved, but because of his intention to display his glorious grace. Actually, let me moderate this a bit.

[15:59] I was just reading C.S. Lewis today, actually, about this. And Lewis, I was surprised because Lewis can move in the leftist humanist direction sometimes, but he is actually careful to say that God's glory is magnified, essentially because we are not objects of great worth. I'm not sure how I feel about all that. I think worth is the wrong way to say that because I agree with Lewis. We were his enemies.

Our worth is not exactly the right way to say this, but I also don't want to view too far away from John 3.16. For God so loved the world. Anyway, I think pity is a word that doesn't quite work well for us because of certain connotations there, but that's the word that the Puritans would use, I think, to describe some of this. All that to say, point being, I don't want to go too far down. I don't have unlimited time to do this podcast, but this notion that God is doing all this to show things, God is saving to show. That's pretty big in Ephesians. Anyway, so verse 7, so that in coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Just remember, because I might not, when we get to chapter 3, that word show is important. All right, for by grace you've been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works that no one may boast. Verse 10, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We are his workmanship, the word is poema. This is where we have two pieces of this that we need to set right. First of all, our modern individualistic ears will get us into trouble. We will hear that as, I am a work of heart. I am a work of art. But Paul most certainly means we, the universal church, are a work of art. We is the plural form here. Y'all have been saved. It's a plural construct here.

So, Ephesians 2.10 is not saying you individually, Bob out there listening, downloading the sermon thousands of times to give us inflated numbers. I'm assuming that's what's happening.

[18 : 28] You are, Bob, a work of art. No, it's we. It's a collective sense. It's the church. The church is his workmanship. Corporate, plural, together, not a solitary sculpture, but a crafted whole, are a notable design. We would be the final piece de resistance of the museum of craftsmanship, the church would be. It'd be like, yeah, you've seen all these other things. Now look at this.

That's the idea. And that line of thinking continues into the next section. I'm going to read it, the next section out loud, and I want you to listen to it for a couple things. Firstly, notice the shift from hostility to peace. That shows up like it did in chapter 2, verses 1 through 10.

In the first section of that, Ephesians 2 is divided basically into two sections. And the first section is 1 through 10, and the second section is 11 through the rest.

And there's some things that they have in common. I'm reading my notes. I'm thinking, I didn't say that well. There's some things they have in common. One, there's a shift from hostility to peace, from hostility to reconciliation kind of thing. And two, there's a shift from the use of you to we. Now, this might be confusing, but the you in those sections is not you as an individual. It's you as a group of people. And then the shift to we is a kind of the church.

Okay. All right. Let's read verse 11 through 15. Therefore, remember that at one time, you Gentiles in the flesh, see how that you Gentiles, it's like a group of people. It's not just you individually, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So chapter in two, one through 10, you've got this phasing from hostility to reconciliation with God. And then you get the same style repeated again in 11 through 14, 15 ish, the phasing from hostility, estrangement, alienation to reconciliation. Verse 14, for he himself is our peace. How does this phasing take place? It's through Christ, through Jesus, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two. So making peace. So essentially, you know, the, the, the, the, the Midwestern Southern, you know, not quite Southern, but on the border type way of thinking about this for me, when I read this in the Greek, I see the use in this section and the one before as y'all's, y'all, you Gentiles were separated from Christ. You who are once far off have been brought near. And then that gives way to the, we, for he himself is our peace. There's a flow there from one group of people to a total group of people. And that's represented in what Paul's saying. It's the transition from just the Jews to the Jews plus everyone else. And that word poema is essentially like God's piece de resistance. It's, it's, it's not, it's not that he just saved people. It's that he did something fundamental to the human race related to the unification of the human race. That's the, that's the craftsmanship. You know, how do you design, how do you, how do you describe why a Zippo lighter is better? It looks, you know, how do you describe why a Porsche 911 has a very satisfying aesthetic while also being, you know, fairly superior in function? It's hard to name that stuff, but it's actually easier to describe why God's action, his poema is so cool. And that is because you had all of these sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, who, in addition to being equally, by the way, hostile with God or hostile with one another. Some of this is dependent on your being at Providence and hearing all this stuff I've been talking about with this to Ikea and the elementary principles and the way that traditions and even certain scriptures were used as sort of mechanisms of hostility within people groups, within tribes and tongues and times and so on and so forth. All that to say that the glorious thing has happened. And that is, is that God has created one people out of many

[24 : 00] people. Verse 16, that he has reconciled us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near.

For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him, you also are being built together in a dwelling place for God by the spirit.

And here we get some sense of the perfectly designed thing that we are, the kind of poema we are. We are specifically not a painting. We are not this or that. We are a house. That's the notion here. And we, at Providence, you know, we went through Exodus not that long ago, probably two years ago. And we, you know, we talked about all of these sections in Exodus for the building of the tabernacle and God's great care and specificity for this goes there, that goes there. We want gold here. We want linen there and so on and so forth. And it's kind of shocking, actually, the level of detail that God gives.

And you're like, well, what's that about? Well, at one degree, there's multiple layers of implication there. But one degree of implication would be, this is a foreshadow of God's great intentional care to build for himself out of the nations, a people for his own possession, who will become his dwelling place, something like that. And so you can move from that concept. Now that's, that's all of Ephesians two. And then we move into three and it doesn't stop. It continues. This building language continues.

So let me read three through six. For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. By the way, let me pause. Let me rabbit trail again. You're in a prison that isn't governed by any kind of civil rights or human rights activists. You're in a Roman prison, a dingy Roman prison.

[26 : 24] I just can't even imagine, quite frankly. But you're, you're in this prison and you're writing this letter through what is most likely an amanuensis, someone who's writing it down as you speak, which was very common back then, especially, uh, even more so if you had, you know, some physical problems that might prevent you from writing yourself, which we have evidence to believe Paul may have had. Anyway, you're in this dingy, gross prison and you're writing about the conceptually and ultimately physically the most glorious dwelling.

You know, it's, it's a stunning thing to think that for a Christian to be in prison is simply for the Christian's body in some respect to be in prison because the God of the universe who is building his poema out of every tribe and tongue and time is, uh, erecting a cathedral for his dwelling place that is taking, well, it's, it's taken several millenniums so far.

And I think it'll probably take some more, but, um, the point being the God of the universe is carefully and painstakingly crafting out of redeemed human lives from every tribe, tongue and time, a temple for himself, a dwelling place. And we'll see the show word come up here again in a minute.

Um, and Paul's in this dingy, gross little prison and he, but he's able because he knows the God of the universe is able to be in prison and also not, you know what I mean? Anyway, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming that you've heard the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation. As I have written briefly, just real quick on that last line, as I have written briefly, you know, for all of the amazing things happening in Ephesians one through two, it only takes about eight minutes to read. It's, it's kind of insane. The way that Paul writes the eternal decrees of God, including before the foundation of the earth in chapter one, you know, he writes it in eight minutes, an eight minute read. Uh, as I've written you briefly, when you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men and other generations, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles, holy, they're set apart, sanctified and prophets by the spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs. Now we did a good amount of work on Sunday, just trying to get people's brains to not go automatically to the place. I think most modern brains go to when they read the word Gentiles. I, I, I really do not agree with the choice that trend. And I'm a very deferential guy to the translators because I don't have a 10th of their abilities in terms of their linguistic abilities. I just don't understand why we keep using the word Gentiles. I just don't understand it. To me, the word nations is the right word there.

It just would make all the difference to the average pew sitter. But anyway, we spent a lot of time on Sunday, just trying to help people think like, don't think of the Gentiles as Romans or Greeks.

[30 : 11] On Sunday, I said, think of them as Samoans, like come up with some, you know, more exotic, think of them as Navajo or something, come up with some more exotic thing in your head, because the word Gentile here does not mean that the Jews can now get along with their Roman occupiers or that the Jews and the Hellenistic peoples can get along. It doesn't just mean that it means that God's plan for the ages is revealed in passages like Isaiah 49, where he talks about the coastlands and the islands and Psalms and so forth. Like this is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessing to, to bless all the whole world through, through him. So we read that word Gentiles. I just wish it was nations or something else. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs.

Well, you know, we skip through a lot on Sundays because we're limited on time, but like heirs is not a, heirs is a very warm and relational and familial word. So it's in the time of Paul's writing and really even in Paul's own conception of covenantal sort of procurement for the Jews, the word heir would have felt warm even for a Jew to be called a son, a receiver of God's inheritance. That would have felt a little warm, a little too familial for some Jews at the time. And now we're saying Samoans are God's sons too. It's, there's just a lot of radical shift happening in this. It's hard for us. Verse six of three, three, three, six. Uh, this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. So we've got this notion that

Paul is saying, I think you can see this because I've spent eight minutes worth of reading, talking about it, that in Christ, something extraordinarily glorious has taken place. All of the possible reasons people would have to, to estrange themselves from one another have been eliminated in one way or another via the cross. This is actually really relevant. And this is also kind of a podcast rabbit trail here, but people who talk about ethnic identity as a, as a sort of fundamental bonding mechanism. I don't completely disagree. And I'm a well-traveled guy and I've lived in lots of different contexts. I don't completely disagree with that. I think that the post-war consensus boomer types would want to wipe away all of that in part, because I just think it's just a simplification of something that's just a little more complex. But I do want to say that this, this, this Greek word *stoikia*, it appears in multiple places in the new Testament and second Corinthians and Colossians come to mind, you know, there's a, there's a wide range of meaning there, but the basic idea is that there, there are within culture of these differences that emerge, these distinctions that emerge rather than tend to be the sort of boundary markers for one thing versus one people's versus another people's color, by the way, it was really, is really a dumb one and not, not even kind of, it's a, it's a very recent notion. Color is not very necessarily very important to the ancients, but culture was for sure. And the whole idea of what Christ has done is that he somehow wound up being the unifier, but not the eliminator of cultural distinctives.

So like one of the principles you see, if you think deeply about these, well, not deeply, but if you just think slowly about these things is the Bible says that every nation will, you know, that all the nations will gather before the throne of Christ and, you know, sort of that sort of stuff in revelations. Well, that means that they have to be still different. They have to be distinct. So the sermon before this, you know, we talked about hedge hegemony is sort of, that's actually not a bad word. It's just been done badly in the past, but edge money is a good way of talking about the kingdom of God and that differences remain. So long as those differences have no sort of delusional or contradictory effect on kingdom ethics. That's really what Christianity is. It's a hegemony.

Jesus is our King. He's like, you guys can all still like different music and eat different foods, but don't jack around with the fundamentals of the gospel. Don't, don't, none of your cultural things can be loopholes around compliance to God's word or even the implications of God's word and so on and so forth. The point is, is that Jesus has done a thing that is essentially, it's, it's, it's, it's, it is not just essentially, it is actually literally impossible to overstate the significance of what Christ has done to the human race.

[36 : 03] All right. Verse seven of chapter three of this gospel. I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. Power is another big term in Ephesians.

It's actually the reason why chapter two exists to some degree is, you know, we use chapter two verses one through 10 as sort of Calvinistic proof texts, which is fine. Is the theology is there for sure. But what Paul's really doing there is he's just saying, I'm praying in chapter one, I'm praying that, you know, God's power. And then he's like, the power is really, really powerful. And that's all chapter two, really fundamentally, he shifts through the fluidity of the Holy Spirit's, you know, wise authorship into other things, but they're all kind of related and there's no definitive breaks in Ephesians one through three, not at all. Anyway, of this gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power to me, though, I am the very least of all the saints. The grace was given to preach to the nations that, you know, your Bible's going to say Gentiles there to preach to the nations, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone. What is the plan of the mystery hidden for the ages in God who created all things so that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places? There's our show word again. So in two, we've got, what verse was that? Does anybody remember? Was it two, seven? Two, seven sounds right. Yeah, two, seven. So that in, so that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Now you read that and you think he's showing us his riches of his grace and kindness toward us. It doesn't say that. Let me read it again. Verse chapter two, verse seven. So that in the coming ages, he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. He doesn't say he's showing us. I mean, we're going to obviously see it because it's, it's landed on us. Praise God. But that's not what's said there. Now, if you go to 310, 310, you get this same concept that he is showing. I think the word is known. Verse 10.

So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. So now we see what I think are probably the two main themes of Ephesians combining in what I think is probably the central verse. That's hard to say. Not sure I'm right about that, but it's certainly the place where these two main themes converge. Theme one is this principalities and powers concept. This idea that God is, uh, is present amongst many, what seemed to be from the book of Ephesians seemed to be Paul's mind in Paul's mind of the darkness, the, the evil authorities, the evil principalities, the, the power of the, the ruler of the power of the air, the devil. What seems to be happening is, is that that concept lines up next to this other concept, which we haven't fully explored yet. And that is that God's a builder.

He's a craftsman. These two concepts seem to be getting married into the, each other in Ephesians 3.10. So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, which I think is just another way of saying what he said in 2.7 to show the riches of his mercy, riches of his kindness. Verse 10 is like really important. I don't know if I'm right to say that it's the center piece, but it's really important. Okay.

And you're like, well, where's the building word in 3.10? You said that it's a convergence of the principalities concept and the building concept. It's in the word manifold. Actually, um, this word is polypoikios. And by the time Paul had used this word and I can go to like places like I'm not a great Greek student, but you know, I know my way around the helps and so forth and I can read a little bit anyway. Um, by the time Paul was using this word polypoikios, it was already used by Herodotus and others enough where we know what it meant. And it's the idea of a richly woven fabric, intricate patterns, layered craftsmanship, beauty that comes from complexity held together, not chaos, not randomness, variety with intention. Now I didn't make this point on Sunday, but one of the weirdest things about reading about the tabernacle, for instance, is how much of it was fabric. And it's culturally odd for us. It wouldn't be for like an Indian listening to this. It would make a lot more sense. Actually a lot of places that I've traveled, like the fabrics are, are kind of almost a pinnacle of the craftsmanship, you know, this is a crazy rabbit trail, but if you ever listened to Alan or if you ever read Alan Watts, like his mother was a, a weaver, you know? So all of Alan Watts is crazy thoughts. And this is not a

[42:18] Christian person. Don't think I'm endorsing him, but he is a crazy 1960s philosopher. He has a ton of, like a lot of his thinking involves warp and woof, you know, the, the, the, the threading of the needle, the, the, the weaving of fabrics. It's just funny to me that when we read Ephesians 2.10, we get poema. So we are his workmanship. And then we're told later, like what kind of workmanship we are, where are, we are a dwelling place. And, you know, in our mind, the last thing we would think of is is fabric following that. But actually the word polypoikilos is like this idea of God interweaving things to make something, to make a fabric. Now, this makes perfect sense when you start to think about the, the, the ethnicity component, the nations being woven together into a tabernacle for God to dwell in, but man, you'd have to just really, this is probably my fifth time preaching through

Ephesians. And some of this is just now coming together. Anyway, uh, polypoikilos is like a, is a word that just means colorful fabric interwoven, which, you know, you can play around with some of the biblical theological. I've got pastor friends that listen to this, I know.

And, um, they can, you know, they can play around with some of the, biblical theological stuff going on there, including Joseph, of course, and the tabernacle and the wall that, uh, the, the curtain that divided from the Holy Holies and Jesus's, uh, you know, fabric with our garment without seams. And, you know, there's just all sorts of places that you could potentially go with this. Not all of them would be true, but the, the, uh, symbolic playground is, is pretty big here. Now this word stood out to me when I was, you know, scanning through the Greek, because I thought it was another word that I like. It turned out not to be, but the word that I thought it was initially that I had to confuse with was another Greek word called, uh, polytropos or polytropon. And I learned about that word. I don't think it's in the Bible. Uh, but maybe it is. I, I learned about it because of the Odyssey. It's the first line of the Odyssey. Tell me, old muse of the man of many turns. And that word essentially praises Odysseus as a clever human hero who is resourceful. Polytropos is like the many turned adaptive resourceful MacGyver type person.

And honestly, like that's probably, that's really high praise for a person. That's, I think that's probably what a lot of men intuitively know is like, yeah, if I was polytropos, I'd be pretty, I'd be pretty happy with that. Being able to think on your feet and figure stuff out when it comes and so forth. I felt like that's a pretty good way of describing one important feature of masculinity that many of us aspire to. I think it's a good, it's a good aspiration, but in a sense, polyplikius is like a better word. It's a word that says, no, no, he's not, God's not just like reacting to stuff like Odysseus. He's not, he's not able to recalibrate, adapt, improvise, or overcome. That would be very much against Paul's first chapter of Ephesians, which is all about the eternal decrees of God and how he decided long ago to make all this happen. And it's just happened because he decided it. So God's not reactive. He's not, he's not a plan B kind of God. There is no plan B for God. He just does what he wants to do. Polyplikius almost has this sense of like, you know, if you watch Bob Ross and you're like, he ruined it. Have you ever felt that? You're watching Bob Ross and you're like, that's good.

That's good. And it's like, wait, what did you just do? You just ruined it. And it's like, and then, you know, he pulls it out at the end. You're like, oh my goodness, that was, that was good. It's this sense of a master craftsman starting from the very beginning before there was anything and winding up with exactly what he wanted to wind up with using an incalculable number of variables.

[46 : 38] We actually don't have numbers capable of describing the number of variables God has providentially worked through to produce the exact outcome without a single stitch out of place that he was intending to produce all along. The classic way describing this is the tapestry analogy. I asked my wife, I know we both grew up, you know, my wife and I are two weeks apart age wise, and we grew up both in the Midwest. So we have a lot in common memory wise, which is nice as we get older, because we can rely on each other. It's like, who sang that song? Or what movie was that called? Or so forth. We all saw the same stuff and listed the same stuff. But I said, do you remember growing up here in that tapestry sermon illustration, probably when we were teenagers? She's like, yeah. And the illustration is something like this. And we think, we think it's Elizabeth Elliot, but who knows? The idea is that, you know, from the human perspective, you look up and you see God's work and it just looks so chaotic.

We're looking at the underside of a beautiful rug or the underside of a tapestry. And the things don't line up at all. It's just, it just looks very disorganized. But from the top perspective, it's just perfectly what it should be. And the only reason I don't like that, I don't love that analogy is like, God doesn't have a, God doesn't have any disorganization, but it's helpful because it is actually basically the main challenge of the Christian life, which is how do I look at what seems to be chance, randomness, and surprise, and mystery, and question marks, and I don't know, and understand that for God, none of this is that way. He is doing what he wants to do. His poem is a polypicius. It's a tapestry, every stitch in place. And of course, then, you know, I think I mentioned this a moment ago, but you also wind up in this thing where you understand you have to use, there's, there's real intention with diversity turned into unity here with this word, or even colors turned into one thing. So it's, it's a very perfect word to use here after the other descriptions of God's craftsmanship. Now, I don't want to spend too much time on this because it's going to expose how bad I am at reading Greek, but there's actually a bunch of different words that fit into this craftsmanship kind of category. Even in back in chapter two, our words said that we are his poem. It also says that we were prepared beforehand. And that word I think is actually fairly commonly used for blueprints. So this is not something God's reacting to. He's planned this beforehand. We are his craft, we are his craftsmanship and we are prepared to do good works, which God has prepared beforehand. That prepared beforehand is almost like a blueprint type concept. In 215, where his kizzo is intentional formation. We are intentionally formed new in Christ. The church in 221 is the oikidome, a structure with real integrity. In 221, we are also the sunarmolego, goodness, let me try one more time and then I'll just quit. Sunarmolego. It's the idea in verse 21 of being precisely fitted together. I'm pretty sure I didn't get that right. Sorry. In 22, we are his, you know, his inhabitants, which is of course a building word and then a polypochios and we've got Christ as the cornerstone. This is, this is all just like building language. In Ephesians, Paul wants us to see that he is, God is not merely saving his people.

He's making us into something, a crafted work of art intentionally made in Christ or good works. And those good works aren't improvised. They were blueprinted beforehand, a part of a design that existed long before we ever even showed up or were delivered to the job site. And what God isn't making, God is making isn't simple or monochrome. It is a multicolored, intricate design, a display of the superior wisdom and organizational capacities of a God who can unify and reconcile a bunch of disparate things into one thing, which is kind of one of God's main flexes, by the way. And this is a key. So it's something God is intentionally forming in Christ. And he's taking Jews and the nations and shaping them into something that did not exist before. This something is an oikidome, a building that can actually bear weight and it's not slapped together. It's precisely fitted. Every stone aligned, every joint intentional.

The goal isn't just completion. It's habitation. God is going to live there. And this all is the way that God says to the principalities and the powers, you fools. Look what I am.

Look what I am. It's a display mechanism. He's turning chaos into order. He's essentially reuniting the human race back into a new atom where the brothers won't kill each other anymore. A people for every tribe and tongue and time brought into the unity of purpose for which man was created to rule and subdue, to be fruitful and multiply, to make much of their creator. We are this church, the invisible church, the church church, the capital C. It is it is God's magnum opus in terms of creation.

[52 : 47] Short of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, like we are, we are, we are the thing that God pulls out to show the principalities and the powers that he is wise and good and kind.

And this continues into chapter four, by the way, because then we're talking about being built up into the fullness, the growing into what we were created to be.

Now, this is an interesting concept because now we have some sense of what the cosmic drama really is. It's a building drama. It's a building drama under skepticism. And now this just as a side point brings Nehemiah into a different focus and it helps you to see the Christological actions happening in Nehemiah.

Jesus tells us, you know, at the end of the Gospels that all of this is about me. But, you know, sometimes we get to certain places in the Old Testament, like, I don't know why that's about Jesus.

You get to Nehemiah and here's the basic plot line of Nehemiah. You've got Nehemiah returning from the throne room to the broken down conditions in Israel.

[54 : 08] And his job is to build back Jerusalem. And he rallies his workers who are, you know, pretty unreliable and prone to morale problems and so forth.

But the Lord gives them the spirit to work. You know, they're working. But as they're working, they have to deal with the flaming arrows of Sambalat and others.

You know, the critics. Those those critics represent the Gamchu. It was one of the names. You know, these are these are the principalities and powers.

This is that this is a microcosmic view of the thing that God is doing himself, of what Christ is doing as he's building his church. And, you know, the workers are working. But they've got these hostile enemies who are always accusatory, always lying, blah, blah, blah, but maybe also violent.

And so, you know, the workers have to carry, you know, a sword in one hand and a spade or a shovel or whatever in the other hand. And they're creating fear.

[55 : 15] They're trying to get the workers to drop their tools. And so the idea of Nehemiah is like, we're not going to fall for that. We're going to keep working. And that's actually the drama that Paul is repeating in Ephesians, only it's with Christ, the master carpenter, building his poema, his polypochios, you know, with the blueprint.

And he's doing that while the enemies are shooting fiery darts. That's what Ephesians six is about. And it's a display to the enemies, not just the finished construction, which will be one kind of display, but it's also just a display that like, well, the building keeps happening, even as you're trying to do your stuff.

And then we kind of like can grab like the gates of hell shall not prevail. Like there's other stuff, no weapon against you formed against you shall prosper.

There's other pieces of the biblical data that gets, you know, flung into this conversation. So, you know, Nehemiah story is like kind of actually important in a way to understand what's happening.

Well, what Paul's describing in Ephesians, God is building and he's building masterfully, impatiently and publicly. He's constructing his church stone by stone, right in front of all the people who have absolute dread in their hearts deep down that this will actually work.

[56 : 48] And guess what? It will actually work. Okay. So that's the idea of what is happening in Ephesians one through three. And, um, you know, when in the sermon, I was like, okay, well, how do I apply this?

I'm not always very good at being intentional about making application. And I thought, you know, I, I think as a pastor who's been done, done this for almost 30 years now, um, I think that probably by far, if I could make one change in the global church, certainly in the universe or in the Western church, but I think globally, it would be this.

We have a tendency to forget that the church is about the glory of God first and foremost, and not about our preferences, our convictions and so on and so forth. And certainly not about our desires for programming and so on.

So I think the basic application that I left on Sunday was something like this. You are part of a building project meant to display the glory of God. One of the surest ways you can screw that up and become a problem rather than a solution is by pushing you into the center of the story.

It doesn't mean that there aren't seasons where you are the center of the church's story. Like it's important that we care for our people and so forth, but all too often, I think if I could fix one thing, it would be this tendency for Christians to evaluate the church by what it does for them rather than what it does for the glory of God.

[58 : 22] And I don't think I'm going to talk anymore about this because I think I'm going to, I mean, it's been an hour and I'll go back and deal with something else, a component of this that was mentioned on Sunday.

But I would say that in terms of application for us, it would just be good if we could get there every Sunday and say, this is a display. This is a display. This is a display, not for seekers, not for visitors, not for me, not for my kids, but for all everything, the universe to see that God is good.

How can I help display the goodness of God today? I think that that would be a pretty seismic shift in how the church works.

If we came in, not so much as consumers or even people who had needs, because I mean, we are those things. And, but if we subordinated all that beneath this other thing of like, I do hope my needs are met today.

And if they are, that'll be a great display of God's kindness, you know, so on and so forth. But if we just could try not to forget that what's really happening at a cosmic scale, at a forest over trees perspective is that we are participating in a divine building drama in which God has the audacity to build a cathedral surrounded by the horde.

[59 : 55] And he says, yeah, I think I'm going to do it this way. And by the way, it's going to be glorious. So that was, um, that's a, a longer stroll through Ephesians, mostly two through three, but I think it's also an important sort of orienting for the whole book.

I really hope that if any young pastors are going to preach to Ephesians, that someone gets them this beforehand, because I think that these two themes are probably the anchor themes for the whole book.

Anyway, well, thanks for listening. And, uh, that was fun for me. Hope it was fun for you. Hope that, uh, the Lord used it to bless you and cause cause you to see how amazing he is.

Have a good day. Thank you for listening.