

Ephesians 3:1-13

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[0:00] We're looking at the book of Ephesians tonight, Ephesians chapter 3. If you are looking in a pew Bible, that is page 977, and we're going to look at chapter 3, verses 1 to 13.

So let me read this passage for us tonight. This is the Apostle Paul writing to Christian believers in the city of Ephesus, and he writes this.

For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me, my revelation, as I have written 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 in other generations, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

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. 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.

[1:25] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for 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.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

I wonder whether you have felt like giving up lately. Maybe you just don't see a good way forward from a situation that you find yourself in.

Maybe that's a financial hardship or a family conflict or a friend who let you down or a work situation or a housing situation, and you're looking ahead and you just don't see a good way forward.

Or maybe you look back at the past. Maybe you think about a time when you weren't coming to church and you weren't really thinking about God and you weren't really praying and you weren't really trying to follow God, and life just seems a lot easier way back then.

[2:48] And you think, maybe I should just go back to that. And go back to that mode. Maybe you're just trying to survive one day at a time in the present, and you just think, I don't know how much longer I'm going to make it.

Or maybe, maybe there's somebody that you really looked up to. A spiritual leader or mentor, somebody who, maybe the person who first invited you to church or told you about Christ.

Maybe a person who really came alongside you at a time in your life and prayed with you and encouraged you. Maybe a parent, if you had a parent who was a Christian, who was a believer.

And maybe that person has, for whatever reason, maybe they've passed on. Maybe they've gotten sick. Maybe they fell on hard times themselves.

Maybe they're going through some things on their own. And you think, I don't know how I'm going to do without this person by my side. They're far away from me. Or for whatever reason, they're not right here with me anymore.

[3:57] You know, there are a lot of things that can make us lose heart. That can make us become discouraged and weary and weak and disheartened, spiritually speaking.

And the passage we're looking at tonight, it talks about a lot of things, but the end of the passage, verse 13, this is what Paul says. Paul says, I ask you not to lose heart.

Now, I'll talk a little bit about why they might be tempted to lose heart. But this is sort of the point. This is what he's driving at. He wants to encourage us not to lose heart, but to keep on looking to Jesus and pressing on in him.

Now, why might these people have been tempted to lose heart? Well, Paul was their spiritual leader, their spiritual mentor, their spiritual father.

He was the one who had started their church. He had come to Ephesus. He had preached about Jesus. He had led many of them to Christ. But now, verse 1 tells us he was a prisoner far away from them.

[5:06] A prisoner for Christ Jesus. He begins and ends this section with a reference to his imprisonment and his suffering in verse 1 and verse 13. And so you can sort of see, since it's right at the beginning and right at the end, that's an important theme that makes sense of what's in the middle.

Now, just so you know a little bit about what happened, you can read the book of Acts, chapters 19, 20, 21, sort of tell you how this all happened. But Paul was in Ephesus, and then he left and went some other places.

Then he came back through Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem. And what he was doing is he was, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were going through some hard times, financially speaking.

There were a lot of widows in their congregation. There were a lot of people who had needs. And so Paul took up a collection. He collected some money from the churches, the Gentile churches in the other nations, and he brought it to Jerusalem as a way of showing the unity that we're all in this together.

We're all one body together. We're part of the same family in Christ Jesus. We're sharing the same promise of blessing that's come to us in Christ Jesus.

[6:18] And so he's told the people in these different churches, you know, we need to help our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. We need to come alongside them. They've been going through a hard time for years and years, and we need to do something to help them.

They said, yes, we want to do that. And so they got some people. They collected a bunch of money. And Paul and some other people, they sent a delegation to Jerusalem. And they arrive in Jerusalem, and then guess what happens?

And Paul gives the gift to the Christians in Jerusalem, and then guess what happens? He gets falsely accused by the religious leaders and by a mob, a violent mob.

He gets arrested, and he gets kept in custody. They try to kill him. The police sort of protect him from being killed. But then they just keep him in custody.

And then it's sort of like he keeps going to court, and his case keeps getting continued. He never gets convicted, but he doesn't get set free either. So he's kept in Jerusalem for a while, and then he's transferred to Caesarea, and he stays in Caesarea for two years in jail, even though he still hasn't been convicted of anything.

[7:29] And part of the reason was some of the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem, now some of them had misunderstandings of what Paul was trying to do, but some of them were very against this idea that he was trying to promote.

He's saying, in Jesus Christ, the Jews and the Gentiles are now one body in Jesus Christ and part of one family together. And there were some people who really didn't like that, and they're like, oh, no, that is not what we're for.

And so that's part of what got him arrested. Paul wrote Ephesians probably while he was imprisoned in Caesarea during those two years. And it seems like, I mean, just imagine yourself, right?

Imagine if you're in the church at Ephesus, and the man who started your church, right, or someone who was the pastor of your church got arrested, you know, he, I mean, let's just take an example, right?

Let's just say one of the three pastors at Trinity, right, Nick or Matt or myself, let's say we were invited to go preach somewhere else in the United States, and we travel there, and while we're there, just because we're preaching about Jesus and talking about the gospel, we get arrested.

[8:47] And we don't, and there's some charges, but we're never convicted of anything, but we just get held in custody for two years. I mean, just imagine how you would, you know, how you'd feel about that.

You might feel, well, boy, like, you know, did Pastor Greg go a little overboard there? Or did Pastor Nick, you know, say something a little crazy?

You know, I mean, should we, you know, are we really behind these guys? Like, I don't know, maybe, maybe, maybe, maybe, maybe we should just, you know, keep our distance.

Or what about us? You know, is somebody going to come after us? Are we going to get arrested? Right? So there's all these, all these questions that could have been going on in the minds of the Ephesian Christians when they realized that their spiritual mentor, their spiritual leader, Paul was arrested and imprisoned for a, and it, and was lasting for a long time.

And they were discouraged. And that's partly why Paul wrote them this letter, is to encourage them. You know, it's actually, Ephesians, you know, compared to some of the other letters, it doesn't tell us a lot about the circumstances that it was written in.

[10:06] But I think, from this passage, at least, and from some of the prayers Paul makes, I think a big purpose of Ephesians is simply to encourage Christian believers to keep looking to Christ and just give them spiritual encouragement in a time where they could have been discouraged and lose heart.

And what we've seen so far, if you've been coming, going with us through Ephesians over the last couple of months, right? Chapter one, how does Paul start? He starts with praise and thanksgiving and prayer.

Now let me tell you, if you're discouraged, if you're tempted to lose heart, that's a good place to start. Praise God for all the spiritual blessings you have in Jesus Christ. Thank God for the good things that He has put in your life, the people He's put alongside you, the ways that you can look back and see His faithfulness.

And pray. Pray for yourself. Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ, for other people who are going through difficulties. Pray that you'd be able to see Christ clearly. That's what Paul prays in chapter one, that they'd be able to see Christ clearly.

And then chapter two, another good thing to do if you're discouraged and disheartened is remember who you are. Remember your identity in Christ.

[11:24] And that's what Paul talks about in chapter two. He talks about who you once were. He said, you used to be dead in sin and following the world and the flesh and the devil and slaves to those things.

But Paul says, now you're alive in Christ. And you've been raised up with Christ. You've been saved by grace. You're God's workmanship created for good works. And then in the end of chapter two, he says, you're part of God's family.

You're not a foreigner and a stranger anymore. You're not an outsider anymore. You're part of God's family, part of his household and part of his new temple. And he lives in you by his spirit.

And then Paul's going to go on in the end of chapter three to pray for them again. But here he interrupts himself. Now look at chapter three, verse one. It's an incomplete sentence.

For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. And he doesn't finish his sentence. And then if you look down at verse 14, he starts again.

[12:30] For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. So then he prays for them. We'll look at the prayer next week, I think. And then chapter four, verse one.

I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in the manner worthy of the calling which you have been called. So then he's going to go on to exhort them and sort of call them to live up to the calling that God has given them and give them some practical instructions and encouragements about how to persevere and how not to lose heart but how to persevere in Christian faithfulness.

And that's chapters four through six. So what we're looking at today is a little bit of Paul. I mean, it almost seems like he starts saying something and then he gets distracted and says something else.

Which is sort of interesting that that's included in his letter and he didn't cross it out. He just left it there. And I think, but in God's providence, that's what we have.

And that's part of God's purpose. So anyway, so looking at this section we're looking at tonight, there's sort of two major sections. Chapter two, verse two through seven is actually one sentence in the original Greek and verses eight through 12 is another sentence in the original Greek.

[13:46] And so in verses two through seven, what we see is that God has revealed the mystery of his grace in Jesus Christ.

And then what we'll see in verses eight through 12 is Paul is saying, God has called me to share this grace with you. And so in verse 13, Paul says, so I want you not to be discouraged, but not lose heart, but press on.

So we'll look into those things and see how that helps us find encouragement. So verses two through seven, Paul talks about a few times here, he refers to the, he uses the word mystery.

mystery. You might think, what's the mystery Paul's talking about here? Okay, verse three, mystery, verse four, the mystery of Christ, verse six, the mystery.

Now, Paul's used that word once already in Ephesians. If you look back at chapter one, verse nine, Paul says, God has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him.

[15:01] That is in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. That is God's going to bring all of creation under the authority of Jesus Christ. Now, why does he call it a mystery?

Well, I think he calls it a mystery. I think verse five helps with this. Paul says, this mystery was something that was hidden. It used to be hidden. Okay, it was, verse five, it was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, but now, it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

So, what Paul's saying is that this mystery that he's talking about, we'll see what it is, is something that it wasn't clearly set forth before the coming of Christ, but now, since Christ has come, now it's revealed.

Okay, so Paul's not talking about something that's still completely hidden. He's talking about something that used to be hidden, and now, God's opened it up so we can see what it is.

Now, what is this mystery? Verse six, 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.

[16 : 26] And, Paul's talking, when he's writing to the Ephesians, he's writing primarily to people who were Gentiles. Now, the word Gentiles just means the nations. It's just a, it's a Hebrew word or a Greek word that simply means the nations.

And, a little bit about what that means. In the Old Testament, God chose the people of Israel to be his holy nation, his special people in the world, unlike any of the other nations of the world.

And, God said to the people of Israel, you are the lights to the, you are a light to the world. I'm going to put my presence in you and teach you my laws and show you how to obey me and show you who I am, the one true God, in a way that's unlike what I'm doing in any other part of the world.

And, he put his temple in Jerusalem and he said, I will dwell with you, I will put my presence here with you, here, in a unique and special way, unlike anywhere else in the world.

And so, in the Old Testament, God said, I've called you to be my holy nation, my special people. So, if you wanted to join in, now, there were people from other nations who joined the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

[17 : 46] There's several examples, actually, like Ruth, the Moabite, and there's many others, some of the people in David's court, but they came, they would come and join the nation of Israel.

And some, they might actually move to that part of, that part of the world and sort of settle there, settle near Jerusalem and come to the temple and worship at the temple. And that's how you would sort of be part of God's work in the world, is you would, you'd be there as part of that nation.

But now, Paul says, there's been a big change. That now, Jesus Christ has broken down the dividing wall that Jews and Gentiles, that is Jews and people from every other nation of the world, can come to God on the same basis, simply through faith in Jesus Christ.

And why does that make sense? Well, it's because Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah of Israel. He's the one that God had promised all along who would be the king of Israel and the king of the nations.

And so Jesus had, and Jesus is now the new temple, right? God had promised he'd put his temple in Jerusalem where his presence would dwell, and now Jesus is the one in whom the presence of God dwells, and so we can come to God through Jesus, not through the temple in Jerusalem, right?

[19 : 05] So the coming of Jesus changed everything. And that's what Paul is saying, the coming of Jesus has changed everything. And so he's writing to people who would have been on the outside before.

And he says to them, you know, you used to be, you know, he says to them, you know, just think about what your life used to be like before you heard about Jesus. You had no real hope. You were without hope and without God in the world, wandering around in the darkness, following the course of the ruler of this world and disobedience to God and all kinds of things.

But Paul says, now the light of Christ has shined on you. Now you're part of God's family. Now you are fellow heirs. That means you're in on the promise.

You're part of the family. You're members of the same body. The one new humanity that he talked about in chapter two, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. So that's what Paul's saying in verse six.

He's saying this to the Ephesians. He's saying, you're in Jesus Christ. You are now one with God through Jesus Christ and one with one another.

[20:24] And Paul says, this is the message that God has given me. This is the mystery that has been revealed in Jesus Christ. You know, if you read in the Old Testament, the prophets promised many times, there's many examples of this, the prophets looked forward to a day when the Gentiles, the nations, would come and worship the one true God of Israel.

They looked forward to that day, but it didn't, but it wasn't totally clear how that would happen. And Paul says, now you can see how it can happen. You can see how it's happened because Jesus Christ has come.

And he's come for Israel and for the whole world. For everyone. And he's come to bring us into God's family by his grace. Look at verse 2 and verse 7.

Paul talks about God's grace that was given to me for you in verse 2. Verse 7, the gift of God's grace which was given to me.

Verse 8, this grace was given. Right? He repeats these words. Grace, gift, given, to emphasize that this is all a gift of God.

[21:34] You know, it's not like it's something that God has done by his grace. That word grace just means generosity or gift.

And Paul says, it's a generous, lavish gift that God has poured out upon us in Jesus Christ. Christ. So this is what he's saying in verse 2 to 7.

God has revealed this mystery, the mystery of his grace in Jesus Christ. And, and then in verse 8 to 12, Paul emphasizes that God has called me, Paul's referring to himself, God has called me to make it known to you.

So you can see really throughout this, these verses, it comes up some in the first paragraph to, you know, verse 2, the stewardship of God's grace given to me for you.

The mystery is made known to me. My insight of the mystery of Christ has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. But then, then especially in verse 7, 8, 9, Paul says, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace.

[22:42] Though I am the very least of the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles and to bring to life for everyone God's plan. This mystery that through Jesus Christ, people from all nations can be united under the lordship of Jesus Christ as part of God's eternal purpose.

And Paul says, God has called me to make this mystery known to you. So those are sort of the two major parts of this passage that it's a mystery or God has revealed this mystery.

God has called me to make it known to you. And so he wants to encourage them. And let me, let me, I want to apply this message to us in three ways and spend the rest of our time just sort of applying this message to us and how it can give us encouragement where we are and looking at some points here.

So first, first way it can encourage us is that this is a message. The message Paul is talking about gives us both humility and confidence. If you look at verse 8, Paul describes himself as the very least of all the saints.

In another place he calls himself the worst, the chief of sinners. Paul saw that he was completely unworthy and undeserving of God's favor and blessing.

[24:08] But then he says, so he was, in that sense he was very humble. I'm the least. Like, I'm not better than anybody else. But then, he's also very confident.

He says, this grace was given me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ to bring to light for everyone the plan that was hidden for ages in God. He's saying, God has sent me to explain to you this mystery that for thousands of years wasn't made clear.

and God sent me as the apostle for you to tell you this truth so that your eyes can be opened and you can come from darkness into light and you can see the glory of God.

It's interesting, right? Paul has both this humility saying I'm the least of all the saints and this amazing confidence. And that's what the message of God's grace does when it gets inside us.

Right? It humbles us. It shows us our sin but it also gives us confidence because our confidence and it's not a false confidence in ourselves but it's a true confidence that comes from Christ and knowing that Christ's promises are true and Christ has called us and he's called us by his grace.

[25:25] He's saved us by his grace and he equips us by his grace to do everything that we're doing and so we can never ultimately take the credit for good things that God does through us but we can go forward confidently because he's called us and we can know that we have a place at his table in the family of God just because of his grace and his mercy.

You know, I think a lot, right? I mean, isn't what a lot of us tend to do? We tend to sort of flip back and forth between false confidence in ourselves and then despair which means losing all confidence in God and we sort of flip from one to the other.

You know, on our good days we sort of build up this confidence in ourselves and then on our bad days we just realize we shouldn't have confidence in ourselves and we feel like we don't have any confidence at all.

And Paul says, no, this is a message of God's grace. It's a message that humbles us and that gives us confidence. And that's how Paul describes himself. He describes himself as a minister and that word simply means a servant.

That was a word used for someone who worked in a household who might have had some authority but you weren't the owner of the house. Right? Or even the way it's used in a government.

[26:40] Right? The minister of state. We don't use it in the United States but some other countries call it like the minister of education. Right? We call it the secretary of education. It means you're not the president.

Right? You work for somebody else. You have authority. You know, you have responsibility but you don't own the place. And that's how Paul is speaking about himself.

He's saying I'm in God's house but I don't own the house. God's given me an important responsibility in his house but it's not my house. And I can never take credit for it in the end.

And then Paul talks about himself as a steward. That word stewardship of God's grace or administration of God's grace. A steward is simply a manager. Again, Paul used another one of these words that would have been common back then for somebody who worked under someone else's authority but also had an important responsibility.

And that's how Paul speaks about himself and that's how we can think about our responsibility as members of God's household. That we have an important place in God's family but it's his.

[27 : 47] So where do you need humility? Where do you need confidence? That's something you can think and pray about. So first, humility and confidence. Second thing, the mystery that is revealed but unsearchable.

Did you notice how Paul emphasized so much God has revealed this mystery? He's made known to you. Verse 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 talks about words like made known or insight or revealed or bring to light.

Paul's emphasizing the gospel it's been brought to light. Now you can see it. You can see who Christ is. You can see who God is more and more clearly but then in verse 8 and 10 verse 8 he speaks about it as unsearchable the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Now isn't that interesting? Paul says now you can see it. It used to be hidden but now it's brought into the open. But then Paul says but it's unsearchable. That means you can never get to the bottom of it.

You can never fully grasp it. It's like exploring the ocean. Right? You can go to the beach on a warm summer day splashing the water enjoy the ocean maybe you learn to swim you can swim out a little further explore a little more maybe you get a boat you know go out a little further away from shore maybe where you can't see the land anymore and maybe you do a little fishing whatever right?

[29 : 21] You explore the ocean more maybe you do a little diving and sort maybe get some goggles and look around maybe you go all the way maybe you do scuba diving and go down even further and see some things that you could never see from the surface maybe you find a way to get into a submarine right?

And go really far down. Here's the point. When you're getting to know Jesus better it's like exploring the ocean but you'll never get to the bottom. And you can splash in the ocean and it's you can rejoice like a child in knowing your sins are forgiven and you have and you have the Holy Spirit working in you but you can go deep you can keep going deeper and that's partly what God does he just takes you deeper and deeper.

He takes you out further in the water and you're like you look around and you're like there ain't no land here. Where are we going? And God says don't worry I'm with you just like I was with you on the beach.

I'm with you. So that's the thing about being a Christian. Being a Christian is never boring because you never get it all figured out. Okay?

It's not like video games. Right? You play Super Mario Brothers or whatever the more advanced video games are today. Right? Most video games are fun for a while.

[30 : 43] You start at level one go to level two get to level three you know throw in the enhanced version but eventually you figure it out and it's boring because you know all the levels and you beat all the levels and you know exactly where all the secret you know prizes are.

You've got it. Right? Then you've got to buy a new video game because you get over it. Sometimes you get over it pretty quick. But following Jesus you never learn all his tricks because his ways are unsearchably glorious.

Right? And so that's the thing we can know God but the more you know him the more amazing he gets. And that's a wonderful truth and it's encouragement to press on and seek to know God better.

That's exactly what Paul prays in the rest of chapter three that the people would know God better and know his love more deeply in their hearts. So keep going deeper. Verse 10 describes it as God's manifold wisdom.

That's a word that means a many-sided thing. It was used for an intricately embroidered pattern or for the many colors of a bouquet of flowers or we might think of a diamond that sparkles from all different angles.

- [32 : 02] And we can come to see the manifold wisdom of God the amazing wisdom of God from sort of from different angles. And part of how we see that is actually through the different kinds of people God brings into the church.

You know, if I just had only my experience to go on you know, based on where I grew up and how I first got to know Christ and you know, how I naturally understand the Bible that's fine but that's just one person.

But the more you get to know other people who come from different backgrounds and yet come to experience the same Lord Jesus it's sort of like you can look at this diamond from all different perspectives and you realize we're all coming from different places but we're coming to the same treasure.

We're coming to the same Savior. And you can see even more of his beauty as we get to know each other and see and listen to each other talk about the unsearchable riches of Christ.

So get to know somebody who's not like you but who belongs to Christ and who's looking to Christ. I encourage you to do that and learn to be who you are in Christ not be who somebody else is in Christ.

- [33 : 10] Sometimes that takes a little while. You feel like I have to be like them. No, you have to be who you are in Christ. Not just who you naturally are in your sinful nature but not necessarily like somebody else.

God's going to make you He's going to make you who He's going to make you. And He's going to make you part of the big picture. Right? Part of His family. So humility and confidence revealed but unsearchable and third suffering and victorious.

These are all paradoxes really. Things that we don't think go together naturally but in Christ they do. This is the last thing verse 13 and this is where we start and where we'll end.

So Paul says so I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you which is your glory. Now suffering and glory. We don't usually think they go together.

And the Ephesian Christians probably thought Paul our leader is thrown in prison and we don't know when he's ever getting out. That's not good.

- [34 : 20] And maybe we I don't know. I mean is this message really true? Should we really hold on to it? Should we really try to live that way?

Or should we just do something that's a little more take an easier road? Do something that maybe is a little more acceptable. A little more according to the social norms.

But Paul says no don't lose heart over what I'm suffering for you. Paul says in the Christian life suffering and glory go together. You know and there's lots of Bible verses that talk about this.

There's some that talk about through suffering we're refined. It's like a fire that refines metal. And it's I mean being in a fire is painful. And if you have ever seen a blacksmith work on metal in the fire they bang on it.

Right? Sometimes that's what suffering feels like. You're put in a fire and then you get banged on. Paul says that's how God is preparing you and making you into something amazingly glorious.

- [35 : 26] You know even in this passage you know Paul reminds them of what God is doing. Paul's saying in verse 10 the manifold wisdom of God God is now making it known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

I mean that's basically it's basically saying God is sort of saying look at what I'm doing. He's saying Satan you see you're not in charge.

Because look at what I'm doing I'm taking people out of darkness and bringing them into the light. I'm forgiving people's sins through the death of my son Jesus on the cross. God's making it known it says the wisdom of God is being made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places and most of the time when Paul talks about rulers and authorities in the heavenly places it's not the good ones it's the evil ones.

And so Paul's saying God is displaying that he that Jesus Christ is going to win the final victory even by the work that he's doing in our lives. I mean that's pretty amazing.

Think about that. It's a little bit like what God did with Job back in the Old Testament. When God said to Satan have you considered my servant Job? And Satan's like yeah yeah yeah he just he just likes you because of the stuff you give him.

[36:48] Take away his blessings and he'll curse you and die. But he didn't. You know so it's a little bit like that and and verse 12 Paul says we have boldness and access with confidence.

Right? We can come boldly before God in prayer. And then that's what he's going to do at the end of chapter 3. You know Paul's saying look yes I'm suffering in prison but think about what God is doing.

Think about how we can come boldly before him in prayer and bring our request before him in prayer and pray for one another and at the end Paul says pray for me. Put on the full armor of God and pray for me too. And then he's verse 13 he says my suffering is for your glory.

You know sometimes I have to say I think sometimes watching somebody else suffer whom you love and not being able to relieve their suffering can sometimes be I would almost say even more difficult than being the person who's suffering.

And that's sort of what Paul's saying here. He's saying don't be disheartened. I'm suffering but don't lose heart over what I'm suffering. I'm going to make it because Christ is going to bring me through this and you can make it too.

[38:10] And in fact all that I'm doing is for your benefit and for your eternal glory that you would that we all would come to the great banquet of God in the new heavens and the new earth that we'd be part of his kingdom forever.

That God is using Paul's suffering even his imprisonment and his faithful testimony for the gospel to encourage the believers in Ephesus and all kinds of places.

I mean how many places throughout the world have Paul's letters been written and Christians have been encouraged? I mean Paul even didn't realize how God would use his experience in prison to experience so many other people who've gone through so much hardship right to minister to people in all kinds of different situations where they were tempted to lose heart and God's used Paul's words over the years to encourage so many Christian believers.

You know Paul couldn't even see that. But that's the thing suffering and victorious suffering and glory they go together and so be encouraged if you're suffering if you're under if you're under the weight of an affliction and you're looking to Christ God's going to use this suffering for your glory and even for the benefit of others and just look for the ways that he's doing that.

You may not be able to see that now you may not be able to see that until years later you may not be able to see that until you get to heaven but this is what Paul says don't lose heart don't lose heart over your own suffering and don't lose heart over the suffering of other believers and the things that they might be going through pray for them come alongside them do what you can to relieve them but some things are beyond our control right?

[39:53] The Ephesians couldn't get Paul out of prison there's nothing they could have done back then for him except pray for him and entrust him to the Lord and Paul says don't worry it's going to be for your glory and the glory of God in the end let's pray Lord we thank you for the message of the gospel that Paul proclaimed Lord we thank you for how it gives us humility and confidence Lord we thank you for how it allows us to see you clearly because you've revealed yourself but also reminds us of how much more there is to know about you and encourages us to keep going deeper and Lord we thank you for how it teaches us that suffering and glory can go together and we thank you ultimately for Jesus Christ who laid down his life on the cross and that was the way to glory for him and for us so we thank you especially for him and for his death on the cross

Lord we just pray that that would be the foundation and that you would give us encouragement give us encouragement this week Lord from this passage to do what you've called us to do and to keep looking to you in Jesus name we pray amen