



Sermon – March 17, 2019
Chris Osborne

Verses Covered

Ephesians 3:9 – 14

John 17:24

2 Timothy 4:7 - 8

So I hear I have a C-. It's alright. I'm preaching in chapel April 2nd. He will rue that moment. You know one of the worse things that can happen to you is you have something you really enjoy doing. You love it. It's a passion. Driving force in your life. And you discover one day that you can't. That's a tough deal. That is pretty much precisely kind of the overview of what Paul's discussing here. In Ephesians 3 he says, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ on behalf of you Gentiles." Paul had a very strong negative and a very strong positive. Strong negative was he said, "I don't want to ever serve Christ where somebody else has already been." And then he had a very strong positive. He said, "I want to go where nobody has ever taken the Gospel." That was his passion. That's why he simply took a road in the Roman empire, went city to city, synagogue to synagogue, opening up the word, preaching Christ. That was just simply his passion. It was his drive. But as he said here, he's in Jerusalem and really he's not in that big a trouble until he says, "God sent me to the Gentiles." The Jews erupt and go nuts and he winds up in jail in Caesarea. Which if you read the Old Testament is where the Philistines were. So he's in Caesarea by the sea. He's locked down in jail. He doesn't get out. He hears the Med. He smells the Mediterranean. He hears the Hippodrome. He hears the games. He hears all the going on. But he doesn't get to leave his cell. Don't think of prisons in that day like ours. There's no ESPN, there's no magazines. He's in a room by himself with not much to eat and it's cold and it's dank, and it's just bad. And he's there for two years. Now he has a couple moments where he has a little bit of hope. He's brought out to speak to Felix. And he thinks, "You know, maybe Felix understands the only reason I'm in here. I'm not in here because I'm a criminal. I'm in here because the Jews hate me. Maybe I can get out." Felix, though, leaves him to bless the Jews. So he gets another shot in front of Festus and Agrippa who without Paul knowing, ironically would have let him go. But he's so frustrated at this point after two years, that he makes a statement as a Roman citizen. He says, "I appeal to Caesar." And so they even make the statement, "You know, we'd have let him go, but he's appealed, he's a citizen, gotta go." So he winds up going to Rome. It takes a little more time. He shipwrecks. He spends a night or two in the sea. Snake bit. He gets to Rome. He's going to spend two more years in Rome. And even though he's in a house, he's not actually in the prison. Not Bill Gate's house. It's probably one room. Locked to a soldier. And here's the bad thing,

when you read the end of the book of Acts. He has to pay for his own expenses. If he has no money, he has no food. So, again, for a guy whose passion, and here's the irony, his passion came from the call on his life after he got saved on the road to Damascus. Because he's a Jewish rabbi. He's fine with sitting in Jerusalem and teaching. But this call comes to him and it's just lit this passion in him. And the irony is that the call that lit the passion is the reason he's in jail. He can't get out. He's going to spend two more years in Rome locked away. He will get out after about two years and wind up going to Spain probably. And then he comes back and he spends just a little bit of time. This time not because the Jews are mad at him. This time because he's called a criminal. Nero's burned Rome, blamed it on the Jews, and he's locked down, blamed it on the Christians, and locked down Peter and Paul.

His calling ignited a passion that his calling quenched. Now how do you deal with that? Now and one of the difference between me and David Allen, I don't go 57 minutes. We're going to look quickly, Chris Osborne quickly, at the passage today. The passage is his answer to his quandary. He's stuck in a jail. He hates it. So how does he deal with that? Because, now come one, we've really romanticized stuff in the New Testament. He's in jail. He's chained to a soldier. Can't go to the bathroom without the soldier with him. He's chained. It's not like thousands of people are coming to hear the gospel from him. Now the gospel's going to go out in the prison, but he's not like every single day, he's sharing Christ with somebody. More than likely, there are days when maybe Luke's there, maybe a couple Christians, but there are days it's just him and the soldier. So if he looks at his own life and looks in the mirror, he does not see, now listen, he does not see a purpose of the glory of God in that moment. So how do you deal with that? What do you say to the person in the nursing home, "God hadn't taken you home yet because He's still getting glory from you." How do you say that? Now here's the answer. It's a little bit unusual. It's not what we think. We just sang about heaven being real. We just sang that. So bear in mind, because that is partially where he goes. Now we're going to walk through this phrase by phrase. Ephesians 3. Now remember we stopped at verse 8. That God had called him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. And now he comes to describe one of those riches.

⁹and to enlighten every man what is the stewardship

Now that means the working, how this thing that he's about to describe works itself out in your life.

the working out of the mystery which has been hidden from the ages in God who created all things;

Now remember he's going back to creation. God created the universe, created us, now remember, created us as the highest beings in that creation. In God's sovereignty He created a universe and gave us, in that sovereignty, limited free will. So He put a tree in the garden, put Satan in the garden, and now we have a choice. A free will choice where I can decide whether or not I think He's worth my trust or whether this guy is worth my trust. We make the wrong decision. But that was God's purpose. That's His creation. Now the mystery in that, that was hidden, now look at this. I want you to understand how that works out.

¹⁰that it might be made known now.

Now listen. Right now you're in this room. Right now there's something happening through you, based on the created power of God. Now listen to what he says.

[In order that He might make known now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavens.](#)

Now catch that. Now we know there's more than us in creation. We do know we're the highest. But there's more than us. We know there are angels, right. Cherubim, by the way, Satan is a cherub, not an angel. There's Seraphim. There's even a weird little non-explanatory statement in the book of Revelation. It just says, literally in the Greek, four participles, four living ones. No description. We don't know anything about them. I think the implication is when you look at all this, there are beings that are not itemized in the scripture. There are beings God's made that He does not delineate in here. He does not explain in here, but they are there. And he says, Paul says, that right now at this very moment God is taking the leadership in heaven and making a declaration. Now watch this.

[that he might make known now to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. 11 Through the church,](#)

That's us, right. So somehow through us there is a demonstration being made right now to the beings in heaven that we don't even understand. Now look at this.

[the multi-colored wisdom of God.](#)

Now somehow if you're actually a part of the church, it doesn't mean you signed a form to join Central. It means you accepted the truth the Holy Spirit told you about the blood of Jesus. Then you can right now demonstrate up there, now listen, no matter what you demonstrate here, even if you're in a nursing home laying in a bed, and there's nobody that comes and sees you, you can still demonstrate there the multi-faceted wisdom of God. How? Look at this.

[according to the purpose of the ages which He performed, now watch this, in Christ Jesus our Lord.](#)

Now listen to what he said. OK. He performed something in Christ Jesus our Lord. Maybe I will be as long as David. Chapters 1 through 3 have to do with our position; 4 through 6 our condition. But right now, he's talking about something God did in Christ that through us no matter whether we're laying in a bed or not, shows off in heaven to everybody there, the multi-faceted wisdom of God. Now what is that? He performed it in Christ. And that's very simply this. Before God ever made us, He knew how when He put us on this planet and He put the tree and He allowed Satan access, He knew how that when we failed, if we failed, He knew how He'd get us back, now listen, He knew how He'd get us back without damaging His integrity. Because He said, "the soul that sins, it shall die." And so now that we've sinned, sure enough, Adam and Eve died. They lost Him. They lost each other. They lost themselves. They lost the world. We've lost everything. It's broken. Everything in our life is broken. He figured out, though, long before He made us how if we did break ourselves, He would get us back without violating His integrity. And what He did is He sent His Son, who died with two kinds of righteousness. Righteousness innate as God, righteousness earned as a man so that when He died on that cross without any sin, God took my

sin, put it on His back, and in that moment gave me the ability to be forgiven without violating His integrity. When I accept that and I become part of the church, then I become a visible demonstration up there right now of the great multi-faceted wisdom of the Creator of the universe. How does that work? Look at verse 12.

¹²in whom we have the freedom and access in confidence through faith in Him.

He gives you two words. Freedom and access. Great Greek word; freedom. It was used in Athens, Greece. If you got in trouble in Athens, Greece, and you had to go before the judge, if you were a citizen, you had this Greek word, *parrésia*, free-speech, if you were a citizen, you could go to court on your own and speak to the judge. If you weren't a citizen, you couldn't go. You are a citizen that can step into the presence of Almighty God any time you desire. And then he uses the word access. We've already seen that word. It's a Greek word that means Jesus comes to the Father and says, "Father, this is Chris." It is an introduction. So what happened when I believed in Jesus and I accepted that statement from the Holy Spirit about His blood over my sin, when I believe that and surrender to that, listen, what God did then is He, Jesus, introduced me to the Father and gave me freedom to come in there any time I choose. Without violating His integrity. And that's why he writes, look in verse 13.

¹³Therefore I'm asking you, don't be bothered in my afflictions for you. It's your glory.

And then, so he says to them, "Don't worry about me. I'm in jail. I hate it. But don't worry." Look at the very next phrase.

¹⁴Because of this I bow my knees to the Father.

Every time you bow your knee to the Father, every time you take advantage of the access, every time you take advantage of the privilege, every time you step into the presence of the Father, on that moment you show off to everybody in heaven the multi-faceted wisdom of the Creator. Now we tend to take glory and make it some big deal. If I don't die on the mission field, I didn't really give God glory, when Jesus says in John 17,

²⁴God give me the glory I had with You before the world

Certainly, that made sense. He's going to the cross. 2 Timothy when Paul said,

⁷I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith; ⁸now there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness to me and not only to me, but all who await His appearing.

Is he going to get glory there as a martyr for Christ through Nero? Absolutely. What about those of us that don't die for Him? What about those of us that go into the mission field? What about those of us that are professors, doctors, lawyers, janitors. We don't do anything, quote, great for Him. Doesn't matter. Every time you step into the position He's given you, you stay in heaven at moment. How great your God is.

My wife and I were watching Blue Bloods the other night. And part of the story line was that there was a guy who was a doctor and his daughter was going through all sorts of pain and he finally took her life. Of course, TV show made it OK, you know. Yeah, maybe not OK, but we understand. I don't. I don't think there's a time in your life, no matter where you are or what you are, you can't, in heaven, honor the great Creator. I remember when my dad, after he had his stroke, last 6/7 years of his life were really hard. I watched the smartest man I ever know lose some cognizance, I watched him go from bed to chair and chair to bed, and bed to chair, and chair to bed in a diaper. It'd be easy, you know, to look at that and say, had no value and had no purpose. Never taught another Sunday school class after that stroke. Rarely read. Couldn't concentrate. My dad was a voracious reader. You know it'd be easy to look at that and say, "What a wasted ending." I'm telling you. Every time he stepped into the Father's presence, he gave Him glory. You're here and you're still cognizant, I don't care where you are, your position demonstrates how great your God is.

Father, You are amazing. You are staggering. And we do have a tendency to only see effort and activity as value. Father remind us today just the access to Your presence, is immense glory to Your name to those we don't even see or hear. Remind us how great You are in our lives. I ask You that in Jesus Christ name because His act on the cross made it all possible.