

Palmetto Baptist Church: June 7, 2020

The Glories of the Gospel: Ephesians 3:7-13

Opening illustration: Yesterday, June 6, 2020, marked the 76th anniversary of D-Day:

On June 6, 1944, (76 years ago) more than 160,000 Allied troops landed along a 50-mile stretch of heavily-fortified French coastline, to fight Nazi Germany on the beaches of Normandy, France. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the operation a crusade in which, **“we will accept nothing less than full victory.”** More than 5,000 Ships and 13,000 aircraft supported the D-Day invasion, and by day’s end, the Allies gained a foot-hold in Continental Europe. **The cost in lives on D-Day was high. More than 9,000 Allied Soldiers were killed or wounded, but their sacrifice allowed more than 100,000 Soldiers to begin the slow, hard slog across Europe, to defeat Adolf Hitler’s crack troops.** (<https://www.army.mil/d-day/>)

In a battle like the one that took place on the beaches of Normandy 76 years ago, soldiers don’t have the luxury of asking their commanding officers WHY when an order is given. Asking WHY during battle brings chaos and confusion. It was more effective to submit to orders and take action.

Of course that doesn’t mean that the soldiers didn’t ask themselves WHY as they were on the boat nearing the shore and a seemingly impossible enemy! **Let’s join the Apostle Paul in asking and answering three questions. Looking down at your dogtag...WHY ME? Looking down at his weapons... WHY THIS? Hearing the bullets bounce off the boat and anticipating the opening of the door... WHY NOT?**

- **Why use me of all people?** I have nothing special to offer. (7-8)
- **Why ask me to fight to build the church in Ephesus with the weapons of preaching, teaching, prioritizing, and simplifying?** (9-12)
- **Why not? Why shouldn’t I suffer here in prison?** Don’t you know its for your benefit? (13)

The Apostle Paul breaks his train of thought in verse 1 of chapter 3, to provide justification for his own internal struggle with the WHY of his calling, his marching orders, and his suffering in verses 7-13.

The Messenger to the Gentiles (1-3)

The Mystery of the Church (4-6)

The Message of the Gospel (7-13)

The Message of the Gospel helps you respond biblically when you face difficulty. It answers the questions of WHY ME? (7-8), WHY THIS? (9-12), and WHY NOT? (13)...

Let's read Ephesians 3:7-13.

I. Why me? (7-8a)

A. Why enlist me?

7Of this gospel I was made a minister...

(*Of this gospel*) The Apostle Paul reflects on all that he has already told us about the glorious of the gospel in the previous two chapters of Ephesians (election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, inheritance, unity, peace, the salvation of individual souls, the formation of the church... ALL BASED ON HIS GLORIOUS GRACE!

- **Gospel:** (euangeliou) good news, news that makes one happy, information that causes joy or words that bring smiles, a message that causes the heart to be sweet [Greek-English Lexicon of the NT by Louw and Nida]

2 Corinthians 3:6 – who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not the letter but of the Spirit For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.)

- **Minister:** (diakonos) one who serves as an intermediary in a transaction, agent, intermediary, courier, servant...

Why did you allow me to be a servant of the Gospel? (purpose)

Illustration: Serving as a courier for FedEx. The difference of delivering documents to a business during the normal course of the year and presents to homes during Christmas!

John Krasinski created (SGN) SOME GOOD NEWS... 6 plus episodes during quarantine due to COVID-19

B. Why enable me?

according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

1. The gift of God's grace [*charis*] (connected to verse 2 – Paul's conversion)
2. The working of his power [*dynamis*] (connected to the GREATNESS OF HIS POWER in Eph. 1:19 and 3:20)
3. Both Paul's calling to salvation and empowering for ministry were gifts given by God with NO CONNECTION to Paul's performance!

C. Why use me?

8To me, though I am the very least of all the saints,

- Why did you choose me, one so unworthy based on my own merit, to represent you?

I am the least of the saints. (perspective)

1. Not false humility (pride masked by self-abasement)
2. Not destructive humility (loss of personal value, dignity, meaning and purpose)
3. Biblical humility (based on a healthy understanding of the greatness and glory of God, the depravity of man, and the transforming power of the Gospel)
 - **I Corinthians 15:9** (written in Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey in A.D. 55)
 - **"the least of the apostles"**
 - **Ephesians 3:8** (written 5-7 years later from prison in Rome sometime between A.D. 60-62)
 - **"the least of the saints"**
 - **I Timothy 1:15** (written approximately 2 years later...after Paul's release from prison in A.D. 64)
 - **"the chief of sinners"**

Paul's perspective of who he was in light of who God is grew deeper and more meaningful over time!

Application: Make the distinction between false humility, destructive humility, and biblical humility. Biblical humility is based on a healthy understanding of your intrinsic value as an image bearer of God with a course to run for God's glory and the good of others.

- **Acts 20:24** – "that I may finish my course and the ministry I have received from the Lord..."
- **2 Timothy 4:6-7** – "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
- **Hebrews 12:1** – "the race set before you..."

I. Why me?

II. Why this? (8b-12)

- A. The foolishness of preaching *the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.***
(8b)

this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

1. **Preach:** God ordained the foolishness of preaching to communicate the life transforming truth of the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

And I, when I came to you, brothers,^[a] did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^[b] of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and my speech

and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men[Ⓜ] but in the power of God.

- God's plan to place us in a context when we can do nothing initially but listen to God speak!
- No opportunity to discuss, debate, or openly deny the truth. We are subjected to the authority of God speaking to us.

2. **Unsearchable riches of Christ:** a perspective check that is only possible to embrace if you are indwelled by the Spirit. You must have a biblical focus (what really matters: earthly riches or heavenly riches and what really lasts: God's Word, God's people, and God's glory).

- Eph. 1:7 - Riches of his grace
- Eph. 1:18 – Riches of his glorious inheritance
- Eph. 3:8 – Riches of Christ
- Eph. 3:16 – Riches of his glory

Romans 11:33

³³Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Romans 2:4

⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

B. The art of teaching *about God's plan to create the church.* (9) [the creator of all things... including the church]

⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in[Ⓜ] God, who created all things,

1. To bring to light (phōtizō): to cause to illuminate, give light to, to make plain, to disclose [reveal the truth, expose the error, provide lasting hope]
2. God, who created all things: God has proven authority to create the church

C. The primacy (priority) of the church as God's method to display His wisdom to the rulers and authorities. (10)

¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- The rulers and authorities on earth (Titus 3:1)
- The rulers and authorities in the heavenly places

- Angels, both holy and unholy (1:21; 6:12; Rom. 8:38; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15)

I. *Why me? (7-8)*

II. *Why this? (9-12)*

- A. *The foolishness of preaching*
- B. *The art of teaching*
- C. *The primacy of the church*

D. The simplicity of Christ to accomplish God's plan and connect with God's people.

¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

1. The salvation of sinners through the Jesus Christ was God's plan from eternity past. He never lost control or stopped orchestrating His plan... **NOR WILL HE DO SO TODAY!**

2 Cor 11:1-3

I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ²For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray **from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**

2. The amazing access all believers have to God the Father through our faith in God the Son.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Why not? (13)

¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- Prison, suffering, death...
 - In essence, Paul is saying: "Don't worry about me. I'm fulfilling God's plan that He set in motion in eternity past."
 - Embracing God's sovereignty brings tremendous hope regardless of the difficulty of your current circumstances.

- **Which is your glory:** Paul's imprisonment did something to inspire the believers in Ephesus to continue to persevere under suffering and hardship. He was used by God to encourage their sanctification!

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^[a] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[b] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Application:

Why me? Understand biblical humility (7-8)

- Not false humility, not destructive humility, but productive humility based on a healthy view of God and a clear understanding of your worth as an image-bearer of God with a calling and purpose for this fleeting existence of life... **ULTIMATELY, THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL THAT YOU MAY KNOW GOD AND JESUS CHRIST WHOM GOD HAS SENT (John 17:3)**

Why this? Follow God's plan for growth (9-12)

- As a church (preaching, teaching, making church a priority, keeping things simple)
- As a family (relating to each other, disciplining children, directing children)
- As a single woman or man (I Cor 7 – investing in others and leaving the future in God's hands. *Be one who is running hard after Jesus who happens to see someone next to you doing the same. The conclusion: keep up the good work or let's do this together.*)
- As a child (obeying and honoring your parents; doing the best with the circumstances in front of you)

Why not? Accept suffering as a gift from God (13)

- 2 Timothy 3:12 – All who desire to live a godly life will suffer persecution.
- COVID-19 disrupted all of our lives. God has a purpose behind this disruption.
- The death of George Floyd and the civil unrest that followed confronted all of us. Let us trust God and respond in a way that builds others up and brings God glory.