

# God's Great Wisdom

## Ephesians 3:7-13

Turn with me this morning to the book of Ephesians 3. We will be looking specifically at verses 7-13.

*7 By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.*

*8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.*

*9 I was chosen to explain to everyone\* this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.*

*10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*12 Because of Christ and our faith in him,\* we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. 13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.*

When we last left off, Paul was explaining to the church his perspective in regards to his imprisonment. He was sitting in jail calling on people to get him out, but he welcomed it, knowing that God was orchestrating something greater. You know, if it wasn't for the fact that Paul spent so much time in jail, then we wouldn't have key books of the New Testament such as the one we have been studying? Those books have gone on in time and have continued to impact and change the lives of people, and will continue to do so.

Paul knew that there was a greater calling or purpose than his comfort and it was so others would know what Jesus Christ did for them and how it can and will make a difference. Paul didn't take his purpose lightly but saw it was a God-given responsibility that gave his life meaning. **Even though he suffered, he was uncomfortable, life didn't seem to go his way, he knew that God was capable of taking his circumstances and turn them into great opportunities for people to find Jesus Christ.**

Life is going to hand us difficult scenarios. Life isn't always fair. There are times when it doesn't seem like God is anywhere to be found. But we serve a God who takes our plan B and turns it into his plan A. **We serve a God who is in control, who orchestrates each and every event so that we learn as we live, we become as we press through, and we illustrate his love and ability as others observe.**

When we can see that there is purpose and meaning to our lives, it helps us get up each and every morning and ask "God, what do you have in store for me today? What lessons are you wanting to teach me?" And, "Who will you give me the opportunity to share your love with today?" You look for those three things in your everyday life and it will become very clear that God has put you in a place of learning and chiseling, and he has

put you in the midst of a people who need God's purpose and meaning in their life as well.

Now, there are times when we make poor choices or mistakes and then we blame God for the results. Sometimes our suffering and difficult times are the result of our own foolishness and have nothing to do with God's will and plan. But that doesn't mean that we have to remain there, because God can take our mistakes, show us what we have done, bring us to a point of dependence upon him, and then intervene and turn them into demonstrations of his grace and love.

God has a purpose for our lives, he has a reason why we are here, he has a plan to play out to make sure that we develop in our character, grow in our faith and share God plan with others who still find life meaningless and without hope. Paul saw his purpose, and found new hope and life in it. That is where we now pick up Paul's words in **Ephesians 3:7**:

*<sup>7</sup> By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.*

The source of Paul's ability wasn't in the fact that he was capable or deserving of such a feat, but it lies in the fact that God's grace and God's power was given to him. Truly, who here, based on their own merit, is deserving of sharing God's Good News? None of us are, yet how will the world hear about Jesus Christ? Through us. It is a grace given to us. An opportunity given to us simply because of God has asked us to. It is a privilege to serve Jesus Christ. Our attitude should be "I get to serve Jesus!", not "I have to serve Jesus."

### **1. View your Christian walk and Christian opportunities as a privilege and not a right.**

I remember when taking the California Drivers Test, one of the great statements that went this way, "Receiving a California Drivers license is a privilege and not a right." The difference is the attitude in which we approach the issue. When it is a privilege, we value it, we respect it, we do whatever we can do to make sure that we don't lose it, we don't take it lightly but hold it above the normal everyday things. When we think it is a right, we become demanding, we consume, we only value it when we want to, in fact we determine how valuable it is instead of observing the value it already has.

Paul saw his walk with God and his opportunities as the greatest privilege! In fact, look at **Ephesians 3:8**:

*<sup>8</sup> Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.*

**In order for Paul to understand his special calling as a privilege, he had to develop a sense of humility.** As you read through the Scriptures it is interesting to see this process take place in Paul's life. If you read in **1 Corinthians 15:9** you see Paul identify himself. He states:

<sup>9</sup> *For I am the least of all the apostles.*

That makes him only last in a crowd of thirteen, after the disciples. Here in **Ephesians 3:8** he states that he is the least deserving of all God's people. In fact, in the Greek he invents a word here giving even greater meaning stating that "I am less than the least of all the saints." A sense of greater humility. But when you read in **1 Timothy 1:15**, look at how he identifies himself:

<sup>15</sup> *This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all.*

From the least of the apostles, to the least of all the saints, to the worst sinner of all – now that's progress isn't it. In the mind of God it is. Jesus even said it himself in **Matthew 11:29**:

*Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle.*

In order for Paul to understand the greatness of the privilege given by God, he had to become more and more humble. The one thing I realize as I get older is just how weak and sinful I really am, just how much I truly do need God's grace and forgiveness each and everyday. And as I develop a clearer picture of who I truly am in contrast to God's great riches, the greater the sense of privilege and responsibility I feel in my own life. I become more grateful and full of praise instead of demanding and self-satisfying. In fact, scripture goes on to say that God draws near to the humble and sets himself against the proud.

Paul found purpose in being an evangelist to the Gentile people, just as Peter was an evangelist to the Jewish people. But during his time of ministry God obviously showed him something very specific. A mysterious plan that was to be revealed at the right place and at the right time. What was it? Look at **verse 9-10**:

<sup>9</sup> *I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.* <sup>10</sup> *God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

Not only was this plan in regards to the coming of Jesus Christ – his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, but it was about God showing his great wisdom.

## **2. God wants to show his great wisdom**

It is quite clear that God doesn't do things the way we want him to, but how many of us this morning understand that that is actually a good thing? He has said in scripture that "my ways are higher than your way, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

I think as we all sit here this morning that we can all agree that when Jesus stepped into our lives things haven't been the same. For some of us it didn't happen a moment too soon but just at the right time.

God steps into our lives and he brings to us wisdom that helps us understand things, he bring strength when we ourselves are capable of holding it together, he heals hurts, he restores relationships, he brings joy and hope when we could be aimlessly wandering around in life. God has shown his wisdom in its rich variety in all of our lives. In fact, the word here for **the term "rich variety" in the original text is the word "manifold" which literally means the "many colored" wisdom of God.**

Why use such a poetic choice of words? Paul wants us to understand that just as life happens to us with great variety, so does God's wisdom. Have you ever had a blue day? Somber yet somewhat depressing. And red hours of anger and passion. Or how about golden moments of glory. Or dark valleys through which we must pass. Or green pastures when we have been led by shepherd. No matter what color our life make look like right now, God's wisdom meets us every time.

If I was to ask each and everyone of you to write out what God has shown you in your life, how he has done incredible things, how he has shown you his wisdom, I think we would all be amazed at what we would read. We can catch a glimpse of the mysteries of God today. We could fill a book of how God stepped in and showed his great wisdom and love. **What would be the purpose of showing his great wisdom? So that others would see that in the wisdom of God, he isn't looking at mankind in order to judge it, he is looking to draw close – he is inviting us in, setting out the welcome mat so that we can once again, without fear, come into the presence of God. God's wisdom shows his welcome.**

But notice in verse 10 that his purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Not only does God want to show us his wisdom but he also is showing his wisdom to those ruling in the heavenly realms (The spiritual realm which we can't see). **God wants the angels and the hostile evil forces opposed to God to see his wisdom.**

As we are living our life, we are being observed by both good and evil forces in the spiritual realm. We read in **Ephesians 6:12**:

*<sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

<sup>12</sup> *They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen. 1 Peter 1:12*

It is as if we are on stage in a great theater, with the angels (evil or good) gathered in rows watching us, and learning from what happens to us here in the lives of the believers. But what are they learning from us? For the angels of God I believe that they are learning something of God's love. A scientist by the name of Dr. Arthur Custance put it this way:

The key to the existence of such a universe as this lies, I believe, in the fact that God wished to show forth that aspect of his being which the angels have never comprehended, namely His love, without at the same time surrendering that part of his being which they do comprehend, namely his holiness.

For the demonic forces I believe it is quite the opposite. In his commentary on Ephesians Dr. Jack Hayford puts it this way:

The Lord desires that they demons would see the glory of his power in the church. In fact, this wisdom is made know through the church. God's plan from the beginning of time was to assault the powers of darkness through the church.

God wants the church to be a demonstration of his power, his wisdom. As these forces in the spirit realm watch us they see us gradually turning to God, gradually depending upon his power, learning to trust God, to turn from our fears, finding divine strength, drawing near to God in the hours of pressure and danger. The angels of God rejoice in amazement and awe of God's love and tender care. They sing praise. To the demons it evokes fear and defeat.

As I think of our church, there have been definite times when the Angels have rejoiced with us and when the demons have become discouraged, yet there have also been times when the evil forces have seemed to have gotten the upper hand. It isn't because God has been inconsistent but because we have been inconsistent in our pursuit of God.

God can only bring direction, victory, healing, purpose, hope, and strength when we are willing to repent and turn away from our sinful lifestyle, and whole heartedly pursue Him and his principles. That is when we will become victors over whatever life may throw our way. Therefore, we need to be doing our part. But even further than that, a church becomes a powerful force only when there is unity. Look at **verse 10** of our text:

*They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church.*

This reminds me of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in **John 17:21**:

*“My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father – that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me.”*

God started a plan and it was to bring everyone to an understanding that God wants to be accessible and close. It is a plan that was accomplished by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who makes all of this possible. He is the door way to God. Jesus also was the point of origin for the Christian church. He knew that his work would spark a new way of life for billions of people throughout the rest of history. His goal is that one day he will come back to receive unto himself a church of his unity and his power. Paul writes in **verse 11-12** of our text:

*<sup>11</sup> This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>12</sup> Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence.*

Despite what some churches have portrayed to the world as hypocrisy, a spiritual elitism, and conditional acceptance and love, God wants the world to know that he wants to be with them and has made a way for them to come into his presence. It is way that is obtained by faith alone. It is a way that is free, available, and accessible by all. It isn’t based on performance or earning ones favor, but is strictly based belief and trust in Jesus Christ.

God’s word to us this morning is:

1. “View your walk with God as a privilege and not a right, and maintain an attitude of humility so that you will understand and rejoice in God’s love and kindness.”
2. Allow your life to show God’s wisdom. Whether in times of trials or times of joy, in everything allow his word and his leading to manifest his wisdom so that other may see and speak of God’s ability. Let your life speak for itself and let it draw people unto Jesus Christ.