

God's Plan, Our Glory Ephesians 3:11-13

Introduction

NJFK—

¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

1. Eternal Purpose in Christ (11)
2. Bold Access through Christ (12)
3. Shining Courage in Affliction (13)

1. Eternal Purpose in Christ (11)

¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

What is "this"? Our English translation has broken a very long sentence starting in verse 8 and ending in verse 12 into shorter ones. Verse 11 actually starts with the words "according to."

⁸ 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, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 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, **11** according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

So “according to” is talking about the whole salvation plan of God in Christ, including making it known through Paul to everyone—Jew and Gentile (the mystery)—so that God’s wisdom would be displayed to the angelic beings.

All this was according to God’s purposeful design through the ages or of the ages to bring salvation through Christ to humanity.

This epic of what God has done in bringing salvation to us through Christ is not just the main story of the Bible. It’s the main story of all history.

Important for us to see it that way to understand our own personal history. We fit into the larger flow.

2. Bold Access through Christ (12)

¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Boldness, access, confidence!

Free and unrestricted access to God—remember how Paul described the Gentile ethnicities as formerly “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” (Ephesians 2:12).

Hodge, 61: not just freespokenness, or frankness, but fearlessness—without fear of rejection or harm

This ultimate freedom is found only in Christ, but by all who are relying on Christ—not just an elite priestly class—Christ is our high priest who opens the way for everyone trusting in Him and what He has done for us.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

¹⁵ For 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. ¹⁶ Let 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.

3. Shining Courage in Affliction (13)

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

These truths about God's plan and purpose of salvation for us through Christ help us put what Paul is suffering into perspective.

Don't lose heart—don't give in to evil, don't be discouraged, don't be cowards, don't grow weary

What I am suffering—my affliction; pressure, tribulation

What is Paul suffering?
House arrest in Rome

How did he get there?
Returned with a gift from Gentile churches to help believers suffering in Jerusalem.
There attacked by an angry mob stirred up by Jews from Asia that declared Paul was an enemy of Moses and the temple and had brought a Gentile into the restricted part of the temple (which he had not). They knew he had brought the good news of the Messiah to the Gentiles and that incensed them. Nearly

killed him, but rescued by Roman tribune. Assassination plot foiled. Sent to Caesarea. Spent two years there. Finally had to appeal to Caesar because the rulers wanted a bribe and were trying to curry favor with Jewish leaders. On the way, shipwrecked. Evangelized island of Malta. Still believers there in WWII.

All this suffering! Was it worth it? Paul says, "Yes!" It was for you. It is your glory. This is how much you mean to me. This is how much you mean to God!

Your not losing heart shines out the glory of the gospel.

My suffering so that you could receive the gospel shines out the glory of the gospel.

Whatever we go through, if it is in some way connected to the gospel of Christ, it shines out the splendor of what God has done for us in Christ. We are part of redemption history. Our journeys shine out the greatness and love of God, His power made perfect in weakness, His promises so valuable that they make the present suffering not worthy to be compared.