

Ephesians 3:7–13 | “God’s Grand Plan”  
*Preached on July 6, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 3, verses 7–13 today, as we continue through the book of Ephesians. *[pauseeee]*

From time-to-time, we all make grand plans. *[pause]*

Maybe it’s a trip somewhere—so you take weeks to plan this amazing trip...

You pick the perfect location, you schedule the lodging situation, you decide on what to do for meals, and all of that. *[pause]*

You even set the itinerary for the trip, scheduling out everything that you will do and when. *[pauseeee]*

It’s a grand plan in your mind, and you get so excited to see it come to fruition, but what often happens with your grand plan? *[pause]*

You envision it turning out perfectly.

You think that everything will happen according to your plan, and it will be right on schedule, according to your itinerary.

Yet there’s always some sort of wrench thrown into everything. *[pause]*

The housing situation is definitely not what it looked like in the pictures, some fun event you had planned had to be canceled due to the rain...

Or one of you gets sick, and it ruins that grand plan of yours. *[pause]*

If you have small children, just hold your plans for *anything* very loosely because you never know what will happen! *[pauseeee]*

We regularly make plans, and those plans are often thwarted, foiled, or ruined...

But today we will learn about *God’s* grand plan, which is never messed up, and the astonishing thing is that we get to play a part in it. *[pauseeee]*

If you remember from last week, Paul has been recounting his role in God’s work—he is called to share the truth that Jews and Gentiles are on equal standing...

They receive the same benefits and blessings in Christ. *[pause]*

Well now as he goes on further, Paul will show us *how* and *why* he was made a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles.

And in so doing, Paul will bring out some glorious truths for us. *[pause]*

Let's READ what he says. [*READ 7–13*]

*The first glorious truth that we see is that...*

**I. God's grand plan is proclaimed by "little us". (7–10)**

Have you ever been asked to be a part of something big and important? [*pause*]

As a pastor, I get asked to officiate in weddings, and we had a couple in our church back in June. [*pause*]

When I really think about that, that's a big honor...

I get to play a vital part in such a momentous day in the life of those two people. [*pause*]

I not only get to see the ceremony happen up close, for I'm standing up there, but also, I get to play a part in officially uniting those two people before God. [*pauseeee*]

It's a day that changes their life forever, and I get to play a part. [*pause*]

What's something that you have been asked to do that was a part of something big and important?

Wasn't it an honor and privilege?

Didn't you feel unworthy to some degree? [*pauseeee*]

As you read what Paul says and how he says it, you can tell that he is amazed to play a part in God's grand plan for the world...

He felt honored, but also unworthy—and so he sees this as pure *grace*. [*pauseee*]

Listen to what he says in verse 7, "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." [*pauseeee*]

As Paul reflected upon his role, he couldn't help but remember that it was God-given—Paul was "made" a minister of the gospel by God. [*pause*]

He didn't make himself a minister—he didn't even seek it out! [*pause*]

He didn't pay a certain amount of money to get it, or get it because he had some sort of good connections with people.

In actuality, God dramatically met him on the road to Damascus, and made him His minister.<sup>1</sup> [*pauseeeee*]

Now certainly we are not the Apostle Paul.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to Acts 9:1–19.

We do not have his special role, nor do we have such a dramatic experience as his on the road to Damascus, yet our roles are God-given. *[pause]*

It is *He* who gives us our spiritual gifts, sovereignly works in our lives and hearts, and places us where He wants us.

We are all ‘small m’ ministers of the gospel. *[pause]*

Christ has made us His disciples, and has called us to make other disciples—that’s ministering the gospel to others.<sup>2</sup>

But He has also placed us in the church, and we are all different parts of the body with different functions.<sup>3</sup>

And we are placed throughout this community in our different occupations or settings, meant to serve the Lord in different ways. *[pauseeee]*

Even in your job, do you see that as a God-given role that you can use for His glory right now in your life?

Do you even see God’s hand in it *at all?* *[pause]*

Even if you are retired, do you see the God-given role that you have now, as a way to serve the Lord?

Or do you see it as not connected to the Lord at all? *[pauseeee]*

Now since Paul was “made” a minister of the gospel, he can’t help but consider that a gift of grace, and that’s why he says that he was a minister “according to the gift of God’s grace.” *[pauseeee]*

He sees possessing his God-given role as a gift of kindness from God. *[pauseeee]*

How often do we view our roles that way? *[pause]*

Way too often, we complain that we don’t have a higher role, or that our role is too lowly.

We might even grumble that our role is too hard, or that it is not visible enough to others.

Yet do you ever thank God for the kind gift of the role that you have—do you even see it as a gift? *[pauseeeee]*

Wouldn’t it radically change the way we lived out God’s calling, if we continually remembered that what we were called to do was a “gift of grace”? *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>2</sup> A reference to Matthew 28:19–20.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

Being a pastor is a gift of God's grace, being a father is a gift, being here in Clearfield is a kindness.

What about you? *[pause]*

Do you see being a stay-at-home mom as a gift of God's kindness, or being salt and light for the Lord in your office job as a gift? *[pause]*

Do you see playing the piano, serving in the nursery, teaching a Sunday School class, or encouraging others through cards as a gift of grace from God? *[pauseeee]*

The roles we have are gifts of God's great kindness to us, for He gave them to us, but there's more...

The ability and strength to perform our roles are gifts of grace, too. *[pause]*

Paul says that this gift was given to him "by the working of his power." *[pause]*

Now Paul seems to be talking primarily about the role that he received, but you cannot sever the role God gives to us, and the ability and strength needed to do that role. *[pause]*

Meaning: He doesn't call us to something, and then not equip us to do it.

No, He calls us to do something, and then gives us exactly what we need to do it. *[pause]*

So Paul sees God's gift as the foundation for all that he was called to do...

It was grace to receive the role, and it's grace to be able to actually do it—God's kindness surrounds us from beginning to middle to end. *[pauseeee]*

Through God's power, Paul has been given what he needs to serve the Lord.

And so what confidence and assurance we can have knowing this—God's mighty, effective power backs our roles and responsibilities that He gives to us. *[pauseeee]*

Since His power is not lacking, then we are not lacking to do what He calls us to do.

And this is so important because we must remember that the work of ministry cannot be done in human strength alone. *[pause]*

You can't simply roll up your sleeves and do everything that He has called you to do, rather, we need the "working of His power"! *[pause]*

To be good and faithful servants, we must have the mighty and effectual power of God empowering us to serve Him, and we do!

So what's *hindering* you from stepping out in faith and serving the Lord even more? *[pauseeee]*

According to what Paul says: how does God assign and equip people for His work in the world?  
By His grace and power.

So ‘little us’ are given A LOT. *[pauseeee]*

Our roles and abilities are only from Him, and as Paul goes on, he shows us that even the bare fact of being used by God is grace, too. *[pause]*

He says in verse 8, “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given.”  
*[pause]*

Paul is astonished that he gets to have such an important role of being the apostle to the Gentiles, even though he humbly feels as though he is the least of the saints. *[pauseeeee]*

This shows us something about God—God loves to use the least likely. *[pause]*

The Lord often surprises with *who* He uses, for He uses “the least of these”. *[pause]*

He uses someone like Paul who was a *persecutor* of the church, and makes him a *proclaimer* of the truth. *[pauseeee]*

This is because God uses the least likely to reveal His greatness. *[pause]*

He can take or use anyone, even the person who is least likely, or who considers themselves the very least out of everyone. *[pauseeeee]*

So who does God use?...

Not the high up and prideful, but the least likely, like Paul, and it just goes to show His greatness.  
*[pauseeeee]*

Who are we to play a part in God’s grand plan? *[pause]*

The very least and little ‘us’, who are undeserving of anything, are graced with roles and gifts to serve Him as His ministers in His great work in the world. *[pause]*

What a privilege! What an honor! What gifts of grace! *[pauseeeee]*

So far, Paul has shown us *how* he was called to serve the Lord, but now, he will tell us *what* God called him to do. *[pause]*

Paul tells us his God-given role in the second half of verse 8 and into 9...

It’s “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.” *[pause]*

Put simply, Paul was to declare Christ and disclose God’s plan—that was Paul’s special role, primarily to the Gentiles. *[pauseeee]*

Now that was Paul’s special role as apostle to the Gentiles, but that doesn’t mean that this can’t relate to us. *[pause]*

For us, we aren’t apostles, but we are to also proclaim Christ, and show others that *all* people can be saved in His name. *[pause]*

We are not to remain quiet, but Christ is proclaimed to us, so that we believe and then proclaim Him to others.

Why? Because how could we keep silent about “the unsearchable riches of Christ”?! *[pause]*

No one keeps quiet when there are unsearchable riches involved! *[pause]*

His riches cannot be tracked out or traced, for in Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”<sup>4</sup> *[pauseeee]*

There are unsearchable riches in Christ, you will never find them all because there are so many!

And so, as John Stott wrote, “Once we are sure that the gospel is both truth from God and riches for mankind, nobody will be able to silence us.”<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Do you see Christ and the gospel message in this way?

Let’s not keep silent about Christ and this good news—it’s what every single person needs to hear, and may God grant them the faith to believe it. *[pauseeee]*

Paul has told us what he was called to do: to proclaim Christ and God’s grand plan of salvation, but *why*?

Verse 10 tells us: “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” *[pauseeee]*

This is an amazing truth...

It means that as more and more Jews and Gentiles, people from different ethnicities and backgrounds, trust in Christ and are added to the church something profound happens. *[pause]*

The very existence and growth of the church reveals God’s manifold wisdom to the spiritual powers. *[pauseee]*

God uses the very existence of the church as a proclaimer of His many-faceted wisdom to the cosmos. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:3.

<sup>5</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 121.

The fact that through Christ, He has brought together Jews and Gentiles into one body is a glowing testament to the wisdom of God.

For no human wisdom would have done this, or guessed at this plan, yet God's wisdom is displayed in the church. *[pause]*

Through Christ crucified, God destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and showed forth His infinite wisdom for all to see.<sup>6</sup>

And that means that the very existence of the church as a multi-ethnic group, all united under Christ, is a slap in the face of the evil spiritual powers, confronting them with the manifold wisdom of God that they cannot deny. *[pauseeee]*

And so every time that we gather is another signal to them of God's wisdom and that we are on the side of victory! *[pauseeee]*

They thought they won at the cross, but it was their defeat, and now the church is the ever-present testimony to God's wisdom and their ultimate demise. *[pauseeeee]*

Just think of how we get to play a part in that—we are showing off God's glorious wisdom to the powers! *[pauseeeee]*

Do you ever stand in wonder that God has graciously given you a task to do? *[pause]*

Do you ever marvel that you get to speak of Christ, and stand amazed at that privilege and honor, in light of how undeserving you are? *[pause]*

Too often we see serving Him as lowly, or something small, or as if there were something better that we could be doing.

But to speak about Christ is the highest privilege of the universe, and to think that He uses "little us" in His grand work is stunning. *[pauseeee]*

*Another truth that we see in this passage is that...*

## **II. God's grand plan was carried out in Christ. (11–12)**

We all want our purposes to be carried out, but for us, our purposes are often thwarted by a myriad of different reasons. *[pause]*

Almost every day is an example of our purposes being hindered, as that rain comes when we didn't want it to...

That person didn't arrive when we wanted them to, or that project of ours didn't get done in the time we wanted. *[pause]*

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<sup>6</sup> A reference to 1 Corinthians 1:18–31.

But God's plan was carried out, and it was carried out in Christ. *[pause]*

Verse 11 says, "This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord." *[pauseeee]*

So we see that God has an eternal purpose. *[pause]*

God doesn't do things on whims, but He's a purposeful God, and doesn't that give you the utmost comfort? *[pause]*

We don't worship, follow, and serve a god, who is all over the place.

He doesn't follow some impulsive thoughts, He doesn't do things based on fads, and He's certainly not fickle.

Rather, He's a purposeful God, and He has an *eternal* purpose. *[pause]*

Before we were even born, He had a purpose in mind.

Before the world was even created, He had an intentional plan in Christ. *[pause]*

We don't have to worry that He doesn't have a purpose, nor do we have to worry that this purpose was a last-minute, hasty decision that He came up with.

No, He had an eternal purpose, and that eternal purpose was carried out in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

So not only did God have a purpose, but that purpose *came to fruition*. *[pauseeee]*

It just goes to show that God's purposes are never thwarted—our's may be, but not His. *[pauseeee]*

What a truth to rest your life upon! *[pause]*

We see the sovereignty and control of our God generally, but we also see the sovereignty and control of God in salvation here...

God's eternal purpose of salvation being found in Christ came to be just as He intended. *[pauseeee]*

This is one of the many reasons why we can trust the gospel message...

Because God's eternal purpose was realized in Christ, then the message of Christ can be trusted and it has the power to save even the most unlikely soul. *[pauseeee]*

We do not live in a chaotic, out-of-control world, but in a world where God's eternal purpose was carried out in and through Jesus.

And if God's purpose was realized in Christ, who suffered such great evil at the hands of wicked men, and yet God's purpose was accomplished...

Then how could I think that today's suffering is out of God's hands, and that it's meaningless?  
[pauseeee]

When the skies look dark, remember—God's eternal purpose has been realized in Christ, so how could I be hopeless or despairing? [pause]

In fact, amidst this sometimes dark world, I can go to the Father, whose purposes came to be because of Jesus.

For not only did Jesus carry out God's eternal purpose, but He has opened up the way for us to go daily to the Father! [pause]

Paul says of Jesus: "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him." [pauseeee]

Through faith in Christ, we can now approach God the Father! [pause]

You see, before Christ, there was separation between us and God due to our sin.

We couldn't approach or draw near to the holy God because we were sinful, defiled, unrighteous.

But now that barrier has been broken down by Christ, and the path to the Father opened up.  
[pause]

We can now draw near to Him. [pause]

Because Jesus shed His blood for us, we are forgiven in Him and declared righteous because of His righteousness.

So we now have boldness and access with confidence to God. [pauseeee]

We do not have to cower before our Heavenly Father.

We aren't restricted from going to Him.

Rather, we boldly go to God the Father in prayer. [pause]

We don't have to go through some human, earthly priest, for Jesus has opened up for us access to the Father...

We now have confidence to approach and address God with anything and everything. [pause]

We can candidly speak to our Heavenly Father whenever and wherever we are, due to Christ!

What a comfort, what a privilege! [pauseeee]

To think that we serve a God who accomplished His grand, eternal purpose in Christ, and then invites us to draw near everyday for what we need is amazing. *[pause]*

As one commentator put it, “The church has the ear of the sovereign King of creation, who listens with real interest and compassion to those who are now members of his own family.”<sup>7</sup>  
*[pauseeee]*

*So God’s grand plan was carried out in Christ, but thirdly...*

### **III. God’s grand plan helps us to rightly view suffering for Him. (13)**

Paul concludes this section with saying in verse 13, “So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” *[pauseeee]*

With this verse, we see that Paul’s whole purpose for all that he just said was for the benefit of the Ephesians—so that they wouldn’t give up. *[pauseeee]*

Now you may be wondering, “Why is it that they would lose heart?” and the answer is that it’s because the great apostle Paul was in prison.

And he even started chapter 3 mentioning that he’s a prisoner, and that could cause many people to be discouraged and lose heart. *[pause]*

They could have thought: if even the godly Paul is in prison, what hope do we have? *[pause]*

If even Paul is in prison, does that say something about the gospel advance? *[pause]*

If Paul’s in prison, is God in control and are His purposes really happening?

And Paul’s encouragement to them is: do not lose heart over this! *[pauseeee]*

He’s not a prisoner of chance or because the other side is victorious, but he’s a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and he’s there on behalf of the Gentiles. *[pause]*

He has been given a purpose and ministry to accomplish, and that ministry still advances.

So Paul is saying, “Do not lose heart, I am right where I belong! God’s in control!” *[pause]*

In fact, they do not need to give up, for Paul hasn’t given up, and God gives Paul what he needs according to the working of His power. *[pause]*

They were not to throw in the towel—there are unsearchable riches found in Christ, and no imprisonment can take away even one small *inch* of those riches. *[pause]*

They didn’t need to be discouraged, for God’s grand purpose has been carried out in Christ, and the manifold wisdom of God is being proclaimed by the church.

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<sup>7</sup> S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 244–245.

Nor did they need to lose heart, for they could now boldly approach the Father with confidence amidst it all! *[pauseeee]*

Through Paul's example, they could see that suffering for Christ is not a waste.

In fact, he mentions that he was suffering for them, which is their glory. *[pauseeee]*

He didn't suffer pointlessly, nor did it do nothing, but he is now suffering because he endeavored to declare to them Christ and His unsearchable riches. *[pause]*

It was for their good, and that means that his jail-time was not purposeless! *[pauseeee]*

They didn't need to give up, lose heart, be discouraged, or throw in the towel...

For God's in control, God's plan is glorious, His grace flows to us, Christ has unsearchable riches, and everyday we can confidently approach our Father's throne for help amidst it all...

So do not lose heart, Christian! *[pauseeee]*

What looks bad, what looks hopeless, what looks like defeat isn't always as it appears...

For God's eternal purpose presses on even amid the suffering of His people. *[pause]*

God's flow of mercy is never blocked by our circumstances. *[pause]*

God's throne of grace is always and ever open because of Jesus. *[pause]*

The wisdom of God is proclaimed, even in His suffering church. *[pause]*

The riches of Christ never dwindle, no matter how things look, and God's grace still reaches the least of all people. *[pauseeee]*

You see, in light of God's grand plan, it helps us to rightly view suffering for Him...

It is not worthless, nor wasted because God's eternal purposes and plan don't falter based on our suffering. *[pause]*

Our access to God isn't plugged by our trials, but we can draw near even in a prison cell. *[pauseeee]*

Way too often we can view suffering the way the world views suffering, which is to see it only and ever as loss and defeat.

But there is no such thing as defeat when you are on the Lord's side. *[pause]*

You think that Paul had a defeated mindset when in prison—just look at what he's writing from prison!

No, Paul's making clear a truth so encouraging, and that's that...

**God has graciously chosen us to be a part of His grand plan, which centers on Christ.**

God has a grand plan, do you remember that? *[pause]*

His grand plan centers on Christ, for it was accomplished in Christ's work on the cross and in His conquering of the grave.

And it will all culminate when He returns and makes all things right. *[pauseeee]*

It's His plan to save souls, and to have them experience the riches of Jesus. *[pause]*

It's a plan that displays the perfect wisdom of God in that through the crucified and risen Jesus, all kinds of people can be saved by grace through faith in Him. *[pause]*

And He has graciously chosen little, least likely, least qualified, undeserving "us" to play a part in it by proclaiming Him and serving others in His name. *[pauseeeee]*

So knowing all of this, we do not lose heart, even in dark, hopeless-looking circumstances.

Rather, we rise up with encouragement, knowing that our God has given us what we need by the working of His power. *[pause]*

We stand in awe that we get to preach the One with unsearchable riches. *[pause]*

We walk forward in faith, knowing that God's plan and purposes never fail. *[pause]*

We run the race of faith with endurance, even amidst our suffering for the Lord.

And through all of this, with bold confidence, we bend our knees in prayer, as we approach our Heavenly Father for everything along the way.