

DO NOT LOSE HEART

Ephesians 3:11-13: For the Sake of Christ, His Church & the Nations 4

“Do not lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” This is Paul’s great encouragement to the Christians in Ephesus while he was in prison, awaiting his execution and martyrdom. We find this encouraging statement “Do not lose heart” six times in the New Testament (Luke 18:1; 2 Cor. 4:1,16; Gal. 6:9; 1 Thess. 3:13; Eph. 3:13). In Paul’s message of encouragement to the Ephesian church, we learn three compelling reasons why we should never lose heart in the midst of suffering and opposition to the gospel. We must not lose heart because: (1) God’s salvation plan for His church is being fulfilled (3:1-6); (2) God’s manifold wisdom is being displayed (3:7-10); and (3) God’s chosen people from all nations are being saved (3:11-13). In light of these reasons, we must then live our lives for the sake of Christ, His church and the nations. Our passage for consideration presents two encouraging truths which affirm the wondrous reality that God saves His people for His glory.

3. God’s chosen people from all nations are being saved:

a. God’s eternal _____ never fails.

Paul encourages the Ephesian believers and exhorts them not to lose heart because God’s chosen people from all nations are being saved in accordance to the unfailing and eternal purpose of God in Christ (Eph. 3:11). In Ephesians 3:10, Paul explains that the glory of God’s manifold wisdom is displayed to both the holy and evil angels through the church. In particular, this wise plan of God in Christ, which is the salvation and unity of believing Jews and Gentiles as one church of Christ, gloriously displays the manifold wisdom of God, that even the holy angels marvel and praise God and Satan and his demons shudder and tremble in defeat and shame (1 Cor. 1:23; Luke 15:10; Col. 2:15). All of the events in history and in our own life are tied up to this eternal and unfailing purpose of God to display how gloriously wise He is in saving us through Christ’s redeeming work and placing us into His eternal family, His church. This saving union with Christ also blesses us with the privilege of prayer and worship as we have been granted access to God through faith in Jesus (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19-22).

b. God uses _____ for the _____ of His church.

In Ephesians 3:13, Paul gives us this concluding exhortation, “So, I ask you, not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” Paul’s suffering is the glory of the Ephesian believers. With a pastor’s heart, Paul encourages his readers not to be disheartened because of his imprisonment for faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles, which include the Ephesians. He reminds them that his suffering is part of God’s wise plan for them to experience the glory of God in saving them. This glory therefore refers to the glory of God’s salvation and its eternal blessings (2 Tim. 2:8-10). Suffering and glory is one of the great encouragements of the Scriptures (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17; John 16:21-22; 1 Pet. 1:6-9). God uses even the sufferings of His saints to advance the gospel of Christ for His own glory and the good of His people.
