



Sermon – February 17, 2019  
Chris Osborne

**Verses Covered**

*Ephesians 3:*  
*Galatians 1:13 - 14*

So we are in Ephesians. We're still walking through. We're going to look at chapter 3. We're going to look at a couple of verses today. Back in the days when Alabama would win a national championship, instead of getting slaughtered, back in those days. A couple years ago, Jalen Hurts was a quarterback. He had won a national championship and really had not lost a second one. Our defense had not stopped Deshaun. And so Jalen is in the first half not playing that great. And so Saban pulls him out at the half. He walks up to him and he says, "Two is going to start. Jalen you're out." Now that was an incredible demotion for him. He took it incredibly well. Exhibited great Christian character. As a matter of fact, when he graduated a month or two ago, they gave him a standing "o" at Alabama because of the character that he showed; as much as he showed some football prowess. But it was a tough thing. I don't then Jalen would look at you today and say, "Man I enjoyed that demotion." Nobody enjoys a demotion. You want a promotion. You don't want a demotion. And yet that is exactly what Paul describes here.

Now look in chapter 3. Look in verse 7. Now he's talked about the Gentiles and the Jews, everybody being equal. We looked at that last week. But now listen to what he says because he talks about the gospel and he says,

<sup>7</sup>of which gospel I have become a servant,

Now that was a massive demotion for him. He grew up having servants. Paul was an incredible Jew. As a matter of fact, I want you to listen. You stay in Ephesians. But I want to read you part of the first chapter of Galatians, he says;

<sup>13</sup>You've heard of my past life when I was in the Jewish religion, that beyond abundance, I persecuted the church and I ravaged it; <sup>14</sup>and I profited in the Jewish system beyond many contemporaries in my age group.

That's exactly right. This guy climbed the ladder in Judaism. He was well-known. He was one of the greatest Rabbis. He studied under the elite seminary president of his day: Gamaliel. He

was one of a handful of guys that Gamaliel pulled into his corner. He became a Pharisee which would clearly necessitate that he was married. He had a wife. He had a career. Everybody loves him. Being a Pharisee he keeps all the rules. He understands the scripture. He speaks Greek and Hebrew. Went to the University of Tarsus. This guy has got everything going for him. And when Christianity began to hit, he went after it. He began to, obviously from what he says in Galatians, persecute way more than we knew. As a matter of fact, one day when they killed the first deacon, they want to really hit him hard with the rocks so they take their jackets off and they lay them at Paul's feet because he's the next guy for the Sanhedrin, the 70-member Jewish court that ruled Israel. They, who honored nobody, they give this guy their clothes and when it's over, they said, "We want you to go North through Galilea, go through the Golan Heights. We want you to go to Syria, get to Damascus." Because a lot of the Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians, have left town. "We want you to go get them and bring them back and let's kill them." And so on the way he's not a servant; he's got an entourage. He's got a bunch of people with him that are serving him. On the way, he runs into Jesus and he gets saved. And now he's immediately a servant. He has been radically demoted. Because now nobody honors him. The Jews hate him and the Christian church doesn't honor him. They're scared of him. Barnabas has to come in and say, "No, no, no. He's legit." So Paul finally gets to preach in the church and he begins to lay that out.

And then life get worse. He gets beaten on his back for preaching the gospel in Philippi. He winds up right here. He spent two years in jail in Caesarea. And you've got to understand, it's not like our jail. There was no internet. No TV. No ESPN. There was nothing like that. He's in, he can smell the Mediterranean Sea because Caesarea is right there. He can't see it. He can't enjoy it. He's in a jail cell for two years. And the reason he's in a jail cell is because the Jews want to kill him. And they got Festus to put him in there. Or they got Felix to put him in there. Felix finally after two years says, "Nah, I think I'll just leave him as a tribute to the Jews." So he's left there. Finally, Festus comes up, he appeals to Caesar, and finally he's on the way to Rome. Ship wrecks, gets on an island, puts his hand in the wood and a snake bites him, I'd have fainted right there, snake bites him, he shakes it off. They finally get to Rome and he's got two more years in jail in Rome. As a matter of fact, it even makes this statement at the end of the book of Acts that they put him in a house, but he's chained to a Roman guard. Obviously they change out. And in this house, he pays for everything. He pays for his food, his clothes, pays for the upkeep for the Roman soldier. He pays for everything out of his pocket. This guy was demoted. He went from being somebody to being nobody. We never see his wife in the scripture which may explain the statement he makes in 1 Corinthians when he says, if your unbelieving spouse leaves, let them go. You are not bound in those circumstances. He may well have been speaking about his own life. He lost everything. He's sitting in a jail cell when he writes this letter. Probably, based on the best we can time, he's in the Roman house bound to this Roman guard and he writes this letter and he says, "I've become a servant. I used to have servants. Now I'm a servant. I used to put people in jail. Now I'm in jail." Now listen to what he says, though. This is crazy. Listen to this.

[which I have become a servant based on the free gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the working of His power.](#)

He says, "You know why I have this? You know why I've lost my wife and my standing and my wealth? And everything that I've lost and I'm sitting, I've been in a jail for two years. Now I'm still in a jail. I can't get out. Do you know why this happened? Because God's grace has blessed

me.” Now I don’t think Jalen Hurts would say that. If you asked Jalen Hurts, “Hey! How about the demotion?” He’d say, “Well it wasn’t because of the grace of God. It was because of the wrath of Saban.” You can change that “b” to an “t” probably for him, but that would be his statement. I don’t think he would have said, now what Jalen Hurts would tell you is, the grace of God got him through it. But I don’t think he would blame that kind of public demotion on the grace of God. Paul says, “The demotion I got and the fact that I am writing to you from a jail cell is because of the blessing and the greatness of the grace of Almighty God.” Why in the world would he say that? Now listen. Because I love what he says here. Look in verse 8. To me, and here’s why he says that the grace of God took everything away from him. He lost everything: family, career, standing. Lost it all.

<sup>8</sup>To me who is the least of all the saints,

He says the very same thing in 1 Timothy. And in 1 Timothy he says three things about himself. He says, “I blasphemed God, I persecuted brothers, and I was an insolent man.” And he says, “I had the trifecta of sin. I sinned against God. I hated my brother. I hated myself.” I don’t deserve what I have, but listen to this.

to the least of all the saints, this grace was given.

Watch this.

So that I might preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There’s his promotion. He lost his family. He lost his standing. He lost his freedom. He lost it all. And he says, “You know what, it’s the grace of God. And you know why it’s the grace of God? You know why this thing’s a blessing? Because if I’d stayed in Judaism, I never would have understood the blessings of Christ and I certainly wouldn’t have been able to preach, but now I can. I get to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus.” He says, “This is great for me. It’s a tremendous promotion. I don’t care if I’m in jail. I don’t care if I’ve been beaten. I don’t care if I’ve been shipwrecked. I don’t care what they do to me. It doesn’t matter where they put me or what they do to me. As long as I get the chance and the promotion to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus, I am good to go. And I’ll take any loss in my life. And that’s why I look at becoming a servant as the grace of God because it set me free to preach something I didn’t know anything about until His grace showed up in my life.” And he wants you to understand about that grace. He talks about it and he says it’s based on the awesome power of God because he wants to remind you this grace he’s experienced is not some feeling that God has, it’s the act of power that God executed in Jesus on the cross when His blood took my sin off my back. That grace demoted him and promoted him. And the promotion was worth a demotion. Now that’s intriguing to me.

If you caught Paul in the house in Rome where he’s locked up to a soldier, and you said to him, “Hey, listen, man. I know following Christ, it’s been rough. I know about the shipwreck. I know about the beatings. I know Luke travels with you because you’re constantly having physical ailments. I know that you probably have epilepsy. I understand all the arthritic concerns. I understand everything you’re facing. And I know that you’re constantly being persecuted. Let me just tell you. I can offer you a position where you can still kind of talk about Jesus a little bit.

You won't really be able to preach the unsearchable riches. But you can talk about Jesus a little bit. But it will get you out of all the hard stuff. Would you like to take the offer?" I think he would be offended that you would even think that he would trade the ability to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ for anything in his life. So explain to me why a ton of young pastors are quitting the ministry. I think Paul would be offended at what's going on in America today. I got a text two months ago from a young preacher and he said, "Hey, I want you to know I'm resigning my church." And this is what he told me in the text. He said, "I'm not being forced out. Everything's fine. There's no immorality. My wife and I are good. There's nothing like that. But I want you to know I've got a chance to do kind of a consulting deal where I'm going to help consult secular leaders and help them mature in their leadership." How can you trade away the greatness of preaching of mercy and the beauty that Jesus Christ on the cross and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for some crummy job like that? And I get it. I've done this a long time. I know what you deal with. Man a guy in my first church, he resigned, didn't think anything about it until I let and he took the job back of Sunday School Director. Now if you're in a rural Baptist church and you're a Sunday School Director, by the way, you're the fourth person of the trinity. He resigned that position and took it back after I left and I talked to somebody after I left and I said, "Why did he resign when I was there?" He said, "Well you changed the time of the worship service from 5 'til 11 to 11. And he felt that was wrong and he quit." I got no answer for that. Second church. Got this guy who I will not change the name to protect the guilty: E.J. A couple guys called me Monday morning and said, "Man, E.J. is mad at you. We need to go see him." So we drive out to his house. He's on the tractor. He gets off the tractor. He walks over and he asks me this question. Don't ever ask me this question. He said, "Did you mean what you said in the sermon yesterday?" And he is mad. Now I know I have a temptation to be unholy here, and I didn't. But I wanted to say, I wanted to say, "No, E.J., listen. Here's how I work. The first and third Sundays I'm serious. The second and fourth I'm not. And the fifth, you just kind of take the shot." But I didn't. But he was livid. I mean he was mad. I said, "Well what's your issue?" And we were having a revival because back in those days if you were Baptist you told God when the revivals would come. And they'd come in the Spring and the Fall. And He has to understand that and get on board. So to make him get on board, what you do is you have prayer meetings in the houses. So we had what's called Cottage Prayer Meetings. So I made a statement in the sermon that we ought to have a, if we have Cottage Prayer Meetings, you should go pray in somebody's house for the revival that we're telling God what to do. So he looked at me and he said, "Did you mean that?" "Yeah." Then he looked at me and he said, still livid, he said, "You should never pray anywhere except God's house. You should never pray in our own private house." Got on his tractor and started plowing. And the two guys looked at me and didn't say anything. I know this is not the right word and a lot of you young mothers are going to kill me, but it's the best word I have. I can't really fix stupid. That's the word here. I know you don't want to hear that but that's the word for this moment. So I get it. You deal with some crazy people. You deal with people who hate you. You deal with all sorts of crazy stuff. I get that. But here's my deal. I've never been shipwrecked. I've never been put in jail. I've never been beaten. So I don't know how this guy who's endured all that says, "Man, my promotion was incredible and I wouldn't make a trade at all." And yet we trade every single day.

I'm preaching in chapel at Southwestern in April and I guarantee you of those kids that I'm going to preaching to that are going to be senior pastors, half of them will be gone in 10 years because they can't handle the stress and they don't get what they're really about. What I hear now, Nathan

and I met with some young pastors a couple weeks ago. And inevitably at some point in the conversation, this is what I'll here. I'll have some young pastor says, "Well, you know, I need to know, Brother Chris, how do you cast vision and how do you lead?" And they're reading all these books on leadership and going, "I've got to lead my people and how do I cast vision." Let me just be real clear today. I don't get to cast vision. Jesus already did that when He said, "You go make disciples of the entire nation." There's the vision. There isn't any other. And when you tell me God gave you a vision that's different from His Son, you and I have an issue because I don't think the Holy Spirit moves you away from Jesus. So we already have the vision. And I don't mind if you read books on leadership. That's cool. Great. As long as you understand as a pastor you're not called to be a leader. I wasn't a leader yesterday. I'm not a leader today. And I'm not going to be a leader tomorrow. Because that's not my calling. My calling is not to lead you to join me. No, no, no. You know what my hope is? Is that if I unlock the unsearchable riches of Christ in a decent way, that they will be two things to you. They will make you love Jesus more and understand Him better. And if both those things occur in you, then what I hope is you will join me as we walk toward Jesus Christ. I don't want you following me. I want you following Him. I don't care anything about being a leader. It's not a matter of being a leader. It's a matter of following Jesus Christ. And if you understand the unsearchable riches of Christ, you'll follow Him. These young guys are so caught up in leadership, they've missed the joy of what it is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. And I'm telling you, that statement is true. I've been preaching for 49 years. So I know one thing that I discovered about this. When I was called into the ministry, my pastor gave me 3 x 5 cards, showed me how to outline kind of a topical message. And I can't explain this, but when I went off to college, it would be several months and I preached second and third time doing a topical message. And then right after that I had this, I don't know how else to say this, I had this overwhelming, compelling push to go to Mark 6 with Jesus walking on the water. And to stay in that passage until I understood why it was in the Bible. Now you couldn't have told me what text-driven preaching was. You couldn't have laid that out for me. I didn't understand anything about that. I just knew that's what I was supposed to do. And so I did that. And all of a sudden as I worked through the passage, it was like the light bulb went off. And I realized that the reason Jesus walked on the water was not to teach Peter a lesson, the reason He walked on the water was that because the disciples had become hardened to who He was and He had to wake them back up to the fact that He was not like them. He was distinct. And He did that by walking on the water. You don't find that in the Old Testament. You don't find it ever again. It's one of the few miracles never in both gospels, I mean, in both testaments. He did it to awaken them and listen. When I figured that out, I couldn't wait to get into the pulpit to share that. Now I'm going to tell you. That was 49 years ago. I still can't wait to get into the pulpit because in 49 years, I have never, I can say that with absolute, complete veracity, I have never come to a passage of scripture, studying that week, that I didn't learn something I did not know that makes me passionate to share here because His riches are unsearchable. He is worth it all. And so I have this great privilege to be able to tell you that the cross is your redemption. That when you experience the cross, when the Holy Spirit comes to you and says, "Listen, My Son died for you." And you put your faith in that and He cleans you up, He gets rid of all your guilt, He put the Holy Spirit in you. Now you can experience Him. You can be free from sin. You can stand for Christ. You can experience God's power. Even when you go through something bad, the Holy Spirit's in there praying for you so that you win in the end. And then when you die, Jesus comes and gets you. I get to preach that when I counsel, when I marry, when I bury, Wednesday night, Sunday morning. I get to do that. You couldn't make me get out of this because Paul's right. And the

great tragedy is today, we've got all these young kids coming up thinking vision and leadership instead of Jesus and preaching. And that is where we're failing. Let me be clear. I'm not your leader, never going to be your leader. I'm not a leader, but I hope with every fiber of my being that until the day I die I open this up with clarity and integrity so that when you see it and you hear it, you don't follow me, you follow Him.

Let's pray.

Father, I do ache for those You call that don't see what they need to be. Father for the young men you've given me the privilege to get to know, let me keep that in their forefront. Thank You for these people. They're here because they love You. And Father I just ask You today keep us focused on how rich it is to have You in our lives. In Jesus Christ name.