

PAUL'S DETOUR, PT. 5; EPH. 3:11-13 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

AS WE KNOW, ~ IN VERSES 7-13, ~ THE SECOND PART OF PAUL'S DIVINELY INSPIRED detour, ~ Paul focuses on the gospel and his role in preaching it.

▶▶ Today, ~ we will finish this second part up by examining [verses 11-13](#).

IN VERSE 11a, PAUL SAYS: ~ ~ ¶¶

"THIS WAS ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL PURPOSE [OR, PLAN]."

▶▶ The word "This" refers back to [verse 10](#), ~ where Paul spelled out the purpose for telling the Gentiles about the unsearchable riches that come from Jesus **and for explaining God's plan of salvation to everyone.**

▷▷ Paul said it was "so that through the church, ~ the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."

↳↳ I.e., ~ as noted, ~ by means of the church, ~ the infinite wisdom of God displayed in lavishing His grace on sinners ~ **becomes known to His holy angels in this larger world that we cannot see at this time.**

▷▷ Now, ~ in case someone didn't pick up on it last week in my equating the church with believers, ~ perhaps it would be good here to clarify, ~ **that the church does not refer to an institution or a building.**

↳↳ The church is not

→→ The church is the people of God, ~ i.e., ~ those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, ~ those who

▷▷ As we noted, ~ we could say that the church is a massive university, ~ with each blood-bought believer a professor; ~ ~ and the holy angels the students, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ as they observe and learn about God's infinite wisdom from each believer's redemption and subsequent blessings from Jesus.

▶▶ And in [verse 11a](#), ~ Paul is saying that it was part of God's eternal plan of salvation that through each blood-bought believer, ~ **His infinite wisdom in bestowing grace on sinners would be revealed to His holy angels.** ¶¶ 1/8

NOTICE THAT PAUL CALLS GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION "ETERNAL."

- ▶▶ Meaning that this is a plan God had before he created the universe. ~ Before existed.
- ▶▶ My brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ this reinforces the truth that God chose us for salvation, ~ we did not choose Him.
 - ▷▷ Jesus makes this plain. ~ In [Jn. 15:16](#), ~ "You did not choose me, ~ but I chose you."
 - ▷▷ This is actually good news, ~ because the NT makes it clear that if God had not chosen us for salvation, ~ we would never have chosen Him.
 - ↳↳ I.e., ~ we would never have come to Him for salvation ~ if he hadn't chosen us first.
 - ↳↳ Consider what Paul tells us in [Rom. 3:11b](#). ~ He writes that "no one seeks for God." ~ E.g., ~ consider Adam and Eve
 - ▷▷ My fellow blood-bought believers, ~ we would never have chosen Jesus if He hadn't chosen us first. ~ We would still be dead in our sins.
 - ↳↳ That is one of the things that's so amazing about God's grace.
- ▶▶ God's eternal plan of salvation also, ~ my fellow disciples of Christ, ~ reinforces the truth that God's choosing us for salvation had nothing to do with who or what we are, ~ or ~ because of anything we've done.
 - ▷▷ In [Eph. 2:4-5](#), ~ Paul makes it crystal clear ~ that it was because of His mercy, ~ love, ~ and grace that God the Father chose us for salvation.
 - ↳↳ Paul writes, ~ "But God, ~ being rich in mercy, ~ because of the great love with which he loved us, ~ even when we were dead in our trespasses, ~ made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved."
- ▶▶ God's eternal plan of salvation additionally reinforces the truth that God wasn't taken by surprise in the garden of Eden
- ▶▶ And God's eternal plan tells us that even though God knew Adam & Eve would sin, ~ ¶¶
 - ▷▷ even though God knew ~ what it would cost Him to redeem mankind, ~ and that ~ was the extremely painful ~ and horrible death ~ of His beloved Son, ~ ¶¶
 - ↳↳ even though He knew all of this ~ He created us anyway. ~ Truly, ~ amazing grace.

IN VERSE 11b, ~ PAUL TALKS ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL plan of salvation.

FOR CONTEXT, ~ READ ALL OF VERSE 11. ~ "THIS WAS ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL purpose ~ [i.e. ~ His eternal plan of salvation] ~ that he has realized ~ [or, ~ accomplished] ~ in ~ [or, ~ through] ~ Christ Jesus our Lord."

▶▶ God's eternal plan of salvation was accomplished through Jesus when he died on the cross.

▷▷ Speaking of Jesus, ~ Rev. 5:9-10, ~ "And they sang a new song, ~ saying, ~ 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, ~ for you were slain, ~ and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ~ 77

↳↳ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, ~ and they shall reign on the earth."

▶▶ God's plan for lost humanity to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life was accomplished through Jesus ~ and no one else.

▷▷ This is extremely important to go over time and again, ~ because there are many voices out there trying to convince us that "all roads lead to Rome," ~ so to speak.

↳↳ I.e., ~ a lot of voices out there are telling us that there are many roads to God, ~ that all religions are the same and equally valid.

→→ No, ~ this is not true. ~ Salvation is not in the name of Mohamed

↳↳ If someone wants a relationship with God and go to heaven when they die, ~ there is only one road, ~ Jesus.

▷▷ In Col. 2:8, ~ Paul warns us about belief systems that are not in agreement with sound Christian doctrine.

↳↳ He tells us to not let anyone capture us with empty, ~ deceitful philosophies that come from human thinking and from the spiritual forces of evil, ~ rather than from Christ.

→→ Any belief system that denies that Jesus is the only way that we can have a relationship with God and spend eternity in heaven, ~ 77

↳↳ is an empty, ~ deceitful philosophy that comes from human thinking and from the spiritual forces of evil. 77 3/8

▷▷ Speaking about Jesus, ~ Peter says in Acts 4:12, ~ "And there is salvation in no one else, ~ for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

↳↳ Salvation, ~ Peter says, ~ comes by means of no one else, ~ nor is there another name by which one can be saved.

→→ The phrase "there is no one else" is emphatic in the Greek.

↳↳ It emphasizes that there is no one else at all, ~ other than Jesus, ~ who has the means to provide salvation and eternal life for lost humanity.

▷▷ In Jn. 14:6, ~ Jesus said, ~ "I am the way, ~ and the truth, ~ and the life. ~ No one comes to the Father except through me"

▷▷ Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 2:5, ~ "For there is one God, ~ and there is one mediator between God and men, ~ the man Christ Jesus."

▷▷ To reject the "one mediator between God and men," ~ to reject the only way, ~ the only truth, ~ the only life, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ to reject the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved," ~ ¶¶

→→ is to reject one's only hope for salvation and eternal life in heaven after death.

BACK TO EPH. 3:11, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT GOD ACCOMPLISHED HIS ETERNAL PLAN through Christ's death on the cross.

▶▶ Notice the past tense of "accomplished." ~ This is a finished work, ~ a completed atonement.

▷▷ Nothing can be or needs to be added. ~ And it does not have to be repeated like the OT sacrifices.

▶▶ This is evidenced in Heb. 1:3b. ~ The author writes, ~ "After making purification for sins, ~ he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

▷▷ The fact that Jesus sat after providing cleansing from sin indicates that His atoning work was finished.

↳↳ No OT priest ever sat while performing his duties because the task was never finally accomplished. ~ There were no chairs in the tabernacle. ¶¶ 4/8

→→Jesus, ~ however, ~ fully satisfied the demands of the law and fully met its penalty, ~ and is now seated "at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

▶▶That Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is a completed work is also evidenced in Jesus' cry of victory on the cross, ~ recorded in Jn. 19:30: ~ "It is finished."

▶▶Heb. 9:12 says, ~ "he entered once for all ~ [i.e., ~ once for all time] ~ into the holy places, ~ not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, ~ thus securing an eternal redemption."

▷▷I.e., ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ the salvation which Jesus achieved for us is eternal. ~ It will continue forever.

↳↳It is not a temporary sacrifice for salvation needing to be repeated like the OT sacrifices ~ and leaving us in danger of falling into sin and ruin.

→→It's a once for all time never having to be repeated sacrifice ~ that makes our salvation secure for all eternity.

▶▶And as the old hymn puts it, ~ Guilty, ~ vile, ~ and helpless we; ~ Spotless Lamb of God was He; ~ "Full atonement!" ~ can it be? ~ Hallelujah! ~ What a Savior! ~ ~ ~

▷▷Lifted up was He to die; ~ "It is finished!" was His cry; ~ Now in Heav'n exalted high. ~ Hallelujah! ~ What a Savior!

HAVING SHOWN THAT GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN WAS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH Jesus, ~ Paul then notes in verse 12a, ~ one of the wonderful results of Christ's work on the cross.

PAUL WRITES, ~ "IN WHOM WE HAVE BOLDNESS AND ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE."

▶▶The terms "boldness" and "access" are not expressing two separate ideas.

▷▷This is one of the very few drawbacks of using a literal translation; ~ you can miss some grammatical connections.

▷▷These two terms may very well form a doublet. ~ I.e., ~ they combine to emphasize a single idea.

↳↳More than likely, ~ Paul combined them to emphasize the notion of bold access. ~

→→And the phrase "with confidence" emphasizes it even more. ~ ~ ~ 5/8

▶▶ So here's the point.

▷▷ Paul here is emphasizing the fact that, ~ because Jesus accomplished God's eternal plan of salvation, ~ 77

↪↪ believers can now come boldly and confidently into God the Father's presence, ~ knowing that, ~ He will not turn us away or reject us ~ and will gladly welcome us into His presence.

▶▶ Heb. 4:16 applies this truth. ~ "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."

▷▷ Because Jesus accomplished God's eternal plan of salvation, ~ we can approach God's throne boldly and confidently. ~ And there we will receive mercy ~ and find grace whenever we need help.

HERE I WOULD CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THE PHRASE "WE HAVE" IN VERSE 12a.

▶▶ The tense of the verb for "we have" indicates repeated action. ~ This means that believers can continually enter boldly and confidently into the Father's presence.

▷▷ There is absolutely no limit on how many times we can boldly and confidently enter the Father's presence, ~ thanks to what Jesus has done on the cross.

AND WE SHOULD MENTION HERE THAT THIS ACCESS IS FOR EVERY BELIEVER, ~ NOT a select few.

▶▶ In OT times, ~ this access to God was the privilege of the few, ~ i.e., ~ the Levitical priesthood and in particular of the High Priest.

▷▷ He alone could enter into the Holy of Holies and into the presence of God.

▶▶ But, ~ because Jesus accomplished God's eternal plan of salvation, ~ every single one of Jesus' followers can come boldly and confidently into the Father's presence.

HOWEVER, ~ IT IS IMPORTANT TO MENTION THAT SIN BREAKS THIS ACCESS THAT we have with God.

▶▶ The genuine believer cannot lose his/her salvation, ~ but sin in our lives definitely affects our relationship with God.

▷▷ Is. 59:2, ~ "but your iniquities ~ have made a separation between you and your God, ~ and your sins have hidden his face from you ~ so that he does not hear." ↴ 6/8

▷▷ And Ps. 5:4 says, ~ "For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; ~ evil may not dwell with you."

▷▷ As long as believers have unconfessed sin in our life, ~ God cannot ~ and will not ~ fellowship with us. ~ He cannot and will not answer our prayers.

▶▶ But 1 Jn. 1:9 tells us, ~ "If we confess our sins, ~ he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

▷▷ At that time, ~ the bold and confident access to our heavenly Father that Jesus gained for us on the cross is restored. ~ Welcomes us back w/ open arms.

IN VERSE 12b, ~ PAUL EXPLAINS HOW THIS RIGHT TO BOLDLY AND CONFIDENTLY enter the Father's presence becomes a reality in a person's life.

PAUL SAYS THAT IT COMES "THROUGH OUR FAITH IN HIM," ~ I.E., ~ JESUS.

▶▶ This is reminiscent of what Paul told us in Eph. 2:8a. ~ "For by grace you have been saved through faith."

▶▶ To receive this right of bold and confident access, ~ one must exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ.

▷▷ I.e., ~ one is not automatically saved because Jesus accomplished God's eternal plan of salvation, ~ but one is saved when he/she puts their faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

▶▶ By confessing that Jesus is Lord, ~ and believing in their heart that God raised Him from the dead, ~ one receives the right to boldly and confidently enter into the Father's presence.

IN VERSE 13, ~ PAUL ENDS HIS DETOUR WITH AN EXHORTATION TO THE Ephesian believers.

HE SAYS, ~ "SO I ASK YOU NOT TO LOSE HEART OVER WHAT I AM SUFFERING FOR you, ~ which is your glory."

▶▶ The word "So" points back to what Paul taught in verses 1-12. ~ And since we've already gone into detail in these verses, ~ no need to go over them here.

▷▷ Basically, ~ in verse 13, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "Because of all these wonderful issues regarding our salvation that I have just spoken about, ~ I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you." ↴ 7/8

▶▶Paul actually sums up his point here quite well in [Rom. 8:18](#). ~ Paul writes, ~ "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

▷▷Paul's point here and in [Eph. 3:13](#) ~ is that whatever we may have to go through now, ~ in this present temporary life, ~ 77

↪↪it is less than nothing compared with the blessings of salvation and the magnificent eternal future God has planned for us.

▶▶So my fellow blood-bought believers, ~ there's no reason to become discouraged when we, ~ or our brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ undergo suffering.

▷▷This should give us great encouragement to persevere in this life.

↪↪No matter how bad things get ~ no matter how hard it is for us, ~ no matter how much we suffer, ~ we can be absolutely, ~ 100%, ~ sure ~ that better days are coming.

▶▶In [Ps. 30:5a](#), ~ David wrote, ~ NIV ~ "weeping may stay for the night, ~ but rejoicing comes in the morning"

AT THE END OF VERSE 13, ~ PAUL GIVES AN ADDITIONAL REASON FOR THEM NOT TO lose heart.

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

▶▶It's hard to understand how Paul is using "glory" here. ~ But we do know Paul's point. ~ We saw it back in [verse 1](#), ~ where he said that his suffering was for their benefit.

▶▶And at the end of his detour, ~ he exhorts them not to lose heart because somehow his suffering for them is for their benefit. ~ Remember, ~ always a purpose for our suffering.

CONCLUSION.

AND THAT BRINGS US TO THE END OF PAUL'S DIVINELY-INSPIRED DETOUR.

▶▶Paul has given us much to ponder, ~ much to rejoice over, ~ and much to be thankful for.

▷▷And let us do exactly that. ~ Let us continually ponder, ~ rejoice over, ~ and be thankful for the great things God has done for us. ~ TO GOD BE THE GLORY!