



Ephesians 3:12-21 New International Version

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

In our culture, giving your mother a gift on Mother's Day is considered by most people a *duty*. But for the person who truly loves and appreciates his or her mother, giving her a gift is also a *delight*. Religion makes obedience to God merely a duty. (I am defining "religion" as the attempt to gain acceptance with God by following established rules of conduct.) But the gospel makes spirituality it a delight. "Because you have done this for me, Religion is about what I *have to do*. The gospel is about what I *get to do*."

The word "gospel" means "good news." The gospel can be summed up with four words: *problem, solution, and response, restoration*. The problem is *sin*, the solution is *Christ*, and the response is *faith*, the restoration is discipleship.

Religion tells you what to do; the gospel gives you power to do it. "The gospel produces not just obedience, you see, but a new kind of obedience—an obedience that is powered by desire. An obedience that is both pleasing to God and delightful to you" (J. D. Greear, *Gospel*, p. 18).



Sermon Notes

The Gospel is not a Ticket

Religion produces **Competitors**. ("Have I done enough?")

The Gospel produces **Servants**. ("You love me that much?")

Marks of a Gospel-Centered Life

Common Complaint: "I just can't make time for a meeting with God. I can't fit that into my busy life."

1. Focused or Fragmented

"I've always been able to make time for what I value."

"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace." Matthew 6:6

2. Duty or Desire?

"I always grow where energy flows."

Duty says, "I obey, then I will be accepted."

The Gospel says, "I am loved, therefore I will please my beloved."

3. Public or Private?

"I've always shared what I'm excited about."

"When they saw the courage [transformation] of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13

LIVING WORD

In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus laid out the tests and requirements of discipleship. Jesus saw a large crowd gathering. He knew that these people believed and accepted His message in principle. Prior to this point, Jesus had shown how the message of the gospel was for everyone. He had exposed the Pharisees as the religious hypocrites that they were. As a result, He had become enormously popular. Now He wanted to weed out those who were following Him for the wrong reasons.

Some wanted to be dazzled by Jesus' miracles, while others came looking for a free meal. A few even hoped that He would overthrow Rome and establish God's kingdom. So Jesus turned to the multitude and preached a sermon that deliberately thinned out the ranks.

Jesus seeks quality over quantity

Jesus makes it clear that when it comes to personal discipleship, He is more interested in quality than quantity. The words He spoke that day are perhaps the most solemn and searching words that ever fell from His lips.

Why would Jesus say such things to all those people who followed Him? It seems that He is intentionally trying to get rid of them. In a sense, He is trying to get rid of at least some of them.

A similar account is found in Judges 7:1-22. There God wanted to give His servant Gideon a victory in battle against the Midianites. But the Lord wanted the glory for the victory. So, through a series of tests, God whittled down Gideon's original army of 32,000 to 300. God knew that He could do more with 300 alert, committed men than He could with 32,000 half-hearted ones.

Three times in the course of this message in Luke 14, Jesus used the phrase, "cannot be my disciple." In other words, Jesus was laying out some absolute requirements for discipleship.

Find a purpose to serve, not a lifestyle to regret.

If you can't figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. Your passion will guide you to your purpose.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Romans 1:16

"It is the highest and holiest of the paradoxes that the man who really knows he cannot pay his debt will be forever paying it." — G. K. Chesterton