

## When Life Gets Hard - Ephesians 3:1-15 – March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018

- I've titled today's teaching, "When Life Gets Hard."

- If there was ever a man of God who knew a thing or two about a hard life, it was the Apostle Paul who suffered great hardship.
- For over 25-years, Paul had experienced unspeakable hardship and difficulty, which he lists in his second Corinthians epistle.

2 Corinthians 11:23–28 --23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

- It's important to understand as Paul writes this letter to the church in Ephesus he's under house arrest in Roman imprisonment.
- If this weren't bad enough, Paul could have easily avoided being in prison if he would have just compromised the Word of God.
- This begs the question of how Paul was able to stand strong in the face of such unspeakable adversity in his life of hardship.

- To answer this question one need look no further than to what the Apostle James writes in his epistle concerning trials in life.

James 1:2–4 (NIV) — 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- What James is saying is that when life gets hard we can actually consider it pure joy because we know what God is doing in it.
- In other words, when I know what God is accomplishing in and through the hardships I go through, I can experience joy in it.
- This was how Paul got through all he went through, and in our text today, there are four things that we can know God is doing.

### 1. God is ruining me for Him (Verse 1)

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

- I find it interesting that Paul doesn't say he's a prisoner of Rome, rather, he says that he is a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles.
- The reason I find this interesting is because Paul knows God has allowed him to be imprisoned so as to accomplish His will.
- Often times, God will ruin us for Him in order to do that which God could not otherwise do, had He not allowed the hardship.

### 2. God is revealing something to me (Verses 2-6)

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

- Here Paul says in his hardship, God revealed the mystery of how that through the gospel the Gentiles are joint heirs with Jews.
- One of the things I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is He uses hardship to get my attention so He can show me something.
- The reason being is that's what it takes in order for me to see that which I would not otherwise see were it not for the hardship.

### 3. God is showing me His grace and power (Verses 7-12)

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

- To me, this is a much-needed reminder of how hardship and difficulty in life is the only way to embrace God's grace and power.
- It's when I realize it's all of grace, and not of myself, in my own strength, that the power of God is manifest in and through me.

### 4. God is allowing it for others to benefit (Verses 13-15)

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 in heaven and on earth derives its name.

- This is amongst the most important of truths when it comes to knowing what God is doing in and through the hardships of life.
- Sometimes God will allow it so that we can comfort others with the comfort God gave us while we were in the difficult hardship.

2 Corinthians 1:3–5 - 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.