



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Power of Perspective

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All right, as the offering is coming around if you would please open up your Bibles to the book of Ephesians and go to chapter three, so Ephesians chapter 3, if you do not have a Bible you may grab one somewhere in the seat back in front of you. As a way of introduction, my name is Jon Walker. I am the High School pastor here at a Canyon Hills. And just in case there's any confusion, I am not related to Steve Walker. And just for proof of that I didn't grow up here, so I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area which means that's right, why are you mad. This is not going to go well for my team today, this should be sympathy and kindness instead, instead the opposite has shown that's fine. All right we can end now. That's funny. You guys are actually a little bit nicer than the first service. They flat out booed me, so I was cool. I was like all right, that's great, first time for everything in church.

But I do want to say what is an honor to be here. My wife and I have been to Canyon Hills now as I've been a high school pastor for about three years. And it really is just an incredible honor to be here as pastor to high school students and their families within this church. I have no doubt a number of your faces I know. But I just want to say what a joy it is. And if you are here you are a family with high school students, or you are a student to the very best of my ability if you have not taken the chance to be a part of HSM what you call our high school ministry, I as best as I can want to make that invite. I'm well aware that the distance between those doors right there in the student center, as you walk across the lobby, might actually be the biggest distance in our church, especially if you are a high school student. And especially if you don't know anybody. And so, what I do want to say as best as I can, is that we would love to have you we'd love to welcome you as you are. We would love to give you a community be a part of, and leaders that genuinely care for you. I've never been a part of a leadership team that cares for

students quite like our volunteers that lead in our high school ministry and our student ministry. They're the best I've ever been around in 13 years of ministry and each week I do not find myself thinking man we need better leaders. I find myself thinking Jon do not mess this up. They are awesome. Do not screw this up. And so, for those that are students we would love to have you or if you'd be willing to take a chance and meet me, I would love to meet you.

And as I said we are going to be in Ephesians Chapter 3. We have been as a church travelling through the book of Ephesians and we are going to begin there this morning so if you would, would you please stand up with me, as we as we read the word of God. And we're going to start in verse 1 we are going to make it all the way to verse 13. Hopefully we survive. So here we go Ephesians 3 starting a verse 1, *"For this reason, I Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus, on behalf of you gentiles assuming that you've heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I've written briefly when you read this, you can receive my insight in the mystery of Christ which was not made known to the sons of men and other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs members of the same body and partake of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of this Gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me by the working of his power to me the one the very least of all the saints this Grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unserviceable riches of Christ and to bring to light for everyone. What is the plan of the mystery hidden the ages hidden for the ages and God who created all things so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he had realized in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence to our faith in him. So, I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffer over I what I am suffering for you which is your glory"*

Let's pray. Father give us eyes to see and give us ears to hear. May we leave this place this morning with a perspective on the world and our lives and our circumstances that is trained by the Gospel and is seen through that lens, and in doing so may we have hope. Not because of who we are but because of who you are and what you've done. So, we pray these things in Jesus name, amen. Have a seat. One of Paul's favorite words to describe the gospel, and it's especially true in the book of Ephesians, is he describes it as a mystery. And just for clarity, when I say the word gospel and I say the gospel, I mean the good news that Jesus is death and resurrection counts for sinners. That his death and resurrection is a

gift given to us that this grace is given to us. And as Ephesians 2 points out, that this is not of our own works, and that salvation is offered to anyone who would believe, regardless of what or where they come from. When I say the gospel that's what I mean this morning. And the word mystery, in a biblical sense, it does not mean something that we have to solve. See mystery in a biblical sense means that something that God genuinely desires to reveal and does so over time. Kind of like a sculptor as he's molding a piece of clay that the onlookers kind of have an idea of where he's going. They have hints based upon the movement of his hands. But the full reality, of the full beauty, the full revealing of what is being created is not known until it is finished. And here what Paul is saying is that Jesus's death and resurrection is the *full* reveal of what God has been doing through the ages is the full reveal of the gospel. This is the mystery.

So, the mystery is that God's plan for sinners is that he would die himself in their place. The mystery is that this grace is for anyone, anyone who would believe regardless of where what they've come from. This mystery is that his saved people are the victory banner to the spiritual forces against God that the gospel is true, and that Jesus has won. The mystery is that he now entrusts that gospel to his people. And the mystery is that this has always, always been God's plan since the foundation of the world. And Paul here in verse 13, at the end of this passage we read he makes a plea says "Please, please do not lose heart". And the phrase to lose heart it means to be to be put under such pressure that we literally lose the will or the heart to continue on, that we're done. And Paul's not writing this hypothetically. He's not writing this in some sort of vacuum. He is writing from a Roman prison, chained to a Roman guard, to a group of believers in Ephesus who are living in a culture that not only does not believe in Christ, but because they do has actually pushed them to the outside of society, so that basic things that we take for granted like food, and like having drinking water, and like finding a job, are now in question for them because they're on the outside. And so, the natural question in their mind, is if this is going to happen to Paul then what about us, what about my kids, what about my family, what about my job? And so, it is very easy. very easy, they're on the precipice, if not already experiencing a loss of heart.

And our circumstances most likely are not identical to theirs, but it is still so easy, all these centuries later, still to lose heart as we face the consequences in our life of the sin of others and what it does to us. As we face the regret and the difficulties of our own sin. As we experience what it is like to be a person who believes in a culture that does not, and the isolation that comes from that, either in your family, or at work, or just in everyday life. It's easy to lose heart as we begin to believe, and it sinks in that you know in our heart the thought that "I'm not sure God's listening anymore, I'm not sure that He's good

and I'm not sure that He'll actually forgive me *this time*". Or we lose heart not when anything crazy happens, just life happens. The everyday exhaustion and frustration and battle of life. And so we're just kind of done and we lose heart, or we see ourselves going that way, or maybe it's not a full loss of heart, but we find ourselves distracted or discouraged. It is so easy to be in that place.

And if you look at verse 4 notice with Paul's request is for them or what he desires for them. He wants them to see. He says I want you to see what I see. I want you to see my life and your life from the perspective of the gospel, because this is true because the mystery, is true finally revealed, see your life through the perspective of the Gospel. See that's exactly what we're supposed to do we're supposed to see our life through, through the lens or the perspective of the Gospel and when we do it changes everything. See it changes how we see God, it changes how we see ourselves, it changes how we see other people, it changes how we see our everyday circumstances. See it's when we take our eyes off of the Gospel, meaning when the truth of Jesus' death and resurrection stops becoming the dominant reality by which we see the world ourselves and others, that's when we lose perspective, and when we lose perspective, we lose heart, we lose perspective we lose heart. And so, this passage is really interesting because really the only imperative giving, that's just given this it's a kind of bible language you're saying command, the only real command or thing to do in this is to not lose heart. But by implication of what Paul is saying, there is so much more application for our life. See what this passage does is it takes our eyes upward first that we are reminded or that we first understand what God has done for us. And then that allows us to look back down on the circumstances of our lives with proper perspective. And when we have this perspective is trained by the Gospel, or just for shorthand or must say this morning. when we have a gospel perspective, I believe there are four things that this passage points out that can actually happen in our life that help us not to lose heart.

Number one, when we have a gospel perspective, we can have the attitude of a steward. When we have a gospel perspective, we can have the attitude of a steward. In verse two, Paul refers to himself as a steward of grace. Now he's talking about himself personally, and though none of us will ever be an apostle, and though none of us are ever going to write scripture, the identity statement that he's making here is true of us. We are, if you are in Christ, you are a steward of grace, it's who you are. This is an identity statement. and the word steward. It means a caretaker of something valuable and this is a little different than how we normally talk about grace in a church context. We normally talk about it as risk as we are recipients of grace which we are. But here it kind of turns it on its head and says not only

recipients of grace we are caretakers of grace, we are stewards of grace wherever we are. One theologian and commentator said that this is a theology of grace that the church needs to recapture. Because to say that we're stewards of grace reorders or identity. What we tend to do, is we tend to place our identity in what we do, what we have, or who we have, and when we do that, we will always find ourselves disappointed by it. Because people, positions, and possessions, *cannot* give us a lasting identity. They will always fail us, or they will sin against us. And when that happens is when we're disappointed, in where we placed our identity is when we begin to lose heart, and when we begin to use that disappointment as an excuse to sin. Well this didn't happen for me, so I now have a reason to do whatever I want over here.

For example, part of who I am is I am a dad of two young boys 6 and 3. Now if I were to find my identity in being a father, that comes with a little bit of peril. Because my boys act like boys that are 6 and 3. And so when they act up, it can easily become about *me*, and not necessarily even correction towards them, but about how they're making me look. And that becomes an excuse for me to sin. I can get extra angry because you are making me look bad in Safeway, *again*. Who are you? The answer is a little version of me. But I make it about me. And so, what happens is when we do it becomes an excuse and that's when we lose heart. Or for example, if what I do is who I am, what do I do when I hate my job? What meaning do I find in that? If what I am is what I do? Or what if there's an identity? I want this job, I want to become a parent, I want to get into this school, but it doesn't happen for us. For some are going to be in that spot it's deeply painful. And so, because that identity has not happened I don't know who I am. I wanted to become that, but for some reason God has not allowed it. And so now it's an excuse to do whatever I want, because I didn't get what I want. Or what if it's an identity that we had but we've now lost? That we've now lost, we don't know who we are anymore. See being a dad is only part of who I am, but it's not *who* I am. See we're not first and foremost a parent, or a spouse, or an employer, or friend. We have these titles from a biblical perspective from a gospel perspective, so that we can be a steward of grace wherever we are, in any position, with any possessions, and with any group of people. That you are in that job because you are there to be a steward of grace, even if you hated. That you have kids to be a steward of grace to them, even when they act like kids. You are in that relationship, whether is healthy or dysfunctional, to be a steward of grace. And see whatever situation we find ourselves in, we are there as stewards of grace first. And when we get that identity order correct, is when it actually allows us to be better, or only be a more accurate word is godlier, more godly parents, and students, and bosses, and employees, and teachers, and friends, and spouses. See when we have a gospel perspective, we can have the identity of a steward of grace.

Number two when we have a gospel perspective, we can have a spirit of other-centeredness. I know the grammar is a little bit off on that, but I'm sticking with it. Paul's writing here to a group of Gentiles in Ephesus. They are not Jews. And he wants them to know that they are not second-class citizens in God's family. And this is continued on from the idea that he's writing in chapter two. And the self-centered division in the church between Jews and Gentiles is not one that we are very familiar with and feels like an ancient problem, but I would argue the division now is greater and it's not merely between one group of people and another, yet that still exists. That in our hyper-individualistic, hyper-consumer culture, that the division has now changed. It has now grown to the division between me and everyone else. In a culture that tells us that what you desire, what you believe, what you want, what your personal truth is, is primary that by default, makes everyone else in our life a second-class citizen, even if we say that we love them. And we buy into that because the natural position of our heart is, we want to believe we're king, we want to believe that we're queen.

Just this week, as I was writing this message has hit me in kind of a ridiculous way that I was driving into work at a church, as a pastor, and as a human being it turns out. Who was at a yellow light, and there was space for two of us. Someone just went "oh yeah, uh-huh." But of course, the person in front of me waited till it was red and was and then zipped through the intersection so that I was what left way like left waiting at a red light, and I am mad. I'm like how dare you? Do you not see Pharaoh in his chariot? Let me through peasant! Like I am mad. Like do you not see me driving here? The whole the whole thing is about me in that moment is it is the natural disposition of our heart. And so then by default we begin to treat other people, even those whom we say we love or to church with, as second-class citizens to bring this home. Let's use some examples here for us. I mean how do we think it's going to go, if the almost 2000 people that we have showing up to LifeGroups on a weekly basis, are showing up to their LifeGroup believing that life group is about them? How is that going to go? It will be couched in spiritual language and it will seem like a LifeGroup, but what's actually going on is a bunch of individuals clamoring for attention, rather than caring for one another. The natural disposition of our heart is to make it about us. But how radically would it change our church or our group, if we showed up genuinely believing that not merely the group, but we ourselves existed for the good of others in it, that that was actually why we were there, or to be as Paul says a steward of grace in it. How would it change our relationships if we realized that we existed for their good and to serve them and not the other way around? How would it change our worship when it is based upon what God has done for us and whether

or not that morning, we are feeling it or it's a song that we like? How would it change my marriage if my critique was not of how well my wife served me, but how well I served her? How would it change our fights? How would it change the way we fight? If we knew that we needed grace equally as much as they did?

See, true other-centeredness, true gospel perspective other-centeredness, it comes from the knowledge that God came to give equal riches of grace to *anyone* who would believe because we all stand before him equally bankrupt. That is where true gospel, gospel centered, other-centeredness comes from. See when we have a gospel perspective, what it does is it takes our eyes off of ourselves. It first draws our eyes upward to what God has done for us and then it naturally takes our eyes back outward, to place other people above ourselves. Not rooted in merely fact that we're not the only one in the room but rooted in the fact of how much God has done for us and how much we need him. Admittedly even more than those next to us. See when we have a gospel perspective, we can have a spirit of other-centeredness.

Number three when we have a gospel perspective, we can have confidence in God's character. We have a gospel perspective we have confidence in God's character, if you think of why we don't approach someone in confidence that's usually one of two reasons. Number one, that we've done something foolish and we owe them a debt, right. We now don't want to go talk to them because we know about how it's going to go. It's probably going to involve an apology and our and first, so we don't want to go to them because we're afraid of what we've done. Or we don't go to them because we're afraid of who they are. Their character is in question, so we don't know what we're going to get when we go to them. So, we don't know. What Paul is saying here especially in verse twelve, is that we can approach God with absolute and full confidence, but because we live in a broken world it throws the character of God into question for us. Whether by what's happened, what someone has done, or what we've done, we're just no longer sure that God is good, or that he's listening, or that he'll forgive us. But please hear the crux of what this passage is saying, please hear this, that because of the evidence of the gospel, that because of the evidence of the gospel, you never ever have to doubt God's record of integrity, and goodness, and faithfulness, and mercy to you. And you can approach him in absolute confidence because of what Christ has done and what God has revealed through the ages.

See the gospel is his wise and perfect plan that he has been carrying out to perfection, is his plan for the salvation of humanity, that he has been carrying out perfectly for the ages, Paul says, it is the beginning of time. So, you're going to tell me that God has done that perfectly, crafted a plan of salvation so perfect that is carried out, and yet somehow in your life he dropped the ball, that you're going to tell me that that God has crafted a plan of salvation, through the ages for all people who would believe, regardless of what or where they have come from, and yet in you has somehow found the one sinner that he *can't* forgive. The evidence of the gospel proves that that is not God's character. And yet in our actions it proves that at times we think that, behave that way, And for those who are here who have not yet trusted in the death and resurrection of Jesus for your salvation, and maybe you're here and you and you're waiting for a feeling or you're waiting for a sign, I would lovingly challenge back to you of like what else are you waiting for? What other evidence, other than a God who crafted a plan of salvation, through human history brought to perfection in the person of Jesus, his work counting for you, what other evidence, or sign or feeling, are you waiting for? There is nothing, nothing else to be done, no other hurdle for you to coming to Christ to find forgiveness of sin and new life. And that salvation comes to us when we trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus to count on our behalf and submit our life to him as he is King over our life. And if you were here and you were in that place, we would love to pray with you at the end of the service, there's going to be people up front who you will find are just as terribly imperfect as you are. But we would love to pray with you and give you a gospel perspective on what's happening in your life and the sin that remains. And for those of us that are here maybe for hurting, or maybe things have happened where that perspective is, is now just thrown into question, is our confidence in God is absolutely shaken. We would love to pray with you afterwards. It's not going to be the magical fix for probably what is going to be a journey, but we would love to be a part of bringing a gospel perspective back to what's going on. See when we have a gospel perspective, we can have confidence in God's character.

Number four when we have a gospel perspective, we can have hope in suffering. When we have a gospel perspective, we can have hope in suffering. This passage here in chapter 3, in these verses is the first time though that we know he's in the situation, it's the first time that Paul admits and addresses the fact that he's in prison. But if you would go back to verse 1 and take a look at whom Paul says he is a prisoner of look at whom Paul says he is a prisoner of. He says he is a prisoner of Jesus. There is no mention of Rome. Though he is chained to a Roman guard. Paul is intentionally and subversively not mentioning Rome, because it is not Paul's identity. It is not who he is. His circumstances, his suffering

does not define his identity in Christ. He is subversively trying to speak to us in the Ephesians and God speak to us through this passage, saying that your suffering does not define who you are. That Paul says, I am here because Christ put me here. I am here because of the gospel of Christ. I am here because I'm a prisoner of Christ, he defines my identity. Our suffering does not define who we are because what the gospel does is it reminds us who we are. And it reminds us that this is not all there is. It reminds us that this is not all there is. And what this means, is that if you're here and you're a believer, you are not what has been done to you. I'm going to say that again, because I think for some, we have either never heard that, or we have forgotten that, you are not what has been done to you. You are not what has happened to you.

For example, if you are here and you are divorced, divorced is not your identity. You are, as Ephesians tells us, one in Christ. You are one with Christ that is your primary relationship. That is who you are. If you are here and you've been sinned against, somewhere in between the spectrum of just downright frustrating today or life-alteringly painful. You are not a victim, you are not a victim, you are a new creation in Christ that's who you are. If you're here you feel deeply isolated, feel alone, you are not an orphan. You have an adopted family and a father who cares, you are adopted that is who you are. See what Ephesians does, is the entire book reminds us of our identity is a book on grace that flows into speaking who we are. And Ephesians reminds us that in Christ we are blessed, we are loved, we are saved we are justified, we are righteous, we are holy, we are forgiven, we are adopted, we are reconciled, we are rich in grace, we are sealed, we are gifted, we are empowered, we are alive, we are new, we are raised up, and we are at peace, and that's only some of them. And all of this is a gift because of what Jesus has done for us and is not predicated on our good works and what we have done and so therefore it cannot be taken away from us by the actions of another person or our own actions. See Paul's encouragement to a group of believers experiencing suffering and watching him suffer was that they should not lose heart. Because if the gospel is all that they have, then they still have everything. That if the gospel is all that we ever end up having then we still have everything. That is a gospel perspective.

So, if I could do one thing to our suggestion to maybe help bring this home into our everyday life. One of the things that I would suggest is go back in the book of Ephesians and start in chapter 1. And I encourage you to underline or highlight anywhere where it says one of three things anywhere says who you were, anywhere where it says who you are now, and anywhere where it says what God has done. And what you will find visually when you do that is you will find your Bible filled with underlines,

especially the first three chapters of Ephesians, and the visual is intentional. That there is there is riches and grace, as Paul says, that is overwhelming how much God has done for us, how much we are no longer who we were, how much we are now who he makes us, and when we do that when we do that it allows us to teach the gospel or preach the gospel to ourselves.

Begin to use the very words of Ephesians and pray a prayer of thankfulness in the morning and the evening to say, God thank you that I'm not this anymore and that I am now this. God thank you, you can look at and say thank you that I am saved and that my sin isn't counted against me, thank you that I'm righteous, and I'm holy, thank you that I'm adopted and not an orphan. Thank you that I'm a new creation and my past doesn't define me anymore. Allow the gospel to be preached to you as you read it and you'll find as you do this how much your perspective changes, how much how you see the world, how you see yourself, how you see God, how you see the circumstances of your life changes, as it is ordered based upon the gospel. See when we have a gospel perspective, we *can* have hope in suffering. That is not to belittle suffering or to promise that somehow magically it will end but to speak hope in the middle of that. See we should see our life through the lens of the gospel, we should see our life through the lens of the gospel, and when we do, we can have an identity of that of a steward, we can have a genuine spirit of other centeredness, we can have confidence in God's character and we can have genuine hope in suffering, so don't lose heart. Do not lose heart. Do not lose heart, when life does not live up to expect to its expectations, your life is not wasted, because we exist as stewards of grace where wherever we are, in whatever situation we find ourselves in. Do not lose heart. When your church experience isn't what it should be. It often won't be. But remember that it was never about us. Do not lose heart at the failure of others, because as much as that stings and is deeply painful, remember that we have been forgiven of much, if not more than they have. Do not lose heart when your own sin overwhelms you because of Christ, we can approach got an absolute confidence. And do not lose heart when you suffer. See we have hope in our suffering because suffering is not our identity. We are who God has made us. We are no longer what has been done to us. And so, because the mystery of the gospel is true, let it be the lens through which you see your life as you leave this day and as you go through this week and beyond. And when we do that, when we do that it allows us not to lose heart. Do not lose heart because the gospel is true, and Jesus has won.

Let's pray. Thank you for your word. I thank you that it reminds us and reorders what we call true, that it reorders our identity. Lord, I pray that if there are those that are here that do not yet know you

that you by your power spirit would draw them, now that they would submit to you and admit their need for you. If there are those that are here that have lost their confidence in you, I pray that you will remind them through your word and the power of your spirit of what you have already done, so they approach you confidently God. There are those that are here that are suffering, I pray that you remind them or help them see for the first time what you have done through your gospel and that you give us an identity that endures through suffering and that this is not all that there is. And there are those that are here, and they realize that they have made our lives about ourselves and what we desire, I pray that you remind them they are stewards of your grace, and in doing so are meant to be others centered and all we do. And so, we lift these requests to you knowing that you are the God that hears and is near your people and we pray these things in Jesus name, amen. Thank you. We'll see you guys next Sunday.