

In Whom We Have Boldness

Epiphany

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Ephesians 3:1-12

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Are we called to be bold? Are we called to be confident? We know that we are not to be arrogant; but what about the other two?

Arrogance is an “offensive display of superiority or self-importance (dictionary.com).” Yet is being bold being arrogant?

Consider Goliath from the Old Testament. He was a giant. He stood over nine feet tall. His armor weighed about one hundred and twenty-five pounds. And his claim was this: “Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.”

Would Goliath’s claim be considered arrogant—at least, by earthly standards? Or did he have the power to back up his claim? Was he making an “offensive display of...self-importance” or was he being simply confident?

In contrast to arrogance, confidence is “belief in the powers, trustworthiness, or reliability of a person or thing (dictionary.com).” Confidence, then, is placed in something reliable.

Goliath certainly had confidence in his abilities; but he was defeated by the youth David. It was not because Goliath lacked physical ability. There was more power with David than he had in his body.

So, are we called to be bold and confident? We must have some confidence to do our everyday work. But that is not the kind to which we have been called. We have been called to be confident in our Lord Christ Jesus. We’ll explore this further as we look at our Epistle text from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

Verse 1

“...I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have 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 have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in 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 partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.”

Paul will refer to the boldness and access to God the Father we have in Christ at the end of this section, but it also applies to what he has written here at the beginning. Paul had been arrested for the sake of the Gospel, but he doesn’t worry about it. He wrote to his Gentile hearers boldly asserting that his arrest was to their benefit, “on behalf of you Gentiles.” He reminded them of his call by revelation to be a worker for Christ to show that the purpose of his life since that point had been in service to Jesus.

For someone else, being arrested would mark failure or seem pointless in trying to achieve their goals. But for Paul, in Christ, Paul knew that Jesus would work things out even as he was in chains. Every part of his life would work together toward Christ’s goals—even the hard ones. Paul had that confidence—not in himself, but in his relationship with God for the sake of Jesus.

Do you have that same confidence? Do you have that same assurance? Not in yourself. Not in your own works. But then, neither did Paul. And yes, Paul was an apostle. He had received power from our Lord Jesus to do great acts in service to our Lord Jesus. He had been baptized with both the Spirit and fire. We, dear friends in Christ, have not been baptized with fire to perform the same kind of great acts. We have, however,

been baptized in the same Name: the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And through that baptism, we have access to the Father just as Paul himself did. And through that baptism, our lives in Christ also serve Christ's purposes.

Verse 2

“Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gifts of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to life for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in 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.”

Paul differentiated between his power and that of God. Paul wrote that he had been “the least of all he saints” because he had been a persecutor of the church of Christ whereas God had called him “by the working of his (God's) power.” So it was by God's power that Paul had become a believer and, more than that, a minister of the grace of God in Christ Jesus—that he might reveal the “plan of the mystery hidden for ages”—that is, the Gospel.

You and I, like Paul, were not worthy of God's power, yet God used His power to bring us to faith in the mystery of the Gospel, His Son's death and resurrection. Since the time of Paul, God has used His ministers to proclaim that Gospel until it has reached us, and today pastors continue to proclaim it so that others would be made ready to preach it to the generations still to come.

He proclaimed the “manifold wisdom of God” to the people at Ephesus from prison to show that, while he was in chains, Satan and the other “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” had no power over him. While he may have been in prison, Satan could not take his baptismal right of God's power in Christ from him. And as Paul demonstrated that for his hearers at Ephesus, so the church has continued to proclaim that by the power of God in Christ through baptism, Satan and the other heavenly authorities have no power over all who believe—including you and me.

Verse 3

“This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is to your glory.”

By our baptismal right, we have access to the Father at all times and in all places—whether in periods of easiness or hardship or even persecution. Nothing Satan and his authorities can do can ever take that away from you.

So have boldness. Have confidence. Just not in yourself, but in your access to our God and Father, through our Savior Jesus Christ, His death and His resurrection.

No matter where you are in life right now—whether things go easy for you or you find yourselves in chains for the sake of our Lord Christ Jesus, “do not lose heart.” We have assurance from the reliability of God Himself that all things will work together for good for you, because of your faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of that, no matter what Satan throws at you, you and I both know God will work it together for your good, for your glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

