

# Permission to Speak Freely?

Long Beach Alliance Church  
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*“...we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.”*

*~Ephesians 3:12 (ESV)*

## 1) **The Big Picture: Paul’s “Rabbit Trail”**

- A) After summarizing how believers are unified and reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:11-22), Paul intends to pray for his Ephesian readers (3:14). However, he gets sidetracked. Mentioning ministry to the Gentiles (3:1) launches Paul into an “aside,” elaborating his Gospel work (3:2-12).
- B) Paul “rabbit trails” from his original prayer plan. Still, this ends up giving his readers further insights into God’s plan to include Gentile believers in His family. The first half of this aside (3:2-7) explains Paul’s calling to “steward” the Gospel among non-Jewish people (Gentiles). The second half (3:8-12) highlights how Paul carried this out.
- C) Within the second half of this aside, Paul affirms his commissioning to “preach to the Gentiles” (3:8) and “bring to light for everyone” the Gospel (3:9). One way God’s complex wisdom is triumphantly waved in the face of His supernatural enemies is through the lives of God’s people in Christ’s Church (3:10).

## 2) **Jesus Makes It All Possible**

- A) God’s “eternal purpose” (3:11) proved His wisdom is triumphant over evil powers. This was accomplished through Jesus’ work on the cross. God the Father planned this from the very beginning of time (1:5,9,11).
- B) God’s wise plan to have Jesus defeat evil is revealed through Christ’s Church. As people are continually welcomed into the family of God (the Church), God’s wisdom to provide a way to save them is proven right over and over again.
- C) The name “Christ” comes first (3:11), drawing attention to Jesus’ role as Messiah. As God’s specially-appointed one, Jesus’ perfect life, death for humanity’s sin, and victorious resurrection made it possible for Gentiles to be included in God’s family. He reconciled all believers back to God!

### **3) God is No Longer Far Away**

- A) Before, sin separated people from God, because He is holy (without sin). Believers have a relationship with Jesus, and He paid for and erased their sin. This trusting relationship (“faith in Him”) allows access to God the Father. Christ has removed every obstacle.
- B) “Boldness” with God means Christians can speak freely and openly with Him. Like a loving Father, God’s children can talk with Him with absolute honesty. Instead of fearing His powerful wrath against sin, believers can have “confidence” God will welcome them in.

### **4) If God Is With Us, Who Can Be Against Us?**

- A) Discussing how we can talk with God, Paul is reminded of his original train of thought: his prayer for the Ephesians (3:1,14). He wraps up His “rabbit trail” (3:2-12) by transitioning back to His own situation (3:13).
- B) Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles had cost him. In an attempt to share the Gospel once more in Jerusalem, Paul had been jailed (Acts 22:29). He was later transferred to Caesarea (23:33), and a couple years later, to Rome (28:28:16). By the time he wrote this letter to the Ephesian church, he had served nearly 5 continuous years in prison.
- C) However, Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles also had wonderful results! Specifically, most of the Christians in Ephesus could trace their “spiritual heritage” back to Paul’s sharing the Gospel there. They wouldn’t be saved if Paul hadn’t accepted the risks of sharing Jesus with others.
- D) Therefore, the hardship and persecution Paul faced was worth it: it led to many Ephesian citizens (among other people all over the Mediterranean world) following after Jesus! In this way, Paul can write how his suffering “is your glory” (Ephesians 3:13): it was to their benefit.
- E) Paul’s only command in this section (3:1-13) implores his Christian friends in Ephesus to not grow weary or give up. He has been called as a minister of the Gospel. Personal suffering will be a natural part of his life’s mission. Therefore, Paul and his readers (and you and !!) should never be discouraged by the hardships ministry brings, because our all-powerful God is listening and walking with His children every step of the way. Serving God will be tough, but His nearness is enough!

# Growth Group Guide

*“permission to speak freely?” (ephesians 3:11-13) september 21-26, 2014*

## Take a Closer Look!

● How was God's eternal purpose “realized” in Jesus?

● What did Paul mean by “boldness” and “confident access?” Why is this such great news?

● How was Paul's suffering the “glory” of his readers?

● What gave Paul's readers reason “not to lose heart?”



### **Take It Home!**

*How can we live out these ideas from the Bible?*



What does a bold and confident relationship with God look like? How does it change how you pray?



What does ministry for the Gospel cost you? How can it discourage you?  
How does a confident relationship with God help?

### **Take It Further!**

*Want to study more? Read here outside group time*



How is David's bold and confident relationship with God revealed in Psalm 13? How does he respect God while still being brutally honest with discouragement and doubts? How can this example influence your prayers?