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## *Devotion for September 3, 2021*

*"For this reason, I Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles..."*  
*- Ephesians 3:1*

**Her name was Ethel Fritz.** She and her husband, Clarence, were members of my first parish in rural Indiana. I was visiting with them on a lovely winter afternoon when talk turned to the state of the world. The year was 1995. After I made a statement about how bad things seemed then, Ethel replied, "Well, of course it appears to be getting worse, Pastor. There are more people in the world and people are sinful." Wise words from a wise Christian woman.

Much is being written in these dark and latter days about Christian persecution. Statistics show that more people are martyred for the faith in our modern era than ever before in history. More people, more sinners, more persecution - it makes sense.

In the devotional reading for today, [Ephesians 3:1-21](#), the Apostle Paul finds himself under house arrest, a prisoner for the faith in Rome. He is writing to the Christian church in Ephesus because it has become divided between Jewish and Gentile converts to the faith. Chapter two, which is one of the greatest expositions of salvation by faith through God's grace, calls for unity in *"Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."*

Whenever I ponder the state of our school and church communities, I realize how significant this call for unity in Christ remains. Outside of that, there are so many things that Satan might use to divide us, things every bit as significant as Jew and Gentile. There's the myriad of things associated with COVID, the Middle East, and so on and so forth, all of which might be best characterized as red and blue.

Clearly that divide is the most significant, so much so that some in one of those groups feel as if they are being excluded by churches. It's not true, but we need to always be evaluating how we act towards others and where our priorities lie so that we do not allow personal opinion to interfere with sharing the faith.

Paul, who penned this letter, was willing to lay all aside for the sake of preaching the Gospel, even his freedom, twice. As he wrote Ephesians he was under house arrest in Rome, around the year 60 AD. A few years later he would write yet again from prison, this time a cell, awaiting his death. There he wrote, as he closed his second letter to Timothy, *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."*

My prayer for you today and always is that the Lord would fulfill you with this strength of faith to overcome the challenges of the day, seeing them as another step towards an eternity with Him in heaven, a grand opportunity to help others along that way, too. He is faithful and He will do it for the sake of His Son, Jesus. Amen.

*God's blessings,  
Rev. Kevin Loughran, Senior Pastor  
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