

Encouragement and Confidence in Hard Times
Ephesians 3:1-13

*“All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.”*

William Shakespeare (1623)



1) ALL THE WORLD'S AN _____.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles” Eph. 3:1

“The beating heart of Rome is not the marble of the Senate, it's the sand of the Colosseum. He'll bring them death and they will love him for it.” Gracchus (Gladiator 2000)

Nero punished Christians seemingly out of cruelty rather than public good. (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44). 68AD

“For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, **like those condemned to die in the arena**. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings.”

1 Cor. 4:9 NIV

2) THE _____ OF A LIFETIME

“In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which 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.” Eph. 3:4-5

The mystery is that our confidence and our encouragement is based on God's promise- His covenant.

“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**.” Eph. 3:6 (bold mine).

3) THE _____ IN THE ARENA

“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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Eph. 3:10-11 (bold mine).

“The Romans are unusual, however, in transforming public killing into entertainment to this degree and in allowing an audience to affect the outcome of gladiatorial duels.” Shelby Brown Archeologist (VP of Archeological Institute of America)

4) CONFIDENT ENCOURAGEMENT FOR _____.

“In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.” Eph. 3:12-13

All scripture is from the New International Version.