

## Don't Lose Heart Ephesians 3:1-13

Life throws all sorts of curves our way. Join us as we see Paul shift his perspective away from the challenge to the purpose God has for his life.

### 1. Change Our Perspective on Circumstances

Your Circumstances aren't "in the way" of what God is doing...

Your Circumstances are "the way" God is doing it

### 2. The Greatness of the Responsibility

- Unlikely Convert
- The Mystery Revealed

Before Christmas I returned, after 45 years, to the country that as a boy I knew as Nyasaland. Today it's Malawi, and The Times Christmas Appeal includes a small British charity working there. Pump Aid helps rural communities to install a simple pump, letting people keep their village wells sealed and clean. I went to see this work.

It inspired me, renewing my flagging faith in development charities. But travelling in Malawi refreshed another belief, too: one I've been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I've been unable to avoid since my African childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my world view, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God.

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.

I used to avoid this truth by applauding – as you can – the practical work of mission churches in Africa. It's a pity, I would say, that salvation is part of the package, but Christians black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it. I would allow that if faith was needed to motivate missionaries to help, then, fine: but what counted was the help, not the faith. But this doesn't fit the facts. Faith does more than support the missionary; it is also transferred to his flock. This is the effect that matters so immensely, and which I cannot help observing.

Matthew Parris, British Columnist

- The Gift of a Part

### 3. Live Your Perfect Part

- Speak
- The Beautiful Message