

Ephesians

Chapter 3

Let's open with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

We thank you again for another time and opportunity to study your word. We pray that your Spirit would go beyond the human ability to listen and receive, and go beyond the human ability to speak and minister your word to our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen!

We're continuing on in Ephesians. Ephesus, over on the western shore of Asia, was founded by Pricilla and Aquila according to Acts Chapter 18, and then established by Paul during his third missionary journey, recorded in Acts Chapter 19.

Ephesus was the hub or the center of all activity and missionary work in this entire region, even over in Greece. Ephesus was a very important center for the work of Christ.

The book of Ephesians is believed to be a circulation letter. What we have is the Ephesians copy of this letter. They were probably the original.

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And what they did with circulation letters, they left the title blank and sent it to the first church. They would copy it, put their name on it and then send the original on to the next church.

So Ephesians is believed to be a circulation letter which is important information. That means that all of the information in the book of Ephesians is for all believers. It's not addressing a certain problem in Ephesus, but it's for all believers.

Paul wrote to Ephesus around 63 AD when he was imprisoned in Rome. During his first imprisonment he was under house arrest for about two years.

And so Ephesians is among a collection of letters called the prison epistles or prison letters. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are the four letters that make up the prison epistles or prison letters.

Again, it's founded by Pricilla and Aquila, and established by Paul during his third missionary journey.

The theme of Ephesians is the believer's position in Christ.

The key phrase of Ephesians is "in Christ." And that's what Paul is ministering about.

The outline of Ephesians, there's only two sections, the first section, Chapters 1 through 3, is the doctrine of the new life in Christ.

And the reason why it is a doctrine is because as we will study, Paul says this doctrine of the new life in Christ is a mystery that has been hidden in ages past, until Paul's era.

And Paul was chosen to have the mystery of Christ revealed to him.

Ephesians Chapters 4 through 6 is the details of the new life in Christ. That's taking the doctrine of the first three chapters and breaking it down into more detail.

The foundation verse for the book of Ephesians is Chapter 1 Verse 3 that God has blessed us, and the literal translation is "in every spiritual blessing, in the heavenlies, in Christ."

And this is progressive, from general to specific. But the emphasis is spiritual. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. It doesn't say physical. It says spiritual.

Secondly, in the heavenlies. There are five different places in the book of Ephesians where the phrase in the heavenlies is described as the spirit realm. And then specifically in Christ.

So we have all spiritual blessings in the spirit realm in Christ.

We also studied that there are other spiritual beings in the spirit realm, including demons. All spiritual creatures and created beings are in the spirit realm.

But Christ is at the throne of the right hand of God, and we are seated in Christ in the spirit realm.

What prompted this letter to be written was because since all of our blessings in the spirit realm, and all of our blessings are in Christ in the spirit realm, the emphasis is that that is our fortress, that is our inheritance, and that is our personal relationship with Christ which happens to be the opposite of the physical realm.

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The spirit realm and the physical realm are opposites. And our problem, as Paul is pointing out, our problem is that we judge spiritual, biblical, and Christian things by the physical, and it isn't physical.

We judge things by numbers and by how things work out in the physical realm. "If everything works out well, it must be God!"

We don't take into consideration that Satan also is the god of this world and that he can make things work out too, especially if we're going in the wrong direction.

But in the spirit realm, we are in Christ, far above all principalities and powers. All of the demonic forces, all of our opposition, Christ is above them, and we are seated in Him.

And that's why Satan works through the physical realm, because in the spirit realm he can't do anything. He has no power over us whatsoever.

And so he works through the physical in order to influence and affect our mind psychologically, our emotions. Since we naturally function with our human senses, he tries to get us distracted, occupied, upset, disturbed, worried, anxiety, anything that has to do with the physical to get us upset.

And then we turn around and judge God and judge our position in Christ, and we judge spiritual things by how we feel and by what's going on in the circumstances around us.

And that isn't spiritual at all. As a matter of fact, everything can be going great in the physical realm, and it can be all wrong!

So Paul says, the foundation verse upon which the entire book is built on is in Verse 3 of Chapter 1, that God is blessed because he has blessed us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

We saw the plan of God as Paul listed the blessings for us. Remember that the provision of the Father, in fact all three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned in Verses 4 to 14 in the plan of God in His blessing towards us.

The provision of the Father in Verses 4 through 6 is election. He has chosen us to be holy and to be without blemish before Him in His love.

Secondly adoption, is that He has predestinated the adoption process for us that we might enter in and become inheritors of the promise based on sonship.

Then in Verses 7 through 12, we saw the provision of the Son and the third thing of the seven blessings that are listed.

The third thing is redemption in Verse 7 of Chapter 1. Not only has He paid the penalty for our sins, but He has also purchased us. We belong to Him.

Fourthly through Christ, He gives us vision. That is, He causes a wisdom and insight to abound towards us.

Fifthly, revelation in Verse 9, that He made known to us the mystery of God's will.

Sixthly, possession, that in Christ we have a possession. We are joint heirs with Christ according to this and Romans 8:7. Everything that Jesus is, He is to me. I have Him, all of Him. Everything that belongs to Christ, belongs to me. I am co-inheritors of Christ.

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And then the provision of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians Chapter 1 Verses 13 and 14.

The seventh thing is preservation, that we who have heard the gospel and have believed the gospel, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise until the day that Christ comes for His purchased possession.

He has purchased us and one day He is coming for us. But the Holy Spirit is preserving us. We are kept by the power of God until our salvation should come.

This prompted Paul's prayer in Verses 15 to 23, and he said because of your salvation, he says I'm praying three things for you, that God would enlighten your eyes that you'll be able to see three things:

Number one, what is the hope of His calling in Verse 18. Emphasis is on the word hope. It's not the word wish. It's not the word I hope so, but it is a word of constant expectancy and confident expectancy. It's not a hope or a wish like I hope it will happen. We have an expectancy that it is going to happen.

Secondly, and what is the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints in Verse 18.

He has an inheritance in us. He has an investment in us. He has given us His inheritance, and we are His inheritance.

Thirdly, what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe?

And from here, he tells us this same power that energized Jesus when He raised Him from the dead energizes us, and this is carried over into Chapter 2 Verses 1 to 10.

The contrast between our spiritual condition: we were dead in trespasses and sin. Dead! And the contrast between our condition and God's ability, He being rich in mercy, and he used resurrection terms. He said just as God raised Christ from the dead, the same power raised us from the spiritual dead, and seated us in Christ in the spirit realm.

In the last half of Chapter 2, we saw that through Christ, there is now peace between Jews and gentiles. By peace, we mean unity. That's what the word peace means, Eirene in Greek. Eire means to be one.

Unity has nothing to do with a tranquil feeling. It has to do with being at one with someone. It tells us in this section that Jesus Christ is our peace, who has taken both and made them into one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition.

And so this brings us up to date.

We are now ready to begin Ephesians Chapter 3. This is the final section of the first section of doctrine, the doctrine of the new life.

Paul has now explained in two chapters about the new life in Christ and about the mystery. He's going to explain to us, I just revealed to you the mystery that's been hidden in ages past that nobody has been able to know.

In fact, nobody can know without the revelation of God's Spirit. And he says that's what I'm doing for you here. So Chapter 3 is the last chapter of the doctrine of the new life.

C.O.

Ephesians 3:1-13 The Procedure of the Mystery
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First of all, the dispensation of the mystery in the first five verses. Paul first of all reveals his condition.

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

He says, for this cause, and if you're note taking, you might want to put a little mark by that phrase "for this cause," because from here through Verse 13, he's going to get off track.

But in Verse 14, he repeats himself and gets back on track again.

Here he says for this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

He introduces himself in his condition as he's about ready to explain this. He's a prisoner in Rome. But he's letting them know that he is a prisoner, not of Rome, but of Jesus Christ.

He's there because Christ has him there as a prisoner. But they don't have him, Jesus does! And he says I'm here as a prisoner of Jesus Christ on behalf of you Gentiles so I can write this letter.

I think it's interesting that when God inspired Paul to write, in most of his letters, he's in difficult circumstances.

For instance, this is his first imprisonment in Rome. During his second imprisonment in Rome, he's going to write to Timothy and Titus.

But Timothy is a young man in Ephesus. As a matter of fact, Paul ministered in Ephesus in Acts Chapter 19 for three years. And then Timothy came behind him and pastored the church for a year and a half.

And at the end of Timothy's time, he started to waiver and he wanted to quit. I'm putting words in his mouth, but he says "Paul, these people are whackos. I can't take it anymore. All the different doctrines and all the stuff that's going on, I've had it!"

And it is interesting that Paul would be in a worse condition than the people to whom he is writing. He's inside of a prison waiting to be executed, and he's writing to a young pastor that says I'm ready to quit.

It's as if Paul was saying, "You think that's tough? What would you do if you were here?"

It's always tough in service to Christ. But it is interesting that the effectiveness, and the influence of a man who is in worse conditions than we are, and he's telling us!

Timothy should be the guy going to visit Paul in prison and saying hang in there brother. But it's the other way around!

So he says for this cause I Paul, the one who is speaking to you is the apostle Paul, yes, but the one who is ministering to you is Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

He gives his commission:

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

If you have heard of the dispensation, and that's word administration, of the grace of God which is given me to toward you:

And he's been commissioned with the communication of the mystery.

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

How that by revelation God made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote before in a few words, literally in brief. That would be the first two chapters.

M.V.

Ephesians 3:4

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4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Whereby, when you read it, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

That last phrase is one of the most important phrases in all of Paul's teachings. Many will teach this book with their understanding and not teach it from Paul's understanding.

No person has the right to take a book from the bible, inspired by God that has certain reasons and specific things concerning which it was written, and take it out of context and minister as to what it means to them.

Any person who has been called to ministry, or called to share the word, no matter where it is, even if it is one on one in your home, that person has a responsibility to represent the one who wrote the book, and the inspiration that he got. In essence, to be the physical vessel, because physically he can't be here!

I have to wonder how many people come to that realization and have nightmares, not because they were worried about their salvation or going to heaven, but worried about Paul waiting for them on the inside and saying "Hey you, come here. I saw how you taught Ephesians. That's not what I meant."

Well, that's what it meant to me!

Whatever book we're in, whatever letter we are reading, we are responsible for the inspiration that God gave to the original writer and what he meant.

So he says as I wrote before in brief, wherein when you read it, and here's the literal translation of Verse 4, that when you read it, you may

perceive. The word understand means perceive. That you may perceive my understanding. The word knowledge is the word understanding.

Again, when you read, you may perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.

That is one of the major scriptures of the bible. Paul wrote and he prayed for God to give me the ability to perceive his understanding of the mystery of Christ, not to perceive my own understanding or what it means to me.

So he says this mystery was communicated to him by revelation. He wrote to them and shared it with them so that when we read it, we can perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ.

The condition of this mystery:

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed, and look who it is revealed to: to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

It's not given to us. It was revealed to the apostles and prophets. And it was done in the Spirit. We are reading the revelation of the mysteries of Christ.

The only revelation that we have today is the revelation that was given to them. We ourselves do not have, nor are we given the revelation of the mystery of Christ. It has already been given!

M.V.

Ephesians 3:6

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Then the proclamation of the mystery. Verse 6 of Chapter 3 is the summary statement of the mystery of Christ. Here's the content of the mystery of Christ:

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

That the Gentiles should be three things: fellowheirs, and instead of the same body, it is fellow body members, and fellow partakers of his promise.

Notice that it is singular. We're talking here about "the promise," the promise of the Holy Spirit which God said He would send as the second covenant. Jeremiah 31:31 tells us that God's covenant is that He would send His Holy Spirit into His people.

So Gentiles are fellowheirs, that is fellow inheritors, fellow body members, and fellow partakers of His promise, the Spirit, in Christ, literally through the gospel:

Verse 6 is a summary statement of the mystery of Christ, which ages past, nobody knew. And it was hidden.

Now I want you to notice as we go through this, and if you want to do some in-depth study, everything taught in the book of Ephesians cancels out the doctrine that we become part of Israel, that we become Jewish.

Ephesians is establishing that Gentiles come out of the world, and Jews come out of Judaism, and they become one body in Christ. They are called the body of Christ. That is not the same as Israel.

We become fellow inheritors, fellow body members, and partakers of His promise together, in Christ, through the gospel.

The capacity for the mystery:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, literally, according to the energizing of His power.

The term "effectual working" is the energy of His power. Paul always wanted people to know that though he was called to be in service to Christ, that it was all based on the gift of grace that was given to him, and by the energy, the working of God by God's power in him and through him. It was nothing that he did!

M.V.

Ephesians 3:8

The selection for the mystery in Verses 8 and 9. First of all, the condition of the vessel:

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Paul says unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,

He says I'm the least deserving. I am less than the least of all saints.

The first cause that he was chosen for:

That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

The things of Christ cannot be searched out through or by human effort and ability. We can study the bible like a textbook, but spiritually have no understanding, or have ministry to us, without the Holy Spirit.

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It is the unsearchable mysteries of Christ. They must be revealed and ministered.

The second cause for which he was chosen:

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

So he says it's to bring Jew and Gentile together to have fellowship in the mystery of Christ bringing Jew and Gentile into one.

The intention of this mystery, the chosen way. He says in Verse 10:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers, that would be authorities, in heavenly places, and here we go with the spirit realm again. We know that principalities and powers are angelic forces.

That now unto the principalities and powers that are in the spirit realm, he might make known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,

In other words, God is working through the church and the angelic forces are watching and looking at God and His wisdom working through the church.

That's how they come to know because they don't know. They are like we are. They have to get the information to know. There are a lot of things that they don't have a clue on, and they look at the church.

Verse 11, the council behind this mystery and its ways:

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

It is according to the eternal purpose which he made in Christ Jesus our Lord:

God purposed this to happen this way that this mystery of God's work making everyone one in the body of Christ in Christ Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, it doesn't make any difference, was hidden in times past and that now would be revealed in Paul's time.

And he would write it down, and all of this was purposed according to God's plan.

But now the tribulation for the mystery, Paul writes in Verse 12 the confidence:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

In whom, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of him.

So in all of this, though it was revealed by revelation, Paul is telling them we have boldness to proclaim this message. We have access to God at all times. We have confidence in God.

But notice what it is through. Not by, but through the faith of Him. It's His faith, not faith in Him. It is in the Genitive case, the faith of Him.

But then he says about the conduct:

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Wherefore, because of this, because we have boldness and access and confidence through the faith of him, he says I desire, more literally, I request that you faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

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So I want to let you know that we have all boldness and confidence. We have access to God through the faith that He has given to us. So therefore, when you hear about the tribulations that we have to go through in order to bring the gospel to you, he says I don't want you to faint because of our tribulations, which is for you, and it's for your glory.

So then Paul breaks out in his second prayer:

C.O.

Ephesians 3:14-19 The Prayer of Paul

His expression of humility in the first couple of verses. Notice this:

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

He says for this cause.

He's repeating what he said in Verse 1. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

That's his humility. He's not bowing physically so much as he is in his heart and his mind.

M.V.

Ephesians 3:16

His petition is very interesting. First of all in Verse 16, concerning strength:

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;

Wow, what a phrase!

The word strengthened is an interesting word. It's from the word Kratos which means grip. That you might be strengthened with power, Dunamis.

And the agent is through His Spirit. But notice the location. In the inner man. All of our blessings are spiritual. All of our blessings are in the spirit realm. And all of our blessings are in Christ.

My inner man is where Christ dwells. Paul is always directing people into the inner man. He's not worried about buildings, about our wealth, or any of these things.

Spiritual growth and transformation takes place on the inside, not on the outside. So the first thing he did was pray for strength.

Secondly, concerning stability:

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

Notice in Verse 17, the first part: That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

Well, wait a minute! I thought He already did?

Let me read it to you literally. That Christ may settle down in your hearts through faith, that now that you have Christ, that you settle down in Him, and He settles down in you, now that your life will be lived through faith.

Thirdly, concerning scope:

That you, and the text says being which shows that it has already happened. That you, being rooted and grounded in love,

M.V.

Ephesians 3:18

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18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

You see, life has dimension. This is just the physical realm. Paul says I want you to have some depth for you to understand the spirit realm and the spiritual truths in Christ.

And then lastly, concerning substance:

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge,

I have the love of Christ. But do I realize that the love of Christ passes any kind of understanding or knowledge that I would have?

The purpose:

In order that you might be filled with all of the fulness of God.

Now he's praying that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. But he says in Colossians 2:9 and 10, for in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

So I have Christ, therefore I am filled with all the fullness of Christ. And you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power, or spirit beings.

And I'm complete in Him. I'm not lacking anything. I have all of Christ. But you see, my growth process is where the fullness of Christ has more of me that I would be filled with all the fullness of Christ.

Now the word filled, without getting too technical, because even in the book of Acts, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit leaks out and you got to get filled up again.

Pimplemi is the Greek word for "to be filled," and it has to do with having your human senses taken over by something.

In other words, Christ is in me but sometimes people see me as just myself. Other times, the Holy Spirit fills my human faculties, and He uses me to speak or to understand, or something. He takes over my human faculties.

That's what it means to be filled. I always have Him in His fullness. But Paul is praying that His fullness would become full over me and in me in all of my living of life, that I might be filled with all of His fullness that's already there.

The problem that we face is that we have the realization of him with us all day long, every day, based on spiritual maturity and growth.

For some believers, you ask "What did you do today?" They will talk about everything that they did. "Did you seek the Lord about it? Was He guiding you? Did you seek what the Lord wanted you to do?"

And they look at you like "What? Hey I go to church man!" There's no personal relationship or interaction. There's no reality that He's there, just a mental belief about a doctrine.

And every year we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, while many people for the rest of the year just forget about it until they are reminded about it the next year.

The resurrected Christ, He's alive. He lives in His fullness in His people. God is in me in His fullness. Sometimes I don't even have a clue that He's there!

Paul prays for dimension, that you understand the height, and breadth, and length, and depth, that I would come to know the love of Christ which passes understanding, that I might be filled with all the fullness of God that's in me.

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C.O.

Ephesians 3:20-21
The Pronouncement of Paul

M.V.

Ephesians 3:20

The pronouncement of Paul, the benediction. First he talks about the capability of the Lord.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

He says, now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,

You can't piece together words like that in any literature better than that. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!

All that I'm complaining about, all that I'm asking the Lord about, He's doing much more. And He knows so much more.

And it's according to the power that is working in us. The word working is the word energy. According to the Dunamis, the power that is energizing in us.

And then the creed concerning the Lord.

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Unto him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus into all ages, world without end. Amen.

Just by these verses, Verses 17 through 21, you get that sense and understanding that Paul knows who Jesus is.

Let's close with prayer,

Our heavenly Father,

Again we stop to acknowledge your presence. We are so thankful for your Spirit who ministers the truth of your word to us. Help us as we continue on in this powerful book. Help us to keep our focus on you. Help us to grow through your word. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen!