

## **Ephesians Chapter 3**

### Outline

#### **C. The Disclosure of God's Mystery (3:1–13)**

1. The Task (Dispensation) to Minister the Mystery (3:2) “if indeed you have heard of the dispensation” (3:2)
2. The Revelation of the Mystery (3:3-5) “how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery” (3:3)
3. The Content of the Mystery (3:6-7) “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs” (3:6)
4. The Purpose of the Mystery (3:8-13) “that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church” (3:10)

#### **D. The Appreciation of the Mystery expressed in Prayer (3:14-21)**

1. Paul's Prayer (3:14-15)
2. Three petitions in prayer (3:16-19):
  - a) that he may grant you...to be strengthened with might...so that Christ may (to) dwell in your heart through faith (3:16-17a),
  - b) that you may have strength to comprehend...and to know the love of Christ (3:17b-18),
  - c) that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (3:19).
3. Benediction (3:20-21).

### ***The Disclosure of God's Mystery (3:1–13)***

#### ***Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—***

***For this reason....*** For what reason? The phrase points the reader back to the last section, *Reconciled with God's People and Growing into God's Temple (2:11–22)*. That material “was concerned with Jewish and Gentile believers who had been made into a new humanity in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> So with these words, we should note that Paul is not done talking about that prior topic.

***I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—....*** Paul is here re-identifying himself as the author of these instructions and adding an important new element; he is a prisoner. Those first reading and hearing this letter knew that Paul was in prison; he will go on to mention this three more times in this letter. Why? I think it gives his message greater weightiness; his imprisonment shows him to be the genuine article, one to be listened to.

*“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”* (Ephesians 3:13, NKJV)

*“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,”* (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV)

*“for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”* (Ephesians 6:20, NKJV)

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<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 63.

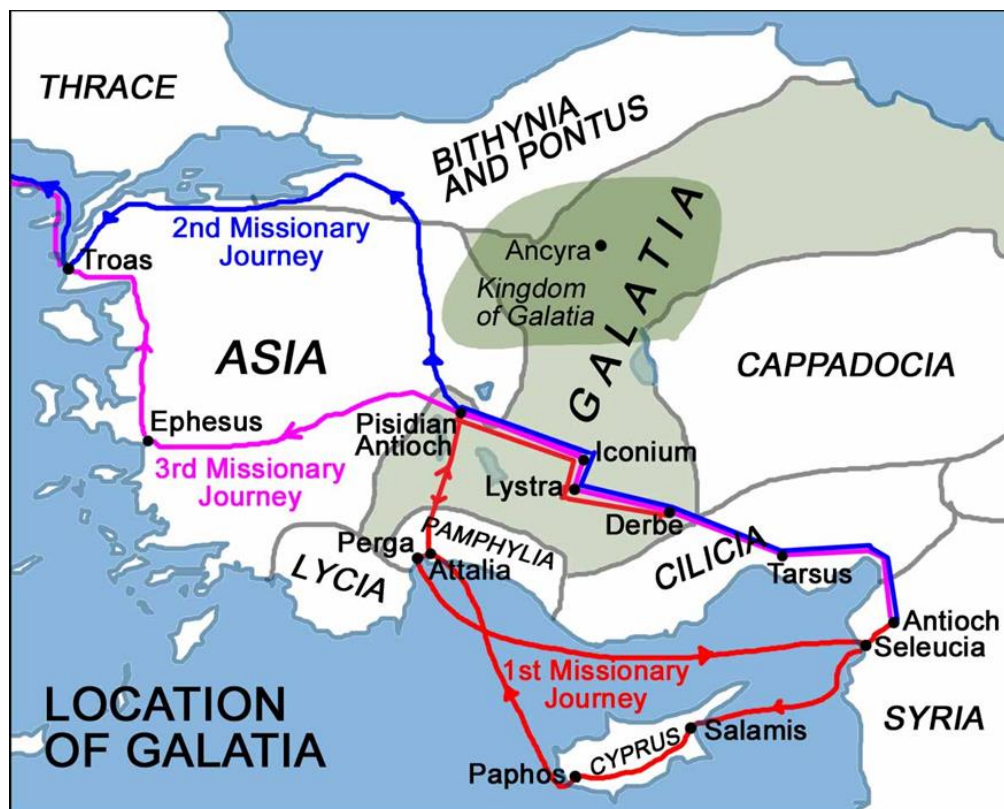
**for you Gentiles....** Paul knew he was called to minister to the Gentiles from the beginning of his call to the faith.<sup>2</sup>

*“But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”* (Acts 9:15–16, NKJV)

This current imprisonment was probably a result of Paul’s trip to Jerusalem to bring a gift to the believers in that city. In this visit, he was first arrested for allegedly bringing a Gentile into the Temple.

*“.... and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”* (Acts 21:28, NKJV)

But then later, “The Jews had claimed that he was distorting God’s message; consequently, they were instrumental in obtaining his imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20–36). Later, he was taken to Caesarea, tried, and granted an appeal to Caesar (Acts 24:23–25:12), which resulted in his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 27–28).”<sup>3</sup>



It is probably from Rome around A.D. 60-62 that Paul is writing this letter.

Soon after this John shows up in Ephesus as pastor of that city and much of the region that we call Asia Minor. By A.D. 64, John is imprisoned in a penal colony on the Isle of Patmos off the coast of Ephesus, where he writes the Book of Revelation to Ephesus and the other churches of Asia Minor that are now under his oversight.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17–18; Rom 1:5; 11:13; Gal 1:16; 2:7–9; 1 Tim 2:7

<sup>3</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 64.



**A House in Ephesus Where John and Mary Are Said to Have Lived**

It is thought that John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, stay there until their death many years later. Both would be there to this day, although we don't know exactly where. So, sometime between A.D. 63 and A.D. 64 John arrives as pastor of Ephesus. But for now, this is Paul's area of responsibility.

This reminder to his audience that he was a prisoner and was so for their sake (***you Gentiles***) will add weight to what he is about to say. But what comes after the word ***Gentiles*** in verse 1? There is a dash at that point, which takes note that Paul is not completing his sentence but stopping for a moment to talk about something else before he goes on. That brings up two questions: 1) when does he pick up where he left off, and 2) what does he address in the mean time?

Where does he pick up this introduction? He probably picks it up at 3:14 where he starts all over again with the same phrase "***For this reason....***"

*"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"*  
(Ephesians 3:14, NKJV)

If that is, in fact, the case, then verse 3:2 to 3:13 are an independent thought related more to 2:11-22 than to 3:1. What is the new thought?

### **Paul Will In This Section Talk About The Mystery Of Christ**

1. The Task (Dispensation) to Minister the Mystery (3:2)
2. The Revelation of the Mystery (3:3-5)
3. The Content of the Mystery (3:6-7)
4. The Purpose of the Mystery (3:8-13)
5. The Appreciation of the Mystery expressed in Prayer (3:14-21)

## The Task (Dispensation) to Minister the Mystery (3:2-5)

**Ephesians 3:2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation [stewardship] of the grace of God which was given to me for you,**

**if indeed you have heard** or better **Surely you have heard**<sup>4</sup>.... They had heard something about this subject, but Paul will now flesh this out in further detail.

**of the dispensation**<sup>5</sup> **of the grace of God which was given to me**.... The word **dispensation** tends to throw us. Why? For one thing, it is used by Dispensationalists in ways not related to what Paul is here talking about, and two, it is simply not a word that we commonly use. Earlier, we suggested *task*, *job*, and *plan* as good synonyms. However, the words *administration* and *stewardship* are the more commonly used words by translators.

One translator translates the passage as “**God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles.**” The words “special responsibility” refer to “administration” (*oikonomia*..., which indicates Paul’s God-given activity of administering grace. This administration has the sense of stewardship or a trust to be dispensed (in 1 Cor 9:17 *oikonomia* is translated “sacred trust,” and in Col 1:25 it is rendered “responsibility”).”<sup>6</sup>

Paul says that this *task*, *job*, or *plan* **was given to me for you**. What was this task? It was to communicate the contents of a mystery for their benefit—**for you**.

## The Revelation of the Mystery (3:3-5)

**Ephesians 3:3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,**

**by revelation**<sup>7</sup>.... The content of this mystery was given to Paul by means of a supernatural revelation. Paul gives us no indication as to when this took place.

**He made known to me the mystery**<sup>8</sup>.... In the Scripture, a mystery “is a secret plan hidden in God (3:9), which cannot be unraveled or understood by human ingenuity or

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<sup>4</sup> “The statement introduced by the construction εἴ γε, which turns up only five times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 5:3; Gal. 3:4; Eph. 3:2; 4:21; Col. 1:23), makes explicit an underlying assumption of the preceding assertion. Here it does not express doubt (‘if, indeed, you have heard’) but implies confidence or certainty: ‘you must surely have heard’....” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 226.

<sup>5</sup> *dispensation* οἰκονομία “1. ... task, a job, implying need for administration (1Co 9:17); 2. ... plan, involving a set of arrangements (1Ti 1:4); 3. ... manage a household, administration of a household (Lk 16:2–4).” James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 64.

<sup>7</sup> *revelation* ἀποκάλυψις “... ‘to uncover, to take out of hiding,’ not occurring in the NT) to cause something to be fully known—‘to reveal, to disclose, to make fully known, revelation.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 338.

<sup>8</sup> *mystery* μυστήριον “*Mustérion* denotes a spiritual truth couched under an external representation or similitude and concealed or hidden ... unless some explanation is given....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

study.”<sup>9</sup> It can only be understood as unveiled by God. The Greek word, **mystery**, is used 27 times in the New Testament six times in Ephesians and not all of these uses address the same subject. There appear to be many mysteries in God and His word.

Ephesians 1:9 “having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself”

Ephesians 3:3 “how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already”

Ephesians 3:4 “by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)”

Ephesians 3:9 “and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ”

Ephesians 5:32 “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 6:19 “and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel”

***as I have briefly written already....*** When did he write this? “...it is most likely that Paul has in mind Ephesians 1:9–10 and 2:11–22, especially vv. 14–16 with its reference to the creation in Christ of ‘one new man.’”<sup>10</sup>

*“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”*  
(Ephesians 2:14–16, NKJV)

And even further back in Ephesians is chapter 1 and verses 9 and 10 Paul says:

*“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”* (Ephesians 1:9–10, NKJV)

In Ephesians 1, this mystery “referred to God’s all-inclusive purpose which has as its ultimate goal the uniting of all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Here, [in 3:3] a more limited dimension to the mystery focusses on Gentiles, along with Jews, being incorporated into the body of Christ and thus participating in the divine salvation.”<sup>11</sup>

It is briefly mentioned in other books that Paul has written as well.

***Ephesians 3:4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),***

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<sup>9</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 229.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 228.

**by which....** “The opening phrase, ‘in accordance with which’ [by which], points to what was written in chapters 1 and 2....”<sup>12</sup>

**when you read....** “The reference to *reading* probably has in view the public reading of the letter in the congregation.”<sup>13</sup>

**you may understand**<sup>14</sup> [perceive] **my knowledge**<sup>15</sup> [insight] **in the mystery of Christ.** “What the writer expects to become clear from such a reading is his insight, his grasp of the significance of the secret which God has disclosed in Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

Paul possesses knowledge of this mystery. “In the present context it is the apostle himself who has received this *insight into the mystery*, but he earnestly desires that they, too, will grasp it by reflecting on what he has already written to them.”<sup>17</sup>

***Ephesians 3:5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:***

In Colossians, Paul says it this way:

*“the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.”* (Colossians 1:26, NKJV)

***which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men....*** This mystery “was wholly inaccessible to human understanding until the time when God chose to reveal it.”<sup>18</sup>

***as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets....*** This revelation came not only to Paul but to the other **apostles** and in addition to some of the **prophets** of the New Testament church.

But, did not the Old Testament promise to bless Gentiles with salvation? In Romans 15:8-12 Paul says, ‘absolutely!’

*“Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.” And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!” And again: “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud*

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 229.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 229.

<sup>14</sup> *understand νοέω* “To perceive with thought coming into consciousness as distinct from the perception of senses. To mark, understand, apprehend, discern.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> *knowledge σύνεσις* “Comprehension, perception, understanding. The word denotes the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 176.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 229–230.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 231.

*Him, all you peoples!” And again, Isaiah says: “There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.”*  
(Romans 15:8–12, NKJV)

So, how is this a mystery? “In what sense, then, could it be said that this ‘mystery’ was a new revelation if the prophets of the Old Testament had already looked forward to the saving purpose of God in which Gentiles along with Israelites would be embraced within its scope? The **manner** in which that purpose would come to fruition—**by incorporation of both Jews and Gentiles into the body of Christ**—was not made known. *This* had remained a mystery until the time of its fulfilment....”<sup>19</sup> We have already seen that Gentiles are not required to become converts to Judaism to be saved, but that Jew and Gentiles must become “*one new man from the two*” (2:15).

### **The Content of the Mystery (3:6-7)**

***Ephesians 3:6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,***

“The writer now comes to an explicit statement of the content of the mystery he has mentioned earlier (v 4).”<sup>20</sup>

***that the Gentiles should be [or are]***<sup>21</sup>.... Three adjectives will follow this statement.

***fellow heirs***<sup>22</sup>.... “Gentiles do not become Jews and thus fellow Israelites, rather they are fellow heirs with the Jews in Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

“...the writer views the Church as a new entity which transcends old divisions and categories, and what for him is at the heart of God’s disclosure is that the Gentiles are an essential constituent of this new entity.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 232.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 180.

<sup>21</sup> The apostle uses three compounds with συν- (‘with’) in Eph. 2:19–22 to emphasize the unity of Gentile converts with the rest of the Christian community: συμπολῖται (‘fellow-citizens’), v. 19; συναρμολογουμένη (‘joined together’), v. 21; and συνοικοδομεῖσθε (‘built together’), v. 22. Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

<sup>22</sup> *fellow heirs* συγκληρονόμος “...one who receives a possession together with someone else....” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 572.

<sup>23</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 67.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 180.

**[fellow members] of the same body**<sup>25</sup>.... "...a smoother rendering is "members of the same body" or "fellow members of the body." Again, Gentiles are not merely fellow members with Jews but fellow members with the Jews in the body of Christ."<sup>26</sup>

"The Gentiles have not been added to an already existing entity; they are fully equal joint members, totally necessary for the life of the body, which without them would not exist...."<sup>27</sup>

**[fellow] partakers of His promise**<sup>28</sup>.... "Before the Cross, Gentiles could come under the pale of the covenants of promise by becoming Jews. Now in the New Testament era, Gentiles are fully accepted and are fellow participants of the promise with believing Jews. This promise includes Messiah, salvation, and the promise of the Spirit (Gal 3:14)."<sup>29</sup>

"...Gentile Christians are participants together with Jewish Christians, with no difference between them."<sup>30</sup>

**in Christ through the gospel**.... It is "because of the Good News (gospel) that Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow participants of the promise in Christ."<sup>31</sup> The message here is not that all Jews and all Gentiles are now automatically one new body, no but that those in Christ and through the gospel are so.

"The OT predicted that God's grace would come to the Gentiles (Gen. 12:3), but equality with the Jews in one body was a secret never before revealed."<sup>32</sup> So, "The content of the secret plan is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow participants of the promise in Christ through the Good News."<sup>33</sup>

## The Mystery on How Paul Uses Mystery

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<sup>25</sup> [fellow members] *same body* *σύσσωμος* "...a person who is a member of a group, with emphasis upon his coordinate relation to other members of the group—'co-member.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 121.

<sup>26</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 180–181.

<sup>28</sup> [fellow] *partakers of His promise* *συμμέτοχος* "one who shares in a possession or a relationship—'sharer, partner.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 558.

<sup>29</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 67.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 181.

<sup>31</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 64.

OT Old Testament

<sup>32</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 1535.

<sup>33</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 66–67.



But isn't Paul's description here of the mystery different than his use in Ephesians 1:9-10? Yes, somewhat, but not entirely. Paul actually does use mystery in a variety of ways.

"...the apostle sometimes employed the term 'mystery' of one particular element in his message (cf. the similar use of 'gospel' to refer to one important component). So, for example, 'mystery' denotes the transformation of believers into spiritual bodies on the last day (1 Cor. 15:51) and Israel's final restoration after her temporary rejection (Rom. 11:25). To speak of the whole by means of a part is entirely appropriate and certainly not inconsistent with the more general uses."<sup>34</sup> Paul here addresses a critical part of the mystery, in Ephesians 1:9-10 Paul addresses either the whole or a different aspect of the mystery.

*"having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."* (Ephesians 1:9–10, NKJV)

"The content of the mystery which is revealed through the proclamation of the gospel, and which has been stated in 3:6, is not unrelated to the content of the mystery as expressed in 1:10 in terms of summing up all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. The former provides the model for the latter. In other words, the bringing together of the cosmos in Christ finds its present anticipation in the bringing together of humanity in Christ in the one Church out of Jews and Gentiles."<sup>35</sup>

***Ephesians 3:7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.***

"In what is a transitional verse Paul returns to the primary thought of the paragraph (vv. 2–7), namely, his stewardship of the mystery in the context of divine grace...."<sup>36</sup>

***minister***<sup>37</sup>.... Or a servant; the word is used of deacon in the New Testament.

### **The Purpose of the Mystery (3:8-13)**

A new sentence begins with verse 8 and continues through verse 12.

***Ephesians 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,***

***To me, who am less than the least***<sup>38</sup> ***of all the saints....*** Or, *leaster*. "Using a very striking expression in which he neither indulges in hypocrisy nor grovels in self-

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 237.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 181.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 237.

<sup>37</sup> *minister* δάκονος "a person who renders service—'servant.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 459.

<sup>38</sup> *less than the least* ἐλάχιστος

deprecation, he indicates how deeply conscious he is of his own unworthiness and of Christ's overflowing grace to him...."<sup>39</sup>

*"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* (1 Corinthians 15:9, NKJV)

It is because he persecuted the church that Paul views himself as "*less than the least.*"

We see that in 1 Timothy as well.

*"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."* (1 Timothy 1:15, NKJV)

Many today would consider this a self-image problem but in fact he was simply honest and well aware of his sin. We need more self-image problems like this.

**this grace....** What grace? That answer will be found in the prior verses.

*"that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power."* (Ephesians 3:6-7, NKJV)

This grace was given to do what?

**that I should preach among the Gentiles....** Verses 8 and 9 give the purpose of the mystery or the reason Paul was made aware of this mystery. It is to "*preach*" (3:8) and to "*make all see*" or bring to light (3:9).

This verse now tells the reader how and why Paul received this mystery, "*that I should preach among the Gentiles.*" "'Preach' here is *euangelizō*, to 'announce good news,' for he was well aware that his gospel was a message of great good news for the Gentiles."<sup>40</sup>

So, Paul mentions here that he has received **grace** to fulfill two missions, more easily identified in the Greek text which uses two infinitives, "**to preach**" here in verse 8, and in verse 9 "**to make all see.**"

**What does Paul preach?**

**the unsearchable<sup>41</sup> riches of Christ....** "Christ himself constitutes the content of the riches of the gospel, and the wealth of the salvation to be found in him is unfathomable."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 240.

<sup>40</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 119-120.

<sup>41</sup> *unsearchable* ἀνεξίχνιαστος "Impossible to be traced out, untraceable, unsearchable...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 184.

**riches of Christ....** Earlier we read:

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV)*

*“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” (Ephesians 1:18, NKJV)*

*“that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:7, NKJV)*

“They are riches freely available because of the cross. They include resurrection from the death of sin, victorious enthronement with Christ in the heavenlies, reconciliation with God, incorporation with Jewish believers in his new society, the end of hostility and the beginning of peace, access to the Father through Christ and by the Spirit, membership of his kingdom and household, being an integral part of his dwelling place among men, and all this only a foretaste of yet more riches to come, namely the riches of the glory of the inheritance which God will give to all his people on the last day.”<sup>43</sup>

***Ephesians 3:9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;***

***and to make all see***<sup>44</sup>.... Or, *to bring to light*. This is the second infinitive, the first was “***to preach***” in (3:8) and now “***to make all see***” in (3:9).

*“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom! now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” (Acts 26:17–18, NKJV)*

To make all see what? “His commission was to make plain to all what was involved in the administration of the mystery.”<sup>45</sup> What was the administration of the mystery? It was the preaching of the gospel to Gentiles!

***which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ....*** “The phrase “*from the beginning*” is a good translation of the literal “*from the ages*,” it signifies that the mysterious plan was hidden before time. This indicates that the mystery was hidden in God before he created “all things;” according to 3:5, it was not revealed until the time of the apostles and prophets.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 120.

<sup>44</sup> *to make all see* φωτίζω “...to cause something to be fully known revealing clearly and in some detail—‘to make known, to make plain, to reveal, to bring to the light, to disclose, revelation.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 337–338.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 184.

<sup>46</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 67.

**who created all things through Jesus Christ....** This passage teaches us that the agent in creation was the Son of God, Jesus Christ. “The God who created all things in the beginning will recreate all things in the end.”<sup>47</sup>

**Ephesians 3:10 to the intent that now the manifold [many faceted] wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,**

**to the intent that....** Or better, *in order that.*

**that now....** Notice the difference in “*from the beginning of the ages has been hidden*” in 3:9 to the “**now**” in 3:10. There is a contrast in time that focuses our attention on verse 10.

**the manifold<sup>48</sup> wisdom of God might be made known....** Or, *the many faceted wisdom of God.*

**by the church....** It is the Church that God will use to make known this mystery of God saving Gentiles. And that having done so, he incorporates them and Jews into a new institution, the Church.

**to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places....** The phrase “*heavenly places*” includes both the angelic hosts and demonic elements as well. It is not clear in this passage which one he is addressing—or both. In 6:12 Paul states.

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:12, NKJV)

But in Ephesians 1:20, it was the redeemed who were seated in heavenly places.

*“which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”* (Ephesians 1:20, NKJV)

So, who is God making this work of salvation to Gentiles known—angelic beings or demonic beings?

Prior to the Gentiles becoming an integral part of God’s new man, Gentiles world-wide were lost to God and were the property of Satan. God’s wisdom in making them an integral part of God’s new creation is made known by the Church to the *principalities and powers*.

For what purpose? Perhaps, 1) That all creatures might glorify God in His works of salvation. 2) On the other hand, it *may* be an “*in your face*” statement. The Church is saying that not only is God saving sons of Abraham, he is also saving some from

<sup>47</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 122.

<sup>48</sup> *manifold* πολυποικίλος “...diverse, various, multi-colored. Manifold, multifarious, greatly diversified, abounding in variety....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

among the Gentiles around the world. More people than ever are being saved from all the nations on the globe than have been saved in all Jewish history.

“The mystery is disclosed in the Church and through her is being made known to these very powers that their malign régime, particularly over that part of humanity, the Gentile world, thought to be especially under their sway, has come to an end.”<sup>49</sup>

***Ephesians 3:11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,***

***according to the eternal purpose....*** In other words, this was His eternal plan.

***which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord....*** This plan saw its fulfillment in what Christ did on Calvary.

***Ephesians 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.***

***in whom....*** This phrase “relates back to Christ as the sphere in whom we have access to the Father.”<sup>50</sup>

***boldness***<sup>51</sup>.... This word “was used originally in classical Greek for “freedom of speech,” the democratic right “to say everything” one wished to say.”<sup>52</sup> “...it reflects the attitude of those who lack any fear or shame and have nothing to conceal, because they are assured of God’s gracious disposition toward them in Christ.”<sup>53</sup>

***access***<sup>54</sup>.... This word refers us back to 2:18.

“*And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*”  
(Ephesians 2:17–18, NKJV)

“While in 2:18 the access was the common access of two previously divided groups, here in 3:12 the access can be seen as one no longer impeded by the menace of hostile principalities and authorities....”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 187.

<sup>50</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 67.

<sup>51</sup> *boldness* *παρρησία* “Freedom or frankness in speaking. NT meanings: freedom in speaking all that one thinks or pleases....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 190.

<sup>53</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 190.

<sup>54</sup> *access* *προσαίrew* *prosaítēō* “The term was commonly used for the audience or right of approach granted to someone by high officials and monarchs.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 191.

**confidence**<sup>56</sup>... The word confidence is united with **access** or “*confident access*.” It is often used in relation to prayer and Paul returns to prayer in verse 14.

So, because God saves Jews and Gentiles alike, these believers have a confident access to God along with a boldness in speaking to Him.

“*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV)

This ends the sentence that began in 3:2.

***Ephesians 3:13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.***

***not lose heart....*** Don’t become discouraged.

***at my tribulations for you....*** It is likely that they were upset that Paul was in prison because of his ministry to Gentiles. That caused them consternation.

I think we can surmise from this that the church in Asia minor was experiencing some apprehension and fear. However, Paul puts another spin on this persecution.

“It is in perfect harmony with the heroic character of the apostle, who himself gloried in his afflictions, and with the elevated tone of feeling pervading the context that he should represent the sufferings which he endured for the Gentiles as an honor, and not as a disgrace and a cause of despondency.”<sup>57</sup>

“*and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*” (Philippians 1:14, NKJV)

“*Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*” (2 Corinthians 1:6, NKJV)

### **The Appreciation of the Mystery in Prayer (3:14-21)**

***Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,***

We read earlier:

“*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—*”  
(*Ephesians 3:1, NKJV*)

***For this reason....*** “*For this reason* points back particularly to the concluding words of chapter 2, where his readers have become part of the new temple in which God dwells by his Spirit (vv. 19–22), but also to 2:1–10, where God’s gracious saving work for them

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<sup>56</sup> *confidence* *πεποιθῆσις* “...to believe in something or someone to the extent of placing reliance or trust in or on—‘to rely on, to trust in, to depend on, to have (complete) confidence in, confidence, trust.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 375.

<sup>57</sup> Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (Crossway Classic Commentaries; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 111.

was recounted.”<sup>58</sup> Spoken again, it “indicates a resumption of the sentence begun in 3:1, a sentence interrupted by the long digression of 3:2–13.”<sup>59</sup>

***I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ....*** The glory of what God has done drives him to pray.

***Ephesians 3:15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,***

***whole family or every family....*** Is Paul praying to 1) the Father of all creation or 2) the Father of His elect children—Christians, those now in heaven and those still on earth? I think the later.

“The word rendered *family* is a play on the preceding ‘father’ and stands for any group derived from a single ancestor.”<sup>60</sup> Every family in heaven and earth was named after their family head—***the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*“You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”* (Acts 3:25, NKJV)

*“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”* (Romans 4:16, NKJV)

In Romans 4:16 Paul identifies Abraham as “*the father of us all,*” meaning Jews and Gentiles.

***in heaven and earth....*** “the addition of the words *in heaven and on earth* will indicate that the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven, though separated by death, are nevertheless only two parts of the one great family of God.”<sup>61</sup>

***is named....*** The idea of naming suggests lordship and authority over what is named. God is Lord over his elect. Others do not claim him as Lord or want him as Lord.

*“So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.”* (Genesis 2:20, NKJV)

As a result, Adam was Lord over all these created beings.

*“He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.”* (Psalm 147:4, NKJV)

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 254.

<sup>59</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 71.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 255.

<sup>61</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 133.

So, God is Lord over all creation.

In this way, we are reminded that the Gentiles also have a role to play in God's plan for they also belong to him. "the dominant theme of these chapters is that through Christ the 'one God and Father of us all' (4:6) has only one family or household to which Jewish and Gentile believers equally belong."<sup>62</sup> He is not Father to the one (Jews) and a close relative, uncle, to others (Gentiles).

***Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,***

***that***<sup>63</sup>.... The word that is used three times in this section marking the three petitions of the prayer, 3:16, 3:17 and 3:19.

***according to the riches....*** Or according to the "unlimited resources" which phrase accurately portrays his wealth.

***to be strengthened with might....*** It is God's will that we be strong in the faith. His riches make that possible.

***His Spirit....*** "It is the Holy Spirit that enables believers to be strengthened with God's power."<sup>64</sup>

***Ephesians 3:17 [that] Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,***

The word ***that*** at the beginning of this verse is a supplied English word looking back to the ***that*** of verse 16; it is not in the Greek text.

***Christ may dwell....*** For ***dwell***, "There are two similar Greek verbs, *paroikō* and *katoikēō*. The former is the weaker. It means to 'inhabit (a place) as a stranger' (AG), to live in fact as a *paroikos*, the very word Paul has used in 2:19 for an alien who is living away from his home. *Katoikēō*, on the other hand, means to settle down somewhere. It refers to a permanent as opposed to a temporary abode, and is used metaphorically both for the fullness of the Godhead abiding in Christ and for Christ's abiding in the believer's heart (here in verse 17)."<sup>65</sup> This is the aim of the first prayer petition.

***that you, being....*** This is the second ***that*** in this section and marks the second reason for praying (see 3:16 and 3:17.)

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<sup>62</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 133.

<sup>63</sup> *that* ἵνα "That, so that, for the purpose of.... Also used to indicate the cause for, or on account of which anything is done." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 74.

AG A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (University of Chicago Press and Cambridge University Press, 1957)

<sup>65</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 135.



**rooted and grounded....** “To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as opposed to superficiality. These Christians are to be *rooted and grounded*, or to have ‘deep roots and firm foundations.’ Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases, the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built.”<sup>66</sup>

***Ephesians 3:18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—***

**comprehend**<sup>67</sup>.... But this word is not a simple *understanding*, no, it is “To lay hold of, seize, with eagerness, suddenness....”<sup>68</sup> There is an aggressiveness to this comprehension.

**with all the saints....** The Gentiles are to have the same spiritual depth as do the Jews.

**what is the width and length and depth and height—** “...it seems to me legitimate to say that the love of Christ is ‘broad’ enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jews and Gentiles, the theme of these chapters), ‘long’ enough to last for eternity, ‘deep’ enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and ‘high’ enough to exalt him to heaven.”<sup>69</sup> But then Paul stops; he will start afresh in 3:19.

***Ephesians 3:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

**to know....** Paul starts again after the dash from the last clause.

**the love of Christ....** It is this that Paul wants us to comprehend in its width and length and depth and height. It is this that Paul wants us to know. This is the second aim of his prayer.

**passes**<sup>70</sup>.... It is not that this love of Christ passes knowledge; it hyper passes knowledge; it is far beyond simply passing; it *surpasses* knowledge. Simple knowledge can’t grasp it.

**that....** This is the third and last use of **that**, the last of the three petitions of Paul’s prayer (see 3:16 and 3:17). Each use of **that** directs the reader to a main point.

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<sup>66</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 136.

<sup>67</sup> *comprehend* καταλαμβάνω “to take. To apprehend, attain, obtain, find.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>68</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 137.

<sup>70</sup> *passes* ὑπερβάλλω “a degree which exceeds extraordinarily a point on an implied or overt scale of extent—‘extraordinary, extreme, supreme, far more, much greater, to a far greater degree.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 688.

**you may be filled<sup>71</sup> with all the fullness<sup>72</sup> of God.** “God’s fullness or perfection becomes the standard or level up to which we pray to be filled. The aspiration is the same in principle as that implied by the commands to be holy as God is holy, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>73</sup> This is the third point and the aim of the whole prayer.

“He is to be perfect as man, as God is perfect as God; and the perfection of man consists in his being full of God—God dwelling in him so as absolutely to control all his thoughts, feelings, and actions.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***The Ascription of Praise (3:20-21)***

***Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,***

***who is able....*** Paul has asked his readers to do great things in this letter. Now he reminds his readers that God is able to empower them to do all this and much more.

“Not even the immensity of the request in the preceding verses nor the unfettered ability of the human imagination can provide any limit to God’s mighty ability to act.”<sup>75</sup>

***exceedingly abundantly....*** Over and above abundantly. “As the readers are drawn in to share his prayer concerns, ‘all we ask or imagine,’ the apostle’s language is stretched to its limits: he uses a comparison of a rare compound adverb which is best rendered by ‘*infinitely more than*’.”<sup>76</sup>

This is designed to encourage us in prayer. So, we pray but, we don’t get the answers that we seek, with the result that we are sometimes confused and discouraged. The fact that “*He is able to do*” does not mean that *he is willing to do* in every case what we ask and think. So, we pray, “*if it be thy will.*” Our prayer is limited by His will, not His ability.

***Ephesians 3:21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

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<sup>71</sup> *filled* πληρώω “to cause something to become full—‘to fill.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 597.

<sup>72</sup> *πλήρωμα* a total quantity, with emphasis upon completeness—‘full number, full measure, fullness, completeness, totality.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 596.

<sup>73</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 138.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Hodge, *Ephesians* (Crossway Classic Commentaries; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 118.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 267.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 267.

**glory....** "...honour, greatness, or power...."<sup>77</sup> Our prayers do not add these things to God, we simply eulogize God, ascribing to him what one rightly should. "...it is an active acknowledgement or extolling of who he is or what he has already done...."<sup>78</sup>

**in the church by Christ Jesus....** "It is his creation, the church, into which believing Jews and Gentiles are united."<sup>79</sup> The New Testament knows no Christians that are not "*in the church.*"

**to all generations, forever and ever.** "Glory is due to God for generations to come and right on throughout all eternity."<sup>80</sup> This is perhaps the most eternally minded statement in the Bible loading up on words that span all of time.

**Amen.** "The 'Amen' makes it clear that the ascription of praise is not simply a matter of the lips, but is the spontaneous response of the whole congregation. Elsewhere Paul strikingly connects believers' response of 'Amen' to the faithfulness of God, who has said 'Yes' to all his promises in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). With this loud 'Amen' the first half of the letter is concluded."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 268.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 268.

<sup>79</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 76.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 269.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 269.

