

## Ephesians 3

### Introduction

In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul revealed that Jews and Gentiles have been united as one new man in Jesus Christ. In this section of the epistle he will reveal that this was not as an afterthought, but rather it was a mystery that was not revealed until after the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul explains the Gentile's new covenant status in order encourage them and exhort them to walk in faithfulness.

Today we will see the mystery revealed and we will consider Paul's words of encouragement that are presented in Paul's prayer for the church.

### Ephesians 3

#### I. The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed (3:1-13)

##### A. Paul explains his calling to the Gentiles (3:1-7)

1. Paul was called to reveal the mystery of the Gentiles inclusion in the people of God (3:1) as well as to call the Gentiles to repentance and faith in Christ.
2. Revelation received by Paul (3:2, 3)
  - a. The Ephesians were well aware of Paul's calling as the apostle to the Gentiles. The word "if" is better translated "since." Paul sees His calling as a stewardship - a responsibility he had been given that he was to properly administer.
  - b. Not only did they know about Paul's calling but Paul had already explained the mystery to them in brief.
  - c. Paul says that this mystery came to him by way of revelation. Paul is most certainly referring to his conversion where Ananias is told concerning Paul: "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel...'" Acts 9:15
3. Significance of the mystery (3:4-7)
  - a. Paul's calling confirms his understanding of the mystery of Christ (3:4)
  - b. The mystery was not revealed to former generations. This does not mean that the mystery was utterly unknown in the Old Testament. It was present but revealed mysteriously:
    - God told Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed as a result of the covenant God was making with him. The Jews would have believed that the nations could be blessed by adopting Judaism, not blessed as Gentiles.

- The story of Jonah reveals God's desire to save Gentiles.
- c. Now Paul says that what was once a mystery is made plain because the Spirit of God has revealed it.
  - d. Verse 6 gives a clear exposition of the mystery. The key word is the word "fellow" it means alongside or along with - the Gentiles are not a subset of God's people or a plan B that will be set aside when God gets back to His real people. Jews and Gentiles together make up the people of God.
  - e. Paul will again emphasize that he was called to reveal this mystery.
- B. God's Eternal Purpose (3:8-13) - In these verses Paul will make it clear that God did not come up with this plan on the spur of the moment, but that it was God's design from the beginning.
1. Paul's calling (3:8, 9)
    - a. The least of the saints - Because he persecuted the church, Paul considered himself the least of the apostles.
    - b. But whatever his status he understood that he was called to preach -- and there was a specific message he was called to proclaim.
      - The unfathomable riches of Christ which did something -- literally Christ was the culmination of God's plans.
      - Paul was called to bring to light the outworking of the mystery that had been hidden in God who created all things. Could it be that when attempting to thwart the plans of God Satan was actually bringing them to fruition? The greatness of God is manifest when the enemies of the cross succeed in their evil purposes yet fail to thwart the plans of God.
  2. God's purpose in calling Paul (3:10-13)
    - a. So that the church would serve as a witness of God's wisdom to the enemies of Christ.
    - b. This was according to God's eternal purpose and it was accomplished in Christ. Yet another instance where the victory of Satan seemed secure yet failure ensued.
    - c. This same Christ provides us with boldness and confident access to the throne of grace.
    - d. Now Paul will demonstrate how his calling mirrored the previous works of God. God through failure accomplished His purposes. Paul through tribulation was bringing glory to the Gentiles.

## II. New Covenant Encouragement in the Form of a Prayer (3:14-21)

### A. Paul returns to his prayer (3:14, 15)

1. Paul is clear that what follows is his prayer for the church.
2. Notice how verse 15 essentially serves as proof that God's promises to Abraham had been fulfilled.

### B. Content of the prayer (3:16-21)

1. Strengthened in the inner man (3:16)
2. Being rooted and grounded in love being able to comprehend the love of Christ (3:17-19)
3. Benediction (3:20-21)