

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Prison Letters
Ephesians 3

Last time...The way we Gentiles were, but now

This time...The Revelation of this mystery and Paul's 2nd prayer

The "back story" of how we got here, compiled from the Gospels (LMJC) and Acts and chronologically preceding Epistles (MoHS):

Because Paul's kinsmen, Israel

- rejected Jesus Christ as God's Messiah
- held to works (keeping the Law) as the means of salvation and therefore opposed the Gospel of Grace
- violently opposed the Gentiles being saved by their God
- had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2)
- being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom 10:3)
- believed that in having the Scriptures they had eternal life but were willfully blind to the revelation that the Scriptures testified of Jesus Christ, His Identity and mission (John 5:39)
- sought to kill Paul, starting with the mob scene in Acts 22 in the Temple in Jerusalem and ending with his appeal to Caesar

we now read Eph 3

v1 For this cause...the line of doctrine flowing from Ch 2

- righteousness with God by faith is for Gentiles too!
Gen 15:6
Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
Gal 3:29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- the Gospel of Grace (vs Law/works) for whosoever believes in Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God
- no difference between Jew and Gentile when it comes to salvation
- the mystery of the Church – a called out people of God, Jew and Gentile

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, is the prisoner

- in Rome (Acts 23:11, Acts 25:11, Acts 27-28)
- of Jesus Christ, NOT of Rome
in prison for a Divine reason – to write 4 letters

Ephesians: the riches and responsibilities of being “in Christ” and the unity of the one Church
Philippians: victory, joy, and peace in Jesus Christ
Colossians: the superiority and preeminence of Jesus Christ
Philemon: the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ who paid the debt for all slaves to sin to reconcile them to the Father

While Paul is imprisoned, God is still Sovereign and on His Throne

John 19:9-11 And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, **Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above**

true for Paul then and true for us now

Phil 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake

v2-4 If they have heard of the dispensation/administration/stewardship of the grace of God given to Paul by Jesus Christ Himself to take to the Gentiles (Gal 1:11-12)... because someone loved them enough and had the boldness of the Holy Spirit to share with them the Gospel of Grace

Sharing the Gospel is sharing the love and grace of God, not His condemnation
Nobody likes condemnation but everybody wants to be loved and “cut some slack”

Yet, behind enemy lines, we need the power of God from on high (the Holy Spirit) for boldness to share the love and grace of God, because it (1 Cor 2:2) is offensive to those in darkness

The Word of God divides (Matt 10:34)

In our days as is all previous days, we need to pray for the boldness/frankness of the Holy Spirit to share God’s love and grace with humility and meekness

By Divine revelation, Jesus made known to Paul the mystery of

- the Christ...the Identity and mission of God’s Messiah (Acts 9, Gal 1)
- salvation...by grace thru faith in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ
- God’s will...Eph 1
- the Church...Eph 2

Stating the obvious, the mysteries of God MUST be revealed by God
The wisdom and understanding of the Infinite God are well past finite man's
intellectual/reasoning capacity, the greatness of God is unsearchable (Ps 145:3)
God's ways are a "mystery" to man that come to man only by Divine revelation

What is a "mystery"?

v5 A mystery of God:

Eternal truths of the eternal God which in other ages was not made known to men
(times previously, by the Law and the Prophets)
but is now made known, revealed to Jesus' apostles and prophets (Eph 4:14)
by the Spirit...of God, of Christ, God the Holy Spirit of promise sent to

- dwell with and in the followers of Jesus (John 14:16-17)
- seal the followers of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:13-14)
- teach the followers of Jesus all things (John 14:26)
- testify of Jesus (John 15:26)
- guide the followers of Jesus into all truth (John 16:13)

The Law and Prophets given to the Jews did foretell what God was going to do, but in
hints and shadows, to be revealed in the foreordained time in the fulness of Truth
and the Substance of what God was doing – Jesus Christ, God's greatest
revelation of Himself to mankind

Even the beloved Daniel, given so much revelation about what God was going to do,
was told "seal the book" until the time of the end (Heb 1:1-3) when knowledge of
God's mysteries would increase...by Divine revelation in the ordained time

What is the particular mystery of which Paul is inspired to write in the first half of this
letter?

v6 The mystery of the Church

That the Gentiles (not created by God to fuel the fires of hell after all) are

- fellow heirs...also children of God (John 1:10-13),
heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17)
- of/belong to the same body...the Body of Christ, the community of the
called out people of God (and the Bride of Christ, Eph 5:32)
i.e. the same one Body, not 2 Bodies (one Jewish the other Gentile)
- partakers/co-participants with the Jews in God's promise of salvation from the
2nd death in Christ

by the Gospel...the Gospel of Grace (Eph 2:8-9), the Gospel of Christ (1 Cor 5:3-4)...
the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and
also to the Greek (Rom 1:16)

For which...

v7 Paul was made (by the will of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ) a minister of the Gospel of Grace/Christ to the Gentiles

Paul was NOT a self-made man (Saul of Tarsus was, however)

Paul was not a self-appointed and self-made Apostle

Paul was not a self-made servant (he was broken by God)

Paul was not a self-made lord over people in the Church (2 Cor 1:24)

Paul is who he is by the grace of God (1 Cor 15:10) that was given to him by God

Paul did not earn or purchase the grace of God, it was a transforming gift of God by the powerful working of His power...

- the Holy Spirit
- Luke 24:49 *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*
- Acts 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...*

in a 1:1 encounter leading to a 1:1 relationship (Acts 9)

when it pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul (Gal 1:15-16)

And now reflecting on “the way he was” and what God did by His grace...

v8-9 “This transforming, debt-forgiving, life-giving grace is given to me?

- the persecutor beyond measure of the Church of God
- who wasted and made havoc of the Church, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord
- hyper-zealously self-righteous
- the chief of sinners

This amazing grace is given to me!”

Paul did as he was inspired to write to others – he did not think more highly of himself than he should but thought soberly (Rom 12:3b, Rom 3:23, 1 Cor 1:30-31)

Do we think the same of ourselves?

Are we aware daily that God has chosen

- the foolish to confound the wise?
- the weak to confound the mighty?
- the lowly and despised?

Are we aware daily that we bring nothing “to the table” but our sin?

God in His foreknowledge had a plan for Paul, a new creature in Christ:

1. to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
spiritual and eternal wealth/abundance past finding out that can never be
measured or itemized
 - His infinite other-worldly love/*agape*
 - His infinite other-worldly grace and forgiveness
 - His unspeakable glory
 - His unsearchable greatness
 - all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)
2. to enlighten all people to the fellowship (communion with the Living God) of
this mystery (The Church, the called out people of God, Jew and Gentile),
which from eternity past (before Gen 1:1) was kept secret by God,
the Creator Who created all things by Jesus Christ (another mystery)

John 1:1-4, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God. The same was in the
beginning with God. All things were made by him; and
without him was not any thing made that was made. In him
was life; and the life was the light of men...And the Word
was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his
glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full
of grace and truth.

(written to the Church: Jesus is the Son of God)

Heb 1:1-3 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in
time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last
days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed
heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who
being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of
his person, and upholding all things by the word of his
power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down
on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

(written to believing Jews: Jesus is "Better")

Col 1:15-18 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of
every creature: For by him were all things created, that are
in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,
whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or
powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And
he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And
he is the head of the body, the church: who is the
beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he
might have the preeminence.

(written to the faithful: The superiority of Jesus)

God in His foreknowledge has a plan for your life and mine, too!

1. To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ – His love, grace, and glory
2. To enlighten others to the fellowship of this mystery (The Church) by Jesus Christ Who is The Son of God, “Better” and Superior/Supreme

Matt 28:19-20 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world.*

Luke 24:47 *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Acts 26:18 *To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

God’s purpose for His plan for Paul’s life and ours?

v10-11 That now...in the fulness of time, in the time He foreordained before He created time His manifold, greatly diverse and varied, wisdom would be made known **by the Church** to...the **angels in heaven!**

The mystery of the Church...Jew and Gentile saved from the 2nd death by grace thru faith, a gift...was kept secret by God from not just man but also from the angels! God (another mystery: F, S, HS) did not reveal to the angels

- the mystery of the Church
- the eternal purpose of His Christ...from eternity past to eternity future

The angels are looking on, watching in time in amazement what God in His wisdom is doing with the Church by the work of His Christ!

1 Peter 1:10-12

Angels, ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (The Church, believing Jews and Gentiles saved by grace thru faith), are “all eyes on” us!

Angels are PTL for what they see

(and I think they are also wondering because of what they see...
but hold that thought for a moment)

Back to what the angels see and are watching and learning of the wisdom of God...

v12 In Christ, our position before the Father in heaven,
we, as do as all children do with their father, have

- boldness, assured bluntness
- access with confidence

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that
we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of
need

Heb 10:19-20 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the
holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way,
which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to
say, his flesh

by the faith of Him...the faith of Christ (vs by the faith of us)

1 Tim 2:5 one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

Heb 12:2 the Author and Finisher of faith

Rom 3:22 the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all
and upon all them that believe

The greatly diverse and varied wisdom of God blows our minds...
as well as the minds of angels in heaven!

With that perspective in mind...

v13 Paul's desire for

- the saints in Ephesus
- the faithful in Christ Jesus
- the accepted in the Beloved (Christ)
- those who have trusted Christ (to conquer the 2nd death)

is that they/we not faint or grow weary or discouraged because of his temporary
tribulation as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, which he is given to suffer for them/us
since it will all work out for their/our glory

Rom 8:28, 31

Phil 1:12-14

Because the Sovereign King of glory is always on His Throne

Therefore, Paul prays again for them/us, as He did in Ch 2:17-23

v14-15 For this cause

- the mystery of the Church being revealed to man and angels
- the work God is still busy doing...Luke 19:10, 13

I bow my knees...pray with all humility and submission, giving all honor and praise voluntarily now as a child of God

vs

involuntarily later as a child of the devil

Phil 2:5-11

to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole Family of God is named

- “Christians”
- “followers of Jesus Christ”
- “the Body of Christ”
- “the Bride of Christ”
- “the accepted in the Beloved” (Matt 3:17, Matt 17:5, Ch 1:6b)
- “Temple of the Spirit of Christ”

Praying in the will of our Father specifically for 4 things...”that”

v16 1. That the Father would give you strength with might in the inner man by His Spirit

strength...empowered by God Who is our strength

Ps 18:2 The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and
the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

Ps 27:1 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I
fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I
be afraid?

Ps 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and*
strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.

“might” is not “maybe” but “power” as in Acts 1:8

in our inner man

2 Cor 4:14-18

Is 40:29-31

While man-kind seeks to change the outer man,
make-up, plastic surgeries, etc
the Father sent His Son to make a change in mankind’s inner man,
from dead to living

v17a 2. That Christ will dwell/live in your hearts by faith...His faith given to us and then invested by us in Him

The Spirit of Christ moves into an ugly house and begins the work of a lifetime:
“remodeling”, conforming us into the image of Jesus...a work of faith on our part, faith to believe and trust God to do the work He desires to do...
as evidenced by obedience

All the while
He never leaves us nor forsakes us
He is with us, even until the end of the age
To give us life more abundantly

Do you believe that?
It takes faith to surrender to the work of God in your life

v17b-19a 3. That we being
A. rooted...roots growing deeper and deeper for the Living Water and
bringing stability to our lives
B. grounded...the sure foundation upon which our lives are built
in love/agape
may be able to
A. comprehend/understand
B. know personally, by experience (not merely in theory or concept)
the love/agape of Christ

- breadth
- length
- depth
- height
- the fulness in
 - all dimensions
 - reality
 - time and eternity
- His and the Father’s motive for the Cross
- which surpasses knowing

v19b 4. That we might be filled with all the fulness of God
a result/consequence of prayer starting in v16

on which I am utterly incapable and inadequate to comment,
all I can do is believe what God has said

v20-21 Now Paul, on his knees and erupting with joy, thanksgiving, and praise...
and we along with him as we join him in his prayer...
hands raised to the Father Who is able to do FAR FAR FAR more and greater than
anything we could ask or even dare to think to ask
e.g. Solomon in 1 Kings 3:12-13
according to the power (Holy Spirit, v7, v16) that

- has sealed us until the day of redemption
- indwells us
- is working in us (Rom 8:29, Phil 1:6)

Unto the Father be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ, now, in all generations, forever!!!
AMEN!!!

So ends Ch 1-3...learning how to sit
Next is Ch 4-5...learning how to walk
ending with Ch 6...learning how to stand

Individual

Are you in the fellowship of the mystery of the Church?
Are you a part of the whole family in heaven and earth carrying Jesus' name?
Do you have a 1:1 relationship with the One Who created all things?
Have you bent your knee and confessed with your tongue that Jesus Christ is your
personal Lord and Savior?

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord
Either voluntarily while one still has breath, and be given eternal life
Or involuntarily after one takes their last breath, at the GWT and be given
eternal death, the 2nd death
Your Maker puts before you Life and death and exhorts you to choose Life
What do you say?
What is your choice?
2 Cor 6:2

Church

The angels in heaven are watching the Church on earth, watching the manifold wisdom of God sitting on His Throne thru the Church

They are watching and learning – Look at what God is doing!

“Two or three are gathered over here to worship Jesus Christ!”

“Look! That man/woman is sharing the truth of God’s love and grace to someone who needs to hear it!”

“The praise and worship in that service is so sweet and simple and sincere!”

“The Word of God is being taught and preached there, the name of Jesus Christ is being lifted high and magnified!”

“The lost are being found and saved from the 2nd death! PTL!!!”

They are also wondering – What are they doing down there?!

“God has given the Church the most important document in the world – The Bible, the very words of God
So why are so many in the Church neglect or deceitfully handle the Bible?
Why would they add to and take away from the very words of God?!
Why do they teach from the Bible or about the Bible but not teach the Bible?”

“That's not the gospel!”

Prosperity
Social
Works

“Why did they not even mention name of Jesus in their worship?”

“Why are they silent in the midst of the lost?”

“Why all the ‘entertaining’ stories and so little Scripture?”

“What's with the smoke machines?”

“Why are they standing, sitting, kneeling mindlessly?”

“Is the Father being glorified there?”

Believers

Pray Paul's prayer as your own!
Pray it for your spouse, children, grandchildren, siblings and their families
Pray it for this church
Pray believing

Communion

An opportunity for the lost to bend their knee and confess with their tongue
An opportunity for the backslider to repent
An opportunity for the believer to take stock and to worship Jesus Christ and
give glory and honor unto the Father

v4 we have knowledge of the mystery of Christ
v6 we are partakers of the Father's promise in Christ by the Gospel
(1 Cor 15:3-4, Eph 2:8-9) whereby we cease from our Labor of earning God's good
pleasure
v8 the grace of God and the unsearchable riches in Christ have been given to us
v11 the Father has an eternal purpose for us in Christ our Lord
v14 so we bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying that
v17 Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith
v19 we may know the love of Christ

1 Cor 11:23-29