

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

Paul did not say he was a prisoner of Rome, but that he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Paul was not allowing his circumstances or surroundings define him. Many of us would have said we are prisoners of Rome and felt that we had done something wrong to end up in prison. Paul was directly in the center of God's will and was very much aware he would face hardships (Acts 20:23).

Paul's letter to the Philippians was also written from prison and he encourages the Philippians to rejoice and have joy. He uses the word joy and rejoice over sixteen times in this book. Again, Paul was not identifying with his circumstances but that Christ was being exalted regardless of the situation. This can keep us to out of a lot of grief if we have this same mindset as Paul had.

Paul was specifically commissioned by God to minister to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7).

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

Paul was sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13). He did not end up in prison because he was out doing his own thing but rather, was in the center of God's will. Most people think if they are doing God's will then there will be no opposition, however most times this is exactly the opposite. If we are walking with the devil we will never collide. Trouble and persecution come because of the Word (Mark 4:17) and all those who live Godly will suffer persecution (2 Tim 3:12). The warfare begins when we start to walk in obedience to the Lord because the enemy is coming to steal the Word.

This should not paralyze a believer from walking in the things of God. There will be opposition but we already have the victory and He has already caused us to triumph in Christ (1 Cor 15:57, 2 Cor 2:14).

The dispensation Paul preached was of grace and that entails all that God has done for man independent of their performance. Man is now blessed based of Jesus finished works and not their own.

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

Paul did not receive the revelation of grace by going to school and being taught. He received it directly from the resurrected Jesus (Gal 1:12). All of Paul's knowledge he gained prior to forsaking his own righteousness and putting no confidence in the flesh only puffed Paul up and made him think highly of himself (Phil 3:5-8). After receiving revelation that none of his own works or effort will ever be good enough and God's measuring stick is Jesus, not our neighbor and if we miss the mark even a little, we are guilty of breaking the entire law; (Jam 2:10) Paul humbled himself. No other apostle had this revelation that Paul had. The mystery spoken of here again is that there is no more separation between Jews and Gentiles.

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

What was a mystery in the Old Testament? That God would choose to indwell His people. Paul learned legalism from Gamaliel (Acts 5:34) but he learned grace from Jesus (Gal 1:12).

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:*

The disciples had in mind that Jesus was coming to establish a physical kingdom. They were being ruled by the Romans at the time and did not understand that Jesus was coming to save the world and usher us into the church age we are currently in. Old Testament saints were not born again and could not understand spiritual truths (1 Cor 2:14).

A toddler cannot understand one hundred divided by five. They first have to take steps in learning to count. Likewise, God progressively reveals Himself throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament. The full and final revelation of God is made known to us by Jesus (Heb 1:1).

We can now know the things of God by the spirit of God because we are born again. We can sometimes take for granted the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives that Old Testament saints could not experience. It takes the Holy Spirit to reveal grace to us. It is easy for our minds to comprehend if I do good then I get good. It takes revelation knowledge to reveal that we now get good because Jesus is good.

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 Jews were God's chosen people in the Old Testament and the Gentiles were any nation outside the covenant. Through what Jesus accomplished on the cross, all Nations become one new creation in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, all that counts now is the new creation (Gal 6:15).

We are partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus. The word partakers in Greek is *summetochos* and means co-participants. Jesus has supreme authority, position, and power and since we are in Him, we also partake of all that He is and has. The kingdom of Heaven is inside of us (Lk 17:21) and Jesus now shares all He has with us (Rom 8:17). Peter was the initial vessel that the Lord used to welcome Gentiles into relationship with God independent of being a Jew.

A dog can be chained his entire life and a different master can come and set him free. As amazing as that would be, it is even more incredible if the master that loosed him; also adopted him, washed him, and moved him into a new home that had everything a dog could dream of having. This is what our heavenly Father did for us through the person of Jesus. He not only set us free from the bondage of sin and being children of the devil but he then adopted us and gave us Christ inheritance and all that it entails.

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.

Grace is a gift. We can never do enough to earn or deserve God's favor. Again, it takes the Holy Spirit to reveal this to us because everything outside of God functions on how well we perform, then we will be rewarded. Under the Old Covenant, it was based off performance. When you did good you got good and when you did bad, you got bad. Our world's system is similar to this. If we perform well on the job, we will get a raise. If we do our homework, we can pass to the next grade. It is all about what we can do. God's system is all about what Jesus has done. He simply wants us to receive.

The Greek word for power is *dunamis* and means inherent power or power which a person or thing exerts and puts forth. Paul was not operating in his own strength and ability to fulfill the call of God on his life. It was God who was working in and through him (Phil 2:13).

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,

Paul understood his position in Christ and in comparison to Jesus he was the least of the saints. Paul went from being proud of all of his fleshly accomplishments to calling himself the least of the saints.

Many times, when the Lord calls us we look to ourself and feel inadequate to accomplish the assignment He places on our life. This occurred with Moses when the Lord instructed him to free His people from an entire Nation. Moses response was, "who am I" (Ex 3:11). When God instructed Gideon to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, Gideons response was; "How can I save Israel, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. (Judges 6:15). It takes us to humble ourself and getting our focus off our own strength and ability and unto who we are in Christ to experience victory in our assignment.

One of Paul's greatest themes in his letters was humility. Religion will make you proud and judgmental. A true encounter with grace will humble you.

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;

The Greek word for mystery is mustērion and means a hidden or secret thing, or not obvious to the understanding. The mystery in the context of this chapter is that the Gentiles would become fellow heirs with the Jews and God would graft in the Gentiles to create one new humanity in Christ Jesus.

The Old Testament prophesied of the door of salvation opening to the Gentiles. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name (Ps. 18:49). "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people (Deut. 32:43)!

The Jews were supposed to be God's chosen people to go out and preach the gospel but they used the law and began to judge others based off the law that they themselves could not even fulfill (Gal 4:21). God never hid the mystery from the church, He hid it for the church.

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

This verse says now the mystery is made known. The Bible flows through progressive revelation where once Adam separated himself from God, God now had to reveal himself in phases to man because they were spiritually dead. Old Testament saints did not have a full picture of who God was. If we want to see God's selfie we need to look at Jesus. He is the exact representation of the Father (Heb 1:3) and has shown us the Father (Jn 12:45, 1 Jn 5:20).

God's plan now is that His wisdom will be made known to the principalities and powers through His church. When Jesus stepped on the scene it was only Him. Now through the new birth anyone who puts faith in Jesus now possess the very life and nature of God inside of them and the powers of darkness have more than one Jesus to deal with. The scriptures say the enemy would have never crucified Jesus had they known He would rise from the dead and then hand over all authority to His church (1 Cor 2:7-8). God's wisdom is revealed in the plan of salvation that was ordained before the ages for His glory.

God is not sovereignly controlling things. In His sovereignty, He chose to give the earth to man (Gen 1:26). This can be proven that before God created Adam in Genesis chapter one, God was doing the speaking. After God created Adam, man had dominion and he was the one that the earth was given to (Ps 115:16). Adam did hand over authority to the devil but Jesus regained that authority and delegated it back to His church (Jn 20:21).

The Greek word for church is *ekklēsia* and means the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth. After Jesus rose from the dead anytime the early church was persecuted, they became scattered like seed in a field. The problem for the enemy is that when seed is scattered it does not die; it only multiplies and reproduces more. The enemy does not only have to deal with Jesus now, he has the entire body of Christ that can now press against his kingdom.

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

God's eternal purpose was to reconcile us back to Himself. God's heart for creating man was for fellowship but Adam messed that up. How did God accomplish this? Through Jesus. Jesus became the very thing that stood as a barrier between us and God which was sin (Is 59:2, 2 Cor 5:21). Through Jesus, and only through Jesus can we now have fellowship with our Father (Jn 14:6).

There are many books that say God sent Jesus to save us from sin. God's purpose for sending Jesus was to bring us into relationship with the Father, sin was just the obstacle that stood in the way (Jn 3:16, Jn 17:3).

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

"In whom" is referring to the theme of this book which is Paul expressing to the Ephesians and us our positional truths and benefits of what we have because of who we are in Christ. An amazing benefit that was not possible in the Old Covenant is that we now have access to God and can approach Him with freedom and confidence.

This is so powerful as there are many churches today teaching if we sin or mess up God will turn His back on us. We can now approach God as if we have never sinned because God sees us in the spirit and when He looks at us, He sees Jesus (Eph 1:4). We can come boldly to our Father and find help in our time of need (Heb 4:16).

A beautiful picture of this is the Parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32). Many times, the focus is on son but what about the Father? The scriptures say he was waiting on his son to come home, kissed him when he returned, and put him back in a position as a son not a servant. Even though his son had turned from him, the Father received him. He was not waiting for his son to beat him, but to meet him right where he was.

When we miss the mark, do we see God receiving us or do we see him angry and disappointed? If we see Him distant then we have the wrong image of God and need to renew our mind to who God truly is. How we see God will determine what we receive from Him. If we want to know who our Father is we need to look at Jesus (Jn 1:18).

The Father not only forgave our sins but He also forgot about them (Heb 10:17).

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

Paul is asking that they do not lose heart. Most of us would be losing heart and fainting in Paul's circumstances, however Paul was not controlled by his circumstances. A person faints in their mind (Heb 12:3). Our spirit is perfect, but our souls are the part of us that have to be renewed. Our souls will either allow us to release the life of God in us or clog it up depending on our thoughts. If we are experiencing death, it is because our minds are stayed on negative things. If we want to experience life, we needed to

be spiritually minded or Word minded (Rom 8:6). In other words, keeping our minds on what God says about the matter. We will either win or lose based off our mind.

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

This is Paul's second prayer in this letter. Although Ephesus was big on idol worship and wild living the church in Ephesus had become established in the faith and Paul is wanting to further mature them in their position in Christ. This prayer again is not to beg God to do something new for the Ephesians, rather to become rooted in what's already done.

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

This verse says from whom. It is through Jesus that we have been created righteousness and delivered into a new family.

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,*

Our born-again spirit is already complete with the life of God (Col 2:10). Paul is praying here that through the Holy Spirit we would draw out what has already been placed within. Our flesh does not have the ability to live for God or break the power of sin over our lives. The source of our strength comes from the spirit of God inside of us.

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

Christ already dwells in us the moment we received Him at salvation (2 Cor 13:5) so what is Paul talking about here? Paul says he is wanting Christ to dwell in our hearts. Our hearts are a combination of our soul and spirit. Our spirit is complete but it is our soul that needs to line up with our spirit to experience the life that God has already placed within us. This is also by faith not feelings. Faith operates independent of our five senses. We must perceive by faith we are who God says we are and we have what God says we have. The worst way to determine if God loves us or is there for us is through feelings or circumstances. Looking to the cross is how to determine His love for us.

This says being rooted and grounded in love. The way our faith will work is by knowing how much God loves us (Gal 5:6, Phil 1:9).

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

God's love for us will never be something we fully comprehend. The dimensions of His love goes beyond anything that could be measured and far deeper than a daily devotional or Sunday church service. The Greek word for comprehend in this text is katalambano and it means to take eagerly. This is not a passive relationship with the Lord. He first pursued us but now as a response we should be actively pursuing the Lord.

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

The word know here in Greek is ginosko and is referring to an intimate relationship that a husband has with their wife. How can we know something if it passes knowledge? This goes beyond head knowledge

and is speaking about experiencing His love. We can go to Disney World and enter into the amusement park and actually take a seat on the bench and never experience the rides or all that the park has to offer. Many people today have put their faith in Christ for salvation and are born again, but few are actually experiencing the joy, love, and provision that God has made available to us.

Being filled with the fullness of God all goes back to relationship with the Father. Paul's prayer just consisted of areas where victory occurs in the previous verses (v.14-18). The only way to have a victorious life is through fellowship with the Father and this was true of Jesus as well. At Jesus worst hour he said "Father, I know you" (Jn 17:25). Jesus referred to God as His father at least 150 times in the New Testament. This is why religion (any attempt man does to please God) is so dangerous because it will always have you focused on your works and what you can do for God. This gives the enemy inroads into our life and will keep us at a distance from God.

When Jesus appointed the twelve their first assignment was to be with Him and the result of that was to preach, heal and cast out demons. Christianity begins with fellowship with the Father and the works are a byproduct (Mark 3:14).

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,

This verse is so powerful and says that God's power works *in* us. Most prayers today are in reference to the power being out in heaven and we have to pray in down. God placed all of His power within us the moment we got born again. He did not come to live in us but leave His power somewhere else. How do we release this power? Through our words when we speak God's word and align our lips to release His very life, we will experience life (Proverbs 18:21).

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

Where is the glory? This verse says in the church. The church is not a physical building, but we are the church. To conclude this chapter Paul is targeting his main focus which is what God has already done for us and it says by Jesus. All that we have and are is through our union with Christ.

Have you ever wanted to touch Jesus like the woman with the issue of blood or walk with Jesus like the disciples did? I believe many times as a church we do not realize Jesus lives in us and He Himself said it was better that He go and that we would do even greater works than He did (Jn 14:12, 16:7). We have a better covenant established on better promises (Heb 8:6). There is nothing better than walking around with God Himself living on the inside of us (2 Cor 6:16-18). We need to meditate on all that Paul just spoke about in chapters 1-3 and see all that God has already provided.