

The Epistle to the Ephesians

4. Ephesians 3



Chapter 3 continues an explanation of the “Mystery” of the church first mentioned in Ephesians 2:11-22, the Jews and Gentiles who form one body in Christ.

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

For this reason: Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles unleashed rage against Paul from the Jewish community in Jerusalem and other Jewish communities.

Prisoner: Paul was a prisoner because of his ministry to the Gentiles, which caused his arrest in Jerusalem.



For you Gentiles: Paul was commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, to dispense the doctrine of Grace.

11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. **2 Timothy 1:11-12**

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

Dispensation of the grace: “*Oikonomia*” **Administration**, Paul was given the responsibility to administer the “Grace” of the Gospel to the Gentiles. We are given the same responsibility to administer

“Salvation” to those God has put in our lives.

Given to me for you: Paul was commissioned by Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul would later spend 2-3 years in Arabia being taught by the Lord.

11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. **Galatians 1:11-18**

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

By revelation: The Holy Spirit revealed a hidden event in Scripture. God Words is a gradual “Revelation” of God’s plan of redemption.

The mystery: The mystery Paul had mentioned earlier was Ephesians 2:11-22, the union of both Jews and Gentiles into a unified body. This was revealed in the “Old Testament”.

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

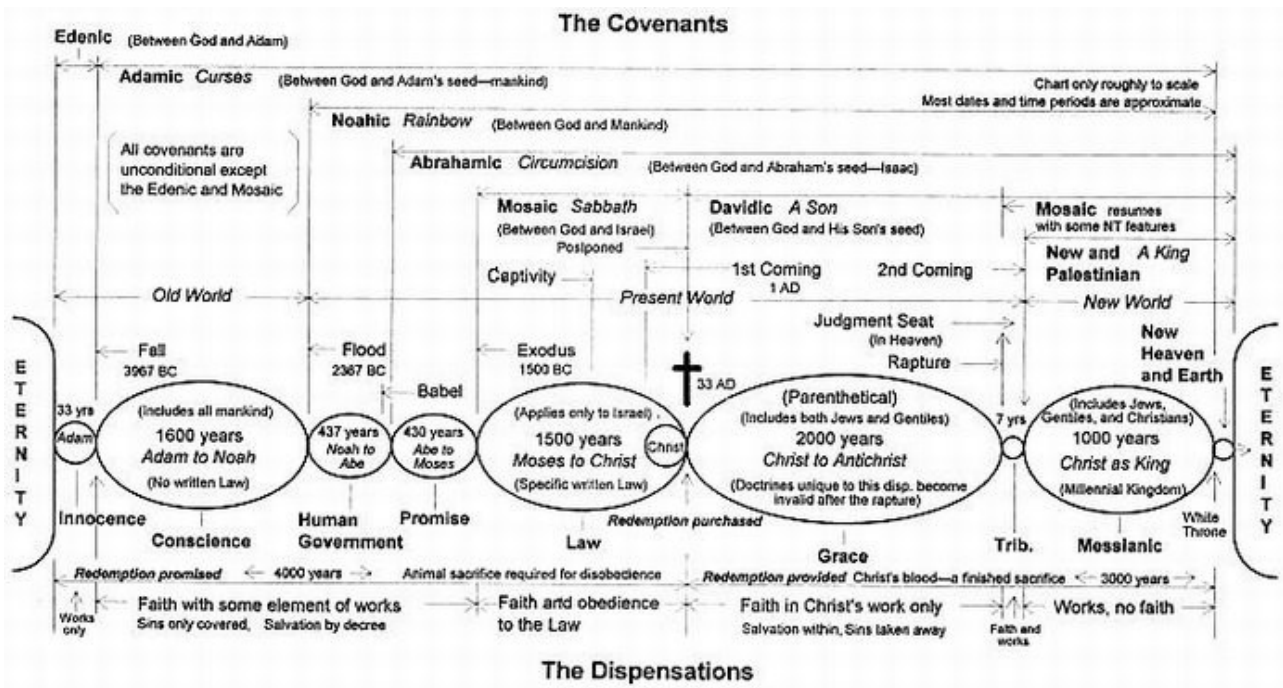
You may understand: Paul wanted the Ephesians to understand God’s plan and design for them.

Mystery of Christ: The mystery of the saints, both Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ.

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:

Other ages was not made known: Though the Old Testament indicated Gentiles would be saved and part of God’s Kingdom. The idea of Gentiles having an equal share and position with Jews was not revealed in scripture.

1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. 2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. 4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law." 5 Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: 6 "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, **Isaiah 42: 1-6**



As it has now been revealed: This is a “New Testament” Revelation for the Gentiles to be part of the Kingdom of God. Through Paul, the **Spirit** of God is revealing this new revelation.

To His holy apostles and prophets: This is referring to New Testament saints and apostles since it was not revealed in the past.

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

The Gentiles should be: Paul continues to show the position of the Gentile believer in Jesus Christ. Gentiles saw their position as inferior to the Jews, and Jews saw themselves superior to the gentiles. We see this in Galatians where Paul has to confront Peter about his treatment of non-Jews when James arrived from Jerusalem to Antioch. (Galatians 2:13-14).

This concept of the Gentiles being included in the Kingdom of God was a hard concept for the Jewish believers to understand, we see Peter at the start, when he was told to go to the house of Cornelius wrestling with the idea of bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). This leads to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

1. **fellow heirs:** Gentiles are made “Fellow” or equal to the Jews in position and inheritance with the Jews, God’s chosen people. God chose to use Paul to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, fulfilling the invitation to the “Wedding Feast” of Luke 14:16-24, where the master of the house after being rejected by those he knows, invites strangers, residents of the streets, lanes of the city, the poor, crippled, blind, lame and those on the highways and hedges. These are the Gentiles, they are now to be joint heir, meaning equal heir, on the same level.
2. **The same body:** One united body, the Church, both Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles do not replace Israel, but are grafted into the promises and covenants promised to Israel.



3. Partakers of His promise:

Through the gospel: The Gospel is the “Good News” of God’s salvation through the death of Christ. When someone accepts the Gospel through belief, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The vehicle of this “Position” is the Gospel.

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.

Which I became a minister “Diakonos”, one who is serving, as in waiter. Paul brought “salvation” to the gentiles, administering it to the lost. We also are waiters of the Gospel to lost people, bring the message of the Good News to the lost.

According to the gift of the grace: Why Paul, he of all people seemed like the most unqualified. He was the persecutor of the church, but God choose him. It was Grace or *Charis*, it was an unmerited gift from God. The same basis of our own salvation:

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Effective working of His power. The force behind Paul’s work is not his own, he is receiving his energy via God, this the Greek word “*energeian*” meaning working power, the second word Paul is uses to

describe the source of this drive is the same word that we derive dynamite from “*dynamiteos*” meaning power. Paul works to reach the Gentiles is supernatural in power and energy.

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,

less than the least of all the saints: Paul was a persecutor of the church; he was the least likely person to be used to bring salvation to the gentiles.

Act 8:1-3 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (3) But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Act 9:1-4 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (3) Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. (4) And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”



I should preach among the Gentiles: God had chosen Paul to bring the Good News to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, to give them understanding of the Salvation of God and how to obtain it.

the unsearchable riches of Christ: God’s plans and riches are beyond our understanding. Even using Paul is beyond understanding of what is to come in the future ages. Salvation is wealth beyond understanding. We are given glimpses of what is coming, but these are only peeks into the coming blessings of the Age to Come (Revelation 21-22).



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;

To make all see: Paul’s purpose is to help us understand who we are in Christ. The Spirit wants us to understand our position, just what does it mean to be saved? Who are we in Jesus Christ?

The Fellowship of the mystery: The mystery Paul is referring to is position of the Gentiles included in the body of Christ, receiving the same covenant promises made to Israel regarding the New Covenant of Jeremiah

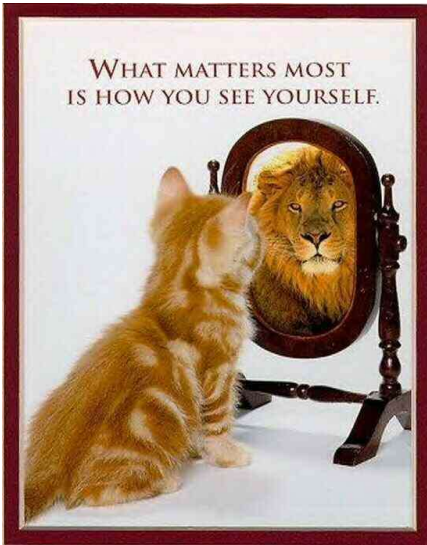
31:31. Though this promise was made to Israel, it now includes the Gentiles who are grafted into the covenant promises of Israel.

Hidden in God: This is a new revelation, though it was hinted at in Old Testament (Isaiah 2:4,11:10), the full extent of the Gentiles inclusion in God’s plan was a hidden mystery. This is the reason it was difficult for many Jewish believers in the early church to accept the Gentiles as part of the program. This is where

Paul's ministry was so effective, reaching and building the church in cities like Ephesus, Corinth and Rome.

Through Jesus; Jesus is the Creator, the pre-incarnate Jesus made all things (John 1:3,10, Col:1:16-17)

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,



To the intent: This declaration of the mystery revealed has a purpose, not only for us as believers to know our position, but also for the Spiritual Realms to understand.

Wisdom of God: His Wisdom is beyond our understanding, it's also beyond the angelic world's understanding. Angels were created in the image of God, like humanity (Job 1:6,Luke 20:36). According to Revelation 12, one third of the angels fell, the angelic world is also learning about this mystery.

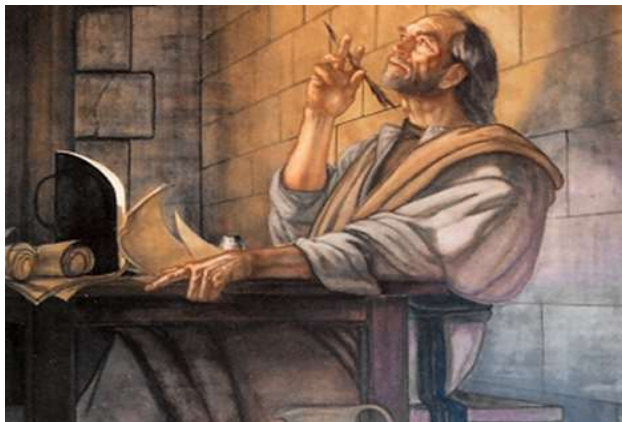
By the church: The church is the vehicle of to release this information into the world, through the church Jesus Christ declares this wisdom to earth, both the physical and spiritual realms.

Principalities...powers...Heavenly places: Paul refers to this realm in Ephesians 6:12, this is the power over the physical. The Good News and the position of the believer and this mystery is revealed to both the physical and spiritual realms through the church.

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

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

Eternal purpose: The redemption of humanity by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was **accomplished** to pay the debt of our sins and redeem us from the prison. Through Jesus Christ, we are made joint heirs of the universe.



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

In whom: When God sees us, He sees His Son, because we are in Christ, we are covered by the "Blood" so positionally we have access to the very throne of God. When we know this, we can be confident to approach Heaven.

We have boldness: As believers we do not have to be afraid and timid with out requests, we can be confident and sure, Jesus is our high priest and through His Blood we have **access** to the throne of God. This is explained fuller in Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 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 4:14-16**

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

From the earthly and fleshly perspective Paul's imprisonment by Roman authorities looks like a losing position causing them to **lose heart**. His **tribulations** demonstrate the struggle between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Men. We need to understand the Heavenly perspective of this conflict and not lose heart regarding our own struggles, we need to look at the End Game. Paul is setting the example for all believers of the coming tribulations we face in spiritual conflict.

Prayer for Spiritual Strength

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

For this reason: From the human perspective, struggles and conflicts can cause people to turn away from the Gospel, they don't have the clear picture of the End Game of the Kingdom of God. Paul prayer is that the church is strengthened through his struggles, he falls to his **knees** praying for the Ephesians to understand the full picture of the struggle and not just see the surface.

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

The whole family: All those "In the image of God" both angels and humanity, we are one community. Its easy to lose perspective of the cosmic conflict between the kingdoms. There are two groups in this conflict an angelic conflict reaching to heaven and an **earthly** conflict affecting humanity.

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,



He would grant you: Having knowledge and understanding of this conflict is from the Holy Spirit, the flesh easily falls prey to the struggles in this world. For the believer, the struggle is not ours alone, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us. We have the conflict waging as our old man wants to resort to our past, while the Spirit of God dwelling inside of points us to God.

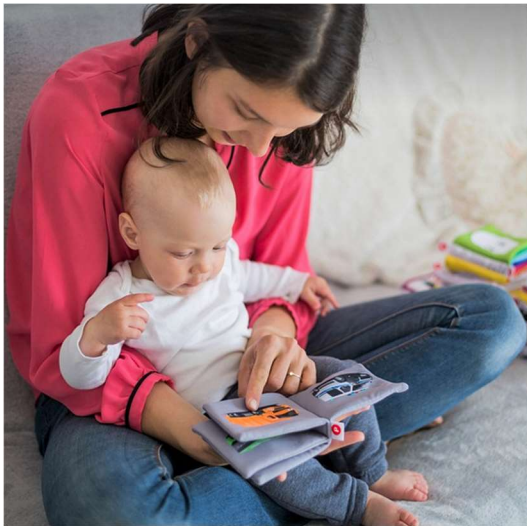
To be strengthened: It is easy to lose hope, when we have the wrong perspective, that is why Paul is praying for the believers at Ephesus to be strengthened in the **inner man**. This message is for all believers to understand the struggle between the old man and old nature and the new man and inner nature.

Rom 7:22-24 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, (23) but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

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

Christ may dwell: Our Inner Man has the Spirit, directing our thoughts and actions, this is at odds with the old man. What is the foundation of our being, is it revenge? Is it glory? Our foundation or **grounding** should be love, we are to see from God's perspective. Paul after he was beaten and jailed in Philippi (Acts 16), when he was freed and the jailer would have killed himself, Paul out of love tells him not to harm himself. Despite having been beaten prior to this, maybe by the same jailer. The jailer becomes a believer along with his whole family. Paul acted out of **love**, because he understood the whole picture.

Act 16:27-34 When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. (28) But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." (29) And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. (30) Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (31) And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (32) And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. (33) And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. (34) Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.



18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Comprehend: Knowledge is power both in the physical and spiritual worlds, for saints to understand the whole picture is spiritual maturity. A child does not Comprehend what an adults comprehends, the same in the spiritual realms. An immature believer also has a hard time understanding struggles and conflicts and the **love of God** toward the **saints**.

Width...length...depth...height: The dimensions of God's love are beyond our understanding; it **passes knowledge** it will

overtake us and fill us up. When we mature and understand as believers our perspective changes, like the child to the adult.

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,

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

Able to do exceedingly: To access this power we need to ask, and when we ask God will do more than we ask. Paul is challenging the Ephesians and all believers to tap into the power of God, and God will surpass our requests. We must remember the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our inner man, that is the power that works in us. God will use us, the Church for His Glory for **all generations**.