

The Hidden Mystery Is Gloriously Revealed in Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 3:1-13 (vv. 9-13)

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I. Historical Background & Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

Ephesians 3 invites us to reflect on Paul's divine calling and how it unfolded through his ministry. Paul was chosen by God to proclaim the name of Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). In time, the Holy Spirit set Paul apart for this work and sent him out to preach the gospel from city to city, make disciples, and help establish and strengthen churches across the Roman Empire (Acts 13-21).

As Paul faithfully carried out this calling, his journey brought him to Ephesus, where he spent approximately three years teaching and ministering (Acts 19; 20:31). During this time, the gospel spread throughout the region, many came to faith in Jesus Christ, and the word of God "grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

Yet, Paul's calling to carry the gospel to the Gentiles also brought opposition and suffering. After completing this period of ministry, he eventually returned to Jerusalem, where, within days of his arrival, some Jews accused him of teaching against the Jewish people, the law, and the temple (Acts 21:27-29). The resulting uproar led to his arrest and set in motion a series of trials and appeals that eventually brought him to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 21-28). It was during this time he wrote the letter of Ephesians to the believers in Ephesus.

Ephesians 3 reveals that Paul understood the mission God entrusted to him and recognized that his circumstances were part of a much greater work God was accomplishing through Jesus Christ. The mystery that had been hidden for generations was now being gloriously revealed!

B. Biblical Context

Throughout Scripture, God progressively revealed His purpose to bring salvation to all nations through Jesus Christ. This purpose can be traced from His promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3), to the prophets who foretold that the nations would share in God's salvation, and ultimately to Christ's redemptive work and His command to

make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). This mission continued through the book of Acts, where the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to carry the gospel beyond Jerusalem and spread the message of Jesus Christ to the world. What we see unfolding through Acts, Paul helps us understand more fully in Ephesians.

Ephesians brings God's purpose into focus, revealing His plan to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). Although the Gentiles were once separated from Christ, excluded from Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God, they have now been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12-13). This same truth defines our identity as believers today. We have been brought near to God not because of our backgrounds, status, or merit, but solely through Christ. In Him, we are no longer outsiders but members of God's people who share fully in His promises.

II. Lesson: The Hidden Mystery Is Gloriously Revealed in Jesus Christ! (Ephesians 3:1-13)

A. The Mystery Entrusted (vs. 1-3)

Paul connects his imprisonment to the special responsibility God had entrusted to him.

Paul begins verse 1 with the words, "For this reason," pointing back to Ephesians 2, where he explained that the Gentiles, who were once far from God, had now been brought near through Christ and welcomed into God's family. Then he continues "I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles". Although he was physically imprisoned by Rome, Paul saw his circumstances through the spiritual lens of his calling and how he remained committed to the mission Christ had given him.

In verse 2 and 3, Paul makes clear that this mission came from God. God entrusted him with the responsibility of ministering His grace to the Gentiles and had revealed the mystery to him so that he could make it known. The plan belonged to God from beginning to end: God conceived it, revealed it, entrusted it to Paul, and commissioned him to proclaim it to the Gentiles.

B. The Mystery Revealed (vs. 4-6)

Paul begins to unfold the mystery that God entrusted to him. Although God's purpose had been unfolding throughout Scripture, its fullness had not been

understood by previous generations. Now through the Holy Spirit, God was making known what had been hidden: His plan to bring the Jews and Gentiles together as one people through Jesus Christ. What had once been hidden was now being clearly revealed and accomplished in Christ.

The heart of the mystery is revealed in verse 6, where Paul describes what it meant to be fully included in God's people through Jesus Christ:

- 1. We are fellow heirs.** This means that we share the same inheritance. Through Christ, we have been brought into God's family and share in the blessings and promises of God – including salvation and redemption through Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the future hope of eternal life in God's kingdom.
- 2. We are members of one body.** This means that Jewish and Gentile believers are not separate groups, nor is one more important than the other. Through Christ, we have been joined together as one body – the Church, the body of Christ.
- 3. We share together in the promise in Jesus Christ.** Through Christ, we share fully in what God has promised His people. We have received the same salvation, the same forgiveness, the same Holy Spirit, the same access to God, and the same hope of eternal life. Gentile believers do not receive something separate or lesser; through Christ, we fully share in the promises and blessings of God.

The mystery reveals that through Jesus Christ, those who were once outsiders have been brought near and fully welcomed into God's family. In Christ, we share the same inheritance, belong to the same body, and partake in the same promises – all made possible through His saving work.

C. The Mystery Proclaimed (vs. 7-9)

In verse 7, Paul acknowledges that his ministry was a gift of God's grace. God called Him to proclaim the gospel and gave him the power to carry out that calling. Paul was not relying on his own strength; God called him, equipped him, and worked through him.

Paul then describes himself as "less than the least of all the Lord's people," in verse 8. He recognized that he did not deserve the ministry he had been given. Yet, by God's incredible grace, the man who had once persecuted believers was

now chosen to preach the “boundless riches of Christ” to the Gentiles. These riches include His grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and countless other blessings so great we can never fully measure or comprehend them.

Then, in verse 9, Paul explains that his calling was also to bring God’s previously hidden plan to light, helping others see and understand what God had now revealed through Jesus Christ.

D. The Mystery Displayed (vs. 10-13)

These verses reveal the greater purpose behind God making the mystery known. In verse 10, Paul explains that God is using the Church to display His great wisdom. The Church is the body of Christ, made up of believers from different nations, backgrounds, and walks of life who have been brought together through Jesus Christ. Through this one body, God displays His wisdom to the world and to the spiritual beings in heavenly places.

Verse 11 reminds us that this was not a new plan or something God decided along the way. It was part of God’s eternal purpose, which He planned from from the beginning and accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Verse 12 brings this truth directly to us. Because we belong to Christ, we can approach God freely and confidently, knowing that through faith in Jesus Christ we have direct access to him.

Finally, in verse 13, Paul encourages the believers not to lose heart because of his imprisonment. His suffering was connected to the mission God had given him, and through that mission, the Gentiles were hearing the gospel and receiving the great honor and blessing of being brought into God’s family through Christ Jesus.

III. Conclusion

The mystery that was once hidden has now been gloriously revealed in Jesus Christ! Through Him, we who were once far away have been brought near, welcomed into God’s family, and given direct access to the Father. So let us live in the reality of what Christ has done by walking together in unity, drawing near to God with confidence, and boldly sharing His grace with those around us. This glorious truth was never meant to stop with us; just as it was revealed and proclaimed to us, we are called to make it known to others.