

God's Plan In Christ

3:1-6

- Paul introduces a digressing or parenthetical statement ending in verse 13.
- The subject "I Paul" does not have a verb. It is not supplied until the prayer he takes up in verse 14. Paul says, "For this reason I bend my knees..."
- The purpose of the digression, 1-13, was to acquaint the Gentiles with their call and Paul's knowledge of the mystery of Jews and Gentiles in one body.

EPH 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—[bend my knees in prayer]

- "for this reason" has the idea of "this is why." Gr. "charin" [**kah** rin] - "because of, account of, for the sake of."
 - Lit. "By reason of this"
1. Once again "Paul" identifies himself as the author of this epistle. (Eph. 1:1).
 2. "For this reason"
 - a. He had become an apostle and suffered as such that Gentiles might be saved and become a part of God's holy temple. (Eph. 2:20-22).
 - b. The Gentiles were a part of the upper structure of God's holy temple like believing Jews and were a priesthood in that house. (1 Pet. 2:5).
 - c. They were part of the one body for which Jesus died and will save. (Eph. 5:25, 23).
 3. He affirms that he is "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." See Phile. 1, 9,13; Col. 4:3, 10, 18; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 17.
 - See Eph. 4:1; Eph. 6:20 - "in chains"
 - "desmios" [**des** mee ahs] - "a captive in bonds, a prisoner"
 - a. This is a reference to the fact he was in prison in Rome at the time he wrote this letter. (Acts 28:30, 16).
 - b. See the Introduction of this epistle for more information about his first Roman imprisonment about A.D. 60 to A.D. 62.
 4. He sets forth that his imprisonment for "for the sake of you Gentiles." See Acts 9:15; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:9.
 - a. See what Jesus said to Paul. (Acts 26:16-18). Also Eph. 3:8.

ACT 26:16 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

ACT 26:17 delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,
ACT 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

EPH 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

- b. Paul preached to Jews, but he primarily devoted his life to the preaching of Gentiles.
- c. He regretted being sent away from preaching to his own countrymen (Acts 22:17-21), but gladly proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles.
- d. He was known as the apostle to the Gentiles.
- e. In Ephesians 3:13 Paul speaks of “my tribulations” - “thlipsis” [**thlip** sis] - “afflictions, sufferings, tribulations”

EPH 3:2 if [assuming, since, surely] indeed you have heard of the stewardship [administration, assignment] of God's grace [unmerited favor] which was given to me for you;

- RSV translates “if” assuming. Lit. “If indeed” - NIV has “surely”
 - See Acts 20:31 - "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”
 - He is gently reminding them of something they knew assuming the church at Ephesus is among those being addressed. He had spent 3 years there and they were well acquainted with Paul and his stewardship.
1. He calls his apostleship in regard to Gentiles “the stewardship of God’s grace.”
 - a. “Stewardship” means God had entrusted to him the charge or responsibility of proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles.
 - 1) “oikonomia” [oi kah nah **mee** ah] - A steward is “an administrator of a household or estate”
 - 2) Paul was entrusted with the responsibility of preaching God’s grace. (Eph. 3:8).
 - 3) The message was the gospel. (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4) See Mk. 13:10; 14:9; 16:16; Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:1.
 - b. His salvation and stewardship was by God’s grace.
 2. He had been saved by God’s grace, and it was by God’s grace that he had the responsibility and privilege of proclaiming the gospel to Gentiles.
 3. God desired the salvation of Paul for Paul’s sake and for the sake of Gentiles. (1 Tim. 2:4).

EPH 3:3 that by [direct] revelation [of Jesus] there was made known to me the mystery [the hidden purpose or secret of God], as I wrote before [already in this letter] in brief.

- “musterion” [moo **stay** ree ahn] - “mystery, something hidden”
1. “that by [direct] revelation there was made known to me the mystery” - His teaching was not from men, but it came directly from Jesus.

- a. Paul made it known in the Galatian letter that his knowledge of the gospel came by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:11,12).

GAL 1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.
GAL 1:12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- b. Paul affirms he had neither received it from man or had he been taught it.
2. “as I wrote before in brief” - See Eph. 1:9, 10; 2:11-22. Paul is likely referring to these verses.
 - “prographo” [prah **grah** foh] - “I wrote before.” It refers to this letter - not some previous letter.
 - This [what he wrote] refers to contents of mystery.
 - “oligos” [ah **lee** gahs] - “briefly, few, little”
 - a. This phrase is translated like this in some versions.
 - 1) The Jerusalem Bible- “as I have just described it”-- TCNT has “as I have already briefly told you”
 - 2) NEB - “I have already written a brief account of this”-- McCord “As I already have briefly written.”
 - b. The contents of the mystery had been kept in the mind of God until He chose to reveal it when He sent His Son into the world. (Gal. 4:4).
 - c. The mystery had been made known to Paul by direct revelation of Jesus Christ.
 - d. It did not come by hearsay or from the teachings of men. It was not his own thinking, but was far from it.
 - e. Paul had been made an apostle to bring Jews and Gentiles together in the one body by the gospel of Christ.

EPH 3:4 And by referring to this [so that], when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

1. “and by referring to this” - Gr. “pros” [prahs] - Lit. “as to.” NIV translates “In reading this”
2. “when you read you can understand” - by carefully reading what I have written.
3. “my insight [understanding] into the mystery of Christ”
 - a. “insight” - Lit. “the understanding of me” - “my understanding”
 - b. “mystery of Christ” is a genitive of description.
 - 1) It is a mystery about the salvation of the Jews and Gentiles in Christ.
 - 2) Christ is Himself “the mystery of God.” (Col. 2:2; 1:26,27).

COL 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in **a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,**

COL 1:26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints,

COL 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of **this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

- 3) They were “one body” in Christ.
- c. Reading what he had written would lead them to come to a realization of Paul’s understanding of God’s hidden purpose in Christ.
- d. His inspired understanding came from Christ and was correct, and should become their understanding and our understanding.
- e. The “good news” of Christ dying for all was then and now to be proclaimed to every person in every nation. (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20).

EPH 3:5 which [mystery] in other [all former] generations was not made known to the sons of men [men, human beings], as it has now been revealed to His holy [consecrated, dedicated] apostles and prophets in [by] the Spirit;

1. “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men [humanity, mankind]”
 - a. “Other [past, former] generations” - Gen. 12:3; Hos. 2:23; 1:10; Deut. 32:21; Isa. 65:1.
 - b. “other” is from the Greek “heteros” meaning another of a different kind. “heteros” [**heh** teh rahs]
 - c. “sons of men” is a Hebraism for “men” (Mk. 3:28).
 - 1) Weymouth has “to the human race.”
 - 2) It refers to the human family, the human race, mankind.
2. “as it [the mystery] has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in [by] the Spirit” - Eph. 2:20; 4:11.
 - a. “in [the] Spirit” is “in or by [the] Spirit” referring to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The apostles and prophets were mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:12,13; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28).
 - c. “To His holy apostles” does not imply Paul was not an apostle or this verse was written by someone else.
 - 1) He is merely grouping himself with the other apostles.
 - 2) The “mystery of Christ” was not revealed exclusively to Paul, but to all the “apostles and prophets in [by] the “Spirit.”

Note:

1. The mystery was not that Gentiles were to be saved.
 - a. This had been declared in former times. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18).
 - b. **Romans 9:24-33.** See Hos. 2:23; 1:10; Isa. 10:22, 23; 1:9.

ROM 9:24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

ROM 9:25 As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

ROM 9:26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

ROM 9:27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

ROM 9:28 for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly. "

ROM 9:29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

ROM 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

ROM 9:31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

ROM 9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

ROM 9:33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

b. **Romans 10:19-21** - Isa. 65:1; 65:2.

ROM 10:19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? At the first Moses says, "I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, By a nation without understanding will I anger you."

ROM 10:20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who sought Me not, I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

ROM 10:21 But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

3. The mystery was both Jews and Gentiles would be united in the same spiritual body and become one new man and be on the same status as believers.

Contents Of The Mystery

- The content of the mystery was a fact - not a purpose.

EPH 3:6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the [same] body, and fellow partakers [sharers] of the promise in Christ Jesus through [obedience to] the gospel,

1. "to be specific" is literally "to be." Greek infinite "einai" [ay ni] means "to be."
2. KJV has "the Gentiles should be" but the Greek has "are."
3. The "mystery" revealed these awesome facts.
 - a. "Gentiles are fellow heirs" - They are heirs of the same inheritance as believing Jews.
 - b. "and fellow members of the body" - Gentiles are members of the same body as Jews. (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4).
 - c. "fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" - They share in God's precious promise or promises "in Christ Jesus." They were equal partakers [sharers, partners] in God's promises.
 - d. "through the gospel" - The promise was "in Christ Jesus" "through the gospel" [the good news of Christ]. (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 4:15).

4. All of this was obnoxious and unimaginable to the Jewish world that scorned and despised Gentiles, but it was true.

Paul's Mission To the Gentiles

3:7-9

EPH 3:7 of which [gospel] I was made a minister [servant], according to the gift of God's grace [unmerited favor] which [grace] was given to me according to the working of His power.

- “minister” is from “diakonos” [dee **ah** kah nahs] meaning “servant, minister.”
- 1. “of which [good news] I was made a minister [servant]” - See Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 2:12-16; 2 Tim. 1:11,12.
- 2. “according to the gift of God’s grace”
 - a. He speaks here of God’s grace bestowed upon him and the fact that by this grace he “was made a minister.”
 - b. It was not something he earned or in any way deserved.
 - c. It was not something he aspired to be.
 - d. It was the last thing on his mind. He had been an enemy of Christianity.
- 3. “which was given to me according to the working [exercise, action, operation] of His power”

- “working” is from “energeia” [eh **neh** gay ah] - “working, operation, action”
 - a. God had the power to appoint him and He did.
 - b. He was appointed by God’s power and operated by God’s power working in him.

COL 1:29 And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

- c. Paul was grateful for God’s power and dependent on it.

EPH 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints [Gods people], this grace was given, to preach [the good news] to the Gentiles the unfathomable [exhaustless, boundless, incalculable] riches of Christ,

- “preach” is from “euaggelizomai” [you an geh **lee** zah mi] - “to preach good news, glad tidings”
- 1. “To me, the very least of all saints” - 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:15.

1CO 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1TI 1:15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

- a. He was “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9), and “the chief of sinners.” (1 Tim. 1:15).

1) This is the way Paul felt about himself - not necessarily the way the Lord viewed him.

2) There is nothing in God’s word to indicate He believed Paul was “the least of the apostles” or “the very least

of all saints.” See Gal. 1:15.

GAL 1:15 But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased

3) In reality he was not inferior to the other apostles. (2 Cor. 12:11,12).

2CO 12:11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for **in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles**, even though I am a nobody.

2CO 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.

b. Paul included himself among the “saints.” (Eph. 1:1).

c. “Saint” [holy one] is another name for Christians as used here and in this epistle.

2. “This grace [charge, stewardship] was given, to preach to the Gentiles” - Gal. 1:16; 2:7.

GAL 1:16 to reveal His Son in me, **that I might preach Him among the Gentiles**, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

GAL 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that **I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised**, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

3. “the unfathomable riches [wealth] of Christ”

a. TCNT “the boundless wealth to be found in the Christ”

b. Weymouth “the exhaustless wealth of Christ”

EPH 3:9 and to bring to light what is the administration [plan, stewardship] of the mystery [secret] which for ages has been hidden in [the mind of] God, who created all things;

1. “and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery”

a. “administration” is from “oikonomia” [oi kah nah **mee** ah] - “stewardship, trusteeship” - See Eph. 3:2

b. It has reference to God’s way of working out His hidden purpose.

c. He wants to clearly set forth what his stewardship is, and how this hidden purpose of God was being put into effect.

2. “which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things”

a. “for ages” means “from the beginning of the world” - Lit. “having been hidden from the ages in the God.”

b. In fact it was in the mind of God even before the world came into the existence. (Eph. 1:4).

EPH 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love

3. “who created all things”

a. God is spoken of as Creator. (Gen. 1:1, 26, 27).

b. God “created all things” through His Son. See Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2

JOH 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. JOH 1:2 He was in the beginning with God. JOH 1:3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.	1CO 8:6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.	HEB 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
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**God’s Purpose Through Church
3:10-13**

EPH 3:10 in order that the manifold [many-sided] wisdom of God might now be made known through the church [the called out people] to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places [heaven].

- The church becomes the university for angels and each saint is a professor.
- They did not know “the manifold wisdom of God” until they witnessed it being made known by the church.
- They were witnessing God’s wisdom being revealed as the gospel brought both Jews and Gentiles into a state of salvation in the one body.

1. “in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known”

a. “manifold” means “many-sided” and refers to “the many-sided wisdom of God”

1) It is loving, just, unique, pure, simple, unifying, holy, sure, indestructible, compelling, etc.

2) It is from “polupoikilos” [pah loo **poi** kee lahs] - “many-sided, manifold.”

b. It has the idea of the supreme and marvelous wisdom of God.

c. It is “manifold” and it is perfect, flawless, saving, etc.

d. “Now” is significant and reveals that the mystery was then being made known.

2. “Through the church” - The “church” [the called-out people] is also God’s people, God’s temple, the saved, the family of God, the body.

3. “to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” - Lit. “in the heavenlies”

a. This seems to be a reference to the angels and archangels and to all angelic powers.

b. They did not know the contents of God's glorious mystery, but had an intense desire to know it.

1PE 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- **things into which angels long to look.**

c. It became known to them when God chose to reveal it.

Eternal Purpose

- Paul sets forth that salvation is not an after-thought of God.
- Paul sets forth the church is not an after-thought of God.
- The church is not a substitution for the kingdom. The kingdom and the church are synonymous in the Christian age. Christ is the King of the Kingdom, and the Head of the body (the church). These are two different ways of referring to God's saved people.
- It is according to God's "eternal purpose."

EPH 3:11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out [accomplished] in Christ Jesus our Lord,

- Lit. "according to [the] purpose of the ages which He carried out"
 - "eternal" is here "aion" [i **ohn**] - "age, world, eternal, forever." The same word is used in Ephesians 3:9, and translated "ages."
1. "with the eternal purpose" - He had always planned to save Jews and Gentiles through Jesus His Son.
 2. There was never another plan. God's plan was perfect and needed no change.
 3. "which He [God] carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" - God's plan was accomplished through Jesus.

EPH 3:12 in whom [Christ] we have boldness and confident access [approach] through faith in Him.

- See Heb. 4:16. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.
 - "boldness" is from "parresia" [pahr ray **see** ah]
 - "access" - Eph. 2:18. Gr. "prosagoge" - [prahs ah goh **gay**] - "access, approach."
1. "in whom [Christ] we have boldness and confident access"
 2. "through faith in Him" - It is only "through faith in Him [Jesus] that "we have boldness and confident access."

Note:

1. Prayers can be addressed to the Father. (Matt. 6:9; Eph. 3:14).
2. Prayers can also be addressed to Christ. (Jn. 14:13,14; Acts 1:24; 7:59, 60; 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Cor. 12:8, 9; Rev. 22:20)

<p>JOH 14:13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. JOH 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.</p>	<p>1CO 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha. "Maranatha" is an Aramaic word and means, "Our Lord, come" or "Lord, please come."</p>
<p>ACT 1:24 And they prayed, and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen" Who is the "Lord" here? The word "Lord" appears two times earlier in this chapter (Acts 1:6, 21), and is used each time to refer to Jesus. The natural conclusion is that it refers to Jesus here.</p>	<p>2CO 12:8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 2CO 12:9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. "God" occurs in 2 Cor. 12:2,3, 19, 21. "Lord" occurs in 2 Cor. 12:1. "Lord" appears certainly to be "Jesus" in 2 Cor. 12 based on how Paul is using the words "God" and "Lord."</p>
<p>ACT 7:59 And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ACT 7:60 And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.</p>	<p>REV 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. "tachus" [tah koos] - "quick, swift, soon, quickly."</p>

- The Bible teaches that Jesus is Deity. (Isa. 9:6, 7; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1-3; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Phil. 2:5-10).
- The Bible teaches it is proper to worship Jesus. (Matt. 2:2,11; 14:33; 28:9, 17, Jn.9:38; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:9-14).
- The above scriptures, likewise, reveal it is right and proper to pray to Jesus.

EPH 3:13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart [become discouraged, downhearted] at my tribulations [sufferings, hardships] on your behalf, for they [my tribulations, sufferings, hardships] are your glory.

- "ekkakeo" [ek kah **keh** oh] - "faint, fail in heart, be weary"
 - "doxa" [**dahks** ah] - "glory"
1. "I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf"
 - a. He did not want them to feel guilty or be ashamed of his "tribulations."
 - b. He did not want them to become discouraged and perhaps give up the faith because of his "tribulations."
 2. "for they [my tribulations] are your glory"
 - Lit. "which is the glory of you"
 - NIV "which are your glory"
 - a. They could take pride in his tribulations.
 - b. The tribulations were endured that Gentiles could be saved and be a part of Christ's one spiritual body.
 - c. Jesus taught we should not be ashamed of persecution that is the result of "righteousness." (Matt. 5:10-12).

d. Peter stressed the same fact. (1 Pet. 4:12-16).

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