

Paul's Letter to the ***EPHESIANS***

CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3: *God's Plan for Everyone Who is "In Christ"* (CONTINUED)

Benefits of Being "In Christ" (1:3 – 3:21) (continued)

Unity (2:11–3:13) (concluded)

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

Paul, a prisoner of Christ ^{Philemon 1:1,8-10} (the Lord ^{Ephesians 4:1}), prepared to pray ^{Ephesians 3:14-21} by referring back to the truth of the unity of believers ^{Ephesians 2:11-22}. God recognized the willingness of Paul to be "entrusted with the task" of preaching to the Gentiles ^{Galatians 2:7-9}.

Paul did not refer to his internments in Jerusalem ^{Acts 21:33}, Caesarea ^{Acts 23:35}, Rome ^{Acts 28:16}. These custodies resulted from Paul being "[the Lord's] chosen instrument to proclaim [His] name to the Gentiles and their kings" ^{Acts 9:15} and the "persecution" ^{2 Corinthians 4:7-15} by the Jews (even Messianic Jews) toward Paul ^{Acts 21:27-22:24}, because he preached to the Gentiles.

The following text ^{v.2-13} is considered to be a parenthetical passage Paul chose to include between the introduction of his prayer ^{v.1} and his actual prayer ^{Ephesians 3:14-21}. It seems apparent Paul felt it was necessary to reiterate the truths in the previous text ^{Ephesians 2:11-22}.

3:2-3 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

Paul ("apostle to the Gentiles" ^{Romans 11:13}) had a ministry of grace to Gentiles ^{Colossians 1:24-27}, and the ministry was "a priestly duty" assigned to Paul by Christ Jesus ^{Acts 9:1-20, Romans 15:15-16}. Paul was responsible for sharing what "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived ... but God ... revealed it to [Paul] ... by [the Holy] Spirit" ^{1 Corinthians 2:6-10}.

God "entrusted" the preaching of the gospel to Paul ⇒ Gentiles and Peter ⇒ Jews. ^{Galatians 2:7}

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The word "administration" ^{v.2} (*oikonomia*) appears as "dispensation" in many other translations. A popular way of dividing Biblical time is into Dispensations. One of the respected concepts of dispensation was offered by Dr. C.I. Schofield who proposed seven divisions of time:

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| (1) Man's Innocence ^{Genesis 1:26-3:6} | (2) Man's Conscience ^{Genesis 3:7-6:5} |
| (3) Man's Authority ^{Genesis 9:1-11:32} | (4) Man under Promise ^{Genesis 12:1 - Exodus 18:27} |
| (5) Man under Law ^{Exodus 19:1 - Acts 1:26} | (6) Man under Grace ^{Acts 2:1 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16} |
| (7) Man under the earthly reign of Christ ^{Revelation 20:1-10} | |

3:4-6 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in (other generations) ¹ as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are (heirs together) ² with Israel, (members together of one body) ³, and (sharers together) ⁴ in the promise in Christ Jesus. [¹*huios*: sons, ²*sugkleronomos*: joint heirs, ³*sussomos*: united in one body, ⁴*summetochos*: co-participant] While the mystery of the Messiah was subtly revealed to the Jews in the OT ^{Isaiah 7:14, 50:6, 53:2-12, Daniel 9:26, Micah 5:2}, Jesus expected them to recognize Him at the time of His First Coming ^{Luke 13:34-35}, but the Jewish leaders rejected Him ^{Mark 8:31}. As a result, "Israel has experienced hardening" ^{Romans 11:25} making many blind to the mystery. However, the mystery of Christ ^{Colossians 2:2-3, 1 Timothy 3:16} has been "disclosed to the saints" (Jews and Gentiles) ^{Colossians 1:25-27} who are "all one in Christ Jesus" ^{Galatians 3:28}. Furthermore, all who "are God's children" are "Abraham's offspring" (not physical ^{Romans 9:8}, but spiritual descendants), and are "heirs according to the promise" ^{Genesis 17:19, Romans 4:13, Galatians 3:29}.

Isaiah prophesied ^{Isaiah 49:6} the "servant" (*Messiah*) would be "a light for the Gentiles" ^{John 1:9}, would "bring [God's] salvation to the ends of the earth" ^{Acts 1:8} and that He would "restore the tribes of Jacob" ^{Daniel 9:24}. After the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, Luke reported Paul/Barnabas spoke about the fulfillment of the first two parts of the prophecy ^{Acts 13:46-47}. The third is promised ^{Jeremiah 30:3, Ezekiel 34-48} to occur during the Millennium ^{Revelation 20:1-6}.

3:7-9 I became a servant ⁵ of this gospel ⁶ by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to (make plain) ⁷ to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price, ron@hopeinchristnm.com, 505-294-4743,.

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[⁵*diakonos*: minister, ⁶*euaggelion*: good news, ⁷*photizo*: to give light to] Continuing the same theme, Paul said his calling ^{Acts 9:15-16, 26:15-18} was a "gift of God's grace" ^{1 Corinthians 3:5, 15:10}. Paul's statement demonstrated his Christian/Godly humility ^{Isaiah 6:1-8, Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3-4}. Many "riches of Christ" are available now ^{Philippians 4:19}, but others are for later ^{Romans 8:18-25}.

As mentioned above ^{v.4-6}, the OT contains truth about the *Messiah* to come, but the details of the "mystery of Christ" were not revealed until the time of the earthly life of Jesus.

The level of success obtained by a man wanting to serve God is dependent on two factors: (1) the calling of God ^{Colossians 1:25} and (2) the amount of effort put into the call ^{Colossians 1:29}.

Humanly, people tend to primarily think of "riches" as money; however, the "unsearchable riches of Christ" include: 'wisdom/knowledge' ^{Romans 11:33, Colossians 2:2-3}, 'grace' ^{Ephesians 1:7 2:7}, 'strength/power' ^{Ephesians 3:16}, 'precious promises' ^{2 Peter 1:3-4}, 'kindness/patience' ^{Romans 2:4}, etc.

3:10-11 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal ⁸ purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. [⁸*aion*: always being (lit)] In addition to Gentiles and Jews, God revealed His wisdom to both holy and unholy angels, ^{Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16}. The "heavenly realms" are the places where all spiritual beings exist ^{Ephesians 1:3,20, 2:6}. The ultimate purpose of man is to glorify God ^{Psalms 86:12, Luke 2:20, Romans 15:5-6, 1 Peter 2:11-12}.

In response to God's revelation, the holy angels, who are curious about ^{1 Peter 1:12b} and involved with ministering to the church ^{Hebrews 1:14}, rejoice ^{Luke 15:10, Revelation 5:11-12}. Of course, unholy angels do not rejoice, but they are aware of God's glory being revealed in salvation and the church, and they battle against it ^{Ephesians 6:11-13}, where they can ^{Matthew 12:29, Colossians 2:15}.

3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. All genuine saints may approach God in faith with Christ-confidence ^{2 Corinthians 3:4, Hebrews 4:15-16} "through [Jesus]" by "one Spirit" ^{Ephesians 2:18} and "by the blood of Jesus" ^{Hebrews 10:19-22}.

3:13 I ask you, therefore, not to (be discouraged) ⁹ because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. [⁹*ekkakeo*: lose heart] Followers of Jesus are not to "lose heart" ^{2 Corinthians 4:1,16} over any situation, including Paul's suffering. Actually, genuine Christians will have "the sufferings of Christ flow over into [their] lives" ^{2 Corinthians 1:5}, which allows them to also "share in his glory" ^{Romans 8:17} and will produce in them a much more mature faith ^{James 1:2-4, Hebrews 12:11}.

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