

Ephesians

Chapter 3

The Church is According to God's Eternal Purpose

Eph 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles--

- Paul came to Ephesus first with Aquila and Priscilla (*Act 18:18-19*). This was a prison epistle and Paul was a prisoner of the Roman state (*during Nero's reign*) because of his preaching Jesus as the Christ, first to a Jewish audience (*Rom 1:16*) who were the reason for his incarceration, and now to those he was appointed to.

Act 22:21 And He said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" *22* Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live." *23* And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, *24* the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out why they were shouting against him like this.

- He told the Jews that it was for "the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain" (*Act 28:20*) and since they didn't believe the good news about Jesus being the very Messiah they were looking for he said "that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (*v. 28*). Paul here reminds the predominantly Gentile Ephesian converts of his state of affairs while writing this epistle. He was there, not as a prisoner to the government of Rome but, as a prisoner for the sake of preaching the truth about Christ.

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Eph 3:2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,

- assuming- *Gk.1489- if indeed, seeing that, unless*. Paul did not doubt that the Ephesians had heard that he had been sent to them as a commissioner of the Divine favor since his message of salvation in Christ was dismissed by the Jews. He goes on to explain something that they might not have known.

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Eph 3:3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

- mystery- See notes on verses 4 & 6.
- by revelation- Paul was not commissioned by any other than Jesus Himself. He stated that in *Gal 1:12*. Part of what he received directly from the revelation, along with what he received later from Jesus (*Act 9:15; 22:21*) was that he was to go to the Gentiles and explain their part in God's redemption for all of mankind.
- have written- What he stated in the previous chapters he is explaining in detail here.

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Eph 3:4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

- Reading this epistle, the Gentiles would see where they became the final piece of the puzzle in uniting all who believe (*Jew and Gentile*) in the one body known as the church. Paul already knew this mystery concerning how they were to become part of the family of God through Jesus Christ and not according to the Mosaic Law. They would not have to be converted to Judaism (*i.e., be circumcised according to the Judaizers his letter to the Galatians pointed out*) even though some of the Jews felt they were the only ones who could receive this new favor with God (*i.e., become Christians*), claiming such status as the children of Abraham. (Abraham “was called a friend of God” [Jas 2:3] “before he was circumcised” [Rom 4:10] so “the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith” [Rom 4:13]) Any Gentile that wanted to become a Christian, these Jews thought, had to first convert to Judaism. They didn’t realize that all (*Jew and Gentile*) who were baptized into Christ became the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). This, Paul’s intellect on the matter, is what he wanted them to wrap their minds around.

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Eph 3:5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

- sons of men- This is a phrase that differentiates between this group (*Gentile*) and the ‘sons of God’ (*here, not referring to the angels- Job 1:6; 2:1*). Gen 6:2 is the first passage to reveal this difference although Gen 4:26 implies that it existed even then. The ‘sons of God’ being the righteous seed of man whereas the ‘sons of men’ being the irreligious. These things that Paul was about to reveal were not made known to them (*specifically the Gentiles*) in other generations. The holy prophets of the O.T., as with Jesus and His holy apostles in the New, were “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mat 15:24) [*for the most part then*], all by the direct guidance (*revelation*) of the Spirit.

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Eph 3:6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

- mystery- Gk.3466- a *secret* (through the idea of *silence* imposed by *initiation* into religious rites). The Gentiles were to give “thanks to the Father, Who has qualified [them] to share in the inheritance of the saints of light” (Col 1:10). As fellow heirs they are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). They were now able to participate in the initiation process that the gospel reveals (Col 1:27).
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- members of the same body- Speaking of the church of Christ, as members these Gentiles were told that they are ‘co-participants’ of the assurances that can only be found **in Christ Jesus** (Gal 3:27-29).
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- through the gospel- Or “glad tidings” (*Interlinear*). The only place salvation will ever be found is in the message of the gospel; the death, burial and resurrection of God’s only Son for the redemption of mankind. When we emulate that process in baptism we also share in the same assurances others have been blessed to receive since “the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come” (Rev 12:10). That was the day of Christ’s coronation after His ascension to “the right hand of God” (Act 2:33).

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Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of His power.

- Paul received this ministry of glad tidings as a 'gratuity' of God's influence on his heart and how it reflected in his actions once the truth was revealed to him after the incident on the road to Damascus (*Act 9*). He acquired it through the effectiveness of Divine miraculous power which was for the purpose of convincing the unbeliever (*1 Cor 14:22*).

2Co 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

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Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

- Paul could not get over his past when he persecuted the church even though he was forgiven. Using his former persecution of the church, that led to his conversion, he was able to convince others of the sincerity in what he preached. He considered himself the very least of all the saints which included those who were considered "to be weaker" (*1 Cor 9:22; 12:24*). The saying "forgive and forget" is easier said than done. So often guilt can outweigh reparation.

1Co 15:8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me. **9** For I am the least of the apostles, **unworthy** to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (*Christ*).

- To share the message of the gospel with these Gentiles was considered as an example of God's graciousness to Paul. He didn't have the words to express the abundant wealth of Christ which he was to preach to the Gentiles. Because he considered it a privilege it was as though he was speechless. He would have agreed with David who wrote *Psa 139:6*.

Psa 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable (*untraceable*) His ways!

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Eph 3:9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,

- Not only was Paul to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles, he was to bring to light for everyone (*Jew and Gentile along with the heavenly authorities*) this secret that was concealed in the mind of the Creator since "before the foundation of the world" (*see notes Eph 1:4*).

Job 11:7 "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven--what can you do? Deeper than Sheol--what can you know? **9** Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.

- Since Christ nailed the Mosaic Law "to the cross" (*Col 2:14*) the Jews had nothing to base their attachment to God on. And Gentiles had no connection to Him to begin with.

Now they both, through Christ, “have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:18), meaning, the Spirit that dwells within confirms their attachment to God (Rom 8:9).

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Eph 3:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- so that- Gk.2443- in order *that* (denoting the purpose or the result). Here Paul explains how those in the spirit realm, whether angel or otherwise, were to understand such diversity of wisdom that belongs to God alone. Since the church is the product of such wisdom, it is through this institution that these ‘behind-the-scenes’ high ranking influential delegates better understand their part in the scheme of the creation and the redemption of it.

Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through Him and for Him.

1Co 2:7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

Heb 1:14 Are they (*angels*) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

1Pe 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven, **things into which angels long to look.**

Why did God conceal such understanding from man until all was revealed through the coming of Christ?

1Co 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for **if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** 9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"-- 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

The cross was the focus of man’s redemption and “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12) would have kept Jesus from dying to redeem man back from their unrighteous grip. Had they known, in advance of His crucifixion, that they would lose it, the purpose for the scheme of redemption would not have been achieved.

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Eph 3:11 This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

- eternal purpose- Before the worlds were created, in eternity, it was God's intent that these things should come to pass which He exercised through Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Eph 3:12 in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.

- boldness- Gk.3954- *all out spokenness, that is, frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication assurance*. Faithful Christians (*i.e., those in Christ*) have this assurance, along with admission (*as it pertains to partaking of "the promised eternal inheritance"*- Heb 9:15) with reliance as it applies to trusting Jesus to save us.

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Eph 3:13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- Because of his illuminating this mystery (*to both Jew and Greek*), which was all Paul was attempting to do, he asked the Ephesians to not become discouraged over why he was imprisoned. His incarceration was for their good because through it Paul became stronger and bolder to preach the saving grace of God through Christ.

2Co 12:10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, **then** I am strong.

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Eph 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

- For this reason- It was on account of the good the Ephesians were receiving through Paul's suffering that he was prostrating himself before the Father. How many today would be thanking God for the benefit others in the church received through our own personal sufferings?

2Co 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the **daily pressure** on me of my anxiety **for all the churches**.

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Eph 3:15 from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

- from- Gk.1537- denoting *origin* (the point *whence* motion or action proceeds). Everything that exists originated from God's creative activity.
- family- Gk.3965- *paternal descent*. Since man (*and angels*) were created "in the image of God" (*Gen 1:27*), *i.e., created as spirit beings, and God is the Paternal Being Who created them, all these have their origin in Him*.

- named- Gk.3687- *to name, assign an appellation*. These named consist of **Christians** which make up “those who are sanctified”, who **Christ** “is not ashamed to call... brothers” (*Heb 2:11*), the holy angelic beings in Heaven who had not “left their proper dwelling” (*Jude 6*), “the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven” (*i.e., the church*) and “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (*Heb 12:23 [those who now exist in that part of the Hadean realm known as Paradise]*).

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Eph 3:16 that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being,

- according to- Here has to do with measurement. If in *Acts 11:29* “the disciples determined, everyone **according to his ability**, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea”, what would we think of **God’s ability** to give when it applies to the riches of His glory? The word “riches” appears five times in this epistle as it pertains to the measuring of **God’s abundance** on whatever subject. When **Paul** applies it here to His glory (*Gk.1391- dignity, honor, praise*), it is out of such an immeasurable quantity that **He** offers the empowerment to “be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (*Eph 6:15*).

- through- Gives the avenue in which this strength is possible. Where else but through His Spirit could such energy come from (“*the Word of God*”- *6:17*)? **The Spirit is the One Who supplies** “the weapons of our warfare” which “have **Divine** power to destroy strongholds” (*2 Cor 10:4*). Chapter 6 specifically names them. Compare *Col 1:10-11*; *1 Pet 1:22*.

- inner being- This is the “inner self” which “is being renewed day by day” (*2 Cor 4:16*). See also *Rom 7:22*; *2 Cor 4:16* and *1 Pet 3:4*. This renewal is only possible when we are “filled with the **Holy Spirit**” (*Eph 5:18*) and “let the word of **Christ** dwell in [us] richly” (*Col 3:16*) and when we hone “the sword of the **Spirit** which is the word of **God**” (*Eph 6:17*) through daily **Bible study**.

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Eph 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

- The reason to have such empowerment is so that Christ might reside in our thoughts and feelings (*mind*) through our reliance on **Him** for our salvation. We trust **Him** to save us by showing it in everything we say and do that brings honor to the **Father** through **Him**.

As per an Interlinear, the latter part of this verse belongs at the beginning of the following verse.

- in love- There is a purpose for our affection and benevolence to be rooted (*Gk.4492- become stable*) and grounded (*Gk.2311- to lay a basis for*). It is so that we...

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Eph 3:18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

- Our ability to be able to fully and mentally grasp the love of Christ (v. 19), will only even begin to materialize once we've become stable in, and have a basic understanding of, what love actually is. Since "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8) we now understand the origin of it.

- saints- Gk.40- *sacred* (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated). In this context the apostle is referring to Christians in particular.

- breadth and length- Both having to do with measurement.

- height- (Gk.5311- [figuratively] dignity) along with depth (Gk.899- profundity, [by implication] extent; [figuratively] mystery) give two other dimensions to Christ's love. It is broad and great, dignified and mysterious.
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Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- know- Gk.1097- understand. It is difficult to fathom Christ's love wherewith He loved His creation to the extent of leaving Heaven to come in human form in order to redeem man from the evil one who had possession of his soul (Jn 8:44).

Php 2:8 And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- To have the ability to understand such immeasurable love, Christ has to first dwell in our hearts through faith (v. 17) since His love surpasses knowledge, i.e., it is beyond mortal man's understanding (1 Cor 2:14).

- The result of accepting Christ's love, and being obedient to it, is to be filled with all the fullness of God and thus become the offspring of God.

2Pe 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us to His own glory and excellence, 4 by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may **become partakers of the Divine nature**, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
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Eph 3:20 Now to Him Who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

- Him Who is able- Paul here makes an endorsement as to the ability that God possesses.

Rom 16:25 Now to Him Who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages 26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith-- 27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

- far more abundantly- This expression denotes the origin (*Gk.1537*) from where this superabundance (*Gk.4053*) comes; the **Creator**. If **He** created everything that exists, then **He** has the ability, that is above comprehension, to do (*Gk.4160- perform*) beyond what mortal man might ask or thinks is possible.

- power at work- There exists within the faithful saint a power (*Gk.1411- force*) that we have but are unable to grasp its magnitude. We understand it is beyond the mortal mind's reach since "the natural person does not accept the things of the **Spirit of God**... because they are spiritually discerned" (*1 Cor 2:14*). A natural man, one who believes he is a **Christian** but only in the sense that he is a 'good' person, prays thinking he is going to receive his request from **God** but when he doesn't he concludes that **God** doesn't exist. Whereas when the spiritual person, one who has been truly converted, when he prays he understands...

1Jn 5:14 ... this is the confidence that we have toward **Him**, that if we ask anything **according to His will He** hears us.

Hearing us doesn't necessarily mean **He** is going to grant whatever the request is. It only means that we have been granted access to **God** that can only be found in **Christ**. Our prayers are to be guided by what **His** will is. Even **Cornelius**, when not yet a **Christian**, "prayed continually to **God**" (*Act 10:2*) and his "prayers and... alms... ascended as a memorial before **God**" (*v. 4*). He had a sincere heart that prayed for **God's** will and surely **God** answered it by sending **Peter** who asked why **Cornelius** sent for him (*v. 29*). **Peter** then preached "how **God** anointed **Jesus of Nazareth**" and how "they put **Him** to death by hanging **Him** on a tree, but [how] **God** raised **Him** on the third day and made **Him** to appear... to us who had been chosen by **God** as witnesses" (*vs. 38-41*). And after stating that this was all prophesied (*v. 43*) "while **Peter** was still saying these things, the **Holy Spirit** fell on all who heard the word" (*v. 44*) "and he commanded them to be baptized in (*Gk.1722- by*) the name (*Gk.3686- authority*) of **Jesus Christ**" (*v. 48*). All this according to **God's** will. So, if we pray to be forgiven of a trespass, **He** hears and pardons the truly repentant. If we ask for wisdom (*Jas 1:5*) **He** grants it to the one truly seeking it. When we pray for the leaders of this country to make decisions that would benefit the growth of the church **He** responds, but sometimes in the way **He** did in **Acts 8:1-4** through persecution since "those who were scattered went about preaching the word". Whatever we pray for we need to first understand what the will of **God** is since **He** knows what's best for us and for the church as a whole.

Rom 8:26 Likewise the **Spirit** helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the **Spirit Himself** intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

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

- to **Him**- In beginning **His** prayer in the garden before **His** crucifixion, **Jesus** asked that **His** Father would "glorify **Your Son** that the **Son** may glorify **You**" (*Jn 17:1*). **He** shared that glory with the believers (*v. 22*), who in turn, as **His** body the church, became "the instrument by which the glory of **God** would be shown; and it is by the church that **His** praise would be celebrated". –Albert Barnes

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- The Interlinear omits the **and** using the phrase “*in the assembly in Christ Jesus*”. Even though **God** received glory from **Christ** in giving **His** life on the Roman cross, **this** glory given to **God** comes from this particular group. It is only through the church, not through the vast number of religions around the world, that **God** is glorified. **He** is seeking “**true worshipers**” since “**God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth**” (*Jn 4:23-24*).

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- **generations-** Gk.1074- by implication an age (the period or the persons). **All** has to do with (*Gk.3956*) *any, every, the whole*, thus the rest of man’s existence since it was for and through mankind that redemption (*in the Son of man*) came.

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- **forever and ever-** Gk.165- *an age*; by implication extension *perpetuity* (also past). This could mean for the rest of the **Christian** dispensation since the **Greek** gloss “*a Messianic period (present or future)*” may apply here. Noting **Paul’s** expression, as the passionate believer he was, gives an inkling as to what he was trying to define as to how long **God** is to receive the glory that is due **Him**. The context demands that it pertains to the church and how long she is to be glorifying her **Creator**, which is even beyond the existence of this physical realm. The church as she was designed will exist beyond this mortal reality, as we believe she will since she originated in the mind of **God** as the “*New Jerusalem*” (*Rev 3:12*). Writing to the church at Corinth **Paul** stated that he felt “*a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you as a pure virgin to Christ*” (*2 Cor 11:2*). As such she is being “*prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband*” (*Rev 21:2*). We understand that **Christ** will “*present her (His church) to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*” (*Eph 5:28*). After the judgment **Jesus** will then present her to **His Father**.

Col 1:21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22 He** has now reconciled in **His** body of flesh by **His** death, in order to **present you** holy and blameless and above reproach **before Him**, **23 if** indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, **Paul**, became a minister.

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- **Amen-** Gk.281- properly *firm*, that is, (figuratively) *trustworthy*; adverbially surely (often as interjection *so be it*): -amen, verily.

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