

EPHESIANS

Chapter 3:1-21

Jim Hoffman

Eph 3:1-2

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

Surely you have heard about the administration of
God's grace that was given to me for you, NIV

- Paul finished up chapter two by declaring that Jesus had broken down the barriers between Jew and Gentile, now he expands on that theme.
 - When Paul calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ here he meant it in the most literal sense.
 - He was in fact in a Roman prison precisely because he was vigorously preaching the gospel to Gentiles and the Jews hated him for it.
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Eph 3:1-2

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

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, NIV

- Paul indeed had a specific calling and mission to the Gentiles.
 - Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! **This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.** 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." NIV



Eph 3:1-2

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ
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- Paul indeed had a specific calling and mission to the Gentiles.
 - Acts 13:46-47 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, **we now turn to the Gentiles . 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us:** "I have made you a light for the Gentiles , that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." NIV
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Eph 3:1-2

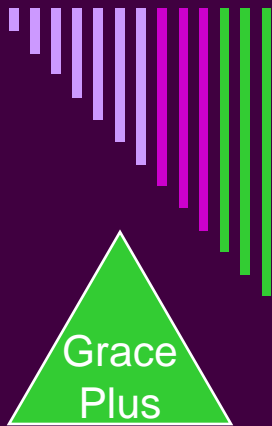
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- Paul indeed had a specific calling and mission to the Gentiles.
 - Acts 18:5-6 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. **From now on I will go to the Gentiles .**" NIV
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Eph 3:1-2

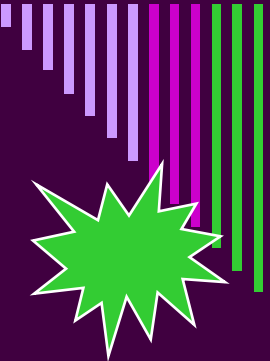
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- The apostle Paul was in jail primarily because he would not conform to the notion that Gentiles are not included in the salvation Jesus offers without becoming a Jew.
- Today, our thinking is all but reversed in this matter. We Gentiles have a hard time imagining that a Jew could be saved.
- Just like Jesus was for the Gentile in the 1st century, he is for the Jew as well in our day.

Eph 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. NIV

- The Apostle Paul spent some years in exile after his conversion being tutored by the Lord Himself.
 - He speaks of a mystery that was made know to him by revelation I would take that to mean that he got it straight from the Lord that Gentiles are included in the new covenant.
 - It was definitely a new explanation of some old information that the Gentiles could have a relationship with God.
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Eph 3:2-3

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- Gal 1:12 *I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*
 - Gal 1:15 - 18 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, 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. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days NIV
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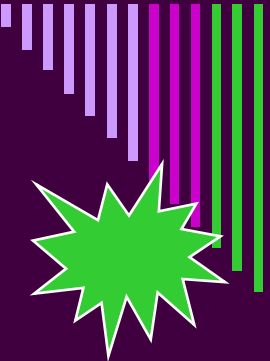


Eph 3:2-3

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- Gen 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.** NIV
 - Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall **all nations** be blessed . KJV
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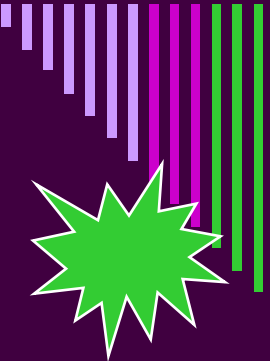
Eph 3:4-6



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 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 with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. NIV

- The friction between Jew and Gentile on this mystery of including the Gentile in the new covenant makes our denominationalism look like child's play.
 - What a prideful position we sometimes adopt thinking that God favors one group of Christians over another.
 - There was real resistance on the part of the 1st century Jew to the notion that these 'dog' Gentiles were on equal footing with the Jew before God.
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Eph 3:7-8



I became a servant of this gospel 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, NIV

- Notice the humility of Paul here; he had been given new information that no one ever had before, and he got it directly from Christ, yet he does not boast.
 - He saw himself as the least of God's people and I do not think these were just words. He meant them.
 - I think he meant them because he had seen things that showed him how small we really are.
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Eph 3:7-8

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- 2 Cor 12:2-4 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. KJV
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- As a general rule this is true; those who trumpet the horns of their own spirituality, are usually the most carnal.
 - The closer we get to Jesus, and the more we experience of his work in our lives, the more we recognize that any part we play in ministry is totally dependant upon him and not us.
 - If I have to tell you that I am spiritual, then I'm not very spiritual at all.
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- **The closer we get to Jesus**, the clearer we see that what he said in John 15 is true; 'apart from me, you can do nothing'.
 - **The closer we get to Jesus** the less we want praise for our spirituality because we know that it is not something that we accomplished.
 - **The closer we get to Jesus** the more like him, and the less like us, we will be.
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Eph 3:7-8

I became a servant of this gospel 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, NIV

What are the reasons Paul might give for his claim of being 'less than the least of all God's people'?



Eph 3:7-8

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- What about this 'gift of grace' that Paul received?
 - This gift landed him in jail, got him beaten multiple times, and caused him to suffer in other ways as well.
 - This 'gift' frequently caused turmoil and brought about danger when he opened his mouth to preach.
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Eph 3:7-8

I became a servant of this gospel 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, NIV

- So what about us? How willing are we to open our mouths for Jesus when there is a price to pay?
 - How much do we count it a gift to be God's spokesperson?
 - Some of things that help us to overcome our fears are; love for God, and love for the lost.
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Eph 3:9-10

and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 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,

- Again we see the word ‘mystery’ and this time it is even more specific; the church was something new and totally unexpected. No one saw it coming.
 - Ecclesia – commonly interpreted to mean ‘called out ones’. That is the church, a group of peculiar people called out of the world to be a new entity for God.
 - Part of the purpose for the church was to show the wisdom of God to the angels, fallen and unfallen.
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Eph 3:9-10

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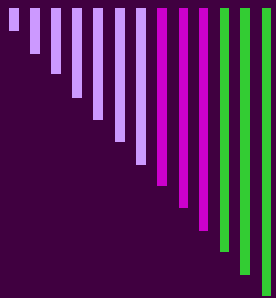
- Not be lost in all of this is a truth we saw earlier in our study; the saving of sinners, and here the calling out of the church, is more about giving glory to God than it is about us.
 - When God saves and separates those who once hated him and opposed him that act in itself shows the magnanimity of God.
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Eph 3:12-13

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. NIV

- The good news of the gospel is more than ‘your sins have been forgiven’; it is also truths like you are now welcome in His presence.
 - There was great mystery in the old testament when it came to approaching God. Ceremony, sacrifice, and just certain people at certain times.
 - Now, we are invited to come freely and confidently.
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Eph 3:12-13

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. NIV

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. KJV



Eph 3:12-13

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. NIV

- Now here is the sad truth to our shame; though the penalty has been paid and the way has been paved, we come so infrequently.
 - Prayer is perhaps the least used privilege that we own. I know we all pray, but we often pray half-heartedly and so often selfishly.
 - I say those things not based just on my experience, but on the weight of many conversations with fellow Christians.
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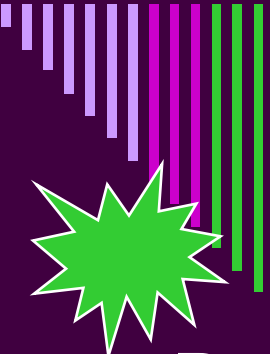
Eph 3:14-15

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. NIV

- For what reason? He is referring back to his statements in verse #1. He has been sidetracked for a awhile, but now he is coming back to his point.
- We need to refer back to chapter 2:19-22 to understand his reason he is declaring that since we have been brought near to God some other things should follow.
- And, since He now lives in the believer temple, we should manifest His power.

Eph 3:16-17

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, NIV

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- Paul's prayer is that the Christians at Ephesus would experience God's power in their lives.

 - When we have His power;
 - We do the things that are on His agenda
 - We resist sin
 - We follow Him
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Eph 3:17-19

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. NIV

- It is no accident that as soon as he turns the subject to experiencing God's power that he begins to talk about God's love.
- The world is not necessarily hungry to see us perform some miraculous sign, but they are interested to know if Jesus in your heart increases your love.
- The world wants to know if He makes a difference.



Eph 3:17-19

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- If we claim to have His power, that can only be so by His Spirit, and if we have His Spirit, then we will also have His love.**

 - I Corinthians 13 would tell us;**
 - Tongues are unimpressive without love.**
 - Faith to move mountains only moves people when we also love them.**
 - Prophecies are just cold truth without love.**
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Eph 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. NIV



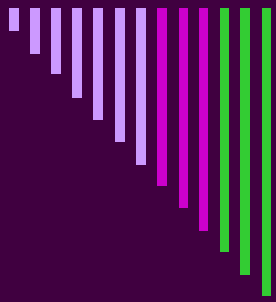
- Listen to this description of God!
 - Not only can God do more than we ask, and more than we are able to know; He is also able to do more than we can imagine.
 - The same power that makes Him powerful beyond our imagination is the same power that is at work in us.
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Eph 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. NIV

- So here is my question; If we have His incredible power then why is it seen so infrequently?
 - And, when it is seen; what does it look like?
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What do you think?
