

The Mystery

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A study in the book of Ephesians Chapter 3

Welcome back for Part 6 of Walk Like an Ephesian! I pray that God has been teaching and changing you through the truth of His Holy Word. Before we begin our study time today, please take a few moments to go before God in prayer. Confess to Him any sin on your heart and accept His wonderful forgiveness. Ask Him to open the eyes of your heart to the truth of His word and fill you with His Holy Spirit. Please sign your initials in the blank when you have finished praying:

_____.

Now please read all of Ephesians chapter three—it won't take long.

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Now please go to Blue Letter Bible (BLB) and read Ephesians 3 in a different version of the Bible.

Please scan Ephesians 3 once more and look for a theme word. Highlight your theme word in the text.

The word I chose for the theme of Ephesians 3 is *mystery*. Let's go back to BLB and do a little research on the word *mystery*. (If you are just joining me in this study, please see [Walk Like an Ephesian: Day One](#) to learn how to do word searches.)

Please record the definition of *mystery* and any insights you gained from your research in the space below.

Mystery:

One question you may have concerning the word *mystery* is, *what is the mystery?* Please read the following information from Matthew Henry:

"He [Paul] makes mention both of the mystery that was revealed and of the revelation of it. (1.) The mystery revealed is that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel (v. 6); that is, that they should be joint-heirs with the believing Jews of the heavenly inheritance; and that they should be members of the same mystical body, be received into the church of Christ, and be interested in the gospel-promises, as well as the Jews, and particularly in that great promise of the Spirit."

In short, the *mystery* is God's plan for the salvation of man through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The *mystery* also encompasses the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in born again believers in Christ.

According to BLB, the word *mystery* transliterates from the Greek as *mysterion*, which means *hidden, secret, confided only to the initiated and not to ordinary*

mortals. Mysterion also means *something that is only known by divine revelation*. At the time Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, the mystery of Jesus was being

revealed. As modern day believers in Christ we *look back* on the mystery as a happening of the ancient past. To Paul and the Ephesians the mystery had been revealed in part very recently by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Letter to the Ephesians finishes the unveiling process by explaining the share of the church concerning the *mystery*.

What is the churches role concerning the mystery (verse 10)?

What special role was Paul given in the revelation of the mystery (verse 2)?

What is the purpose of the mystery?

How did Paul receive this special calling (verse 7)?

Paul received his calling not by merit, virtue or natural ability but by the *grace* of God. He considered himself to be *less than the least* of the saints because of his life before Christ. If God can use the *less than the least of the saints* to further His mystery, imagine what He can do with you and me.

As part of the church of Christ do we share the same calling? How do you participate in the calling?

Now please go back and read verse 1.

By what peculiar name does Paul call himself?

Notice that Paul does not call himself the *prisoner of Rome* or the *prisoner of Caesar*—he calls himself the prisoner of Christ. Why?

What did Paul do while he was a prisoner of Christ? Did he while his time away bemoaning his fate or worrying over his destiny? Despite trials and suffering, while in prison Paul continued to minister to others, grow in his faith and produce fruit for the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, while he was in chains, Paul wrote 4 letters of the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Paul had a very different view of his confinement; he did not consider his imprisonment a hindrance to his work for Christ but an asset. Keeping this in mind, please read Philippians 1:12-14.

Why was Paul in chains?

How did Paul's prison experience encourage other believers?

What has God promised believers in Romans 8:28?

Because of the outcome of Paul's prison experience other believers did not have to fear going to prison. If they were imprisoned for preaching the Gospel it would not be by the will of Caesar, or the Pharisees, but by the will of God. The brethren could confidently continue preaching and teaching knowing that they too would further the Gospel of Jesus Christ even from behind prison bars. Likewise, God has promised to use all things for our good and for His glory. If you are in prison while you are doing this Bible study, God has plan to use your prison time to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

As modern day believers how do we usually react to hardships and trials?

Do you remember a time of suffering in which you were very fruitful or experienced great spiritual growth? If so, please share the details in the space below:

If you are currently going through a time of suffering can you think of any benefits that may result from this season of life?

Please go back and reread Ephesians 3:14-19.

What does Paul pray for the Ephesians in verses 14-16?

And 17-19?

He prays for them to be strengthened and to comprehend the great love of God for His children. The Greek word for *strengthen* means to be strengthened with the mighty power of God. *Katalambanō*, the Greek transliteration for comprehend means not just to understand intellectually with the mind, but to experience for oneself. God's love isn't a love that we just know about—it is a love that we can experience on a daily basis.

Why does Paul pray for the Ephesians to be strengthened and to comprehend God's four-dimensional love?

When we are experiencing hardships and trials we need to know two things: God's loves us and He is strengthening us.

Which is more important to you and why?

What will happen to us when we experience the depth of God's love for us (verse 19)?

The love of God will fill us in a way that no other thing can. Nothing else can satisfy our hearts and souls. The love of God is the only thing that can fill us—all other things will only leave us longing for more ... more life, more love, more peace, more joy, more God. God is the only one who can perfectly satisfy because He is the only One who is perfect.

When we are filled with the fullness of God we will no longer have room for

bitterness, vengeance, or despair. We will be filled to the brim with love, joy, peace, contentment ... earthen vessels full of God. Then we will long to share the mystery of our filling with the lost, wounded and hurting souls around us.

I used to be afraid to completely give myself over to God. I thought that I would lose myself and become some kind of Christian robot. But it is only in giving ourselves completely to Him that we become who we were created to be. God can satisfy every longing and lack of our hearts and souls. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above anything we can think or imagine. To Him belongs all the power and glory forever and ever Amen.

In closing, please read Ephesians 3 one more time. Please turn these scriptures into prayers for yourself, your family and the lost of the world.

God's blessings and mercy to you.

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