

Ephesians

Chapter 3

Introduction

MKJV

Luk 4:18 "The Spirit of *the* Lord *is* on Me; because of this He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to *the* poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and new sight to *the* blind, to set at liberty those having been crushed,

Luk 4:19 to proclaim the acceptable year of *the* Lord."

Mat 10:7 And as you go, proclaim, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received freely, freely give.

Down through the years, there have been many excellent studies, commentaries and expositions of Ephesians. This study has been undertaken, not as a replacement, rather as what I hope will be a supplement and aid to others.

This study consists principally of three parts. First, the Scriptures themselves. You will note parallel translations to aid you in your study.

Second, Matthew Henry's Commentary on Ephesians 3.

Lastly you will find many comments from Ed Murphy's excellent text *Handbook For Spiritual Warfare*, accompanied by additional comments I believe relevant for this study.

Like all Scripture, this chapter is rich in the Word of God. It is my sincere prayer that God will reveal new truths and treasures with each reading.

EPHESIANS 3

MKJV

1 For this cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you nations,

2 if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me toward you,

3 that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words,

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 is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,

6 that the nations should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partaker of His promise in Christ through the gospel.

AMP

1 FOR THIS reason [*because I preached that you are thus built up together*], I, Paul, [*am*] the prisoner of Jesus the Christ for the sake and on behalf of you Gentiles--

2 Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace (His unmerited favor) that was entrusted to me [*to dispense to you*] for your benefit,

3 [*And*] that the mystery (secret) was made known to me and I was allowed to comprehend it by direct revelation, as I already briefly wrote you.

4 When you read this you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.

5 [*This mystery*] was never disclosed to human beings in past generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles (consecrated messengers) and prophets by the [*Holy*] Spirit.

6 [*It is this:*] that the Gentiles are now to be fellow heirs [*with the Jews*], members of the same body and joint partakers [*sharing*] in the same divine promise in Christ through [*their acceptance of*] the glad tidings (the Gospel).

KJV+

1 For this cause^{5484, 5127} I¹⁴⁷³ Paul,³⁹⁷² the³⁵⁸⁸ prisoner¹¹⁹⁸ of Jesus²⁴²⁴ Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ for⁵²²⁸ you⁵²¹⁶ Gentiles,¹⁴⁸⁴

2 If¹⁴⁸⁹ ye have heard¹⁹¹ of the³⁵⁸⁸ dispensation³⁶²² of the³⁵⁸⁸ grace⁵⁴⁸⁵ of God²³¹⁶ which is given¹³²⁵ me³⁴²⁷ to¹⁵¹⁹ you-ward:⁵²⁰⁹

3 How that³⁷⁵⁴ by²⁵⁹⁶ revelation⁶⁰² he made known¹¹⁰⁷ unto me³⁴²⁷ the³⁵⁸⁸ mystery;³⁴⁶⁶ (as²⁵³¹ I wrote afore⁴²⁷⁰ in¹⁷²² few words,³⁶⁴¹

4 Whereby,^{4314, 3739} when ye read,³¹⁴ ye may¹⁴¹⁰ understand³⁵³⁹ my³⁴⁵⁰ knowledge⁴⁹⁰⁷ in¹⁷²² the³⁵⁸⁸ mystery³⁴⁶⁶ of Christ)⁵⁵⁴⁷

5 Which³⁷³⁹ in¹⁷²² other²⁰⁸⁷ ages¹⁰⁷⁴ was not³⁷⁵⁶ made known¹¹⁰⁷ unto the³⁵⁸⁸ sons⁵²⁰⁷ of men,⁴⁴⁴ as⁵⁶¹³ it is now³⁵⁶⁸ revealed⁶⁰¹ unto his⁸⁴⁶ holy⁴⁰ apostles⁶⁵² and²⁵³² prophets⁴³⁹⁶ by¹⁷²² the Spirit;⁴¹⁵¹

6 That the³⁵⁸⁸ Gentiles¹⁴⁸⁴ should be¹⁵¹¹ fellow heirs,⁴⁷⁸⁹ and²⁵³² of the same body,⁴⁹⁵⁴ and²⁵³² partakers⁴⁸³⁰ of his⁸⁴⁶ promise¹⁸⁶⁰ in¹⁷²² Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ by¹²²³ the³⁵⁸⁸ gospel:²⁰⁹⁸

MKJV

8 This grace is given to me (*who am* less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

9 and to bring to light what *is* the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

10 so that now to the rulers and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through His faith.

AMP

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints (God's consecrated people), this grace (favor, privilege) was granted and graciously entrusted: to proclaim to the Gentiles the unending (boundless, fathomless, incalculable, and exhaustless) riches of Christ [*wealth which no human being could have searched out*],

9 Also to enlighten all men and make plain to them what is the plan [*regarding the Gentiles and providing for the salvation of all men*] of the mystery kept hidden through the ages and concealed until now in [*the mind of*] God Who created all things by Christ Jesus.

10 [*The purpose is*] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere.

11 This is in accordance with the terms of the eternal and timeless purpose which He has realized and carried into effect in [*the person of*] Christ Jesus our Lord,

12 In Whom, because of our faith in Him, we dare to have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access (an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear).

KJV+

8 Unto me,¹⁶⁹⁸ who am less than the least¹⁶⁴⁷ of all³⁹⁵⁶ saints,⁴⁰ is this³⁷⁷⁸ grace⁵⁴⁸⁵ given,¹³²⁵ that I should preach²⁰⁹⁷ among¹⁷²² the³⁵⁸⁸ Gentiles¹⁴⁸⁴ the³⁵⁸⁸ unsearchable⁴²¹ riches⁴¹⁴⁹ of Christ;⁵⁵⁴⁷

9 And²⁵³² to make all *men* see^{5461, 3956} what⁵¹⁰¹ *is* the³⁵⁸⁸ fellowship²⁸⁴² of the³⁵⁸⁸ mystery,³⁴⁶⁶ which from⁵⁷⁵ the³⁵⁸⁸ beginning of the world¹⁶⁵ hath been hid⁶¹³ in¹⁷²² God,²³¹⁶ who created²⁹³⁶ all things³⁹⁵⁶ by¹²²³ Jesus²⁴²⁴ Christ:⁵⁵⁴⁷

10 To the intent that²⁴⁴³ now³⁵⁶⁸ unto the³⁵⁸⁸ principalities⁷⁴⁶ and²⁵³² powers¹⁸⁴⁹ in¹⁷²² heavenly²⁰³² places might be known¹¹⁰⁷ by¹²²³ the³⁵⁸⁸ church¹⁵⁷⁷ the³⁵⁸⁸ manifold⁴¹⁸² wisdom⁴⁶⁷⁸ of God,²³¹⁶

11 According²⁵⁹⁶ to the³⁵⁸⁸ eternal¹⁶⁵ purpose⁴²⁸⁶ which³⁷³⁹ he purposed⁴¹⁶⁰ in¹⁷²² Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ Jesus²⁴²⁴ our²²⁵⁷ Lord:²⁹⁶²

12 In¹⁷²² whom³⁷³⁹ we have²¹⁹² boldness³⁹⁵⁴ and²⁵³² access⁴³¹⁸ with¹⁷²² confidence⁴⁰⁰⁶ by¹²²³ the³⁵⁸⁸ faith⁴¹⁰² of him.⁸⁴⁶

MKJV

14 For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 of 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 by His Spirit in the inner man;

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height,

AMP

14 For this reason [*seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ*], I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 For Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named [*that Father from Whom all fatherhood takes its title and derives its name*].

16 May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [*Holy*] Spirit [*Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality*].

17 May Christ through your faith [*actually*] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love,

18 That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [*God's devoted people, the experience of that love*] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [*of it*];

KJV+

14 For this cause^{5484, 5127} I bow²⁵⁷⁸ my³⁴⁵⁰ knees¹¹¹⁹ unto⁴³¹⁴ the³⁵⁸⁸ Father³⁹⁶² of our²²⁵⁷ Lord²⁹⁶² Jesus²⁴²⁴ Christ,⁵⁵⁴⁷

15 Of⁵³⁷ whom³⁷³⁹ the whole³⁹⁵⁶ family³⁹⁶⁵ in¹⁷²² heaven³⁷⁷² and²⁵³² earth¹⁰⁹³ is named,³⁶⁸⁷

16 That²⁴⁴³ he would grant¹³²⁵ you,⁵²¹³ according²⁵⁹⁶ to the³⁵⁸⁸ riches⁴¹⁴⁹ of his⁸⁴⁸ glory,¹³⁹¹ to be strengthened²⁹⁰¹ with might¹⁴¹¹ by¹²²³ his⁸⁴⁸ Spirit⁴¹⁵¹ in¹⁵¹⁹ the³⁵⁸⁸ inner²⁰⁸⁰ man;⁴⁴⁴

17 That Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ may dwell²⁷³⁰ in¹⁷²² your⁵²¹⁶ hearts²⁵⁸⁸ by¹²²³ faith;⁴¹⁰² that²⁴⁴³ ye, being rooted⁴⁴⁹² and²⁵³² grounded²³¹¹ in¹⁷²² love,²⁶

18 May be able¹⁸⁴⁰ to comprehend²⁶³⁸ with⁴⁸⁶² all³⁹⁵⁶ saints⁴⁰ what⁵¹⁰¹ *is* the³⁵⁸⁸ breadth,⁴¹¹⁴ and²⁵³² length,³³⁷² and²⁵³² depth,⁸⁹⁹ and²⁵³² height;⁵³¹¹

MKJV

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding 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 throughout all ages, forever. Amen.

AMP

20 Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [*action of His*] power that is at work within us, is able to [*carry out His purpose and*] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [*dare*] ask or think [*infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams*]--

21 To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it).

KJV+

20 Now¹¹⁶¹ unto him that is able¹⁴¹⁰ to do⁴¹⁶⁰ exceeding abundantly^{5228, 1537, 4053} above⁵²²⁸ all³⁹⁵⁶ that³⁷³⁹ we ask¹⁵⁴ or²²²⁸ think,³⁵³⁹ according²⁵⁹⁶ to the³⁵⁸⁸ power¹⁴¹¹ that worketh¹⁷⁵⁴ in¹⁷²² us,²²⁵⁴

21 Unto him⁸⁴⁶ *be* glory¹³⁹¹ in¹⁷²² the³⁵⁸⁸ church¹⁵⁷⁷ by¹⁷²² Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ Jesus²⁴²⁴ throughout¹⁵¹⁹ all³⁹⁵⁶ ages,¹⁰⁷⁴ world without end.^{165, 165} Amen.²⁸¹

Matthew Henry Commentary

Eph 3:1-13 -

Here we have the account which Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, as he was appointed by God the apostle of the Gentiles.

I. We may observe that he acquaints them with the tribulations and sufferings which he endured in the discharge of that office, [Eph 3:1](#). The first clause refers to the preceding chapter, and may be understood either of these two ways: - 1. "*For this cause*, - for having preached the doctrine contained in the foregoing chapter, and for asserting that the great privileges of the gospel belong not only to the Jews, but to believing Gentiles also, though they are not circumcised, - for this I am now a prisoner, but a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, as I suffer in his cause and for his sake, and continue his faithful servant and the object of his special protection and care, while I am thus suffering for him." Observe, Christ's servants, if they come to be prisoners, are his prisoners; and he despises not his prisoners. He thinks never the worse of them for the bad character which the world gives them or the evil treatment that they met with in it. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him, when he was in prison. - *For you, Gentiles*; the Jews persecuted and imprisoned him because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. We may learn hence that the faithful ministers of Christ are to dispense his sacred truths, however disagreeable they may be to some, and whatever they themselves may suffer for doing so. Or, 2. The words may be thus understood: - "*For this cause*, - since *you are no more strangers and foreigners* (as [Eph 2:19](#)), but are united to Christ, and admitted into communion with his church, - *I Paul, who am the prisoner of Jesus Christ*, pray that you may be enabled to act as becomes persons thus favoured by God, and made partakers of such privileges." To this purport you find him expressing himself in [Eph 3:14](#), where, after the digression contained in the several verses intervening, he proceeds with what he began in the first verse. Observe, Those who have received grace and signal favours from God stand in need of prayer, that they may improve and advance, and continue to act as becomes them. And, seeing Paul while he was a prisoner employed himself in such prayers to God in behalf of the Ephesians, we should learn that no particular sufferings of our own should make us so solicitous about ourselves as to neglect the cases of others in our supplications and addresses to God. He speaks again of his sufferings: *Wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulation for you, which is your glory*, [Eph 3:13](#). While he was in prison, he suffered much there; and, though it was upon their account that he suffered, yet he would not have them discouraged nor dismayed at this, seeing God had done such great things for them by his ministry. What a tender concern was here for these Ephesians! The apostle seems to have been more solicitous lest they should be discouraged and faint upon his tribulations than about what he himself endured; and, to prevent this, he tells them that his sufferings were their glory, and would be so far from being a real discouragement, if they duly considered the matter, that they ministered cause to them for glorying and for rejoicing, as this discovered the great esteem and regard which God bore to them, in that he not only sent his apostles to preach the gospel to them, but even to suffer for them, and to confirm the truths they delivered by the persecutions they underwent. Observe, Not only the faithful ministers of Christ themselves, but their people too, have some special cause for joy and glorying, when they suffer for the sake of dispensing the gospel.

II. The apostle informs them of God's appointing him to the office, and eminently fitting and qualifying him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him. 1. God appointed him to the office: *If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward*, [Eph 3:2](#). They could not have heard of this, and therefore he does not design to speak doubtfully of this matter. *Eige* is sometimes an affirmative particle, and we may read it, *Since you have heard*, etc. He styles the gospel *the grace of God* here (as in other places) because it is the gift of divine grace to sinful men; and all the gracious overtures that it makes, and the joyful tidings that it contains, proceed from the rich grace of God; and it is also the great instrument in the hands of the

Spirit by which God works grace in the souls of men. He speaks of the dispensation of this grace given to him; he means as he was authorized and commissioned by God to dispense the doctrine of the gospel, which commission and authority were given to him chiefly for the service of the Gentiles: *to you-ward*. And again, speaking of the gospel, he says, *Whereof I was made a minister*, etc., [Eph 3:7](#). Here he again asserts his authority. He *was MADE a minister* - he did not make himself such; he took not to himself that honour - and he was made such *according to the gift of the grace of God unto him*. God supplied and furnished him for his work; and in the performance of it suitably assisted him with all needful gifts and graces, both ordinary and extraordinary, and that *by the effectual working of his power*, in himself more especially, and also in great numbers of those to whom he preached, by which means his labours among them were successful. Observe, What God calls men to he fits them for, and does it with an almighty power. An effectual working of divine power attends the gifts of divine grace. 2. As God appointed him to the office, so he eminently qualified him for it, by a special revelation that he made unto him. He 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* ([Eph 3:6](#)); 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. And this *in Christ*, being united to Christ, *in whom all the promises are yea and amen; and by the gospel*, that is, in the times of the gospel, as some understand it; or, *by the gospel* preached to them, which is the great instrument and means by which God works faith in Christ, as others. This was the great truth revealed to the apostles, namely, that God would call the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, and that without the works of the law. (2.) Of the revelation of this truth he speaks, [Eph 3:3-5](#). Here we may observe that the coalition of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church was a mystery, a great mystery, what was designed in the counsel of God before all worlds, but what could not be fully understood for many ages, till the accomplishment expounded the prophecies of it. It is called a mystery because the several circumstances and peculiarities of it (such as the time and manner and means by which it should be effected) were concealed and kept secret in God's own breast, till by an immediate revelation he made them known to his servant. See [Act 26:16-18](#). And it is called the mystery of Christ because it was revealed by him ([Gal 1:12](#)), and because it relates so very much to him. Of this the apostle has given some hints *afore*, or a little before; that is, in the preceding chapters. *Whereby, when you read*; or, as those words may be read, *unto which attending* (and it is not enough for us barely to read the scriptures, unless we attend to them, and seriously consider and lay to heart what we read), *you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*; so as to perceive how God had fitted and qualified him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, which might be to them an evident token of his divine authority. *This mystery*, he says, *in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit* ([Eph 3:5](#)); that is, "It was not so fully and clearly discovered in the ages before Christ as it is now revealed unto the prophets of this age, the prophets of the New Testament, who are immediately inspired and taught by the Spirit." Let us observe, that the conversion of the Gentile world to the faith of Christ was an adorable mystery, and we ought to bless God for it. Who would have imagined that those who had been so long in the dark, and at so great a distance, would be enlightened with the marvellous light, and be made nigh? Let us learn hence not to despair of the worst, of the worst of persons, and the worst of nations. Nothing is too hard for divine grace to do: none so unworthy but God may please to confer great grace upon them. And how much are we ourselves interested in this affair; not only as we live in a time in which the mystery is revealed, but particularly as we are a part of the nations which in times past were foreigners and strangers, and lived in gross idolatry; but are now enlightened with the everlasting gospel, and partake of its promises!

III. The apostle informs them how he was employed in this office, and that with respect to the Gentiles, and to all men.

1. With respect to the Gentiles, he *preached* to them *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, [Eph 3:8](#). Observe, in this verse, how humbly he speaks of himself, and how highly he speaks of Jesus Christ. (1.) How humbly he speaks of himself: *I am less than the least of all saints*. St. Paul, who was the chief of the apostles, calls himself *less than the least of all saints*: he means on account of his having been formerly a persecutor of the followers of Christ. He was, in his own esteem, as little as could be. What can be less than the least? To speak himself as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Observe, Those whom God advances to honourable employments he humbles and makes low in their own eyes; and, where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other grace. You may also observe in what a different manner the apostle speaks of himself and of his office. While he magnifies his office, he debases himself. Observe, A faithful minister of Christ may be very humble, and think very meanly of himself, even when he thinks and speaks very highly and honourably of his sacred function. (2.) How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ: *The unsearchable riches of Christ*. There is a mighty treasury of mercy, grace, and love, laid up in Christ Jesus, and that both for Jews and Gentiles. Or, the riches of the gospel are here spoken of as the riches of Christ: the riches which Christ purchased for, and bestows upon, all believers. And they are unsearchable riches, which we cannot find the bottom of, which human sagacity could never have discovered, and men could no otherwise attain to the knowledge of them but by revelation. Now it was the apostle's business and employment to *preach* these *unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles*: and it was a favour he greatly valued, and looked upon it as an unspeakable honour to him: "*Unto me is this grace given; this special favour God has granted to such an unworthy creature as I am.*" And it is an unspeakable favour to the Gentile world that to them *the unsearchable riches of Christ* are preached. Though many remain poor, and are not enriched with these riches, yet it is a favour to have them preached among us, to have an offer of them made to us; and, if we are not enriched with them, it is our own fault.

2. With respect to all men, [Eph 3:9](#). His business and employment were *to make all men see* (to publish and make known to the whole world) *what is the fellowship of the mystery* (that the Gentiles who have hitherto been strangers to the church, shall be admitted into communion with it) *which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God* (kept secret in his purpose), *who created all things by Jesus Christ*: as [Joh 1:3](#), *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*; and therefore no wonder that he saves the Gentiles as well as the Jews; for he is the common Creator of them both: and we may conclude that he is able to perform the work of their redemption, seeing he was able to accomplish the great work of creation. It is true that both the first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God*, [Eph 3:10](#). This was one thing, among others, which God had in his eye in revealing this mystery, that the good angels, who have a pre-eminence in governing the kingdoms and principalities of the world, and who are endued with great power to execute the will of God on this earth (though their ordinary residence is in heaven) may be informed, from what passes in the church and is done in and by it, *of the manifold wisdom of God*; that is, of the great variety with which God wisely dispenses things, or of his wisdom manifested in the many ways and methods he takes in ordering his church in the several ages of it, and especially in receiving the Gentiles into it. The holy angels, who look into the mystery of our redemption by Christ, could not but take notice of this branch of that mystery, that among the Gentiles is preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is *according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*, [Eph 3:11](#). Some translate the words *kata prothesin tōn aiōnōn* thus *According to the fore-disposing of the ages which he made*, etc. So Dr. Whitby, etc. "In the first of the ages," says this author, "his wisdom seeing fit to give the promise of a Saviour to a

fallen Adam: in the second age to typify and represent him to the Jews in sacred persons, rites, and sacrifices: and in the age of the Messiah, or the last age, to reveal him to the Jews, and preach him to the Gentiles." Others understand it, according to our translation, of the eternal purpose which God purposed to execute in and through Jesus Christ, the whole of what he has done in the great affair of man's redemption being in pursuance of his eternal decree about that matter. The apostle, having mentioned our Lord Jesus Christ, subjoins concerning him, *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him* ([Eph 3:12](#)); that is, "By (or through) whom we have liberty to open our minds freely to God, as to a Father, and a well-grounded persuasion of audience and of acceptance with him; and this by means of the faith we have in him, as our great Mediator and Advocate." We may come with humble boldness to hear from God, knowing that the terror of the curse is done away; and we may expect to hear from him good words and comfortable. We may have access with confidence to speak to God, knowing that we have such a Mediator between God and us, and such an Advocate with the Father.

Eph 3:14-21 -

We now come to the second part of this chapter, which contains Paul's devout and affectionate prayer to God for his beloved Ephesians. - *For this cause*. This may be referred either to the immediately foregoing verse, *That you faint not*, etc., or, rather, the apostle is here resuming what he began at the first verse, from which he digressed in those which are interposed. Observe,

I. To whom he prays - to God, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, of which see [Eph 1:3](#).

II. His outward posture in prayer, which was humble and reverent: *I bow my knees*. Note, When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts, and express our reverence in the most suitable and becoming behaviour and gesture. Here, having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without an honourable encomium of his love, [Eph 3:15](#). The universal church has a dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ: *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*. The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father, but now Jews and Gentiles are both denominated from Christ (so some); while others understand it of the saints in heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth who are going on in the work of grace here. Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from him they are *named* CHRISTIANS, as they really are such, acknowledging their dependence upon, and their relation to, Christ.

III. What the apostle asks of God for these his friends - spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought and prayed for by every one of us, both for ourselves and for our friends. 1. Spiritual strength for the work and duty to which they were called, and in which they were employed: *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened*, etc. *The inner man* is the heart or soul. To be *strengthened with might* is to be mightily strengthened, much more than they were at present; to be endued with a high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for discharging duty, resisting temptations, enduring persecutions, etc. And the apostle prays that this may be *according to the riches of his glory*, or according to his glorious riches - answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy, and power, which resides in God, and is his glory: and this by his Spirit, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Observe from these things, That strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man is the best and most desirable strength, strength in the soul, the strength of faith and other graces, strength to serve God and to do our duty, and to persevere in our Christian course with vigour and with cheerfulness. And let us further observe that *as the work of grace is first begun so it is continued and carried on, by the blessed Spirit of God*. 2. The indwelling of Christ in their hearts, [Eph 3:17](#). Christ is said to dwell in his people, as he is always present with them by his gracious influences and operations. Observe, It is a desirable thing to have Christ dwell in our hearts; and if the law of Christ be written there, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. Christ is an inhabitant in the soul of every good Christian. Where his spirit dwells, there he swells; and he dwells in the heart by faith, by means of the continual exercise of faith upon him.

Faith opens the door of the soul, to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ, and have an interest in him. 3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul: *That you being rooted and grounded in love*, stedfastly fixed in your love to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to all the saints, the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many have some love to God and to his servants, but it is a flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, it makes a great noise, but is gone presently. We should earnestly desire that good affections may be fixed in us, that we may be *rooted and grounded in love*. Some understand it of their being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them, which would inspire them with greater ardours of holy love to him, and to one another. And how very desirable is it to have a settled fixed sense of the love of God and Christ to our souls, so as to be able to say with the apostle at all times, *He has loved me!* Now the best way to attain this is to be careful that we maintain a constant love to God in our souls; this will be the evidence of the love of God to us. *We love him, because he first loved us*. In order to this he prays, 4. For their experimental acquaintance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance we have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake: *That you may be able to comprehend with all saints*, etc. ([Eph 3:18](#), [Eph 3:19](#)); that is, more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe, the wonderful love of Christ to his, which the saints do understand and believe in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter. Christians should not aim to comprehend above all saints; but be content that God deals with them as he uses to do with those who love and fear his name: we should desire to comprehend *with all saints*, to have so much knowledge as the saints are allowed to have in this world. We should be ambitious of coming up with *the first three*; but not of going beyond what is the measure of the stature of other saints. It is observable how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable: *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height*. By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, the unsearchable riches of his love, which is *higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea*, [Job 11:8](#), [Job 11:9](#). Some describe the particulars thus: By the breadth of it we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men; by the length of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting; by the depth of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery; by its height, its entitling and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love: it is the character of all the saints that they do so; for they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ: *And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*, [Eph 3:19](#). If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? We must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though, after the best endeavours, none can fully comprehend it: in its full extent it surpasses knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by Christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven. 5. He prays that they may *be filled with all the fulness of God*. It is a high expression: we should not dare to use it if we did not find it in the scriptures. It is like those other expressions, of being *partakers of a divine nature*, and of being *perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*. We are not to understand it of his fulness as God in himself, but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us, as a God to his people: such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill them all to the utmost of their capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces which he sees they need. Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness may be said to be *filled with the fulness of God*, according to their capacity, all which is in order to their arriving at the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and an entire conformity to him.

The apostle closes the chapter with a doxology, [Eph 3:20](#), [Eph 3:21](#). It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God, and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that *is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask,

still God is still able to do more, abundantly more, exceedingly abundantly more. Open thy mouth ever so wide, still he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power. *According to the power which worketh in us.* As if he had said, We have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness he gives to experience his power. Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellences and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, The seat of God's praises is in the church. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world is from the church, a sacred society constituted for the glory of God, every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, concurs in this work of praising God. The Mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from his to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus *throughout all ages, world without end*; for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. *Amen.* So be it; and so it will certainly be.

Spiritual Warfare

There is a great deal of information revealed in Ephesians concerning our war against the forces of evil. In this chapter, Paul begins with a summation of the preceding verses that serves also as an introduction to what is to follow. "For this reason...."- that the Ephesian believers (and, by inference, all Gentiles that are believers) are to be built together into a dwelling of God in the spirit- that Paul was made a minister of the Gospel. He further explains the purpose of his ministry to the Gentiles to unveil to them the mystery of Christ that the Gentiles, too, are fellow heirs and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. Here again is the theme of unity within the Body, so central to Paul's teaching on victorious warfare.

This mystery of the Gentiles being in the church is only part of a larger mystery, however, that embraces one dimension of the church. The purpose is that all of creation, including the evil principalities and powers, might see God's great plan.

Verse 10 sums up what the church is to do. **(Eph 3:10)** [*The purpose is*] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere. (AMP)

Commentators are divided in their interpretation of verse 10. The difficulties revolve around three major questions.

1. What is the "manifold wisdom of God" about which the church testifies?
2. How does the church bear testimony to this wisdom towards "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places"?

3. Who are these “principalities and authorities in the heavenly places”?

Let’s take the last question first: Who are the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places? John Eadie discusses the three major views: these are the elect and the fallen angels; these are the elect angels; or these are the fallen angels.

In light of the spiritual warfare motif of Ephesians, especially Paul’s explanation of how he views the principalities and powers in 6:12, we are compelled to embrace the third view.

The principalities and powers are evil spirits. While the elect angels are observing and participating in this warfare, they do not seem to be in Paul’s focus in 3:10 or in any of the verses of Ephesians that refer to principalities and powers.

Second, what is the “wisdom of God” about which the church testifies? In examining the larger context in which Paul writes these words, we find Paul focuses on the use of “mystery” in Ephesians and Colossians. In both epistles, God’s mystery is the redemptive mystery of God’s salvation in Christ. Paul’s most common idea used in both Ephesians and Colossians for the essence of the mystery, aside from the words “the mystery” themselves, is either “the mystery of Christ or “God’s mystery, that is Christ Himself” (Eph. 3:4; Col. 2:2).

The theme of the mystery is Christ and Christ in the believer along with God’s election of the believer in Christ. The aim of the “mystery” is revealed in 1:9-10 to be the consummation of all things in Christ. This includes the subjugation of the hostile ‘powers’ to Christ. These same ideas are brought forth in Colossians: Jesus has come to de-throne all evil spirit-beings.

This leads us to the practical question: How does the church testify to the principalities and powers of the wisdom of God, that is, His redemptive plan in Christ with all its outworkings in this world and even the next?

Wink’s commentary on Ephesians 3:10 says:

The church’s task is articulated here as preaching to the powers. It is engaged in a kind of spiritual warfare, but it also has a mission that carries the truth of the gospel into the very heart of the powers and *expects* some result.

Wink sees the ‘heavenlies’ as a dimension of reality into which the believers have already, while on earth, been admitted yet in which unredeemed powers and principalities still exercise dominion and must be fought with, preached to, and made to know the manifold wisdom of God. Just as God’s throne is where God is effectively acting, so the ‘heavenlies’ are where Christ is already effectively Lord, with all powers and principalities under His sovereignty (Eph. 1:22) even though not yet under His control (Eph. 6:12). Thus, we are faced with the intriguing (and some would even say contradictory) concept of the “already, but not yet” enigma of spiritual warfare.

Here, in the ‘heavenlies’, the church has committed its most serious act of disobedience to the Lord. In choosing not to engage the powers and principalities, the church has, instead, fallen into collusion with the enemy. This is the major cause of powerlessness in the spiritual battle before us.

The church has direct access to the evil powers because the church lives in the same realm as they do. As Wink puts it, we are a people of both kingdoms, the earthly and the heavenly. We are thus in continual contact with these powers but unfortunately are either only vaguely aware of it, don't know what to do about it, or don't care.

Now to the key question. What does it mean that the church is to make known "now" the manifold wisdom of God to these principalities and powers?

The simplest and most obvious answer is the best one. It means exactly what it says. The church, united with Christ in the heavenlies, the same heavenlies in which the powers exist, proclaims to them "the manifold wisdom of God." It is that simple.

The process of accomplishing this is complex – the answer is simple.

Wink says it well:

It remains the church's task not only to proclaim to people that they have been redeemed from the darkness that once held them in bondage (5:8-14), but also to **proclaim to the powers** that they are not supreme. Christ is their sovereign. That those human beings under their dominion (here the concept of territorial or national angels comes immediately to mind) **belong to Christ**.

The church enters the heavenlies through prayer and intercession. The risen Christ is praised, worshipped, and loved through prayer. The church then intercedes for those the church has been called to redeem. Only a unified church interceding over a period of time can do this. Here again we see the dominant note on church unity in Ephesians (2:11-6:9).

The church declares Christ's lordship over both the powers and the unredeemed. It declares God's purpose in redeeming all men (2Cor. 5:18-21). The church then turns towards the powers. It does **not** pray against the powers. It prays only to its Lord. It **proclaims** the defeat of the powers. It **declares** that Christ as Lord is now displacing the power of the powers over the unredeemed people they have been keeping in bondage. It not only **informs** the powers of their defeat by Christ in His church, it **enforces** their defeat by its faith and delegated authority in Christ. This is the manifold wisdom of God made known by the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies to which Paul refers in Ephesians 3:10.

Some may question why the church is to proclaim the mystery of Christ to the powers. Peter talks about the revelation of God's redemptive plan as "things into which angels long to look" (1 Pet. 1:12). Evidently even the angels only know what God wills them to know, and that, progressively. They know their part in God's plan. They 'long' to know (look) more. The evil fallen angelic powers, then, know even less about God's profound plans in Christ. Of course, they know more now, but only after the fact.

Just as believers can take authority over demons through Christ's authority, Paul here explains that the church, through Christ, is to do the same with powers and principalities in the heavenlies. Through this ongoing proclamation, the powers and principalities are weakened and ultimately brought into submission and defeat. The church's role is not just to inform, but to enforce. Paul

follows with the declaration that this hidden mystery of Christ and the cosmic-earthly mission of the church are all according to God's eternal plan, carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, who is now Lord over the powers.

To these powers, then, the church is to proclaim the divine plan made known only now in fullness of time in Christ Jesus, that the God who is above all and through all and in all is uniting all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 4:6; 1:10).

The church can carry out its dual mission – earthly and cosmic – with boldness and confidence because we “have access through faith in Him,” Paul says (v. 12). This implies worship, praise, prayer and intercession. It also implies access through the risen Christ to the powers. This plan is so perfect, our resources in Christ so complete, that Paul immediately breaks forth into an awesome prayer that the believers may be empowered to minister this mystery.

The church of the risen Christ is a praying church. It is also a warring church. It is to engage the powers and principalities in the name of Christ. The church is to maintain that engagement offensively, not just defensively. Through faith and persistence proclaiming, in the Spirit, the defeat of the powers over specific areas of human life, they will eventually be forced to yield.

Jesus promises that the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against His obedient, praying, warring church (Matt. 16:18). We are on the winning side. Jesus has already won the victory. He is presently winning the battles. He will yet win the war through us, His unified, praying, warring church, climaxed by His glorious Second Coming.

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a strong (loud) voice in heaven, saying, Now it has come--the salvation and the power and the kingdom (the dominion, the reign) of our God, and the power (the sovereignty, the authority) of His Christ (the Messiah); for the accuser of our brethren, he who keeps bringing before our God charges against them day and night, has been cast out!

Rev 12:11 And they have overcome (conquered) him by means of the blood of the Lamb and by the utterance of their testimony, for they did not love and cling to life even when faced with death [*holding their lives cheap till they had to die for their witnessing*]. (AMP)

The majority of churches today are concerned with “seeker-friendly” messages, proclaiming the popular “health and wealth” doctrine and producing a “program” that is conducive to filling the house.

This is not what Paul commands us to do. Paul charges the church with a specific task.

Failure to follow the commands given us puts us squarely on the enemy's side in this cosmic conflict. Our enemy has used the old tactic of “if you can't beat them, join them.” Working from the inside, he has managed to gradually steer the church away from its mandate and neutralize the forward progress of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We are called to reclaim the lost territory and advance the Kingdom.