

A Practical Study of

EPHESIANS: Heaven's Plan for Life on Earth

"What It's Like Living According to God's Plan"

Study #5 – Ephesians 3:1-13

HIS PLAN FOR A BODY

Key Verse: Ephesians 3:6

that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

Text:

v. 1 Because of this I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

v. 2 assuming that you heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you;

v. 3 That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, even as I have written above in brief,

v. 4 in order that, when you are reading, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

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

v. 6 that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

v. 7 of which I became a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power.

v. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ.

v. 9 And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

v. 10 in order that now, through the church, might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.

v. 11 According to the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

v. 12 in whom we are having our boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him.

v. 13 Wherefore I am asking you not to lose heart over my tribulations on your behalf, which is your glory.

INTRODUCTION:

(When the Cowboys Come to Town (tape) by Stephen Bly) Winchester, Idaho:
 Bly Books. Copyright – Stephen Bly, 2003.

Ponder Rosa

I rode up in the hills to Ponder Rosa
 She's the sweetest girl that I have ever known.
 The roundup's takin' longer than expected
 My bones is hanging tired on this old roan.

Rosa knew that I had to ride out on Fall gather.
 She never once complained the day I left.
 I saw anxious ridin' heavy in her dark eyes like I was doomed
 to leave my sweet girl all breathed.

We are planning on a weddin' come next summer.
 Behind her Mama and her Papa we'll build a place.
 I've got a job waitin' for me down at the feed mill.
 It'll be nice to settle down to a slower pace.

I won't miss all these nights sleepin' hard ground
 I'd rather wake up with my gal right next to me.
 And we'll set out on the porch come every evenin'
 And, an, en, en, contemplate her great big family.

My Rosa is the oldest of eight children
 The rest of them will all still be at home.
 I surmise that they will visit us quite often.
 And her Granny has a tendency to roam.

She's related to most everyone in the county.
 Her kin goes back to Spanish days of old.
 They spin tales of great big haciendas
 And vicarros so handsome, brave and bold.

I'll hate to leave my Sparky at the bunkhouse
 He's the best cowdog that I've ever had.
 Rosa wants to keep her dozen cats at our place.
 Most of them will stay outside it ain't that bad.

Her beauty doesn't blind me to her failures.
 Shoot any gal can learn to cook and clean.
 We'll probably eat most meals at her Mama's
 Which means more garlic than this cowboy's ever seen.

Rosa taunts me that we will have ten healthy children
 Each name will begin with the letter R.
 At least I think that she's just plain teasing.
 A mill clerk's pay will only stretch just so far.

Her sisters tell me that my Rosa sometimes snores loud
 But none of is perfect, that's for true.
 It don't seem to bother any of her whole family.
 They say her sleep walkin' is the danger of the two.

I'm sure she'll make me into a better cowboy.
 She's always finding things that I should change.
 She doesn't like the kinda pals that I run with
 Or the life I live out ridin' on the range.

Yep! I rode up in the hills to Ponder Rosa
 As the moon comes out there ain't much left to say.
 I must do the things that I'll regret not doing.
 I reckon this is where the cowboy rides away.

(Side 1, #4)

Cowboys of Yesterday

By Stacey Sue, Billings

My grandfather thought it was kinda strange
 When he first met Little Tex on the range
 Billy Bowman was Tex's real name
 Grandpa remembered the Bowman family of fame.
 This cowboy dude can't be much he thought
 But Grandpa had met hands from many a lot
 He needed a [drover] to ride the trail next day
 So he took on this little Montana stray

Reaching down from the saddle where he sat
 Grandpa shook the cowboy's hand and tipped his hat
 From then on, side by side they rode together
 Trailin' cattle wearing their chaps of leather
 On the SH place, they worked for a year or so
 Movin' to the Horkin' Ranch where wages weren't low
 That fall they rounded up cattle on Lone Creek
 Sortin' out big steers lookin' fat and sleek

They gathered and separated the big four-year-olds
 Headed them toward Miles City, to be sold
 Little Tex spotted a run-away steer, travelin' fast
 Spurrin' hard his horse, but he couldn't last
 Then throwing a quick loop, he caught the steer's neck
 When the slack left his rope, dust hovered over the wreck
 The big steer pulled horse and his rider to the ground
 Grandpa knew instantly, Little Texas was no longer around

Without hesitation, he got a spring wagon on loan
 Loaded Little Tex's body for the long ride home
 Little Tex's horse, tied to the wagon followed the herd
 And, sad, sober cowboys, moved on without a word
 Little Tex laid to rest, his Earthly days at an end
 Grandpa whispered, "Thanks for being, for being my friend."
 Then he held the hand of that cowboy once more
 Smilin', thinkin', "Lord, ya got one
 of the best standin' at your door."

(newspaper article, unknown)

Paul, when he's writing under divine inspiration to the Corinthian assembly on the subject of spiritual gifts, uses the illustration of the **BODY** in:

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Phillips)

As the human body, which has many parts, is a unity, and those parts, despite their multiplicity, constitute one single body, so it is with the body of Christ. For we were all baptised by the Spirit into one body, whether we were Jews, Gentiles, slaves or free men, and we have all had experience of the same Spirit. Now the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I don't belong to the body," does that alter the fact that the foot is a part of the body? Of if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I don't belong to the body," does that mean that the ear really is no part of the body? After all, if the body were all one eye, for example, where would be the sense of hearing? Or if it were all one ear, where would be the sense of smell? But God has arranged all the parts in the one body according to his design. For if everything were concentrated in one part, how could there be a body at all? The fact is there are many parts, but only one body. So that the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" nor, again, can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body which have no obvious function are the more essential to health: and to those parts of the body which seem to us to be less deserving of notice we have to allow the highest honour of function. The parts which do not look beautiful have a deeper beauty in the work they do, while the parts which look beautiful may not be at all essential to life! But God has harmonised the whole body by giving importance of function to the parts which lack apparent importance, that the body should work together as a whole with all the members in sympathetic relationship with one another. So it happens that if one member suffers all the other members suffer with it, and if one member is honoured all the members share a common joy. Now you are together the body of Christ, and individually you are members of him.

Because the Apostle Paul realizes the fact he is not alone in prison and that he has a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ in Ephesus, he writes this letter.

Verse 13 will say:

“WHEREFORE I AM ASKING YOU NOT TO LOSE HEART OVER MY TRIBULATIONS ON YOUR BEHALF, WHICH IS YOUR GLORY.”

Human nature has a tendency to withdraw and go it alone when facing difficult circumstances.

The Lord has wonderfully provided a body for support, encouragement, and affirmation, understanding when we go through difficult trials.

(High Calling: The Courageous Life and Faith of Space Shuttle Columbia Commander Rick Husband by Evelyn Husband with Donna VanLiere) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Evelyn Husband, 2003.

Several news outlets interviewed the crew from space. CBS News interviewed Rick, Ilan, K.C., and Laurel and addressed a question to Rick.

CBS: From your perspective, how has it been going? Batting a thousand?

Rick: Well, actually, things are going really well. Things have been working well. Columbia is in great shape and working absolutely perfectly. The experiments are working very well also so no place to go but up!

The crew was unaware that something was indeed wrong with the Columbia. Rick’s last words were prophetic, but he had no idea what he was saying . . . there would be no landing, for there was no place to go but up.

pp. 159-60

Gary Thomas is vulnerable and transparent when his devotional for July 22nd was “Running From Yourself.”

(Simply Sacred by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright—Gary Thomas, 2011.

RUNNING FROM YOURSELF

One time, after tossing and turning all night long, I glanced in the hotel mirror and was shocked at what I saw—the tired eyes, the messed-up hair, the pale color. I said to myself, “Gary, at this very moment you may well be the ugliest person on the face of this planet.”

In the same way, looking at our reflection through the mirror of our marriage can be hard to take. We are horrified by how we’ve acted, astonished at our own selfishness, pettiness, laziness, or even cruelty. Satan can use this to tempt us to run. In truth, we don’t just want to run from our spouse; we also want to run from ourselves, the person we are in that marriage. We want to be with someone new who hasn’t seen our bad side. Some may even try to deceive themselves into thinking that the other person is at fault for bringing out the flaw in them. We think we can just start over without having the bad side follow.

This is, of course, the great myth. We have enough energy either to run from who we are or to cooperate with God’s Holy Spirit to change who we are—but never enough to do both.

If we accept the fact that God designed marriage to help us grow in holiness, we know that we are a work in progress. Instead of running from hurtful revelations, we can welcome them, realizing that our marriage is showing us what we need to know and pointing out where we need to grow.

Rather than run from ourselves, we can focus on *changing* ourselves! Let’s be honest—some things about you and me are ugly. Our spouse will set that ugliness, whether it is an attitude, habit, or disposition. After marriage does its work and our weakness gets exposed, we’ll have a decision to make: Will we run from this revelation into the arms of another person who doesn’t yet know our weakness, or will we embrace the call to grow in holiness, accepting Scripture’s admonition to “think of ourselves with sober judgment” (Romans 12:3)?

Don’t run from yourself. Be humble, stay where you are, and focus on changing your attitudes instead of your spouse.

Devotions for a Sacred Marriage, 89-90

p. 230

Gary Thomas in his book Sacred Marriage also says:

(Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright –Gary L. Thomas, 2000.

Around which world is your life centered? Your marriage will ultimately reveal the answer to that question. If we have an eternal outlook, preparing for eternity by sticking with a difficult marriage makes much more sense than destroying a family to gain quick and easy relief. Most divorces are marked by the actions of someone running from, at most, a few difficult decades—and for this relief, people are throwing away glory and honor that last for eternity. It's a horrible trade!
p. 110

(Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce by Kristin Armstrong) New York, NY: FaithWords. Copyright– Kristin Armstrong, 2007.

We have exactly two alternatives when we are burdened by unfavorable circumstances, of which divorce is no exception. We can sink into despair or we can rise up in praise and rejoice. We can thank God for everything good, and all the rest we don't comprehend yet. We can be thankful for things without particularly liking them at this moment. We can say, "Lord, You know this hurts. I don't understand what You are aiming for, but I will praise You in spite of my despair. I will thank You in advance for my future redemption and Your rebuilding my life." We can go right on worshipping in the midst of chaos and confusion.

We can praise His mighty supernatural possibility or we can gridlock His blessing in discouragement.

Today is a new day. We have a fresh start. We can choose all over again.
p. 151

When we refuse to reach out to all the resources the Lord has provided for us:

1. His own personal involvement in our lives and
2. The body of Christ made up of other believers who likewise want to please their blessed Lord.

When we refuse these **DIVINE RESOURCES**, there is a sad and terrible consequence.

(Iran: The Coming Crisis by Mark Hitchcock) Sisters, OR: Multnomah.
 Copyright – Mark Hitchcock, 2006.

MENE, MENE	Numbered, Numbered
TEKEL	Weighed
UPHARSIN	Divided

God's message to Belshazzar was as straightforward as a slap across the face. "Belshazzar, your number is up, you do not measure up, and your kingdom is to be broken up."

p. 41

We come now to **STUDY #5** in Life According to God's Plan and we will examine:

HIS PLAN FOR A BODY.

God has always had a plan for manifesting Himself to His people and their world. In the Old Testament and with the children of Israel He chose the **TABERNACLE** in the wilderness and the **TEMPLE** in Solomon's time.

He chose to come in **HUMAN FLESH**. John tells us in:

John 1:14 (AMP)

And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth.

Now having gone back to glory, He has chosen to manifest Himself through the church universal, which is the **"building"** in:

Ephesians 2:21 (DAV)

in whom the whole building is joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

Now we are going to notice here in Ephesians 3, the church is spoken of as a body in which we are members with different gifts functioning together, with Christ as our head. It is also true that we are individuals who know Christ. We become bodies through whom He can function.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (TLB)

Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it.

It would be only natural the apostle would now reveal **GOD'S PLAN FOR A BODY** after discussing his plan for peace in making the Jew and Gentile one in Christ, through His death upon the cross.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these verses and then says:

Parenthetical expansion of the mystery (3:1-13).

Having discussed the union of Jewish and Gentile believers in the church (2:11-22), Paul was about to offer a prayer on behalf of these believers. But he stopped right in the middle of a sentence (at the end of 3:1) and digressed on the subject of the mystery of Christ. He explained this mystery and his responsibility to dispense it. Then he resumed his prayer, starting with verse 14.

Abbott says:

This truth, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs with the Jews, was hidden from former generations, but has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets; and unworthy though I am, yet to me has been given the privilege of making it known, and of preaching Christ to the Gentiles.

p. 76

Anders says:

“We cannot all argue, but we can all pray; we cannot all be leaders, but we can all be pleaders; we cannot all be mighty in rhetoric, but we can all be prevalent in prayer. I would sooner see you eloquent with God than with men.”

Charles Hadden Spurgeon

p. 126

Anders says:

In chapter 3, Paul informs the Ephesian Christians: God has revealed to me a great mystery, namely that both Jews and Gentiles are united as one in the body of Christ, and he has called me to proclaim this message. For this reason, I pray that you might be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inner man so that you might mature spiritually, be able to comprehend the magnitude of God's love, and be filled with the fullness of God.
p. 126

Barclay says:

To understand the connection of thought in this passage it has to be noted that verses 2-13 are one long parenthesis. The *for this cause* of verse 14 takes up again and resumes the *for this cause* of verse 1. Someone has spoken of Paul's habit of "going off at a word." A single word or idea can send Paul's thoughts off at a tangent. When Paul speaks of himself as "the prisoner of Christ," it makes him think of the discovery of the universal love of God, and his part in the bringing of that love to the Gentiles. In verses 2-13 his thoughts go off on that track; and then in verse 14 he comes back to what he meant to say when he began.
p. 140

Barker & Kohlenberger say:***E. Grace and Apostleship (3:1-13)***

Paul continues the prayer that he began in the opening chapter and has never really abandoned, despite asides and digressions. Once again, however, there is an interruption, for no sooner has he announced in v. 1 that it is for the sake of the Gentiles that he finds himself under house arrest than he is diverted from his main theme (resumed in v. 14) as he explains how his ministry as the apostle to the nations was given to him. What prompts this parenthesis in vv. 2-13 is the mention of his imprisonment in v. 1. He hastens to assure the Ephesians that his present circumstances are not to be regarded as a hindrance to his apostolate (v. 13).
p. 762

Baxter says:

The Revealing of the Divine Mystery (iii. 1-12)

This third chapter brings the doctrinal part of Ephesians to its climax. There is not a profounder passage in the Bible. Here we view the topmost peaks and sound the deepest depths. The first part of the chapter is all about *the revealing of the Divine mystery* (verses 1-12); the second part is all about *the receiving of the Divine fulness* (verses 13-21).
p. 175

C. Henry says:

3. Mystery of the Union of All Saints in Christ (3:1-13)

In the beginning of chapter 3, Paul prepares to bow the knee in worship at the thought of such matchless grace of God. But that we might bow with him, he digresses until verse 14 to explain more fully how this grace was revealed. Paul says it was a mystery (v. 3), something that could not be reasoned or guessed in previous ages. Paul knew it by the only possible means, revelation through the Spirit (vv. 4, 5). By remarkable direction, the Holy Spirit had led Paul again and again to minister to other nations until he recognized that he was indeed God's minister to the Gentiles and that through him God's Spirit was offering the unsearchable riches to those who had not formerly been evangelized. At last to all earth and heaven is manifest the mystery that it is the eternal purpose of God to offer grace to all equally through Jesus Christ.
p. 307

Dunnam says:

Paul starts to pray, intending to resume his intercession already begun in chapter 1, but immediately interrupts himself to remind his readers of who he is and the special role he has been given in the drama of God's universal purpose. In his interruption, he does not stray from the consciousness that he is offering a prayer, and thus his language is not that of ordinary speech.
p. 176

Foulkes says:

- c. **The privilege of proclamation (iii. 1-13)**
p. 89

Hendriksen says:

Theme: *The Church Glorious*
I. *Adoration for its*

Lofty Goal

1. *To declare* to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places *God's iridescent wisdom*, reflected in the mystery revealed especially, though not exclusively, to Paul, namely, that the Gentiles are fellow-members of the body of Christ.

p. 148

Henry says:

This chapter consists of two parts. I. Of the account which Paul gives the Ephesians concerning himself, ver. 1-13. II. Of his devout and affectionate prayer to God for the Ephesians, ver. 14-21.

p. 1851

Lenski says:

Paul's own Great Work

1) After telling the Gentile Christians in Ephesus to keep in mind what they once were and what God has now made of them, in particular that they together with all other believers are built together for a habitation of God, Paul continues by bringing to their minds his own great part in this work of God among the Gentiles (v. 1-13), adds the intercession he ever offers for them, and states its contents (v. 14-21).

p. 461

Lenski says:

In this elaborate paragraph (v. 1-13) Paul presents his apostolic connection with the great work among Gentiles. He intends to do just that in this paragraph. And just because of that he places the suspended subject at the head of it, for that subject contains the climax of his career as the apostle to the Gentiles, namely that he, Paul, is the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you, the Gentiles. All that follows in the paragraph is illumined by the suspended subject, is to be read in the light of the climax it presents. It is suspended in order to make it stand out like a beacon, to make it shed light over the whole paragraph.

p. 464

Lincoln says:

3:1-13 is formally a digression on Paul's apostolic ministry to the Gentiles and on the mystery which had been revealed to him and was at the heart of his ministry. The original intention of the thought begun in 3:1 is not completed, because the reference in it to Paul as a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles leads to an expatiation on this theme.

p. 167

Lincoln says:

The digression falls into three sentences, two longer ones and then one short final sentence. The two longer sentences, vv 2-7 and vv 8-12, provide parallel statements about the mystery which is central to the gospel with which Paul was entrusted. The first statement is framed by references to Paul's apostleship in terms of grace and, in line with the reflections of 2:11-22, focuses on the mystery of the Gentiles' participation in God's people, the Church, while the second statement links the mystery with the Church's role in God's purposes for the cosmos and thereby recalls the earlier association of mystery with God's plan for the cosmos in 1:9, 10. In its talk of the recipients of the revelation of the mystery, the first statement speaks of Paul alongside the holy apostles and prophets, while in the second statement the focus narrows to Paul alone as the proclaimer of the mystery. The final sentence, v 13, rounds off the digression neatly by taking up from v 1, but in a different formulation, the notion of the suffering apostle for the Gentiles, which had caused the digression in the first place . . .

p. 168

Lloyd-Jones says:

Having expounded those truths to the Ephesians, the Apostle says: Now then, because of that, I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, . . .’ Suddenly, however, he seems to stop. He was obviously going to say something further, but he pauses, he hesitates, and he does not say it until he gets to verse 14, where we find exactly the same formula again—‘For this cause I’—and then he goes on to tell them that he is praying for them, and what he is praying for them. In other words, from verse 2 to the end of verse 13 we have a long digression, and the punctuation should have given indications of this at the end of verses 1 and 13.

In this digression the Apostle gives the Ephesians an account of his own ministry—his calling, his office—and its great object and purpose. Then, having done so, he comes back again to his theme and says what he was setting out to say in the first verse.

p. 12

MacArthur says:

This passage is largely a parenthesis, which runs from verse 2 through verse 13. Paul begins a prayer for believers to understand their resources as one in Christ and then decides to reemphasize and expand some of the truths he has already mentioned. He does not actually get into the prayer until verse 14, where he repeats the phrase “For this reason” in order to pick up the thought originally introduced in verse 1. He seems to have felt that the Ephesians were not ready to hear his prayer in their behalf until they better understood—and were therefore better able to apply—the truths he wanted to pray about. And it seemed essential for Paul to affirm his authority for teaching such a new and far-reaching truth as the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ, which he does by saying that God Himself gave him the truth and the commission to proclaim it (vv. 2-7).

p. 86

MacArthur says:

The primary reemphasis is on the great mystery now revealed by God that Gentiles and Jews are one in Christ and that there is no longer any distinction. The revelation of the mystery is discussed in vv. 1-3, the explanation of it in vv. 4-6, the proclamation of it in vv. 7-9, and finally the intention of it in vv. 10-13. “To be specific,” he says in verse 6, the sacred secret never before revealed is that “the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” That verse is essentially a summary of 2:11-22.
p. 86

MacArthur says:

In 3:1-13 the apostle leads us to focus on five aspects of this divine mystery: its prisoner, its plan, its preaching, its purpose, and its privileges.
p. 86

McGee says:

This is the final chapter in the doctrinal section of this epistle. We have learned that the church is a body and the church is a temple. Now we learn that the church is a mystery.
p. 242

O'Brien says:

Paul begins his intercessory prayer with the words *for this reason* (v. 1), but breaks off almost immediately in order to give an account of his distinctive ministry to Gentiles and its place within the divine mystery that has been revealed to him.
p. 223

Parker says:

THE Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, expresses himself with a redundance of thankfulness and appreciation which shows the wonderful depth and richness of his nature. He does not mete out his words as if by constraint. He lavishes his heart upon his theme, and, with holy impatience, he urges word upon word, description upon description, that he may give some faint hint at least of the sublimity by which he is dazzled, and the joy which lifts him almost to heaven.

p. 2

Patzia says:

When the apostle completed his section on the spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3-14), he proceeded to offer a prayer of thanksgiving and petition (1:15-23). After this theological discussion in 2:1-22, it appears that he is once again ready to turn to prayer because the statement, “For this reason” (3:1), refers to what he has just said; furthermore, the actual prayer in 3:14ff. appears to relate to this section and would be a fitting climax to the thoughts that he has developed. But instead of a prayer, the apostle’s thought is diverted to another topic of discussion—one that is related to Paul’s call and mission as a proclaimer of God’s secret. After a rather lengthy presentation of this subject (3:2-13), he returns to his initial intention to pray and subsequently offers one of the most beautiful and comprehensive prayers in the NT.

p. 205

Patzia says:

The new features of this chapter center around the clarification of God’s “mystery,” the prominence of Paul as an exponent of that secret, and the cosmic mission of the church. Beyond that, there is a definite repetition of the ideas used earlier in the epistle, . . .

p. 207

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

3:1-21 If we compare 3:1 with 3:14, we see that everything between the two times Paul uses the expression “for this reason” is a digression. This is a common feature of the apostle’s writing style. These are real letters, not books of systematic theology (although next to Romans, Ephesians probably constitutes the most closely reasoned theology in the NT). The parenthetical material details God’s revelation to Paul of the “mystery,” that is, the sacred secret that in the dispensation (or stewardship) of God’s grace, Jews and Gentiles would be on an equal level and in one body.
pp. 1534-5

Robinson says:

III. 1-7. ‘All this impels me afresh to pray for you. And who am I, that I should so pray? Paul, the prisoner of the Christ, His prisoner for you—you Gentiles. You must have heard of my peculiar task, of the dispensation of that grace of God which has been given me to bring to you. The Secret has been disclosed to me by the great Revealer. I have already said something of it—enough to let you see that I have knowledge of the Secret of the Christ. Of old men knew it not: now it has been unveiled to the apostles and prophets of the holy people. The Spirit has revealed to their spirit the new extension of privilege. The Gentiles are co-heirs, concorporate, co-partakers of the Promise. This new position has become theirs in Christ Jesus through the Gospel which I was appointed to serve, in accordance with the gift of that grace, of which I have spoken, which has been given to me in all the fulness of God’s power.’
p. 166

Stedman says:

We all love mysteries. We are fascinated by any hidden, secret, cryptic truth which needs to be discovered and revealed. God understands us so thoroughly that he has hidden mystery in everything in life. We do not know anything fully; there is always an element we don’t understand. Even terms we commonly use, such as *love* and *joy* and *life*, are basically mysterious to us. We know they are absolutely essential to our existence, but we don’t know what they are. We struggle constantly trying to understand the great realities they represent.
p. 175

Stedman says:

There, in very brief form, is his statement of the mystery which lies at the heart of all life. As we will see, this is the greatest secret ever presented to the minds of men. It is not new to us—we have been discussing and discovering aspects of it all along in this letter. But now we come to the full statement of what it is. The paragraph falls very simply into two divisions: Paul is concerned first about his role as a teacher of this mystery, and then about the mystery itself.

p. 176

Westcott says:

The Apostle has declared summarily his great Gospel of the unity of Jew and Gentile in the Christian Church, both alike coming to One Father in One Spirit through One Mediator, and he prepares to draw the practical consequences which follow from this divine calling. But he is twice interrupted in his purpose by the thought of the marvellous privileges which are involved in his mission, for himself, and for his readers.

p. 42

Westcott says:

2-13. The thought of his helpless position leads St. Paul to unfold its true meaning. His zeal to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles had brought him into bonds. These very bonds, therefore, which might at first sight seem to be a cause of discouragement, really witnessed to the greatness of the work which he had done (v. 13).

p. 43

Westcott says:

The key words ‘mystery,’ ‘minister [of the Gospel],’ ‘the wisdom of GOD,’ suggest in succession fresh parentheses which are in essence overflowings of adoring thankfulness.

p. 44

Wiersbe says:

A purpose. “For this reason: (vv. 1, 14) refers to what Paul wrote at the end of chapter 2, the building of the church. That was the purpose behind his praying and his ministering. Jesus said, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18), but He uses people to help get the job done. Is the building of the church your motivation to pray and serve?

A parenthesis. The word *Gentiles* (v. 1) put Paul in prison (Acts 22:21). God gave him a special commission to evangelize the Gentiles and to explain to both Jews and Gentiles God’s “mystery” (sacred secret): in Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles are one and share the same spiritual riches. As He builds His church in this world, God is putting things together. Are you helping Him?

p. 774

We are now prepared to enter into the text of Ephesians 3:1-13:

HIS PLAN FOR A BODY.

v. 1 Because of this I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

The NET Bible translates verse 1:

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

Peterson paraphrases verse 1:

This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this first verse and then says:

THE INTRODUCTION (3:1).

3:1. The words **for this reason** (also used in v. 14) specifically point back to 2:11-22, which dealt with the Jewish and Gentile believers being raised to a new plane. But they also more generally refer back to all the first part of the epistle in which Paul discussed God's grace to the Gentiles. The words **I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles**, refer to Paul's imprisonment in Rome because of his service for Christ . . . and more particularly because of his ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles . . . Because of his faithfulness to the stewardship God had given him among the Gentiles . . . bitter Jewish opposition arose against him. This resulted in his being attacked in Jerusalem and put on trial in Caesarea and Rome.

“BECAUSE OF THIS” refers BACK to the TRUTH in:

Ephesians 2:22 (DAV)

in whom also you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul then calls himself:

“THE PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS ON BEHALF OF YOU GENTILES.”

He was in a ROMAN PRISON, a prisoner of the Roman government, but in a far greater sense, everything that happened in his life was permitted by God for His purpose and Paul’s ultimate good. Therefore, he could speak of himself as “THE PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS.”

Most students of the Scripture feel that Paul was:

BEGINNING TO PRAY here in verse 1 and then he was interrupted and finally

RESUMES HIS PRAYER in verse 14.

It certainly would be natural for him at this point to STOP AND PRAISE GOD FOR THE TREMENDOUS TRUTH that has been expounded thus far in the epistle, especially in the last few verses in Ephesians 2.

Abbott says:

“The prisoner of Christ Jesus,” so he calls himself in 2 Tim. i. 8 and Philem. 9, and in this Ep. iv. I, “prisoner in the Lord.” He looks on his imprisonment, not merely as suffered in the service of the Lord, but as part of the lot assigned to him by Christ, so that he was Christ’s prisoner.
p. 77

Anders says:

We could summarize it this way: because Christ abolished the barrier between Jew and Gentile and made them one new thing (a dwelling place of God in the Spirit), I, Paul, was made a minister of this message. I’m assuming that you know that this truth was revealed to me, that Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers with the Jews of the promises of God.
p. 128

Anders says:

Corrie Ten Boom wrote that she considered that wherever she was, that was just the part of the world that God wanted her to take the gospel to—even the German concentration camps. That was Paul’s perspective, also.
p. 128

Barclay says:

WHEN Paul wrote this letter he was in prison in Rome awaiting trial before Nero. He was waiting for the Jewish prosecutors to come with their bleak faces and their envenomed hatred and their malicious charges. It is true that in prison Paul had certain privileges, for he was allowed to stay in the house which he himself had rented, and his friends were allowed access to him; but, even then, night and day he was a prisoner; night and day he was chained by a length of chain to the wrist of the Roman soldier who was his guard, and whose duty it was to see that Paul would never escape.
p. 141

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

1 “For this reason” (repeated in v. 14) connects immediately with 2:22, but Paul recalls 2:11-22 and perhaps what lies even further back than that. “I, Paul” is left suspended without a verb until v. 14, where it is at last supplied—“I kneel.” Having identified himself by name, Paul is reminded of his captivity in Rome. He refuses to regard himself as a victim either of the Jews or of the Roman emperor; rather, he is “the prisoner of Christ Jesus.” He insists that his imprisonment is a mark of his apostleship.
p. 762

Bruce says:

1 The intercessory prayer of Eph. 1:15-19, which passes into a statement of the exaltation of Christ and of his people with him, followed by the celebration of God’s grace to the Gentiles, is now resumed. Almost immediately, however, it is broken off to make way for an account of Paul’s distinctive ministry. The subject “I Paul” is left without a verb, which is not supplied until the prayer is taken up again in v. 14: “For this reason I bend my knees . . .”
p. 309

Calvin says:

Paul’s imprisonment, which ought to have been held as a confirmation of his apostleship, was undoubtedly presented by his adversaries in an opposite light. He therefore points out to the Ephesians that his chains served to prove and to declare his calling; and that the only reason why he had been imprisoned was, that he had preached the gospel to the Gentiles. His unshaken firmness was no small additional proof that he had discharged his office in a proper manner.
p. 246

Calvin says:

The glory of Christ not only overcomes the ignominy of the chains, but converts what was in itself a reproach into the highest honour.
p. 246

Dunnam says:

Two lessons are immediately obvious. One, *Paul's suffering clothed him with authority*. He spoke out of the “blood-and-guts” context of laying his life on the line for what he believed. You can believe a person’s story about his participation in war if he bears the marks of that involvement. You can believe that a person is hurting with the starving poor of the world if you know that person is giving his own resources to alleviate that suffering. My affirmation of love and concern is validated by my willingness to spend myself—time, energy, presence—with and on behalf of the one I say I love. Paul’s commitment and zeal on behalf of the Gentiles brought his arrest and imprisonment. His suffering clothed him with authority.

Two, *Paul's imprisonment was being used by God in the fulfillment of His purpose*. Thus he could see himself not as a victim of his enemies, but a “*prisoner of Jesus Christ*.” This imprisonment was for the sake of the Gentiles. Paul reminds us that God can use all the circumstances of our lives for the *furtherance of the gospel*.
pp. 176-7

Eadie says:

The clank of his chain at length awakens him to present reality, and he concludes the parenthesis with a request that his readers would not mope and despond over his sufferings, endured for a cause in which they had so tender and blessed interest. The 1st and 13th verses are thus in close connection, and the apostle, as if describing a circle, comes round at length to the point from which he originally started.
p. 208

Eadie says:

“I Paul,” his own name being inserted to give distinctness, personality, and authority to the statement, . . .
p. 210

Fergusson says:

This verse belongeth to the purpose contained in the second part of the chapter, which, being begun here, is interrupted until ver. 14.
p. 171

Foulkes says:

He writes like this not because he was dispirited or disappointed. He wanted no pity and would allow no-one to be dejected because of his imprisonment. He saw it in a light which burnt out all self-pity. To outward appearances he was the prisoner of Rome, confined by the will of men. But just as his spiritual life ‘in Christ’ mattered far more to him than his outward circumstances and environment, so now he regarded himself as a prisoner by the will of his Master. Therefore he could gladly call himself *the prisoner of Jesus Christ* . . .
p. 90

Gaebelein says:

He became a prisoner on account of the Gentiles, when on his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts xxii: 21-22). And to him was made known the mystery which was hidden in other generations. And the mystery is “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.”
p. 255

Hendriksen says:

. . . **For this reason**, already indicate its close *material connection* with the preceding one. The meaning accordingly, must be, Because blessings so great have been bestowed upon both Gentile and Jew—reconciliation with God and with one another, and the erection of *one* sanctuary consisting of Jew and Gentile—therefore, etc. In fact, in view of the equally close relation between chapters 1 and 2, and the recurrence in 3:4, 9 of the concept *mystery*, first mentioned in 1:9, it is very probable that the connection goes back even further and includes *all* that has gone before in this epistle.

p. 149

Hendriksen says:

Nevertheless, there is *progress* in thought. Chapter 2 has shown what God has done. Chapter 3, therefore, is going to indicate what the church, mentioned distinctly in verse 10, now must do. It indicates the church's *Lofty Goal*. In the realization of this purpose Paul himself has played a prominent role, for to him, to him *especially* though not exclusively, the great mystery, to be published far and wide, has been disclosed.

p. 150

Hendriksen says:

In every reference to himself as a prisoner Paul stresses the fact that as such *he belongs to his Lord*, for it was while engaged in *his* service and thus for *his* sake that he was imprisoned. Moreover, all the details of the imprisonment as well as the outcome, whether it be the death-sentence or acquittal, are in the hands that were pierced for this prisoner, those very hands that now control the entire universe in the interest of the church (1:22).

p. 150

Henry says:

. . . I am now a prisoner, but a *prisoner of Jesus Christ.*” Christ’s servants, if they come to be prisoners, are his prisoners. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him, when he was in prison.

p. 1851

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

“I Paul,” expresses the agent employed by the Spirit to enlighten them, after he had been first enlightened himself by the same Spirit (vss. 3-5, 9).

p. 1286

Lange says:

. . . I Paul, the prisoner, not of the emperor, nor of the soldier, but of Christ Jesus, whose Apostle I am.

p. 107

Lange says:

That is an elevating sight—a man who has overcome sorrow and compelled it to grant him joy, strength, comfort, as a star in the night joyously twinkles for the traveller. It is sad enough, when a man, an heir of eternal life, a child of a Heavenly Father, permits himself to be overcome by sorrow and cast forth like a faded leaf from the tree, to be trodden under foot, instead of affording shade.—The cause of sorrow was to Paul a cause of joy: on account of the Gentiles, to whom he preached the gospel, he was persecuted, and this persecution turned out for their advantage.—Paul was like a sword in the contest against error and falsehood and godlessness; life was the workshop, God the Lord was the master, who formed it, but suffering was the anvil and hammer, by means of which it became solid and sharp; and that was good for the church.

p. 120

Lincoln says:

The incomplete sentence, with its emphasis on the person of Paul, “I, Paul,” and its reference to him as Christ’s prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles, in fact serves as the basis of the important digression on Paul’s apostolic ministry which follows.

p. 172

Lloyd-Jones says:

The first thing he tells us is that he is not an ordinary prisoner. His way of putting the matter is this – ‘For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ’. In a sense, by speaking thus he has already solved his problem. He is not Rome’s prisoner. He is not Nero’s prisoner. Nero is the Emperor, incidentally; but Paul is not Nero’s prisoner. He is not in the prison because of Roman law; he is not in prison as all the other prisoners presumably are because of some misdemeanour or crime. Well, if not, why is he in prison.

His answer is: I am the prisoner of Christ, the Christ Jesus. What a staggering statement! Have you noticed how, with this Apostle, everything that is true of him is always expressed in terms of Christ? He is ‘the apostle of Christ’, ‘the servant of Christ’, he is ‘the minister of Christ’, ‘the bondsman of Christ’. Watch his terms always and especially in the introductions to his Epistles. Everything is in relation to Christ, and because of Christ. And here he does not hesitate to say that he is in prison for one reason only, namely, because he is ‘in Christ’. He is Christ’s prisoner.

p. 19

Lloyd-Jones says:

The Apostle is telling these Ephesians that if they but see the meaning of his imprisonment truly, if they but view these things in the right way, it will bring them into a knowledge of the glory of the Christian life such as they had never had before. What Paul is saying is that the Christian life to him is everything; Christ is his 'all and in all'. The Christian life is so glorious and so wonderful that it is much more precious to him than his personal liberty. It is much more precious than life itself. What he is really saying is what he said to the Philippians in the words, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain' and 'that I might depart and be with Christ, which is far better' (1:21, 23).

p. 24

Lloyd-Jones says:

We turn now to the words found in verses 2-7 and we must look at this as a whole because it is just one sentence with many subdivisions; and there is a sense in which, if we are to understand any of its individual parts correctly, we must have some conception of the whole statement. It is the beginning of the long digression which continues until the end of verse 13. We have seen that its object was to help these Ephesians who were troubled about the fact that he the Apostle was a prisoner. He wants them to see things in such a way that not only—as he says in verse 13—will they not faint at it, but that they will even glory in it. He himself is glorying in it, and he proceeds to show them why they also should be glorying in it.

p. 25

MacArthur says:

Perspective is all-important. How we view and react to circumstances is more important than the circumstances themselves. If all we can see is our immediate situation, then our circumstances control us. We feel good when our circumstances are good but miserable when they are not. Had Paul been able to see only his circumstances, he would quickly have given up his ministry. Had he thought that his life was ultimately in the hands of his persecutors, his jailers, his guards, or the Roman government, he would long since have given up in despair.

But Paul's perspective was a divine perspective, and he lived with total trust in God's purposes. It was not that he himself knew his future or fully *understood* the divine purposes behind his afflictions, but that he knew his future, his afflictions, and every other aspect of his life were totally in His Lord's hands.

p. 87

MacArthur says:

3:1 *For this reason.* This refers back to the truths about the unity of believers that Paul has just discussed and introduces the motive for his prayer which begins in verse 14. ***the prisoner of Christ Jesus.*** Although Paul had been a prisoner for about two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome, he did not consider himself to be a prisoner of any government or person. Rather, he knew he was under Christ's control, and every aspect of his life was in the Lord's hands.

pp. 1688-9

Patzia says:

I, Paul, is an emphatic expression designed to draw attention to the apostle and what he has to say (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:2, Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:18). What is emphasized is that Paul is **the prisoner of Christ Jesus** for the sake of the Gentiles. The NIV rightly translates the article before prisoner as **the** rather than "a" prisoner (RSV). Thus Paul is represented, not as one prisoner among many, but as *the* prisoner of Christ Jesus, because of the significance of his ministry to the Gentiles . . .

p. 209

Simpson & Bruce say:

He styles himself the *prisoner of Jesus Christ*. See what the grace of God can accomplish! Scan not without wonder the bearing of this caged eagle penned within Nero's prison-bars. Here is a veteran soldier of the cross, seamed with many a battle-scar, shut out from the high places of the field where he had so gallantly trodden down strength, cramped within painfully narrow precincts, his untamed spirit shackled by manacles of inaction and suspense; the churches whose names were graven on his heart left meanwhile untended, and he himself to all seeming laid aside as a "vessel wherein is no pleasure". Does he faint or repine? Nay, he glories in tribulations. Nero's prisoner? Nothing of the sort! He is the prisoner of *Jesus Christ* and that makes a world of difference; renders him far freer than his jailors in fact. What is best for the Lord's cause the Lord knows best. pp. 70-71

Stedman says:

Sometimes it is difficult to see how Paul builds his letters. This is particularly true of this passage, because Paul begins, "For this reason . . ." But he doesn't give the reason toward which he is moving until verse 13. This is the way the Apostle's mind worked. He starts out to say one thing but then is captured by the truth of something else he is going to say, so he brings it in ahead of time. Then he is carried along from one truth to another until he finally gets back to what he started to say in the beginning. If you read it this way: "for this reason . . ." then skip down to verse 13: ". . . I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory," you will understand what he is trying to say in the intervening sentences. p. 176

Stedman says:

His first statement is this: "I am a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles." That is the first thing he wants them to know. It is striking that nowhere does Paul ever refer to himself as a prisoner of Caesar. He *was* Caesar's prisoner. He had been arrested because he was charged by the Jews with sedition, or treason, against the emperor. Therefore, eventually, he was remanded to the care of the palace guard, the personal bodyguard of the emperor. So here he was in Rome, a prisoner of Caesar, awaiting trial before Nero. But never once does he say that he is a prisoner of Caesar; it is always "a prisoner of Christ Jesus."

p. 177

Wuest says:

The words "for this cause" refer back to "the building together of the saints" of 2:20-22. That is, "seeing you are so builded together for a dwelling place of God" (Vincent). Then comes a parenthetical paragraph to verse 13, and the words "for this cause" are resumed.

p. 80

Wuest says:

On this account I, Paul, the prisoner of the Messiah, Jesus, on behalf of you, the Gentiles, assuming that you heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you, that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery even as I wrote above in brief, in accordance with which you are able when you read to understand my insight into the mystery of the Christ which in other and different generations was not made known to the sons of men as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and belong jointly to the same body, and are fellow partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus, revealed through the good news of which I become one who ministers according to the gift of the grace of God, which grace was given to me according to the operative energy of His power.

p. 218

Because Paul believed in the sovereignty of God and His purpose and plan for his life, he can truly say that whatever happened to him happened because of **“CHRIST JESUS”**:

“BECAUSE OF THIS, I PAUL, THE PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS ON BEHALF OF YOU GENTILES.”

Isaiah 14:24 (NLT)

The Lord Almighty has sworn this oath: “It will all happen as I have planned. It will be come about according to my purposes.

Isaiah 14:26-27 (NLT)

I have a plan for the whole earth, for my mighty power reaches throughout the world. The Lord Almighty has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?”

I personally need a reminder of this on a daily basis. On my desk I have the words:

“Don, Trust Me. I have everything under control. Signed, Jesus”

(Voices from the Past: Puritan Devotional Readings edited by Richard Rushing) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Richard Rushing, 2009.

Are you not sufficiently convinced that the ways you called hard and the cup you called bitter were necessary? The Lord had a sweeter purpose and meant better than you would believe. Your Redeemer was saving you as much when he crossed your desires as when he granted them, and he was saving you when he broke your heart as much as when he bound it up. No thanks to you, unworthy self, for this received crown, but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory forever!
p. 304

(Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Books: Being a collection of sentences, illustrations, and quaint sayings from that renowned Puritan, Thomas Brooks by C.H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Banner of Truth Trust, 2011.

As our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ, so God's greatest glory that he hath from his saints comes through their sufferings.
p. 80

(The Attentive Life: Discerning God's Presence in All Things by Leighton Ford) Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. Copyright– Leighton Ford, 2008.

When Sandy died, my wife Jeanie expressed in a wonderfully deep and simple way her faith, a faith tested not only by the terrible loss of a child but also by some friends' well-meant but totally off-the-mark efforts to explain the unexplainable. "I understand God less," she said, poignantly and honestly, "but I have learned to trust him more."
p. 144

v. 2 assuming that you heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you:

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

I take it that you're familiar with the part I was given in God's plan for including everybody.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verse 2 and then says:

The dispensation of God's grace (3:2).

3:2. Having broken off in the middle of a sentence in verse 1, Paul began one new long sentence that ended with verse 13 (one of eight lengthy sentences in Eph.; . . . It is a conditional sentence with 3:2 serving as its introduction . . . and verse 13 as its conclusion. Paul wrote of **the administration of God's grace that was given to him** . . . and concluded by asking them not to be discouraged over his imprisonment in Rome . . . The details of his message and ministry are in verses 3-12. Probably the NIV used "surely" because the wording implies certainty that the Ephesians had heard of his responsibility. Now he spoke of it in greater detail. The word "administration" . . . has the sense of stewardship or a trust to be dispensed . . . Paul was to administer "God's grace" . . . which was given to him. He elaborated on this in verses 3-6. This grace was given to him to dispense to the Gentiles . . . at Ephesus (**for you**), because he was an apostle to the Gentiles . . .

“THE GRACE OF GOD” is mentioned **THREE TIMES** in this passage:

1. verse 2—“THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU,”
2. verse 7—“THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME ACCORDING TO THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER,” and
3. verse 8—“THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN, TO PREACH TO THE GENTILES THE FATHOMLESS RICHES OF CHRIST.”

Isn't it interesting that every time you have the “GRACE OF GOD” it is a “GIFT WHICH [IS] GIVEN.” It is something you cannot earn or deserve, but it is as a “GIFT . . . GIVEN.”

He said back in:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (DAV)

For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith; and this [salvation] is not of yourselves—it is the gift of God; not because of works, in order that no one might boast.

Pentecost points out:

His method to administer grace was to appoint ambassadors of grace. That's what Paul was to the Gentiles. An administration that was gracious in its character was given to Paul for the Gentiles, therefore everything that God did for the Gentiles was gracious in its very character. Paul is saying that when I was appointed by God, it was a gracious appointment, on God's part. (source unknown)

“[IT] WAS GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU.”

Bruce says:

The digression is designed to explain more fully Paul's description as the Lord's prisoner "for the sake of you Gentiles" (it is immediately after the word "Gentiles" that the construction is broken off). Paul has received, by divine appointment, a special responsibility with regard to the evangelization of the Gentile world. "I have been entrusted with a stewardship," he says to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:17); he speaks to the Gentile believers of Colossae of "the stewardship of God given to me with reference to you" (Col. 1:25). There, as here, the stewardship involves the impartation and disclosure of a "mystery"; similarly, in 1 Cor. 4:1 he refers to himself and other preachers of the gospel as "stewards of the mysteries of God."

p. 311

Fergusson says:

Here beginneth the first part of the chapter, wherein the apostle, by way of digression, setteth forth the dignity of his apostolic office towards the Gentiles; that thereby he may not only guard them from stumbling at his sufferings, as is clear from ver. 13, but also give a reason of what he presently said, ver. 1, that he was a prisoner for them, to wit, because he had his office from God towards them: . . .

p. 172

Lloyd-Jones says:

What a tremendous thing this is! These Ephesian believers, most of whom were probably ordinary common slaves, had been included in this eternal plan and scheme of God. Do you realize the trouble to which God has gone in order that you and I might be redeemed and rescued and might become saints, and might be eventually spend our eternity in His glorious presence? Now then, says Paul to the Ephesians, do not faint because of my tribulations, do not think so much of my chains in prison: think rather of this amazing thing that God has done—'a dispensation of the grace of God has been given to me to you-ward'!

p. 31

MacArthur says:

3:2-13 In this parenthetical passage, Paul interrupted the thought begun in verse 1 to reemphasize and to expand upon the truths he had just written. He was compelled to affirm his authority for teaching the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ (vv.2-7), a new and far-reaching truth that most of the Ephesians doubtless found difficult to comprehend or accept.
p. 1689

O'Brien says:

Divine grace was given not simply for Paul's personal enhancement. Instead, it was for the sake of the Gentiles, as the following words *for you* show.
p. 228

v. 3 That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, even as I have written above in brief.

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly.

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

I got the inside story on this from God himself, as I just wrote you in brief.

Paul is now going to make reference to the **“MYSTERY”**:

here in verse 3,

then in verse 4, and

then down in verse 9.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verses 3-5 and then says:

The revelation of the mystery (3:3-5).

3:3. That is further explains that **the mystery** is the “grace” mentioned in verse 2. That mystery (a truth hitherto unknown) is not defined till verse 6. The mystery’s disclosure was given to Paul **by revelation**, which in fact he had **already written briefly** about, not in another epistle, but in this one (in 2:11-22).

Here Paul gives the means whereby he received this **“MYSTERY”** which he had written about in Ephesians 2:11-22, that Jew and Gentile were going to be reconciled to God in one body through the cross.

According to Pentecost, the word **“MYSTERY”** here refers to:

A purpose or a program of God that would not and could not have been known unless it had been revealed by God to man. That which was given to Paul was a direct revelation of that which was God’s purpose but which had not previously been revealed.

(source unknown)

The **TWO IMPORTANT WORDS** in this section are:

1. **“REVELATION”** and
2. **“MYSTERY.”**

The **“MYSTERY”** necessitates **“REVELATION.”**

The **“REVELATION”** will be:

THAT WHICH WAS FIRST UNKNOWN.

The **“MYSTERY”** here is **NOT** the **MYSTERY OF A NEW AGE** or is it specifically the **MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH**, which is His body.

The **“MYSTERY”** revealed to Paul was that Gentiles were to be admitted on the same level with Jews as heirs of Christ in one body.

Arthur says:

Read through Ephesians 3. Remember to read aloud because that will help you remember the content of Ephesians. Mark the word *mystery*. The Greek word for *mystery* is *musterion*. A mystery is a spiritual truth that was previously hidden and not revealed until God chose to explain it through one of His servants.

p. 65

Barclay says:

In this section Paul recurs to the thought which is at the very heart of this letter. Into his life there had come the revelation of the great secret of God. That secret was that the love and the mercy and the grace of God were meant, not for the Jews alone, but for all mankind. When Paul had met Christ on the Damascus road there had come to him a sudden flash of revelation. It was to the Gentiles that God had sent him “to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in God.” (Acts 226:18). This was a completely new discovery.

pp. 142-3

Baxter says:

What *is* the “mystery” (or previously hidden Divine secret) which is now divulged (verses 1-12)? Let us be quite clear that it is not the Gospel, though the Gospel includes it. It was no hidden secret that Christ was to come, was to bear the sins of the many, was to be a Prince and a Saviour to both Jews and Gentiles; nor that the Holy Spirit was to be outpoured, that remission of sins was to be preached, and that Christ should take the throne of David. All these are foretold in the Old Testament. As the Scofield Bible note aptly says on verse 6: “The mystery ‘hid in God’ was the Divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing—‘the Church, which is His [Christ’s] body,’ formed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13) and in which the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears (Eph. ii. 14, 15; Col iii. 10, 11). The revelation of this mystery, which was foretold but not explained by Christ (Matt. xvi. 18), was committed to Paul. In his writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the Church.”

p. 175

Bickel & Jantz say:

For thousands of years God kept a secret in his heart, hidden from the world, from the angels, from the priests, from the patriarchs, and from the prophets until the time came for him to reveal it through his Son to his holy apostles.

—*Max Anders*

p. 83

Hughes says:

In the New Testament, the Greek work *musterion* means something which is beyond natural knowledge, but has been opened to us by divine revelation through the Holy Spirit. Paul's words in Colossians 1:26 give us the idea: "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints." It is something previously undreamed of which is now disclosed to believers—an open secret.

Here in Ephesians the mystery was hinted at in 2:10 where Paul says, "For we are God's workmanship"—his masterwork, new spiritual creations "brought near through the blood of Christ" (v. 13). The mystery was further opened in verse 15 where we are told that the nearness (reconciliation) happened through the creation "in himself [of] one new man out of the two"—a new humanity—a third race of humans—the Church. So amazing is the life of this new humanity that he uses three gripping images to describe its life in verses 19-22, and the bouquet of these images further opens the mystery.

This mystery, this now-open secret, dominates Paul's thoughts as he begins chapter 3.

p. 105

McGee says:

I repeat that "the mystery," the divine secret, was something not revealed in the Old Testament and therefore unknown to man. Now it is revealed in the New Testament. The word is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament, . . .

p. 243

O'Brien says:

As he explains and amplifies the meaning of v. 2 in the words which follow, Paul indicates that he received the stewardship of God's grace when the *mystery* was revealed to him. On the key motif of the *mystery*, see on 1:9-10. There it referred to God's all-inclusive purpose which has as its ultimate goal the uniting of all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Here, a more limited dimension to the mystery focusses on Gentiles, along with Jews, being incorporated into the body of Christ and thus participating in the divine salvation.

p. 228

Patzia says:

In the next ten verses the author concentrates upon the mystery and how God used Paul to reveal that plan to the Gentiles. He begins by referring to **the mystery made known to me by revelation**. This follows the connection between revelation and the **mystery** that was alluded to in 1:9 and 10, but affirms that this revelation is from God and not something that Paul concluded from his studies or received from tradition . . .

p. 210

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

3:1-4 The **dispensation** (stewardship) that God gave Paul for the benefit of the Ephesians had previously been a mystery. Now God was revealing this mystery more fully in Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. The mystery was that Jews and Gentiles were to have an equal status in the church, the body of Christ.

p. 1535

Robertson says:

In few words (en oligōi). Not = pro oligou, shortly before, but as in Acts 26:28 "in brief space or time" = suntonōs (Acts 24:4), "briefly."

p. 530

The Navigators say:

. . . there was nothing "mysterious" or incomprehensible about God's secret. It was simply kept until God chose to reveal it, and now it is absolutely not to be kept private.

p. 51

v. 4 in order that, when you are reading, you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ.

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

As you read over what I have written to you, you'll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ.

Paul is saying, "I have written above in brief" with this **PURPOSE** in mind:

"IN ORDER THAT, WHEN YOU ARE READING, YOU ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND MY INSIGHT [because of the revelation that was given to me] INTO THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

3:4. The Ephesian Christians would **be able to understand his insight . . . into the mystery of Christ . . .** by **reading** what he had "already written." Paul's next words (Eph. 3:5-6) would further enhance their understanding of it. His "insight" was not his own discovery; it was revealed by God.

In this verse, Paul states the **PURPOSE** for telling them how the **"MYSTERY"** was revealed to him.

Bruce says:

The “mystery of Christ” into which Paul has received such exceptional insight is the content of the “revelation of Jesus Christ” of which he speaks in Gal. 1:12. Christ is himself “the mystery of God” (Col. 2:2; cf. Col. 1:26-27) in the sense that in him the unseen God is fully revealed; “the mystery of Christ” may best be understood as the mystery which consists in Christ, the mystery which is disclosed in him. This mystery is proclaimed in the gospel, which may indeed be called “the mystery of God” in 1 Cor. 2:1. Paul sometimes uses the term “mystery” of one particular element in his message—the transformation of believers into spiritual bodies at the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:51) or Israel’s final restoration as the goal of its temporary relegation in favor of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25). But his use of the term in Ephesians to denote the gospel in its fullness is in keeping with his general practice. The gospel which he received on the Damascus road by “revelation of Jesus Christ” was the law-free gospel which he proceeded to preach throughout the rest of his life; and precisely because it was law-free it was as applicable to Gentiles as to Jews (the law being the barrier that had formerly kept them apart).

p. 313

Eadie says:

. . . “you can while reading perceive my insight in the mystery of Christ.” When this epistle reached them it was presumed that they would read it; and as they read it, they would feel their competence. The present participle expresses contemporaneous action—the reading being parallel in time to the perception; . . .

p. 215

Hendriksen says:

One can say that the mystery is, in a sense, Christ himself, that is *Christ in all his glorious riches actually dwelling through his Spirit in the hearts and lives of both Jews and Gentiles, united in one body, the church.*

p. 153

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

understand my knowledge—“perceive my understanding” [ALFORD], or “intelligence.” “When ye read,” implies that, deep as are the mysteries of this Epistle, the way for all to understand them is to *read* it (II Tim. 3:15, 16). By *perceiving his understanding* of the mysteries, they, too, will be enabled to understand. **the mysteries of Christ**—The “mystery” is Christ Himself, once hidden, but now revealed (Col. 1:27).
p. 1286

Lloyd-Jones says:

‘Mystery’ in the New Testament sense is a technical term pertaining to a truth which, because of its character, can never be attained unto, or arrived at, by the unaided human intellect or by mere human ability. The thing itself is clear, but because man is what he is—finite and sinful—he cannot by his own unaided intellect arrive at it or understand it. The classic statement with respect to this is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians where the Apostle has defined it once and for ever. ‘Howbeit’, he says, ‘we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God have prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God’ (2:6-10).
p. 33

Lovett says:

MYSTERY. The truth of the Gentiles being admitted to salvation was never hidden and neither was the fact that they would one day receive a call (Isa. 56:6, 7; Rom. 9:25, 26). But that they would someday be admitted without circumcision and made equal to the Jews, by means of an entirely **new institution**, was never once hinted. The truth of the body of Christ, in which God would live, was reserved for N.T. preaching where it was to become a startling dimension of Christ’s glory.
p. 102

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

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

Now this secret was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God's Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

3:5. Paul then revealed the time when the mystery was disclosed. The mystery **was not made known to men in other generations as it has . . . been revealed.** This statement has caused some debate among Bible students. The problem hinges on the comparative adverb "as" (hōs). Some take this as restrictive (a comparison of degree), which would mean that the mystery was partially revealed in the Old Testament but is now fully revealed in the Church Age. The thought of the verse should be, God has not revealed this mystery in the past *to the extent* He has now. Others see the adverb "as" to be descriptive (a comparison of kind), which means that no revelation of this mystery was given in the Old Testament but that this mystery was revealed for the first time in the New Testament.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says further:

The second view is a better interpretation for five reasons: (1) Though the restrictive sense for “as” is more common, the descriptive sense *is* used sometimes . . .

(2) The context supports this view for Paul wrote that this mystery was hidden in the past (Eph. 3:9).

(3) Colossians 1:26, . . . does not use the comparative adverb “as,” but clearly states that the mystery was “kept hidden for ages . . . but is now” . . . made manifest to the saints.

(4) The position of the temporal adverb “now” . . . agrees with Colossians 1:26 in marking the contrast between the two Ages. . . .

(5) “Revealed” means “to uncover or unveil” something that has previously been completely covered or hidden. Therefore it would be wrong to say the mystery was *partially* uncovered in the Old Testament.

This mystery was revealed **by the Spirit** . . . and its recipients were **God’s holy apostles and prophets** . . . Some have promoted the idea that this revelation was given to Paul, but 3:5 explicitly states that it was given to the apostles and prophets and that Paul was one who was to disseminate it.

The **“WHICH”** of course refers to the **“mystery of Christ”** in verse 4.

This **“mystery of Christ”** was:

“NOT MADE KNOWN [in other generations] TO THE SONS OF MEN.”

Lovett points out:

The truth of the body of Christ, in which God would live, was reserved for N.T. preaching where it was to become a startling dimension of Christ’s glory. . . . Indeed it was hidden. Who expected the Messiah to show up as a Carpenter and be crucified by His own people? Once that happened, a whole new program went into effect. The church, the new program; had to remain a mystery until Jesus was disowned by Israel. God’s nation could have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit to become God’s spiritual house, but she forfeited the privilege.

p. 102

Colossians 1:26-27 (NLT)

He has kept this secret for centuries and generations past, but now at last it has pleased him to tell it to those who love him and live for him, and the riches and glory of his plan are for you Gentiles too. And this is the secret: that Christ in your hearts is your only hope of glory.

NEGATIVELY:

“IT WAS NOT MADE KNOWN TO THE SONS OF MEN.”

POSITIVELY:

“IT HAS BEEN REVEALED.”

This **TAKES US BACK** to verse 3 where Paul tells us it is:

“by revelation there was made known to [him] the mystery.”

“IT HAS BEEN REVEALED TO HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS BY THE SPIRIT.”

These **“HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS”** are of the New Testament times and are probably the same ones referred to back in Ephesians 2:20.

Ephesians 2:20 (DAV)

having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Anders says:

For thousands of years, God kept a secret in his heart, hidden from the world, from the angels, from the priests, from the patriarchs, and from the prophets until the time came for him to reveal it through his Son to his holy apostles. The secret was that there was to be a new creation, a new living temple, a new spiritual body through which God was going to work to carry the message of salvation to the ends of the world, and in whom he was going to create his spiritual likeness. This new creation was to be comprised of both Jew and Gentile alike. This new creation is called the church.
p. 127

MacArthur says:

In verse 5 Paul defines the general meaning of mystery as it is used in the New Testament, and in verse 6 he identifies the particular mystery he is explaining to the Ephesians.
p. 90

Meyer says:

He is the Spirit of Revelation.

There are deep things of God, mysteries, hidden things, of which the apostle Paul often speaks. The eyes of the natural man cannot discern, nor his ear detect, nor his heart conceive them. Deeper than the azure depths above us, or the fathomless lakes beneath, they defy the wise and prudent of this world. But they are revealed to babes—not in the land of light and glory, but here and now, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. “God hath revealed them unto us by the Spirit.”

This is what Jesus promised, that when He, the Spirit of Truth, was come, He would lead us into all the truth, and take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. Let us be apt pupils of so transcendent a Teacher. Be willing to do, and you shall know.

p. 58

O'Brien says:

The 'mystery of Christ' had not been made known to human beings in earlier generations. It was wholly inaccessible to human understanding until the time when God chose to reveal it. In essence the same point is affirmed in the concluding doxology of Romans (16:25-27), where Paul's gospel is said to be 'the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages', and in Colossians 1:25-27, where 'the word of God' which the apostle is to complete is 'the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations'.
p. 231

v. 6 that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The NET Bible translates verse 6:

namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.

Peterson paraphrases verse 6:

The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verse 6 and then says:

The constitution of the mystery (3:6).

3:6. Paul now defined the **mystery**. In three compound nouns he stated that the Gentile believers with the Jewish believers **are (a) heirs together** (i.e., “fellow heirs,” . . . of God’s riches (1:3-14), **(b) are of the same body . . . and (c) are sharers together in the promise** (the messianic promise; . . . **in Christ Jesus. . . .**

Thus the mystery is not something mysterious, but is a sacred secret hidden in Ages past but now revealed. This is made possible **through the gospel**: believing Jews and **Gentiles** are in **one** body. The mystery is not that Gentiles would be saved, for the Old Testament gave evidence of that, but rather that believing Jews and Gentiles are joined **together**. That was a revolutionary concept for Jews and Gentiles alike!

This is the **KEY VERSE** in our study:

HIS PLAN FOR A BODY.

This particular plan was a “mystery” to be “revealed” during New Testament times and made possible as a result of the death of Christ upon the cross.

If we are living life according to His plan in this area, we recognize the fact that His body is made up of all those who know Jesus Christ as Savior.

It is our responsibility as Christians to function in the body as He has gifted us. The apostle will have more to say about this in Ephesians 4.

There are **THREE THINGS** Paul says in this verse about the Gentiles position:

1. **“[THEY] ARE FELLOW-HEIRS”**—Jew and Gentile alike in this new relationship have the same inheritance. They are heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.
2. **“[THEY ARE] BELONGING TO THE SAME BODY”**—there are not two inheritances and there are not two separate bodies, but one inheritance and one body, the body of Christ. They both belong to this body.

You could say:

“OUT OF EVERY DENOMINATION INTO ONE BODY.”

3. **“AND PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE IN CHRIST JESUS”**—the **“PROMISE IN CHRIST JESUS”** is the promise of His coming again to take the church, His body, to be with Himself.

John 14:1-2 (NASB)

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NASB)

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NASB)

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Each of these glorious provisions have been made possible:

“IN CHRIST JESUS THOROUGH THE GOSPEL.”

The **KEY** to the study here in verse 6 is that there are **THREE THINGS** that are true:

1. they have **ONE INHERITANCE**,
2. they are **ONE BODY**, and
3. they are looking forward to **ONE COMING**, when Jesus Christ comes to catch His bride home.

Anders says:

A **mystery**, in this biblical sense, is not to be understood in the same sense of mystery in modern usage. It does not mean that the truth Paul is proclaiming is mysterious or puzzling. Rather, *mystery* is a technical term, meaning “something that has not previously been made known.” The mystery is: Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers with Jews of the promises of God.
p. 129

Bickel & Jantz say:

We cannot overstate the importance of this announcement to the world. Previous generations didn't know this Good News because God did not reveal it to them (3:5). But now the Christians in Asia Minor and everyone since then knows that salvation by grace—not by works—is available to anyone who believes that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that nobody can come to God except through Him (John 14:6).

Because of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles “are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus.” This is the eternal purpose of God.
p. 86

Eadie says:

This verse explains the mystery. The infinitive . . . contains the idea of design if viewed from one point, and of fact if viewed from another—the purpose seen or realized in the purport or contents. It does not depend upon the last verse, but unfolds the unimagined contents of the revelation . . .
p. 220

Lenski says:

6) The content of “the mystery” (v. 3) which is a part of “the (gospel) mystery regarding Christ” (v. 4) is: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow body members and fellow partakers of the promise in connection with Christ Jesus through the gospel.” They are no less even as Paul has also written regarding the Ephesian Gentiles in 2:11-22. Three terms are used as good writers often employ them for the sake of rhythm and for the sake of fulness of thought.

p. 473

Lloyd-Jones says:

It is quite clear that the Apostle is using the word *mystery* about two different things. We have already defined ‘mystery’ as meaning something that the human mind cannot attain unto by its own unaided effort, and which must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. It does not mean something which is misty or uncertain and about which you can never be clear in your minds; but something which without the enlightenment and revelation of the Holy Spirit we can never grasp. He uses this term in two senses. The mystery to which he refers in the parenthesis, in verse 4, is ‘the mystery of Christ’. We may call that the *general* mystery. But what he is really concerned to elaborate is another mystery, the mystery he describes in verses 5 and 6. This is a mystery which ‘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; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs’. That is the *particular* mystery.

pp. 40-41

O’Brien says:

To sum up. The mystery or open secret of Christ is ‘the complete union of Jews and Gentiles with each other through the union of both with Christ. It is this double union, with Christ and with each other, which is the substance of the “mystery”’.

p. 236

Patzia says:

Up to this point the author has alluded to the mystery a number of times: now, however, he becomes specific and defines it in a way that will remove any doubt about its content. **This mystery is that through the gospel**, that is, by way of the proclamation of the word of truth that was believed and accepted (1:13), the Gentiles have been given a completely new status with all of the privileges pertaining thereto. The author describes this with a number of picturesque words prefixed with the preposition *syn*.
p. 211

Wuest says:

Paul now proceeds to make known the mystery. The words “should be” are *einai*, the infinitive of the verb of being. The translation should read: “that the Gentiles are”. The contents of the mystery are a fact, not a purpose. The Gentiles are fellow-heirs with the Jews. They are *sussōma*, “fellow-members”, that is, “belonging jointly to the same body.” They are “fellow-partakers of the promise.” The Gentiles inherit jointly with the Jews the blessings of salvation.
p. 82

v. 7 of which I became a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power.

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power.

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this section and then says:

THE MINISTRY (3:7-12).

Having described the mystery (vv. 2-6), Paul now discussed his ministry of dispensing this mystery to the Gentiles.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

I became a servant of this gospel . . . denotes Paul's rendering of service (cf. Col. 1:23). The word "servant" . . . stresses not the idea of subjection (as does *doulos*, "slave") but the idea of service or serving, as one who is a waiter . . . This service has its basis in **the gift of God's grace . . . given to Paul through the working of His power . . .** The Greek more clearly implies that Paul's service was initiated by "the gift of God's grace" and continues by "the working . . . of His power" . . .

“OF WHICH” refers to back to the “gospel” in verse 6.

It was of this “gospel” that Paul “BECAME A MINISTER.”

This ministry was:

“ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO [HIM]” and

“ACCORDING TO THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER.”

What Paul is teaching in these verses is that the “mystery” which he is making known has come to him, not of his own doing, but by a “revelation” from God.

The **MINISTRY** which he is carrying out is not of his own doing but is because of “THE GIFT OF THE GRACE OF GOD” and is a “MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER” working through the apostle.

We therefore conclude from these verses that the **MYSTERY** and the **MINISTRY** are all God’s doing. The Apostle Paul is just an **INSTRUMENT** through whom God is working.

Hughes says:

A striking quotation by the great Methodist divine W. E. Sangster is relevant to this point: “Called to preach! . . . commissioned of God to teach the word! A herald of the great King! A witness of the Eternal Gospel! Could any work be more high and holy? To this supreme task God sent his only begotten son.” W. E. Sangster had a Pauline joy in his sense of the privilege of preaching—and thus he had spiritual power.

p. 107

Lenski says:

The language used in v. 2 in regard to the manner in which this ministry came to Paul is now expanded. It came to him “by way of the gift of the grace of God, of that (grace) given to me by way of the energetic working of his power.” Paul’s office was a special gift (note the article) to him; he obtained it in this way . . . alone. This thought is enhanced by the subjective genitive which says that a special grace of God made this gift to him. True, the apostleship was a gift also to the Twelve, came to them by pure grace; Jesus told them that *he* chose *them*, not *they him* (John 15:16); yet in Paul’s case this was true in a special sense (v. 8).

p. 474

Lloyd-Jones says:

But there was another element also in this situation. Paul was a man who lived so near to his Lord that he was conscious of his deficiencies and shortcomings. Labouring as he did indefatigably, he was nevertheless conscious of how little he had done, and of how much more he might have done. He expresses this in many places, thereby demonstrating true humility, true Christian meekness. If a man is not always conscious of the honour and dignity of being a Christian at all, and especially of having the privilege of preaching the gospel and of his own inadequacy and insufficiency, he is in a very false position. The more we realize these things, the more we shall be amazed, with the Apostle, at the grace and goodness and kindness of God.

Furthermore the Apostle explains to the Ephesians, and to us, how all this had happened to him; and once more his explanation is that it is all ‘of the grace of God’. Note how he keeps on repeating this word ‘given’: ‘whereof’, he says in verse 7, ‘I was made a minister, according to the *gift* of the grace of God *given* unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace *given*’.

p. 54

McGee says:

Paul assumed no place of superiority in the knowledge of the mystery by virtue of the fact that he was the Apostle to the Gentiles. He takes only the title of *diakonos* which is translated “minister” and means a worker or helper or deacon.

It was the gift of God’s grace which had transformed him from Saul, the proud Pharisee who persecuted the church, to Paul, the apostle who was now a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He had been taken out of one group and put into another. He is now a member of the body of Christ.

p. 244

Meyer says:

The power of God in the communication of spiritual gift.

The apostle took a very lowly view of himself. He was but a minister, a deacon, a servant; like the Master, who when none of His disciples essayed to wash the feet of the rest, put an end to the hesitation as to who should do it, by doing it Himself. Only the greatest can stoop to these menial offices without loss of position or self-respect.

But the position that the great apostle occupied was distinctly, in his judgment, the gift of the grace of God. And he never ceased magnifying the exceeding abundance of the grace which had not only saved him, but had given him an office in the church.

The grace of God which calls us into His blessed service is connected with the energy of His power; so that whatever the work may be to which we are called, there is ever sufficient power waiting within our reach for doing it. The grace of God permits us to be His fellow-workers in the salvation of men; and the power of God moves parallel with the line of our activities, to do that which would baffle our unaided efforts. Whatever you are called to do by the grace of God, you may be enabled to do by the power of God; and you will acquire the marvellous faculty of making men see the meaning of mysteries long veiled from their view.

pp.71-72

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

The word translated **minister** here means “servant.” **the gift of . . . grace:** It took divine grace to transform Paul from a blasphemer into a saint, from a Pharisee into an apostle, and from a persecutor of Christians into a preacher of Christ. Then it took divine power and authority to enable Paul to function as a minister of God.

p. 1535

Wuest says:

The word “minister” is *diakonos*, “a servant seen in his activity.” Our word “deacon” comes from this Greek word. The Greek word refers to one who serves. The word “minister” is misleading, since it is the technical word used today to designate the pastor of a church. Paul merely meant that he became one who ministered the gospel, served God in that capacity.

p. 83

Please notice here in verse 7 that the **“GRACE OF GOD”** is mentioned a second time:

1. verse 2—“the administration of the grace of God which is given to me for you” and
2. verse 7—referring to his reaction to **“A MINISTER, ACCORDING TO THE GIFT OF THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME ACCORDING TO THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER.”**

(The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester selections from the translation by F. E. Brightman) London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. Copyright – unknown, 1920.

Let the preacher labour to be heard gladly, intelligently, obediently. And let him not question that he can do this better by the piety of his prayers than by the fluency of his speech. By praying for himself and for them he is going to address, let him be the bedesman or ever he be a teacher: and approaching devoutly, before he put forth a speaking tongue, let him lift up to God a thirsty soul, that so he may give out what from Him he hath drunk in, and empty out what he hath first replenished.

p. 168

(Authentic Faith: The Power of a Fire-Tested Life by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Gary L. Thomas, 2002.

God is not impressed by our gifts, nor is he frightened by our inadequacies.

p. 33

(The Pastor: A Memoir by Eugene H. Peterson) New York, NY: HarperOne. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2011.

William Faulkner was once asked how he went about writing a book. His answer: “It’s like building a chicken coop in a high wind. You grab any board or shingle flying by or loose on the ground and nail it down fast.” Like becoming a pastor.

p. 6

(The Spiritual Combat by Lorenzo Scupoli) Mesa, AZ: Scriptoria. Copyright– Scriptoria Books, 2009.

Know, then, beloved, that when the Lord has discovered in us the desire to yield ourselves up in earnest, and to strive as we ought for so great a prize, He at once prepares for us a cup of the sharpest temptations and hardest trials, that we may drink it when He wills; and we, as we acknowledge His love and our own profit, should receive it cheerfully and blindly, and drink it trustingly and unhesitatingly, to the very dregs, for it is a medicine, mixed by an unerring Hand, the composed of ingredients which are as profitable to the soul as they are bitter in themselves.

p. 77

(Life is Like Licking Honey Off a Thorn: Reflections on Living Wisely in this World of Pain and Joy by Susan Lenzkes) Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House. Copyright– Susan L. Lenzkes, 2002.

PEOPLE amazed me in the good things they found to do to encourage and help us when Herb was so sick. Other than their medical services, the hospice personnel never had to send any other volunteers to our home. There was nothing for them to do. The place was crawling with God's people honoring Him by putting His love into action.

In shifts, friends brought delicious meals, cleaned my house, answered the door and phone, and did the washing so that I could stay by Herb's bedside. Almost before soiled sheets hit the floor, they were back, clean and neatly folded. People came and sang, prayed, talked, listened, laughed, cried, and loved us.

p. 41

v. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ.

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Ministering **this grace**—by God's strength, not his own—was Paul's responsibility though he considered himself **less than the least of all God's people**. . . . This denotes Paul's deep humility in view of God's incomparably generous grace. . . . Two infinitives state Paul's functioning in this ministry. First, he was **to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ**.

You will notice the **THIRD OCCURRENCE** of **“GRACE”** here in verse 8:

“THIS GRACE WAS GIVEN, TO PREACH TO THE GENTILES THE FATHOMLESS RICHES OF CHRIST.”

“GRACE” and **“GIVEN”** are seen **THREE TIMES**:

1. verse 2,
2. verse 7, and
3. verse 8.

This **DOUBLE PRIVILEGE** of being made an heir of the “**mystery of Christ**” and also a “**minister**” of the Gospel did not make the apostle proud, as we see here in verse 8.

John Calvin said:

Paul is perfectly sincere in admitting his unworthiness; nay, at other times he speaks of himself in far more degrading language. “For I am the least of the apostles, and am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Cor. xv. 9.) “Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners, of whom I am chief.*” (1 Tim. i. 15.)

But let us observe, that, when he speaks of himself as the meanest of all, he confines his attention to what he was in himself, apart from the grace of God. As if he had said, that his own worthlessness did not prevent him from being appointed, while others were passed by, to be the apostle of the Gentiles.

p. 253

JOHN THE BAPTIST said in:

John 3:30 (DAV)

He must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing.

2 Corinthians 4:7 (TLB)

But this precious treasure—this light and power that now shine within us—is held in a perishable container, that is, in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own.

Anders says:

3:8 Paul's considered himself to have no qualifications for the mission God gave him. He ranked last on the list of applicants. God chooses by different criteria than we do. He did not search out Paul's resumé to determine if he could do the job. God in love gave Paul the opportunity to tell Gentiles who had never heard the gospel the story of God's **unsearchable riches of Christ . . .**
p. 129

Barclay says:

PAUL saw himself as a man who had been given a double privilege. He had been given the privilege of discovering the secret that it was God's will that all men should be gathered into the secret of His grace and love. And he had been given the privilege of making this secret known to the Church, and of being the instrument whereby God's grace went out to the Gentiles.
p. 146

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

8 "Given me" forms a link with v. 7 (cf. v. 2). "Less than the least" is a unique combination of comparative and superlative. Literally it is "more least." Perhaps there is a playful allusion here to Paul's own name (v. 1), meaning "little." In 2 Co 12:11 Paul acknowledges that in himself he is a nobody, while at the same time recognizing that God has made him a somebody. Such humility is an essential qualification for effective service.
p. 764

Bruce says:

As he contemplates his commission to be Christ's apostle to the Gentiles and the instrument of their incorporation into the "one body," Paul is filled with wondering humility at the honor thus conferred on him of all people. In an earlier letter, considering the risen Lord's appearance to him, he said, "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them [the other apostles], though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1 Cor. 15:9-10).

p. 318

Calvin says:

He labours to exhibit himself, and everything that belongs to him, in as humiliating a light as possible, in order that the grace of God may be the more highly exalted. But this acknowledgment had the additional effect of anticipating the objections which his adversaries might bring against him. "Who is this man that God should have raised him above all his brethren? What superior excellence did he possess that he should be chosen in preference to all the others?" All such comparisons of personal worth are set aside by the confession, that he was *the least of all the saints*.

pp. 252-3

Calvin says:

By *the unsearchable riches of Christ* are meant the astonishing and boundless treasures of grace, which God had suddenly and unexpectedly bestowed on the Gentiles. The Ephesians are thus reminded how eagerly the gospel ought to be embraced, and how highly it ought to be esteemed.

p. 253

Eadie says:

The apostle prolongs the thought, and dwells upon it. He was a minister of the gospel through the gracious power of God. This reflection ever produced within him profound wonder and humility; and though in one sense he was greater than the greatest of all saints, yet the consciousness of his own demerit stood out in such striking contrast with the high function to which he had been called, that he exclaims—“To me, who am less than the least of all saints” . . . being emphatic from its position.

p. 224

Eadie says:

The riches of Christ are the true wealth of men and nations. And those riches are “unsearchable.” Even the value of the portion already possessed cannot be told by any symbols of numeration, for such riches can have no adequate exponent or representative. Their source was in eternity, and in a love whose fervor and origin are above our ken, and whose duration shall be for ages of ages beyond compute. Their extent is boundless, and the mode in which they have been wrought out reveals a spiritual process whose results astonish and satisfy us, but whose inner springs and movements lie beyond our keenest inspection. And our appropriation of those riches, though it be a matter of consciousness, shrouds itself from our scrutiny, for it indicates the presence of the Divine Spirit in His power—a power exerted upon man, beyond resistance, but without compulsion; and in its mighty and gracious operation neither wounding his moral freedom nor impinging on his perfect and undeniable responsibility.

pp. 226-7

Fergusson says:

The apostle doth extol and magnify his office, thirdly, from the consideration of his own unworthiness, which was so great, by reason, especially, of his enmity to Christ and the Christian church, while he was unconverted, . . .

p. 177

Foulkes says:

Paul cannot stop with what he has said, but must dwell further on the incredible grace of God and on his personal unworthiness. He was *less than the least of all saints*. He invents a comparative of a superlative to express himself more forcefully. This is no feigned humility. It is the inevitable attitude of one who was prostrated with wonder at the grace of God in Christ. Here it is not so much that he is consciously comparing himself with others; if he did so, he might speak as he does in 2 Corinthians xii. 11. Nor is it because he had specially in mind the fact that he had been a persecutor (as in 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13-15; 1Tim. i. 12-14). Rather it is that the more he meditated on the blessings of God in Christ, and the infinite grace of His gifts, the more he realized that in himself there was nothing to make him deserve such mercy. He knew that he had no standing, no personal worthiness, no claim, no natural position or gifts, that he should receive the grace of reconciliation, and become a preacher of it. He was *less than the least*. The gospel was everything, *the unsearchable riches of Christ*.
p. 96

Gaebelein says:

And of all this the Apostle Paul was the minister. Beautiful words, “Unto me, whom are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” The great revelation had made him very humble.
p. 256

Henry says:

(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*. What can be less than the least? To speak himself as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other grace. While he magnifies his office, he debases himself.
p. 1851

Henry says:

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. And they are unsearchable riches, which we cannot find the bottom of. It was the apostle's business and employment to *preach these unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles*. "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.
p. 1851

Hughes says:

Again Paul bends the language. He takes the Greek word for "least" or "smallest" and adds an ending which is impossible linguistically, so that he comes out with the word "leaster." Some think he was playing off his Latin name *Paulus*, which meant "little" or "small," so that the idea is, "I am little by name, little in stature, and morally and spiritually littler than the least of all Christians." *I am Small Paul*.
p. 107

Lenski says:

"The gift of the grace of God given to me" (v. 7) is resumed with the strongest emphasis on the pronoun: "*to me*, the one less than the least of all saints," *to me* as such a one, "was given this grace." "The gift"—"given"—and now "was given" glorify the Giver. Paul's office was, indeed, absolutely a gift given; Paul never tired of saying so. With that goes "the grace," his office itself, here (as in v. 2) called "this grace," which was absolutely undeserved, bestowed by the wondrous *favor Dei*.
p. 476

Lenski says:

“The riches of Christ” = all the saving grace and gifts belonging to Christ, which as “riches” abound to the uttermost. Paul was the hand of God to dispense this wealth without money or without price especially to the Gentiles. The blessedness of this office is ever present to his mind.
p. 477

Lloyd-Jones says:

We shall spend our eternity in discovering fresh aspects and facets of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Unsearchable, untraceable!
p. 60

Lovett says:

LEAST. Paul’s persecution of the church, before his conversion, lingers in his mind as the strongest expression of his sin. So that when compared with all other Christians, he regards himself as the most unworthy. Aware that God’s grace has reached down so low and that His power has raised him so high (from Saul the persecutor to Paul the Apostle), his being is filled with a sense of unworthiness. The Spirit would have us see that Paul’s office was a gift, totally apart from any personal worth in the Apostle. What vessel can take credit when all of the work done through him is by God!
p. 103

MacArthur says:

The unfathomable riches of Christ include all His truths and all His blessings, all that He is and has. The purpose of every preacher is to declare those **riches**, to tell believers how rich they are in **Christ**. That is why it is so important for Christians to understand the greatness of their position in the Lord. The obedient, productive, and happy Christian life cannot be lived apart from understanding that glorious position. Before we can do what the Lord wants us to do for Him, we must understand what He already has done for us. We have riches beyond measure in the One of whom it was said, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) and in the One in whom we have “everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

Among the **unfathomable riches** with which Christ has blessed us are “His kindness and forbearance and patience” (Rom. 2:4), His “wisdom and knowledge (11:33), His mercy and great love (Eph. 2:4), “His glory” (3:16), His supplying us with “all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17), His assurance (Col. 2:2), His word (3:16), and even our being reproached for His sake (Heb. 11:26). Little wonder that Paul triumphantly reminds us that “in Him you have been made complete” (Col 2:10).

p. 95

MacArthur says:

In light of God’s perfect righteousness, Paul’s assessment of himself was not false humility but simple honesty. He knew his unworthiness.

p. 1689

McGee says:

In verse 8 Paul calls himself “less than the least of all saints”—it is a comparative superlative. Paul always took the place of humility as an apostle. “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemers, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:12-13).

A mighty revolution took place in the life of Paul. He was chosen to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. How wonderful!

p. 245

Meyer says:

God's wealth is for all.

The special note of this Epistle, and of that to the Colossians, is Paul's desire to express his conviction of the universality of God's bounty. It is not for Jews only, but for Gentiles. His commission was to preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ. The mine is inexhaustible; in it are the precious things of heaven above, and of the depth beneath, of the fruits of the sun, of the fulness of the earth, of the abundance of the seas, and of the hidden treasures of the sand; and it is all for *all* who believe.

pp. 18-19

O'Brien says:

As he reflects on his commission to be Christ's missionary to the Gentiles Paul is filled with amazement at the extraordinary privilege that has been given to him. Using a very striking expression in which he neither indulges in hypocrisy nor grovels in self-deprecation, he indicates how deeply conscious he is of his own unworthiness and of Christ's over-flowing grace to him: to me who am *less than the least of all God's people has this grace been given.*

p. 240

Patzia says:

The translation **unsearchable** (*anexichniastos*) **riches** captures beautifully the idea behind this Greek word (cf. NEB, “unfathomable”). Stott lists ten different English equivalents that he has discovered in various translations and commentaries—all attempting to define the word without confining its meaning (p. 120). Basically, it means “not to be tracked out,” “beyond comprehension,” or “inscrutable.” Paul expresses this idea when he writes to the Romans: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (11:33). The same thoughts occur in Job 5:9 and 9:10 with respect to God’s creation and providence: they lie beyond human comprehension and defy description.

p. 213

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

3:8 Paul was not expressing false humility when he called himself **less than the least of all the saints**. He was truly humble because he previously had persecuted Christ’s church. In another place Paul refers to himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). He is ever conscious of his demerit and never thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think . . .

p. 1535

Robertson says:

. . . Paul undertook to track out the untrackable in Christ.

p. 531

Robinson says:

8-13. ‘Yes, to me this grace has been given—to me, the meanest member of the holy people—that I should be the one to bring to the Gentiles the tidings of the inexplorable wealth of the Christ: that I should publish the plan of God’s eternal working, the Secret of the Creator of the universe: that not man only, but all the potencies of the unseen world might learn through the Church new lessons of the very varied wisdom of God—learn that one purpose runs through the ages of eternity, a purpose which God has formed in the Christ, even in Jesus our Lord, in whom we have our bold access to God. So lose not heart, I pray you, because I suffer in so great a cause. My pain is your glory’.

p. 169

Spurgeon says:

THE apostle Paul felt it to be a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery, or a servitude, but he entered upon it with intense delight. All God’s truly-sent servants have experienced much delight in the declaration of the gospel of Jesus; and it is natural that they should, for their message is one of mercy and love. If a herald were sent to a besieged city with the tidings that no terms of capitulation would be offered, but that every rebel without exception should be put to death, methinks he would go with lingering footsteps, halting by the way to let out his heavy heart in sobs and groans; but if instead thereof, he were commissioned to go to the gates with the white flag to proclaim a free pardon, a general act of amnesty and oblivion, surely he would run as though he had wings to his heels, with a joyful alacrity, to tell to his fellow-citizens the good pleasure of their merciful king.

p. 395

Wuest says:

To me, the one who is less than the least of all saints, there was given this grace, to the Gentiles to proclaim the good news of the incomprehensible wealth belonging to the Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which has been kept covered up from the beginning of the ages in the God who created all things, in order that there might be made known now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places through the intermediate agency of the Church the much-variegated wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which He carried into effect in the Christ, Jesus our Lord, in whom we are having our freedom of speech and entree in perfect confidence through faith in Him.

Wherefore, I am asking in my own interest, that you do not lose heart by reason of my tribulations on your behalf which are of such a nature as to be your glory.

p. 218

(Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey by Gary L. Thomas) Eugene, OR: Harvest House. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 1999/2011.

Humility leads us to a place of restful reliance on God, in whose authority alone we live and minister. Rather than consistently (and arrogantly) promising God that we'll never, ever fall again, we can adopt the prayerful approach of Jeanne Guyon:

As you come to Him, come as a weak child, one who is all soiled and badly bruised—a child that has been hurt from falling again and again. Come to the Lord as one who has no strength of his own; come to Him as one who has no power to cleanse himself. Humbly lay your pitiful condition before your Father's gaze.⁸

8. Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, (late seventeenth century) 16.

p. 138

(Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey by Gary L. Thomas) Eugene, OR: Harvest House. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 1999/2011.

The Encouragement of Humility

Ironically, if our self-understanding is truly born in heaven, our familiarity with our faults will actually encourage us rather than discourage us. This might sound bizarre, but it's true. God's revelation comes with His comfort. His gentle corrections arrive with His affirmation, and the experience feels like a bath rather than a scolding. Fénelon commented on this:

As the inner light increases, you will see the imperfections which you have heretofore as basically much greater and more harmful than you have seen them up to the present . . . But this experience, far from discouraging you, will help to uproot all your self-confidence, and to raze to the ground the whole edifice of pride. Nothing marks so much the solid advancement of a soul, as this view of his wretchedness without anxiety and without discouragement.¹¹

11. Francois Fénelon, *Christian Perfection*, (1704-1717) 22-23. pp. 140-141

(Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Books: Being a collection of sentences, illustrations, and quaint sayings from that renowned Puritan, Thomas Brooks by C.H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Banner of Truth Trust, 2011.

No vessels that God delights so much to fill as broken vessels, contrite spirits, *'He resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble'* (James 4:6). The silver dews flow down from the mountains to the lowest valleys. A humble soul that lies low, oh, what sights of God has he! what glory does he behold, when the proud soul sees nothing! He that is in the low pits and caves of the earth sees the stars in the firmament, when they who are upon the tops of the mountains discern them not.
p. 35

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

Trust Christ, but do not trust yourself. 3556.144
p. 409

You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most.
2098.424
p. 412

Who are you that everything should happen just as you wish? Should the weather be fine simply because you want it to be so when a thousand fields are gasping for rain? Should you have the channels of trade turned in your direction when, if that were the case, scores of others would be beggared? Is everything in this world to be so arranged that you shall be the darling and pet of providence? 3184.76
p. 416

The less you think of yourself, the more will people think of you; and the more you think of yourself, the less will people think of you. SW80
p. M-521

(Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 2003.

Adam hides. And God says, “Adam where are you?”

This is one of the most astounding questions in Scripture. Why does God ask it? The psalmist wrote that no matter where he went, he could never travel beyond the range of God's knowledge: “If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.” The thought of Adam trying to hide from God would be funny if it weren't so sad—like a four-year-old playing hide-and-seek in a telephone booth with Sherlock Holmes. Yet here is the omniscient Maker of heaven and earth asking for the location of one human being who hasn't even left the garden. Why doesn't God just use his X-ray vision to locate Adam?

The reason is that, of course, this question is not really about Adam's geographical location. It is not really a request for information at all, as if God needed a global tracking system for his creatures. It is an invitation.

God allows Adam to hide.

God offers him the opportunity to reveal himself.

God has the audacious grace to treat Adam as a person, even when Adam has defied him. God does this because no one—not even he himself—can get another person to be in a relationship by brute force.

pp. 72-73

v. 9 **And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things.**

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

and to enlighten everyone about God’s secret plan—a secret that has been hidden for ages in God who has created all things.

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary speaks of the two infinitives, one in verse 8 and the other here in verse 9:

Two infinitives state Paul’s functioning in this ministry. First, he was **to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ**. Second, he was **to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery**. Though Paul ministered to both Jews and Gentiles . . . he was especially designated as the apostle “to the Gentiles” . . .

The Gentiles can know something of the riches of Christ’s blessings . . . and the richness of His mercy in 2:4). Yet Christ’s fathomless spiritual wealth can never be fully comprehended . . . “not capable of being traced by footprints”; used only here and in Rom. 11:33). Paul was to disclose publicly *to everyone*, not just the Ephesians . . . this stewardship of God’s sacred secret . . . This secret had been **hidden in God** . . . the Creator of the universe. Even before creating **all things** God had in mind this wonderful truth as part of His eternal plan . . .

Here we have a **CONCISE STATEMENT** of Paul's purpose in life. This double privilege which is his is restated in different words:

1. **"to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ"**—which is the **GOSPEL** and
2. **"TO BRING TO LIGHT WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN HIDDEN FOR AGES IN GOD, WHO CREATED ALL THINGS"**—this is the revealing of the **"MYSTERY."**

It is impossible to plumb the depths or to trace out the riches of Christ. The vocabulary fails when we endeavor to spell out all the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus.

He also mentions in verse 9 that:

"THE MYSTERY . . . HAS BEEN HIDDEN FOR AGES IN GOD, WHO CREATED ALL THINGS."

This agrees with:

John 1:3 (TLB)

He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make.

Gaebelein says:

The purpose of preaching the mystery concerning the church (verse 9-13) is twofold: 1. To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery; to make it known among men. 2. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. The heavenly hosts look on (1 Cor. xi: 10) and behold by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

That which no prophet ever saw, what no human being could have imagined, what no angel ever knew, what was known alone to God, took place. The church, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, began on earth with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. They see how this body is being built, fitly framed together, and they know the glory which awaits that body. Therefore *now* is made known unto angels by the church the manifold wisdom of God.
pp. 256-7

Lenski says:

Preaching the untraceable riches of Christ to the Gentiles was like setting the deep mystery into the fullest light of day so that all men might see it. To be sure, not all of the Gentiles as also not all of the Jews would appropriate the mystery, but the sound and the light of the gospel would place the blessed wealth of Christ before them to hear and to see it.
pp. 477-8

(Work in Progress: An Unfinished Woman's Guide to Grace by Kristin Armstrong) New York, NY: FaithWords. Copyright– Kristin Armstrong, 2009.

As I emerged from the pit, I began to read the Bible with a voracious appetite unlike any hunger I have ever known. And that's saying a lot. Remember, I was once pregnant with twins! Every ounce of striving that I had ever applied to getting ahead in the world, I applied to my pursuit of God and His desire for my life. I had three child-sized sets of eyes on me, watching how I handled everything, so I was motivated far beyond myself to get healthy and make things right.
p. 31

(All Is Grace: A Ragamuffin Memoir by Brennan Manning with John Blase)
 Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook. Copyright– Brennan Manning,
 2011.

I found it in the writings of the Episcopal priest Robert Farrar Capon. He calls it *vulgar grace*.

In Jesus, God has put up a “Gone Fishing” sign on the religion shop. He has done the whole job in Jesus once and for all and simply invited us to believe it—to trust the bizarre, unprovable proposition that in him, every last person on earth is already home free without a single religious exertion: no fasting till your knees fold, no prayers you have to get right or else, no standing on your head with your right thumb in your left ear and reciting the correct creed—no nothing . . . The entire show has been set to rights in the Mystery of Christ—even though nobody can see a single improvement. Yes, it’s crazy. And yes, it’s cold, and outrageous, and *vulgar*. And my God who would do such a thing is a God who has no taste. And worst of all, it doesn’t sell worth beans. But it is Good News—the only permanently good news there is—and therefore I find it absolutely captivating.²¹ (italics mine.)

21. Robert Farrar Capon, *The Romance of the Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 20. pp. 192-3

(10 Lies About God: And The Truths That Shatter Deception by Erwin W. Lutzer) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications. Copyright– Erwin W. Lutzer, 2009.

When the earth shakes under your feet, or when a tornado crosses your street, you take cover, but ultimately we must flee into the arms of the only One who is able to shelter us. No matter how many things move in this world, we can always find *terra firma*, solid ground, in the consolations of the Almighty. We are reminded that all things pass away and only what is eternal abides.

The righteous sons of Korah (the psalm-writers, not the earthquake victims) knew that when all gives way, God abides. They invite us to recognize God's majesty and run to Him for safety.

God is our refuge and strength,
 an ever-present help in trouble.
 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
 and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
 though its waters roar and foam
 and the mountains quake with their surging.
 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
 the holy place where the Most High dwells.
 God is within her, she will not fall;
 God will help her at break of day.
 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
 he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
 The LORD Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.
 Come and see the works of the LORD,
 the desolations he has brought on the earth.
 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
 he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
 he burns the shields with fire.
 "Be still, and know that I am God;
 I will be exalted among the nations,
 I will be exalted in the earth."
 The LORD Almighty is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress.

(Ps.46)

pp. 117-18

v. 10 in order that now, through the church, might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.

The NET Bible translates verse 10:

The purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God should now be disclosed to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms.

Peterson paraphrases verse 10:

Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The purpose (*hina*) of Paul's ministry **was that . . . the manifold wisdom . . . of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.** In classical Greek the adjective "manifold" . . . referred to the beauty of an embroidered pattern or the variety of colors in flowers . . . The "manifold wisdom of God" does not refer to redemption as such but rather to the new relationship between believing Jews and Gentiles in one body. The medium by which this wisdom is communicated is **the church**; the recipients are the angelic hosts "in the heavenly realms" . . . These "rulers and authorities" refer to both good and evil angels as seen in 6:12 . . . As the angelic hosts witness the church, they must admit that having Jews and Gentiles in one body is evidence of God's wisdom.

Here is a statement of **PURPOSE** for why “the mystery which has been hidden” has now been revealed:

“IN ORDER THAT NOW, THROUGH THE CHURCH, [His body, made up of Jews and Gentiles who know Jesus Christ] MIGHT BE MADE KNOWN TO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES, THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD.”

Wuest points out:

The church thus becomes the university for angels, and each saint a professor. Only in the church can the angels come to an adequate comprehension of the grace of God. They look at the church to investigate the mystery of redemption. 1 Peter 1:12 speaks of the things which the angels have a passionate desire to stoop down and look into, like the golden cherubim that overshadow the Mercy Seat, ever gazing upon the sprinkled blood that is upon it.
p. (unknown)

The only way the angels in heaven can find anything about the plan of redemption is what they can see in the life of a victorious Christian who walks day-by-day with Him. To them the plan of redemption is a mystery and they have no part in it. They are merely spectators when it comes to this great plan.

The hymn writer had it right:

Holy, holy, holy, is what the angels sing,
And I expect to help them, make the courts of heaven ring.
And when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings,
For angels never felt the joy, that our salvation brings.

Abbott says:

10-13. *It is God's purpose, that even the angelic powers should learn through the Church the varied wisdom of God as shown in His eternal purpose in Christ.*

p. 88

Boice says:

It is not only we, the members of the church, who are directed to look at this mystery. "The rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" are also said to be looking at the church as the place where God's manifold wisdom is made known (v. 10). What is that "manifold wisdom" these heavenly authorities are to see? What is the purpose of God made known in the worldwide community of God's people?

p. 103

Boice says:

When Satan rebelled against God and carried the host of fallen angels, now demons, with him into eternal ruin, God could have crushed the rebellion and annihilated Satan and his hosts forever. That would have been just and reasonable. It might even have been merciful; for if God had gone on to create Adam and Eve, as he had no doubt determined to do beforehand, Satan would not have been there to tempt them, the pair would not have fallen, and sin and death would not have passed upon the race.

But this would not have shown God's "manifold wisdom." It would have shown his power and perhaps even his mercy. But it would not have shown that God's way, the way of truth and righteousness, is the only really good way and the only sure path to happiness.

So instead of annihilating Satan, God took an entirely different path: "I have already determined to create a race called man, and I know in advance, because I know all things, that Satan will seduce him from my righteousness and plunge him into misery. Satan will think he has won. But while Satan is doing that—turning the human race against me and setting individual human beings against one another and even against themselves—I will begin to create a new people who will glory in doing what is right, even when it is not popular, and who will delight in pleasing me, even when they suffer for it. Satan will say 'Your people serve you only because you protect them, only because you provide for them materially.' But here and there in a great variety of ways I will allow them to be greatly abused and persecuted, and I will show by their reactions that not only will they continue to praise me in their suffering, and thus bring glory to my name, but that they will even be happier in their sufferings than Satan's people will be with their maximum share of human prestige and possessions." pp. 105-106

Lovett says:

NOW! How startling that the central feature of God's master-plan, the church, was a top secret locked in His heart. It was kept from the entire spirit-world! Jesus said He was going to build His church, but who dreamed it was going to be a living house for the Living God! One which He plans to occupy for the rest of His life! The Greek indicates that God's church is like a theatre where His wisdom is being acted out to educate the spirit-world as to the size of His heart and genius. p. 103

Meyer says:

Multitudes of holy beings are there.

We know little of them. The vague term “principalities and powers in the heavenly places” veils as much as it reveals. But we shall know them one day, and be known by them. And we shall make them know the manifold wisdom and the eternal purpose of God. Here is the ministry that shall engage our redeemed energies in the land of the unsetting sun, where the flight of time is not marked, because time shall be no more. Heaven is not set out with couches and beds of ease, for our luxurious enjoyment. His servants see his face and serve. And their aim is ever to pass on to others some deeper knowledge of the being and attributes of God.

p. 36

Meyer says:

It is through the Church that God's Wisdom is made known.

Men learn God's manifold wisdom in creation: in the limpet whose fragile shell may be pierced by a tiny insect, yet resists the blow of the mightiest wave; in the eye that is able to adjust itself immediately to the waxing or waning light; in the hand, so marvellously adapted to its myriad purposes, that the study of its manipulating dexterity has before now convinced infidelity of the being of God. But angels learn the manifold wisdom of God by studying the adaptation of His grace to the varied needs of His saints. As students discover the wonderful resources of the surgeon, who passes through the wards of the hospital adapting himself to the need of each sufferer; so do angels and the lofty spirits of heaven learn secrets they had never known, but for the infinite variety of sin and need and sorrow with which God has to deal, and which become so many prisms to break up the white ray of His character into its varied constituent hues.

p. 80

Patrick & Lowth say:

. . . *To the principalities and powers.*] This phrase, though used of evil spirits, vi. 12, may be understood of good angels, the mystery of godliness being then “seen of angels,” 1 Tim. iii. 16, and the things which the apostles preached by the Holy Ghost, being such as “the angels desired to look into,” 1 Pet. i. 12. That the words . . . and . . . always signify things, or persons in heaven, is very evident. So . . . is “our heavenly Father,” Matt. xviii. 25 . . . “heavenly things,” to be taught only by him “who was in heaven,” John iii. . . . “the Lord from heaven,” 1 Cor. xv. 48, 49, . . . 12, 13, . . . “heavenly bodies,” viz. the stars, 1 Cor. xv. 40, . . . “the kingdom to be enjoyed in heaven,” 2 Tim. iv. 18, Heb. xi. 16, . . . “the Jerusalem that is above,” Heb. xii. 22 . . . “the pattern of things in heaven,” Heb. viii. 5, . . . “heavenly things,” Heb. ix. 23. Hence are they distinguished from “things on earth,” or “under the earth,” Phil. ii. 10. The words are five times used in this epistle, and always signify “heavenly places.” So it doth when we are said to “sit down with Christ, . . . in heavenly places,” . . .

p. 754

(Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey by Gary L. Thomas) Eugene, OR: Harvest House. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 1999/2011.

Have you ever been hit exactly where you’re weakest, when you’re weakest, and felt as if you were set up? Ever think that maybe you *were*? This is not to excuse sin, but to help us understand that spiritual beings are actively tempting us, our family members, and our coworkers to sin. We must vigorously embrace grace, understanding, and forgiveness, or these spiritual foes will tear apart our homes, our churches, and our workplaces.

p. 202

(Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Books: Being a collection of sentences, illustrations, and quaint sayings from that renowned Puritan, Thomas Brooks by C.H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Banner of Truth Trust, 2011.

Christians, remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from graces received, but from the fresh and renewed influences of heaven. You must lean more upon Christ than upon spiritual tastes and discoveries; you must lean more upon Christ than upon your graces; or else Satan will lead you into captivity.

p. 36

(Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 2011.

You know why I don't climb mountains, even though part of me thinks scaling Everest would be the experience of a lifetime? You know why I'm careful when I drive? It's because there are four faces always before me who really do depend on me—financially, relationally, and otherwise (my wife and three children). There is now a church community in Houston, Texas, that has made a major investment in my ministry and cares about whether I'm available to serve them. There are churches around the world contacting me after reading a book and asking me to speak. I can't serve them without taking care of myself physically.

I only have one body and one life. By God's design, that life may end before I ever complete this book. But I don't want selfishness to steal a single minute away from those I love or from those I'm called to serve.

God has given us his word and a direct command: We are not our own. We were bought at a price. Therefore we must honor God with our bodies.

p. 50

Since the contemporary church tends to define sinful indulgence as anything having to do with sexual immorality or illicit substances (getting drunk or stoned), we're acutely sensitive to avoid such sins. But many of us feel quite comfortable with bodies that don't honor God—in large part because everyone else in our church looks just like us. Too many of us are members of Calorie Chapel!

p. 93

v. 11 According to the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

This was according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This mystery—that both believing Jews and Gentiles are in one body (3:6)—was revealed to the apostles and prophets (v. 5) and was disseminated by Paul (vv. 7-9). Its **purpose** was that angelic beings might see God’s variegated wisdom. This whole plan was in accord with God’s **eternal** intent **which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord** (v. 11). This means either that God is now carrying out His eternal purpose, or that He carried it out (accomplished it) in Christ about 2,000 years ago. The latter view is preferable because (a) “accomplished” is in the past tense not the present or perfect tense, and (b) the inclusion of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body was in fact accomplished by Christ’s death.

He has already spoken of this **“ETERNAL PURPOSE”** in:

Ephesians 1:10 (DAV)

with reference to a plan for the fullness of the times, to bring everything together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth in Him.

Paul is saying this “mystery” and ministry which has been given to him is in accordance with the MASTER PLAN which we have already looked at together in Ephesians 1.

MacArthur says:

3:11 *the eternal purpose*. The supreme purpose of the church is to glorify God, which includes the displaying of His wisdom (v. 10) before the angels, who then honor Him with even greater praise.
pp. 1689-90

Robertson says:

“According to the purpose (1:11) of the ages.” God’s purpose runs on through the ages. “Through the ages one eternal purpose runs.”
p. 532

(Life on the Highest Plane: A Study of the Spiritual Nature and Needs of Man by Ruth Paxson) Chicago, IL: Moody Press. Copyright—The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1928.

IN THE TWO WONDROUS GIFTS of His Son and His Spirit, God has made perfect provision for a life of true spirituality. God's twofold gift to us was not a partial gift. When He gave Christ He gave all of Christ; when He gave the Holy Spirit He gave all of the Holy Spirit. *He withheld nothing from us.* Love not only gave its best but its all. When God gave Christ to us He gave Him in all the fullness of His perfect life and His perfected work. When God gave the Holy Spirit He gave Him to indwell, to infill and to empower. God is not a niggardly, grudging giver. In the glorified Christ through the fullness of the Holy Spirit He has given all that He has to give to make us spiritual. This is the perfection of grace, the acme even of divine giving.

God has made the provision but you must make the decision whether you will be Spirit-filled or not. There is a place in God's dealings with men beyond which He cannot go. He Himself set this boundary line in man's right to will. He sets the feast before you but He cannot compel you to eat. He opens the door into the abundant life but He cannot coerce you to enter. He places in the bank of God a deposit that made you a spiritual multimillionaire but He cannot write your checks. God has done His part, now you must do yours.

p. 325

(Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey by Gary L. Thomas) Eugene, OR: Harvest House. Copyright—Gary Thomas, 1999/2011.

The Christian life will not be easy, but glory awaits us. When the love of Christ grips our hearts, we will suffer anything for His sake, endure any difficulty, or persevere through any trial. We will begin to understand these words from William Law: "How many saints has adversity sent to Heaven? And how many poor sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery?"⁷ And perhaps we will even embrace the final wisdom of John of the Cross: "I would not consider any spirituality worthwhile that wants to walk in sweetness and ease and run from the imitation of Christ."⁸

7. William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 291.

8. John of the Cross, "The Ascent of Mt. Carmel," in *Selected Writings*, II:7:8.

p. 209

(Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce by Kristin Armstrong) New York, NY: FaithWords. Copyright– Kristin Armstrong, 2007.

PACE YOURSELF

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

HEBREWS 12:1

I belong to a women's running group, and we often run pacing workouts on the local high school track. After warming up we begin a series of 5 one-mile repeats. Each mile is four laps around the track. The goal is to remain at a consistent speed or run a negative split, which means to run faster at the end than when you started.

It's tempting to start too fast in the false exuberance of fresh legs and be unable to complete the work. It's easy to be inconsistent, speeding up or slowing down depending on who is running nearby, or whether the coach is watching.

I love the metaphor of the track as I apply it to my life.

We are called spiritually to run our own race, to persevere, to be nourished, to be consistent, to set goals, to remain focused, and to push our limits.

I want to mature in my faith to a state of tenacity and sinew. I want to know my pace and to gain the experience, endurance, and wisdom to run a lifetime negative split.

p. 114

v. 12 in whom we are having our boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

in whom we have boldness and confident access to God because of Christ's faithfulness.

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Through faith in Christ Christians have the right of address (**freedom**, . . . "courage, boldness"; . . . and the right of access (**approach**, . . . to **God with . . . confidence**. Though God's eternal plan was accomplished in Christ nearly two millennia ago, believers can still address God and go to Him freely and confidently.

"IN WHOM" refers **BACK** to "Christ Jesus our Lord" in verse 11.

It is in Him **"WE ARE HAVING" TWO THINGS**:

1. **"OUR BOLDNESS"** to come to a holy God and
2. **"ACCESS IN CONFIDENCE."**

Paul has already mentioned in:

Ephesians 2:18 (DAV)

because through Him we are both [referring to Jew and Gentile] having access by one Spirit to the Father.

Here he is speaking of this:

“ACCESS IN CONFIDENCE THROUGH FAITH IN HIM.”

Hebrews 4:14-16 (TLB)

But Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who has gone to heaven itself to help us; therefore let us never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, since he had the same temptations we do, though he never once gave way to them and sinned. So let us come boldly to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.

1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Lloyd-Jones says:

Boldness means fearlessness, a freedom from all apprehension, and from all doubt that we may be rejected. It means freedom from all sense of evil which tends to make true prayer impossible. Boldness obviously means an absence of restraint or fear in any shape or form. When we think of a bold man, we think of one who steps straight forward, who is afraid of nothing. Though facing a mighty enemy the bold man walks with chest high and with confidence and with assurance. He is not conscious of inhibitions, he is not hesitant or doubtful or uncertain. Boldness is the exact opposite of all that indicates weakness.

The second term is *access*. This can be translated as 'entrée'. A man says that he has gained an entrée into some exclusive club; many people are not allowed in, but he has found a way of getting in, a means of entry. It connotes the privilege of entrance, of admission. Paul's use of the term means, then, that there is a relationship existing between us and God whereby we know that we are acceptable to Him and have an assurance that He is favourably disposed towards us. That is the essence of this term 'access'. We know that God is ready to look upon us favourably and that He is waiting to receive us. So we do not hesitate as it were on the doorstep, we have a right of entry, an access, an entrée. This is a very strong term which the Apostle has already used in verse 18 of the second chapter.

p. 97

Patzia says:

Lest the readers conclude that the God who worked out this eternal plan is somehow removed from the everyday affairs of mankind, the apostle turns to a practical concern and reminds them that their union with Christ grants them the privilege of communicating with God (**in him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence**). The words in Greek are “boldness” (*parrēsia*), “access” (*prosagōgē*), and **confidence** (*pepoithēsis*). *Parrēsia* is used in the NT in the context of speaking, such as boldness in proclaiming the gospel (Acts 4:31; Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:20) and confidence in approaching God (Heb. 4:16, 10:19).

Christians have that boldness in approaching God because their faith and union with Christ have given them **confidence**. In Christ, all barriers have been removed that would keep the believer from approaching God openly and confidently. Christ has revealed the Father as one who has forgiven his children and who loves them. B. F. Westcott aptly comments that “the right of address and the right of access are coupled together as parts of the right of personal communion with God” . . .
p. 218

(The Spiritual Combat by Lorenzo Scupoli) Mesa, AZ: Scriptoria. Copyright—
Scriptoria Books, 2009.

DISTRUST of yourself is so necessary in the spiritual combat, that without it you may be assured that you will neither gain the desired victory, nor be able to overcome even the weakest of your passions. You must be firmly convinced in your mind that this is the case, for we are too prone through our natural corruption to make a false estimate of ourselves; so that, though we are absolutely nothing, we persuade ourselves that we are something, and presume without the slightest foundation on our own strength.

p. 5

(Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections Between Sexuality and Spirituality by Rob Bell) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Rob Bell, 2007.

Even in healthy relationships, an offhand comment or a rolling of the eyes can cripple us for days or years or even a lifetime. This is because the more we open ourselves up, the more vulnerable we are. The more exposed we are, the more it hurts. The more we let someone in, the greater the risk. Surprise, anger, shock, betrayal, helplessness—it all gets mixed in together.

There's a phrase that I have heard used to explain how God loves everybody equally. People say that "the ground at the foot of the cross is level." The idea is that God has no favorites, that no matter where you're coming from and what you've done and who you've been with and how badly you've screwed it up, the cross is the place where God looks past it all and forgives and accepts and wipes the slate clean.

It's a beautiful idea, really.

So the statement works as a truth about God's power. God's power to liberate and cleanse and forgive and grant new life, new hope, new mercy. God's power to take something that appears hopeless and redeem it. But the statement could also be seen in a totally different light.

The ground at the foot of the cross is level for God too.

In matters of love, it's as if God has agreed to play by the same rules we do. God can be anything—that's what makes God, God. But God can't do everything. God can't make us love him—that's our choice.

Love is risky for God too.

Which is a bit like a boy asking a girl to dance.¹⁰²
pp. 108-109

(The Greatest Gift: A Collection Devoted to Prayer by Bruce Wilkinson, Oliver North, Ruth Myers, Shirley Dobson, Otis Ledbetter, Ron Mehl, David Jeremiah, and Greg Laurie) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright– Multnomah Publishers, 2006.

Ask the Lord for a growing thirst for Him. Pray often about this, for yourself and for others. Begin with A. W. Tozer’s prayer from *The Pursuit of God*.

O God, I have tasted Your goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more . . . O God, the Triune God, I want to want You; I long to be filled with longing . . . Show me Your glory, I pray, so that I may know You indeed . . . Give me grace to rise and follow You up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

p. 143

KEEP ON

Those three little words in Matthew 7:7 are not only imperatives, but in their original Greek tense they have a kind of continuing action connected with them. Jesus is saying *keep on* asking, *keep on* seeking, and *keep on* knocking. Don’t ever stop; just keep doing it. Always, whatever you need—just ask.

We could learn a lot from children on that score, couldn’t we? I remember hearing a story about a little boy who was at home with his father while the mother was away for the evening. The father (who wasn’t as familiar with the boy’s bedtime routine as the mother was) was trying to get the boy to sleep. Shortly after tucking his son into bed for the night, he was reading his newspaper when he heard a little voice calling out from the bedroom: “Daddy? I need a drink of water.”

The father went upstairs and brought him a drink of water, and of course a short time later the boy called out to say he had to go to the bathroom. Repeatedly the boy kept calling his father to come up and take care of this or that—locating a lost teddy bear, turning on a night light, shutting a closet door.

Finally the exasperated dad reached the limit of his patience. “No more. Young man, you’re fine, so get quiet! If I hear another sound from you, I’ll come up and give you a spanking!”

For several moments, all was silent. Then the little voice drifted downstairs once more: “Daddy, when you come up here to spank me, could you bring me another drink of water?”

That’s how children are. They never quit. It doesn’t matter how many times you say no, they keep coming back. They keep asking. They ask and ask and ask.

(Voices from the Past: Puritan Devotional Readings edited by Richard Rushing) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Richard Rushing, 2009.

We must store up in our hearts a sense of the love of God in Christ, with the eternal design of his grace, with the taste of the blood of Christ, and his love in the shedding of it. We must cherish our adoption, justification, and our acceptance with God. Fill your hearts with thoughts of the beauty of holiness, since this was the design of Christ in his death. With these considerations you will in the ordinary course of walking with God have great peace and security from the disturbances of temptations.

p. 101

(31 Days of Encouragement: as We Grow Older by Ruth Myers) Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. Copyright– Ruth Myers, 2011.

In the final pages of *The Perfect Love*, in a section on our need for continual submission to the Lord, she had quoted in Jim Elliot: “That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime.” She believed life’s later years are meant to be just as spiritually vibrant and rewarding as earlier seasons.

p. 10

(31 Days of Encouragement: as We Grow Older by Ruth Myers) Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. Copyright— Ruth Myers, 2011.

Lord, don't let me drift through life—or worse, to just sit back and wait for life on earth to end.

Grant me a growth mentality
 so that I'll live on the cutting edge in
 becoming more than I am.
 Give me growth especially in the things
 most important to You—
 in loving You,
 in loving people,
 in doing Your will for my life, be it great or small.
 As Milton wrote when blind in his old age,
 “They also serve who only stand and wait”¹—
 keep me available—glad to serve—
 yet not needing to be needed.
 May I grow in faith and praise and prayer.
 May I enjoy a growing hunger for You
 and a growing depth in my walk with You.
 May my later years be a time when I expand
 in some ways and consolidate in others—
 when I get ready for a new thrust—
 a thrust beyond the confines of earth!

Lord, may my ability to find joy in You never diminish. May there always be a growing edge in my relationship with You—an “eternal preoccupation” with You, just as You so graciously instruct me:

Delight yourself in the LORD,
 and he will give you the desires of your
 heart. (PSALM 37:4)

1. John Milton, Sonnet 19.
 pp. 20-21

(Finish Strong: Amazing Stories of Courage and Inspiration by Dan Green)
Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, LLC. Copyright– Simple Truths, LLC,
2008.

“BELIEVE AND ACT
AS IF IT WERE
IMPOSSIBLE TO FAIL.”

— CHARLES F KETTERING

p. 9

“REGARDLESS OF WHAT CAME BEFORE
OR OF WHAT HAS YET TO COME,
WHAT MATTERS MOST RIGHT NOW
IS HOW I CHOOSE TO REPEND TO
THE CHALLENGE BEFORE ME.
WILL I LIE DOWN OR WILL I FIGHT?
THE CHOICE IS MINE AND I CHOOSE TO
FINISH STRONG.”

— DAN GREEN

p. 10

(The Best of A. W. Tozer by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe)
Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers. Copyright– Zur Ltd., 1978,
2000.

First, the trouble may be no more than a temporary break in God-conscious communion due to any one of half a hundred causes. The cure is faith. Trust God in the dark till the light returns.

Second, should the sense of remoteness persist in spite of prayer and what you believe is faith, look to your inner life for evidences of wrong attitudes, evil thoughts or dispositional flaws. These are unlike God and create a psychological gulf between you and Him. Put away the evil from you, believe, and the sense of nearness will be restored.

p. 54

v. 13 Wherefore I am asking you not to lose heart over my tribulations on your behalf, which is your glory.

The NET Bible translates verse 13:

For this reason I ask you not to lose heart because of what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Peterson paraphrases verse 13:

So don't let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud!

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this verse and then says:

THE INJUNCTION (3:13).

3:13. This verse marks the conclusion of the sentence begun in verse 2. If the Ephesians truly understood “the administration of God’s grace that was given to” Paul (v. 2), they should **not . . . be discouraged because of his sufferings for them.** His sufferings were for their gain and **glory.** If Paul had not dispensed to the Gentiles the stewardship of God’s grace, then Jews would not have been hostile to him and he would not have been imprisoned. His preaching brought salvation to the Gentiles, but it incurred the wrath of many Jews on him. However, many others became members of the church, Christ’s body, and this was their glory.

Pentecost, speaking on verse 13, says:

Because of the particular relationship which we have to Him, we ought to be living above the experiences of life that come to us.
(source unknown)

Barclay, in speaking on this verse, says:

Paul finishes with a prayer that his friends may not be discouraged by his imprisonment. Perhaps they might think that the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles will be greatly hindered because the champion of the Gentiles is in prison. [It might be that they might be afraid lest a like fate should befall them.] Paul reminds them that the afflictions through which he is going are for their good.

p. 146

They need never fear that God's cause will be handicapped because Paul is in prison. God's cause is greater than any man.

Anders says:

The eternal plan accomplished in Christ was administered in many ways. These included Paul's becoming a prisoner and proclaiming this message while in chains. Paul's situation in prison could easily discourage young churches and turn them away from Jesus. Paul urged the Ephesians not to let this happen. His suffering was no reason for sadness. It helped accomplish God's plan. Through Paul's suffering the Ephesian believers gain **glory**, that is they are led to know Christ more intimately and experience salvation more fully.

p. 130

Foulkes says:

Paul was aware of the fact that they were tempted to lose heart because he, the apostle and champion of the Gentiles, was in prison. (See on vi. 21f.) This they must not do, but rather realize that his sufferings were their gain and *glory*. It was true that he was suffering imprisonment *for* them, because he had given his life to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and because he had stood for the equality of Gentiles with Jews in the one people of God (see on iii. 1). But in his willingness to do this, and in the grace of Christ given to him in imprisonment, they could glory.

p. 100

Hendriksen says:

The apostle concludes this parenthetical paragraph by writing: **Therefore I ask (you) not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory—**. Meaning: because we have been endowed with this courage of confident access, we should rise above discouragement. Joy in the Lord should fill our hearts at all times, for no one can take from us the blessings which are ours in Christ Jesus our Lord . . .
pp. 161-2

Hendriksen says:

. . . “What an honor it is for you that in the very eyes of God you are regarded as being worthy of so much suffering endured by me in your behalf!” (see on verse 1). How precious you must be to him!
p. 162

Lange says:

Wherefore I beseech . . .—This refers to ver. 12 (“we have our boldness and our access”); he proves this in petition, of course, to God.
p. 117

Lincoln says:

The possible cause of discouragement for the readers is Paul’s sufferings on their behalf. Since it is unlikely that readers not known personally to Paul would actually need reassurance for their own faith because the apostle is suffering or had suffered, the request of this verse serves, rather, as an apologetic device to show how even Paul’s sufferings and martyrdom are no cause for shame, but fit the magnificent scope of his apostolic ministry that has just been set forth . . .
p. 191

O'Brien says:

The final words of the paragraph are an entreaty to the readers not to become discouraged because of Paul's sufferings. The inferential particle *therefore* draw out the implications of the great truths he has set before them (vv. 2-12). Paul has written about the eternal purposes of God, the place of his Gentile readers within the divine plan, as well as his own role in relation to it. God had appointed him to enlighten them about the mystery, and as a result he undergoes suffering for them.

p. 250

Westcott says:

St Paul goes back to the thought of his imprisonment (v. 1 . . .) and points out that his readers should not be disheartened at the afflictions which his teaching had brought to him (comp. c. vi.22). These were as nothing in comparison to the privilege of preaching the Gospel, so that they were their 'glory,' inasmuch as they shewed the grandeur of the truth which they had received.

p. 49

(Take My Heart, O God: Riches from the Greatest Christian Women Writers of All Times by Sarah Young) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Worthy Media, Inc., 2010.

We need someone to show us that our pain can be redeemed and there is light ahead of us. And the ones who show this best are those who have lived deeply and have not sidestepped suffering.

—REBECCA MANLEY PIPPERT

p. 1/10

From heaven's perspective, trials looked extraordinarily different. When viewed from its own level, my paralysis seemed like a huge, impassable wall; but when viewed from above, the wall appeared as a thin line, something that could be overcome.

—JONI EARECKSON TADA

PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Gazing down at the land from thirty thousand feet in an airplane, everything looks doll-house size. Trees that would dwarf you if you stood close by look as if they could fit in the palm of your hand. Rivers seem like ribbons.

Life. It's really all about perspective.

And so it is with life's problems. On this side of heaven, we feel dwarfed and discouraged by hurdles that seem insurmountable. We feel walled in and helpless. But from God's perspective, problems look like opportunities for us to trust him. He waits for us to lift the concerns that look large to us and place them into his infinitely larger hands. When we do this, our big problems become bearable. We know that with God on our side, the problems can be overcome.

Ask your heavenly Burden-bearer for his perspective today. Your problems are an opportunity to draw closer to him.

p. 1/14

(The Glorious Pursuit: Embracing the Virtues of Christ by Gary L. Thomas)
 Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 1998.

Learn to suffer with patience. God will send frequent and probably great suffering into your life. This is His doing; He has chosen it; accept it.

JEANNE GUYON

p. 121

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

God is in this life preparing his people for a better world and part of that process is effected by trial and affliction, so that it frequently happens that the godly are in adversity while the wicked are in prosperity. 1415.289

p. 479

All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. 2098.429

p. 479

(Smooth Stones Taken from Ancient Books: Being a collection of sentences, illustrations, and quaint sayings from that renowned Puritan, Thomas Brooks by C.H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Banner of Truth Trust, 2011.

Long afflictions will much set off the glory of heaven. The longer the storm, the sweeter the calm; the longer the winter nights, the sweeter the summer days. The new wine of Christ's kingdom is most sweet to those who have long been drinking gall and vinegar. The higher the mountain, the gladder we shall be when we get to the top of it. The longer our journey is, the sweeter will be our end; and the longer our passage is, the more desirable will the haven be.

p. 82

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

Oh, for grace to love the rough paths, because we see his footprints upon them! 2212.366

p. 302

(Simply Sacred by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright—Gary Thomas, 2011.

Dr. Mitchell Whitman, a clinical psychologist, was describing his frustration over some people's tendency in midlife to reject everything they once believed in and destroy their families, their children, and their character. They make themselves and everyone around them miserable. They become increasingly misguided and seem to make ever-worse choices, until they get buried under a cascading avalanche of stupidity.

Those who study human nature understand that foolishness begets foolishness. We can become “increasingly stupid” when we start making unwise choices; the snowball effect of darkened thinking can cause utter ruin. When Paul writes, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2), he is declaring, as C. E. B. Cranfield observes, that “when Christians allow themselves to be conformed to this world, what takes place is not just a disguising of their real nature but an inward corruption.

We are fallen creatures radically dependent on God's *continuing* mercy and grace. When we shut God off, we become vulnerable to any foolish whim; our emotions and passions may rule us and degrade us. Worse, we even lose the spiritual perception that otherwise can warn us about what is happening.

p. 83

(Happily Ever After: Walking with Peace and Courage Through a Year of Divorce by Kristin Armstrong) New York, NY: FaithWords. Copyright– Kristin Armstrong, 2007.

ACE THIS TEST

The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

DEUTERONOMY 13:3

The answer to this test is a matter of trust.

The way we show the Lord whether or not we love Him with all our heart and soul is to surrender ourselves and our lives into His hands.

The more we know God, the more we trust Him. The more we trust Him, the greater our faith. How do we get to know God? We pray to Him, seeking Him and sharing our hearts with Him. We read His Word, allowing Him to speak to us in His timeless and profound method. We offer what we have and ask Him to multiply it and direct us.

It isn't so much a matter of effort as it is a matter of release. It is an infinitely more challenging task because it requires giving up our control and self-reliance. It is letting go of the small to hold on to something big.

When the Lord allows a season of testing in your life, show Him the depth of your love by placing your trust in Him.

p. 126

(Simply Sacred by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright—Gary Thomas, 2011.

In short, we miss out when we insist on self-absorption, affluence, and ease rather than pursue a deeper walk with God. We miss out on an intimacy heralded by previous blessed generations, a fellowship of labor, suffering, persecution, and selflessness. Of course, it doesn't sound like much fun initially; but those who have walked these solitary roads have left behind a witness that they have reached a glorious, invigorating, soul-satisfying land. These women and men testify to being radically satisfied in God, even though others may scratch their heads as they try to figure out how someone who walks such a hardship-filled road could possibly be happy.

The fact is that in a broken, fallen world, we have only two real choices: mature friendship with God, or radical disillusionment. The new groundwork that needs to be laid is an authentic faith that is based on a God-centered life. Rather than the believer being the sun around whom God, the church, and the world revolves to create a happy, easy, and prosperous life, God becomes the sun around which the believer revolves, a believer who is willing to suffer, even to be persecuted, and lay down his life to build God's kingdom and to serve God's church. This is a radical shift—indeed, the most radical (and freeing) shift known in human experience.

If you find yourself hovering on the precipice of disillusionment, ask yourself: What am I living for really? Friendship with God and service to the king, or a life free from hassle?

p. 29

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

May you be rooted and grounded in love. May your convictions be deep, your love real, your desires earnest. May your whole life be so settled and established, that all the blasts of hell, and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you. But notice how this blessing of being “stablished in the faith” is gained. The apostle’s words point us to *suffering* as the means employed—“*After that ye have suffered awhile.*” It is of no use to hope that we shall be well rooted if no rough winds pass over us. Those old gnarlings on the root of the oak tree, and those strange twistings of the branches, all tell of the many storms that have swept over it, and they are also indicators of the depth into which the roots have forced their way. So the Christian is made strong, and firmly rooted by all the trials and storms of life. Shrink not then from the tempestuous winds of trial, but take comfort, believing that by their rough discipline God is fulfilling this benediction to you.

p. 386

(Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright –Gary L. Thomas, 2000.

The same conclusion could be made about marriage. Every marriage has sorrows. Every marriage has trials. There isn’t a shared bedroom in this country where tension doesn’t occasionally or perhaps frequently lift its snarling head. Many a pillow has been a solemn receptacle for soul-felt tears, cried late at night or even all throughout the day. We don’t get to choose which sorrows or trials we are called to bear, only that we must endure them.

p. 145

(Authentic Faith: The Power of a Fire-Tested Life by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Gary L. Thomas, 2002.

If we want to know whether a building will stand strong or not, we look at it when the wind is blowing hard. Similarly, we can list the reality of a man’s Christian practice when he is under the trials of God’s providence.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

p. 55

(Finish Strong: Amazing Stories of Courage and Inspiration by Dan Green)
 Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, LLC. Copyright– Simple Truths, LLC,
 2008.

*“Most of us have far more courage than
 we ever dreamed we possessed.”*
 DALE CARNEGIE

“Have the courage to live. Anyone can die.”
 ROBERT CODY

*“Courage is almost a contradiction
 in terms. It means a strong desire
 to live taking the form of a
 readiness to die.”*
 GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

p. 13

(A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and
 God’s Sovereignty by Joni Eareckson Tada) Colorado Springs, CO:
 David C. Cook. Copyright– Joni Eareckson Tada, 2010.

For instance, I absolutely love that beautiful hymn (a great favorite of my parents) “I Come to the Garden Alone.” Remember the verse that says, “He speaks and the sound of His voice is so sweet, the birds hush their singing”? It’s a nice sentiment, and I’m aware that a thought like that can provide comfort. But it’s really just a reinforcement of a romanticized nineteenth-century image. We have gilded the real Jesus with so much “dew on the roses” that many people have lost touch with Him—or simply turned away.

p. 31

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Because everything that happens in Paul's life happens because the Lord has allowed it, he can declare "[I am] the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" (verse 1).

LESSON #2: Paul tells us the mystery of Christ was given to him by revelation (verse 3).

LESSON #3: His personal passion is to proclaim the mystery of Christ and be faithful to complete the work the Lord has for him to do.

LESSON #4: The mystery that Paul is proclaiming is "that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (verse 6).

LESSON #5: Paul is just a vessel as he describes himself in verse 8: "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the fathomless riches of Christ."

LESSON #6: Paul speaks in verse 11 of the "eternal purpose which [God the Father] carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

LESSON #7: A mystery in the Old Testament is concealed and in the New Testament revealed.

LESSON #8: There is one church His body made up of all those who have life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #9: Only in the church can angels comprehend the grace of God.

LESSON #10: We have access to the Father through the Son and by the Spirit.

LESSON #11: Paul is personally concerned about the saints in Ephesus over the difficulties he is going through at this time in being imprisoned. He does not want them to lose heart because of the hard times he is having.

In this study, **HIS PLAN FOR A BODY**, we have noted together this plan was a **MYSTERY NOT KNOWN** in generations past, but revealed to the Apostle Paul that:

“the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and belonging to the same body, and partakers of the [one] promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

Not only was he the instrument God used in revealing the mystery, but also he had the privilege of becoming a minister according to the gift of the grace of God to preach the gospel.

(Day by Day with the English Puritans compiled and edited by Randall J. Pederson) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright—Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004.

Blush Daily

Richard Alleine

Friends, whatever your faults are, do not mince the matter, do not count your errors little errors, your sins, little sins. Be sure of this, that mincing is not the way to mending. Shame yourselves before the Lord, abase yourselves in His sight; study the greatness of those you count your little sins; rip open your hearts, and find out what a nest of wickedness is there; ransack your ways, and see what a course of folly and vanity is to be found there, and do not go about to hide them. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Prov. 28:13). Do not go about to hide them, but confess them, and spread them before the Lord, till your soul is ashamed. O that this word might send us to our homes, every one of us with an aching heart, and a blushing face, that it might make us all fall down before God, with Ezra’s words in our mouth, “O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses are grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:6). Let us blush at our hypocrisy, let us blush at our lukewarmness, let us blush at our worldliness and carnality; let us blush in our prayers, let us go blushing home, and weeping as we go; let us acknowledge we all are as an unclean thing, and our righteousness is as filthy rags.

p. 145

(The Greatest Gift: A Collection Devoted to Prayer by Bruce Wilkinson, Oliver North, Ruth Myers, Shirley Dobson, Otis Ledbetter, Ron Mehl, David Jeremiah, and Greg Laurie) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright– Multnomah Publishers, 2006.

Several years ago when I preached about prayer in Matthew 7, our church's superbly creative drama team came up with a great way to set our minds on what Jesus is saying in that passage.

Here's what we saw and heard that Sunday:

On the stage is a sort of vestibule outlined with filing cabinets. A couple is entering the vestibule, and a man is waiting there for them. From their conversation, we learn that this is the threshold of heaven, and the apostle Peter himself is inviting the couple in.

After a brief discussion, the man asks Peter, "What are all these filing cabinets for?"

Peter explains that inside the filing drawers are inventories of all the unclaimed gifts God was prepared to give His children, yet they failed to request them from Him. "One of these cabinets has a drawer marked for you," Peter says. "And in it are all the things God wanted to give you that you never asked for."

I'll never forget that! If there were a drawer like that in heaven for you and me, how full would it be? Some of us may be shocked in eternity to realize the potential ministry impact we could have had, and the true blessings we could have known, if we'd only just asked God for them.
pp. 125-6