

A Practical Study of EPHESIANS

HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

“What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

Study Number Five – His Plan for a Body – Ephesians 3:1-13

We now come to chapter 3, the last of the DOCTRINAL sections.

Once again the apostle is going to turn to PRAYER—the magnificent prayer that ends this section.

We’re going to look at the first 13 verses—His Plan for a Body—study #5.

Our KEY VERSE for this study is verse 6:

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

Thus far in the four expositions we looked at in the “Master Plan.”

Taking an overview, it is:

God the Father SELECTING us,

God the Son PURCHASING us, and

God the Spirit SEALING us.

Then we looked at “His Plan for Getting to Know Him” as Paul prayed that our capacity might be enlarged, that we might know Jesus Christ more intimately.

And then we looked at “His Plan for Giving Life.” It is a gift of God’s grace, apart from human works, is basically the summation of that study.

And then we looked at “His Plan for Peace.”

Where the Spirit of God is, there’s peace.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness of it, quietness and assurance forever.” (Isaiah 32:17)

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.” (Isaiah 26:3)

Our peace is disturbed when we get our eyes off the Lord and on our circumstances. Our peace is disturbed when we are

having a problem in conflicts in relationships. Our peace is disturbed when we have offended the Lord and we have not dealt with it, we're no longer at peace.

“Great peace have they which love Thy law and nothing shall offend them.” (Psalm 119:165)

Now in the Bible when it comes to talking about the New Testament church, there are basically TWO ILLUSTRATIONS that we have to remember.

In in our last study we saw one of the pictures—the picture of a BUILDING. And that building was a building on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

Jesus Christ is the CHIEF CORNERSTONE of that building in Paul's picture.

When we're born-again by the Spirit, we are “living stones”—is the way he describes it. We are placed in that building.

Paul sees this magnificent building going up and it continues to build. And one of these days the last stone is going to be put into that building and then it's going to be a TEMPLE, a dwelling place for God Himself, a residence for Jesus Christ who is that chief cornerstone.

Now there's one other illustration in the Bible that Paul uses and it comes out in a number of the epistles. And it's the term BODY. The church is a body. Paul means a HUMAN BODY.

For instance, we turn to those controversial passages that we deal with the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believer, in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and 14. Paul, when he has to straighten out the Corinthian assembly on the use of spiritual gifts, talks about the body. He talks about spiritual gifts—which we’re going to get to in chapter 4.

But the whole thesis of the spiritual gifts is that we are members in a body together. We are inter-related to one another. We’re not all eyes, we’re not all ears, and we’re not all toes, and we’re not all fingers. We are each having differing abilities and functions in this body.

Now that body is the picture in these verses. It is not the building anymore. We had that in chapter 2. It’s now the body—all with varying parts and members.

Some of us are very much aware that we have members of our body that have been put under stress and it’s telling us so. Members that we did not even know or were aware that we had until we did that to it.

There’s one truth before we get into the verses.

God has always had a way to manifest Himself to the world. For instance, in the Old Testament, after the Abrahamic covenant, after the formation of the nation of Israel, how did God meet people?

Immediately He gives the instructions for the Tabernacle. And it is in the Tabernacle that God meets with man.

The cloud was there by day and the fire was there by night. And they couldn't go into the Holy of holies unless they were the high priest on the Day of Atonement to put the blood on the Mercy Seat.

So God was visibly present among the men—among the children of Israel—through the Tabernacle, initially.

Now during David's reign, once he got the Ark back in the tent in the city of Jerusalem, he immediately wanted to build a Temple so that God would have a nice house to live in.

And the Lord said “No David, it's not part of My plan right now. You're just a little ahead of schedule. Your son's going to do that.”

And so Solomon's Temple is built. This then becomes the place where God dwells on earth.

Now when Jesus Christ came into the world, in John chapter 1, it's beautiful. This verse—verse 14—is one of the greatest verses to bring the Christmas message out. Listen to this:

John 1:14

And the Word (Christ) became flesh and tented (tabernacle, dwelt) among men. . . .

How did God reveal Himself? During the 33 years that Christ was here on earth, God revealed Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus who “tabernacle” among us.

Now what happens when Jesus Christ ascends back to glory? Immediately on the day of Pentecost. This is the birthday of a NEW BODY. This body is going to be indwelt by the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT.

This body is going to be referred to by the term CHURCH—*ekklisía*—“called out assembly,” the congregation, the body in whom Christ dwells.

So God says the world has a right today to see Him in the church. No labels, no institution, but the body.

Now let’s take that one step further before we go into these verses. There’s another great truth. And that is, when Jesus Christ comes into our life we are a little body all by ourselves. We’re a little light. Jesus Christ resides in us.

We are living stones in a building. All the vital part of a body. And we can bring it right down to the individual—Christ in us, the hope of glory.

That’s why Paul says in:

1 Corinthians 6:19

Have you not yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit? God gave you this and He lives within you and you are not your own but that you have been bought with a price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because He owns it.

Now let's look at the truth as Paul teaches it here in these verses.

His Plan for a Body—chapter 3:1-3.

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

“Because of this I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—”

A lot of commentators on the book of Ephesians believe that Paul right here was so excited about the building concept that he wanted to stop and pray again and he got interrupted.

A lot of people feel it would have been altogether fitting for him right now. After he got through talking about the building and all the glorious things of his plan for peace for him he stops and talks to the Lord again.

But we're going to wait until we get down to verse 14 in our study before he gets back to his praying again. He's been interrupted here by something and so he does not pray at this point.

Although a lot of times when we see a statement like this: “Because of this I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus I’m going to fall on my knees before the Lord for you Gentiles” would have fit into the text real well right here.

But he says:

“I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—”

He’s a prisoner of who?

Sometimes we tritely slip over statements like that. He’s a prisoner of who?

He’s in a Roman prison. He’s in a prison of the Caesars. He’s been incarcerated because of the Gospel, because the Jews were resisting it. Forced his hand to make an appeal before Caesar. Someone might be in a Roman prison and a Roman authority might be doing all this, but they could have never done it if Jesus Christ had not allowed it. So they’re really a “prisoner of Jesus Christ” and not any Roman prison at this point.

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

“assuming that you heard of the administration of the grace of God which was given to me for you;”

He's assuming that they've already heard this glorious message of the grace of God, that it'd been given to the apostle for these Gentiles.

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

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

Looking at the Greek exegesis on the book of Ephesians, there's something about the word “mystery.” It shuts off all mental capacity. It's like we can't understand it, it's a mystery, so forget it.

Who wants to go to all the mental strain to try to figure it out?

Whenever we see the term “mystery” in the New Testament, that word refers to some truth that was veiled in the Old Testament and totally unknown but was revealed in the New Testament.

A “mystery” is in the Old Testament CONCEALED and in the New Testament REVEALED.

We don't have the teachings of the church, the body of Christ, in the Old Testament. It's not there.

This is a New Testament entity.

The prophets will verify this and vindicate us at this point. And a lot of times when we read Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel we get really mixed up. And that's not abnormal. Why?

Because those prophets, when they were looking down the lions of time to the future, they saw the first and second comings of Christ together without anything in-between.

They never saw any church, the body of Christ. For them to speak of the coming of Christ, He was coming as a suffering Messiah but He was also coming as a ruling King.

This great gap of 2,000 years was not treated by them. They looked beyond where we are.

So the doctrine of the church—blood-bought believers, brought into a relationship, both Jew and Gentile—was totally foreign to them. It was like God skipped over it and waits to reveal it in His time to the apostle and he refers to it as a mystery.

The reason being, he's been an Old Testament scholar all of his years. He knew the prophets and the Law but this was a mystery. This was something different. This was truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament.

So what he's getting ready to tell us is, "I'm getting ready to tell you about the church—the body of Christ—and that is a REVELATION."

Now this is the next thing:

A mystery can only come by direct revelation from God.

Since it is a mystery, it is truth that is yet to be revealed. It must come by revelation. And Paul is the recipient of that revelation.

“That by revelation”—verse 3, now we can read it again with a little bit more understanding—“there was made known to me the mystery even as I have written above in brief,”

Who is the other one that got a revelation when he was sitting on the Isle of Patmos? That’s the final revelation. That’s a message of what is yet in store, what is going to happen.

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

“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;

“which in other generations”—WHAT?—“was not made known to the sons of men, as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets”—that’s New Testament prophets—“by

the Spirit;”

How did Paul receive this? How was the Bible written?

Well there are two passages in the Bible that talk about INSPIRATION.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

All Scripture is God breathed (or given by inspiration) . . .

Then the other passage is 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

Holy men of God were born along by the Holy Spirit. They were blown along like wind in the sails, by the Holy Spirit to write these down. And the Holy Spirit always preserved the personality of the person doing the writing, in what was the result.

Now this has been revealed and written down now for our own personal edification. What is it that’s being talked about? And here comes our KEY VERSE—verse 6.

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,

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

If we look at that verse there's ONE three times, isn't there?

There's ONE INHERITANCE, there's ONE BODY, and there's ONE PROMISE.

He wants ONENESS.

“that the Gentiles”—and the Jews—“are fellow-heirs now and they belong to the same body.”

They have one inheritance, they're in one body and they're “partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

Now when we read a verse like that, how meaningful do labels become?

We make so much to-do over WHAT we are. And the hardest thing in the body of Christ is to get over that.

It's almost like every time we come to a discussion of religion, we have to ask a person so we can make it neutral, “where do you go to church?”

And as soon as they tell us, we can formulate some opinions as to whether we can fellowship with them or not. It's just incredible!

“Oh Church of Christ.”

“Oh Methodist, good gravy.”

Isn't that something? See how far we've come from what was the original intention of the Lord?

The freedom is gone! The spontaneity to be ME—a blood-bought, born-again, son of God, believing in the Bible—wanting to have some love and fellowship with a brother and sister in Christ with whom we're going to spend eternity! And the label doesn't make any difference!

And here the apostle puts it right on us.

Now granted we have our preferences where we worship, but that is not intended to be the instrument that we are the chosen few and the only ones that are going to show up in heaven. So oftentimes we come across that.

The Jews felt that! “We're the chosen few. We're going to make it, we're the only ones that are gonna be there! We're God's choice. Sorry for the rest of you creeps. You're not going to have any part in our wonderful future.”

The MYSTERY is in THREE PARTS:

1. we're going to be “fellow-heirs”—that's each of us has the same inheritance to look forward to.
2. we're going to belong “to the same body”—there're not going to be two of them, just one.

3. we are “partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.”

What does he refer to when he says that?

ETERNAL LIFE and HIS COMING AGAIN.

He promised to give us life. And when we come to Christ, whether a Jew or Gentile, we have the PROMISE. We’re “partakers of that promise,” we have eternal life. But the other thing is, He said in the Upper Room:

John 14:1-3

Stop being troubled in your hearts; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; ... [There aren’t going to be two places to stay up there!] if it were not so, I would have told you; I’m going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I’m going to come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Ever stop to think that maybe we’re going to have to spend eternity next door to an Episcopalian? Or a Presbyterian?

See how meaningless all that is? We’re going to be living next door to a brother and sister who came to know Jesus Christ in some way during the years that they lived down here.

That’s the pure truth of the Gospel message.

We are “partakers of the promises, of the promise in Christ Jesus.”

Paul describes his relationship to this truth about the body.

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.

“of which I became a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me”

He’s going to get on into that as we have shared, the body is gifted in different ways in chapter 4.

“which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power.”

At the moment of our new birth, the Spirit of God comes to dwell within us. And He also brings a special ministry, a special gift (or gifts), abilities, talents that energized by the Spirit cause us to edify and minister to the body of other believers.

If someone teaches effectively in the power of the Spirit, the body is edified.

Paul says, “I became a minister in God’s plan. I ministered to this body by taking the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

to the Gentiles. That was God’s plan for my life, that I exercise ‘the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the manifestation of His power.’”

Now look at verse 8.

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.

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given,”

Sometimes we read that and we say “Oh he’s just being proud, just to say he’s nothing.”

“Oh I’m nothing. I’m really not any good.”

Don’t look at it that way. Let’s look at another verse that immediately comes to mind—John 3:30. This is really the framework of Paul’s statement.

John the Baptist says—it’s so neat.

They say: “Aren’t you the bridegroom?”

“No, the friend of the bride. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom! He must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing! I’ve got to get out of the way so people can see Jesus Christ! This great gift and ability was given to me who is less, or at

the very least of all the saints, this special gift was given.”
(ref. John 3:30)

There’s another reason for that statement.

In the initial phases of the church, he wasn’t a saint. We just need to talk to a few of those early believers if we don’t think so.

We’ll talk to Stephen. While they were pelting him with rocks, probably the last person that Stephen saw with his eyes was a man by the name of Saul of Tarsus who was standing there with all the coats laying down at his feet while the rest of the Sanhedrin were putting him out of his misery.

Talk to an awful lot of Christians who suffered a whole lot of misery because of the apostle Paul. He had that feeling inside “I really, you know, I whaled on their tails. I really don’t have the right and the privilege now to come into this glorious relationship and be able to be used this way. Only God could have done something like this so I’m less than the least of all the saints.”

Probably the best verse that described it from his own pen is:

2 Corinthians 4:7

This precious treasure—this light and power that now shines 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 it is not our own.

Philips translates it, “we’re just cracked pots.”

Just old broken vessels that have to be broken so the light shines out. Paul just considered himself a cracked pot. We aren’t concerned about the pot, we’re concerned about the light—the treasure—that’s inside that pot.

Now what is it that’s been given to him?

“to preach to the Gentiles”

That was the ministry.

Look at that next statement. Isn’t that great!

“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,

“And to bring to light”—to those who are in darkness—“what is the administration of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in God, who created all things,”

We have this great privilege to tell everybody about the body! And about the fact that we’re ALL, once we come to know Christ (born again in the Spirit) are placed into this body.

What a neat verse!

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.

“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.”

Ever thought about what it'd be like to be an angel? No sin nature.

Here we are an angel and we've always lived in the presence of the Lord and we watch the Lord operate day after day with those crumbly, rebellious sinners down there.

The only way that an angel can even begin to comprehend the wisdom of God is to look at the church, His body.

They know nothing of the thrill of being a recipient of God's grace!

1 Peter 1:12

Speaking of the things which the angels have a passionate desire, to stoop down and to look into—like the golden cherubim that overshadow the Mercy Seat—ever gazing upon the sprinkled blood that is upon it.

An angel can never get over how far God will go.

And like the anointed cherub that gaze upon the blood on the Mercy Seat, the angelic realm stoops down, lost in amazing wonder at a God who can step down and pick up the pieces and go on loving.

This is a beautiful hymn along this line:

Holy, holy, holy, is what the angels sing.

And I expect to help them, make the courts of heaven ring.

[BUT]

And when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings,

For angels never felt the joy, that our salvation brings.

(source unknown)

They want to look into it.

Paul says it's a manifestation even to them of the wisdom of God.

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

“According to the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,”

What was that “eternal purpose”?

To go to any extent in order to redeem fallen mankind, and that involved the Cross through Jesus Christ.

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

“in whom”—JESUS CHRIST—“we are having our boldness and”—what’s that next word?—“ACCESS”—“in confidence through faith in Him.”

Because of WHO we know, we can come with boldness, with confidence, not fearing that we’re going to be rejected or turned away.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says exactly the same thing:

Hebrews 4:14-16

But Jesus the Son of God is our great High Priest who has gone to heaven itself to help us, therefore let us not stop trusting in 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 throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need.

The apostle ends this section and this study in verse 13.

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

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

What’s the apostle saying? He’s saying something very special. And we as Christians ought to listen up real good.

He’s saying a lot of times when rough things happen to us and we keep on talking about them, we really discourage the saints.

It’s like finding our greatest joy in talking about all our personal problems—finding our greatest joy in sharing all the horrible things that are happening to us.

As though it brings therapy to us—and yes it does, to dump the whole load on some brother. But what does it do to the brother?

If God’s going after her, what’s he going to do next?

It brings **DEPRESSION**. It brings a **SPIRIT OF DISPAIR**.

It’s not easy for these Gentile Christians over here in Ephesus to know that the man who’s sitting up there in prison is the man who was the apostle to bring them the gospel of Christ!

And they can lose heart. They could quit. They could stop.

And then everybody else stopped.

Something that's very strange. It's in the human anatomy. And that is, the first person who stops in a marathon also causes a lot of other people to stop in the race.

Because a lot of people were thinking about it. Especially when they get out there about 16 miles and they're spilling their insides and they're calling themselves an idiot for the fact that they're doing it in the first place.

And the first guy that finally stops there are a jillion that follow him.

That's exactly what happened in Galatians 2. Paul has to stand up and confront Peter because Peter slips over to eat with the legalistic brethren when the guys came down from Jerusalem.

And he says, "The others started slipping away with them and I so I had to stand and confront him with that fact!"

We DO make an impact on people around us.

God help us to quit feeling sorry for ourself and put away our "pity me" towel and start thinking about something good that we can do and say to minister and to edify!

Sure it's alright to share our hurt. But don't dwell on those things. Don't let that be the dominant thing.

What's so special about Paul right here is he could say "Hey, you know boy, its rough here in this Mamertine prison."

It was right next to the city sewer. It was just a round hole in the ground basically. What a crumby place to write a letter like this.

He could say, "Man, roaches and rats are all over the place and it sticks crazy!"

We don't see him do that.

We learn something in Philippians 4 about the mentality of this man.

"I have learned in whatever state I am, there will I be content. And whether I'm hungry or full or whatever, I know how to rise above it and to be triumphant and victorious." (ref. Philippians 4:11-12)

It's alright for us to cry a while together. Hurt and feel with one another. But also realize that the constant rehearsal of all of our problems can really put a douse of cold water on some poor person who's struggling uphill anyway and wondering if it's really worth it.

So edify and build up.

In the last verse the apostle is just saying: "You know, I'm asking you not to lose heart. You know don't flick it in just because I'm having a rough time on your behalf. This is your

glory! There's got to be something to this because I'm having a hard time!"

So hang in there—stay with it.

Boy that's beautiful.

He's ministering to the needs of the body, isn't he, in that last statement?

Here are the lessons we learn from our 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.

Father, thank You for the pictures that Paul paints under divine inspiration to help us understand. It sure makes it a lot easier when we know that he's telling us about some things that hadn't been revealed before. But this gigantic body here on earth, made up of everyone who knows You, is looking for

the time when the Head's going to come and take the whole body home. Thank You that He's going to pick up the building of living stones and have a temple in which to dwell throughout eternity. Each of us is placed in the body and in the temple, as a result of Your grace and the death of Your Son upon Calvary. Lord we pray as we revel in these truths, may a lot of the things we have to go through fade into insignificance when we realize how much You love us. Please encourage us these days, strengthen us, build us in the faith. That having been fortified by our learning from the Word, we can turn and edify the body of Christ, exercising our own spiritual gifts to the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray today that You would really deal with us in the areas of need. That Your Spirit would search our hearts and we'd be open and receptive here to hear what You're trying to say. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

“What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

STUDY NUMBER FIVE – HIS PLAN FOR A BODY – EPHESIANS 3:1-13

KEY VERSE 3:6

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,

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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.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ephesians 3:1-13 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Where is Paul when he writes this letter, according to verse 1?

3. What is Paul writing about in this section, according to verse 4?

4. What is the mystery, according to verse 6?

5. What was Paul's position, according to verse 8?

6. What was Paul's purpose, according to verse 9?

7. What does God desire to make known "through the church" in verse 10?

8. What is he asking to do in verse 13?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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.