

# E P H E S I A N S

## Week Four: Ephesians 3:1-21

Study Guide for the week of June 27, 2021

**Study Ephesians 3:1-13, "Paul the Preacher to the Gentiles."** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. Do you like to figure things out for yourself or get help as soon as possible?
2. To what mystery did Paul refer? (3:2-3)
3. How did Paul reveal the mystery of Christ? (3:6)
4. How did God accomplish His plan? (3:11)
5. How do you think Gentile believers responded to Paul's explanation of "the mystery of Christ?"
6. How is sharing the gospel with someone like discovering priceless treasure?
7. What can you do this week to help others understand the mystery of Christ's provision for sin?

### Life Application Bible Notes

**3:1** Paul was under house arrest in Rome for preaching about Christ. The religious leaders in Jerusalem, who felt threatened by Christ's teachings and didn't believe he was the Messiah, pressured the Romans to arrest Paul and bring him to trial for treason and for causing rebellion among the Jews. Paul had appealed for his case to be heard by the emperor, and he was awaiting trial (see Acts 28:16-31). Even though he was under arrest, Paul maintained his firm belief that God was in control of all that happened to him. Do circumstances make you wonder if God has lost control of this world? Like Paul, remember that no matter what happens, God directs the world's affairs.

**3:2, 3** Paul's "special responsibility" refers to the special stewardship, trust, or commitment that Paul had been given. He had been assigned the special work of preaching the Good News to the Gentiles, God's great plan shown to Paul in a revelation.

**3:5, 6** God's plan was not revealed to previous generations, not because God wanted to keep something from his people, but because he would reveal it to everyone in his perfect timing. God planned to have Jews and Gentiles comprise one body, the church. It was known in the Old Testament that the Gentiles would receive salvation (Isaiah 49:6); but it was never revealed in the Old Testament that all Gentile and Jewish believers would become equal in the body of Christ. Yet this equality was accomplished when Jesus destroyed the "wall of hostility" and created "one new people" (2:14, 15).

**3:7** When Paul became a servant of the gospel, God gave him the ability to share the gospel of Christ effectively. You are not an apostle, and you may not be an evangelist, but God will give you opportunities to tell others about Christ. And with the opportunities he will provide the ability, courage, and power. Make yourself available to God as his servant whenever an opportunity presents itself. As you focus on the other person and his or her needs, God will communicate your caring attitude. Your words will be natural, loving, and compelling.

**3:8** When Paul describes himself as "the least deserving of all God's people," he means that without God's help, he would never be able to do God's work. Yet God chose him to share the Good News with the Gentiles and gave him the power to do it. If we feel that our role is minor, we may be right—except that we have forgotten what a difference God makes. How does God want to use you? Draw on his power, do your part, and faithfully perform the special role God has called you to play in his plan.

**3:10** The "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" are either angels who are witnesses to these events (see 1 Peter 1:12), or hostile spiritual forces opposed to God (2:2; 6:12).

**3:12** It is an awesome privilege to be able to approach God with freedom and confidence. Most of us would be apprehensive in the presence of a powerful ruler. But thanks to Christ, by faith we can enter directly into God's presence through prayer. We know we'll be welcomed with open arms because we are God's children through our union with Christ. Don't be afraid of God. Talk with him about everything. He is waiting to hear from you.

**3:13** Why should Paul's suffering make the Ephesians feel honored? If Paul had not preached the Good News, he would not be in jail—but then the Ephesians would not have heard the Good News and been converted either. Just as a mother endures the pain of childbirth in order to bring new life into the world, Paul endured the pain of persecution in order to bring new believers to Christ. Obeying Christ is never easy. He calls you to take your cross and follow him (Matthew 16:24)—that is, to be willing to endure pain so that God's message of salvation can reach the entire world. We should feel honored that others have suffered and sacrificed for us so that we might reap the benefit.

**Study Ephesians 3:14-21, "A Prayer for the Ephesians."** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. How often do you pray for those you love?
2. What did Paul request of the Father? (3:16)
3. How would Christ dwell in the believers' hearts? (3:17)
4. How did Paul close his prayer? (3:20-21)
5. If Paul were your prayer partner, how might he encourage you in your devotional life?
6. How does Paul's doxology encourage you?
7. How could you include Paul's doxology as a part of your personal devotion each day?

## Life Application Bible Notes

**3:14, 15** The family of God includes all who have believed in him in the past, all who believe in the present, and all who will believe in the future. We are all a family because we have the same Father. He is the source of all creation, the rightful owner of everything. God promises his love and power to his family, the church (3:16-21). If we want to receive God's blessings, it is important that we stay in contact with other believers in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves from God's family and try to go it alone cut themselves off from God's power.

**3:17-19** God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experience. It is *wide*—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is *long*— it continues the length of our lives. It is *high*—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is *deep*— it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. For another prayer about God's immeasurable and inexhaustible love, see Paul's words in Romans 8:38, 39.

**3:19** This "fullness" is expressed only in Christ (Colossians 2:9, 10). In union with Christ and through his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We have all the fullness of God available to us. But we must appropriate that fullness through faith and through prayer as we daily live for him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is also for you. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill every aspect of your life to the fullest.

**3:20, 21** This doxology—prayer of praise to God—ends part 1 of Ephesians. In the first section, Paul described the timeless role of the church. In part 2 (chapters 4-6), he will explain how church members should live in order to bring about the unity God wants. As in most of his books, Paul first lays a doctrinal foundation and then makes practical applications of the truths he has presented.

*Ephesians Study Guide questions and notes are from*

