

CORE Seminar
Spring 2024
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
Week 5: Ephesians 3

ICE BREAKER

Choose an ice breaker from the **Spring Community Group Guide** or go to www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back guys!! **Today**, we're going to pick up our study and complete **Ephesians 3**. This chapter can actually be broken into 2 parts. The first **13 verses** are more of an introduction to Paul and he explains his unique role in God's purpose for the Gentiles [*after all he is known as the “apostle to the Gentiles.”*]. The second half deals with the remaining verses [**14-21**] and focuses on Paul's prayer [*the prayer actually starts in **Ephesians 3:1** – has a short break as the he describes his ministry in **verses 2-13** – and starts again in **verse 14**]* In **verses 14-21**, we see how his prayer explores the “mystery” of how Jesus Christ makes the Gentiles fellow heirs and members of the body of Jesus Christ [*the church*] through the Gospel.

Ok, everyone ready? Let's pray and we'll get started:

PRAYER

Have someone read Ephesians 3:1-6

3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Was there a verse/passage that jumped out to you? Share why the verse or passage struck you.

Ok, at the beginning, we see this phrase – “**For this reason...**”

Now, when we see this [along with “therefore”] we should realize this is a context clue that immediately points us back to the end of **chapter 2**. And in our review above, we saw that **chapter 2** was all about salvation by **grace** through **faith**. And, not just any salvation, but the salvation of the Gentiles.

So, “**for this reason,**” for the great salvation of the Gentiles by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul submits his prayer of gratitude! His entire ministry revolves around spreading the good news of the gospel and proclaiming the **mystery** of God.

This mystery is part of the beautiful reality that Paul explained back in **Ephesians 2:11-22** – that Gentiles [*through grace by faith in Jesus Christ*] are FULLY included in the family and household of God!

QUESTIONS: How does Paul talk about his imprisonment in verse 1 – and what does that tell you about his understanding of God’s sovereignty over his life and the ministry God has placed him with the Ephesians?

- **In verse 2, Paul uses the word “stewardship.” In what way has Paul been a faithful steward of the gospel to the Ephesian believers?**
- **How many times does Paul mention the word “mystery” in the first 6 verses? [3]**
 - **Why this word?**
- **How would you explain the “mystery” that Paul describes? [The mystery the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Jesus has always been God’s plan for the salvation of the world. Jesus alone redeems all people, and He alone, dwelling in his people, is our hope.]**
- **What are the implications for you personally?**
- **What does the revelation of this “mystery” imply for our evangelism?**

Ok – let’s move on to the next set of verses.

Have someone read Ephesians 3:7-13

⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to

light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Was there a verse/passage that jumped out to you? Share why the verse or passage struck you.

As a minister, Paul's calling/ ministry is more than just self-sacrifice and service towards others – he **LIVES** to proclaim the glorious mystery of the gospel AND the grace of God that is ours through Jesus Christ. AND, he KNOWS this because he experienced the gospel... God's grace... when he was the “very least of all the saints.” So, he speaks from **experience**.

In **verses 10-13**, he explains the grace that God has shown to the **church** – the very vehicle through which He has planned to make His gospel known through... even to the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” This, he says is the “eternal purpose” realized through Jesus Christ. Paul instructs the church at Ephesus to remember the access they have – through their faith in Jesus.

QUESTIONS: In Ephesians 3:7-8, how does Paul show humility regarding his own salvation and calling from God?

- In Ephesians 3:8, Paul uses very similar language to what he uses in 1 Timothy 1:15 [have someone look up]. What do you think Paul is trying to emphasize here about his status before God and apart from Jesus Christ?
 - What can we learn from his understanding of the depth of his sin AND his need?
- What are the unsearchable riches of Christ?
 - Why do you think it is right to say the riches of Christ are unsearchable?
- In verse 9, what does Paul teach us about the eternal plan of God, which has now been fully revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- What do you learn from Ephesians 3:10-13 about God's purpose for the church?
 - Is there anything that is surprising to you about the calling the church has been given?
 - In what way could these verses encourage you to better appreciate the work of First Baptist?

Ok – let's finish up the chapter.

Have someone read Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Was there a verse/passage that jumped out to you? Share why the verse or passage struck you.

Paul's prayer is all about making his vision for God's church a reality, where everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, comes together. He asks for **strength** for the church members to truly understand and embrace the amazing love of Christ, a love that's beyond our full **understanding**. But then he switches gears, talking about the incredible **power** of God that goes beyond anything we can imagine. He's convinced, and we should be too, that only this divine power can create the kind of divine love that's needed in our **churches**.

QUESTIONS: What prompts Paul to pray with such humility and gratitude?

- **What does Paul pray for? [to be strengthened with power through his Spirit; may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; and, you may be filled with all the fullness of God]**
- **Why do you think it is important to meditate on the love of God?**
- **Why do we need the power of God?**
- **Why do verses 20-21 encourage us to pray with great expectations?**
- **According to verse 21, why should we pray for God to do amazing things?**

CONCLUSION

The calling that Paul received to proclaim the “mystery” of the gospel of Jesus Christ should be a reminder for us of how the good news of Jesus has come to us as well! And what good news it is that we – through Jesus Christ – get to experience the eternal blessings of God. Today, we should spend time praising God for His grace that He provides to us through His

Son and ask Him to make us even more captivated by His love and His mercy. Finally, we should spend time asking God to remind us of our own calling – to make Him known to a world in need!

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

- *What about Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 is an encouragement to you to pray?*
- *What do we learn about God from Ephesians 3?*
 - *Was there any "aha moment" for you?*

Next Week: Ephesians 4

CLOSING PRAYER