

Every Spiritual Blessing

Lesson 5
Ephesians Chapter 3

Memory Verse: *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen!* **Ephesians 3:20-21**

Everyone loves a good mystery, especially one with a plot twist at the end that makes you marvel and realize how the story all comes together. Here we have this very thing. Paul is further explaining the mysterious plan of God and the plot twist that has everyone astonished. The mystery of God's plan is not just understanding salvation, nor that the gentiles are included in God's plan for salvation, but that the Jews and Gentiles alike would be raised to the honored position of being God's children through faith in Jesus Christ and that they would together be equally the holy people of God. The mystery of God's grace and plan was a sacred secret hidden in the past, but now is revealed through the gospel and its believers. One commentator explains how remarkable this is, "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!" (Hoehner, Bible Knowledge Commentary). From the beginning of this Epistle Paul has been detailing out and discussing God's grace towards the Gentiles. Now Paul is going to go into further depth, breaking it down as to what the mystery is and get into specifics of the grace God gave Paul and Paul's ministry to share that grace (Eph 3:2-6). Paul then describes the action and purpose of his ministry to the Gentiles and exhorts them to not be discouraged because of Paul's sufferings for them. (Eph 3:7-13). Paul closes chapter 3 with a prayer for strengthened love and unity for believers as the Body of Christ and encourages them with the benediction of understanding the greatness of Christ's love for them and the security they have in it. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21). God has been writing our story from the beginning and don't think for a moment He has forgotten you or the details of your life. He is working it all out, plot twists and all, to do more than you can ever imagine or think for His glory and your good—hallelujah!

Day 1

1. Read through our passage on page 2, which is in the New Living Translation. You may also refer to other translations if you would like. The New Living Translation of this text uses wording that helps to understand the text a little easier. Highlight or underline words or phrases that stand out to you: (You will refer to this for Day 1 and Day 2)

God's Mysterious Plan Revealed - Ephesians 3:1-13 (NLT)

³ When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles. ² assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending His grace to you Gentiles. ³ As I briefly wrote earlier, God Himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. ⁴ As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. ⁵ God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by His Spirit He has revealed it to His holy apostles and prophets.

⁶ And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. ⁷ By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving Him by spreading this Good News.

⁸ Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, He graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. ⁹ I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹² Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. ¹³ So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

2. Referencing verses 1-4 above, Paul is referring to the previous information he had shared at the beginning of this letter to the Ephesians (Eph 2:11-22). Paul calls himself a "prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you." What do you think Paul means here and how do you think the believers in Ephesus reacted to such an introduction? What assurance in verse 4 does Paul give them?

Paul has written one long sentence beginning his thought in verse 2 continuing it all the way through to verse 13. Paul begins verse 2 with "if indeed" or "assuming" or "Surely" depending on the translation you read, and he is pointing to the fact that he has been sent to the Gentiles with a special dispensation of grace and responsibility to explain God's marvelous truth of the Gospel to the Gentiles and offer it to them personally.

3. Paul was given a "special responsibility," (verse 2) in other versions the word administration or dispensation is used, but all come from the Greek word *oikonomia* which means a *responsibility of management*. What was Paul responsible for and to do?
 - a. Look up 1 Peter 4:10-11. Verse 10 says we are to be "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." How do these verses speak to you personally?

4. Paul assures his readers that they would understand what he is teaching them and he further shares where his insight comes from. At the time He had appointed, God revealed His plan to His holy apostles and the prophets. Paul was one of those apostles. Who revealed these things to Paul? (verse 5)
5. Paul is continually encouraging the believers that they would know and grow in their understanding and love of Christ not only in this letter but in others too. Look up the following verses and write what they say about this:

Colossians 1:9-10

Colossians 1:27

2 Timothy 1:13-14

6. Read verses 7-8: By what means has Paul been given the privilege and ability to spread the Good News to the Gentiles?
 - a. By God's grace and effective might, Paul fulfilled the ministry God gave him for the Gentiles by sharing the gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ. The word here in the Greek to describe God's power and might is *energeia*, which means *working, action, effective energy*. This reveals to us that God's power and might are never dormant or ineffective. Remember you have that same *energeia* available to you if the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you. How does this give you confidence in God's power?
 - b. As believers we have also been called to share the gospel and make disciples. In Matthew 28:19-20, what did Jesus tell the disciples to go and do, and who would be with them?
 - c. Knowing Jesus is with you and that you have the privilege to walk in God's grace and might being called to share the gospel, who is God calling you to share the gospel with today? If you don't know, pray and ask God to show you—He will.

Day 2

1. Paul makes a shocking confession in his opening words in Ephesians 3:8, what is it?
 - a. Certainly we can relate to how Paul felt knowing our own inadequacies. Paul's assessment of himself did not stop him from serving God and sharing the gospel. What phrase in this verse do you think kept Paul preaching regardless of how he felt?
 - b. What do you learn from Paul's example of embracing and having confidence in the grace of God, rather than being stuck in your own assessment of yourself?

2. Continue reading Ephesians 3:8-9 Here Paul is talking about the purpose of his ministry. Paul had been given grace to:
Preach to the Gentiles the _____ in Christ (v8)

Paul was chosen to explain _____ of God. (v9)

3. Paul's ministry was to the Jews and Gentiles, but as you read other portions of scripture you will see that God had given him a more specific ministry as well. Look up the following verses and write who it says Paul was to reach and note who Paul had a more specific ministry towards:

Acts 9:15 (Note: Jesus declares Paul's purpose!)

Romans 11:13

Galatians 1:15-16; and 2:7-8

Note that though Paul ministered to a variety of people, he was called to a specific ministry and population—the Gentiles. Considering Paul's credentials and background you would have thought God would have called him to reach the Jews as Paul was a "Pharisee among Pharisees" which in essence means the very best. Yet, God called Paul to reach the Gentiles, and Peter, a fisherman, was to minister to the Jews. Have you had dreams or aspirations to serve in a specific ministry yet it seems God is not calling you there or you have had little success? Paul was surrendered to God's will, and was willing to go and serve wherever and whoever God called him to—we should do no less. God's way is perfect and though mysterious, and doesn't always make sense at first, we trust and follow His agenda and not our own. When God says go—we go. Then we will experience the excitement and sustaining grace of God working in our lives and in our ministries.

4. Paul makes a point about the “unsearchable riches of Christ” which is an expression of God’s great wisdom, limitless blessing and resources that we have in Jesus Christ. The spiritual wealth we have in Christ is truly amazing and incomprehensible. Look up Romans 11:33-36 and write how he describes it in those verses:
 - a. We may not be able to fully comprehend God’s ways, but in His infinite wisdom and knowledge we can trust that He will give us all that we need for any situation we are faced with in this lifetime. How does knowing this change the way you look at situations in your life and the people around you?

5. In Ephesians 3:8-9 Paul is publicly revealing God’s great plan, which was once a great mystery; Jesus is the way of salvation for the Gentiles and Jews. In Him, being made one and therefore equal in the Body of Christ, now having access to the riches and blessings of Christ. Eph 1:7 and Eph 2:7 explains it as the *exceeding riches of His grace*. From the beginning God, who created all things, had a plan for salvation for everyone! Reread Ephesians 1:4 and 1:11 to see this plan.
 - a. How does this reassure you of God’s great love for you, now knowing that God had you in mind to be His from the beginning?

6. Read verses 10-13 (in the NLT located on page 2.) Verse 10 says that it was God’s purpose to use the “church” to display his perfect wisdom. How was God’s plan carried out and how does the church display God’s wisdom?

In verse 10 the NKJV translation states, “the **manifold** wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” The word **manifold** in the Greek is *polupoikilos* and is a word used to describe intricate embroidered patterns or relating to the great variety of colors of flowers. Paul’s use of **manifold** signifies the complex beauty and intricacy of God’s wisdom and work in salvation and the new relationship and union between believing Jews and Gentiles—Jesus has made them one body. Different artists use different mediums to display their art, some use oil or water color paints, others use fabric or clay, in our modern day we see how people use computers and graphic design as an art medium. God uses the church as the medium of his artwork to display His marvelous, beautiful work as evidence of His total wisdom. All the angelic hosts see it and marvel! (1 Peter 1:12 states that angels long for these things). That includes both good and evil rulers and authorities. God “accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” His eternal purpose. “He accomplished” is written in the past tense and makes it clear God has carried it out in Christ once and for all. Hallelujah!

- a. Who are the unseen rulers and authorities in heavenly places? Why would God want to display His wisdom to them in this way?

7. Reread verse 12 and write it out here as a personal statement:

8. In verse 13 Paul is concluding his statement that he began in v.2 “that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles.” And now Paul ends with: “So please don’t lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.” Paul took the opportunity to describe in detail God’s grace that He has called and enabled Paul to share with the Gentiles and explain to them what it means for them to be one in the body of Christ. Paul also makes sure to encourage them to not lose heart knowing they have full access to God and that Paul’s sufferings are for their glory. As you close your study time, reflect on what this means for you and how God has used others to bring you the Gospel and even train you up in the faith like Paul has done for the Ephesians. Consider the sufferings of others for you and how you might pray for them as they are certainly praying for you—that we all may glorify God—and walk in the unity of the body of Christ. Remember, we are the art and display of the mastery of the wisdom of God.

Day 3

Paul has a proper perspective of the Almighty God he served, and he took his calling as a representative of His God very seriously. Paul loved the people of God. As we read this epistle (letter) we can see Paul’s heart in how he prays for the believers. It is as if while he is teaching and reminding them of the beautiful “mystery” of salvation, he is humbled himself and prompted to pray once again for the believers and their spiritual growth.

1. Reading Ephesians 3:14, and notice Paul’s personal reaction to what he had just revealed and reminded the people. Write out verse 14.
 - a. What do you notice about his response? What position did he take?
2. How does his position reveal what was going on in his heart and mind?
3. Paul is demonstrating humility as he considers the plan, love and greatness of God as he transitions to prayer for the needs of the believers. He *bows his knees*. In the NLT it reads: *When I think of all of this, I fall to my knees and pray...* Besides humility, what else do you think *bowing of the knee*, or *kneeling* before someone might represent? Read these verses and share what they reveal to you about the heart of those bowing or kneeling:

Psalms 95:6-7

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

Mark 1:40-41

Romans 14:11

One does not have to physically kneel before God to have a heart that is bowed before Him. God looks at the heart, not the physical position of kneeling, standing, arms raised or hands folded in prayer, nor is he concerned with the location, but the God hears the attitude of our heart!

4. Jesus, when giving instructions on how to pray, directed us to pray in a manner that shows reverence for God. Read Matthew 6:9-13. This is not to be a religious prayer for rote memorization and repetition. Jesus gave us this prayer as a model and guideline for how to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer and the things we are to pray for, with a warning against hypocrisy. Consider how Jesus said to pray. How would thinking about and praying each of these verses help us to maintain a heart that is *kneeling before God*?

5. Remember this was a personal letter written by Paul. It is as if in the middle of this letter he pauses to think about what he has just written and is again in awe of God. Before Paul gets to this point in his letter he has just revealed the amazing grace of God in saving sinners individually and by His grace uniting them as one, in Christ! God chose to place the Holy Spirit in us that we might have *every spiritual blessing in Christ!* Take a few moments to think about what you have learned so far as you have studied Ephesians; learning about your identity in Christ and the spiritual blessings you have in Christ. What great things have you learned that Christ has done for you? This may seem redundant, but it is good to be sure of what you are learning! (If you have trouble with your answer, re-read Ephesians 1 through 3:13 to refresh your memory.)

As you wrote these things, what is the response in your own heart? Would you be like Paul to stop and humbly acknowledge your Lord with a reverent, thankful, surrendered and expression of love? We must be purposed in our hearts to never lose our awe of God or neglect being thankful for all He has done and continues to do for us. Take this opportunity to praise God for His amazing grace!

Day 4

Prayer is one of the most important things we can do for one another. Paul demonstrates through out all of the letters he has written, that along with his instructions in righteousness and godly living, that prayer for the believers was something he never neglected. In chapter 1 we see part of his prayer for the Ephesian church, and here in verses 16-21 a continuation of that prayer.

1. Read Ephesians 3:16-19. Write what Paul is praying for:

2. Paul prays for the believers to be *strengthened with might through His (God's) Spirit in the inner man (person), that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*. Once again Paul reminds them of the *riches of His (God's) glory*; the vast spiritual riches of our heavenly Father that are available to us because of the Cross. The NLT translates his prayer: "*I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit.*" The inner person could be explained as the spiritual part of our nature if we are born again.
Read these verses and write what they speak to you about our natural person or flesh nature in comparison to our inner person or our spirit?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Mark 14:38

- a. After reading those verses, why would strength in our "inner" man be more important than just physical strength especially in our walk with God?

- b. Sometimes we struggle and it seems we just need more help! How does Romans 8:26-27 encourage you?

Paul uses the phrase *that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith*. When we accept Christ as Savior by His Spirit, He does dwell in our hearts. Paul is not addressing them about saving faith because he has just explained that previously. He is speaking now about living by faith and allowing Christ to have full access to all of your heart; by living and walking in faith you are allowing Christ to dwell fully in the home of your heart so to speak; giving Him access to every "room". We must remember, He now holds the title deed and is the rightful owner of our heart/home! (1 Corinthians 6:20)

3. Read Ephesians 3:17-19 again. How does Paul describe what would be stability in the life of a believer?

4. What do you think this means? (For you creative study girls, maybe God is giving you a picture to draw to help illustrate what this means. Go ahead and draw it.)

5. What is the result of being rooted and grounded in God's love according to verses 18 & 19?
 - a. How does this description of the immeasurable vastness of God's love toward you encourage you?

 - b. Paul continues to encourage us of God's love in Romans 8:35-39. What do these verses reveal to you?

Paul finishes his prayer declaring "Now to Him who is able!" Aren't you encouraged to read that? "The means by which God answers prayer is given in the expression, **according to the power that works in us**. This refers to the Holy Spirit, Who is constantly at work in our lives, seeking to produce the fruit of a Christ-like character, correcting us because of sin, guiding us in prayer, inspiring us in worship, directing us in service. The more we are yielded to Him, the greater will be His effectiveness in conforming us to Christ"- Believers Bible Commentary

6. Write out Ephesians 3:20 personalizing it as if you are reminding yourself of Who your God is and what He is doing for you:

As you wrote Ephesians 3:20 out, were you encouraged? Did you feel your faith start to rise up? How awesome it is to be loved by God and to know that He is able to do so much more than we can imagine and to know that HIS power is working in our lives! Now unto Him be all glory!!!!

Day 5 Review and Reflect

This was quite a lesson to study this week!

1. In your own words, how would you describe the “mystery of Christ”?
2. Review each day of your Lesson this week. Share 3 things (or more) that God spoke to your heart this week:
3. As Paul prayed for believers to be rooted and grounded in the love of God, what are some practical things that you choose to do, to be rooted and grounded in the Lord?
4. Write out the Memory Verse for this week, Ephesians 3:20-21:
5. The power of God working in our lives! What can we say but thank you, Lord! Now end this study time re-reading Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 and pray each verse over your own personal life. Don’t skip this part, there is treasure trove of encouragement and faith waiting for you and an opportunity to see afresh through prayer—Oh, how He loves you!