

For This Reason

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into Ephesians chapter 3, emphasizing the significance of Paul's imprisonment for preaching the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan. Paul's suffering is portrayed as a display of glory for the Gentile believers, showcasing the eternal purpose and wisdom of God to rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. The sermon highlights the revelation Paul received from Jesus Christ regarding the Gentiles and the unsearchable riches of Christ, urging listeners to grasp the magnitude of this mystery and its impact on their lives.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:1, Ephesians 3:6, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 3:11, Acts 22:17, Romans 9:23, Matthew 28:19, Acts 20:24, 2 Corinthians 4:17

Topics: "Inclusion of Gentiles", "Unsearchable Riches of Christ"

Description

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Transcript

The desire, the hope is to return to Ephesians today, so if you all want to turn to Ephesians chapter 3 after four or five week break, maybe it's been six, we resume our study in Ephesians chapter 3. Last message was in chapter 2. Let's pray. Father, I pray that you give us ears to hear Ephesians the way that we should hear it. This is inspired language.

We recognize that Paul is carried along by the Spirit of the Living God, and we have these words by divine revelation. We have these words preserved for us because you have promised that heaven and earth might pass away, but you've told us such promises about your Word. It will not pass away.

You've promised to preserve it, and here it is. We have it close to 2,000 years after Paul penned these letters, and yet you've preserved it to this day to speak to us, and I pray Lord that you give us the grace to hear it for what it is and for how we should hear it, and I pray that you would allow it to be applied to our lives in the way that it ought to be. Lord, give us ears to hear what you would say to the church at this very hour, I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. So as we return to Ephesians, I basically have one simple purpose today, and it's to try to get us back in the flow. There's four elements to us starting in chapter 3 that if we're going to properly understand these first 13 verses, we need to grasp.

We need to pay close attention to at least these four things. Before we get into those four things, let's read verses 1 through 13. Most of your Bibles probably has that sectioned off, and for good reason.

Let's read this. For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you. How the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I have written briefly.

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men and other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 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. Of 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 to 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 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized or carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him. So, I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

And you might also look at verse 14, for this reason I bow my knees before the Father. So, we've been away from the letter. As we try to get back in, we try to get a feel, I want us to notice four things right off.

First, the chapter starts with the word for. It's used here synonymous with because. The second thing, notice the first phrase, for this reason I. Just notice that.

And notice this, that phrase, at least those four words are repeated down in verse 14. You see that? For this reason I. It's the same thing. There's a connection there.

We'll look at that in a second. The third thing I want you to notice is this. In almost all of your Bibles, verse 1 ends with one of those extended dashes, or a double dash.

The only Bible that doesn't do that is the King James Bible. And yet, those who preach from the King James recognize this as well, that that double dash belongs there. Fourth, there is a close connection between verse 1 and verse 13.

You notice in verse 1, Paul is a prisoner. You notice in verse 13, he talks about what I am suffering for you. His suffering came from the fact that he was a prisoner.

So those four things, starts with for, you've got for this reason I, you've got that double dash at the end, and then you've got a connection between verse 1 and verse 13. Now I want us to think about those things as we just try to, we need to get the feel. It's very difficult, very difficult to adequately grasp, especially Paul.

Paul being so logical, he's careful, he develops arguments. And one of the problems with preaching expositionally through a book of Paul's is that originally the people sat down and they read it in just a few minutes. And so they got the full picture all at once.

It can be really difficult to dive in and say, okay, well I'm going to preach on chapter 3, verse 1 today, without us sitting here and actually reading the whole epistle and seeing how it fits in. We don't have time to do that. What we do have is we have four essential ingredients of this portion.

These first 13 verses, perhaps first 14 verses of chapter 3. If we don't properly recognize these four details and what they are, we're going to miss some of the gravity of what's happening. So the first thing, four. Four.

Now, look, I bring that up or it could be because. We've taken a month-long, six-week-long break from Ephesians. The last time we looked at it, actually, the last time we looked at it, I kind of did an offshoot message on race from the last verse of chapter 2. It really wasn't a consistent part of the exposition, but that's where we were before.

We've taken this break. It seems like a good place to take a break, right? Well, you've got a chapter division there. It seems like a natural place to take the break.

But I draw your attention to this first word in chapter 3, because when you get that, when you get the word four, there means there's connectivity. Paul's not starting some new thought here. We took a break.

But what I want you to understand is Paul did not take a break. When he was writing this, he didn't get done with chapter 2 and say, well, there's a chapter division, there's a natural break here, I think I'll go stretch and have a coffee break, and then we'll come back and pick it up with the new thought. That isn't what's happening here.

This is Paul not skipping a beat from the last thing he said in chapter 2. So that's the first thing to notice. Second thing, this phrase, for this reason or for this cause, I. For what reason? What's he talking about there? For this reason. No one starts a new line of thought with those kind of words.

You know what that is? For this reason? I mean, right between services, I walked out this door and there were about four men standing over here to the right. And if I would have walked up to them and just broke out with conversation, for this reason, well, they would have looked at me like, what are you talking about? You talk that way when you've already been talking about something, not when you're introducing something new. And so what's Paul referring to? Well, it's obvious what he's referring to.

He's referring to that which he's been speaking about in chapter 2. What's the reality? Brethren, we Gentiles, dead in trespasses and sins, following the prince of the power of the air, children of wrath, separated from Christ. That's what he's talking about. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

We had no part in the covenants. We didn't have any hope. We were without God.

We were in the world. We were far off. That's us Gentiles.

And you know what happened? We've been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ. And we've been reconciled to God through the cross. And the beauty of it is this.

It's in the same body. It's in one body. The same body that saved Jews are in.

And the Gentiles have been added. And they're now part of the family. They're fellow citizens.

They make up the same temple in which God abides. That's the glory. That the Gentiles have been added.

That's the message of chapter 2. When he says, for this reason, that's exactly what he's talking about. Okay, next. For this reason.

For this reason. Because the Gentiles are fellow heirs. For that reason.

Paul is motivated to do something. For this reason. I, Paul.

What, Paul? What are you motivated to do? What are you motivated to say by that? Well, Paul has an earnest desire to pray for them. Do you see it? Well, no you don't if you're looking at verse 1. Why? Because, look, what we need to recognize, the four words at the beginning of verse 1 and the four words at the beginning of verse 14 are not separate. If you look down at 14, what you recognize is this.

Paul is saying, for this reason, because you Gentiles are included, my heart is moved. I feel an earnestness in my soul to drop down on my knees before God the Father and pray for you. That you would have the spiritual enablement, the power of the Spirit of God would enable you to comprehend this love of Christ.

That's, that's where he's at. That's what he wants to do. And you know what the double dash is at the end of verse 1? He's interrupted.

He was ready to launch out into that prayer and he stopped dead in his tracks. You know why? Because the thoughts come into his mind. I'm aware that, look, I'm aware that when I preach, there's times I'm saying something and I stop and go, you probably notice that.

Why? Because a thought came into my head. It's not that I don't want to tell you what I was already in the midst of telling you, but a thought came into my head that I want to give clarity about something before I go on with that thought. That's what Paul's doing here.

That, you know what a double dash is? It's, it's basically, it can stand in the place of maybe a semicolon. It can stand in the place of perhaps a comma. It can stand in the place of parentheses.

What are parentheses? It's kind of something you say on the side. You're giving some information to enlighten the reader or the listener about something that you're saying. You're adding some extra information.

And when you use a double dash, it's a pronounced way to bring that thought. That's what's happened. Paul, Paul is ready to pray and boom, digression.

He steps aside. He gets, he gets distracted. Now he does eventually get around to saying what he started to say.

He gets around to saying it in 14. But Paul is gripped by something that he said. And I'll tell you what it is.

He's a prisoner. He just used a word that he recognizes is going to have impact on his hearers. And he feels like he needs to comment on this.

So what is it that stops him in his tracks? He called himself a prisoner for Christ Jesus. And look, we know that's why he stops dead in his tracks. Because of verse 13.

And there's a close connection between these two. In one, he says, I'm a prisoner for Christ Jesus. In 13, you see, you see, this is the conclusion of this digression.

So, this, this is the consummation of this. This is the conclusion. This, this is where he's driving them to by the things that he says in verses 2 through 12.

He's, he's stepped aside before he prays for them. And he says, look, I don't want you to lose heart over what I'm suffering for you. It's your glory.

But let's ask this question. Why would they lose heart? Why would the Ephesians lose heart? Listen, Paul's dealing with people who, who he believes feel. We need to feel.

You know, when I'm preparing messages for the church, that's, that's constantly in my mind. When I'm thinking about, okay, how am I going to say something to the church or as I'm preaching, what do I want to do? And you know what I'm constantly convicted with? I'm constantly convicted. Say it so they feel it.

Try to make them feel it. That this, that there's reality here. Paul realizes he's dealing with real people and they have feelings.

And for them to hear that he's in prison, he's telling them all this glorious reality. All your Gentiles, God has included the Gentiles, your fellow heirs, your partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. You're in.

You're part of God's people. You are far off. God has included you.

This was not made known to men in other generations. This has now been made known to these apostles and prophets. It hasn't.

It's been a mystery. This mystery that Gentiles are fellow heirs. They're real people.

And he recognizes that them hearing that little word prisoner, that might be a stumbling block for them to really hear him for how he wants them to hear him. And I recognize this. They had feelings about Paul being in prison.

I know this. You don't care. You don't care that Paul was in prison.

Nobody here feels it. Hearing, see, I can read that. Paul a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.

Nobody felt like they wanted to, you know, catch their breath. They wanted to sigh. They wanted to shed a tear.

Nobody felt discouraged. Why? Because you're not feeling this like they felt it. They knew Paul, personally.

You know what he says in Acts chapter 20 when he's talking to them about his past in Ephesus? He said, I spent three years among you going door to door. Three years. He was a spiritual father there.

Do you remember when he gathered those Ephesian elders the last time he was ever going to see them? They wept on his neck. Listen, they loved him. This was personal for these Ephesians.

We don't feel any of that. We didn't know Paul. He's not our spiritual father per se.

I mean, we know him through his writings, but we don't know him personally. We don't have the same feelings. But what Paul recognizes is this.

Mentioning that word prisoner, he realized might cause them enough sorrow and enough distraction to render the Ephesians incapable of hearing the glory of the message that he's seeking to give to them. The mention of his own imprisonment might cast a shadow. Prison has a way of doing that.

Do you remember how it was with John the Baptist when he ended up in prison? I just want to try to draw a parallel here. John the Baptist is in prison. And you remember what he did? He sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask what? Are you the Messiah? Are you the One? Or should we be looking for another? I mean, maybe you've read that and you wonder what in the world is all that about? I mean, how can John be questioning this? And after all, wasn't he told that the One upon whom you see the Spirit comes? You have all that.

Didn't he see the Spirit come upon Christ? Wasn't he told and given revelation of God? But you know what? Here's the problem. Do you remember what John's message was? He said, he that comes after me, he is going to come with his winnowing fork in his hand and he's going to come and he's going to gather all the wheat into his barn and he's going to take all this chaff and he's going to throw it in the fire. You heard John say that.

John said it because he believed it. That was his message. And just like most of the Jews, they were looking for that to happen immediately.

And you know what happened to John? Not only is Herod not gathered like chaff and thrown into the fire, Herod's sitting there very comfortably on his throne and the servant of God is in prison awaiting his head being chopped off. And you know you can start to look at that and say, wait, is this really God's plan? Is this really right? Prison and suffering can sometimes throw a stumbling block to God's people. Why? Well because God's program so often doesn't work out the way that we think it should.

This is precisely the issue facing the Ephesians. I mean, think about it. Lord, can you imagine? I mean, we tend to feel this way.

How often in this church have we prayed for labors? So many prayer meetings. Lord, give us labors, give us labors. That's what Jesus taught the church.

What is it, Matthew 9? Pray for labors. Why? Because the fields are white for the harvest. And here we are.

Can you imagine? The Ephesians the same way. Praying for labors, praying for labors. It's like, Lord, why are we praying for labors? And then the thing you do is you take your very best of your labors and you throw them into jail.

Lord, we don't understand this. We read the Great Commission, lo, I am with you to the end of the age. Are you? I mean, if you're with us, why this? You see, that imprisonment.

But, don't you love Paul? He doesn't utter a single word of discouragement, of complaint, of grumbling. He's the one that's in, I mean, he's the one in prison and he's worried about them. And, you know what? He doesn't say, well, let me tell you about my suffering.

Like, you know, because he wants their pity. He wants to tell them about his suffering because he wants them to feel the glory of it all. Their glory.

You see it? Look at verse 13. Paul isn't saying, this isn't fair. Instead, look at this.

I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you. Which is your glory? The question that I ask is this. It's clear that Paul thinks that his own suffering in prison was for the Ephesians and it was for their glory.

But what does that mean? Does that mean it's for our glory too? The thing is, we don't even feel that. You could read that verse ten times over in your own devotions and feel no glory at all. I'm certain of that.

Paul's suffering. He's in prison. It's our glory.

You know, when you use that word, when Scripture uses that word, it's typically in the category of something big. Like the kind of thing that ought to make you jump up and down for joy. I mean, just think.

The woman is the glory of man. Young men that are single. God brings you a beautiful young lady to marry.

You're going to jump up and down? You're going to get a little excited? You see, glory. Paul says the sun has glory. The moon has glory.

We sing the song, fair is the sunshine. Fair is still the moonlight. I was out last night.

I saw my shadow. I thought, oh, the moon must be out. There's a glory in the sun that's shining.

There's a glory in the moon. What I want you to recognize is this. Scripture does not use the term glory in cheap fashion.

Jesus talks about to the Father restoring the glory that He had with Him before the world was created. Glory. The Son of Man is going to come in power and in glory.

These are the ways Scripture uses this. There's a glory in the resurrected body. You see, not cheaply used in Scripture.

And yet, right here, it's like, this is something that should really excite us when this word is used. But I know this. You and I don't feel it.

We do not feel excitement when we read it right here. Now maybe somebody's out there saying, oh, brother, you're wrong. Don't put thoughts in my head, because I'm feeling lots of glory here.

You can raise your hand. Brethren, I know. I read this and it's like, glory? Paul, I'm not feeling it.

And so what I've been doing in preparation is, I've been trying to feel it. Because I'm sure He wants us to feel it. Paul says that what He's suffering for these Ephesians is their glory.

Now I recognize they had a relationship with Him that we don't. But I think, correctly understood, it's just as much our glory as it is theirs. So, who talks this way? Well, Paul talks this way.

Brethren, it's clear that what Paul wants these Ephesians to do, what he wants us to do, is to look at his imprisonment and look at his sufferings in such a way, just like looking at the sun. You'll see the glory shining through. Brethren, what is glory? Glory is splendor.

It's brightness. You say the sun has a certain glory. Well, it's got light and brightness and heat.

It's glory. It's the excellence of something. It's the magnificence of something.

What's the magnificence in His suffering? But see, listen, this is what you got to recognize in this. Paul doesn't say, this is my glory. He actually says, I'm in prison.

You're not. My being in prison and suffering, not my glory. It's your glory.

It's your glory. What is this all about? There's some kind of marvel in this. There's some kind of marvelous element, if we can but see it.

There's something victorious. There's something triumphant in this. It's like Paul's saying, look, don't waste your pity on me.

Don't waste your tears on me. Don't waste your moans and your sighs on me. You need to recognize something.

Me being here is the greatest imaginable privilege. And if you recognize not what I'm enduring here, but why I'm here, I think we need to get that. See, he's not articulating, well, let me tell you about my deprivations.

Brethren, the glory of this is why. Why is He there? Why? So what's really going on here? To feel the glory of all this, go to Acts chapter 22. I was just reading this like a week ago.

And it jumped out at me. And it caught my attention. And all the more now preaching this message.

If you go to Acts chapter 22, what we have is Paul is free. Now Paul did some time in jails, but for the most part he was free and he was preaching the gospel. But do you know, let me ask you this, do you know how Paul came to be in prison? Do you know the book of Acts well enough to be able to kind of chronologically go through how he ended up in Nero's prison? You know how it happened? You say, well, he appealed to Caesar.

No, no, no, way before that. Way before that. And this is what I want you to see.

They, you know, some Asians came to Jerusalem. Paul had come to Jerusalem. These Asians saw Paul with a Gentile.

They immediately assumed, oh, he took the Gentile into the temple. And they began telling everybody, Paul took Gentile into the temple and everybody got stirred up. But brethren, hear why they got stirred up.

They got stirred up over a Gentile. Now pay close attention to that. Because then what happens is, they're ready to tear Paul limb from limb and the Romans come and they rescue Paul.

And they question him. And then Paul wants to address the Jews. And this is what I want you to see.

Look at Acts 22.17. When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance. This is Paul preaching. Remember, he began to address the people in the Hebrew language.

And they said, well, he's speaking in our language. So they paid close attention. Verse 18, I saw him saying to me, make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony.

Now you understand what's happening here. Paul is telling them his testimony. He's telling them what happened to him.

And I said, Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another, I imprisoned and beat those who believed in You. And when the blood of Stephen, Your witness, was being shed, now you can see it. Paul has gotten himself somewhere where he can oversee the crowd.

Maybe some kind of high place there. And you've got this whole crowd of Jews gathered. Because he began speaking to them in the Hebrew language, they're all still.

They're listening. They're intent. Paul's undoubtedly got Roman soldiers at his side and behind him, because they've brought him out to address the crowd.

He says, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him. Now listen, right here, you want to notice this very carefully. He quotes what Jesus said to him.

And Jesus said to me, go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles. Now look at this. Up to this word they listened to him.

Then they raised their voices and said, away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live. And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks saying that he should be examined by flogging to find out why they were shouting against him like this. Now Paul goes on to say, hey, I'm a Roman citizen.

You better be careful. You don't want to flog me. And they didn't flog him.

And anyways, he ends up eventually coming to Felix and Festus and then on his way to Caesar. But look, here's the glory. What really put Paul in prison is that he went everywhere preaching and teaching what? That the Gentiles were included.

I mean, can you imagine it? He stood up before the Jewish people and he said, you want to know what the Jewish Messiah told me? Go preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. And at that point, they went crazy. Look, what Paul was, what did Paul do that demanded incarceration? I'll tell you what he did.

His absolute persistence and insisting that the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs with Jewish believers. Listen, that's what got him put in prison. Do you recognize if he would have left that out of his message? If he would have just said, hey folks, the Jewish Messiah has come.

I recognize preaching the Gospel without that Gentile factor in it will likely stir up the devil and stir up wicked men against you. But what I want you to see is this. Paul ends up in prison for this reason.

He stood up before these people and he said, Jesus Christ told me to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles. He's asserting that this great mystery, this mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and the Messiah sends me. And you know what? They couldn't tolerate that.

They were all up in arms. Do you see the glory of his imprisonment? Do you see how it's your glory and my glory if we're Gentile Christians? Recognize this. Paul suffered because he would not budge on the fact that he received a revelation from Jesus Christ.

That Christ was made a Savior to the Gentiles as well as to these believing Jews. That's what you have here. What Paul is saying is look, the Gentiles are just as much sons of Abraham by faith as any believing Jew is.

And he stuck on that. You know what he says here in chapter 3 of Ephesians? He says, it was given to me by revelation. This mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs.

Fellow heirs. You see it. Members of the same body.

Partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. He had a revelation. And you know what? He's fearless.

Have you ever noticed that about God's true preachers? They're not afraid to offend people. You notice that about Daniel? Daniel seasoned his hard message undoubtedly. Saying to Nebuchadnezzar, King, I could hope that this would happen to your enemies.

But you know what? Nevertheless, he gave them the message from God. You know, I have wondered about Paul in the times he's given his testimony and he gives all this detail about he's going down the Damascus road and Jesus Christ appears to him and the people standing around, they saw the light, but they didn't see what was going on and it's like they heard sounds, but they didn't, you know, they were on the outside and Paul is having the Lord Himself speak to him. And you know when Paul gives his testimony, he gives all those details.

And I thought, Paul is that wise? Maybe that makes you sound crazy to the people. But no, that's what happened and he had this revelation and he tells it like it is. He had a revelation from Jesus Christ concerning the Gentiles and it doesn't matter.

You know what? If you had asked him ahead of time, Paul, do you think, do you think? I mean, think about your own Lord Jesus Christ. He's in the synagogue and he's trying to tell the people one day that, oh, there were many widows in Israel, but did God have mercy on any of them? No! He went over here to a Gentile widow. There were many lepers in Israel in that day.

Do you remember what they wanted to do to Jesus? They wanted to throw Him off the edge. Well, you could ask Paul, Paul, do you think if you stand up before the Jews that it's likely that you're going to escape this thing unscathed if you start telling them that the Messiah has come and He's actually sent you to the Gentiles? Paul would say, no, it'd probably get ugly. I'll probably end up, I mean, something bad's going to happen.

I might end up dead. But you know what Paul would say? It doesn't matter to me. You see, as he's looking at the Ephesians, he's saying, this is your glory.

You ask Paul, you know, Paul, is it likely that you might have made it out of that situation without being imprisoned if you would have left that out of your message? Well, there's a good possibility. But you see what he's saying to these Gentiles in Ephesus is, I didn't leave it out. I didn't leave it out and I'm going to proclaim it.

I am going to proclaim that I am sent to preach the glorious, these riches, these exceeding riches of Jesus Christ. Not just proclaim them. Proclaim them to the Gentiles.

And I'm going to do it even if it costs me prison. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine if some guy is sitting in prison who is your spiritual father and he's in there because he is absolutely determined to preach a message that has been given him from Jesus Christ about your salvation. And it's so certain.

See, he doesn't want them pining away. He doesn't want them feeling sorry for him. He wants them to step back and say, look at what's happening.

Get your eyes off the little picture and me being put... You need to recognize this. I'm willing to go to prison. I'm willing to die for this.

I have a revelation and you need to recognize what revelation this is. The mystery is that we Gentiles, we're fellow heirs. We're in.

We're members of the same body. We're in. We're partakers of the promise.

What promise? All the promises that the Jews had. The promise given to Abraham. We're partakers and we're in there.

And this is the glory of it all. This is the glory. And Paul is saying through these verses that we're going to be looking at in the weeks to come.

He's saying, brethren, step back and look at the magnitude of all this. Look at the glory of all of this. What? We have a message that's been concealed.

It's been a mystery. It was not revealed to the sons of men. All the prophets said some things about it.

Yes, you can go to Romans 9 and you can see that there's glimpses and God was saying. You hear about the riches of the nations coming in. But so much of this was hidden.

So much of this was mystery. So much of this, even though it's there. Brethren, just because some little things are said doesn't cause it to not be a mystery any longer.

They didn't get it. They didn't get it. They didn't get it so much that when they heard it, it so enraged those Jews that they wanted to tear Paul limb from limb.

It so enraged those Jews that they would have cast their own Messiah off the cliff. And yet, we're in. We're in.

And Paul says, step back and look at this. It has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets this mystery and it's that you are fellow heirs. And he said, you get it.

You get this, the unsearchable riches of Christ and you get it preached to you. And if you notice what he says here, he says the church, through the church, through the church, through the church, the manifold

wisdom of God is now being made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. You know, we can get to where we look at our situation.

We look at Paul's situation. You know, maybe if John Seitzman was thrown in prison over in Nepal, it's like, Lord, the people are perishing in Nepal. We have to remember God says His Word is not bound.

But he says this, recognize there is an eternal plan. Do you see that? Eternal purpose in verse 11? There's an eternal purpose and it is unfolding. And this purpose is that in the course of time with the coming of the Messiah, the Gentiles would be included and begin to be gathered in and such numbers of them.

We find there in Revelation that it's a number nobody can count. And the riches of the nations are coming in and God has this eternal plan. And brethren, do you see what's happening? The manifold wisdom of God is being put on display.

Before who? When we get to chapter 6, you know who these rulers and authorities are? They're demons. They're wicked powers in the heavenly places. The prince of the power of the air.

You know what God's saying? God is trumpeting. If we could only hear or see into the spiritual realm. Oh, there's spiritual shakings.

We feel those things. But if we could really tear back the veil. You know what God is saying? God is saying, behold My wisdom.

He points at this church and He says to the demons around here, behold them. And God is being magnified and God is being glorified by putting us on display. Brethren, what greater thing can be said about the church than we are for His glory and He's demonstrating it before demonic principalities and powers.

And that's what's happening. It's like, get off our little problems. Get off even our little sufferings.

Momentary light afflictions. Even if somebody we dearly love is in prison or we're in prison, we need to see it for what it is. This great, big plan, eternal plan of God is being unveiled and it's falling out before us.

I mean, look, the reality is, you look at Paul there. You just watch him. You can stand back and watch this like you're watching it through a TV.

Here he is preaching. He's preaching in their language. He's got their attention because they identify with him.

Hebrew language. Oh, we're Hebrews. We love Hebrews.

And all of a sudden he mentions the fact that the Messiah wants him to go to the Gentiles and these people erupt to the point where those Roman soldiers had to get him out of there, otherwise he was going to be killed. And he's saying, look, Ephesians, my sufferings, it's your glory. San Antonians, Paul's suffering, it's our glory.

This thing is...the thing about this is it so cements, it so vindicates the reality of this. Paul's imprisonment is the is not defeat. It's not failing.

God hasn't advocated. Paul's imprisonment is quite to the contrary. And Paul is just saying, look, you don't want to be defeated.

You don't want to be cast down. You don't want to lose heart. You want to recognize this thing is so certain.

He's saying, look, I'm an apostle of God. I have revelation from Jesus Christ and I am so absolutely convinced that Christ died for you Gentiles. I'm willing to preach that message though they take my head off, which they did.

And that's good news for us. But that's the flow. I mean, this is what's happening.

He says, for this reason, because you Gentiles are included, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, I'm going to pray for you. I'm a prisoner. Okay, I'm not going to pray for you yet.

Let me just tell you, my imprisonment is for your glory. He's going to get to praying for them in verse 14. But first, he's just going to unravel some of the glories of this inclusion, this mystery, the Gentiles.

So that's where we are. This was an introduction to what's to come. Set the stage.

Father, I pray that you'd help us to recognize. I can see Paul there. What a message.

Christ Himself tells him what's to come. What's to come. What's to come.

Go to the Gentiles. Lord, we say it. What have you done? Not in the way Nebuchadnezzar said, but the way our brother Bob said it.

The Jewish Messiah cares about the Gentiles. Go to the Gentiles. You tell them.

When you think of Paul, he turned his back on the Jews in some places, saying that they're not worthy of eternal life. And that he would go to the Gentiles and they would hear him. What glorious news for us.

Father, I pray help us to feel it. Lord, there's so much about Scripture that we know if we could just sink our teeth into the reality of it, we'd undoubtedly have a joy unspeakable and full of glory. We're dense.

We're dense in the head and in the heart so often. Please, Lord, show us glorious things in these days ahead. Chapter 3, make it come alive in these weeks ahead.

Lord, I want myself and my brethren to be able to remember back all those messages from Ephesians 3. God was in them. That's what we need. We need You to be here and help.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

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