

**Ephesians 3**  
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**Eph 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--**

**Eph 3:2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;**

**Eph 3:3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.**

For what reason? The reason is given in the last four verses of chapter 2 that we just studied. The reason is that God is offering the salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, to all mankind whom He chooses. Those who have not heard of this stewardship to the Gentiles that God gave to Paul would be those that have not yet received this blessing from God. His statement "wrote before in brief" may mean that there was another letter or it could just refer to those previous four verses. Here he refers to a mystery that was revealed to Him by God. The word "mystery" means an existing knowledge or event that can be clearly seen only by those who have been given the insight to understand it. It is not like the mystery of the murder of someone that has to be deduced by the investigators and then it will be clear. The knowledge or event is already clear to those whom God has chosen to see it. He says that it is also what he just briefly wrote about. In the next few verses he elaborates on this "mystery".

**Eph 3:4 And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,**

**Eph 3:5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;**

**Eph 3:6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,**

**Eph 3:7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.**

Here is the "mystery": the Gentiles are "fellow heirs", "fellow members of the body", and "fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel". We saw before how the wall was destroyed dividing the Court of the Gentiles from the remainder of the Temple area and how the veil was torn from the top down that restricted access to the Holy of Holies to only the Jewish priests and to only one of them each year after a year's sacrifices. God made it clear from the beginning that all the families of the earth would be included in His blessing as we read in Genesis:

*Gen 12:3 "And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

However, as we have discussed before, before the coming of Christ, everyone thought that one had to first become a Jew before he/she could receive the blessings of God. This sign of having become one of the chosen people was circumcision of the males. However, with the coming of Jesus Christ, we have a new economy of God. Now the blessings of God are available to whomever He chooses: male, female, Jew, Greek, free, slave! It is difficult for us to imagine what a “sea change” this was in the perceived workings of God in bringing His salvation to His chosen people. America has experienced some minor analogous events such as the allowing of women to vote and the freedom of the black slaves. Total equality of both women and blacks is still being worked out in this country, but this is still not nearly as big a deal as the equality of Jews and Gentiles before the Holy God. Hitler had his superior race concept and the killing of the Jews but as awful as that was, it still is not in the same “ball park” with the concept of equality before God of the Jews and Gentiles.

Paul clearly states that God made him the minister explicitly to the Gentiles in this newly offered grace to them. We will examine this gift to Paul in the next few verses.

Let’s look at each of these three separate revelations as stated by Paul in these verses.

1. Fellow heirs

We see this concept also in Gal 3:29, Titus 3:7, and Rom 8:17. This promise of inheritance is for all Christians regardless of what they were before being born again. There are no second-class citizens in Heaven.

2. Fellow members of the body

This verse states that we all are members of the body and being built together to become a Holy Temple for God as told at the end of Chapter 2. We are also told in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14 and other places how members are given different gifts that are to be used to edify and establish the entire body (<http://livingtheology.com/HolySpiritII.htm>). All members of the body of Christ then need to work to have good relationships with each other and to care deeply about each other. It does take a spirit-filled person to really put the needs of fellow Christians above his/her needs, but that is what we are called to do.

3. Fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

This is a wonderful statement. All of God’s chosen people (Jew, Gentile, all races, male and female, free and slave, rich or poor, and any other man-conceived differences) receive the same promises in Jesus Christ as told in the gospel. We are all equal before God, but we must strive to see others as equal before God in **our** eyes.

The “mystery” is that, through Jesus Christ, God worked out His prophesy of Gen 12:3. This “mystery” was such a shocker to the people of that time that Paul and Peter had to

explain it several times using the word “all” to refer to both Jews and Gentiles such as in the following:

*1Tim 2:4 “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

*1Tim 2:6 “who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.”*

*Titus 2:11 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,”*

*2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*

This concept of equality between Jew and Gentile also caused Paul to write:

*Rom 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek”.*

The reader is referred to the following paper for a further discussion on the topic of “all”:

<http://LivingTheology.com/All>

So why do people today still insist that the above uses of “all” means that all people can choose on their own power to come into a forgiving relationship to God through Jesus Christ (Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism)? The only reason that I can discern is that people still want to have an active role in their salvation. They want to make the choice to believe on their own initiative. They want “faith” to be synonymous with self-confidence, to be a self-confidence that they truly develop on their own. However Scripture is very clear that man cannot and will not choose God on his/her own initiative (see our study on Ephesians chapter one) and that God gives faith with Jesus as the author and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2). See the following article for more discussion on faith: <http://LivingTheology.com/Faith>.

**Eph 3:8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,**

**Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things;**

**Eph 3:10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.**

Paul has been chosen by God to preach to these newly selected people (now included explicitly in the “all”) and to illuminate to the world the ways in which every person on the face of the earth should be now reached for the Kingdom of God. No longer do the non-Jews have to first become Jews to receive the blessings of God. These two assignments will be done by Paul so that all the church – and certainly the rulers of the church – will know that God has so spoken in the initiation of this new economy of God. Certainly Paul would say that he was the very least of all the saints because of his background prior to his conversion and because he did not walk with the Lord during His earthly existence on earth. But it was through this great theologian, who was allowed to

see the plan of God in an understanding way that a non-Jew could not experientially understand, that God brought the Gospel message to the non-Jews. Paul's great Jewish background and education, coupled with the opening of his eyes in a Godly spiritual birth, allowed him to experientially understand God's plan. As a non-Jew, I did not have all of the historical Jewish background in my development, and so I depend upon the writings of Paul and his references to the Old Testament Scripture to try to understand the full development of history by God.

Mankind tries to understand and make some sense of history from a perspective that excludes God. They have been very unsuccessful in making any sense out of the unfolding of history with all the wars and cruelty to mankind by mankind itself. Some historians have said that there is no ultimate sense to history, but that history is just the unfolding of events without any connectivity. Some of these historians and philosophers have developed a very pessimistic view of the past, present, and future of mankind. Others have tried to view the historical development of mankind into some sort of superman whose actions will result in a time of total equality of all people and that peace will prevail in this future. Taking a close look at all the horrors going on the world in 2003, and at how mankind has "progressed" toward the current state of existence does not validate such a hypothesis.

We Christians look at history, and certainly Paul is discussing this in this great book, with the church of Jesus Christ as the focal point and we date history with a past view (BC) and a present still unfolding timeline (AD). The world tries to change this dating to BCE (before the current era) and CE (the current era) so as to remove Christ from history. The Jewish calendar is totally forward looking from a deduced date of the creation of the world because they did not accept the coming of the Messiah. Certainly in this text Paul is justifying our BC/AD calendar with the new era of the extension of the promise of salvation directly to "all". The angels in Heaven are still watching this unfolding and they too are eagerly awaiting the time when the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ, will return to rule earth with His saints who have been being born into the Kingdom since the time of Adam and Eve.

**Eph 3:11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,**

**Eph 3:12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.**

**Eph 3:13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.**

The unfolding of the mystery of how "all" people would be given equal access to the Holy God was done through the work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We don't need a worldly priest to have access to God. We, the children of God, have a confident access to God through the great High Priest Jesus Christ.

*Heb 7:12 "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.*

*Heb 7:13 For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar.*

*Heb 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*

*Heb 7:15 And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,*

*Heb 7:16 who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.*

*Heb 7:17 For it is witnessed of Him, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

*Heb 7:18 For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness*

*Heb 7:19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

*Heb 7:20 And inasmuch as it was not without an oath*

*Heb 7:21 (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest forever'");*

*Heb 7:22 so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*

*Heb 7:23 And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing,*

*Heb 7:24 but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently.*

*Heb 7:25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

*Heb 7:26 ¶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;*

*Heb 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."*

We can come boldly and confidently to Him because our coming to Him is not based on anything that we may have done or not done, but totally upon double imputation for the chosen people of God. It is because of this great truth of God that we don't doubt the promises of God even when we see His people undergoing great hardships and even death. We look at the horrible way that all of the Apostles were treated by the world, and certainly the horrible death of our Lord as proof that all that they have done is for our glory. There is no promise of a worldly success for any of God's people before the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ. We all should be working for the spiritual betterment of God's people first in our lives and not first concerned with our worldly needs.

*Matt 6:31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'*

*Matt 6:32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

*Matt 6:33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."*

God has promised to take care of the basic needs of His people if we truly put His kingdom and the total application of Jesus' righteousness in our life first in our list of priorities. However we are also promised problems because we are living in a world that refuses to accept our beliefs as the truth. We see this promise in the following and other Scripture verses:

*John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

*Rom 5:3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;*

*Rom 12:12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,*

This promise of taking care of our basic needs and the promise of tribulation may sound contradictory, but that is only because we do not yet totally have the mind of Christ and the total focus of history on the church of Jesus Christ. God truly cares for each of His children in ways that we can only guess, but our true rewards await us in heaven.

**Eph 3:14 "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,  
Eph 3:15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,  
Eph 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;  
Eph 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,  
Eph 3:18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,  
Eph 3:19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."  
Eph 3:20 ¶ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,  
Eph 3:21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

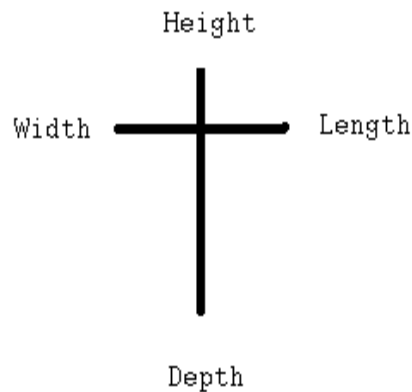
For what reason does Paul bow his knees before the Father? He falls on his knees to praise God because God has now provided through Jesus Christ the final sacrifice for sin, the final act for righteousness to be given to all of God's chosen people, an end to all of the many years of continuous sacrifices and attempts to fulfill the law, for a new covenant fulfilled by Jesus, and that "all" people whom God chooses now have direct access to the Father through the Great High Priest Jesus Christ. He then prays that God would strengthen us with power from the Holy Spirit in our inward being, that Jesus Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith from God, that we would be rooted and grounded in love, that we would then be able to deeply understand with all saints the four dimensions (!!!!) of knowledge of God, that we might truly know the love of Jesus Christ

that goes far beyond just an intellectual understanding, and that we might be totally filled with the fullness of God!!!! What a prayer for us!

He closes this section with a great benediction that goes down to us (“to all generations forever and forever). Note that the benediction says that God is able to do beyond our understanding of what He can do through the power that dwells within us (God Himself). There is no justification for us to ever have a “pity party” for ourselves. We deny the presence of God within ourselves when we become anxious or “whinny”. Read the following for a more complete discussion of the problem and solution for anxiety.

<http://LivingTheology.com/Anxiety.htm>

What a great ending for this portion of this book by the great Apostle Paul.



### References

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