

EPHESIANS is one of Paul's "Prison Epistles," the others being Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, written during his first Roman imprisonment in A.D.60-62. Wm. Gurnall, The Christian in Complete Armor wrote that while Paul was in Caesar's prison, much more was Caesar the prisoner of the Lord. Paul used this time to write Holy Scripture. Paul never felt sorry for himself but rather accepted what God sent his way and made the best of it.

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for 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.

⁷ 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. ⁸ 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, ⁹ and 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. ESV

1. PAUL: Prisoner of Christ

3:1

Here and in 4:1 and 6:20 Paul refers to his imprisonment. Always, he understands that it is God's providence being worked out in his life.

The Book of Acts {28:16-20, 30; 21:26-3} gives the record of the events that lead to Paul's imprisonment.

2. PAUL: Explains of the Mystery of Christ

3:2-6

It was not a new thing that Gentiles were saved by grace through Christ. It was a new revelation of the extent of the Gentiles' blessing, even fellow-heirs of the same body. Chapter 2:14-15 introduced the idea that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was forever removed. There is "one new man" created in Christ.

As is often pointed out, your eschatology will interpret a great deal of Scripture. From the amillennial view this passage teaches that at the death of Christ all distinctions of race, i.e. Jew and Gentile were broken down.

"...Official Judaism was punished in the destruction of Jerusalem and the suicide at Masada. But the Israel of God continues. The Christian Church began with Adam. It took a more definite form with Abraham; and Galatians makes it clear that the present Christian Church is based on the Abrahamic covenant, which the laws of Moses could not disannul. Or, to refer to the figurative language of Romans eleven, some of the branches from a wild olive tree were grafted in. Note that the Gentiles were grafted into the true Israel, the Israel of God. In future history, when the Jewish branches "abide not still in unbelief" (11:23), they shall be grafted back into the one holy olive tree. But this will not be a nation of Israel. It will be the Church of God." Author Unknown

3. PAUL: Preacher of the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

3:7-11

Paul had been a proud Pharisee. After Christ saved him he is, in his opinion of himself, "the least of all the saints (God's people)..." Paul was even sent to be a servant to the Gentile "dogs." Paul was humbled to be chosen to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles

Verse 11 tells us that the "purpose of the ages" is the establishment of the Church made up of Gentiles and Jews.

4. PAUL: Encourager of the Body of Christ

3:12-13

Because of Christ, all believers have freedom and access directly to Him. It is not in the Bible where you find any limits on the believer's access to Jesus the Christ.

No human priest; not Mary, and no pope are needed to go to Christ.

POWER IN CHRIST

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.

EPHESIANS, LIKE Paul's other letters, begins with doctrine (teaching) about the things of God. Believers are "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; "they all once were; "dead in trespasses and sins;" and they are now all, both Jews and Gentiles, part of the "one body."

The next question that Paul answers is, "So What?" If a person is really saved how does that affect their life? Chapters 4-6 answer the "so what?" Before that Paul prays for the Ephesian believers. What applies to them extends to all believers.

1. PAUL'S POSTURE

3:14-15

What is the correct position for prayer?

What does it mean to be "named" after the Father? Cf. Isa 43:6-7

⁶ I will say to the north, Give up,
and to the south, Do not withhold;
bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the end of the earth,
⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

Paul makes a play on words in Greek that does not readily translate into English. Paul prays to the Father (pater) for whom the fatherland (patria) is named. Some commentators include unfallen angels in this family, but clearly the next verse can't include angels who have no need for redemption.

God is the Creator of everything and in that sense is the Father of all. The Bible does not, however, teach the "universal brotherhood of man." Jesus told some unbelievers that their father was the devil.

2. PAUL'S PRAYER

a) For Power through the Spirit 3:16-17a

You can't divide the Godhead. This is one of the errors of the Charismatics who teach that you may be saved by Christ and then later on receive the Holy Spirit in some ecstatic experience. Paul said in Romans, "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." Intellectually we can separate the Persons of the Trinity because the Bible does so, but the believer has Christ, the Spirit indwells, and they are the temple of God.

This awesome power is available now!

b) For Knowledge of the Love of Christ 3:17b-19a

One of the failings of the modern church is the ignorance of the average church member. Even worse is the ignorance of the pastors. There are examples of people who have attended church for 50 or 60 years and are still ignorant of what the Bible teaches on most subjects. Ignorance is not the same as stupidity. Paul often uses the phrase, "I would not have you ignorant." The solution to ignorance is knowledge. In these verses Paul prays that they will understand something. That something is in a sense unknowable except by the power of the Spirit.

c) For the Fullness of God 3:19b

We have a responsibility to know what may be known.
Ignorant Christians are empty Christians.

3. PAUL'S PRAISE

3:20-21

This is one of the great doxologies in the Bible.

Some other doxologies:

Romans 16:25-27

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Jude 24-25

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

It is impossible to find enough words to describe the praise due to God.

The church is to glorify Christ for ever and ever!