



WORD FOR LIFE CHURCH MINISTRIES

IN CHRIST: BELIEVING AND LIVING BECAUSE OF JESUS
a study of Ephesians

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Ephesians 3:1-14

In Christ: Believing and Living Because of Jesus

To this point, Paul has emphasized Gentile believers' union in the family of God as they receive salvation by God's gift of grace—the Lord Jesus Christ. The Good News is that Gentiles have been redeemed because of the blood of Jesus and they have been adopted as children of God. Gentile believers are encouraged to see themselves as heirs of God and fellow citizens in the kingdom of God with Jews, who were people of God's covenant promises. As our title suggests, believers are in Christ and should view their lives on that foundation.

With this chapter, Paul exercises personal privilege by highlighting his calling. However, Paul does not understand his calling in a vacuum—that is, Paul is not thinking about himself. Instead, as Paul centers his testimony, he demonstrates how belief in Christ enables life in Him.

Chapter Theme: Strengthened by the Gospel | **Section Theme:** Paul's ministry to Gentiles

Key Terms

- *Prisoner* (3:1) □ [one who is bound, a captive] can be used as a metaphor, but given the context of this letter, the belief is that Paul was a prisoner, in a literal sense.
- *Mystery* (3:3, 4, 5, 9) □ [a secret, secret doctrine; the counsels of God before revelation] understood in these cases as a secret that requires some initiation for understanding to be possible. A mystery is not something unknowable. Rather, the understanding is that God initiates the act necessary for understanding to occur. Thus, God reveals what can be known.
- *Revelation* (3:3) □ [an unveiling, uncovering, or a disclosure; shares the same core of the word for which we get the term apocalypse] used primarily to mean the unveiling or uncovering of Jesus Christ, but also for the unveiling of God's will in Christ Jesus.
- *Servant* (3:7) □ [*diakonos*: an attendant – as in a waiter – anyone who performs some service; an administrator (contemporarily, a pastor, minister, or deacon)] The servant ministers to the needs of a superior – e.g., a king – or in this case, of divine will.

Chapter Outline

I. **Ephesians 3:1-6 – Gentile adoption into the family of God informs how Paul sees himself.**

The message and meaning of the Gospel reside in the *ethos* and *persona* of Apostle Paul. This chapter reveals how Paul saw himself in the light of his calling as part of the will of God—yes, for Paul's good, but also, importantly, for the good of Gentiles.

The rhetorical effect of Paul's self-identification as a prisoner.

1. First, Paul's imprisonment provides the context for his authority.



- He believes the _____ to be his _____ to and for them (Gentiles).
 - He bears the _____ of _____ as his validation.
2. Second, Paul's imprisonment has a purpose in the fulfillment of God's plan.
- He is imprisoned in Rome, but he is a prisoner of _____.
 - He is not a _____; he is fulfilling his _____.

Making meaning of a mystery.

What was the mystery? According to 3:6, Gentiles are: 1. Fellow heirs; 2. Members of the same body; and 3. Sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

Why was it considered a mystery? _____

How was the mystery made known? The mystery was uncovered in two ways:

1. Grace to receive divine _____.
2. Grace to specific people and groups, namely the _____ and _____.

A note on this grace: The Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and prophets to reveal the mystery on God's terms. The Holy Spirit also works through us in the form of spiritual gifts, to demonstrate God's grace. We fulfill God's purposes in our lives by acknowledging and exercising God's grace (i.e., the spiritual gifts).

Reflections

- Have you ever self-identified with something so closely as Paul associated himself with his call?
- If so, what was it and how did (or how are) you live out the call?
- If not, would you pray that God would reveal to you a purpose that captures the entirety of your being?

Takeaway: God's calling enables and informs how we view ourselves in light of the call. It is often difficult to distinguish the person from the work because of how completely the person gives themselves to the work.

NOTES: _____



II. Ephesians 3:7-13 – Gentile inclusion in God’s plan informs Paul’s hope for their continuation in the faith.

According to Paul, the Gospel referred to as a mystery in verse 6 is the same Gospel to which he says he has become a servant.

The rhetorical effect of Paul’s self-identification as a servant.

1. As a servant, Paul is bound to do the will of God.
 - This was the responsibility of Paul’s _____ gift.
2. As a servant, Paul ministers with humility.
 - This was the result of God’s _____ grace (*see 1 Cor 15:9; 1 Tim 1:15*).
3. As a servant, Paul ministers with clarity.
 - This was the response to a _____ God.

NOTES: _____

The goals of Paul’s servanthood

What was once concealed was being revealed through Paul’s ministry. Paul’s mission for ministry (and, by extension, the church’s mission) is intricately connected to Jesus Christ. A new creation—the Church—has come alive in Him.

- A. To demonstrate the _____ of God’s grace. (10-13)
 - The diverse church instructs the angels concerning God’s _____.
 - The diverse church instructs the angels concerning God’s _____.
- B. To declare the Lordship of Christ.
 - God’s purpose is _____ in Him.
 - God is _____ through Him.
 - God’s people are _____ by Him.

NOTES: _____

