

**"The Revelation of God's Mystery"**

**Ephesians 3:1-21**

**Part 1**

**Introduction:** Today in our study of Ephesians we have now come to chapter three and it will be in this chapter that Paul will explain God's mystery concerning the church and that is that we are all one in Christ.

Last week in our study we looked at how the Apostles and the prophets were the foundation upon which the church is built.

**Notice Ephesians 2:20**

The idea here is that the Apostles and the New Testament prophets were used by God to lay the foundation for the church. When the church began at Pentecost it was the New Testament church without a New Testament Bible. So, God gave to the Apostles and the prophets the revelations which they needed to have in order to teach sound doctrine to the church.

**Acts 2:42-43**

<sup>42</sup> *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

<sup>43</sup> *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*

Last week we considered that since the foundation has been built there is no longer a need for Apostles and prophets. They did their work in establishing the foundation by teaching the Truth which the Lord revealed to them. Now we have it in the New Testament Bible and so there is no longer a need for foundation builders. Apostles and prophets do not exist today.

We are used by the Lord today to build upon the foundation that has already been established. Jesus Christ is the chief Cornerstone which means everything must align with Him.

In chapter three of Ephesians we have the privilege of studying the revelation given to Paul concerning the body of Jesus Christ/the church.

**I. Paul the Prisoner**

When Paul began this chapter, it was his original intent to pen the words of a prayer for the believers at Ephesus.

**Notice Ephesians 3:1, 14**

We can see the connection between these two verses. Before Paul was able to pen his prayer, the Holy Spirit led him to write of the revelation that had been given to him.

**Notice Ephesians 3:1 again.**

This verse shines a great amount of light upon Paul's heart and reveals much for us. Here in this verse Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ for these Gentiles.

Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison at Rome and I really want you to understand why he was in prison. He was in prison for the revelation which he is about to explain. You see, the Lord had revealed to Paul the mystery of the church and how the Jew and the Gentile are one in Jesus Christ. Paul then took this message to the Gentiles how that God desired to see them saved and if they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior they would be forgiven of all sin and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ.

The Jews hated this message! The Jews hated Paul for preaching this message! Even believing Jews had a tough time accepting the message that the Gentiles were equal with them in the body of Christ. They believed the Gentiles should become Jews before they could be saved, and they should be second class Christians and citizens and no more. When Paul taught the Gentiles were equal the Jews absolutely hated Paul and his message. Paul was tireless in reaching the Gentiles however which infuriated the Jews even that much more.

In Acts 21 Paul was captured and in Acts 22 he gives his testimony and I want you to notice what he says to the Jews and their reaction to his words.

**Acts 22:14-22**

*14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.*

*15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.*

*16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

*17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;*

*18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.*

<sup>19</sup> And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

<sup>20</sup> And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

<sup>21</sup> And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

<sup>22</sup> And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

This is why Paul was in prison. He was given a revelation from the Lord and he proclaimed that revelation and was hated for it.

**Application:**

There is something here which I need to point out for all of us. When we sign up to follow Jesus Christ and to serve Him there is going to be a cost. There is a cross for all of us to bear.

**Matthew 16:24**

<sup>24</sup> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

**Matthew 10:38**

<sup>38</sup> And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is not an easy life. There will be suffering, trials and sacrifice. We shall see this as we continue our look at verse 1.

**Notice Ephesians 3:1 again.**

I want you to notice that Paul states that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He does not see himself as a prisoner of the Jews or of Nero. He is not complaining about his conditions. He has accepted what has come upon him as the will of the Lord. He is not looking for sympathy from the church. He is fine with his situation because he knows he has been strategically placed where he is at by the Lord.

Let me show you how he described his circumstances in another letter.

**Philippians 1:12**

<sup>12</sup> But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

<sup>13</sup> *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places:*

<sup>14</sup> *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

<sup>20</sup> *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

<sup>21</sup> *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Paul desired to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead God sent him as a prisoner. He was arrested for the Truth he preached, placed on a ship and experienced a shipwreck, was bitten by a poisonous snake, and was finally brought to Rome where he was under house arrest. He refers to it all as "THE THINGS WHICH HAPPENED UNTO ME". There is no complaining and no blaming others. He knew that the Lord placed him there and allowed him to go through everything for a purpose, so He trusted the Lord with it all.

**Application:**

We all need to have the same attitude which Paul had. But the problem is when life becomes difficult, we begin to complain and then we begin to question the love and the kindness of the Lord. Let us who are believers understand that when we were saved, we were bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 5:9**

<sup>9</sup> *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

We were enslaved to sin and Jesus Christ bought us with His own blood freeing us from the power of sin and then He set us free to live in a way that glorifies Him. Therefore, we belong to Him and so He has every right to strategically place us wherever He desires for us to be. He has every right to change our plans and send us down a path that is uncomfortable.

**When He does this, it is our responsibility to surrender and to set our rights aside.** This then allows the Holy Spirit to manifest the life of Jesus Christ through us.

**2 Corinthians 4:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

<sup>8</sup> We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

<sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

<sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

<sup>11</sup> For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Let me show you what Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit.

#### John 16:13-14

<sup>13</sup> Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

<sup>14</sup> He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Notice Ephesians 3:1 again.

There is yet one more point I want you to see within this verse. Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ FOR THE EPHESIAN GENTILES.

When I read this, I realize that Paul was willing to give up his life in order to see that the Gentiles had eternal life. He experienced great suffering for the sake of others. Paul was had the mind of Jesus Christ in him.

#### Philippians 2:4-8

<sup>4</sup> Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

<sup>7</sup> But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

<sup>8</sup> And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus Christ did not use His deity for His personal advantage, but He emptied Himself and became a servant. He went to the cross and He died a shameful death so that we could have eternal life. This is the same mind that we see in Paul. He placed the needs of others ahead of his own comfort.

**Application:**

I point this all out because we are living in a time when it is so easy to become focused only upon ourselves and in so doing, we miss many opportunities to manifest Jesus Christ to others.

Timothy was a man who also had the mind of Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 2:19-22**

*19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.*

*20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.*

*21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

*22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.*

If we are not careful, we can come under the control of the divisive spirit which is at work in our society today. Let me show you what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Matthew 5:43-48**

*43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

*44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

*45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

*46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

*47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

*48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

**Conclusion:**

There is one verse in the Sermon on the Mount that clearly states how we are to treat other people.

**Matthew 7:12a**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:*