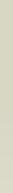


EPHESIANS

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

Ephesians 3:1-13

PLEASE GIVE US FEEDBACK:
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SUPPLEMENTAL VERSES

Acts 21:27-29

Acts 21:30-33

Acts 23:12-15

Acts 23:12-15

Acts 25:11

Acts 28:16, 30-31

Acts 9:15,

Galatians 2:7-8

Philippians 3:5-7

Genesis 12:1-3

Isaiah 49:1-7

Isaiah 56:1-8

Psalms 67:1-7

Galatians 3:24-25

Galatians 4:4

I Timothy 3:15

I Peter 1:12

Ephesians 1:20-21

Ephesians 2:6

Ephesians 6:12

Job 1:1-11

Job 1:12-22

Job 2:1-10

REVIEW OF EPHESIANS

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ

God planned salvation before the foundation of the world.

Salvation is entirely by grace, not by human effort.

Believers share in Christ's new life and position.

God saves people to display His grace and kindness.

Christ creates one new peoples (from Jews and Gentiles).

REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK

What did you learn last week?

We (Jews and Gentiles) were once separated but now one in Christ.

God now dwells in us together as one.

INTRO FOR THIS WEEKS CLASS

The Church is universal because desperate peoples have been brought together in one body.

God has gone to extraordinary lengths in order to bring the Gentiles into the Church. Paul shares this in Ephesians 3.

The assumption for the reader is the story of how God brought the Jews to Christ is well known, with the old testament.

Why was this important to Paul? The Jews and Gentiles were having problems accepting each other. The Jews were in the minority, but they were the 1st to receive the gospel. The Gentiles were in the majority but newer converts. Paul wanted to reduce resentment between the two.

Now that the Gentiles are in Christ, they have direct access to God. They are equal partners w/the Jews in the Church. Gentiles do NOT need to become Jews first. They now have a confident expectation of salvation, unity with everyone, and value as the people of God.

This sets the stage for Ephesians, Chapter 3....

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Today's Focus: *Ephesians 3:1-13*

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A prisoner of Christ Jesus: (v1) "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles"

Paul was physically a prisoner in Rome. How did this happen?

- He was accused of defiling the Jerusalem Temple because he brought a gentile inside (**Acts 21:27-29**)
- A riot broke out, and Roman soldiers arrested him to stop the violence (**Acts 21:30-33**)
- Jewish Leaders formally charged him (**Acts 23:12-15**)
- A plot was formed to kill him (**Acts 23:12-15**)
- He was transferred under guard to Caesarea for trial before Roman governors
- After two years in custody, he appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen (**Acts 25:11**)
- He was sent to Rome and eventually placed under house arrest (**Acts 28:16, 30-31**)

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A prisoner of Christ Jesus: (v1) “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles”

1. From a worldly view, why was he actually a prisoner in Rome? Was it really because he brought a gentile into the Temple?

- He preached Jesus is Lord, not Caesar.
- He proclaimed that Gentiles were fully included in God's covenant family.
- This message threatened both Jewish and religious leaders and Roman political order.

2. Why does Paul call himself a prisoner of Christ (not a prisoner of Rome)?

3. If your current frustrations were reframed as “assignments from Christ,” how would that change your attitude. Is there anything in your life right now that you are calling unfair — that He might be calling purposeful?

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A prisoner of Christ Jesus: (v1) “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles”

Paul was primarily called to minister to the gentiles, not the Jews

Acts 9:15

Galatians 2:7-8

Peter was more specifically associated with ministry to the Jews.

That said, Paul was uniquely equipped to minister to both – and especially powerful when speaking to the Jews because of his background.

Why was Paul the perfect person to minister to the Jews?

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Why was Paul the perfect person to minister to the Jews?

1. He was thoroughly Jewish (**Philippians 3:5-7**) – Circumcised, Tribe of Benjamin, A Pharisee.
2. He understood legalism: Prior to Christ, he was fiercely devoted to law. He wasn't critiquing Judaism as an outsider. He had lived its strictest form.
3. He was also Roman and Educated – From Tarsus. Fluent in Greek which allowed him to move comfortably in both Jewish and Gentile Words. He was Theologically sharp enough for synagogue debate. Culturally fluent enough for Greek philosophers. HE WAS RARE.
4. His conversion was dramatic! “I was wrong – Jesus is the Messiah”. It caused people to listen.

God Shaped him for decades: Jewish Training, Roman Citizenship, Intellectual formation, Zealous temperament.

HE WAS LITERALLY PERFECT FOR THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

What parts of your past – even parts you regret – might God have uniquely prepared to use?

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(v2-3) “Surely you have heard about the **administration** of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly”

“Administration”. The Greek word is ‘oikonomia’. It means: Management, Stewardship, or A trust given to oversee.

Paul is saying, “God entrusted me with a specific responsibility”.

“God’s Grace” – Paul didn’t feel he deserved to be an apostle; he persecuted the Lords Church.

He was entrusted with (grace) and the stewardship of the mystery:

- The message that gentiles are fully included in Christ
- The revelation that salvation is by grace, not by Jewish law
- The unfolding mystery of the gospel

If you had been a first-century Jew, how shocking do you think it would it have been to learn the Gentiles were now equal members of God’s family?

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(v4-6) “In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus”

What is the mystery? Jews and Gentiles are now one new people in Christ – equal heirs, equal access, equal standing.

Were there any hints the Gentiles were heirs in the Old Testament?

Genesis 12:1-3 – God’s promise to Abraham, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you”

Isaiah 49:1-7 – A light to the Nations, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles”

Isaiah 56:1-8 – Foreigners Joined to the Lord, “A house of prayer for all nations”

Wait, there’s more...

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Continued hints the Gentiles were heirs in the Old Testament?

Book of Ruth – a Moabite (gentile) woman, she chose God, she became great-grandmother of David, and an ancestor of the Messiah. It's like an early preview of the truth.

Book of Jonah – The gentile sailors pray to Yahweh, the gentile city of Ninevah repents. God rebukes Jonah for not caring about 120,000 people who don't know Him.

Psalms 67:1-7 – Repeatedly calls for “all the peoples” to praise God

These weren't accidents, they were previews!

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But here is what was NOT clear from the Old Testament:

Jews and Gentiles would be equal heirs

They would form ONE new body

Circumcision and Torah identity markers would no longer define covenant membership

Therefore, the mystery revealed by Christ is, the full equality and union.

Israel struggled to see that God's blessing was meant to flow outward. Israel misunderstood "chosen" as "exclusive"?

What assumptions might we hold today that future believers will look back on and say, "They missed what God was doing?"

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Paul doesn't just say what the mystery is – he implies there was a divine timing to its revelation.

Why was God revealing himself NOW to the gentiles after all this time?

Let's read, Galatians 3:1 - 4:4)

Because the Law Had Finished Its Temporary Role – **Galatians 3:24-25**

Because the “set time” Had Fully Come – **Galatians 4:4**

From a historical standpoint: The Roman road system allowed for rapid travel, A common Greek language unified communication, Synagogues existed throughout the empire as gospel entry points. The stage was set for global expansion.

What can we learn from this as it relates to God's timeline?

He is never late, He is never rushed, He prepares structures before He expands blessings. Sometimes what feels like delay is actually preparation.

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(vs 7-8) “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ”

Paul has been given the wonderful task to tell the Gentiles that the spiritual riches are also for them.

God uses humble people, unlikely people - to carry His greatest message.

The mission is about God’s grace, not our qualifications.

The message we carry (Christ) is infinitely greater than the messenger.

Why do you think God often chooses the most unlikely or humble people to carry His greatest message?

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Name that Person 1 of 5

Background: A fugitive shepherd in the wilderness for 40 years

Obstacle: He told God he was not a good speaker

Outcome: God used him to confront Pharoah and lead Israel out of Egypt

Lesson: God chooses people who feel unqualified

MOSES

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

Name that Person 2 of 5

Background: The youngest shepherd boy in his family.

Obstacle: Overlooked by his own father when Samuel came to anoint a king

Outcome: Became Israel's greatest king and defeated Goliath

Lesson: God sees potential where others see insignificance

DAVID

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

Name that Person 3 of 5

Background: Mostly fishermen and ordinary laborers.

Obstacle: No formal religious authority or education.

Outcome: They spread Christianity across the Roman world.

Lesson: People were astonished because they were “unschooled, ordinary men”.

THE APOSTLES

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

Name that Person 4 of 5

Background: Born into slavery with no formal education.

Obstacle: Constant danger and a severe head injury earlier in life.

Outcome: Led dozens of slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Lesson: Courage and calling often outweigh credentials

HARRIET TUBMAN

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

Name that Person 5 of 5

Background: Born in a log cabin, largely self-educated.

Obstacle: Numerous political failures before becoming president.

Outcome: Led the United States through the Civil War and abolished slavery.

Lesson: Humble beginnings do not limit impact

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

(vs 9-11) “and to make plain to everyone the administration of the mystery which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Manifold = multi-layered
- The Church is Christ's Bride
- The church is not just a gathering of believers. It is central to God's eternal plan. It is precious.
- **(I Timothy 3:15)** – The church is “The Pillar and supporter of the Truth”
- The church is on display to the spiritual world. Angels and spiritual powers are watching. The church is the stage where God reveals Himself to the heavenly realms.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S PLAN

What does Paul mean by heavenly realms?

- Refers to the spiritual dimension where God reigns and where spiritual forces exist and operate.
- It is not simply heaven as a future destination, but the spiritual reality that exists alongside the physical world.
- **(I Peter 1:12)** – “Things into which angels long to look.” Even the angels didn’t know God’s full plan.
- God’s authority and Christ’s reign exist there **(Ephesians 1:20-21)**.
- Believers are spiritually connected to it now **(Ephesians 2:6)**
- It is also the arena of spiritual conflict. Not all forces there are good. Satan and his demons are on notice! **(Ephesians 6:12)**
- The church is not just living on earth – it is participating in a much bigger spiritual reality.

God could reveal his wisdom through miracles, angels, or direct power – so why do you think He chose the imperfect church instead?

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The church is like a stage, and the universe is watching God display His wisdom through redeemed people living together in Christ.

If the universe is watching the Church to understand God's wisdom, what should they see when they look at us?

In Job, we are allowed to see something humans normally cannot see: a heavenly courtroom scene. Job has no idea this conversation is happening. Yet his life on earth is part of a larger spiritual demonstration. (**Job 1:1-11, Job 1:12-22, Job 2:1-10**)

Just like Job's faith demonstrated God's wisdom, the church demonstrates God's wisdom when people from different backgrounds are united in Christ. The physical and spiritual world is observing.

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(vs 12-13) “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.”

- In Christ we have confident access to God because of Jesus. This confidence comes through faith in Christ, not our worthiness
- Suffering for Christ can serve a greater purpose
- God's work often advances through hardship and suffering.

Why do you think Paul saw his suffering as something that should encourage believers rather than discourage them?

Do you have a story from your life where God's work advanced through hardship and suffering?

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What can you do to strengthen the spirit of unity in your church?