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EPHESIANS 3:1-3: GOD'S DIVINE MYSTERY—PART 1

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. We are going to be looking at verses 1-3. I want to show you "God's Divine Mystery."

We leave chapter 2 talking about life in the quarry. Ephesians 2:21 says,

"in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."

The phrase, "living life where the chisel hits the stone," so fits the idea of what the word "fitted" really means there in the text. It covers the whole process of what a stone goes through in order to be fitted properly into the building. If you will remember in the Old Testament, the stones were cut exactly to fit, and when they brought them to the Temple, there was no sound of hammer or chisel. Does that mean the stones were already there in the quarry in exactly the right size? No, in that quarry all the chipping and all the chiseling took place, so that stone could be what God wanted it to be. That is exactly what we are going through, life in the quarry. We are being chipped and rubbed and honed to get all the rough edges taken off as we are conformed into the image of Christ Jesus. Remember that verb "fitted" has the idea of the passive sense which means we are being fitted. God is fitting us. But it also has the sense in which we need to put ourselves into a position to cooperate with His fitting process while we are here in the quarry. God is going to accomplish the task, but it is a lot better when we cooperate with what He is up to in our life.

The letter to the Ephesians is really a good illustration of what God can do through a man while He is doing something to a man. Paul was in a quarry. Paul is like you and me. He says in the book of Philippians,

"I have not yet attained."

Part of his quarry living involved a few prisons here and there. While he was in those prisons, God squeezed out of him four of the greatest messages in the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. You see, that is what quarries are all about. God is doing something to you in the quarry. If you will cooperate with Him, He'll do something through you while you are in the quarry.

Well, this wonderful book of Ephesians was squeezed out of Paul while he was in the quarry. Chapter 1 covers the riches of our salvation. Paul wants the Ephesian believers to know the riches of their salvation. Not only that, in chapter 2 he gives the reasons for our salvation. We were helpless and dead (verses 1, 2 and 3). We were hopeless according to verses 12 and 13:

"You were in the world without hope."

We were also homeless, so God made us part of His kingdom, part of His family and part of His Temple.

Now we start chapter 3, and I've got another title for you.

Chapter 1 Riches

Chapter 2 Reasons

Chapter 3 Revelation
.....of Salvation.

I want you to begin looking with me in 3:1. Paul says,

"For this reason I, Paul."

I want to stop right there. If you move down to verse 14, he uses the exact terminology:

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father."

Paul starts off to pray in chapter 3, but immediately he backs away. Before he prays, he wants them to understand something.

Verses 2-13 could be put in parenthesis. He starts his prayer, suddenly stops, and then starts up again in verse 14.

Why does he do that? Well, he wants to tell them of a mystery that has been revealed to his heart. You see, the bottom line is, he is going to pray that what has been revealed to him will be revealed to them. That is what gives us our title, "God's Divine Mystery."

Let me give you a little outline of verses 1-13 that might help you.

1-3: A mystery was revealed to him

4-6, Explains the mystery revealed.

7-9, Defends preaching of the revelation of the mystery

10-13, Proclaims results of the preaching of the mystery.

14-21 Now all of this is a prelude to his prayer in verses .

You see again that he is going to pray that God would reveal to them what God had already revealed to him.

Let's look at the mystery revealed in verses 1-3.

Now before the apostle Paul goes any further, he wants to tell them that a mystery has been revealed. In verse 3 he says,

"that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief."

Now what is the word "mystery"? It's the Greek word *mysterion*;. It means that which God has hidden and only God can reveal. Let me share something with you. Man hides things, and man can find what he hides. When God hides something, man, with all of his education, with all of his intelligence, cannot discover it. Only God can reveal the things He has hidden.

Paul says that this has been made known to him by revelation. Now what is the word "revelation"? It is the word *apokalupsis*. It is the word used in Revelation 1:1, the revelation of and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is it for? For the church. What does it mean? It means to take the lid off. It means to uncover. It means to pull the curtain back. In other words, there is something there that man has not understood, and God has chosen to reveal to man. We would not have the book of the Revelation, we would not have the book of Daniel, we would not have the Scriptures, if God had not chosen to reveal all of this to man. So what is this mystery he is talking about? The word itself means that which God has hidden and only He Himself can reveal to man.

In looking at this revealed mystery, I want us to see three things.

First is the man to whom the mystery is revealed. 3:1 says,

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus."

By the term "prisoner" Paul means, "I am a man conquered by Christ Himself."

In Philippians 1:1, he uses the term "bond servant." "I am a love slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have chosen to serve Him for the rest of my life." Here there is a different picture. It doesn't take away from it. It adds something to it. He says, "I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Now listen to what he is saying. Paul writes this letter from prison, but he lets them know immediately that he is not the prisoner of the Jews. He is not a prisoner of Rome. He is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He might be in their prison, but buddy, he is not a prisoner of those people. He is the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To understand that, you have to go to 2 Corinthians 2:14. There is no other way to explain it. Paul is talking about the fact that he had to go on to Macedonia. He couldn't get with Titus and he begins to explain that whatever he does, he does as a captured, conquered man for Jesus Christ. He does it as a prisoner. He doesn't call the shots. God calls the shots. Let's look at verse 2 Corinthians 2:14. Paul says,

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

Paul uses a term there they would have understood. In the Greek it refers to being chained to a chariot. In our culture, we don't quite understand that. However, we need to see what they saw. He uses the picture of a general who goes out to battle and wins a great victory. He takes the commanders of the other armies, chains them together and chains them to his chariot. Now, he starts a

processional back home. He has all the prisoners behind him. He has their leaders chained to his chariot. He sends a runner ahead of him. There is no telephone or telegraph, so he sends that runner. The runner comes into town and goes from door post to door post. He shakes incense all over everything so it has a sweet smelling aroma. What is that for? That is to let the people know that there has been a victory, that somebody has conquered something, and they are now coming home. The people say, "Oh, let's go down and line the streets." They all come down and line the streets. Sure enough about an hour or two later, here comes the army. Here comes the commanding officer, and chained to his chariot are the captains of those armies that he has conquered. Paul says, "I want everything that I do to send a message to the whole world, I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I am not only a bond-servant. I've not only chosen to serve Him, I am His prisoner. I've been captured, and I've been conquered. Whatever He wants is right in my life." This is the man to whom the mystery is revealed. He is not only a bond-servant, he is a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, I want you to see the people for whom the revelation of the mystery was given. It wasn't just for Paul. Oh, it started with him, and it transformed his life, but it was for others. Look at verses 1 and 2:

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you."

We want to see something here. God had specifically called Paul to preach to the Gentiles. Look up Acts 9:15; 15:7; 20:20-24; 22:21; Romans 11:13. Those are just a few of the scriptures to let you know God specifically singled Paul out and sent him with a ministry to the Gentiles.

Well, in Ephesians 3:2, he says,

"you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you."

What in the world does the word "stewardship" mean? There are two things involved here. One is somebody managing a household. Then there is a secondary meaning of being a steward itself. A steward is one who manages something that is not his own. He manages somebody else's household. He manages somebody else's business. Paul is saying, "This ministry to the Gentiles that God has appointed me to was not my idea. It is not something that is of me. It is not something that came from my schooling with Gamaliel. It is something that God raised up. God, who is the great family steward, gave it to me. I'm the one now assigned with this ministry." That is important.

A lot of folks don't seem to understand that once you are chained to His chariot, once you are a bond-servant to Christ, God will appoint what He wants you to do. He has already gifted you to do it, and God will take over from that point on. It is not something you can achieve. It is something you just stand and receive. It is what God does through you while He is doing some-thing to you. Let me show you some Scriptures.

Look in 1 Timothy 1:12-13. I want you to know, without a shadow of a doubt, this ministry to the Gentiles was appointed by God. God revealed something to Paul. For whom did he reveal it? The Gentiles. It is all God's doing. He says,

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor."

That ought to give us some hope. You may have veered, but God can bring you back and make you near by the blood of Jesus. Then He can change you and put you right into the work of the ministry. God assigns ministries. God begins them. God ends them. Whatever happens, God does it. Now look with me in Romans 15:15-16, and we find again where Paul is talking about the ministry God has given to him.

"But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles."

Look in Galatians 2:9, where we can easily see that God gave him this ministry. Now, if God gave him the ministry, that is why he revealed the mystery. The mystery wasn't for Paul. The mystery was for those he was assigned to minister to:

"and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised."

He is saying, "They went to the Jews, but I was given the ministry to go to the Gentiles." That is why the mystery was revealed.

Look at I Corinthians 4:1:

"Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Was the mystery he is talking about in Ephesians 3 the only mystery? No. But it is the basic one which he comes off of in his ministry. We will talk about what that is in a moment.

So, when God spoke to him, he was a man who was a prisoner. He was captured and conquered. God revealed something to him, not just for him, but for others to eternally benefit. God wants to do the same thing in your life. What He reveals in our hearts is never for just ourselves. It is always to be shared with someone else. Paul says in 3:1:

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles."

The whole thing he is saying here is, "This mystery was revealed for you, not just for me. I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles."

He was in prison. Do you remember the story of how he got there? Paul was so faithful. God appointed him, and Paul went out. He served his whole life doing what God had assigned him to do. Acts 13 shows when he was commissioned and sent out. How did he get to prison to begin with? The book of Acts tells how he went over to Jerusalem. He wanted to go to the elders of the church there in Jerusalem. Here he is, a converted Jew, and he couldn't wait to tell them about all the Gentiles he had led to Christ. He gets there, and James and the counsel say, "Well, Paul, that is wonderful. We are excited for you, but we are worried about some-thing." Paul said, "What is that?" They said, "We have some Jews here in Jerusalem who have become believers, but they are babies who haven't got out from under legalism yet. They see you as a threat because they don't want to see anybody but Jewish believers. They don't believe there can be Gentile believers."

They said, "Paul, you need to do something about it. Go down to the Temple and let them see you in the Temple doing the things that you ought to be doing in the Temple. That will make them feel better, and everything will be fine."

So Paul went down to the Temple. There were some Jews there from over in Asia Minor, maybe even from Ephesus. They saw him in the Temple, and they had seen another man, Trophimus, who was associated with Paul, walking the streets of Jerusalem. They said, "He took Trophimus [who was a Gentile] behind the dividing wall! He is wrong." They spread a lie about him, saying he had desecrated the Temple because he took a Gentile behind the barrier of the dividing wall. Well, the penalty of that in Jewish law is death.

That incident started about a seven-year period in his life that was agonizing to say the least. He was taken to Caesarea under armed guard where he was kept for two years. Then he was sent to Rome, and he has been in a Roman prison now for almost three years. They still have not given a basis for the accusations made against him. What does it say in Ephesians? "I am a prisoner for your sake. I was standing up for you, Gentiles. I was telling everybody how you are coming to know Christ, and they didn't like it. They put me in jail, but I am still a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ." Do you see? God revealed a mystery to Paul, and it so shook him up that it effected the rest of his life. God gave him a people for whom the mystery was given. It effected their lives for all of eternity. The people to whom or for whom the mystery was revealed obviously were the Gentiles.

Third, there is the focus of the mystery:

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief."

He has already said something about this mystery.

Go back to Ephesians 1:9:

"He [God the Father] made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him."

Now, how did it get made known to all of us? It says in chapter 3 later on that he revealed it first to apostles and prophets. Why? So that they could reveal it to you and me. So, we know that the mystery has been revealed, and we know that we can understand it through the words of the New Testament.

What is that mystery? Chapter 2:11-18 is the mystery. Verse 14 says,

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace."

The **mystery** revealed to Paul is that the Jew and the Gentile are made into one brand new man in Christ Jesus. What does that mean? It means He didn't make the Jew a Gentile, and He didn't make the Gentile a Jew. When they come to Jesus, they are brand new creations in Christ Jesus. Paul saw this. God revealed that to his heart. The specifics of chapter 3 and the focus of what he is talking about is not that he is included as a Jew, but the fact that they are included as Gentiles.

Look at Ephesians 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."

You know, you can't quite grasp this unless you realize that Paul is a Jew. Who is more excited about it? Is it the Gentiles who are now a part or the Jew who is finally realizing that they are not some group that shuts everybody else out? They are included, but so are the Gentiles. Paul is saying, "God revealed that." He says in verses 14-21, "I am praying that God will reveal to you what He has revealed to me."

You are in the quarry.

"I don't like being in the quarry, Brother Wayne."

Well, don't tell me. Tell God. He put you there. I am in the quarry. I don't like the quarry. What do we do in the quarry? I have become a bond-servant. I become a prisoner of Christ so captured, so conquered that whatever He does is right. God does something to me, not only in the chiseling, but in the revelation and in the understanding of the Word that I didn't have before and can't have without that surrender in my heart. God wants to do something through me that others will be effected through all eternity. God wants to reveal to you and me things that we can't discover by our own humanistic intelligent mind. As a matter of fact, if you put our minds next to God, you would not even have a contest. We don't show up on the scale. God says, "You want to understand me? Do you want to understand what I have written through these apostles and prophets to whom I revealed this mystery? Then you are going to have to get yourself in the same position they were in, prisoners, captured and conquered by Jesus Christ Himself.

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Ephesians 3:1-9: GOD'S DIVINE MYSTERY—PART 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. We're looking at Part 2 of "God's Divine Mystery," the mystery of salvation.

Verses 2-13 are a parenthesis. He stops before he starts praying because he wants them to grasp something as he enters into prayer for them. He wants to talk about this mystery of salvation. It is almost as if he doesn't want the Gentile believers at Ephesus to ever take their salvation for granted.

We live in a day and age when people take their salvation so lightly and so for granted. Paul does not want that to happen to the Ephesian believers. Paul has a burden on his heart to let them know that this whole thing had to be revealed to him, and now it must be revealed to them. It was not man's idea. It was God's idea. God was Redeemer long before He was ever Creator. The heart of God was to redeem His creation that He, in his omnipotence and omni-science, knew would sin against Him.

He has talked about the riches of our salvation in chapter 1, the reasons for our salvation in chapter 2, and in chapter 3 he is talking about the revelation of our salvation. In verses 12 and following, he is going to pray, "God, will You reveal to them what You have revealed to me? Let them see what You've done for them." You don't discover this by your own pursuit; it is something that God must reveal to our heart. Yes, you seek after it. Yes, you ask and knock, but God has to reveal the things that He Himself has hidden.

He tells them that the salvation of the Gentiles has been a great mystery. He goes on to say how he got in on that great mystery. In verses 1-3, he said it had to be revealed to him. Let's read it.

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief."

In Ephesians 1:9, he mentions the mystery but doesn't really clarify what it is. If you will go over to 2:11-18, he very specifically clarifies what the mystery is all about. Look at what verse 14 says:

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one." Now Paul is a converted Jew writing to converted Gentiles. The Gentiles had been shut out from the promises that were given to Israel for so long. Now, the door has been thrown wide open. Paul is saying: "He broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. There is nothing now that separates Jew from Gentile in their pursuit of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Jew and Gentile enter in the same way."

In verse 15 he says:

"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."

Now, what was the mystery that Paul was so excited about that he wants to tell these Gentile believers? It is that the Jew and Gentile are made into one new body through Jesus Christ.

However, that is not really the focus. The focus is not the Jew. The focus is the Gentile. He wants them to realize not so much that the Jew has it, but that the Gentile now has been included into that which God once promised to Israel. He wants them to see that all of the promises of God that were promised to Israel now have been made available to the Gentiles through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have seen the mystery revealed. Now we are going to look at it explained and then proclaimed. I want you to see the divine work that God did in effecting your salvation and my salvation. We are Gentiles today, and we live in a country that has a Gentile mentality. We think it started with us. It didn't start with us, we were brought in at the appropriate time. We were shut out until Acts 8 when God singled out the minister named Paul, to preach the message to the Gentiles. The center of evangelism shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch, and then the message went out into all the world that any man, whether Jew or Gentile, can come in through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what Paul is explaining to the Ephesian believers. Let's look, first of all, at the mystery explained in verse 5. I will pick up the thought in verse 4. He says:

"And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 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."

To say that the Old Testament never mentions anything about the Gentiles being allowed in would be wrong. As a matter of fact, Paul continuously spoke of the Old Testament when he spoke before the Jews to let them know he was not preaching heresy. In their own Scriptures, through their own prophets, God had already mentioned that others, who were not called His people, would be allowed in one day. The difference is, as he says in verse 5, it has not been known as it has now been revealed. In other words, yes, it was alluded to, but it had never been as clear as it was in that day. It had been made clear to the apostles and to the prophets in his generation.

You see, the prophets he speaks of there are not Old Testament prophets. The word "now" distinguishes the New Testament prophets from the Old Testament prophets. It has been revealed to them by the Spirit. Since we know what the mystery is, let's begin to see how he focuses in on how the Gentiles are the whole topic of his conversation. He is writing to Gentile believers. Yes, the mystery includes the Jew, but the Gentile is his focus.

Look at verse 6. He is going to start explaining the overwhelmingness of the salvation that the Gentiles have: "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." Don't ever take for granted what God has done. This is what our salvation is all about. This is true of them, and if you are a believer today, it is true of you.

First of all, we are fellow heirs.

Now what does that mean? "Fellow heirs" refers to the fact that they, as Gentiles, have the same right to the benefits of the covenant of God's grace as the Jews did. Can you imagine what happened to Paul when God revealed to him that the promises made to Israel now had been granted to the Gentiles? Then, God gave him the ministry to go tell it to them. This is incredible! We are fellow heirs! All that was promised to Israel in the new covenant is ours through Jesus Christ!

What was promised to Israel? Let's look in two places. Paul says we are fellow heirs. We inherit these promises that were first promised to Israel. Jeremiah 31:31 says,

"Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, al-though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it.'"

In Ephesians it says He abolished the law contained in ordinances. That is the ceremonial law, but he didn't do away with the moral law; He wrote that on our hearts. He promised Israel,

"One day I am going to write it on your hearts."

This is also now written on our hearts. We have been allowed into this promise. Well, it goes on in verse 33 and says:

"and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

We are going to have a unique relationship that is incredible. This is promised to Israel, and one day that will be fulfilled to the rest of Israel.

We have been allowed into that. Ephesians 2 says we are now part of the family. We are part of the kingdom, part of the Temple, and part of the family. We are part of this promise. It says in Jeremiah 31:34,

"And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord."

You see, in the Jewish tradition, people couldn't really know about God except through the priests and those who would teach them in the synagogues. He says here, "Oh no, in that day it is going to be different. The Holy Spirit is going to live in you. You shall all know Me and know Me intimately," declares the Lord. It says, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

If you are a believer and a Gentile, rejoice! We have been allowed into the very promises of grace that were given to Israel. We have the law written on our hearts now as believers. We have something that we never could have had before. God opened the door to us. The apostle Paul was the herald of the message of the gospel.

Look in Ezekiel 36:26-27. He says something else about this new covenant of grace promised to Israel. It will be fulfilled to Israel one day, but beautifully, we are allowed into it. Look at what it says:

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart."

You talk about the miracle of healing, the miracle of raising someone from the dead. What kind of miracle is that? They are still going to die. The miracle is a brand new heart that is eternal, a heart that is God's heart. God will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, a new attitude, a new hunger to obey Him:

"and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

That was promised to Israel. One day it will be fulfilled to Israel. Right now, to the Jew individually who comes out, to the Gentile who wants to come, it is given at the moment of belief. We can enter into that which was promised to Israel. We are fellow heirs to the promises made in the covenant of God's grace. You ought to understand that you've got a brand new heart. Israel turned away from God all the time and walked away from Him. He said,

"I am going to do something so radically different one day. I am going to make you My children by birth. I am going to give you a relationship to Me, and I am going to cause you to walk in My statutes. You won't turn away from Me, and I won't turn away from you."

We are now fellow heirs with those Israelites. We have been allowed into that very covenant. Israel as a nation has not yet experienced it. They will one day. God has not forgotten His people, but this New Covenant has given to you and me the opportunity to enter into the promises once made to Israel. Can you imagine how the apostle Paul must have felt? Can you imagine how overwhelmed he must have been when God began to reveal this to his heart? Now remember, he was schooled under Gamaliel. He

stood there and watched Stephen be stoned to death. He held their garments while they stoned him. He stood against everything that he is now preaching. God had to reveal it to his heart, this educated Jewish man, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He said in Philippians 3, as to the law, he was absolutely found righteous. Here is a man that found out the Gentiles have now been allowed into everything that he thought was just solely given to a Jew. What an overwhelming truth. We are fellow heirs. Everything that was promised to Israel, we have been allowed to participate in.

Second, he says we are fellow members of the body

We can be just as closely related to Christ as a Jew once we are all believers. We have the same relationship in the family as they do. He doesn't distinguish the Jew that comes to know Christ from the Gentile who comes to know Christ. We saw that in chapter 2. He makes them both into one brand new body. We are both brand new creations, and we have the same oneness with Him in the family. Gentiles are not in the body because of the courtesy of the Jews. I like that. The Jews didn't stop and say, "Well, okay guys, we will let you in." They had nothing to do with it. The Jews are not in by the courtesy of the Gentiles. Both of them are in solely by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been allowed in. We are fellow heirs. We are fellow members of the body.

Not only that, **third, we are fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.** That is the promise of redemption, that if a man comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he can enter into the family of God. I want you to see that in Galatians chapter 3. There are several verses here that tell us now we have been allowed to partake. Look at Galatians 3:13-14 to catch the whole sentence:

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.'" We have been allowed in. We have redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look down at Galatians 3:19.

"Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."

The seed was promised to Abraham, and now we are a part of all of this. Remember, He told Abraham, "through you all nations will be blessed." How can all nations be blessed through the Jewish race? Through the seed that came to them, which was the Lord Jesus Christ. We've been allowed in by faith in Him.

Look at Galatians 3:22:

"But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." There is no distinction there whether they are Jew or Gentile. Now we can enter in to the promise. If we believe, we are a part of the redeemed.

Look down in Galatians 3:29:

"And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

He is talking about spiritual Israel here. He is talking about the Israel that has come, by faith in Jesus Christ, into the family, into the kingdom, into the very holy Temple of God Himself. He is saying to those Gentiles in Ephesus,

"Don't take this thing for granted. It was revealed to me and then explained to me very specifically that you are allowed in. God stopped me on the Damascus Road. He commissioned me and made me an apostle out of due season. I am preaching something to you that God revealed to me. Don't you dare take it for granted. Gentiles, you have been allowed in. You are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

Do you realize what you have, what I have? We are talking about what you have in Jesus Christ. You are rich beyond measure.

Folks, we take it for granted. We are walking right past something that one day we are going to be sorry we took for granted. When my father died in 1966, he was 60 years old. He was the picture of health. He had some heart problems, but he had come out of them. He was looking forward to retirement. My Dad, on November 12, 1966, was taken out of here. You know, when I stood there that day to minister to the family, God brought something to my mind that has haunted me ever since. I began to think back to the way I took that man for granted for so many years in my life. I took for granted that he was going to live forever. I took for granted his

kindness and goodness to me. All of a sudden on that day, it just stopped. It was like God said,

"There is not one single thing you can do. You can't relive all of that time that you took for granted knowing him."

Well, folks, it is going to be even more so when we stand before Jesus one day. Oh, yes, we live in America. I understand that. I understand that you can go to any church you want. You can find any Bible Study book you want. Everybody is just taking everything for granted as if we deserve it. But folks, Paul is saying,

"Before I even begin to pray for you, understand something. The only reason that you are in is because of God. He revealed it to me. He explained it to me, and then He sent me to proclaim it to you and me."

That is the third thing. Not only was the mystery explained, but the mystery was pro-claimed. I want you to see that in verses 7-9 of our text. Paul is just overwhelmed by the fact that this is all God's doing. He had nothing to do with it. This is not some man-made religion. Verse 7 says:

"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."

Paul says,

"Listen, not only was this by revelation and explanation, but it was by the proclamation of it. God made me a minister. I had nothing to do with it. God called me."

Then he uses the phrase in verse 7,

"according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of His power." Paul says, "It was God's divine favor and power."

He took an evil opponent of the gospel and transformed him. Then He gave him the very message which he had spent his life opposing. God did it, every bit of it. He said,

"He even gave me the proclamation."

Do you realize how many books of the New Testament Paul wrote? Folks, what he is saying is,

"This book right here was not by man. God gave it to us."

All the epistles to those churches that he had gone to are God's Word, not Paul's. Paul is trying to back out of the picture. He is saying, "Don't ever look at me, I am just as overwhelmed as you ought to be. I am just praying that God will reveal to your heart what He has revealed to my heart. Our salvation should never be taken for granted."

In Ephesians 3:8 he says,

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."

Now that is why I read that verse. Do you know what that word "unfathomable" means? It means "that which is past finding out, past discovering." In other words, there is so much. Paul is saying,

"Even in the preaching of the gospel, I am realizing there is so much more that I don't even know."

The scriptures are the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of our salvation, the gospel of eternity, the gospel of creation, and everything else. It is like a well that has no bottom.

Listen, don't ever take salvation for granted folks. Remember whose you are. Remember who you are. As a matter of fact, we are about to get into Ephesians 4-6. That's not the riches. That's not the reasons. That's not the revelation. That's the responsibilities of our salvation, and they are based on everything Paul has said in the first three chapters. If you don't get this down pat, you'll never understand why there is so much responsibility for Christians to live as God wants them to live.

Ephesians 3:10-11: GOD'S DIVINE MYSTERY—PART 3

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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I have said it before and I want to say it again, if you have never studied Ephesians, you need to study this for yourself.

Ephesians is such an overwhelming book. In chapter 1 we found the riches of our salvation. In chapter 2 we found the reasons for our salvation and in Chapter 3 the wonderful revelation of our salvation.

We are still talking about that divine mystery, God's Divine Mystery. We are going to be looking at verses 10-11, particularly verse 10. Let's read verses 8-11 just to get the context in our minds:

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; 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. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul is doing something in chapter 3, really all three chapters. He is trying to get the Gentiles to understand the significance of their salvation. In verses 1-13 he starts a prayer. Then he stops and picks the prayer back up in verse 14. He stresses to them that the whole matter of our redemption and salvation was a mystery that was hidden through the ages. He tells us that God, for a while, was sharing with us. God has always been giving us bits and pieces, but there was never a clear picture in the Old Testament. Paul says it has now been revealed. If you will think about it, in Genesis God began to give a clue, didn't He? When Adam and Eve sinned there were animal skins to clothe them. God began to show us a clue that there is going to have to be a death and blood shed for sin to be dealt with. Then later in the covenant with Abraham, He promises a seed, an offspring. There had to be a man to shed His blood and die. Isaiah prophesied there was going to be a Messiah. As a matter of fact, Isaiah 53 says,

"He was pierced through for our transgressions."

You begin to realize it was no ordinary man. This is the Messiah he is talking about, the Anointed One. The God/Man would die and shed His blood for our sins. There were clues in the Old Testament all the way through. Many of the prophets did not even understand what they were prophesying, but now it has been made clear.

After the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension the mystery was revealed. Paul says, "I am overwhelmed." We don't know when God revealed it to him. Maybe it was on the back side of the desert for those first three years when Holy Spirit preached to him. Paul had that mystery down. In his heart, he understood it. That mystery is our redemption. The mystery is that all men, whether Jew or Gentile, can be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was assigned a specific part of that mystery of redemption. Peter was assigned to the Jews, but Paul was assigned to the Gentiles. Get the Word out! For years, Gentiles had been shut out. Now the barrier has been torn down. Now the doors are wide open. The gospel is for whosoever might come. In Ephesians 3:6 he says,

"to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

What a mystery our redemption has been! It was always revealed in bits and pieces through the years and yet, before the foundation of this world, God already had it in His mind.

Well, we come to verse 10 and find that this mystery being revealed to Paul, preached to the Gentiles and, through Peter, to the Jews, was not just for mankind. God wants somebody else to understand the mystery of man's redemption. You say,

"Now wait a minute, I am confused. Who else is there?"

Look at verse 10 again. He says,

"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."

Verse 10 indicates there is another audience out there. Evidently it is an invisible audience. We are a visible audience. We have Jews and Gentiles being converted who are the body of Christ. But there is another audience out there, an invisible audience. That is our focus this time.

Let's look at two things. First of all, I want us to look at the invisible audience. There is an invisible audience out there. Paul is preaching this mystery that has been revealed to him to the Gentiles, but he says it is also for those rulers and authorities in heavenly places. Now, who in the world are these people?

Well, first of all, the term "rulers" is the Greek word *arche*. This word has as its basic meaning "beginning." When it refers to persons, it has the idea of those who are in first place, those who have power, those who have preeminence, those who have rulership. Here he is talking about the princes and the chiefs. "You mean to tell me, in an invisible order of God, that there is some kind of order, that there are people who are under others?" Yes. There is an authority structure. Paul simply uses these two words to point to that. The term "authority" is the Greek word *exousia*. Now *arche*, is the one who has the power to delegate authority, but the word *exousia*, is the one who carries it out and executes that authority, that power. In other words, they have the right and the might. Now put both words together. *Arche* is the authority granting the power, and *exousia* is the one who executes the power. That just simply says there is a divine order. Something is delegated down through the ranks. There is an invisible rank of people or something. I will tell you what they are in a minute. They have divine order to them.

Now where are these powers and authorities?

That begins to give you the clue as to what he is talking about. Where are they? He says in verse 10,

"rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

Now that is an interesting phrase. This invisible audience is somewhere in the heavenlies. What does the term "heavenlies" mean? That is the New American Standard translation, but it is a good translation because the word "heaven" is not in the singular. It is in the plural. It means heavenlies.

Look in 2 Corinthians 12:2. Is there more than one heaven? Let's let the Scripture answer itself. Paul is speaking of himself:

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven."

Now what does that tell you? There is no heaven beyond God because God is in the highest place, so evidently, if God is in the third heaven, there must be two underneath it.

When you get up in the morning and look up at the sky you see the first heaven. It is a beautiful thing to look at. It is the lower atmosphere that we live in every day. Now, you know and I know that you can get outside of that atmosphere. How do you know that? Well, every night God just pulls the blinds back and says, "Hey, do you want to see another heaven?" In the daytime you see the lower one and at night you see the second heaven, the universe. Scientists tell us that we only get a glimpse of what is out there. When you leave this atmosphere, you go into another dimension altogether. So, there is the first heaven, which is the sky around us; there is the second heaven, the universe; then there is the third heaven where God dwells. (Click for more discussion of The Third Heaven)

The term "heavenlies" is used five times in the book of Ephesians. Every time it is used it refers to that highest heaven. What do we know about it from chapter 1? If you will look at Ephesians 1:3 you will see the first time it is used.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Our blessings far exceed this atmosphere. They far exceed the universe. They are in heaven in Christ. In other words, they are heavenly attributes that God has given us. They are all resident in the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His Spirit indwells us. He lives and exists beside the Father at the throne.

In Ephesians 1:20 we find that Jesus was raised up and seated in the heavenly places:

"which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places."

It is referring to that third heaven, far above the lower heavens. In 2:6 we are seated with Him:

"and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."

Let's put this together. We have got an invisible audience out there. There is a structure to it. There are those who are delegating authority to others. They are in the heavens. So far, we see a host that is in the third heaven. We know that. We know there must be this delegated authority or divine order in the third heaven. Now look in 6:12. There might be some

others that we are dealing with here. They are invisible the same way. However, they are not in the third heaven, evidently, because of what the Scripture teaches us.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

There was a rebellion in heaven, and Satan led it. But folks, you don't get away with rebel-ling against God. God threw him out. Now he is delegated to the lower heavens. If we could get a picture of what the world looks like, it would be in the midst of a darkness that surrounds it. The beautiful thing about our redemption is, Jesus is the Light. Nobody ever turned Him on, so nobody can turn Him off. He is perpetual Light. He broke that darkness and came into this dark world and died on the cross. Ephesians says,

"You were once darkness, now you have been made light."

Satan has temporary domain over this world. The whole world, John says, lies in the hands of the evil one as if asleep and not even knowing it.

So we see that the devil and all of his fallen angels operate in the lower heavens. You can't say that in chapter 3 he is just talking about the ones in the lower domain. No! Paul wants the angelic hosts, whether in heaven or fallen, to understand what His plan has been since before the foundation of this world. Oh, folks, redemption is God's plan. Once you are saved and Christ comes into your heart, the church becomes very instrumental in understanding the mystery that God has revealed to Paul.

What is that mystery? We have already talked about that in chapter 2. The Jew and the Gentile are made one in the body of Christ. In other words, Christ lives in us, and we are a part of His body. That is what redemption is all about. So we see the invisible audience. Now let's look at the invincible teacher. Who is going to take that message to these angels? Who is going to teach them about the redemption of man? Look at 3:10: "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church." What is the church? It is the body of Christ. It is Jew and Gentile becoming one new man in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Church, through the vehicle of His Church, which you are a part of and I am a part of, if you are a believer, He is going to make known to these rulers and authorities in the heavenly places the mystery of our salvation. Let's get into that.

Look first of all at that term "might be made known" in verse 10. He says,

"in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known."

Now what is that? The term for "known" there is the Greek word that means "they wouldn't know unless somebody teaches them." In other words, it is not intuitive. It is not something that you can just know. This word in Ephesians 3:10 is the knowledge that has to be revealed. It has to be taught. It has to be communicated. This invisible audience won't know any other way.

So, through the Church God wants to communicate to this invisible host of angels, both heavenly and the fallen ones. He wants to communicate what His plan has been throughout the ages, and what has just now been revealed to the apostles and prophets and through the Church. He wants them to understand the redemption of mankind.

The word "might now be made known" is in the aorist passive subjunctive. Aorist tense doesn't mean they are going to know at some specific point in time. It means it is time now for them to know, but it is not something that happens at one point in time. It is something that has started. Yes, one day it will have its completion, but right now it has begun. There is some teaching going on. The Church is a part of that. The angels are looking on. They need to understand redemption. What they are learning we are teaching them. Through the Church, they are learning what redemption is all about.

Subjunctive mood means we have something to do with that by the way we live. Every time I choose not to let the Holy Spirit control my life, number one, I have denied Him the privilege of sharing it with the lost of this world. Number two, I have held an angel hostage because that angel may be watching me. He wants to know what redemption is all about. We've got to understand the angelic realm. It is out there. It is up there. We know that there is an invisible audience out there and through the Church, it will be made known.

The term "manifold wisdom" is just absolutely beautiful. Let me see if I can help you understand "the manifold wisdom of

God." The word "manifold " there is the word that means "multicolored."

Have you ever watched a master craftsman? I am married to one. She loves to put things together. We are doing some work in our house and changing the colors. When I saw the color of the den, I thought to myself, "It is beautiful!" I saw the colors of the living room and I thought, "Yucky!" I saw the color of the dining room and I said, "Uhhh." I saw the color of the kitchen, and I liked that. I was thinking, "How does all this tie together? I know what that color is, I know what that color is, but I can't put it all together." Have you ever watched a master doing that? A tapestry on the bottom side looks like a big confused mess. You have all kind of colors, but you don't know how they blend or fit until you turn it over. Then you see the artistry and the marvelous skill of putting those colors together. That's the idea of "the manifold wisdom of God." Well, in our house Diana put some wallpaper in the foyer. What a difference. All of those colors were in the wallpaper. Now when you walk into our house that wallpaper draws this into it and this into it and this into it. That's "the manifold wisdom of God."

Oh folks, it has been going on for a long time. The angels want to know all about this. They are probably saying, "What is going on with these people running around down there?" When Jesus was on the cross and He cried out to His Father and His Father turned His back on Him and darkness fell on the earth, don't you know the angels said, "What is going on?" The fallen angels in the realm were rejoicing and saying, "Ah ha, we have done it! We killed Him." The angels don't understand, Satan included. Why would He ever put Jesus on the cross? Satan thought he had him.

Tony Evans was at a convention several years ago and was preaching on how God and Satan were in this chess game. God would raise up a man, and then Satan would raise up a man. God raised up Adam and of course, Satan raised up Cain. God raised up Seth. You can just walk through the Old Testament. God raised up one, and Satan raised up one. The score in Malachi is tied up. At half time it is all tied up. For four hundred years nothing is said. It is a time of darkness. It is a time when Satan probably sat back and said, "I got you now." However, the next move was exciting. God didn't raise up another man. God became a man, and Satan said, "Uh oh." He couldn't handle that. God came down and took upon himself a body. Oh, the plan of redemption, God was our Redeemer before He was ever our Creator. Before the foundation of the world, He was our Redeemer. He has been standing in the portals waiting to come, and Jesus breaks forth and comes down in a lowly manger, born of a virgin. Now what we have on earth is not just a man. We have the God-man.

Satan thought he understood it. He didn't understand it. Nor does he understand redemption, that Christ now comes and lives in our life. That is why in Ephesians 6 it says just to stand. That is all we have got to do. You stand in the character of Jesus, filled with His Spirit as it says in 5:18. The devil looks at you and says,

"Is this what God was all about? I could handle you, but I can't handle Him who lives in you."

They need to understand this mystery.

Over in Revelation 10 it says the mystery of God is finished. We know it has been revealed, but I want to tell you something folks: there are a lot of things about this mystery we still don't understand. The more we surrender to His Word and the more we let Him enlighten our minds, and the more we begin to understand, the more those colors start to blend. We see judgments in this picture. We see an awful time coming on this earth. We see a putting to an end to all unrighteousness. That is all a part of the same mystery our redemption is wrapped up in. There is a lot we don't understand, much less the angels.

I want you to look in I Peter 1:12. Peter has a word to say here.

"It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look."

That angel is standing out on the edge of a precipice just looking, eagerly wanting to see.

What do they want to know? You may ask,

"Are you talking about the fallen angels?"

Yes, I think a few of them are there too. We probably have some of them in the church. We still have a lot of the holy ones out there looking in and they want to know. They are saying, "Tell me about redemption." They eagerly long to look into it.

How are they going to find out, folks? Look in Ephesians 2. I want to tell you my reasoning behind what I am about to say. Let's begin with verse 4 because that is the whole thought:

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

"You mean to tell me that an angel can learn something from me? I thought I had to learn from the angel."

Oh, you can learn a whole lot from them, but friend, they can learn a whole lot from us. They don't understand redemption. Now, I am not talking about perfection. This doesn't mean that you live perfectly and understand redemption. When we start living obediently, doing the things that God has told us to do, the angels look at us and say, "What has happened to him? Why, we were around here last year and acted like a sinner. Man, look at him now. He is living like a saint. What happened in his life? Look at him. Look at him. He just sinned against his wife and look, he is going to ask her forgiveness. What is going on here? What is this redemption?" They don't know. We are teaching them. When Jesus is Jesus in your life, friend, it is not only touching a lost world, it has opened the eyes of the angels who haven't got a clue. They are looking intently.

The audience is an invisible audience, but we are an invincible teacher, folks, through the Church. Look at verse 11.

"This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Eternal purpose" means the purpose of the ages. Salvation is it. Redemption is it. That is God's purpose before the foundation of the world. What should church be? It should be a time of us coming together and celebrating like no other group on the face of this earth.

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Ephesians 3:13: ROOTS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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We come now to verse 13, a very powerful verse. It comes right before the prayer which Paul is going to pray. He starts his prayer in verse 1 of chapter 3. He says, "For this reason," and then he is overwhelmed by his salvation. He puts a parenthetical clause between verses 1 and 14. We see the beautiful mystery that was revealed to Paul in those verses. Now in verse 13 he is right on the brink of starting that prayer. Look at what he says. He says, "Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory." This could be called the "Roots of Discouragement."

So, as we came to this verse, I want to ask: How are we doing? How are we doing in our Christian walk? Are you discouraged? Have you grown weary? That is what I want us to look at because Paul gives us the leverage in this verse. The apostle Paul certainly has enough to be complaining about. If we look at the apostle Paul's life from the world's point of view, we could certainly justify the fact that he might complain, which he does not. You see, he has been harassed and falsely accused. He has spent now almost five years in prison for nothing. Two of those years were at Caesarea. Not one charge has ever held up against the apostle Paul. He is a man, however, that is on a mission. The prisons don't hinder him.

Look back in Ephesians 3:1 at what he says. He says,

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles."

He wanted to make sure they knew something. He wasn't a prisoner of the Jews. He wasn't a prisoner of Rome. He was a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why didn't the prisons hinder him? Because he was so overwhelmed by his redemption that nothing stood in his way. Have you picked up the thought he has been trying to convey to us in these first three chapters? He is dignifying our salvation. Folks, when you begin to realize whose you are and who you are, there is nothing that matters any more than just cooperating with the One who is allowing you to get in on what He is up to. In Ephesians 3:1-12 God has revealed this mystery to him. He is overwhelmed with that. Here is an old converted Jew writing to Gentiles. He says,

"God just overwhelmed me by revealing this mystery to me. He explained it to me, and now He has assigned me to preach

to the Gentile world."

He is a single-minded man. 1:1 says,

"I am an apostle by the will of Christ Jesus."

"Everything I am," Paul is telling these Gentiles at Ephesus, "is by the grace of God."

As a matter of fact, in Philippians 1:12-13, while in the same imprisonment, he said to them,

"I want you to know, brethren, that my imprisonment has worked out for the furtherance of the gospel, the progress of the gospel."

He says,

"God has assigned me to preach the wonderful mysteries, the unfathomable riches of Christ. A prison doesn't bother me. As a matter of fact, I want you to know all the brethren in Caesar's household send you greetings."

He has got the word all the way to the top. Paul is on an assignment for God. He is sold out to what God wants him to do. He is a man who was not discouraged, so he warns the people of Ephesus,

"Don't lose heart."

Now you say,

"Do you mean that Christians who love Jesus can lose heart?"

Oh yes, and we need to look at it. The word "lose heart" in verse 13 is the word *ekkakeo*. It means "to grow weary, to be discouraged, to be faint hearted." It also carries another idea. It means "to turn cowardly and to give into the influences of evil that are around you." It is almost as if Paul is saying,

"Listen, I am in prison, yes, and my imprisonment is on your behalf. Now don't you go and lose heart. I certainly haven't lost heart. Look at the marvel of our salvation. Don't you grow weary. Don't become faint hearted. Don't give in to the consequences and the temptations of evil that are all around you."

Let's look and see if we can get a perspective on the roots of discouragement. What are the things that cause people who love God to grow discouraged? Maybe you will find yourself there and will go on to confess it, come out of it and let the blood of Jesus cleanse you and walk out with your head held high knowing that you have been blessed beyond measure by being a child of God. There are five roots of discouragement. We are going to look at all the times that Paul uses this phrase, beginning here in our text.

The first root of discouragement

In chapter 3, the first root of discouragement would have to be a low view of salvation. You know, so often we talk about salvation and redemption. Christians who have been Christians for a while have lost the thrill. They have lost the excitement. When you have a low view of salvation it effects everything else that goes on in your life. Paul has been trying to dignify the salvation and show them that this salvation is absolutely the greatest blessing you could have on this earth. Now listen to what I am saying. This earth offers nothing compared to our salvation. That is what Paul is trying to get across. He could have easily given up, but folks, when he speaks in chapters 1 and 2 and 3:1-12, he speaks with such awe when he thinks about his salvation. He is overwhelmed and nothing has marred his focus. He single-mindedly is looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, when you have a low view of your salvation, you look at it as if it is something tagged on to your life. If you have not yet seen it as the very essence of every-thing you are, you will grow faint-hearted. You will grow weary. You will lose heart and give in to the evil that is around you.

What about you? How are you doing? How are you doing in your walk? How are you doing in your work? Young people, back in school right now, how are you doing right now? Do you have a low view of your salvation? Does the pressure of the world make you feel sort of stupid sometimes even to tell them that you are a Christian? Are you ever in a crowded room of students or a crowded room at work and not want anybody to know that you are a Christian, that you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that going on in your life? Are you on a plane traveling and sit down beside somebody and you don't want to tell them that you are a Christian? You don't want to take the laughter and the ridicule because you have such a

low view of what salvation really is?

Folks, it is no wonder we are discouraged if we haven't realized yet that our salvation has been God's plan before creation. He was our Redeemer before He was ever our Creator. As a matter of fact, He has so saved us and redeemed us that we are to teach the angelic realm what redemption is all about. The highest honor, the highest privilege is to be called a child of God. Folks, we have such a low view of it that we let the world intimidate us. We lose heart and get sucked right into the evil that is all around us.

Let me ask you a question. Have you forgotten that salvation makes you a brand new creation in Christ Jesus? Folks, we ought to hold our heads high, jump out of bed in the morning, thank God and praise Him that anything short of hell is grace in our life. Something has happened to us. We live in a day and an age when redemption and salvation are seen on such a low, low view. The greatest privilege is when we can say our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Unless you are living in the kingdom and are a part of His temple and a part of His body, you haven't got a clue yet as to the dignity of your salvation. Friend, to be saved, born again, redeemed, is the greatest thing we could possibly say. Yet we let the world intimidate us to the point we lose heart and we give in as cowards to the evil that is around us.

The second root of discouragement

The second root of discouragement I want you to see is found in II Corinthians 4. I think we need a checkup every now and again. I just want to take the time and the liberty to do that. I get discouraged. You get discouraged. Why do we do it? We shouldn't. We should never. The Christian in his right mind has no excuse getting discouraged. 2 Corinthians 4:1 says,

"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart."

Now I want to make sure we hit this again. Striving to achieve a ministry will absolutely discourage you to no end. It will get you to the point that you will bail out on church and everything else God is doing. Paul is saying,

"I have a ministry, and I received this ministry the same way I received mercy."

This is not the only place he says this. Let's look at what the ministry is. Look in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6. It says in verse 5,

"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Paul goes on to explain that in the context of that chapter. But in chapter 4 he starts off and says,

"We have received this, just like we received mercy. Therefore, we do not lose heart."

This ministry was not something Paul ever prayed for. It was not something Paul ever trained for. It was something God raised up in his life, in God's own time.

So often people come into church ready to get to work. They bring their agenda and every-thing they can do for God. They think if they come in they will immediately be put into a position to help out. I appreciate that sincerity, but I want you to know, unless God has raised that ministry up in you, you are going to be totally ineffective to this body. There's an idea around that makes you think,

"I have got to go do something for God."

God is already at work, and God will get it done whether we do something for Him or not. We want to be involved in what He is already doing in His strength and His work. He initiates the ministry and He anoints the ministry. So often when it doesn't work the way you want it to work, you fall into that trap of discouragement. Immediately you give in to the evils around you. What are the evils? I can give you many. You get into the evil of a critical spirit. Is it fun to be around people with a critical spirit? They say things like,

"If you did this, it would be a lot better."

Have you ever noticed that the people saying it are never part of seeing it done? You get a critical spirit.

There's the evil of a bitter spirit. There are people who will not go to church. They are mad because they went to a church and the church wouldn't let them do what they thought they were there to do. Therefore, they won't even go to church anymore. They are discouraged, and they have given in to the evil that is around them.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 tells us three things about ministry. Number one, it says when we get saved the Spirit of God gives us gifts so that we might minister. In other words, we don't go do something God has not first gifted us to do. Secondly, it tells us in the body of Christ that Jesus Himself gives the ministry. It tells us thirdly that God the Father gives the results. The whole Trinity is a part of the ministry.

Until you are surrendered to God and the Holy Spirit of God is using your life, filled up in your life, you can forget ministry. It is what God does, not what man does.

Are you discouraged? I can tell you why. If you have not received the ministry God has for you, very obviously you are trying to achieve it for God. Discouragement has set in and immediately you have slipped into the evil that surrounds you.

The third root of discouragement

The third root of discouragement is forgetting God's purpose in serving. If you will look in 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul says the same words. He says,

"Therefore we do not lose heart but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.."

Now, anytime there is a "therefore," you look to see what it is there for. Back up and he will tell you. In the whole chapter he talks about the suffering that he has gone through for the sake of the gospel. He wants them to know something.

"Don't feel sorry for me. It was for your benefit. That is why I went through all of that."

That is what he is telling them. Verse 15 says,

"For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."

Paul had a beautiful perspective of why he was serving. He wasn't in it for himself. As a matter of fact, he would be among many and not even charge them. He wouldn't even let them pay him anything. He would go out and make tents just to keep any kind of questions from coming back at him. This was a man of integrity, a man who understood why he was doing what he was doing. He never griped. He said in Philippians, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself in." He had a perspective of ministry that was for the sake of others.

He says in verse 16, flowing right out of that thought,

"Therefore, we do not lose heart."

In other words, Paul is saying,

"Folks, it is worth all the pain. It is worth all the suffering."

When you or I lose that perspective and start to complain and murmur, it is very obvious that we have grown discouraged, we have lost heart and we have slipped into the evil that is around us. We have forgotten why we are serving others. Everything that Paul did was for the benefit of others. You may be having problems in church. You have drifted in and you don't like the place.

You don't like the fact that the church tells you to find your gift and then nobody plugs you in. You haven't figured it out yet. God has got to do that in His own good time. It is not what we can figure out in a meeting! It depends on your measure of surrender to Him. God will raise up your ministry when He is ready to raise it up. I guarantee you there are some discouraged folks in churches. They have lost heart because they have forgotten something along the way. It is not their ministry. It is not their ability. It is God. You have got to remember why you are in what you are in or I will tell you what is going to happen. You are going to give in to the evil around you and that evil around you is the most devastating thing to the body of Christ.

The fourth root of discouragement

The fourth root of discouragement is when we lack perseverance and want to see quick results. Look in Galatians 6:9. When I do something, I want to see results. As I am preaching, I want to see somebody nodding their head or smiling or doing something besides sleeping. I just want to feel like I am communicating. When you lack perseverance you want to see quick results.

Now in Galatians 6:9, look at what he says.

"And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary."

Now what is the context there? He is talking about the law of sowing and reaping. He is also restoring a brother when he first starts off. Then he gets into the law of sowing and reaping.

There are two things about sowing and reaping that we have got to understand.

Number one, you always reap more than you sow. Remember that. One little seed brings a bunch of stuff. So when you choose to sow sin in your life, hang on. It is going to be worse than you ever thought it was going to be.

Secondly, you reap later than you sow. No farmer puts a seed in the ground and comes back the next morning to see what is happening. If he does, he is going to be very disappointed. It doesn't happen that way. You see, that is the principle. If you are not willing to persevere and trust and be faithful to what God is doing, it will lead you right into losing heart and being faint-hearted. You will slip right into the evil that surrounds that kind of thing. I am trusting the fact that when God chooses not to say anything, it doesn't mean He is not doing anything. Just trust Him. When you lose that perseverance you want to reap as soon as you sow.

Well, the roots of discouragement we have seen so far are

a low view of salvation,

a striving to achieve a ministry,

forgetting our purpose in serving, and

when we want quick results and are not willing to wait.

The final root to me is the most overwhelming. It's when the mundane loses its excitement.

The fifth root of discouragement

Look at 2 Thessalonians 3. I want to show you the context beginning in verse 6.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good."

Who is the "you?" There must be a group of people there not doing it right. There must be a group of people there doing it right. What is doing it right? It is working quietly, making their own way, eating their own bread, and saying nothing about it. Paul is talking about the mundane responsibilities of life. He tells those people who are living responsibly day by day, doing the things we all have to do and doing it quietly, not griping or begging,

"Don't lose heart. Don't lose heart."

Now how in the world can you lose heart doing things the right way? I'll tell you how. When the mundane becomes boring, all of a sudden we see something more exciting out here. You see, when you do the responsible things in life, they can become very boring. When they get that way, look out. You can lose heart if you don't understand. We are required to do them. This is what Paul is trying to say.

The joy comes when we do them quietly and know that whatever we do, as Colossians says, we do as unto the Lord. That is the key. If you ever get your focus on the wrong thing, and get it off of Christ, you will lose heart and become discouraged.

How quickly we can lose heart.

Folks, it starts with a high view of salvation. If you don't own a car and a house you don't need them anyway. They are all going to burn. You have got a mansion in heaven waiting on you, not made with human hands. No carpenter will have to come over and fix anything he messed up on. It is made by the Lord Jesus Himself. A high view of salvation automatically means that we have a high view of scripture. If you have a low view of salvation, the Word of God means nothing to you. You are not in it and that is why you have lost your hope and you have become discouraged.

One verse and I am through. Turn to Isaiah 40:28. Watch this.

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

Folks, look up! Look up!

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