

All-Ages Adult Life Group Expositional Study

Ephesians Ch. 3:8-13

Our Inexhaustible Riches in Christ

The Mystery Revealed (Part 2)

Class Reference: **Knowing the Bible Series**

Week 6: Interlude: The Mystery of Gentile Inclusion (Eph. 3:1–13)

August 24, 2025

Version 2

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9:20

ESV Commentary Outline

VI. Paul's Situation, Stewardship, and Service ([3:1–13](#))

- A. Paul's Situation ([3:1](#))
- B. Paul's Stewardship of the Mystery ([3:2–7](#))
- C. Paul's Service in Proclaiming the Mystery ([3:8–12](#))
- D. Paul's Encouragement to the Ephesians ([3:13](#))

VII. Paul's Second Prayer ([3:14–21](#))

- A. Address to the Father ([3:14–15](#))
- B. Prayer for Strength ([3:16–17a](#))
- C. Prayer for Understanding ([3:17b–19a](#))
- D. Prayer for Filling ([3:19b](#))
- E. Praise to God ([3:20–21](#))

JM Outline (This week: Ephesians 3:8-13)

The Mystery Revealed ([3:1-13](#))

THE PRISONER OF THE MYSTERY ([3:1-4](#))

THE PLAN OF THE MYSTERY ([3:5-6](#))

THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY ([3:7-9](#))

THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY ([3:10-11](#))

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE MYSTERY ([3:12-13](#))

The Fullness of God ([3:14-21](#))

THE SPIRIT'S POWER ([3:14-16](#))

CHRIST'S INDWELLING ([3:17a](#))

LOVE'S ABUNDANCE ([3:17b-19b](#))

GOD'S FULLNESS ([3:19b](#))

THE LORD'S GLORY ([3:20-21](#))

Today's Verses Ephesians 3:8-13

THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY (3:7-9)

READER #1:
Ephesians 3:8-9

⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY (3:10-11)

READER #2:
Ephesians 3:10-11

¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE MYSTERY (3:12-13)

READER #3:
Ephesians 3:12-13

¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.
¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Before We Begin

- The following discussion can bring us great comfort, though it will also be a challenge.
- Our prayer should be that the Holy Spirit would *strengthen our faith* to fully trust and live out these words.
- That even in *our deepest trials*, Christ is present, and His purposes are at work ultimately for “His Glory and Our Good”. (Who knows this song?)*
- This was Paul’s encouragement to the Ephesians, that his own suffering was *not a defeat*, but part of *God’s plan* to bring *them* the riches of Christ ([Eph. 3:13](#)).

* [Song: CityAlight - His Glory and My Good \(Live\)](#)

Knowing the Bible Summary

Encouraging the Church ([Eph. 3:7–13](#))

- Paul sees his ministry as a gift of God's grace, despite being the “**least of all saints**,” and views his imprisonment through the lens of God's powerful grace ([Eph. 3:7–8](#)).
- He preaches the “**unsearchable riches of Christ**” to the Gentiles, revealing God's eternal plan hidden for ages, now uniting Jews and Gentiles in Christ.
- Through the church, God's “**manifold wisdom**” is displayed even to heavenly powers, showing His redemptive purpose in Christ ([Eph. 3:10](#)).
- In Christ, believers have **bold and confident access to God**, encouraging them as they consider Paul's sufferings on their behalf ([Eph. 3:12–13](#)).
- **DISCUSSION:** Consider how Gospel truths, biblical connections, and theological insights personally shape faith and perseverance.

Knowing the Bible Summary

Gospel Glimpses

- **Boldness and Access:** Through Christ's cross, believers can confidently approach God in prayer, knowing He hears and acts for His purposes and glory—even amid trials ([Heb. 4:14–16](#)).
- **Suffering for Christ:** Just as Jesus suffered, believers will face opposition for the gospel, yet this temporary suffering is a call to courageous witness and service for the glory of Christ ([John 15:18](#); [Phil. 1:27–30](#)).

Knowing the Bible Summary

Whole-Bible Connections

1. God's Plan for the Gentiles

- From the beginning, Israel was chosen to display God's truth so the nations might come to know Him ([Deut. 7:6–8](#); [Isa. 49:6](#)).
- In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are united in one body, showing that Gentile inclusion was always part of God's eternal plan ([Eph. 3:6](#)).

2. Fulfillment of the Old in the New

- The Old Testament carried the promise of blessing for the nations, seeds pointing forward to Christ's redeeming work ([Gen. 22:18](#); [Isa. 11:10](#)).
- In the New Testament, these promises blossom into reality as the church embodies God's plan for Jew and Gentile alike ([Acts 3:25](#); [Gal. 3:8](#)).

The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)

THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY (3:8)

⁸ To me, though I am the very **least of all the saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches** of Christ,

- **"Least of all the saints"** — Paul regarded himself as the lowest, not out of false humility, but from a deep awareness of God's holiness and his own sinfulness, which made him more effective in ministry.
- His calling was entirely by God's grace; as the **foremost of sinners**, Paul never claimed perfection.
READ: [1 Timothy 1:15](#) **SONG:** *"His Mercy is More – Boyce Dorm Meeting Band"*
- **"Unsearchable riches of Christ"** includes all that Christ is and provides—wisdom, love, mercy, glory, provision, assurance, His Word, and even the privilege of suffering for Him.
 - Inexhaustible treasures also include – forgiveness, adoption, Spirit, eternal life.
 - We must never think we've exhausted Christ.
 - Riches = all blessings in Christ.
 - Exhaustion of Christ's riches is impossible (they are infinite).
- **QUESTION:** If Paul called himself 'least of all the saints,' how should that shape our view of sin, humility, and dependence on the unsearchable riches of Christ?

The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)

THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY (3:9) (CONTINUED)

⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,

- Paul's mission was to “bring to light” “the plan or administration of the mystery (Gk. *mystērion*) hidden for ages” which was God's uniting of Jews and Gentiles into one body...in Christ.
- As steward/administrator (Gk. *oikonomia*, [v.3:2](#)), Paul combined proclaiming Christ's riches with guiding how God's unified people live and serve together. **READ: [Colossians 1:27](#)**
- This revelation is vital so believers understand their position in Christ; obedience and joy depend on grasping what God has already accomplished for them.
- **Boice** – The mystery = Jew and Gentile united in Christ, part of God's eternal plan now revealed.
- **Lloyd-Jones** – Emphasizes the “hiddenness” and God's sovereignty in revelation.
- **MacArthur** – Defines “mystery”: once hidden, now revealed. The new body, the church.
- **Sproul** – Stresses that this mystery is not something strange but something once hidden, now revealed in Christ. God had always planned to bring Gentiles in, but now it is manifest.
- **QUESTION:** How does Paul's humility as the “least of all the saints” and his stewardship of Christ's riches challenge your view of ministry and service?

The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)

THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY (3:10)

¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- **Manifold** (Gk. po-loo-POY-kee-los) **wisdom** (multifaceted infinite) **of God** is displayed in the church, revealing His multi-faceted redemption plan to both holy and fallen angels. **READ: 1 Peter 1:12**
- This wisdom is **made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places**. God unites Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free—once divided and guilty—into one eternal Body in Christ. **READ: Luke 15:10**
- Holy angels see God's work in the church and respond with deeper praise and greater glory to Him.
- **[if]** Fallen angels, they see their rebellion's futility as God thwarts every attempt to destroy His church.
- The church's ultimate purpose is glorifying God, by displaying **His** wisdom to the heavenly host.
- **Boice** – Church = “theater” of God's glory, wisdom displayed to angels.
- **Lloyd-Jones** – Cosmic drama: angels watching the wisdom of God unfold through the church.
- **MacArthur** – Church manifests God's wisdom in uniting Jew and Gentile, displaying His plan to angelic beings.
- **Sproul** – Focuses on “manifold wisdom” (literally “many-colored”). God's wisdom is complex, multifaceted, beautiful. The church is the instrument by which God reveals this to the unseen spiritual world.
- **QUESTION:** If the church is the ‘theater’ where God displays His wisdom to angels, how should that truth shape the way we see our role and responsibility as part of Christ's body?

The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)

THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY (3:11) (CONTINUED)

¹¹ This was according to the **eternal purpose** that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

- All this aligns with God's **eternal purpose**, carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, that all creation exists to glorify Him. **READ: Colossians 1:16**
- In God's cosmic classroom, He is the Teacher, angels are the students, the church is the illustration, and the subject is His manifold wisdom.
- **Boice** – Salvation rests on God's eternal decree, accomplished in Christ.
- **Lloyd-Jones** – History isn't random; comfort in God's sovereign purpose.
- **MacArthur** – Strong emphasis on predestination and eternal design in Christ.
- **Sproul** – Points out Paul roots everything in God's eternal decree. Nothing is accidental; the cross and the church are part of God's plan from eternity.
- **QUESTION:** If history is not random, but part of God's eternal purpose in Christ, how should this truth affect the way we view our personal struggles and the unfolding events of our world?

The Mystery Revealed ([3:1-13](#))

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE MYSTERY ([3:12](#))

¹² in whom we have **boldness and access** with confidence through **our faith** in him.

- Under the Old Covenant only the high priest could enter God's presence briefly, but now all in Christ have **boldness and confident access** at any time. **READ:** [Hebrews 4:15–16](#) (from slide 7 also)
- **QUESTION:** What was access to God like under the old covenant?
- Through **our faith** in Christ, every believer can come freely to God and share in heaven's spiritual riches.
- This access is marked by freedom of speech and spirit—honest, reverent approach without fear of rejection because we belong to Him. **READ:** [1 Timothy 3:13](#)
- Such privilege should encourage perseverance, not discouragement, even when facing trials.
- **Boice** – Boldness in prayer was revolutionary for Jew and Gentile alike. Confidence is grounded in Christ.
- **Lloyd-Jones** – True grasp of access in Christ restores joy and freedom.
- **MacArthur** – “boldness” = freedom of speech; “access” = unhindered approach through Christ.
- **Sproul** – Stresses boldness: before a holy God, who should terrify sinners, believers can come confidently because of Christ.

The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE MYSTERY (3:13) (CONTINUED)

¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, **which is your glory**.

- Paul urges them not to lose heart at his imprisonment and suffering, for **they are your glory**—God works blessing and honor through them (i.e., Paul's suffering).
- **READ: Romans 8:18**. Present sufferings cannot compare with the coming glory, and even hardship advances the honor of the church.
- **QUESTION:** If we truly have bold and confident access to God, how might that change the way we pray, especially in times of suffering?
- **Boice** – Paul's imprisonment serves God's purpose for Gentiles' glory. Believers should not lose heart.
- **Lloyd-Jones** – Suffering looks like defeat but is actually victory. God's strength shines in weakness.
- **MacArthur** – Paul's suffering was necessary for Gentile salvation and part of God's plan.
- **Sproul** – Reminds readers that Paul's chains were not defeat. His suffering was purposeful and for the benefit of the church. Urges Christians to view trials in light of God's providence.

Take-aways from Ephesians 3:8-13

- Paul, though unworthy, was entrusted with proclaiming Christ's inexhaustible riches.
- The mystery once hidden is now revealed, and the church is the stage on which God displays His wisdom to the universe.
- The mystery once hidden—God's plan to unite Jew and Gentile into one body through Christ—is now revealed.
- The church is the stage on which God displays His wisdom to the universe.
- This gives believers boldness and access to God, and it gives perspective: even suffering has meaning in God's eternal purpose.

A sepia-toned photograph of an ancient Roman street, likely the Via Sacra in Rome. The street is paved with large, irregular stone tiles. On both sides of the street are tall, rectangular stone columns, some of which are part of a larger structure, possibly a colonnade or a wall. The background shows a hilly landscape with trees and a clear sky. The word "END" is written in blue capital letters in the center of the image.

END



EXTRA MATERIAL

THE BIBLE: SCRIPTURE, LANDS, AND HISTORY

by Paul Szydowski

Faith, Scripture, Biblical Archaeology & Travels

Bible Studies

Suggested Reading

Touching the Bible Lands Books

Blog

My Church

More

Study Lessons: Ephesians

First Baptist Brandon FL, Room A-205 9AM

by Paul Szydowski and Scott Cooley

Class Outlines Below

[Ephesians Study Outline Page 1_rev4.pdf](#)

[Ephesians Study Outline Page 2_rev4.pdf](#)

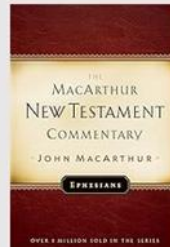
PDFs of Lessons Below

(PowerPoint Files Available Upon Request)

[L01A Ephesians Ch1v1-3 To His Glory and Our Good_r2.pdf](#)

[L01B Ephesians Ch1v4-6 To His Glory and Our Good_r2.pdf](#)

Resources Used



Website
Updated

A Review: Why Study Ephesians?

- It has been called the “**Queen of the Epistles**” or the “**Crown of Paul’s Theology**”
- Rich in:
 - **Trinitarian theology**
 - **ecclesiology**
 - and **soteriology**
- Offers a **heavenly perspective** on earthly living
 - "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3)

QUESTION: What are these?

ESV Commentary Outline

IV. From Death to Life ([2:1–10](#))

A. Dead in Trespasses and Sins ([2:1–3](#))

B. Made Alive with Christ ([2:4–7](#))

C. By Grace for Good Works ([2:8–10](#))

V. From Strangers to Members ([2:11–22](#))

A. Remember Your Past Situation ([2:11–13](#))

1. Far from Christ ([2:11–12](#))

2. But Now Brought Near ([2:13](#))

B. Remember that Christ Is Your Peace ([2:14–18](#))

1. Christ Has Made Jews and Gentiles One ([2:14a](#))

2. Christ Has Broken Down the Dividing Wall ([2:14b](#))

3. Christ Has Abolished the Law ([2:15–16](#))

a. So That He Might Create One New Man ([2:15](#))

b. So That He Might Reconcile Us Both to God ([2:16](#))

4. Christ Preached Peace to Jews and Gentiles ([2:17–18](#))

C. Remember Your New Status in Christ ([2:19–22](#))

1. As Citizens in God's Kingdom ([2:19a](#))

2. As Members of God's Household ([2:19b](#))

3. As Part of God's Holy Temple ([2:20–22](#))

ESV Commentary Outline

VIII. Unity in the Church ([4:1–6](#))

A. The Manner and Means of Unity ([4:1–3](#))

B. The Basis of Unity ([4:4–6](#))

IX. Diversity in the Church ([4:7–16](#))

A. Diversity according to Christ's Gifts ([4:7–10](#))

B. Diversity for the Purpose of Unity and Maturity ([4:11–16](#))

X. Living according to the Renewed Self ([4:17–24](#))

A. Don't Live Like Unbelievers ([4:17–19](#))

1. They Are Futile in Their Thinking ([4:17](#))

2. They Are Darkened in Their Understanding ([4:18a](#))

3. They Are Alienated from the Life of God ([4:18b](#))

4. They Have Become Callous ([4:19](#))

B. Instead Live according to What You Have Been Taught ([4:20–24](#))

1. You Have Learned Christ ([4:20–21](#))

2. You Are to Obey Christ ([4:22–24](#))

a. Put Off Your Old Self ([4:22](#))

b. Be Renewed in Your Minds ([4:23](#))

c. Put On the New Self ([4:24](#))

ESV Commentary Outline

- XI. Walking in Love ([4:25–5:2](#))
 - A. Don't Lie but Speak the Truth ([4:25](#))
 - B. Don't Sin When You Are Angry ([4:26–27](#))
 - C. Don't Steal but Work Hard ([4:28](#))
 - D. Don't Speak What Is Harmful but What Builds Up ([4:29](#))
 - E. Don't Grieve the Holy Spirit ([4:30](#))
 - F. Don't Be Bitter or Angry but Forgive One Another ([4:31–32](#))
 - G. Imitate God by Walking in Love ([5:1–2](#))

ESV Commentary Outline

- I. Introductory Address and Greeting ([1:1–2](#))
 - A. Author ([1:1a](#))
 - B. Recipients ([1:1b](#))
 - C. Greetings ([1:2](#))
- II. Praise God for His Blessings in Christ ([1:3–14](#))
 - A. He Chose Us ([1:3–6](#))
 - B. He Redeems Us ([1:7–10](#))
 - C. He Gives Us an Inheritance ([1:11–12](#))
 - D. He Seals Us with His Spirit ([1:13–14](#))
- III. Thanksgiving and Prayer ([1:15–23](#))
 - A. Paul's Thanksgiving for Their Faith and Love ([1:15–16a](#))
 - B. Paul's Prayer ([1:16b–23](#))
 - 1. That God Will Give Them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation ([1:16b–17](#))
 - 2. That They Will Know God's Great Grace ([1:18–23](#))
 - a. The Hope of His Calling ([1:18a](#))
 - b. The Riches of His Glorious Inheritance ([1:18b](#))
 - c. The Immeasurable Greatness of His Power ([1:19–23](#))

JM Outline

The Salutation (1:1-2)

THE DUAL SOURCE OF AUTHORITY (1:1A)

THE DUAL DESIGNATION OF BELIEVERS (1:1B)

THE DUAL BLESSINGS OF BELIEVERS (1:2A)

THE DUAL SOURCE OF BLESSING (1:2B)

The Body Formed in Eternity Past (1:3-6A)

THE ASPECTS OF BLESSING (1:3):

THE BLESSED ONE—GOD (1:3)

THE BLESSER—GOD (1:3)

THE BLESSED ONES—BELIEVERS (1:3)

THE BLESSINGS—EVERYTHING SPIRITUAL (1:3)

THE LOCATION OF BLESSING—THE HEAVENLY PLACES (1:3)

THE BLESSING AGENT—JESUS CHRIST (1:3)

THE ELEMENTS OF THE ETERNAL FORMING OF THE BODY (1:4-6A):

THE METHOD—ELECTION (1:4)

THE OBJECT—THE ELECT (1:4)

THE TIME—ETERNITY PAST (1:4)

THE PURPOSE—HOLINESS (1:4)

THE MOTIVE—LOVE (1:4)

THE RESULT—SONSHIP (1:5)

THE GOAL—GLORY (1:6)

JM Outline (Ephesians 4:1-6)

The Lowly Walk (4:1)

THE CALL TO THE WORTHY WALK (4:1)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORTHY WALK (4:2-3)

HUMILITY

GENTLENESS

PATIENCE

FORBEARING LOVE

UNITY

THE CAUSE OF THE WORTHY WALK (4:4-6)

UNITY IN THE SPIRIT

UNITY IN THE SON

UNITY IN THE FATHER

JM Outline (Ephesians 4:7-11)

The Gift's of Christ to His Church (4:7-11)

THE GIFTS OF CHRIST TO INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS (4:7)

HOW CHRIST WON THE RIGHT TO GIVE GIFTS (4:8-10)

THE GIFTS OF CHRIST TO THE WHOLE CHURCH (4:11)

APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

EVANGELIST

PASTORS AND TEACHERS

JM Outline (Ephesians 4:12-16)

Building the Body of Christ ([4:12-16](#))

THE PROGRESSION OF GOD'S PATTERN ([4:12](#))

EQUIPPING

SERVICE

BUILDING UP

THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S PATTERN ([4:13-15a](#))

UNITY OF THE FAITH

KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

SOUND DOCTRINE

AUTHENTIC LOVING TESTIMONY

THE POWER OF GOD'S PATTERN ([4:16](#))

JM Outline (Ephesians 4:17-32)

Off with the Old, On with the New (4:17-24)

THE WALK OF THE OLD SELF (4:17-19)

INTELLECTUALLY FUTILE
IGNORANT OF GOD'S TRUTH
SPIRITUALLY AND MORALLY CALLOUSED
DEPRAVED IN MIND

THE WALK OF THE NEW SELF (4:20-24)

CHRIST CENTERED (4:20)
KNOWS GOD'S TRUTH (4:21)
DELIVERED FROM THE OLD SELF (4:22)
BECOME THE NEW SELF (4:23-24)

Principles of New Life (4:25-32)

FROM LYING TO SPEAKING THE TRUTH (4:25)

FROM UNRIGHTEOUS ANGER TO RIGHTEOUS ANGER (4:26-27)

FROM STEALING TO SHARING (4:28)

FROM UNWHOLESOME WORDS TO WHOLESOME WORDS (4:29-30)

FROM NATURAL VICES TO SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES (4:31-32)