

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 3:1-21 (NKJV)

Part 2

Ephesians 3:1–13 (NKJV)

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. ⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

Apostle to the Gentiles...by the Power of God

Paul did not choose for himself the role of Apostle to the Gentiles. He was called, chosen, and appointed by God to that purpose. As a result he was given grace to perform the task. He said, *“I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.”* (vs. 7) The work of ministry – whatever it is – must be accomplished in us and through us by the power of God, not by the work of the flesh. The Spirit gives life! *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”* John 6:63 (NKJV)

It is apparent that Paul understands that the work of God within him – and through him – is not of his own doing or power. He demonstrated this humility in the expression, *“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”* (vs. 8) Not only does Paul see himself through the Biblical lens of humility as it relates to his personal inabilities, but also humbles himself as *“the least of all the saints.”* This attitude should be ours as well. We are called to think soberly and humbly. It is easy for those in ministry to demonstrate a competitive spirit and want to be best, first, head, etc. However, as we learned from the Lord Himself, *“...he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Matthew 23:11–12 (NKJV) Paul rightly shows himself as a servant (one of many) to the Church.

The Fellowship and the Mystery

The *“fellowship of the mystery”* is participation within the Church and in the Church Age. This fellowship was apparently, like the *“mystery”* itself, hidden even from the angelic hosts of the

heavenly places. *“The manifold wisdom of God”* is *“made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.”* This would include both the fallen and faithful angels.

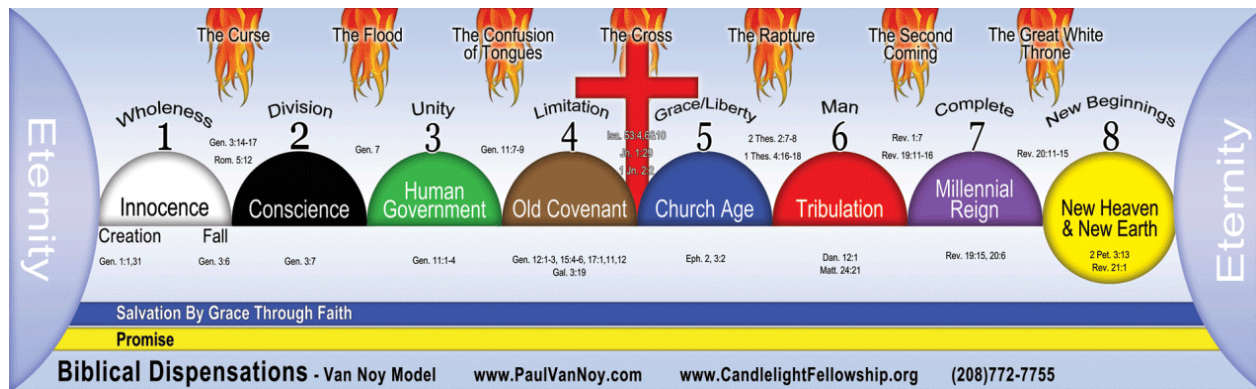
Peter referenced this when he said, *“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.”* 1 Peter 1:10–12 (NKJV) Therefore, as stated above, not only the prophets of old but even the angels did not have full knowledge of the things we now know and enjoy.

For this reason, the fallen angels hate the Church just as they hate Israel. However, Jesus said, *“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,”* (Matthew 16:18 NKJV) and of Israel God said, *“Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name): ‘If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.’”* Jeremiah 31:35–36 (NKJV) Therefore, we have peace with God, and live in the peace of God, knowing that all He promised Israel is sure and all He has promised us likewise. *“We have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”* (vs. 12)

The mystery and the Church Age was not an afterthought in the foreknowledge of God. This mystery was *“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (vs. 11) Furthermore, it was no inconvenience to God that the plan was put in place, or to *“make all see”* the glorious nature of His grace toward all who believe – Jew and Gentile alike.

To this end Paul says, *“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”* (vs. 13) His persecutions, sufferings, abandonments, rejections, beatings, stonings, and imprisonment are considered worth every moment – in order that the Gospel would go forth and the lives of those who believed might be eternally changed.

To the Romans Paul said, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Romans 8:18 (NKJV)



Questions:

- 1) True or False: God called Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles.
- 2) True or False: Paul said that the riches of the promises made to the Jews were available to both Jew and Gentile – in Christ.
- 3) True or False: God never planned on saving the Gentiles but because the Jews rejected Him He went to the Gentiles.
- 4) True or False: Angels and demons can see what God has done in the Church.
- 5) True or False: The work that needed to be accomplished in order to break down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile was accomplished in Christ over 2000 years ago.
- 6) True or False: Paul was concerned that his imprisonment was a discouragement to the church at Ephesus.