

Ephesians — Part 6

Ephesians chapter 3 closes the first half of the epistle and reveals the mystery of Christ. In Chapter 1, we were shown the wealth of God's blessings that are in Christ. In Chapter 2, God's purpose is developed to show how those who were dead in sin are given new life in Christ and reconciles all people to God. In Chapter 3, the mystery of Christ is revealed, which is, "*Christ in you the hope of glory,*" (Colossians 1:27) and the unity of all believers in Christ, (Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:3-11). This work of God gathers together every believer in Christ.

God's purpose is to make a new body of people on earth.

Ephesians 3:1–3 NIV84 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

Paul began introducing this mystery of God's will in Ephesians 1:9-10.

Ephesians 1:9-10 NKJV having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

The word "dispensation" refers to the implemented strategy of God's plan for the church. Paul was a prisoner of Christ Jesus to help believers know that they are partners together of God's covenant in Christ.

This is what is called the mystery of Christ.

This *mystery* is God's plan to break down prejudice, segregation, hatred, and division and reconcile all believers to God. This is accomplished by creating one new body of people who love and serve Him and each other supremely. Each member of this one new body of people has been saved by grace.

Colossians 1:26–27 NIV84 The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Watch this closely. The tie that binds us all together into one body is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" This mystery had been hidden in previous generations, but is now revealed in us.

Ephesians 3:4-5 NIV84 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and

prophets.

The mystery is clearly revealed that in Christ we are members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ. The mystery of Christ required a special revelation. In the Old Testament, there were glimpses of what God was going to do, but from the beginning of the world most people did not know this mystery. Romans 15 shows some of what God promised to the Gentiles.

Romans 15:9–12 ESV ... that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

Ephesians 3:6 NIV84 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Before Jesus Christ, salvation was of the Jews. When Jesus appeared, He confirmed the promises made to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) so that Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy. After Christ’s ascension back to the Father, and the advent of the Holy Spirit, the door was opened for all people to come and find mercy, help, and salvation. In the early church, believers had great difficulty accepting Gentiles into the faith. The Acts of the Apostles shows how this door was opened. In Acts 10, God gave Peter a special revelation of a large sheet descending from heaven. It held all manner of unclean animals, reptiles, and wild birds. When Peter saw it, a voice came from heaven telling him to slaughter and eat. Peter argued that he had never eaten anything unclean.

Acts 10:15 AMP And the voice came to him again a second time, What God has cleansed and pronounced clean, do not you defile and profane by regarding and calling common and unhallowed or unclean.

God was preparing a way for anyone cleansed by the blood of Christ to be accepted and made a part of His family. Now we all have an approach to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:15–16 NIV84 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

Listen to the message from the Spirit that testifies that we have been included and are God's children. This message is for all who put their faith and trust in Christ.

Romans 8:17 NIV84 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

We have become partakers of His glory because we are covered by His sufferings. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from sins. His death brings us into a right standing with the Father. By His humiliation, our shame is covered. His isolation and abandonment on the cross makes it possible for us to come near to God. The stripes on His back procures our healing. Think about the depth of the ways that we have been made to share in His sufferings. Without Christ we are still aliens, strangers and far away from God. In Christ Jesus, we have been brought near and made partakers of all of His promises, blessings, and glory.

Galatians 4:4–6 NIV84 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

Through Christ, every believer has access to all of the promises of God.

We are made heirs and joint heirs with Christ. To gain this spiritual growth and victory, we must understand that we have been made full sons of God.

John 5:24 NIV84 I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Romans 10:9–10 NIV84 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Ephesians 3:12 NIV84 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

In Christ, we have bold, free, and confident access to the Father in heaven. This boldness and confidence before the Father means we have freedom of speech, absence of fear and shame, and free access to the Father. This freedom and confidence gives us great faith in knowing that the blessing and inheritance is ours.

Romans 5:1-2 NIV84 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Paul's second Intercession for the Saints (3:14–21)

In this next section, Paul offers his second prayer of intercession for believers. He is kneeling before the Father, offering a Holy Spirit inspired prayer for you. Pay attention to each phrase of this prayer.

Ephesians 3:14–16 NIV84 For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

The source of our strength comes as a result of the Holy Spirit working in our inner being and making evident the mightiness of God's power in us. The realization of His power working in us strengthens our inner being. God the Father has glorious unlimited rich resources and power. It was out of His limitless power that everything was created and by His great power, we have been included in Christ. The Holy Spirit will strengthen you in your inner being with that power. Each person that is vitally connected to Christ should be strengthened and equipped with power (*dunamis*) that enables them to stand firm, live and work in and for Him.

Philippians 4:13 NKJV I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Ephesians 3:17–18 NIV84 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

As the Spirit dwells and works in power strengthening you, Christ dwells in your innermost being. Christ dwelling in the heart and the strengthening by the Spirit in the inner being are joined together. As soon as you are redeemed and brought into His family by grace, this begins happening in you. The Spirit who dwells in you is continually renewing your strength, (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Ephesians 3:18 "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."

The roots of our Christian character go deeply into this foundation. As the Holy Spirit works in us and strengthens us, we are strengthened in Christ. By the measure the Holy Spirit works in us we are strengthened and given this

power. The ultimate goal of the Spirit's activity in us is to help all saints grasp the width, length, height and depth of the love of Christ. The greater His unrestricted access is in our innermost being, the stronger we become and the more established (rooted and grounded) we will be in Christ. God wants you to expand and grow in Christ until you are filled with Him.

Ephesians 3:19 NIV84 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

This part of this prayer brings believers into the uncharted deep waters of God's love. God's love surpasses knowledge, but He wants to bring you into the overwhelming depths of His love. As we begin diving into the bottomless depths of His love, we will be *“filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* These words are so profound that they are incomprehensible.

Is it possible for us to be “filled with all the fullness of God?”

This is the goal of our pursuit of God. Once we have tasted the sweetness of His love, can we ever say that we have received all? This is what God has desired for us, that we would press on and strive for all that is made available in Christ.

Ephesians 3:20–21 NIV84 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

God is able to accomplish this great work in us by the Holy Spirit's power that is working in us. He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is working in us. The stronger His power that is working in us, the greater the manifestation and realization of Christ's work.

The two prayers in Ephesians complement each other, (here and 1:15–23)

The first prayer is for enlightenment. The second prayer is for enablement. God wants us to know and receive power.

Paul's requests are:

1. That God would grant you, **according to the riches of His glory** to be **strengthened** according to the riches of His perfections in the inner man. (Ephesians 3:16)
2. That **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith. He wants us to be strengthened so that Christ may dwell in our hearts. (John 14:23; Revelation 3:20) As we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we will be made like Jesus.

3. The result of Christ's unrestricted access is being **rooted and grounded in love and given power**. (Read:1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
4. He prays that believers may know by experience the surpassing love of Christ.
5. Then he prays that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**. The more Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, the more we are filled unto the degree of the fullness of God.
6. Finally, he tells believers that even though these requests are vast and seemingly impossible, **God is able to do more than what we can ask or think**. God will accomplish this by the power of the Spirit that works in us. The more we yield to Him, the greater His effectiveness will be in conforming us to Christ.
7. He wants Christ to **"feel at home"** or **dwell** (v. 17) in our hearts. Christ feels at home in our hearts when He finds faith and love.
8. When he prays that you would be **"Rooted and established in love"** (v. 17) *suggests a steady position, a habit of faith and love, like a tree rooted in the soil*. We cannot have the fruit or gifts of the Spirit without being rooted in spiritual things.