



## **EPHESIANS THREE**

### **PAUL'S PRAYER FOR OUR STRENGTHENING**

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## THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

### *Previewing in Outline Form (3:1-19)*

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        - (a) Made possible by being rooted and grounded in love. 3:17b.
        - (b) Includes knowing the love of Christ that passes knowledge. 3:19.
      - (4) That you may be filled unto all the fulness of God. 3:19b.

\*In the Greek text, three of these petitions are introduced by *hina*. The first *hina* clause has a compound object, which includes petitions (1) and (2) in our outline.

### *Fact Questions*

129. What is section 3:1-19 called in the outline?

130. What is the parenthetical section about? What are the Scripture limitations of it?
131. What are the four petitions which Paul asked for the Ephesians?

*Text (3:1)*

**For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, in behalf of you Gentiles,—**

*Thought Questions (3:1)*

123. What was the cause referred to in the phrase, "for this cause"? Reread the preceding paragraph to find out.
124. Of whom was Paul a prisoner, Christ or Rome? Explain.
125. How did Paul's imprisonment help us Gentiles?

*Paraphrase*

1. Because of the glorious mystery which I know and preach, namely that the Gentiles are equal in privileges with the Jews, and are united in one church with them (2:16), and are not obligated to keep the law of Moses, I Paul, the prisoner (not of Rome, but of Christ Jesus), who by my imprisonment performs a protective ministry over you Gentiles — I do bow my knees unto the Father in prayer for you. (3:14)

*Notes (3:1)*

1. Paul was a bound prisoner, one bearing a chain. Ephesians 6:20.
2. Paul was technically the prisoner of the Jews and Romans, but he was in truth only the prisoner of Christ Jesus. If his heart had not been bound by chains of love, gratitude, duty, trust, and faith in Christ Jesus, he would soon have been free of his iron chains. But even when free of chains, he was always the prisoner of Christ and His service.
3. Paul was truly THE prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of us Gentiles. Others had been in prison for Christ, but Paul was the one prisoner whose bondage preserved the rights of Gentile Christians to be accepted without keeping the law of Moses.
4. Paul had first been arrested in Jerusalem by those Jews who opposed his accepting Gentiles into the church without making them keep the ceremonies of the Law. They accused him of bringing Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21:28), and they

refused to listen to him speak about the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22).

5. If Paul had not been true to the message revealed to him, many Gentiles would have been deceived and forced into keeping the ceremonies of the law of Moses. But Paul never closed his mouth in our defence, not even to avoid punishment. Thus his imprisonment was "in our behalf" (literally, "over" us), and it shielded us from an unbearable and unnecessary yoke being placed on our necks.

We ought to be like Paul, ever ready to stand up and speak out for the truth, regardless of personal consequences.

### *Fact Questions*

132. Why was Paul originally arrested?  
 133. What could have happened to the Gentiles if Paul had been silent, and not submitted to imprisonment?

### *Text (3:2, 3)*

**2 If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; 3 how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words,**

### *Thought Questions (3:2-3)*

126. Could Paul have written to people as well known to him as the Ephesians, and said, "if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me"?
127. How did Paul get the message which he preached?
128. What meaning did the word *mystery* have to the Gentiles?
129. In what sense is Christianity a mystery?
130. To what does Paul refer when he said, "as I wrote before in few words"?

### *Paraphrase*

2. Assuming, of course, that you have heard of that stewardship (management) of the message of God's grace, which was given to me to deliver unto you;
3. How that there has been made known unto me by revelation of God the mystery, that previously unknown sacred secret, as I have written previously in this epistle in a few words.  
 (Compare 1:9.)

*Notes (3:2-3)*

1. "If ye have heard" is a simple conditional expression (*ei ge akousate*), used when one wished to assume that what he said was true. We could also translate it, "For you must have heard . . ." or, "Assuming that you have heard . . ."

Therefore the statement does not indicate that the writer was writing to people who were strangers to him. Paul could have written these words to the Ephesians as properly as to anyone else. (Compare the notes on 1:15.)

Another thought on the phrase, "if ye have heard," is this: Paul's work while he was at Ephesus became known to all the province of Asia (Acts 19:10, 17). Some of the people in outlying areas from Ephesus may have heard of Paul and the Jesus whom he preached, but may not have heard how Paul had been entrusted to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul therefore explains about his ministry in this section, so that everyone might know clearly about it.

2. Paul began his prayer for us at verse one. As he began his prayer, he mentioned that he was the prisoner of Christ in behalf of us Gentiles. The reference to this fact diverted his prayer for a moment, as he launched into a parenthetical explanation of how God had given him the work of preaching to the Gentiles. Paul resumed the prayer at verse 14. Note that 3:1 and 3:14 begin with the same words.
3. A *dispensation* is a stewardship, or administration, or management of a household. Christ revealed to Paul much truth. Paul was a good manager and worker with the truth and "dispensed" the message faithfully.
4. As 3:2 indicates, the Christian gospel is basically a message of grace (see notes on 1:6 and 2:8). God loved us when we were yet sinners. God accepts us now, not because we deserve it, but as a favor bestowed upon us by His love. Without Jesus as an advocate, our filthy souls could not stand in God's presence for one second.
5. Paul preached a message that had been revealed directly to him from God. Paul had no contact with the other apostles for several years after his conversion. He never had much contact with them (see Galatians, chapter 1). But he preached the same message that they did, for Christ revealed the same Gospel to all.

We must accept Paul's words as inspired and coming directly from Christ (compare I Corinthians 14:37 and

Galatians 1:11-12). Many people try to belittle Paul's writings as if they were the personal opinions of some soured old bachelor or epileptic fanatic. We dare not think such thoughts.

6. Much is said in Ephesians about the *mystery* of Christ (see 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19).

The New Testament uses the term *mystery* 27 times, mostly in Paul's writings. It is applied to several hidden, or once-hidden, or deep truths.

The Gentiles were familiar with mystery religions. When people were initiated into some cult, they were told the mysteries or secret teachings of the cult. The Greeks had their Elusian and Orphic mysteries. The Persians had Mithraism, and the Egyptians the mysteries of Isis and Serapis. The religion of Diana had its mysteries.

Here in Ephesians the mystery referred to is the fact which was formerly unknown, but is now revealed, that the Gentiles have equal privileges with the Jews (see 3:6). This was the sacred secret unknown in former ages, but now revealed and publicized to all men.

Thus in the New Testament the word *mystery* is used in its ancient sense of a *revealed secret*, and not in its modern sense of that which cannot be fathomed or comprehended. There is nothing mysterious or hidden about the Gospel, even if there are deep things in it. It is called a mystery only because at one time it was not made known to the sons of men.

7. That which Paul had written "before in a few words" may either refer to some previous writing of Paul which the Ephesians had seen, or to what Paul had written previously in this letter about the mystery of Christ (1:9-10). The latter idea seems much more likely, because Paul's writings were not then generally circulated around as they are now.

### *Fact Questions*

134. How else have we translated the phrase "if ye have heard"?
135. What are some words that mean the same as *dispensation*?
136. By what means was the mystery made known to Paul?
137. Why is the gospel called a *mystery*?
138. What is a reason for thinking that what Paul had written "before in few words" refers to previous remarks in this letter?

*Text (3:4)*

4 whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ;

*Thought Questions (3:4)*

131. Can we expect God to put His truths directly into our minds and lips?
132. What are we to read to find out the whole truth about the will of God?

*Paraphrase*

4. Concerning this mystery that was revealed to me, when ye read what I have written, you shall be able to grasp my perfect understanding of the matter.

*Notes (3:4)*

1. We cannot expect to receive information directly from God into our mind and speech, as Paul did. Paul did not tell us to pray for such enlightenment, but to READ what he had written, for God had given to him perfect understanding of the matter.

Some people think that they will always know the truth because they pray for the Holy Spirit to guide them. They should go and read what the Spirit told Paul and the apostles once for all. The only spirit likely to guide us without studying is some "seducing spirit" (I Timothy 4:1).

2. It has been suggested that the phrase, "when ye read," may refer to reading the Old Testament. Paul sometimes proved the truth of his preaching by appealing to the Old Testament for support (Acts 17:2, 11). Paul's message brought to light many hidden truths of the Old Testament.

Even so, the natural and obvious thing suggested by "when ye read" is that it has reference to reading Paul's own writings.

3. Only when we read (or "know accurately") the writings of the *apostles* will we have infallible divine information. We cannot get divine truth from the great or wise men of this world.
4. Concerning the *mystery*, see notes on 3:2-3, 6.

*Fact Questions*

139. What must we do to perceive Paul's understanding of the mystery of Christ?
140. Should we depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us direct enlightenment concerning the mystery of Christ?

*Text (3:5)*

**5 which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;**

*Thought Questions (3:5)*

133. Did Abraham and Moses and other Old Testament saints know of God's plan for salvation?
134. Why did God put off so long the revealing of His mystery of salvation to the world?
135. How much of our knowledge of God's will do we owe to the prophets?

*Paraphrase*

5. The mystery of Christ was not made known to men in the ages before the apostles, as it has now been made known directly by the Holy Spirit to the holy apostles of Christ and the prophets of New Testament times.

*Notes*

1. "In other generations" refers to the ages or generations of mankind who lived before the church began on Pentecost A.D. 33 (A.D. 29 according to our calendars). Neither Confucius, nor Buddha, nor the philosophers knew what God has now revealed, and their disciples still do not know it.

Abraham, Moses, and other Old Testament saints did not know the mystery of Christ, "God having provided some better thing for us, that without us they should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). God accepted these men because He knew that Christ would shed His blood for all men later. But this way of salvation was unknown to them. Even the prophets who predicted the coming of Christ did not understand the prophecies they uttered (I Peter 1:10-12). Their messages remained a mystery until Christ had died and rose again, and the Holy Spirit revealed the meaning of all these things to the apostles. Note the emphasis on the fact that



the mystery is NOW revealed to the holy apostles and prophets.

2. It was the Holy Spirit that revealed the mystery of Christ to the apostles and prophets. On the day of Pentecost the apostles spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance (compare II Peter 1:21). At other times when they spoke or wrote, the Holy Spirit gave them thoughts and words (I Corinthians 2:10-13).
3. The prophets referred to here are the New Testament prophets, such as Silas, Agabus, etc. (see Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; Ephesians 2:20). These men spoke the message of God, for God put it directly into their minds and mouths.

Not much information is given in the Bible concerning the New Testament prophets. In Ephesians Paul sets a very high estimate on their work. It may be that more of our knowledge of the way of life has come to us through the prophets than we realize.

#### *Fact Questions*

141. To what two groups of men has God revealed the mystery of Christ?
142. In (or by) what has the mystery been revealed?

#### *Text (3:6)*

**6 to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,**

#### *Thought Questions (3:6)*

136. What is the standing of the Gentiles in the church compared to that of the Jews?
137. How many churches are the Jews and Gentiles to form?
138. What will we inherit as "fellow-heirs" of God? (See Matthew 19:29; 25:34.)

#### *Paraphrase*

6. The mystery which was revealed to me is, in brief, the revelation that the Gentiles are now equal in privileges with the Jews, and that when both are saved through Christ, they are heirs of God together, members of the one body (church) together, and partakers together of the promise of the Messiah, through the gospel of Christ Jesus.

*Notes (3:6)*

1. The expressions, "fellow-heirs," "fellow-members," and "fellow partakers," as given in the American Standard Version (quoted above) are a splendid attempt to reproduce in English the alliteration of this verse in Greek. Each of the Greek words translated as given above begins with the same syllable, a prefix meaning "together" or "with."
2. Most Jews felt that if the Gentiles were ever accepted of God, it would only be when they became subject to the law of Moses. The revelation that both Jews and Gentiles stand on equal footing with God through Christ was more than many zealous Hebrew Christians would accept (Acts 15:5).
3. Christ has only one body, one church. Jews and Gentiles are fellow-members of the one body. Denominational divisions, social, or racial divisions in the church are not of God's making, and are not pleasing to Him.
4. We are fellow-partakers of THE promise. One great promise runs throughout the Old Testament, and gave hope to all the ages before Christ. That was the promise of the Messiah. This promise had many shining aspects to it, like the facets of a diamond. But it was a single promise.

This promise has now been fulfilled, and lo! the Gentiles are made to share in the benefits of it through the Gospel (which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). The spiritual condition of our ancestors before Christ was so dreadful that we really ought to thank God for being made fellow-partakers of the promise. (Compare Ephesians 2:11-12.)

*Fact Questions*

143. Name the three things in which the Gentiles are now "fellows" with the Jews.
144. What was the promise of which the Gentiles are made fellow-partakers?
145. Ephesians 3:6 defines the content of what?

*Text (3:7)*

**7 whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me, according to the working of his power.**

*Thought Questions (3:7)*

139. Of what was Paul made a minister?
140. Why would God choose a murderer, blasphemer, and persecutor like Paul to be His minister?
141. How did God's power work in the life of Paul?

*Paraphrase*

7. Of the gospel, I, Paul, was made minister (or servant). This ministry was given to me as a gracious gift of God, and God empowered me with miraculous powers by the working of His power to accomplish my ministry.

*Notes (3:7)*

1. "Whereof" refers to the gospel, mentioned in 3:6. Of this gospel Paul was made a minister.
2. The word *minister* used here is the same term (*diakonos*) that is elsewhere translated *servant*, *attendant*, or *deacon*. We can be a *minister* of God and serve Him as a *minister* in many ways. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant (minister)" (Matthew 23:11).
3. The two phrases (1) "according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me," and (2) "according to the working of his power," seem to be parallel, and both describe the ministry of Paul. The idea is that Paul's ministry was not self-chosen (it was a gift to him), and was not dependent upon his own natural ability for its success.
4. Because Paul had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious before his conversion (I Timothy 1:12-13), he felt especially indebted to God after his conversion, and tried to make up for all his years of opposing Christ. Sometimes the greatest sinners, when converted, will serve Christ the most earnestly and gratefully. Even so, Paul would never have been chosen as a minister unless God had seen fit to bestow that ministry as a gift of His grace (favor).
5. The "working" of God's power enabled Paul to work miracles, speak by prophetic inspiration, and guided him into great, marvelous, and hard service. Any sincere servant of God today will find that God leads and helps him in a powerful and marvelous way, even if we do not have the miraculous gifts such as Paul had.

*Fact Questions*

146. According to what two things was Paul made a minister?

*Text (3:8, 9)*

**8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things;**

*Thought Questions (3:8-9)*

142. How could anyone be less than the least of saints?
143. What are the unsearchable riches of Christ? If you do not know, how can you preach what Paul preached?
144. What is the dispensation of the mystery which Paul was to make all men see?
145. Why did God hide His program from so many ages?

*Paraphrase*

8. Unto me, Paul, who am inferior to even the least distinguished of the saints because I persecuted the church, to me was this favor given to preach to the Gentiles the riches of Christ, which are so vast that they are unsearchable, beyond tracing out in their fullness;
9. and I am appointed to enlighten all men concerning the present Christian age (or dispensation), the knowledge of which has been hidden from the people who have lived in previous ages, hidden within the mind of God who created all things.

*Notes (3:8-9)*

1. Things may be little, less, or least. But Paul sincerely considered himself less than the least of saints in personal merit. Concerning the "saints," see the notes on Ephesians 1:1.
2. Paul had always been sincere, even when sincerely mistaken (Acts 24:16). He was highly educated. He was earnest in his work. He had high moral character. In spite of all of these good things, he was a great sinner before his conversion. In fact, he was the chief of sinners (I Timothy 1:15), and less than the least of saints.

Paul's testimony should be a stern warning to those who are self-righteous, and pride themselves on being good moral men. We can be the chief of sinners in spite of morality.

3. The low estimate that Paul places upon himself in 3:8 excludes the possibility that this epistle could have been

written by some admiring disciple of Paul's (such as Onesimus) in Paul's name. Some modern commentaries actually teach that very thing.

4. The "grace" given to Paul was his ministry, the same as that "gift of grace" referred to in 3:7. Paul should have been put to death for opposing Christ. Instead, God graciously appointed him to be an honored minister.
5. Paul was recognized and accepted by the other apostles as being divinely sent to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9).
6. The early Christians had the unsearchable riches of Christ. Few had social standings, few had material wealth; yet they were filled with joy and radiant love. What were these riches of Christ which they had?

When you consider what these early disciples had, it actually amounts to a few intangible blessings, such as:

- (1) Fellowship with Christ
- (2) Fellowship with one another
- (3) Assurance of pardon from sin
- (4) Assurance of eternal life
- (5) Assurance that they knew the truth
- (6) The Holy Spirit within them

Would these intangible blessings satisfy our modern church members, who have to be entertained, coddled, flattered, babied, and tricked into being faithful? These need to learn the preciousness of being in Christ, the joy of Christian fellowship (I John 1:3), the joy of the Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 1:6).

A Christian who is so in love with Jesus that he can say,

"Sun of my soul, thou savior dear,  
It is not night when thou art near;  
O may no earth-born cloud arise  
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes"

truly has grasped some of the "riches of Christ."

7. The riches of Christ are not called *unsearchable* because they are confusing or vague, but because they are so vast that no human can trace out all the priceless aspects and phrases of them.
8. The word *fellowship* of the King James Version (3:9) is correctly replaced by *dispensation* (or *stewardship*) in the Revised Version.
9. The phrase, "by Christ Jesus" in the Authorized Version (3:9) is not in the best Greek texts and is omitted by the

Revised Version. It is absolutely true that God created the universe through Christ, and for Christ (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), but that fact is not stated in this text.

10. Concerning the "mystery," see notes on 3:3, 6.
11. During the times before Christ came, God tolerated the nations on earth to walk in their own ways, and He overlooked those times of ignorance (Acts 14:16; 17:30). But now God wants to make all men see (enlighten them concerning) the present dispensation of the mystery. People must know that God now commands all men everywhere to repent and obey the Gospel.
12. For ages (literally "from the ages" (compare Colossians 1:26) the mystery of God's will had been hidden in God, that is, in the mind and plan of God. We might ask, "Why did God wait so long to reveal His mystery, when the world needed it so greatly?" We cannot know God's reasons for doing things. But it is evident to everyone that by the time that God revealed His mystery, the world had fully discovered that it could not save itself by philosophy, law, military might, or any other human means. Hence, the world should have been fully ready to receive Christ.

#### *Fact Questions*

147. How did Paul compare himself to other saints?
148. To whom was Paul sent to preach?
149. What was Paul to preach, according to 3:8?
150. What was Paul to make all men see (3:9)?
151. Where had the mystery been hidden?

#### *Text (3:10)*

**10 to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,**

#### *Thought Questions (3:10)*

146. What are the "principalities and powers" to which God's wisdom is to be made known?
147. Are there good and bad angels and spiritual beings all around us?
148. What is Satan's opinion of God's efforts to save us?
149. Where and how can we show to the principalities and powers that God is wise?
150. What kind of wisdom is "manifold" wisdom?

*Paraphrase*

10. Not only was I made a minister to make known the present administration of God's program to men, but also that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the angelic hosts, the first rulers and authorities (both good and evil) who dwell in the heavenly regions of the air; this wisdom is made known to them through the church, for the church testifies by its existence that God did not send Christ in vain.

*Notes (3:10)*

1. All about us are unseen hosts of angelic beings and spirit creatures. We cannot see them but, like Elisha's servant (II Kings 6:15-17), we could if God opened our eyes.

The devil and his angels are here on earth (Revelation 12:12), inhabiting the region of the air (Ephesians 2:2), which is called the "heavenly places." They go about looking for anyone whom they may devour (I Peter 5:8).

The devil apparently has his forces organized into an efficient army, with ranks of authority and work assigned. We, as Christians, wrestle not against flesh and blood (human enemies), but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). These "principalities and powers" thus seem to refer to high-ranking evil angels in the army of Satan. "Principalities and powers" may be translated "first rulers and authorities."

2. Many modernist scholars deny the existence of spirit beings such as the "principalities and powers." One modern writer says that it is not necessary or even possible for us to return to this ancient way of thinking about the spiritual forces that inhabit our universe. People with opinions like that will have their eyes opened, but probably too late.
3. Satan, whose every thought is evil, cannot believe that any person would serve God without selfish interests. To Satan's mind, God's efforts to save man are foolishness and can be thwarted.

Once God asked Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?" (Job 1:8). Satan had indeed observed that Job served God faithfully, and that God had blessed him with abundant wealth. So Satan replied to God, "Doth Job fear God for

nought? — put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face” (Job 1:9-11). God allowed Job to be tested, and Job lost everything that he had. But when Job remained faithful in spite of all this loss, it proved that Satan was wrong about Job, and that God was wise in blessing him.

4. Likewise, God makes His wisdom known at the present time to the principalities and powers through the CHURCH. Faithful church members are a constant testimony that God was wise in sending His Son to die for us. God can say to the devil, “In spite of all your lies and temptations, these people in the church have accepted My Son Jesus as Lord and Savior. This proves I was wise to send Christ to die for them.”

Question — Are you a church member, proving to Satan that God was wise in offering salvation to you? Or does the devil gloat because you refuse to serve Christ in the church?

5. Not only the evil angels, but the angels of God as well, are deeply interested in God’s plan of salvation. During those ages when the mystery of salvation was yet unrevealed, the angels “desired to look into” these matters (I Peter 1:12). Surely it was hard for them to understand how a just and holy God, who was too pure to behold iniquity, could pardon and accept sinful men, who were under the just sentence of eternal death. But now these angels can see the wisdom of God demonstrated in the church made up of men pardoned through the blood of Christ.
6. Thus our faith is not a private matter, but is bound up with God’s purpose for the whole universe.
7. God’s wisdom is manifold. It has many forms, various objectives, efforts, many methods and means, and is unsearchable by human minds (Romans 11:33). It is many-splendored.

### *Fact Questions*

152. What are the principalities and powers in the heavenly places?
153. Through what is the wisdom of God made known to the principalities and powers?



THE GLORIOUS CHURCH



*“...made known  
through the church*

*the manifold wisdom of God.”*

*Text (3:11, 12)*

**11 according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him.**

*Thought Questions (3:11-12)*

151. Has God permitted the universe and man to develop as chance and time might cause and direct?
152. Who is the central character in God's eternal plan?
153. Should we not approach a holy and just God with fear and trembling?
154. How can we who are sinful, disobedient souls have opportunity to come into the presence of the almighty God?

*Paraphrase*

11. This work of showing God's wisdom to the principalities and powers is part of and according to God's eternal purpose and program, which he has made in Christ, that is, with Christ as its center, object, and means.

12. In Christ, around whom God's eternal purpose was made, we miserable sinners may have boldness in approaching God, and an open, clear access (way of approach) unto Him. And we have this access not through meritorious works that we have done, but through faith in Christ.

*Notes (3:11-12)*

1. God's intention of showing His wisdom to the evil angelic powers is according to an eternal purpose which He had made. God's purpose (*prothesis*, plan, or pre-planned program) was made before the world began, and cannot be overthrown. The wisdom of God will overcome the sin, greed, lust, war, meanness, and weeping of our sin-cursed world.
2. It was the work of Satan that caused man to sin, suffer, and die back at the beginning. God, foreseeing that this would happen, determined before the foundation of the world that Christ should suffer, die, and rise again, and thus bring to nought the power of the Devil. (See Ephesians 1:4.) God is still directing the course of human events in order to accomplish His will. Even the wrath of men shall ultimately praise Him (Psalm 76:10; Ephesians 1:10-11).

3. In Christ Jesus we have boldness to come unto the Father. *Boldness* here means *freedom in all speaking*. We may come to God in prayer boldly. But only in Christ can we have such boldness.

We generally take too much for granted about our own merits, rights, and privileges. We do not fear God as He ought to be feared because of His greatness, holiness, and power. We would not crash into the room where a king or president was working. But we often approach the Lord of all the universe with a reckless and demanding attitude. Let us not forget that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). He is God, and we are only flesh.

Nonetheless, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST we can come to the Father with boldness. Unlike the heathen who are afraid of their gods, we come to God with boldness. But let us come with reverential boldness, not with impudence, reckless demands, and irreverence.

4. In Christ Jesus we not only have boldness, but access to the Father. Paul mentioned this access in 2:18. An *access* is a way of approach or an introduction. We cannot speak to a government official without proper introductions being made through the right people. Christ gives us access to the Father. We have no goodness in ourselves to demand such an access, and no power to command or force an access to the Father.
5. Our access to God through Christ is used with confidence through "the faith of him" (Christ). We do not deserve such an honor as free access to God, but God has graciously granted it to us simply through the faith we have in Christ. Compare the notes on 2:8.

### *Fact Questions*

154. What is it that is referred to as being "according to the eternal purpose" of God?
155. In whom did God make His eternal purpose?
156. In whom can we have boldness in approaching the Father?
157. What is an *access*?
158. Through what does our confidence in approaching God come?

### *Text (3:13)*

**13 wherefore I ask that ye may not faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory.**

*Thought Questions (3:13)*

155. Was Paul more concerned about himself or his brethren?
156. What evil effects could the sufferings of Paul have had on the other Christians?
157. How could Paul's sufferings be our glory?

*Paraphrase*

13. Wherefore, on account of all the honors given unto me in my ministry, I ask that you Ephesians not be disheartened and faint because of my troubles in prison for asserting your title to the riches of Christ. For my tribulations are your glory, a credit to every member of the church of Christ with which church I am identified.

*Notes (3:13)*

1. "Faint" here means to do evil, draw or shrink back in battle, be weary, or lose courage. The Ephesians could have become discouraged because of sympathy and fellow-feeling with Paul in his sufferings. Or they could have fainted out of fear that they would soon be enduring the same miseries that Paul was enduring.
2. Paul's tribulations were "for you", the Gentiles. He was in prison for defending their rights to the riches of Christ. See notes on 3:1.
3. It is indeed a glory to us that Paul suffered as he did. His victories in suffering made the whole church of Christ with which he was identified appear honorable. Likewise, when we suffer for Christ without surrendering to evil, it is a glory to all our fellow church members.
4. We observe in Paul's request that the Ephesians not faint at his tribulations the apex of Christian courtesy and consideration for others. Paul, the prisoner, was concerned about the free disciples, hoping that his tribulations were not causing THEM to stumble.

*Fact Questions*

159. What did Paul ask the Ephesians not to do because of his tribulations?
160. For whom were Paul's tribulations?
161. What did Paul say that his tribulations were to the Ephesians?

*Text (3:14, 15)*

14 For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

*Thought Questions (3:14-15)*

158. For what cause was it that Paul bowed his knees to the Father?
159. If God's family is both in heaven and on earth, and they are all named from Him, what is their name?

*Paraphrase*

14. For this cause of which I began to speak before digressing off onto the subject of my ministry, namely that Christ has made both Jews and Gentiles into one temple, one body (2:15-22), I Paul do bow my knees in prayer unto the father,
15. From whom (the Father) the whole family of God's created beings in heaven and on earth is named; unto Him do I pray for you brethren.

*Notes (3:14-15)*

1. In this verse (14) Paul resumes the prayer that he began at 3:1, which was interrupted by the parenthetical discussion of his ministry (3:2-13).
2. "For this cause" refers to the glorious fact that the Gentiles are now accepted as fellow-citizens and are made into one temple of God with the Jews (see 2:11-22). It was for that cause that Paul prayed. Paul prayed, not just when there was trouble, but out of gratitude over the doctrines of Christ.
3. Paul bowed his knees unto the Father when he prayed. We need to limber up our spiritual arthritis and bend our knees unto God more often. Men do not bend the knees until they have first bent their pride.
4. Probably the translation in the King James Version, "the *whole* family in heaven and earth," is preferable to that in the Revised Version given above, "*every* family in heaven and on earth." God has only one family.

The word *family* used here means "a race, or tribe, or family lineage going back to a common father; a fatherhood." Every human being on earth has descended from Adam, who is called the "son of God" (Luke 3:38). In the sense that we all owe our existence to God's creation, we may

all be called "sons of God," and thus we are named from God. Of course, if we commit sin, we become children of the Devil. (See John 8:44.)

5. The angels of God are also called the "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 38:7). They may be the ones described as the "family in heaven" who are named from the Father.

But it may be that the "family in heaven" refers to the saints of God who have died and are now with the Father in heaven.

6. "The name of *Father* has not gone up from us, but has come to us from above; for it is manifest that God is Father by nature, and not only in name." (Severian) It is absolutely true, as Alexander Campbell contended in his debate with Robert Owen, that man could never have conceived the idea of a supreme God unless God had revealed Himself to man. We have not given the name *Father* to some idea of a supreme power. The name of *Father* has been taught to us by the Father Himself through His Son Jesus (Matthew 6:9).

### *Fact Questions*

162. What is this section (3:1, 14-19) called in the outline?  
 163. Where did Paul begin the prayer which he picked up again at 3:14?  
 164. In what physical position did Paul pray?  
 165. From whom is every family in heaven and on earth named?  
 166. What two interpretations of the phrase, "the family in heaven," are given in the notes?

### *Text (3:16-19)*

**16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.**

### *Thought Questions (3:16-19)*

160. How great are the riches of God's glory?  
 161. If God's grant of strength is given according to the riches of His glory, how greatly should we expect to be strengthened?

162. Do we have any good excuse for letting sin defeat us when God strengthens us according to the riches of His glory?
163. Through what does God strengthen us with power?
164. What is a person's *inward man*?
165. By what does Christ dwell in our hearts (v. 17)? Through whom does Christ dwell in the Christian, according to John 14:16-18?
166. In what is the Christian to take root?
167. What does Christ dwelling in our hearts have to do with our being rooted and grounded in love?
168. What do you think is meant by the "breadth and length and height and depth" of the gospel?
169. What is likely to happen if the child of God does not comprehend the true greatness of the gospel?
170. How can we know the love of Christ if it passes knowledge?
171. How much of the divine fulness can we humans here and now expect to receive?

### *Paraphrase*

16. Praying that the Father would grant you, in a manner according to the great riches of His glory, that you may be mightily strengthened through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in your inward man, so that you will have the necessary strength to live as you ought to live.
17. Praying also a second request, that Christ may dwell in your hearts to the greatest possible degree as a result of the increasing faith which you have in Him.  
 And (a third request) that you, being rooted in love, as a tree is rooted, and well-founded upon love, as a sturdy building with a good foundation —
18. that you may have such full strength of spiritual discernment that you will be able to comprehend, along with all other saints, the surpassing breadth and length and height and depth of the Christian faith,
19. that indeed you may know the love of Christ, which is so great that it exceeds mere human knowledge without divine strengthening.

As a climactic fourth request, I pray that you may be filled unto all the fulness of the divine power, love, and favor which God himself bestows upon his saints.

*Notes (3:16-19)*

## PAUL'S REQUESTS FOR US

1. That we be strengthened through God's Spirit. 3:16.
2. That Christ dwell in our hearts. 3:17.
3. That we be able to comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth. 3:18.
4. That we be filled unto all the fulness of God. 3:19.

## DO YOU EVER PRAY FOR THESE THINGS?

1. The phrase, "riches of his glory," is a favorite expression of Paul (Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 4:19; Romans 9:23; Colossians 1:27; etc.). The fact that it is used here in Ephesians is further proof that Paul actually wrote Ephesians, and that the epistle is not a forgery under Paul's name, as some have dared to teach.
2. The riches from which God can supply us with all things are too great for humans to measure. God's riches are of every kind, material and spiritual. If God strengthens us according to HIS riches, through HIS Spirit, surely we shall be powerful enough to conquer every temptation and serve Christ victoriously.  
The phrase "strengthened with power" simply means "mightily strengthened."
3. The "inward man" refers to the non-material part of our being, our spirit, conscience, mind, and emotions. The term "inward man" is used in Romans 7:22 to describe that spiritual part of our nature that delights in God's law, contrasted to that fleshly part of our makeup which craves sin. The "inward man" is mentioned in II Corinthians 4:16. "Though our outward man (the physical body) perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."  
It is much more important that the inward man be strengthened than the outward man, even though it is necessary to be strong physically. People can do much for God even in great suffering, weakness, and poverty if they are strong inwardly.
4. Christ dwells in us through the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18, 23). Our faith is the entrance through which Christ enters. Our faith in Christ ought to grow stronger and stronger as we serve Christ. Then as our faith grows stronger, Christ



will dwell in us in a greater way through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

5. The verb *dwell* (*katoikeo*) means "to settle or dwell permanently," contrasted to a related verb (*paroikeo*) meaning "sojourn or dwell temporarily." Christ is to dwell in our hearts to stay.
6. *Grounded* means "having a foundation" or "made stable." We are to be rooted as a sturdy tree and founded as a temple with solid foundations.
7. We are rooted and grounded "in love." Love is the soil into which we are rooted, and the solid earth upon which we are founded. Unless our work and faith is rooted and grounded in love, it is no good.

Being rooted and grounded in love comes as a result of Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith.

8. The average Christian does not grasp the greatness of His salvation. We need to pray that all may comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth. Unless they do, they are liable to backslide.

Of course Christianity is not reduceable to certain mathematical dimensions — height, depth, length, breadth. This is a rhetorical expression used to express vividly the great fulness of our salvation.

9. To "know the love of Christ" is part of comprehending the breadth, length, height, and depth. This love of Christ actually passes knowledge. It cannot be described by words, or pictures, or human expression. This knowledge develops by long experience with Christ, by study of His Word, and by prayer. As we walk with Him, and repeatedly see His power and mercy, we come more and more to know the love that passes knowledge.
10. The clause "that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God," is coordinate with the clauses in 3:16, 18, being likewise introduced by *hina*. We have made this more evident in the text by changing the comma after *knowledge* to a semicolon. Note the outline of chapter three.
11. The thought that we may be filled unto all the fulness of God may be a bit staggering. (Concerning *fulness*, see the notes on 1:23.) However, the expression does not mean that we may expect to become like God in power and sinlessness.

However, we can, and need to be filled with all the fulness of sincerity, love of God, mercy, firmness for the right, kindness, etc., which God has provided for us to have. This degree of fulness is far beyond what most of us seek for. Too often we are content to play along the shore of God's sea of blessings. We have too low an opinion of what God can do for us, and what we can be and do. Oftentimes we do not want to launch out into the deep. We love the shallows where few demands are made upon our talents, will power, and energy.

### *Fact Questions*

167. What were Paul's four petitions for the Ephesians?
168. Paul prayed that God would grant the Ephesians to be strengthened according to what?
169. Through what are we strengthened with power?
170. What is the means through which Christ dwells in us?
171. In what are we to be rooted and grounded?
172. Name the four dimensions of the Christian faith in the order given.
173. What is it that passes knowledge?
174. To what degree are we to be filled?

### *Text (3:20, 21)*

**20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

### *Thought Questions (3:20-21)*

173. Who is it that is able to exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think?
174. How much can you think of for God to do? Can God do that much? Can He do more than that?
175. Is God's power available to us now, or will it only be available to us in the future life?
176. What is ascribed to God?
177. In what two areas is God glorified? How is He glorified in each?
178. How long shall glory be ascribed to God?

*Paraphrase*

To paraphrase this sublime doxology is almost like trying to beautify a pearl by painting it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Make it your own.

*Notes (3:20-21)*

1. This sublime doxology comes at the close of an exalted prayer. The doxology informs us in moving words that our glorious God is able to grant the marvelous requests stated in the prayer of 3:16-19.
2. The word *doxology* means a "word of glory, or an ascription of glory." This definition certainly described these verses.
3. God not only can do great things, but He can do exceeding abundantly (or beyond all measure) above all things which we can ask or think. We can think of great things for God to do. God can do much more than we ask or think that it is beyond all measure.
4. This unimaginable ability of God is "according to the power" that "doth energize itself" within us (Rotherham). God's power is working within us now. We do not have to wait until the future life to avail ourselves of it.
5. God is glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus. In the church, God is glorified as His saints praise Him and His saving grace. Also, God is glorified in the church because the very fact of its existence causes heavenly beings to glorify God for redeeming such a body unto Himself (Revelation 5:8-10).

God is glorified in Christ Jesus because Christ did always do His Father's will, and glorify His Father's name (John 17:4). And the pleasure of the Lord prospers in His (Christ's) hand (Isaiah 53:10).

6. This glory unto God is to continue "unto all the generations of the age of the ages" (Revised Version, margin). Here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, eternity is viewed not as one incomprehensibly endless period, but as a succession of ages, one after another, stretching as far as can be perceived, and then on beyond.

*Fact Questions*

175. How does this doxology fittingly close the prayer of 3:16-19?
176. Quote from memory the doxology and give its Scripture limitations.

## THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

### THE SECOND HALF OF EPHESIANS

The second half of Ephesians is mostly exhortation to us to fulfill our DUTIES in the church. There are some passages of doctrine included (for example, 5:25-32), but it is primarily an exhortation to duties.

The first three chapters told of the glorious DOCTRINES of the church: our priceless blessings, the marvelous mystery of Christ, and other doctrines.

It is never enough merely to know and believe the doctrines of the church. We must obey and live by that which we learn. Paul, after telling us of the doctrines of the church at length, now says, "Therefore," and goes on to exhort us to do certain things. Ours is a "therefore" religion. God has given us many favors. THEREFORE we have certain responsibilities in return.

#### *Previewing in Outline Form (4:1-6-20)*

#### II. DUTIES — 4:1-6:20.

- A. Keep the unity of the Spirit. 4:1-16.
  - 1. Walk worthily of your calling. 4:1-3.
  - 2. Unity of the Spirit described. 4:4-6.
  - 3. Unity is served by a diversity of gifts. 4:7-16.
- B. Walk as becometh saints. 4:17-5:20.
  - 1. Walk not as the Gentiles walk. 4:17-24.
  - 2. Seven practical exhortations. 4:25-5:2.
  - 3. Walk as children of light. 5:3-14.
  - 4. Walk as wise men. 5:15-20.
- C. Subject yourselves one to another. 5:21-6:9.
  - 1. The command. 5:21.
  - 2. Wives and husbands. 5:22-33.
  - 3. Children and fathers. 6:1-4.
  - 4. Slaves and masters. 6:5-9.
- D. Put on the whole armor of God. 6:10-20.
  - 1. Exhortation to be strengthened. 6:10-13.
  - 2. The armor described. 6:14-17.
  - 3. Exhortation to prayer. 6:18-20.

#### *Fact Questions*

- 177. What is the word that describes the contents of the second half of Ephesians?
- 178. What are the four duties (A, B, C, D) listed in the outline? Give the Scripture limitations of each.