

*THE BELIEVER'S
SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD*

The Epistle to the Ephesians

A Bible-Believing Study Guide

AV 1611 Bible Companion

**“To the praise of the glory of His grace”
Ephesians 1:6**

INSTRUCTOR'S EDITION

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The Christian's Place in God's Plan

Finding Our Place in the Church

Ephesians 3

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Value of a Mystery

1. Mysteries are always of great interest in the minds of people. The suspense of a "Who Done It" type mystery has captured the attention of people. Millions have been made in the motion picture industry because of mysteries. Magicians know how to mystify an audience with their tricks. People go away wondering, "How'd he do that?"
2. Mysteries are also included as a part of life. Thankfully, the Bible was written to explain and reveal the facts and truth behind those mysteries! The structure of the Old Testament purpose was a mystery even to those who carried out their instructions.
 - a. What was that pillar of cloud/fire in the wilderness?
 - b. Or how did those animal sacrifices work?
 - c. The Israelites would wonder what went on in the tabernacle behind the veil?
 - d. Even the prophets seemed to not understand much of what they predicted (i.e. Daniel 12:4-10).
 - e. Even Jesus used parables to teach and mystify His audiences. The only difference was that He WANTED them to come to Him for the answers.
3. Paul's concern in this chapter, deals with the mysteries of God. The word, "*mystery*" is mentioned three times in this chapter (vs 3,4,9). This word in the New Testament always means something that is unknown to unbelievers, but supposed to be understood and treasured by the people of God.

B. The Greater Value of Revelation

1. The whole book of Revelation is a mystery to those outside of Christ, but it is a revelation to those who know Christ (Rev 1:20). Paul put it this way, "*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: (to the unsaved, godliness is a great mystery – and then he goes ahead and explains it to the believers) God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*" (1 Tim 3:16). People look at Godliness and wonder, but believers rejoice!

C. Chapter 3 is all about what this unique thing called "the Church" is supposed to be doing in this world

1. It is important to understand that the things mentioned in chapter three are the outgrowth of what Paul said in chapter 2 regarding the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles in Christ as a Church.
2. That in itself was a mystery. But it was to be fully understood by every believer!

I. Lesson

A. The Calling of God's People (3:1-5)

1. God's Call is a Grip
 - a. Paul was in prison, a prisoner of Rome (vs 1). Twice in this epistle, Paul says that he is a prisoner (Eph 3:1; 4:1) and then calls himself an "*ambassador in bonds*" (Eph 6:20). His imprisonment at Rome happened because of his work for Christ. That story began in Acts 21 and 22.
 - b. But he was freer than any king
 - c. He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ – in His grip (Rom 6:16-18)
 - d. Paul was a minister (vs 2-5; note verse 7). Paul was given just such a revelation by God to minister to the Gentiles. He knew that he was to do this from the very early part of his Christian life (Acts 9:15; 26:13-18). Though God is "*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*" (Heb 13:8), God, down through the course of time, managed things differently. These time eras were called dispensations. Three of the main dispensations were the Patriarchal (time before the Law), Mosaic (time during the Law), and Grace or Ecclesiastical (time after the Law). Each of these times had certain conditions that were not present in the other dispensations which required different responses from both man and God.
2. God's call is for Others
 - a. People NOT like yourself – not like your family
 - b. Gentiles were filthy, wicked, ungodly – Paul was called to reach the Gentiles (2Tim 1:11)
3. God's call is because of God's grace, not our ability
4. God's call is Revelation

- a. Through the man of God
- b. From the written words of Scripture
- c. Beyond the Old Testament

B. The Work of God's People (3:6-12)

1. First, To bring sinners into God's family – make them equals
 - a. Ephesians 2:11-22 reveals that Christ's work on the cross actually reconciled Jews and Gentiles to each other and to God.
 - b. The mystery revealed to believing Gentiles that they can have a wonderful new relationship through Jesus Christ.
 - c. It shows that all believers (especially heathen Gentiles):
 - 1) Have a New Relationship to God (vs 6). Since Gentiles are included, they are fellow-heirs of what God has promised the Jews because of His covenant with Abraham (Gal 3:29).
 - 2) Have a New Power available to them (vs 7). This is the mighty resurrection power that gives us the ability to serve Christ in daily life and service.
 - 3) Have New Riches (vs 8, "*unsearchable riches of Christ*").
 - a) In vs 2:7, he called them "*exceeding riches*". There is no end to them!
 - b) In light of God's great riches, Paul claims himself to be, "*less than the least of all saints*". So unworthy of such riches! Paul considered himself insignificant (Acts 13:9); "*least of the apostles*" (1Cor 15:9); and later, chief of sinners). This goes to show that having an understanding of the deep truths of God's Word does not give a man a big head, it gives him a broken and contrite heart.
 - d. This is why the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19,20 is so important to the Church – no greater mandate!
2. The work we do is a POWERFUL work (3:7)
 - a. It works first in us – a proof for others to see
 - b. Then in others
 - c. We go and preach because it works (1Cor 1:17,18,22-24)
 - d. We don't do Christian works because we have abilities, but rather because it is gifted to us – Spiritual Gifts
 - e. Letting God work through you is THRILLING
 - 1) To the believer, we experience and promote the unsearchable riches of Christ (Philp 3:10)
 - 2) Preach RICHES, not poverty
3. Make all men know the fellowship of this mystery
 - a. So that even the demons and angels would see in us and in our church just how wise God is! (vs 9,10).
 - 1) The church should teach the "*principalities and powers in heavenly places*" about the mystery of God. This mystery of the church was something that was hidden from the time of Creation and throughout the Old Testament. Even Satan knows the Bible, understood *that* Christ would come, *how* He would come, *when* He would come, *how* He would come, *where* He would come and *why* He would come, but did not know about God's plan for the church. Had Satan known the far-reaching results of the Cross, he, no doubt, would have altered his plans against Christ.
 - b. And so the whole universe sees how great His designs and purposes are
 - 1) So great is the work and mystery of the church that God calls it "*the manifold wisdom of God*". It is like God said, "I'll show you something unbelievable like you have never seen before!" When sin was pushing the world apart, God was using the church to pull it back together to Himself.
4. All this makes us bold – very bold as believers!
 - a. **It Should be Important to Christians Today** (vs 11-13).
 - b. The reason many churches are weak and ineffective is because they do not understand what they have in Christ. They confuse their people as to what "*the eternal purpose*" of the church actually is.
 - c. Many think of the church to be much like a society rather than a God ordained institution.
 - d. All of God's divine resources are available to those who sincerely want to do His will and help Him accomplish His purposes on earth.
 - e. If church is important, it will be attended, supported, prayed for and spoken highly of. If it isn't, then

people will neglect it, but in neglecting it, they snub their nose at this mystery that God kept secret and is so important to Him.

C. The Struggles of God's People (3:13-19)

1. Tribulations for the Christian
 - a. We will suffer persecution (2Tim 3:12)
 - b. We need trials and afflictions (1Pet 1:6,7; James 1:2,3)
 - c. We grow only in the fires of troubles (Job 23:10)
 - d. Paul went through so much, and he was glad to do it
 - e. It encouraged other believers to be ready to go through troubles
2. Discouragements to Christians
 - a. People don't even have to go through troubles to get discouraged
 - b. All they have to do is hear bad news
3. Struggles drive us to PRAY – not work harder, but pray harder!
 - a. To your knees
 - b. To God the Father
 - c. Praying specifically for
 - 1) To strengthen us inside, not primarily in health or physical strength (vs 16).
 - a) He prays that the “*inner man*” might have spiritual strength, which, in turn, leads to a deeper relationship with Christ.
 - b) Whatever strength a Christian has is because of God's Spirit in him.
 - c) Note Acts 1:8. God does not give out of His riches, but “*according to his riches*”, which is a far greater thing. If a billionaire gave you €10.00, he gave you out of his riches. If he gives you a million euros, he gave you “*according to his riches*” – *according to his wealth*.
 - d) This power is available for the “*inner man*” or that spiritual part of man where God dwells and works (not normally for the outer man). Before salvation, the inner man was dead in sin (Eph 2:1). At salvation, he was made alive.
 - (i) This inner man can see (Ps 34:8); hear (Matt 13:9); taste (Psa 34:8); and feel (Acts 17:27).
 - (ii) He also must be exercised (I Tim 4:7,8) and cleansed (Psa 51:7) and fed (Matt 4:4).
 - (iii) Though the outer man grows old and perishes, the inward man can be renewed spiritually (2Cor 4:16-18).
 - 2) That Christ would dwell freely and dominantly in our hearts (vs 17).
 - a) Jesus seems to only be allowed to dwell in people's heads, in books, in church, but rarely in people's hearts
 - b) To dwell in our hearts is to fill up our hearts as His home – make it just the way He likes it
 - c) Paul uses three words to convey spiritual depth: “*dwell*”, “*rooted*” and “*grounded*”. Each term speaks of contentment, stability and permanence. That is how the Christian should be in Christ, no matter what the trials of life bring.
 - 3) That we would be stable and strong in our love (vs 18,19a).
 - a) Love For God
 - b) Love For each other
 - c) Love For souls
 - d) Never quitting! They are worth it! Your home is worth it! All people are worth it – the value of just one souls is so worth it!
 - e) What Paul really states here is that he wants believers to learn all they can know about God. Then he adds a fourth dimension: “*the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.*” Unlike the others, this dimension cannot be measured.
 - 4) That we would actually comprehend the love of God
 - a) Four-dimensional reality
 - 5) That we would be full of God instead of the world, and of the devil (vs 19b). Nature abhors a vacuum. That is why Christ must fill the emptiness that is created when sin is gone. The believer should strive to live a Spirit filled life (Eph 5:18).

D. The Praises of God's People (3:20-21)

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, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

1. Unto God (Ps 73:25)
 - a. Not the saints, or Mary, or the Church, or the angels
 - b. But all our attention needs to be on God
 - c. Oh that God was in the centre of all our thoughts
 - d. Too many people give the devil their thoughts, and their focus
2. Be Glory (Rom 11:36; Gal 1:5)
 - a. Praise, awe, radiance, reflection of God's light, Honour, majesty, worship!
 - b. All of it belongs to God (1Tim 1:17; Rev 5:13)
 - c. Because of His plans being the best plans – God is SO right!
 - d. Jesus just did His Father's will
 - e. If only we were that committed to God's will!
3. First in the Church
 - a. If every Church truly glorified God, the world would reflect that glory
 - 1) The world is dark because the church has little light
 - 2) Don't wait for the world to glorify God
 - b. Jesus saved us to be a part of a local NT kind of a church that truly, simply, but powerfully honours and glorifies God
 - 1) Not through morbid chants and sombre mumblings
 - 2) Not through swinging on the chandeliers
 - c. How to glorify God in a church
 - 1) Through obedience to God's word
 - 2) Through a clean life (Ps 96:9)
 - 3) Through song – passionate singing
 - 4) Through testimony – not being ashamed of any opportunity to give honour to the name of Jesus and of God!
 - 5) Through lifting up Jesus everywhere
 - 6) Through loving Him – never swaying your heart from love and worship of Him alone
 - 7) Through saving a soul from hell
4. For ever – constantly (Ps 34:1)
 - a. In everything, bless Him (1Thes 5:18)
 - b. For everything bless Him (Eph 5:20)
 - c. We will find it easy in eternity – make it a sacrifice of thanksgiving now
5. All because He is able!
 - a. To save to the uttermost
 - b. To keep us from falling (Jude 1:24)
 - c. To give you sanity and stability
 - d. To give us an inheritance incorruptible (John 14:1-3)
 - e. To do more than we could ever imagine
 - f. This is an invitation to ask BIG of God in prayer!
6. And because it is a power that ALREADY is at work in us (Philp 1:6)

II. Conclusion

Ephesians Chapter Three Quiz

For Credit in the *Cork Bible Institute* Study Programme

STUDENT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

SCORE: _____

1. In the New Testament, a mystery means what? _____

2. What mystery is being revealed in Ephesians chapter 3? _____
3. Can a person escape the call of God for their life unscathed? _____
4. Circle any of the following that are NOT true concerning troubles in a Christian's life:
 - 1) Every Christian experiences persecutions and troubles
 - 2) Every Believer NEEDS afflictions
 - 3) Troubles and fiery trials can hinder our growth
 - 4) Paul had a hard time going through his troubles
 - 5) Troubles in a Christian's life help other believers go through their trials
5. Define "glory" as in "Unto him be glory in the church"
6. Briefly describe how to glorify God as a believer: _____
