

STUDY 3
Ephesians 3:1-21
Paul an apostle to the gentiles

Q. How do you treat others when you are dealing with stress or trials in your life? Give examples.

Read 3:1-21 and as you read, circle the words you think are important. (Discuss your reasons afterwards).

1 For this reason I, Paul, **the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--**

2 Surely you have heard about **the administration of God's grace** that was given to me for you,³ that is, **the mystery made known** to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,⁵ **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.⁶ **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.

7 **I became a servant** of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me **through the working of his power.**

8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: **to preach to the Gentiles** the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ **and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

10 **His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,** ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose **which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

12 **In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

13 I ask you, **therefore, not to be discouraged** because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

14 **For this reason I kneel before the Father,** ¹⁵ from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

16 **I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,**¹⁷ **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.** And I pray **that you**, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ **may have power**, together with all the saints, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,**¹⁹ **and to know this love** that surpasses knowledge-- **that you may be filled** to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 **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, ²¹ to him **be glory** in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Q. Read verses 1-6 again. What is the mystery made known? (v3)

Q. Why do you think Paul understands his mission to the Gentiles as a gift of God's grace? (v7,8)

Q. What will be the vehicle which will make known this wisdom of God to the nations? (v10)

Q. What is the great benefit to God's people through what Jesus has done? (v12)

Paul has gone to great lengths to explain to his readers that he has been given a special mission by God to lift the lid off this mystery. Although he is the least likely candidate for the job (possibly b/c he once persecuted the church of God), he has been shown grace by being given this task to preach to the Gentiles.

Q. Do you think our call to be involved in ministry is also an act of grace? Why or Why not?

Paul writes this letter from prison, most probably a consequence of preaching Christ within a Jewish context. In verse 13 therefore he declares that he is suffering for their glory, namely for the cause of the gentile inclusion. The way Paul deals with suffering for his people is a living testament to the Christian community of how God's grace has impacted his life. Rather than wallow in self pity or accuse others for his situation, Paul is moved to prayer in verses 14 -19 and the content of his prayers reveals where his heart truly lies.

Fill in the gaps:

¹⁶ I pray that...he may strengthen you...¹⁷ so that _____

And I pray that you...¹⁸ may have power... to grasp _____

¹⁹ and to know this love...that you may be _____

Q. How would you describe these prayers? What or who is the subject of his prayers?

It is an act of the Spirit of God when a Christian man or woman can pray so wholeheartedly for the well being of others when they themselves are in such distress. Here in the final verses Paul reveals something of his heart for others. He is a man of God who continues to spur his fellow believers on, even though he has been stung by difficulties, loneliness and humiliation of imprisonment.

Q. What do you think spurs the heart of Paul, from the passages we have read in this study?

1. Spend some time praying that we will realise how blessed we are to be saved by God's grace.

2. Pray that our eyes will be opened to see that our service to God's people is actually an act of God's grace to us.

3. What's your ministry...give thanks to God for sharing it with you!

4. Pray that we can continue to be focussed on others even when we are in the midst of trials or persecutions.