



The Epistle to the Ephesians

CHAPTER THREE

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—”

I. BOUND TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

- “*For this reason*” points back to what was stated in chapter 2 (reconciliation in Christ).
 - Paul uses this phrase again in **Eph. 3:14** to circle back around to his original point.
 - He also used the phrase in **Eph. 1:15** (ESV) and uses it again in **Eph. 4:1**.
- Paul refers to himself as “*the prisoner of Christ*” for the Gentiles.
 - If our timeline is correct, he was specifically imprisoned because of his ministry to the Gentiles (**Acts 22:17-23**). The Jews hated, arrested, and sought to kill Paul for emphasizing the equality between them and the Gentiles (**Acts 21:28-32, 22:21-22, 23:12-21**).
 - If Paul is referring to his literal imprisonment here, the good was accomplished on Ephesians’ behalf through his difficult circumstances (**Rom. 8:28**).
 - Paul was “*the prisoner*” of Christ in the sense that he was bound to preach (**Eph. 6:19-20; Phile. 1, 9, 13; 1 Cor. 9:16, ISV; Acts 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:8**), specifically to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:15, 26:15-18; Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:11-16, 2:9**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,”

II. THE BEGINNING OF A DIGRESSION.

- After describing himself as prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles, Paul enters a digression focused on his ministry that continues through v.13.
- By saying “*if indeed...*” Paul is not expressing doubt whether they had heard of his ministry or God’s grace. Instead, he takes it for granted (assumes) they understand this already.
 - Paul uses the phrase “*if indeed*” numerous times throughout his letters and it never appears to convey doubt (Eph. 4:21; 2 Cor. 5:3; Gal. 3:4; Col. 1:23).
 - A similar thing also occurs in 1 Pet. 2:1-2.
- Paul’s commission to preach the gospel occurred by the grace of God, which was given to him on behalf of the Gentiles.
 - Paul emphasized God’s grace to the Ephesians reminding them of how salvation was made possible (Eph. 2:4-9), while also recognizing that his stewardship as minister was also directly a product of God’s grace towards him (Rom. 12:3, 6; 15:15; Eph. 4:7).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”

III. BY REVELATION, THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (cont).

- Paul’s ministry was the direct result of God revealing to Him exactly what he needed to preach.
 - Although Paul did not accompany the apostles during Christ's ministry, which was a qualification for apostleship (**Acts 1:21-22**), Jesus Himself appointed Paul to the apostleship (**Acts 9:15**).
 - Paul told the Corinthians that he was sent by Christ Himself to "preach the gospel" (**1 Cor. 1:17**), because he – like the other apostles – possessed the “*mind of Christ*” to impart the wisdom of God (**1 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 1:11-12; Matt. 28:18-20**), as guided by the Holy Spirit (**John 14:26; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 2:6-16**).
- Broadly speaking, the “*mystery*” is the gospel message itself (**Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 3:16, KJV**).
 - Even more broadly, the mystery is Christ (**Col. 1:26-27**).
 - Contextually, the “*mystery*” is the inclusion of Gentiles as one with the Jews in receiving equal opportunity and rights in the salvation offered by Christ (**Eph. 2**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”

III. BY REVELATION, THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (cont).

- Paul wrote down and recorded what God revealed to him.
 - He had *“briefly written already”* about this mystery earlier in the epistle (**Eph. 1:9-10, 2:8**); he is now expounding more fully on the revelation (uncovering/disclosure) of this mystery.
- The word *“revelation”* simply means to be uncovered (**Rev. 1:1-3**).
 - This revelation was once a mystery (**Eph. 3:3, 5; Rom. 16:25**) but is no longer a mystery (**Eph. 1:9**).
- This revelation from God is called:
 - *“the mystery”* (**3:3, 9**),
 - *“the mystery of Christ”* (**3:4**),
 - *“the gospel”* (**3:6**),
 - *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (**3:8**), and
 - *“the manifold wisdom of God”* (**3:10**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),”

III. BY REVELATION, THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (cont).

- What Paul taught was not impossible to understand. It was simply a message once hidden from man but now revealed (**Gal. 1:11-12**). It is revealed to us when we “*read*” God’s word.
- This mystery and the Bible as a whole can be understood.
 - If not, that means God is unjust by requiring obedience to a revelation that is impossible to understand, directly contradicting the words of Christ (**Matt. 7:21; John 12:48, 8:32**).
 - Mankind CAN understand God’s word; the problem is not everyone desires true understanding (compare **Psalm 25:14** to **Matt. 13:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:12-14**).
 - When we do not understand God’s word, the problem rests with man, not God.

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,”

III. BY REVELATION, THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (cont).

- Paul continues his digression by emphasizing how the mystery was purposely hidden (Col. 1:26a; 1 Pet. 1:10-11), but *“has now been revealed”* through the apostles and prophets (Col. 1:26b; 1 Pet. 1:12).
 - The source of the revelation is *“the Spirit”* (John 16:13).
- The Gentiles being accepted as equals in the Kingdom had been made known in that it had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 11:10, 49:6, 60:1-3, 65:1; Hos. 1:10, 2:23). However, this message was spoken to them by God in a way they did not understand. In this sense, the mystery *“was not made known to the sons of men.”*
- Contextually, these verses provide the answer to what mystery Paul is specifically discussing – Gentiles can be fellow heirs, members, and partakers in Christ and His body, i.e. the gospel is for all (Gal. 3:26-29).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,”

III. BY REVELATION, THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (cont).

- A distinction is made here between three categories of inspired people:
 - “*Sons of men*” – Old Testament prophets.
 - This phrase is unique to the Old Testament, save for one appearance in **Mark 3:28**. The phrase frequently appears in the poetic books of the Old Testament.
 - “*Apostles*” – The original twelve apostles of Jesus, plus Paul and Matthias.
 - Two apostles in specific (Peter and Paul) were responsible for revealing Gentiles could be fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promises of Christ (**Acts 10:34-35; 11:18; 15:12, 15-17**).
 - “*Prophets*” – New Testament prophets (**Acts 11:27-28, 13:1, 15:32, 21:7-10; Eph. 2:20, 4:11**).
 - New Testament prophets carried an enormous responsibility in revealing the mind of God to first century Christians and edifying the church (**1 Cor. 14:1-4, 22, 28-31**) and convincing non-believers that God is who He claims to be (**1 Cor. 14:24**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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.”

IV. PAUL'S MINISTRY.

- Paul reaffirms how his ministry was directly a result of God's grace (**Gal. 1:15-16a**), which occurred by the “*effective working power*” of God.
 - “*Effective*” means action, productive work, activity. In the New Testament, this word always refers to superhuman activity (Strong).
 - **Gal. 2:8** conveys the same thought that Paul is expressing in this passage using similar language.
 - A similar expression is also used in **Eph. 1:19-20** to describe God's power on display in resurrecting Christ and placing Him on His throne in Heaven.
- Paul identified himself as a “*minster*” (**1 Tim. 1:12**), or servant, not in a position of rank or office.
 - Paul's ministry is different than anyone else's today because he was “*made*” a minister, showing God's direct involvement in appointing Paul to his inspired position (**Acts 9:17, 20; Gal. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:5**).
 - Paul's ministry was one which required work and service (**Col. 1:24-25, 29**). He did not view the provision of God's grace as an opportunity to neglect his duties as a servant of Christ and for the souls of men (**1 Cor. 15:10**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery,”

IV. PAUL’S HUMILITY.

- Paul’s humility (**James 4:6**) is on full display in this text.
 - Paul considered himself not only “*less than the least*” of the apostles but less than the least “*of all the saints.*” He considered himself less than even you and me!
- Paul’s lowliness of mind (**Phil. 2:3; Mark 9:35**) was due to him not forgetting his former condition.
 - He remembered how he once persecuted and wreaked havoc of the church (**1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6; Acts 8:3**).
 - He remembered he was a former blasphemer (**1 Tim. 1:12-13**).
 - He remembered how he was the chief of all sinners (**1 Tim. 1:15-16**).
- God extending his grace to Paul led to a two-fold compulsion: “*I should preach*” and “*make all see*” (bring to light, ESV) the fellowship of the mystery.

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery,”

IV. PAUL’S HUMILITY (cont).

- All who act upon God’s grace should desire to spread the gospel and share in the fellowship of the mystery of the gospel (**Rom. 11:11-12, 15-16**).
- The unveiling of the mystery is describing as bringing forth light (**2 Cor. 4:3-5**).
 - The scriptures provide light (**Psalms 119:105, 18:28**).
 - Obedience to the scriptures cause us to be identified as “*enlightened*” (**Heb. 6:4**).
 - Christ Himself is the source of all spiritual light (**John 1:1-9, 8:12; 1 John 1:5-7**).
 - Christ’s followers are the secondary source of light to the world (**Matt. 5:14; Rev. 1:20**).
- In this text, light shines forth through Paul’s stewardship in the gospel.
 - Although Paul was specifically commissioned to bring light to the Gentiles, making them see the mystery (**Acts 13:47**), the passage shows that “*all*” people CAN see (understand) the mystery – all can become enlightened.

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“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, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery,”

V. “UNSEARCHABLE” RICHES.

- For a third time in this epistle, Paul refers to spiritual “*riches*” from God available in Christ (**Eph. 1:7, 2:7**).
 - The “*riches of Christ*” found in the gospel are “*unsearchable*” because they cannot be traced out, cannot be explored, and are past finding out (Strong).
 - The Greek word translated as “*unsearchable*” only appears one other time in the New Testament (**Rom. 11:33**).
- To human reasoning, the wealth and riches in Christ are past fully understanding, both because God has not revealed everything (**Deut. 29:29**) and because we are unable to fully comprehend it (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;”

VI. CHRIST, THE CREATOR.

- Paul states that God “*created all things through*” Jesus Christ; all things owe their origin to Him.
 - All things were made by Christ and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:1-3; Gen 1:26).
 - Jesus is the “*firstborn*” (first in rank, not literally born first) over all creation (Col. 1:15).
 - “*Firstborn*” indicates that Jesus is supreme over all creatures, not that He is a created being. It refers to the firstborn in position and not in time (Jer. 31:9; Gen. 48:14).
 - Col. 1:16 explains Col. 1:15 – everything was created by Jesus and for Jesus – He is supreme; He is God.
 - The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, obviously suggesting Christ is not a created being (John 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8; Isa. 9:6).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

*“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,”*

VII. THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD MADE KNOWN.

- “*To the intent*” indicates what was just stated (Paul’s ministry) exists for the purpose of making the manifold (varied / diverse) wisdom of God known.
 - He adds that this responsibility not only rested in his hands but also lies with “*the church*” (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - Not only is God’s wisdom manifold, so too is His grace (1 Pet. 4:10).
- Although the church, through preaching the gospel, makes known God’s wisdom, that is not Paul’s point in this text. Contextually, the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the church to principalities and powers (supernatural beings such as angels) in the heavenly places (1 Cor. 4:9).
 - I think it is debatable whether Eph. 1:21 refers to supernatural beings or earthly beings in positions of authority. In this text, however, there is no doubt Paul refers to supernatural beings because these principalities and powers are identified as being located “*in*” the heavenly places.
 - Whereas angels once did not understand the mystery (1 Pet. 1:12), they now can see the manifold wisdom of God due to the apostles’ work in the first century and the church’s work while the earth continues to exist (Eph. 3:21).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”

VII. THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD MADE KNOWN (cont).

- The manifestation of God’s wisdom via the church was part of God’s “*eternal purpose*,” or plan (**Eph. 1:7-9**), and was accomplished through Christ.
- The church was not a substitute for an earthly kingdom because the Jews rejected Christ, nor was the church some stopgap measure for another kingdom to be established upon Christ’s second coming, as some contend. The church serves a part of God’s “*eternal purpose*.”
 - The premillennialists argue that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world are not the same events, but the Holy Spirit says otherwise in **1 Cor. 15:23-26**.
 - When Christ returns, He will not set foot on earth. Instead, the dead in Christ will rise from the graves, then those who are still alive will follow, and both will meet Jesus “*in the air*” (**1 Thess. 4:16-17**). How could Jesus return to establish a kingdom and reign on earth without ever setting foot on the earth?
 - **2 Pet. 3:3-4, 10** shows how when “*the day of the Lord*” (Jesus’s second coming) occurs, the earth and everything in it will be burned up. How could Jesus possibly reign 1,000 years on earth when the earth has been destroyed?

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

*“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,
in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.”*

VIII. ACCESS TO GOD WITH BOLDNESS AND CONFIDENCE.

- Through Christ and our faith in Him, we can access the Father with “*boldness*” & “*confidence*.”
 - “*Boldness*” indicates freedom, frankness, and openness of speech.
 - This word appears frequently throughout the book of Hebrews (Heb. 3:6; 4:16; 10:19-22, 35).
 - The word “*confidence*” expresses a similar thought indicating a state of assurance.
 - This boldness and confidence that Christians can have is not a product of anything within ourselves but is a product of God’s work (2 Cor. 3:4-5).
- Boldness and confidence toward God is not rash nor presumptive.
 - Our access to God is a gift of God’s grace, of which we are undeserving. Therefore, we approach God with humility recognizing our smallness and God’s greatness (Psalm 8:4a). Nevertheless, we should never be afraid to approach God while we abide in Him.
 - Our access to God is conditioned upon our faith in and obedience to Christ (Rom. 5:1-2).
 - Sin (unless repented of) will turn God’s face from us & remove our access to Him (Isa. 59:1-2).

The Hidden Mystery of the Gospel Now Revealed (3:1-13)

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

IX. DO NOT LOSE HEART.

- The Ephesians were concerned for Paul (**Eph. 6:21-22**). As result, Paul was afraid they might “lose heart.”
 - “*Lose heart*” means utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted (Thayer); to be (bad or) weak, i.e. (by implication) to fail (in heart) – faint, be weary (Strong).
- Paul’s tribulations may have appeared to the Ephesians as an indication of failure in his mission. Yet, quite contrary to failure, Paul’s tribulations were an indication of the Ephesians’ “*glory*.”
 - Paul wanted the Ephesians to focus on the “*glory*” his sufferings would bring them rather than the pain that it would personally bring him (**1 Cor. 4:8-13; Phil. 2:17-18**).
 - Paul refused to lose heart because he knew he was bringing life to the lost (**2 Cor. 1:6-7; 4:1, 7-12, 16**).
 - Due to the boldness and confidence Paul had in God through his faith in Christ, Paul recognized no tribulation could separate him from Christ (**Rom. 8:35**). He also recognized the power brought about by his sufferings (**2 Cor. 12:9-10; Rom. 5:3-4; Col. 1:24**).
- All Christians will reap a harvest of “*glory*” if we do not lose heart (**Gal. 6:9; Rom. 8:18**).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”*

I. THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S PRAYER.

- God's grace in offering salvation to all men, Christ replacing enmity with peace, the unifying power of the cross, and equality in the household of God prompted Paul to pray.
- Paul states that he “*bowed his knees*” to the Father in prayer.
 - “To bow knees is one of those great symbols of earnest, deep emotion associated with prayer. In bowing down, the one beseeching God's favor recognizes his own weaknesses and subjects himself to God” (Caldwell).
- In this passage, I believe “*bow my knees*” is a figurative expression to describe Paul praying. However, it being figurative only works because kneeling is indicative of how God's people can pray.
 - “The bowing of the knees was so universally the accompaniment of prayer that to bow the knees meant to pray. This was an emphatic way of denoting prayer” (Lipscomb).
 - **1 Tim. 2:8** makes mention of “*lifting up holy hands*” in prayer.
 - I believe this is figurative. However, the figure of hands lifted in prayer only works because the figure is representative of what prayer can look like (1 Kgs. 8:22-23, 54; 2 Chr. 6:12-13; Ezra 9:5-6; Ps. 28:2, 141:2; Lam. 2:19).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”*

I. THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S PRAYER (cont).

- Kneeling in prayer appears throughout the OT (Ezra 9:5; 1 Kgs. 8:54; 2 Chr. 6:13; Ps. 95:6, 13:2; Dan. 6:10); it also appears throughout the NT (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40); Paul did it regularly (Acts 20:36, 21:5).
 - TO BE CLEAR, I AM NOT SAYING WE MUST ALWAYS KNEEL IN PRAYER, NOR AM I SAYING WE MUST ALWAYS LIFT OUR HANDS WHEN WE PRAY.
 - Standing in prayer is approved (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11).
 - Sitting in prayer also appears throughout the Old Testament (Neh. 1:4; 1 Kgs. 19:1-4; 1 Chr. 17:16).
 - I am simply stating that if we really believe approved examples are binding (Phil. 4:9), then we should, at least on occasion, follow the examples in the New Testament of God's people bowing their knees when praying.

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”*

I. THE BEGINNING OF PAUL'S PRAYER (cont).

- Some will contend, “But there is no command to kneel/lift our hands/etc. when we pray.”
 - Neither is there a direct command to use unleavened bread and grape juice for the Lord's Supper, only an approved example. We are commanded (“*this do*” [1 Cor. 11:25]) to partake of the Lord's Supper, but we are never actually commanded to use unleavened bread and grape juice.
 - Likewise, we are commanded to pray (1 Thess. 5:17). We are never expressly commanded to bow, lift our hands, etc. when we pray, but the approved examples in the New Testament show that we ought to do so at least occasionally.
- **MY REASON FOR BRINGING THIS UP:** If we are not bowing, lifting up our hands in praise/prayer, etc., then we need to be careful about singing some of the hymns that mention us doing so because how can we mean what we sing when we are not doing it (John 4:24; Col. 3:16)?

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”*

II. THE OBJECT OF PAUL'S PRAYER.

- The question is sometimes asked, “Are we authorized to pray to Jesus? He is God after all.”
 - Jesus is God, but He is not God the Father (**John 1:1**) to whom Paul prayed.
 - Here, Paul prayed “*to the Father*.” This is consistent with the teachings of Christ (**Matt. 6:5-9; John 14:13-14, 15:16**) and is consistent with what Paul taught (**Col. 3:17; 1 Tim. 2:5**).
 - We have one possible exception with Stephen in **Acts 7:59**. However, I would contend that Stephen was not actually praying but just crying out to the Savior.
- Paul states the “*whole family*” in heaven and earth is named after God.
 - Carrying the name of God indicates we derive our origin from Him (**Gen. 1:26; Acts 17:28**).
 - God is the source of all human life, but throughout this epistle Paul emphasizes the spiritual family of Christ (**Eph. 2:18-19, 3:6, 4:4-6**).
 - The spiritual family of God not only includes the church (**Eph. 2:19-22**) but also includes heavenly beings (**Col. 1:20; Luke 15:8-10**).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

*“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,
to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,”*

III. DESIRE FOR STRENGTH IN THE INNER MAN.

- The word "*riches*" denotes abundance. The idea here is that God could provide all necessary strength for increasing the stability of the Ephesians' inward persons.
- Notice Paul wanted the Ephesians to have inward strength, not outward strength.
 - The inward man is the center and seat of spiritual life, the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors (Thayer).
 - The inward man is the spiritual part of man, including our intellect, emotions, humility, and morality (1 Pet. 3:3-4).
- Though the outward man grows old and weakens, the inward man stays strong through the power of the Spirit and His revealed word (2 Cor. 4:1-2, 16).
- Inward strength increases as our knowledge of and obedience to God's word increases (Col. 1:9-11).
- The Holy Spirit is the source of strength for the inward man (John 6:63).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”

IV. A DWELLING PLACE FOR CHRIST THROUGH FAITH.

- Paul prayed that Christ would “*dwell*” in the Ephesians hearts through faith.
 - Although I believe this epistle provides repeated evidence of the Holy Spirit dwelling personally (literally) in believers (**Eph. 1:13-14, 2:22**), I believe this reference to the Spirit dwelling in believers’ hearts refers to Christians allowing the word of God to dwell in them figuratively (**Col. 3:16**), because that is consistent with the first 13 verses of the chapter.
- We abide in Christ and He abides in us by our faith and obedience (**John 15:4, 7; 1 John 3:24a**).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”

V. “ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE.”

- “*Rooted*” – to render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded (Thayer).
 - “Firmly established - as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts, as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth” (Barnes).
- “*Grounded*” – lay the foundation, ground, settle (Strong).
 - “The word is taken from architecture, where a firm foundation is laid, and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis” (Barnes).
- Paul uses a similar expression in **Col. 2:6-7**.
- The result of a person taking Christ and His word into his heart is his faith becomes rooted and grounded in love. Love is not itself the root or foundation but the condition upon which growth occurs.

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”

V. “ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE” (cont).

- Faith (and obedience) without love is useless (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
 - In fact, love is greater than faith (1 Cor. 13:13).
 - A Christian's faith is only satisfactory when motivated by & working in love (Gal. 5:6; Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:13-14).
- The church is to build itself up in love (Eph. 4:16).
- Love is arguably the most defining characteristic of Christianity (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-11; Matt. 22:37-39; Rom. 13:8-10).
 - Is it not strange then that so many Christians, instead of being filled with love are filled with jealousy, contempt, anger, strife, etc.?
 - Such sinful attitudes only prove that God is no longer dwelling in them (1 John 4:12-21).
 - Unfortunately, in Rev. 2:4 we see how the Ephesians left their “*first love*” roughly 30 years after receiving this letter.

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

VI. COMPREHENDING WHAT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

- Paul prayed the Ephesians would understand the “*width and length and depth and height*” of Christ’s love.
 - What is fascinating here is Paul essentially prays that the Ephesians would understand what is, by his own admission, impossible to fully understand (“*the love of Christ ... passes knowledge*”)!
- He did not pray for only a select few to comprehend the Lord’s love for them. Instead, he prayed for the Ephesians and “*all the saints*” to realize Christ’s love for them. This comprehension would only be possible if the Ephesians were rooted and grounded in love themselves (v.17).
 - When love abounds in us, we fill ourselves with Christ and His righteous fruits (**Phil. 1:9-11**).
 - Christ represents the fullness of God (**Col. 2:9; John 1:14-16**). When we allow the love of Christ to rule over our hearts, we fill ourselves with the fullness of God.
 - When downtrodden and burdened by this world and its troubles, how easy it can be (even for saints) to forget the simple truth that “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so” (**John 15:9, 3:16**)!

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

VI. COMPREHENDING WHAT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE (cont).

- How wide is the love of Christ?
 - The love of Christ is as wide (broad) as the earth itself because it embraces everyone of all ages, genders, languages, skin colors, etc. who are willing to submit to Him (Heb. 2:9, 5:9).
- To what lengths will the love of Christ go?
 - To the end; to death (John 13:1, 15:9-13).
- To what depths will the love of Christ go?
 - To incredibly painful depths (Isa. 53:1-7).
- What, or where, is the height of Christ's love?
 - In Heaven itself (John 17:24-26, 14:1-3).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

VI. COMPREHENDING WHAT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE (cont).

- There "seems" to be a slight contradiction here in expressing a wish to know what cannot be known, or in a desire that they should understand that which cannot be understood. But it is the language of a man whose heart was full to overflowing. He had a deep sense of the love of Christ, and he expressed a wish that they should understand it. Suddenly he has such an apprehension of it, that he says it is indeed infinite. No one can attain to a full view of it. It had no limit. It was unlike anything which had ever been evinced before. It was love which led the Son of God to become incarnate; to leave the heavens: to be a man of sorrows; to be reviled and persecuted; to be put to death in the most shameful manner - on a cross. Who could understand that? Where else had there been anything like that? What was there with which to compare it? What was there by which it could be illustrated? And how could it be fully understood? Yet "something" of it might be seen, known, felt; and the apostle desired that as far as possible they should understand that great love which the Lord Jesus had manifested for a dying world (Barnes).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

VII. AN EXCEEDINGLY AND ABUNDANTLY POWERFUL GOD.

- Paul here acknowledges that there is no limit to the power of God. He can do more than we could ever think or ask of Him.
 - “*able to do*” – if we think it or ask it, God can do it.
 - “*above*” – not only can God do it, but He can do more than we think or ask.
 - “*abundantly above*” – in fact, he can do far more than we think or ask.
 - “*exceedingly abundantly above*” – not only can God do far more than we think or ask, it takes zero effort for Him to do things that we are incapable of comprehending.
 - “*all*” – it’s not that God can do greater than a few things we can think of, but He is able to do immeasurably above ALL things that we ask or think.
- Just as the fullness of Christ’s love is ultimately beyond our mortal comprehension, so too is the power of God (Luke 18:18-27).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

VII. AN EXCEEDINGLY AND ABUNDANTLY POWERFUL GOD. (cont).

- The same power of God that did the impossible in raising Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20) is working in Christians.
- How does God's power work “in” us?
 - God's power works in us when do His good work (Col. 1:28-29).
 - God's power works in us through faith (1 Pet. 1:3-5).
 - God's power raises us from death (Rom. 6:3-4).
 - God's power grants us strength in our hearts through the word of Christ (Eph. 6:10, 3:16-16; Col. 3:16).
 - God's power works in us via the Holy Spirit during prayer (Rom. 8:11, 26-27).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

VII. AN EXCEEDINGLY AND ABUNDANTLY POWERFUL GOD (cont).

- Since God is so great and powerful, He is to be glorified *“in the church.”*
 - God works His power in us for His glory and not our own (**Eph. 2:8-9**), of which He is most deserving (**Rom. 11:33-36**).
 - Just as the church is responsible for making known the manifold wisdom of God (**Eph. 3:10**), the source of the glorification of God is also the church (**Rom. 15:5-6**).
 - Glory will be brought to God via the church *“to all generations, forever and ever”* (**Matt. 6:13, 16:18**; see also **Phil. 2:10-11**; **Psalms 45:17**; **Rev. 5:13**).

Paul's Prayer for the Church (3:14-21)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

VII. AN EXCEEDINGLY AND ABUNDANTLY POWERFUL GOD (cont).

- Glory is used in two senses in the latter part of **Eph. 3**.
 - It signifies the supreme nature of God showing His power, grace, and perfection (**v.16**).
 - In this sense, man has nothing to do with giving God glory. He possesses this glory and man should recognize it and be humbled by it.
 - It refers to the praise and honor we should ascribe to God because of His greatness and dominion over us (**v.21**).
 - In this sense, glory must never be ascribed to man (**Psalms 115:1**).
 - “Honor, renown; glory, an especially divine quality, the unspoken manifestation of God, splendor” (Strong).
 - “So as to honor God, to promote his glory (among men)” (Thayer).
- Our lips should continually ascribe all glory to God (**Heb. 13:15**).
 - We must, however, not only glorify not only in our speech but, more importantly, in our actions (**Heb. 13:16; Matt. 5:14-16; 1 John 3:18**).