

To God Be Glory In The Church

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Text: Ephesians 3:1-21

Introduction:

I. Seized

- A. “Biblical preaching tries to capture the perspective of the text lest it become a pretext. Until the preacher himself has been siezed (*sic*) by what siezed (*sic*) the writer, he will be unable to pass it on with passion and telling impact.” (Harbuck, 59)
1. I can’t help but consider the advice of Adler and Van Doren when considering books or chapters within them to read the end first because “Few authors are able to resist the temptation to sum up what they think is new and important about their work.” (Adler and Van Doren, 35).
 2. That is exactly what Paul does. He concludes the first section of this book with a summary statement of what is important and what matters most. He concludes with a summary statement that explains what has seized him.
- B. “To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”¹
1. To whom? To God be the glory. Paul was seized by God’s glory. Everything in the first half of this letter has been about this.
 2. God’s glory is the *inclusio*² that begins and ends this first half of Paul’s letter.
 - a. At the beginning of the letter, he mentions God’s glory five times, emphasizing that every blessing God has given was so God could be glorified.
 - 1) “He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he blessed us in the beloved” (Eph. 1:5-6).
 - 2) “So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12).
 - 3) “In him you also... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).
 - 4) “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory...” (Eph. 1:16-17).
 - 5) “...that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...” (Eph. 1:18).
 - 6) God is the Father of glory. His inheritance is glorious. His grace is glorious. Every step of His plans is designed to bring praise to His glory. In fact, our very purpose as Christians is to bring praise to His glory.

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² *Inclusio*: “The Repetition of the same Word or Words at the beginning and end of a Sentence.” (Bullinger, 245) Though often this term is used to describe the repetition of sentences or ideas at the beginning and end of a section (e.g. Acts 8:4 and 11:19)

- b. We find the glory highlighted again at the end of this section.
 - 1) “So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory” (Eph. 3:13).
 - 2) “...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being...” (Eph. 3:16).
 - 3) “To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).
 - c. We Gentile Christians only have glory because the glorious God shares it with us or bestows it on us. We reflect His glory. An earthly king displays his own glory through displays of gold and silver, but the riches of God’s glory are greater and deeper. Finally, just as our very purpose as Christians is to bring praise to God’s glory, the church is designed from beginning to end to bring glory to God.
3. Only when we are as seized by God’s glory will our preaching truly be good news. Everything else will fall short. “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness” (Ps. 115:1).

C. We are in a glory war.

1. Paul David Tripp in his book *Dangerous Calling* highlights the war we are in. It is right at the center of Ephesians 3. Paul is winning the war. Consider some of the statements Tripp makes about our war.
 - a. “First, pastoral ministry³ is always shaped by a war between the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God.” (Tripp, 98)
 - b. “It is a glory war, a battle for what glory will rule their hearts and, in so doing, control their choices, words, and behaviors.” (*Ibid.*, 139-40)
 - c. “Perhaps we have forgotten that pastoral ministry is war and that you will never live successfully in the pastorate if you live with a peacetime mentality. Permit me to explain. The fundamental battle of pastoral ministry is not with the shifting values of the surrounding culture. It is not the struggle with resistant people who don’t seem to esteem the gospel. It is not the fight for the success of the ministries of the church. And it is not the constant struggle of resources and personnel to accomplish the mission. No, the war of the pastorate is a deeply personal war. It is fought on the ground of the pastor’s heart. It is a war of values, allegiances, and motivations. It is about subtle desires and foundational dreams. This war is the greatest threat to every pastor. Yet it is a war that we often naively ignore or quickly forget in the busyness of local-church ministry.” (*Ibid.*, 98)
 - d. “Because the inertia of sin leads away from God’s purpose and glory toward my purpose and glory, as long as sin is inside of me there will be temptation to exchange God’s glory for my own. In ways that are subtle and not so subtle, I begin to pursue the accoutrements of human glory. Things like appreciation, reputation, success, power, comfort, and control become all too important. Because they are too important to me, they begin to shape the way I think about ministry, the things I want out of my ministry, and the things I do in ministry. Remember, a pastor’s ministry is not shaped just by his knowledge, gifts, skill, and experience but also by the condition of his heart. Could it be that much of the

³ Certainly, “pastor” is not the same as “preacher” (Eph. 4:11). However, Tripp is speaking of preachers as pastors as those in modern evangelical churches do. What he writes about is a danger for both pastors and preachers.

tension and despondency that pastors experience is the result of seeking to get things out of ministry that we should not be seeking?" (*Ibid.*, 98-9)

2. If you think this battle isn't serious, consider a review found on Tripp's 2012 dustjacket by Joshua Harris, author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, published in 1997.
 - a. "This book is 'good' in the same way that heart surgery is good. It's painful and scary, and as you read it you'll be tempted to run away from the truth it contains. But it just might save your life. Pastors need this book." (*Ibid.*, Dust Jacket)
 - b. This is the same Joshua Harris who on July 26, 2019 wrote the following on his Instagram feed: "...I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase for this is 'deconstruction,' the biblical phrase is 'falling away.' By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian. Many people tell me that there is a different way to practice faith and I want to remain open to this, but I'm not there now." (Harris)
 - c. I understand Harris did not teach the Scriptural response to and obedience of the gospel even when he did claim to be a Christian. In my opinion, he was no less lost as a false teacher among "evangelical Christianity" than he is now, having abandoned what faith he did have. However, his story is still a parable of the glory war. And his fall from the faith he did have is a warning for us as well. While we may be quick to dismiss his fall because he was not "one of us," we could no doubt multiply stories of faithful gospel preachers whose falls were not nearly so public, but even more fatally tragic. When any of us believe we are immune, we are already losing the glory war.
3. We must win this glory war. Not because God needs us to give Him glory, but because we need what comes from giving God glory.⁴
 - a. "What people revere, they resemble for ruin or restoration." (Beale, 16)
 - b. When we give God the glory, we become more like Him. We reflect His glory as Moses did literally in Exodus 34. We must understand that the glory of the immortal God ultimately is life.
 - c. When we exchange the glory of God for the glory of anything else, we resemble that idol (see Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15-18). By contrast to the living God, we must understand that the glory of dead idols ultimately is death.
4. We are in a glory war. Paul was in a glory war. Paul was seized by the glory of God. He was held captive by it. In the end, because he surrendered and let God win that glory war, he too won the glory war. Ephesians 3 shows us how Paul fought and won. May we too win this glory war.

II. Outline: Just as the Ephesian letter has two distinct but related movements (1-3; 4-6); Ephesians 3 has two distinct but related movements (3:1-13; 3:14-21).

- A. The sections are tied together by their introductory comment: "For this reason"/Τούτου χάριν (Eph. 3:1, 14). We will start our study with a look back to see what the basis, background, and context for these two movements in Paul's argument are.
- B. In the first section (Eph. 3:1-13), we see Paul's overwhelming gratitude to God for having received the gifts of ministry. Though Paul's ministry was not merely preaching, but apostleship, I hope we will see a profound example for our ministry as preachers.

⁴ For a deeper look at why we must win the glory war and support for the claim that we resemble what we revere, see Appendix A.

- C. In the second section (Eph. 3:14-21), we see Paul's prayer of temple dedication, a concept that will become clearer after we discover what "For this reason" means.

Body:

I. **"For this reason..."**

A. Both sections of Ephesians 3 begin "For this reason..."

1. "For this reason, I Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles..." (Eph. 3:1).
2. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father..." (Eph. 3:14)
3. Both times, the ESV is translating the same phrase: *Τούτου χάριν*
4. The ESV also has "for this reason" in Ephesians 1:15. However, the Greek at that verse is different: *Διὰ τοῦτο*.

B. Ephesians 3:1 is most certainly an *anacoluthon*,⁵ a breaking in the construction of the sentence.

1. "This verse should not be made into a sentence by supplying *εἰμί* and treating *ὁ δέσμιος* as the predicate⁶...this verse contains an incomplete statement and its thought is not taken up again until v 14. It appears to be the beginning of an account of a prayer asking that the Gentile Christian readers be enabled to live out their privileged role in God's purposes, a prayer in which the introductory phrase, 'for this reason,' refers back to the depiction of that role in 2:18-22 in particular. The incomplete sentence, with its emphasis on the person of Paul, 'I, Paul,' and its reference to him as Christ's prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles, in fact serves as the basis of the important digression on Paul's apostolic ministry which follows." (Lincoln, 172)
2. After mentioning he was a prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles, Paul doesn't go on to complete the sentence, but starts a new sentence moving in a different direction.
3. By repeating "for this reason" in Ephesians 3:14, he signals a return to his original thought/plan of discourse.
4. Lenski believes the *anacoluthon* is purposeful.
 - a. "Only a few exegetes supply *εἰμί* in v. 1 in order to avoid the break in construction in v. 2. The break is there. It is intentional. The common explanation is, however, unsatisfactory. This supposes that after dictating v. 1 it occurred to Paul that he really ought to tell his readers, especially new converts made since his departure from Ephesus, about his office in connection with the work among Gentiles in the church before he proceeds to dictate his intercession for all his readers. Thus, we are told, he swung off into an elaborate digression which became longer than he had intended when he began as he did in v. 1...

"The break at v. 2 is *not* due to a sudden flood of new thoughts, it is deliberate, made for a purpose, made so that the purpose for making it lies on the surface. This break itself conveys a most important thought. It is the most adequate means for conveying it to his readers. Paul does not have thoughts come up in his mind and thus veers off into anacolutha and broken constructions. Paul uses the

⁵ *Anacoluthon*: "A breaking off the sequence of Thought... This figure is so-called, because the construction with which a proposition begins is abandoned; and either for the sake of perspicuity, emphasis, or elegance, the sentence proceeds in a manner, different from that in which it set out." (Bullinger, 720)

⁶ This would make Ephesians 3:1 say, "For this reason, I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles."

anacoluthon as a regular means for expressing what he plans to express from the start.” (Lenski, *Ephesians*, 463, italics in original)

- b. If Lenski is correct, then most certainly we should reflect on “for this reason” in both sections of Ephesians 3. That is, if Paul purposefully broke his sentence to reflect on his ministry before moving to his prayer, then the digression in vss. 2-13 is just as much predicated on “for this reason” as the prayer in vss. 14-21 is.
 - c. However, I suggest, even if Lenski is incorrect — if Paul did mention being a prisoner and this mention brought to his mind the need to change directions before recording his prayer — we should consider that even mentioning himself as a prisoner was based on “for this reason.” Therefore, even in this case, “for this reason” will give insight into Paul’s digression and his prayer.
- C. For what reason? As this kind of phrase prompts us to look immediately before it, we’ll start in 2:22 and work our way back.
1. “In [Christ] you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (2:22).
 - a. Because we are working backwards, the first statement we see is the capstone of Paul’s entire point in Ephesians 2:18-22.
 - b. However, it actually opens the door for the entirety of the letter to the Ephesians. It calls to mind an entire segment of Israelite history. The history of the dwelling place of the Lord.
 - c. Just as Solomon dedicated the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, Paul, in Ephesians, is dedicating the dwelling place of the Lord for the New Covenant. There are numerous hyperlinks from Ephesians to tabernacle/temple/dwelling place literature. This will especially be important when we study Paul’s prayer in 3:14-21.
 - d. These parallels will be drawn mostly from the period in which David was preparing for the temple, Solomon was building the temple, and Solomon was dedicating the temple. However, there are parallels from the time of Moses building the tabernacle and also the construction of the second tabernacle.
 - 1) God’s dwelling place:
 - a) Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for the Lord: Ephesians 2:22.
 - b) Solomon built a dwelling place for the Lord: 1 Kings 8:13; 2 Chronicles 6:2 (see also Ps.132:14).
 - 2) Blessing/Eulogy:
 - a) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”: Ephesians 1:3.
 - b) “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel”: 1 Kings 8:15.
 “Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people”: 1 Kings 8:53
 “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father”: 1 Chronicles 29:10.
 “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son”: 2 Chronicles 2:12.
 “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel”: 2 Chronicles 6:4.

1. Granted, this is a common way to start prayers of thanksgiving throughout the Old Testament. Additionally, 2 Corinthians and 1 Peter start similarly.
 2. If this were the only connection, it would be weak. However, as you watch the linkages grow, we will see Paul is beginning his dedication of the dwelling place of God and giving charges to the people involved with the temple.
- 3) Chosen:
- a) God chose us before the foundation of the world: Ephesians 1:4.
 - b) Solomon was in the midst of the people God had chosen: 1 Kings 3:8
God chose David to be over His people: 1 Kings 8:16;
God chose Judah, David, Solomon: 1 Chronicles 28:4-6
God chose David to be king over His people and Jerusalem to be the place for His name to dwell: 2 Chronicles 6:5-6
God chose the temple as a house of sacrifice: 2 Chronicles 7:12
- 4) Adoption:
- a) God predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ: Ephesians 1:5
 - b) God chose Solomon to be His son, and He would be Solomon's Father: 1 Chronicles 28:6. (BDAG says of the word for "chose" here: "perh. in the spec. sense 'adopt.'")
- 5) Forgiveness:
- a) We have forgiveness through the blood of Christ: Ephesians 1:7
 - b) In Solomon's prayer, he asks over and over again that God would forgive the people as they pray toward the temple: 1 Kings 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; 2 Chronicles 6:21, 25, 27, 30, 39; 7:14
- 6) The Lord's heritage:
- a) The saints are the allotment or inheritance of the Lord: Ephesians 1:11, 18 (Smelser, 77-8)
 - b) God separated out Israel to be His heritage: 1 Kings 8:51, 53 (see also Exo. 15:17, NASB, NET, NKJV, KJV, *et al.*)
- 7) A promise:
- a) We were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 1:13
Gentiles were strangers to the covenants of promise: Ephesians 2:12
Gentiles are made fellow partakers of the promise: Ephesians 3:6
 - b) The Lord gave rest according to His promise: 1 Kings 8:56
The Lord has fulfilled the promise that He has made: 2 Chronicles 6:10
Solomon asks the Lord to keep His promise to David: 2 Chronicles 6:16
- 8) Wisdom, insight, knowledge, discernment, revelation:
- a) God lavished wisdom, insight, and knowledge on us: Ephesians 1:8-9
Paul prays God will give a Spirit of wisdom and revelation: Ephesians 1:17
The church/the new temple makes known the manifold wisdom of God: Ephesians 3:10

- b) David asks the Lord to give discretion and understanding to Solomon:
1 Chronicles 22:12
Solomon asks for wisdom in the midst of those whom God has chosen so he may know how to govern: 1 Kings 3:8; 2 Chronicles 1:10
God lavishes wisdom and discernment on Solomon: 1 Kings 3:12; 2 Chronicles 1:12
Hiram recognizes that Solomon has been given wisdom, discretion, and understanding: 2 Chronicles 2:12
God gives wisdom, skill, understanding, and craftsmanship to those who will be instrumental in building the tabernacle: Exodus 31:3; 35:31; 36:1
- 9) Riches lavished:
- a) God lavished riches on us in all wisdom: Ephesians 1:7-8
Through the wisdom God gives, we discover the riches of His inheritance in the saints: Ephesians 1:18
God will show in the coming ages the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ: Ephesians 2:7
Paul preaches to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ: Ephesians 3:8
He will grant us to be strengthened according to the riches of His glory: Ephesians 3:16
- b) Because Solomon asked for wisdom, he was given wisdom and riches:
1 Kings 3:13; 2 Chronicles 1:11
Riches and honor come from God: 1 Chronicles 29:12
Solomon's wealth and wisdom: 1 Kings 4; 2 Chronicles 9
- 10) The greatness of God's power and might:
- a) We are to know the immeasurable greatness of God's power, according to the working of His great might: Ephesians 1:19
Paul was made a minister by the working of God's power: Ephesians 3:7
We will be strengthened with power through His Spirit: Ephesians 3:16
We are to be strong in the strength of the Lord: Ephesians 6:10
- b) Yours is the greatness and power and the glory and the victory and the majesty: 1 Chronicles 29:11
In God's hand are power and might, He gives strength to all: 1 Chronicles 29:12
- 11) Above all rule and power:
- a) Jesus is seated above all rule and authority and power and dominion: Ephesians 1:21
- b) God rules over all: 1 Chronicles 29:12
- 12) Head over all things:
- a) Jesus is head over all things to the church/temple: Ephesians 1:22
The body is to grow up into Christ the head: Ephesians 4:15
The husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the body the church: Ephesians 5:23
- b) The Lord is exalted as head above all: 1 Chronicles 29:11
- 13) Those far off included:

- a) Jesus preached peace to those who were far off: Ephesians 2:17
 - b) When a foreigner from far off comes and prays toward the temple, God will hear Him and honor his request: 1 Kings 8:41; 2 Chronicles 6:32
- 14) Temple built in peace:
- a) Jesus Christ is the peace between the Jews and the Gentiles through the shedding of His blood: Ephesians 2:14-15
Jesus preached peace to those near and far in preparation for the building of the new temple: Ephesians 2:17
 - b) Blessed be the LORD who gave His people rest: 1 Kings 8:56
Solomon would build the temple because God would give him rest and peace: 1 Chronicles 22:9-10, 18
- 15) Boldness and courage:
- a) We have bold and confident access to God: Ephesians 3:12
The Gentiles are not to lose heart over Paul's suffering: Ephesians 3:13
Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he may preach boldly: Ephesians 6:18
 - b) David charges Solomon regarding his leadership of Israel to be strong and courageous: 1 Chronicles 22:13
David charges Solomon to be strong and courageous, not to be afraid or dismayed but to finish the house of the Lord: 1 Chronicles 28:20
After the exile, when the Israelites started to rebuild the temple, the people of the land discouraged the Israelites and made them afraid to build so that they gave up: Ezra 4:4
- 16) Bow the knees in prayer:
- a) Paul bowed his knees in prayer: Ephesians 3:14.
 - b) Solomon bowed his knees/knelt in his temple dedication prayer: 1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chronicles 6:13.
- 17) Named from God:
- a) Every family on heaven and earth get their name from God: Ephesians 3:15.
 - b) The house of God derives its name from God: 1 Kings 8:43.
- 18) Strengthened by the Spirit:
- a) We are to be strengthened in our inner being by the Spirit so Christ may dwell in us and we may have the fullness of God: Ephesians 3:16.
 - b) Craftsman were mentally strengthened and given skill by the Spirit so they could build the tabernacle for God to dwell in: Exodus 31:3; 35:31; 36:1
The second temple would not be built by might nor by power, but by God's Spirit: Zechariah 4:6
- 19) Serve from the heart:
- a) Christ is to dwell in our hearts by faith: Ephesians 3:17
Slaves are to serve with a sincere heart as they would Christ: Ephesians 6:5
 - b) Let your heart be wholly true to the Lord: 1 Kings 8:31

20) Rooted/Planted:

- a) We are to be rooted in love: Ephesians 3:17
- b) God will plant Israel on the mountain of His dwelling place and sanctuary: Exodus 15:17
God will plant His people so they may have a dwelling place: 2 Samuel 7:10; 1 Chronicles 17:9

21) A foundation of Love:

- a) Grounded/founded on love: Ephesians 3:17
- b) When the foundation of the second temple was laid, they sang “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” which had been sung at the completion of the first temple: Ezra 3:11

22) Glory to God:

- a) The church is to bring glory to God: Ephesians 3:21
- b) Yours is the glory: 1 Chronicles 29:11

23) Walking:

- a) We are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling: Ephesians 4:1
We are to no longer walk like the Gentiles do: Ephesians 4:17
We are to walk in love: Ephesians 5:2
We are to walk as children of light: Ephesians 5:8
We are to walk as wise and not unwise: Ephesians 5:15
- b) The Israelites were to walk in all his ways: 1 Kings 8:58, 61
Solomon was to walk before God as David did: 1 Kings 9:4; 2 Chronicles 7:17

24) Don't be partners with the Gentiles:

- a) Do not become partners with the sons of disobedience: Ephesians 5:7
- b) After the golden calf incident, when the covenant is renewed while they are building the tabernacle, Israel is told not to make covenants with the inhabitants of the land: Exodus 34:15

25) Look carefully:

- a) We are to look carefully how we walk: Ephesians 5:15
- b) David charged Solomon to be careful: 1 Chronicles 28:10 (LXX)⁷

26) Marriage:

- a) In the temple of the Lord, husbands and wives are supposed to love and respect and represent Jesus and the church. Guidance is given for faithfulness in marriage: Ephesians 5:22-33
- b) As the story is told, almost immediately after the temple is dedicated and Solomon is given wisdom and riches, he violates God's marriage laws, which leads him to fall away: 1 Kings 9:24; 11:1ff; 2 Chronicles 8:11

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the text of LXX used in this outline is Rahlfs', accessed via BibleWorks 10, © 2017, version 10.0.8.365.

⁸ Though the words in the Greek are different, both phrases carry the same meaning of looking with care.

Following the building of the second temple, Israel immediately pursued unlawful marriages: Ezra 9-10

27) Parenting and children:

- a) In the temple of the Lord, children are to honor and obey their parents so they can develop a generational legacy of faithfulness in the land and fathers are to raise their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord, not provoking them: Ephesians 6:1-4
- b) Solomon is told that he must teach his children to follow the Lord. If the children do not serve the Lord, He will cut them off from the land: 1 Kings 9:6

28) Slaves and masters:

- a) In the temple of the Lord, slaves are to serve as for the Lord, but masters are not to threaten, remembering they have a Master in heaven: Ephesians 6:5-9
 - b) Immediately following the building of the temple, we see Solomon with forced labor and slaves. During the revolt against Rehoboam, we learn he was a harsh task master. Rehoboam plans to be even worse: 1 Kings 10ff; 2 Chronicles 10
- e. As these comparisons and links mount up, I realize Paul is doing in Ephesians exactly what Solomon was doing. He is dedicating the New Covenant dwelling place of the Lord and then giving instructions to the people for faithfulness since God is dwelling among us.

2. "In whom the whole structure being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21).

- a. The temple of Jerusalem was the dwelling place of God, the place where God met man, the place where the glory of the Lord resides.
- b. Consider the history of the temple and God's glory.⁹
 - 1) In Exodus 40:34-38, when the tabernacle was finished and erected: "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."
 - 2) In 2 Chronicles 5:2-14, when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the temple built by Solomon, "the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God."
 - 3) In 2 Chronicles 7:1-2, after Solomon finished his prayer of dedication for that temple, the glory of the Lord filled the temple again: "As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house."
 - 4) In Ezekiel 8-10, God reveals to Ezekiel in a vision the glory of the Lord leaving the temple. It is no surprise then to see that the Babylonians were

⁹ For a more in depth look at the history of the Lord's Glory which should be considered in the context of Ephesians 2:21-22 and 3:21, read Appendix B: A History of the LORD's Glory

able to destroy the temple. However, God did not leave Israel without hope. In Ezekiel 43:1-5, God reveals to Ezekiel in a vision the return of the glory of the Lord to the temple.

5) However, when the second temple is built in Ezra 6, there is a shocking contrast between it and the first temple and tabernacle. There is no cloud. There is no fire. There is no glory. In fact, as if to call attention to this, where the accounts in Exodus 40:35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; and 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3 declared the priests couldn't minister in the temple because of the presence of the glory of the Lord, the account in Ezra 6:18 shows the Israelites setting the priests and Levites in their divisions.

c. If the Jews and the Gentiles are being built into a temple, we expect them to be the dwelling place of the glory of the Lord. Since the second temple did not seem to fulfill the promises of the Glory's return. We expect to see that return in this new temple.

3. "Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (2:20)

a. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

1) "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever... The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD... Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Psa 118:1, 22-26, 29)

a) Is it coincidence that when the temple was dedicated, the praise from the children of Israel was "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever"? (2 Chr 5:13; 7:3).

b) This was the same praise repeated when the foundation for the second temple was laid (Ezra 3:11).

c) Paul calls to mind this temple related psalm.

d) He also calls to mind that Jesus Christ who became the cornerstone was actually rejected before becoming the cornerstone.

2) "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste'" (Is 28:16).

a) In this context, God is rebuking the "agreement" the rulers of Jerusalem had made with death and Sheol, believing when judgment passed through, they would be spared. God's point: He is the one who has laid the foundations and cornerstone of Zion. When He brings judgment, the rulers will learn their "agreement" with death and Sheol won't hold water. They will die.

b) Paul is highlighting that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, the foundation laid by God Himself.

b. The apostles and prophets are the foundation.

1) It has been my experience people rarely notice what Ephesians 2:20 actually says.

- a) I have been in countless studies in which I have someone read Ephesians 2:20. Then I ask, “Based on this verse, what is our foundation?” Almost universally they will answer, “Jesus.”
- b) After all, Jesus is our foundation, right? Of course, He is.
1. “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11; see also Isa 28:16 above)
 2. Is this a biblical contradiction? No. Paul is using similar metaphors to make distinct, but related points.
- c) If Jesus is our foundation, how can the apostles and prophets be our foundation?
1. “Apostles and prophets” is used in Ephesians 2:20 in very much the same way as “Moses and the Prophets” in the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:29.
 - a. In Luke 16:29, Abraham tells the rich man that his brothers have Moses and the Prophets. The brothers need to hear them.
 - b. However, this cannot possibly mean the men Moses and the prophets. After all, none of the other prophets were contemporaries of Moses. Abraham, by metonymy, is actually referring to the Old Testament, written by Moses and the prophets.
 - c. The second definition for the word “prophet” in BDAG: “2. by metonymy, **the writings of prophets**. The prophet also stands for his book.” (BDAG, bold in original)
 1. BDAG gives examples such as Acts 8:28 in which the Ethiopian was “reading the prophet Isaiah.” That phrase, “the prophet Isaiah,” doesn’t refer to the prophet himself, but to the prophet’s writings.
 2. In like manner, in Ephesians 2:20, Paul, by metonymy, is referring not to the men themselves but to their teaching and ultimately their writings as the foundation for this New Covenant temple, the church.
 4. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (2:19)
 - a. The household of God
 - 1) The Gentiles are no longer “aliens”/πάροικος, they are “members of the household”/οικεῖος of God.
 - a) This is the only passage in Old and New Testament in which οἰκεῖος is used to refer to God’s family (with the exception of Gal. 6:10, but there it is the household of faith).
 - b) οἰκεῖος refers to relatives and often the idea of the closest of relatives (see Lev. 18:6, 12, 13, 17; 21:2; 25:49).
 - c) The Gentiles are part of God’s family. Since it is His household, He is the Father.
 - b. Fellow citizens with the saints

- 1) The Gentiles are no longer “strangers” or foreigners/ξένος (from which we get the modern xenophobia), they are “fellow citizens”/συμπολίτης with the saints.
 - 2) The Jews here are classed as saints, the holy ones. The Gentiles are brought into the same nation with them. They are citizens of the same holy kingdom, becoming saints as well.
 - 3) συμπολίτης is a compound of σύν, meaning “with,” and πολίτης, meaning “citizen.” The Gentiles are part of the same nation/kingdom with the Jews.
 - a) This is a contrast with 2:12 in which the Gentiles were to remember that at one time they were “separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise.”
 - 4) As one of the themes of Ephesians is unity, this compounding of words with σύν happens frequently: “The preposition σύν, ‘with, together with,’ is combined with fourteen words. Three times these compound words denote the union between Christ and the believers such as God ‘made us alive together with (συνζωοποιέω) Christ’ in 2:5, he ‘raised us up with (συνεγείρω) Christ,’ and he ‘seated us with him (συγκαθίζω) in the heavenly places’ in 2:6. The remaining eleven of these combinations refer to the union of Jewish and Gentile believers. These believers are ‘joined/fitted together’ (συναρμολογέω) in 2:21 and 4:16 and ‘are being built together (συνοικοδομέω) in 2:22. Believers are portrayed in 4:16 as being ‘held together’ (συμβιβάζω) and in 4:3 they are enjoined to maintain between them the ‘bond of peace’ (σύνδεσμος). They are described in 2:19 as ‘fellow citizens’ (συμπολίτης) and in 3:6 as ‘fellow heirs’ (συγκληρονόμος), and ‘fellow members of the body’ (σύσσωμος), and ‘fellow participants of the promise’ (συμμέτοχος). Negatively, the believers are not to become fellow participants (συμμέτοχος) with unbelievers (5:7) and are not to participate (συγκοινωνέω) in the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11).” (Hoehner, 103)
5. “For through [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”
 - a. Not only does God have access to the one body of the Jews and Gentiles (2:22), the Gentiles, along with the Jews, have access to God because of the work of the Spirit.
 - b. As Moses and then the High Priests of old had access to the Holy of Holies and the presence of God in the temple, Jews and Gentiles alike have access to God because of the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. In the Old Testament, this was an access that was granted by the purifying of sacrifice. No doubt, our access is granted to us by the purifying sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 6. “And [Christ] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.”
 - a. Certainly, this highlights a reconciliation between God and both Jews and Gentiles.
 - b. In the context, it also highlights a reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles in Christ. This was accomplished by Jesus on the cross abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that created a dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile (see 2:13-16).
 - c. Notice the parallel here with the first temple:

- 1) “David said to Solomon, ‘My son, I had it in my heart to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth. Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever’” (1 Chr. 22:7-10).
- 2) David was not able to build the temple for the Lord’s name and glory because he was a man of war and bloodshed. Solomon on the other hand would be able to build the temple because the Lord would give him peace.
- 3) The temple Jesus is building from the Jews and Gentiles is happening because He is bringing peace.
- 4) Additionally, David had been unable to build a temple because of bloodshed. In order to establish that kingdom, he shed the blood of other men. Jesus, however, is bringing peace by His own blood (2:13).

D. For all these reasons, Paul describes his thanksgiving for being part of the ministry and for all these reasons he prays his prayer of dedication. As we go through those two sections of Scripture, we will repeatedly be pointed back to these reasons.

II. The Gifts of Ministry (Ephesians 3:1-13)

A. Perspective is key.

1. Paul begins this section saying, “For this reason, I, Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...” Then whether spontaneously or by design, he breaks midsentence into a digression. The purpose of this digression helps us see something about Paul and what helped him win the glory war: Perspective.

2. Why the digression?

a. The content of the digression gives an indication.

- 1) “He is for the moment distracted from his prayer as he rejoices in the privilege he has, the favor God has bestowed upon him, to be the one who proclaims the good news to the Gentiles. Even though Paul reckoned himself to be the least of all saints, he was given the privilege of preaching the gospel (Acts 26.16) for the benefit of the Gentiles (Acts 26.17f), and he revels in the joy of being the one to bring the good news.” (Smelser, 145)
- 2) Being a prisoner seems a negative thing, but Paul views it positively. What a small price prison was to pay for such magnificent blessings.

b. Perhaps most to the point though is an aspect of the grammatical structure highlighted by Hoehner: “The conditional εἰ introduces the reader to the first part of the protasis of a first class conditional sentence that will continue until the end of verse 12 and the conjunction διό in verse 13 introduces the apodosis of this conditional sentence.” (Hoehner, 421)

1) First, some explanation of terms.

a) “A conditional sentence has two parts: an ‘if’ part and a ‘then’ part. ‘IF’ = protasis; ‘THEN’ = apodosis.” (Wallace, 682)

b) “The first class condition indicates *the assumption of truth for the sake of argument*. The normal idea, then, is *If — and let us assume that this*

is true for the sake of argument — then... This class uses the particle εἰ with the indicative (in any tense) in the protasis. In the apodosis, any mood and any tense can occur.” (*Ibid.*, 690, italics in original)

c) Do not be distracted by the phrase “assumption of truth.”

1. This assumption of truth is about the logical flow of the argument.
2. Sometimes, in first class conditional sentences, the protasis is not actually true, but many times it is.
3. The reader must look to the context to determine the actual truth. The context of Ephesians 3:2-12 is that Paul’s protasis is not only assumed to be true for the logic of this argument, but it is really true as well.

2) Hoehner’s description of this lengthy digression as a first-class conditional suggests we should look at vs. 13 to explain the reason for this tangential discussion.

a) Having stated that he is a prisoner, Paul is afraid the Gentile Christians will lose heart because of what he is suffering.

1. “Lose heart” translates ἐγκακεῖν, the present, active, infinitive form of ἐγκακέω.
 - a. Baur, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich (BDAG hereafter) say in 3:13, this word means “to lose one’s motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity.” However, they do claim some would attribute to Paul’s use of the word in Ephesians 3:13 the meaning, “to be afraid in the face of a great difficulty.”
 - b. Louw and Nida define as “to lose one’s motivation to accomplish some valid goal - ‘to become discouraged, to lose heart, to give up.’”
 - c. This word is also found in Luke 18:1; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 16; Galatians 6:9; and 2 Thessalonians 3:13. The context of each of these uses suggests more than merely being discouraged or afraid, but being discouraged or disheartened to the point of quitting.
 - d. In other words, Paul is not merely saying, “Hey guys, don’t feel bad for me.” He isn’t saying, “Don’t worry about me.” He isn’t saying, “Don’t be afraid or discouraged for me.” He is saying, “Don’t give up just because I am a prisoner.”
 - e. Put this in the context of the basis of this chapter.
 1. From Ephesians 2:17-22, we know the Gentiles are being built into a temple, a holy dwelling for the Lord. The foundation has been laid. Paul is afraid that in the middle of this building project the Gentile Christians will lose heart, get discouraged, and stop building.
 2. Paul is afraid these Christians will be like the Israelites who returned from exile in Ezra 4:4. They began to build the temple. However, the people of the land discouraged

them, hired counselors against them, made them afraid to build, and they quit.

- c. Therefore, he digresses from his intended prayer to give the Gentile Christians a powerfully positive perspective of his imprisonment. That perspective being that at the very least, going to prison was worth it. Why was it worth it? Because the gifts he received were greater than the cost.

3. But why would the Gentiles lose heart over Paul's imprisonment and suffering?

- a. In order to understand Paul's perspective on the gifts of his ministry and to gain perspective on our own, we need to see why the Gentiles might lose heart over his imprisonment and suffering.

- b. It is possible Paul is concerned the brothers and sisters would lose heart with Christianity in the face of persecution.

- 1) After all, Jesus's foundational parable, the Parable of the Sower, had explained that the seed sown on rocky soil represents "the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away" (Mat. 13:20-21).

- a) "Tribulation" in Matthew 13:21 and "suffering" in Ephesians 3:13 both translate forms of θλίψις.

- 2) No doubt, persecution and tribulation always present a dangerous temptation to the Christian. Witnessing others, especially leaders, face tribulation may cause followers to determine it simply isn't worth it.

- c. However, I believe Gombis is on to something when he claims Ephesians 3:2-13 is not a "Pointless Digression," but is instead the "Epitome of the Triumph of God in Christ." (Gombis, *WTJ*, 313)

- 1) Gombis presents what is at stake in these terms: "If Christ Jesus is exalted to the position of cosmic supremacy over the powers ruling the present evil age, then why is Paul in prison? Why has the exaltation of Christ resulted in the defeat and humiliation of his servant? This looks less like triumph than a glaring defeat at the hands of the powers that supposedly have been put under the feet of the sovereign Lord Christ." (*Ibid.*, 316)

- a) Why would the Gentiles lose heart?

1. Not because they wish to avoid the persecution Paul is facing.
2. Rather, because with Paul in prison, it looks like Jesus Christ has lost the battle against Caesar.
3. How can Paul claim Jesus is seated above every ruler and authority, when his ambassador is under Roman arrest, awaiting trial before the face of Caesar?
4. Why would the Gentiles want to be fellow citizens (2:19) in a kingdom that seems to be losing?

- b) "Paul's concern for the digression is that his audience would wrongly understand his apostleship in terms of his imprisonment, and so he takes pains instead to interpret his imprisonment in terms of his apostleship. Otherwise, his role in God's eschatological plan could have been subverted and viewed as shameful and, by extension, so could their own involvement in that plan detailed in ch. 2." (Sherwood, 108)

- 2) To grasp this significance for the digression, Gombis suggests we must first understand the context that has led up to the chapter.
- a) “Eph 2 employs the ideology of divine warfare in order to state and defend the claim that Christ has been exalted far above the power and authorities ruling the present evil age (Eph 1:20-23). This ideological tool was used widely in the ancient Near East in order to assert the supremacy of a nation’s deity, and appears throughout the Old Testament with reference to the God of Israel. The ideology of divine warfare followed a typical pattern: Respective deities engage in conflict, with the eventual victor proclaimed supreme among the gods and given the right to build a house/temple at which the people gather to celebrate the deity’s ascendancy. Thus the following pattern emerges: conflict, victory, kingship, house-building, celebration.” (Gombis, *WTJ*, 315)
1. This pattern of divine warfare can be seen in myths of the Ancient Near East (ANE). (Gombis, *JSNT*, 405-406; also Longman and Reid, 83-85)
 - a. Ugaritic Baal Cycle
 1. Threat: Yamm, representing chaos and having received El’s favor, demands Baal be handed over
 2. Conflict-Victory: Baal refuses, fights Yamm, and is victorious.
 3. Kingship: This establishes Baal’s supremacy over other gods.
 4. Housebuilding: Baal demands a temple be built in his honor.
 5. Celebration: Baal hosts a celebration for the gods
 - b. Enuma Elish
 1. Threat: Tiamet is urged by older gods to wipe out younger gods.
 2. Conflict-Victory: Marduk agrees to fight her, wins, and from her carcass creates the heavens.
 3. Kingship: Based on victory, Marduk is made king by the younger gods.
 4. Housebuilding: The younger gods erect the temple, “Esagila.”
 5. Celebration: They hold a celebratory feast at the temple.
 2. This pattern is seen in the Old Testament. Exodus 15 is an example. (Gombis, *JSNT*, 406-407; also Longman and Reid, 85-86)
 - a. Conflict-Victory: Fought and defeated Pharaoh (vss. 3, 6)
 - b. Kingship: The Lord will reign forever (vs. 18)
 - c. Housebuilding: The Lord will plant His people on His mountain where He has made His abode and established His sanctuary (vs. 17).
 - d. Celebration: The planting of His people in that house is the gathering of people to celebrate (vs. 17).

3. The pattern is seen, according to Gombis, in Ephesians 1-2 in the following way: (Gombis, *JSNT*, 408)
- a. Conflict-Victory: Jesus conquers trespass, sin, and death, which includes conquering the “prince of the power of the air,” seating us with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:1-16).
 - b. Kingship: Jesus is seated above all rule and authority and dominion, all things are put under His feet (Ephesians 1:20-23).
 - c. Housebuilding: Jews and Gentiles being built together into a temple for the dwelling place of God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22).
 - d. Celebration: Through Jesus, we have access by the Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). Though, in my opinion, Gombis would have been better to see this celebration in Ephesians 3:21.
- 3) I admit, there are aspects of this Gombis stretches. However, fundamentally, I believe he is on to something. Whether Paul is purposefully attempting to mirror this Divine Warrior motif is hard to nail down. However, Paul has declared Jesus to be King of the Universe above not merely every ruler on earth, but also above every ruler in the heavens. And yet, Paul is in prison. He is under Roman arrest, having been led from Jerusalem, to Caesarea, to Rome by Roman guards and in Roman chains. How can he claim Jesus to be above all? How can he claim to be seated with Jesus above all? How can he claim the Christians in Ephesus are also seated with Jesus above all? How can he claim all this while seated in Roman imprisonment?
- a) Because he is not the prisoner of Rome. He is the prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1).
 1. “In these circumstances Paul calls himself the ‘prisoner of Christ.’ Here is another vivid instance of the fact that the Christian has always a double life and a double address. Any ordinary person would have said that Paul was the prisoner of the Roman government; and so he was. But Paul never thought of himself as the prisoner of Rome; he always thought of himself as the prisoner of Christ.” (Barclay, 121)
 - b) He is not in prison because the Jews accused him. He is not in prison because the Romans arrested him. He is not in prison because he is subject to the emperor. He is in prison because that is where Jesus wants him.
 - c) And he is more than willing to be there, he is glad to be there.
 1. “The value we place on something determines the hardship we are willing to endure for it. We will expend enormous energy and resources to care for a person or a prized possession we value a great deal. Paul valued the gospel enough to go to prison for it.” (Snodgrass, 171)
- 4) As paradoxical as it may seem, Paul’s imprisonment, far from being a reason to lose heart is a reason to rejoice and recommit to King Jesus:

a) “In his current situation, Paul is in a position of utter defeat at the hands of the powers, being completely in their grasp. Seen in terms of the present age, he could not be in a weaker, more shameful, or more vulnerable position. Yet, astonishingly, it is by his preaching of the gospel that the creative power of God is unleashed and engaged, and the church, the arena of the triumph of God, is called into being, thereby displaying the wisdom of God to the powers.

“This paradoxical dynamic at work in v. 10 is the same as that in 1 Corinthians, where God, ‘destroys the wisdom of the wise’ by choosing the foolish and the weak to shame the wise and the strong (1 Cor 1:19-27). In living out this paradox, Paul is following the pattern of humiliation and exaltation set by his Lord, whereby in his shameful death, by being utterly defeated, Christ triumphed over the evil powers (Eph 2:13-16; 4:8-10; Phil 2:8-11; Col 2:15).” (Gombis, *WTJ*, 322)

b) In fact, this is the lesson Barclay wants us to learn: “If a man is in prison for some great cause he may either grumblingly regard himself as an ill-used creature, or he may radiantly regard himself as the standard-bearer of some great cause. The one regards his prison as a penance; the other regards it as a privilege. When we are undergoing hardship, unpopularity, material loss for the sake of Christian principles we may either regard ourselves as the victims of men or as the champions of Christ. Paul is our example; he regarded himself, not as the prisoner of Nero, but as the prisoner of Christ.” (Barclay, 122)

4. The joy of the Lord.

- a. From Nehemiah 8:10, we sing a wonderful song, claiming, “The joy of the Lord will be my strength.” That song sums up Paul’s perspective.
- b. Despite his imprisonment and suffering, despite fears that the Gentiles might lose heart over his imprisonment, he takes joy. So much joy he doesn’t seek encouragement from the Gentiles in his suffering so much as he gives them encouragement.
- c. He has joy because he is so amazed at the gifts God has given him. He is stunned that he could be so blessed. I wonder if I would feel so blessed if I were imprisoned for preaching the gospel? Paul was winning the glory war because of this perspective.
- d. Throughout the rest of this section (II), we will focus on Paul’s spectacular perspective. But first, we must note how shocked he was that he should receive these gifts.

B. Least of all the Saints

1. Smack in the middle of this section, we see the basis of Paul’s shock at the gifts he has received. “To me, though I am the very least of all saints, this grace was given” (Eph. 3:8). This is what seems to blow Paul’s mind the most.
 - a. Gombis takes special notice of Paul’s declaration of being the least: “Further, he claims that it was specifically to him as the one who is ‘less than the least of all the saints’ (ἐμοὶ τὸ ὀλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων) that this grace was given (v. 8a), stressing his own unworthiness and lack of fitness for the task. Paul emphasizes his utter weakness and inability so that the triumph of God in Christ might clearly be seen.” (Gombis, *WTJ*, 317)

2. The “leastester”

- a. “As if the superlatives ‘least’ (among the saints) or ‘first’ (among the sinners) were too weak to express his unworthiness, in this verse he creates a novel form of a Greek adjective, which in English would be equal to the terms ‘smallest’ or ‘leaster.’ In the NT only one similar formation is found, i.e., ‘greaterer’ in III John 4...Paul is not ashamed to place himself extremely low.” (Barth, 339-340)
- b. “For what he calls *this grace*, which we might call ‘this privileged gift of God’, had been given to him, in spite of the fact that he was *the very least of all the saints* (verse 8), or ‘the meanest member of the holy people’. It is a very striking expression. He takes the superlative (*elachistos*, ‘least’ or ‘smallest’) and does what is impossible linguistically but possible theologically; he turns it into a comparative (*elachistotos*, ‘leaster’ or ‘less than the least’). Perhaps he was deliberately playing on the meaning of his name. For his Roman surname ‘Paulus’ is Latin for ‘little’ or ‘small’, and tradition says he was a little man. ‘I am little,’ he may be saying, ‘little by name, little in stature, and morally and spiritually littler than the littlest of all Christians.’” (Stott, 119, italics in original)

3. This, no doubt, ties to his past as a persecutor.

- a. He saw himself as the foremost of sinners because of his pre-Christian life.

1) “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost*. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:12-16; italics mine ELC).

a) Paul considered himself the foremost of sinners because he had been a blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent opponent.

1. The first time we meet Paul in the New Testament, though at the time he went by Saul, he was watching over the coats of those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58).
2. That moment of support for murder and persecution emboldened Paul to lead the first full scale persecution against the Christians (Acts 8:3).
3. In Acts 26:9-11, Paul described his opposition to Christianity to Agrippa in this way: “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

b) In his mind, he was saved for the express purpose of proving to anyone and everyone that Jesus Christ saves sinners. If Jesus would save Saul the persecutor, transforming him into Paul the apostle, Jesus will save anyone. Praise the Lord!

- b. He saw himself as the least of the apostles.
- 1) “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me” (1 Corinthians 15:8-10).
 - a) He was least and unworthy of apostleship, he claims.
 - b) He was neither saved, nor an apostle, because of his personal worth, because of his accomplishments. He was both saved and an apostle because of the grace of God.
 - c) Seeing his salvation all by itself as a gift, we can understand that every aspect of work God allowed him to accomplish for God’s glory was icing on the cake.
 - d) Paul was a sworn enemy of Jesus Christ. However, when Jesus conquered him on the road to Damascus, he did not vanquish him in eternal judgment. He cleared a path for him and brought him into the fold, giving him life and a work.

4. Yes, Paul was in prison. Yes, he had suffered. But who was he? He was a persecutor. He was the leaster of the leastest. He didn’t deserve anything. Yet, he had been saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. Then, not only was he saved, he was made an apostle! He was like the man lame from birth in Acts 3. Now that he was lifted up by Christ to walk with him, how could he do anything but go walking and leaping and praising God, even if, as he held on to the hand of Jesus, he was led into prison?

5. We do not need to get in a competition with Paul or one another for the position of “leastest.”

- a. However, we do need to remember the questions Paul asked of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:7: “What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”
 - 1) We aren’t disciples because we are worthy. We aren’t preachers because we are worthy. We aren’t at this conference because we are worthy. There isn’t a single sermon we’ve preached, student we’ve studied with, lost person we’ve baptized that has happened because we are worthy.
 - 2) We are unworthy to be called disciples. We are unworthy to be called preachers. We are what we are by the grace and gift of God. Let us not let the gift be in vain, rather let us work harder than all of them.

6. Only with this perspective will we win the glory war. Anything less than this will be bringing the glory to ourselves.

C. The Gift of Stewardship

1. Paul calls attention to the first of the gifts he cherishes by using an *inclusio* as a rhetorical structural device.

- a. Paul uses the same phrase toward the beginning and toward the end of the sentence that stretches from vs. 2 to vs. 7.

- 1) In vs. 2: εἴ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς (“if indeed you heard the stewardship of the grace of God given to me on your behalf”¹⁰).
 - 2) In vs. 7: οὗ ὑγενήθη διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. (“of which I became a servant according to the gift of the grace of God given to me according to the working of His power”¹¹).
- b. In vs. 2, Paul has a stewardship (οἰκονομίαν). In vs. 7, he is a servant (διάκονος) of the gospel according to God’s gift (δωρεάν). We are meant to see that this stewardship is a gift from God.
- c. The “grace of God” in these verses does not refer to the grace of forgiveness and salvation. Rather, Paul is referring to a specific favor, gift, grace he had received in addition to the grace of forgiveness and salvation.
- 1) In both vs. 2 and 7, τῆς δοθείσης (“given”) is in the genitive case. Thus, in both verses it modifies τῆς χάριτος (“the grace”, also genitive) and not either τὴν οἰκονομίαν (“the stewardship”) or τὴν δωρεάν (“the gift”). These other two are both in the accusative case.
 - 2) In vs. 2, the grace of God given to Paul was done so εἰς ὑμᾶς (“unto you” or “on your behalf”). By a stretch we might imagine that Paul’s salvation was to benefit the Gentiles, but surely we can recognize that what was given to Paul on behalf of the Gentiles was not the call to salvation, but the commission to preach to them.
 - 3) In case there is any doubt on that score, vs. 8 spells it out.
 - a) To Paul, the least of all saints ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὐτῆ (“was given this grace”).
 1. Recognize the structural and rhetorical significance. In the previous long sentence (vs. 2-7), Paul began and ended talking about grace that was given to him (in both places using forms of these same words for “was given” and “grace” in vs. 8).
 2. We are to see vs. 8 as an explanation of the grace that was given Paul in vss. 2-7.
 - b) Then Paul defines the grace that was given to him: “to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
 1. The grace given to Paul in this digression is not the grace of salvation and forgiveness. The grace given is the favor bestowed to be the apostle to the Gentiles, the proclaimer to the Gentiles.
 2. “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...” (Galatians 1:15-16).
- d. In a later section, we will highlight the gift of preaching. In this section, I want to focus on the fact that he viewed his preaching as a gift of stewardship.

¹⁰ My own translation

¹¹ My own translation

2. Stewardship

a. Definition of terms

- 1) “The word *οἰκονομία* was discussed at 1:10 and 3:2 and has two nuances: first, the position or office of an administrator; second, the activity of administrating. Although the nuances are intertwined and both may be in view, the emphasis in 1:10 is on the activity of the administrator, whereas the emphasis in 3:2 and 9 is on the arrangement or plan of the mystery. Here it could have the idea of strategy.” (Hoehner, 455-6)
- 2) “The term *οἰκονομία* speaks either of a plan, or of the exercise of a *stewardship* role of administration in the execution of that plan or mission. In 3:9, the term clearly refers to God’s plan, as it did in 1:10. So it would make sense for that meaning to be here.” (Bock, 93, italics in original)
- 3) However, before we worry that the difference in these two nuances of definition is going to make some major difference in what we learn from Paul, Bock goes on to say: “This is one of those places where it is hard to be sure of the exact nuance, but it makes little difference in the meaning as the ultimate point is the same: Paul has a commission he is exercising from God that has brought him into contact with Gentiles.” (*Ibid.* 94)
- 4) A steward is one who is given charge over what actually belongs to another. The steward is not an owner. The steward is an administrator, a manager.

b. The picture of stewardship

1) Consider Joseph in Genesis 39

a) “The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.” (Genesis 39:2-4).

1. Joseph was made the overseer of Potiphar’s house and belongings. Notice it was because Joseph found favor (*χάριτι*) or grace in the eyes of Potiphar. This stewardship was a grace, it was a gift. It was an honor.

2) Not just the average servant

a) In Luke 12:42-46: “And the Lord said, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.’”

b) Though every servant would have to steward anything the master put in his charge (see Matthew 25:14-30), not every servant was a steward.

- c) The steward was over the household. In charge of the servants, often even the children (Galatians 4:2). He was tasked with distributing food, payment, and necessities to the servants of the house.
- 3) Often given great latitude, but always accountable to the owner.
- a) In the story of the dishonest steward in Luke 16:1-9, we see that stewards were given great latitude. In fact, they were even allowed to gain profit themselves from the stewardship.
- b) However, first and foremost, their duty was to the owner to prosper the owner. If the steward did not perform his duty well, he would be held accountable by the owner.
- c) This story also demonstrates that a steward was not necessarily a slave. Had this steward been a slave, he would have been punished. Instead, he must have been a freedman, therefore the consequence for failure was being discharged. (*ISBE*, 2853-4)
- 4) The primary and fundamental charge of a steward was to be faithful to the owner.
- a) “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).
- b) While stewards were given great latitude, the first principle of stewardship is to do with the owner’s property what the owner wants.
- c) The second principle is, where given latitude, use the owner’s property to profit the owner.
3. Paul as a steward.
- a. In Ephesians 2:29, Paul declared the Jews and Gentiles were members of the household of God. In Ephesians 3:2 he declares himself a steward in that household.
- b. In 1 Corinthians 4:1: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”
- c. What an honor. He, the least of all the saints (read that as servants) has been lifted up to the stewardship.
- 1) In fact, take this a step further. Paul is a servant in the household of God because he is a conquered enemy. He was an avowed enemy of the Master. However, he was defeated in battle, taken captive, and carried home to be a servant in the King’s household.
- 2) Is this the kind of person most kings would make the steward of their household? Not likely. That is a ready-made recipe for disaster, treachery, betrayal, and treason.
- 3) What an honor that Paul, the one who had persecuted Christians, blaspheming and opposing the Master with great fury, was granted the honor of being a steward in the Master’s household. What a gift.
- d. He is charged with caring for the household. He is charged with distributing the “food” to all as they have need. He is especially charged with the feeding of the Gentiles.

- 1) Perhaps this is why in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Paul, who declared himself a steward just a chapter later, wrote, “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.”
 - 2) As a steward he was charged with distributing to the household as they had need.
- e. As 1 Corinthians 4:2 said, his primary duty is faithfulness. “He is a steward, not an inventor, of the precious message God has given to him. God revealed this to Paul directly, so what he expresses is not the product of his own mind or initiative. The goals of grace and reconciliation are God’s agenda.” (Bock, 94)
- 1) He did not invent the gospel message for the Gentiles. He was administering God’s plan. His job was to administer it faithfully. His job was not to alter it. His job was not to revise it to his liking. His job was to steward it.
- f. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, Paul demonstrates a great understanding of stewardship. One we moderns often miss.
- 1) Since, as a steward, nothing he used was his own but was placed in his hands by the actual owner, he recognized that he was not responsible for the growth.
 - 2) Stewards may plant or water, but the owner is the one who actually provides the seed and the water. The steward is not using his own money to buy seed. The steward is not using his own money to provide water for the seed. The steward is not providing the pay and the meals for the servants and hired hands to tend the fields.
 - 3) When a steward has done a great job, managing the household, providing for the servants and children, investing in seed, water, and labor, the steward must remember if not for the owner, the steward could have accomplished nothing.

4. Our stewardship.

- a. Of course, I recognize we have not been given the same stewardship as Paul. That was reserved for apostles. However, we can draw parallels.
 - 1) Doesn’t 1 Peter 4:10-11 draw that parallel out for us? “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”
- b. Stewardship is a gift. It is a grace. It is an honor.
 - 1) How amazing is it that any of us are granted the opportunity to steward the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - 2) How amazing is it that any of us are granted a role of stewardship, being tasked with the feeding of the household of God?
 - 3) I am not worthy of that opportunity. You are not worthy of that opportunity. That is strictly a grace from God. Therefore, we must steward it.
 - 4) We should spend time daily on our knees thanking God for the favor He has bestowed on us that we get this opportunity.
- c. What do we have that we did not receive? (1 Cor 4:7).

- 1) Have you ever had the joy of baptizing someone? Isn't it wonderful?
 - 2) Have you ever preached a home run sermon? Isn't it wonderful?
 - 3) Have you ever taught an awesome Bible class? Isn't it wonderful?
 - 4) Have you ever been asked to preach a Gospel meeting? ...give a lecture? ... speak at SITS?
 - 5) Had God, the owner, not provided the gospel, had He not provided us Bibles, had He not provided us with teachers, had He not provided us with ability, had He not provided us with opportunities, we would never have accomplished that.
 - 6) We are servants, stewards, to whom God has given these opportunities. We are nothing. God is the one who provides the growth.
- d. In the 2016 SITS conference, when presenting on "The Foolishness of Preaching" as seen through Acts, we considered the nature of preachers based on the definition of κήρυξ, the word translated "preacher," which also means "herald." At that time, we noted a quote from Friedrich which highlights the stewardship of preachers: (Crozier,123)
- 1) "It is demanded, then, that they deliver their message as it is given to them. The essential point about the report which they give is that it does not originate with them. Behind it stands a higher power. The herald does not express his own views. He is the spokesman of his master...Heralds adopt the mind of those who commission them, and act with the plenipotentiary authority of their masters...It is unusual for a herald to act on his own initiative and without explicit instructions. In the main the herald simply gives short messages, puts questions, and brings answers. Sometimes he may simply hand over a letter (Diod. S., XIB, 47, 1). He is bound by the precise instructions of the one who commissions him (Eur. Suppl., 385). The good herald does not become involved in lengthy negotiations but returns at once when he has delivered his message (*Ibid.*, 459, cf. 388). In rare cases he may be empowered to decide on his own. But in general he is simply an executive instrument. Being only the mouth of his master, he must not falsify the message entrusted to him by additions of his own. He must deliver it exactly as given to him (Plat. Leg., XII, 941a)." (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 687-8)
- e. We are stewards. Our job is to do the absolute best we can with the gifts God has given us (1 Pet. 4:10-11), to work as hard as we can (1 Cor. 15:10), to do as much good as we can (Mat. 5:16) not so we can be seen, but so God can be seen.
- f. Then and only then will we win the glory war.

D. The Gift of Revelation

1. Revelation/revealed

- a. "That according to revelation was made known to me the mystery, just as I wrote before in brief"¹² (Eph. 3:3). [ὅτι] κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον, καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ
 - 1) Paul describes how the stewardship was given to him. Regrettably, the ESV hides the emphasis.

¹² My translation

- a) As seen in multiple translations (e.g. KJV, NKJV, NASB, NET), the preposition “by revelation” is pulled to the front of the sentence. No matter where Paul had placed that phrase, it would have been the most important. But drawing it to the front highlights its importance.
- b. “As it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:5).
- 1) On the surface, this demonstrates Paul is not the only one who has received this gift. Revelation has been given to apostles and prophets.
2. The gift of revelation for Paul is indicated by what he wrote before in brief.
- a. There is a great deal of discussion regarding “as I have written briefly.” Most of which tends to say it refers to an earlier part of the Ephesian letter.
- 1) Bruce describes the difficulty in nailing this phrase down: “Where did Paul ‘write before in brief’ about the revelation of the mystery? Presumably in some document to which the present readers had access, whether this letter or another. In this letter one might think of the mention of the mystery of the divine purpose in Eph. 1:9-10, or of the creation of ‘one new man’ described in Eph. 2:14-26. Or on the view (probable on other grounds) that Ephesians was addressed (*inter alios*) to the Christians of the Lycus Valley, one might think of Col. 1:25-27, where Paul’s stewardship involved the unfolding to the Gentiles of the contents of that rich mystery ‘concealed for ages and generations.’ The statement of Col. 1:25-27 is indeed ‘in brief’ compared with the more ample statement of Eph. 3:2-13. Certainty is unattainable, and no single interpretation of the words ‘I wrote before in brief’ is free from difficulties.” (Bruce, 312, italics in original)
 - 2) Smelser explains it could refer to something written earlier in the letter: “Does προέγραψα (*previously written*) refer to something earlier in this same epistle, or does it refer to some other document? Both uses of the word can be illustrated. Occurrences of προγράψω meaning *aforementioned*, with reference to something previously mentioned within the same document, are found in literary Greek as well as in non-literary Greek.” (Smelser, 146-147, italics in original)
 - 3) “Uncertainty exists about the intention of ‘as I have already written briefly.’ Reference could be to something written earlier in the same document or to an earlier document. If we assume the readers had access to Colossians or Romans, we could argue that the reference is to an earlier document. However, in light of the difficulty with the address in 1:1-2, one can assume nothing about the recipients. Most commentators accept that Paul is referring to 1:9-10 or to 2:11-22, and this is the safest understanding, even though it makes 3:4 seem unusual. If so, then verse 4 means, in effect, ‘If you have read 2:11-22, you see the insight I have into the significance of God’s revelation in Christ.’” (Snodgrass, 160)
 - 4) “Others have argued that the phrase refers to Paul’s earlier letters and in the use of the phrase have found support for the theory that Ephesians served as an introduction to the Pauline corpus. . . These theories, however, are highly speculative and are not accepted by most scholars today. The majority of commentators understand the phrase to be a reference back to what the author previously wrote in Ephesians.” (MacDonald, 261-262)

- 5) “In regard to the last suggestion,¹³ it is difficult to see what is written in the rest of the Pauline corpus as ‘brief,’ a description which makes sense as a slightly depreciatory way of referring to what stands earlier in the same document (cf. 1 Peter 5:12; also Heb 13:22), but not as a reference to several documents. So, as the majority of commentators propose, the clause is best taken as a reference back to the earlier chapters of the present letter and, more specifically, 1:9, 10 and 2:11-22 with their discussions of the disclosure of the mystery and the inclusion of the Gentiles.” (Lincoln, 175)
- 6) “Paul had previously **written** (proegrapsa) concerning the mystery of God. That earlier statement had been presented **in brief** (en oligo), i.e. ‘in a few words.’ Some suppose that statement of the mystery was written in a previous epistle. He may, instead, be referring to his brief comment in chapter one (vvs. 9-10).” (Caldwell, 109, emphasis in original)
- 7) “Paul says he wrote beforehand to them about this. The expression could mean ‘wrote in brief’. So when exactly did he do this? It seems most likely that he is referring to what he has just said, especially in 2:11-22. The remark, then, is reflective and in part a recognition of his digression before he goes on to pray. Paul is saying, ‘See above for my insight on this’, and that insight is what is about to cause him to pray.” (Bock, 95)
- 8) Lockhart and Roper are most definite: “**I wrote before in brief** must refer to what he had earlier written in this Ephesians letter that had direct bearing upon the mystery and the Gentiles (see 1:9, 10; 2:11-22).” (Lockhart and Roper, 154, emphasis in original)
- b. However, it seems to me that a great deal of the discussion sidesteps what Paul actually claimed he had previously written about.
- 1) When considering the passages commentators choose as possibly antecedent to Paul’s reference in Ephesian 3:3, whether they want to talk about other letters or earlier in Ephesians, the focus seems to be mostly on Paul writing about the contents of the mystery.
 - a) For instance, when they refer to Ephesians 2:11-22. Or when they think of Romans or Galatians as a whole. Or when they make the, I believe, untenable argument that Ephesians is a disciple of Paul collecting his previous works and using Ephesians as an introduction to them and then claiming this is a reference to Paul’s collected works.
 - 2) “As I have written briefly,” however, doesn’t refer to previous writing about the contents of the mystery. Rather, it refers to writing about the manner in which Paul received the mystery: made known by revelation.
 - 3) Paul is not saying, “I have written briefly before about the mystery.” He is saying, “I have written briefly before about receiving the mystery according to revelation.”
- c. When commentators do focus on passages that mention the revelation, those passages don’t seem to fit the contextual purpose of Ephesians 3:3-4.
- 1) Keep in mind that Paul refers to the aforementioned writing to bolster his present argument. “When you read this previous writing,” Paul essentially

¹³ The last suggestion being that Ephesians is a later introduction to a collection of the Pauline corpus, and, therefore, this statement refers to the rest of Paul’s writings.

explains, “you can learn something more or something different than I am stating now.”

2) Ephesians 1:9-10 falls short.

a) First, as Smelser points out, “Ephesians 1:9 refers to a revelation made to *us*, not one made specifically to Paul.” (Smelser, 148, italics in original) The Ephesians 3:4 revelation is specifically to Paul.

b) Second, Ephesians 1:9 doesn’t help us know anything about Paul’s insight into the mystery of Christ. It says less than Ephesians 3:3-4 does. Therefore, why would Paul point people to Ephesians 1:9 to learn he has insight into the mystery?

3) Colossians 1:25-27 falls short as well for similar reasons. Why would Paul direct his readers away from what they are reading “right now” to read something else that says exactly the same thing as what they are reading?

4) Romans 16:25-27 falls short for the very same reasons. Why would Paul direct his readers away from what they are reading “right now” to read something else that says exactly the same thing as what they are reading?

d. The passage that most fits Paul’s purpose and statement is, in my opinion, Galatians 1:11-24.

1) First, note that προέγραψα can refer to something written in a prior document.

a) Smelser, whom we earlier noted claiming the word could refer to a previous reference in the same document, goes on to say:

1. “But in the first century, the word was also used of something written on a previous occasion. In the 12th year of Tiberius, one Chaireas wrote to his friend, Tyrranos, προέγραψά σοι ἀνδραγαθὴν καὶ ἀπατεῖν (*I previously wrote to you to be firm and demand payment*).” (Smelser, 147, italics in original)

2. “προγράφω is found elsewhere in the New Testament three times: Romans 15.4, Galatians 3.1, and Jude 4. In Romans 15.4, the reference is to the Old Testament scriptures, things written outside of the letter to the Romans. In Jude 4, it is possible that the word is used without pointing to a literal writing. Almost certainly must this be the case in Galatians 3. But in both instances, it is clear that the reference is to something outside the document wherein the word is used.” (*Ibid.*)

2) Lincoln, though he concludes 1) that Paul isn’t the author and 2) that AE, as he labels the “Author of Ephesians,” is referring to an earlier portion of Ephesians, makes an interesting statement, which I believe points us in a different direction from his conclusion:

a) “It is this notion of revelation which receives emphasis by the placing of the phrase κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν, ‘according to revelation,’ at the beginning of the clause (cf. also the use of the verb in v 5), and by the way this placement reinforces the idea of disclosure already present in ‘was made known.’ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν should not simply be translated ‘by revelation,’ indicating the means by which the mystery was made known, as most commentators assume, since this is a meaning which is not attested for κατὰ with the accusative. Instead this is an example of

the use of *κατά* with the accusative to indicate the norm and, at the same time, the reason or ground¹⁴. . . In Gal 1:12, 16, Paul had talked of ‘a revelation of Jesus Christ’ in connection with his reception of the gospel and of the purpose of this revelation being the preaching of Christ among the Gentiles. Presumably it is this initial formative revelation on the Damascus road which provided the writer’s inspiration for the link here with the disclosure of the mystery.” (Lincoln, 175)

b) Lincoln sees Galatians 1:11-24 as the reason a later disciple collecting, summarizing, or representing Paul’s works might bring in this word “revelation” to his discussion of the “disclosure of the mystery” to Paul in Ephesians 3:3. However, if I accept that Paul is the author, wouldn’t this argument hold that Galatians 1:11-24 is the reason Paul brings this word about “revelation” into this discussion in Ephesians 3:3?

1. Lincoln’s argument reminds me of Smelser’s observation: “One final observation: The contrast between older and more recent expositors, the older ones seeing a reference to an earlier epistle and the more recent ones seeing a reference to something in the present epistle, loosely corresponds to the difference in opinion concerning authorship. The correlation is not so strong that we may suppose one who defends Paul as the author will see a reference to an earlier epistle. Many defenders of Pauline authorship have understood *καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ* as a reference to the present epistle. And on the other hand, Goodspeed, who did not believe Paul wrote Ephesians, took 3.3 as a reference to an earlier letter. But it may be said that those who deny Paul as the author generally do not see a reference to an earlier epistle.” (Smelser, 149)

3) Similarly, Witherington, though he also suggests Paul is referring to an earlier part of Ephesians in 3:3, can’t help but notice the connection to Galatians 1:

a) “He gained knowledge of ‘the mystery’ from a revelation from God (v. 3; cf. 1:9). This may well allude to the experience described in Gal. 1:15-17, where Paul says that he did not derive his calling or the essence of his message from anyone other than God in Christ.” (Witherington, 264-5)

4) O’Brien makes a strong connection:

a) “The *revelation* granted to Paul occurred on the Damascus road when ‘God...was pleased to reveal his Son in me’ (Gal. 1:12, 15-16). The divine initiative is signaled here by means of the passive ‘was made known’, while the phrase ‘according to revelation’, which is placed first in the clause for emphasis, provides a standard for evaluation and refers to the ground or basis on which Paul became acquainted with the ‘mystery’ (cf. Rom. 16:25). The event itself, Paul as the recipient of the revelation, and especially the ground on which he became acquainted with the mystery were all features which he wishes to draw to the attention of his readers.” (O’Brien, 228-9, italics in original)

¹⁴ BDAG supports this claim under its definition of *κατά*: “B. with acc ... 5. Marker of norm of similarity or homogeneity ... a. to introduce the norm which governs something ... δ. Oft. The norm is at the same time the reason, so that *in accordance with* and *because of* are merged.” (italics in original).

- 5) Galatians 1:11-24 is 1) a brief record, only 205 words, 2) a record explaining how Paul received his teaching by revelation, 3) written before Ephesians.¹⁵
- a) “On the other hand, a strong case can be made for taking καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ as a reference to some earlier document such as Galatians. In Galatians, Paul not only wrote that he received the gospel by revelation of Jesus Christ (1.11), in a few words he adamantly rebutted any claim to the contrary (1.11-24). Moreover, he specifically wrote that he was to preach ‘among the Gentiles’ (1.16), that he was ‘entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision’ (2.7).” (Smelser, 148)
 - b) Lincoln claims this is “among the more unlikely suggestions” about the meaning of Ephesians 3:3, but gives no argument why. (Lincoln, 175) He merely dismisses it within his argument that the verse cannot refer to the entire Pauline corpus. Certainly, “in brief” could not refer to the entire Pauline corpus. But that does not mean that it cannot refer to a 205-word section somewhere within the Pauline corpus.
 - c) Though, in the article, Best is not attempting to connect Ephesians 3:3 to Galatians 1, his discussion of when the revelation to evangelize the Gentiles came makes the following intriguing claim connected to our discussion: “His earliest detailed reference is found in Gal. i.12, 15, 16 and ii.1-1-. In ch. i he emphasizes that he did not receive his Gospel from those who had been in the church before him; he received it δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως; the anarthrous noun probably lays stress on the method by which he received the gospel rather than indicating an actual act of revelation, though all the aorist tenses in the passage suggest that this is what it was.” (Best, *JTS*, 15-16)
 1. The claim is Galatians 1 is the earliest detailed reference. Placing the writing of Galatians before Ephesians.
 2. Please, note that while Best makes an argument that the lack of the article (“anarthrous noun”) means he is laying stress on method, he also points out that the use of aorist in all the verbs suggests he is actually emphasizing an act of revelation. If the latter is true, Paul is emphasizing the revelation that occurred on the road to Damascus.
 - d) Best goes on to make the connection between Ephesians 3 and Galatians 1 clear: “What is said is that he obtained the knowledge by a direct and personal communication from God. The aorist ἐγνωρίσθη suggests an event in the past but gives no indication as to its duration or date. The author of the letter presumably associates it with the experience on the road to Damascus.” (*Ibid.*, 24)
- 6) The main argument against the claim that Ephesians 3:3 refers to Galatians 1:11-24 is that we cannot assume Paul’s letters had received wide enough distribution for him to expect the recipients of Ephesians to have read Galatians.
- a) Isn’t this objection begging the question? Isn’t it assuming what is to be proven? Isn’t it circular reasoning?

¹⁵ “Note: Since Paul seems to be at liberty when he wrote Galatians, it must have been written sometime before his arrest in Jerusalem at the conclusion of his Third Missionary Journey (Acts 21).” (Kay, 58)

- b) When scholars who write commentaries say we can't assume or can't believe there was such a widespread distribution of Paul's writings at the time, we often just accept that as if they must know something more definitely than they do. Why can't we believe Paul's letters had received wide enough distribution?
- c) Rather than assuming Ephesians 3:3 cannot refer to another of Paul's writings because we assume the other writings couldn't have been distributed so widely, couldn't we assume Paul believed there had been a wide enough distribution?
- d) "Paul, an apostle... To the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:1-2).
1. The Galatian letter was not written to or for a single congregation. Rather, Paul intended this letter to be distributed to multiple churches.
 2. Is it really too great a leap to believe a letter written by the apostle Paul, designed to be copied and distributed across such a large region, would be distributed even beyond the original region into Asia?
- e) Further, the question of who the actual recipients of the Ephesian letter were must be considered.
1. I will not repeat all his arguments here, but Smelser includes a very compelling discussion in his commentary regarding the intended recipients of the letter we know as Ephesians. I recommend reading it. (Smelser, 16-43)
 2. Based on the generic and impersonal nature of the letter, the significant differences between it and Colossians (a letter whose similarities make the differences striking), and its emphasis on Gentiles, Smelser's ultimate conclusion is "Ephesians" was an encyclical for Gentile Christians throughout Asia first delivered to the Ephesians as Tychicus traveled from Rome to Colossae and perhaps beyond into Galatia."
- 7) The point to be made here is, on the one hand, we have an earlier letter written to Galatian churches intended to be distributed heading west through Galatia that naturally would have made its way into Asia. On the other hand, Paul is writing a letter to Gentile Christians starting in Ephesus and heading east toward Galatia. Is it really all that untenable to think Paul believed at least some, even many, of the recipients of this letter we call Ephesians either had or could read his brief record of receiving revelation recorded in Galatians 1:11-24?
- e. What was revealed to Paul according to Galatians 1:11-24?
- 1) "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).
- a) Many read "a revelation of Jesus Christ" to mean "a revelation that came from Jesus Christ." Thus, the picture they get when they read these two verses is that Paul received a teaching, a sermon, a series of doctrinal lessons from Jesus Christ by revelation which he called the gospel.

- b) However, “a revelation of Jesus Christ” does not here refer to a message revealed by Jesus Christ. Rather, it refers to Jesus Christ as the revelation. Paul received his gospel in the revealing of Jesus Christ to him on the road to Damascus.
- 2) “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...” (Galatians 1:15-16).
- a) Paul himself defines the revelation as Jesus Christ.
- b) When God called him by His grace (don’t miss the connection back from Ephesians 3:3), He revealed His Son to Paul. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was the revelation.
1. In Galatians 1:12, “revelation” is ἀποκαλύψεως from ἀποκάλυψις.
 2. In Galatians 1:16, “revealed” is ἀποκαλύψαι from ἀποκαλύπτω, the verb form of the noun in Galatians 1:12.
 3. In the first verse, he received a revelation of Christ, and in the second, the Son of God was revealed to him.
 4. Jesus Christ is the revelation.
 5. We quoted Best above regarding Galatians 1:12, 15, 16. Here is that quote again and then continuing on to his conclusion about the revelation: “His earliest detailed reference is found in Gal. i.12, 15, 16 and ii.1-1-. In ch. i he emphasizes that he did not receive his Gospel from those who had been in the church before him; he received it δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως; the anarthrous noun probably lays stress on the method by which he received the gospel rather than indicating an actual act of revelation, though all the aorist tenses in the passage suggest that this is what it was. The way in which Paul received this gospel is contrasted with the ways men normally receive information from one another. The content of the revelation is probably ‘Christ’, and therefore ‘call’ and conversion are regarded as simultaneous, for in verse 16 Christ is revealed (ἀποκαλύψαι) ‘in Paul’ and the result is that he preaches ‘Christ’ to the Gentiles; it was part of the revelation that he should preach to them; a revelation would hardly have been necessary to evangelize Jews.” (Best, *JTS*, 15-16)
- 3) What gift of revelation did Paul receive according to what he wrote before in brief? The resurrected Jesus Christ.
- 4) If the above is true, note Smelser’s conclusion:
- a) “Paul’s point seems to be that any of his present readers who had read in his previous writing about the mystery being made known to him by revelation would have gained insight into his perspective, that he was one who understood the mystery of the Christ.
 “This passage has been a favorite proof text for use in showing that the word of God is comprehensible, as if Paul had meant, ‘By reading what I am writing, you can understand what I understand.’ But that does not seem to be Paul’s point here. Rather he seems to be saying, ‘If

you read what I previously wrote, you can understand *that I understand.*” (Smelser, 150, italics in original)

3. The gift for Paul is demonstrated once again by a rhetorical construction.

a. In 3:3-5, there is an inverted parallelism construction:

- A according to *revelation*
- B was *made known* to me
- C the *mystery*
- D as I *wrote* before in brief
- D' which you are able by *reading*
- C' to understand my insight in the *mystery* of Christ
- B' which to other generations was *not made known* to the sons of men
- A' as now *revealed* to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit

b. Paul is making a personal claim with this structure.

- 1) What had not been made known to the sons of men in earlier generations had been made known to him. How had it been made known? By revelation. That was exactly how it had been made known to Jesus's holy apostles and prophets.
- 2) Through this structure, Paul is declaring he is one of Jesus's holy apostles and prophets.
- 3) Smelser's statement in [II. D. 2. e. 4) a)] is bolstered by this. By reading Galatians 1:11-24 we learn why Paul has insight into the mystery of Jesus Christ. He is an apostle informed by the Holy Spirit. Which, of course, is the very point of Galatians 1.
- 4) Recall that the key role for an apostle according to Acts 1:22 is to be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus.
 - a) “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:8-9).
 - b) While it is true that just because someone witnessed the resurrected Jesus did not automatically make them an apostle (consider the 500 brethren of 1 Cor. 15:6; also Joseph Barsabbus Justus of Acts 1:23), it was by witnessing the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus that Paul was given the gift of apostleship.

4. Jesus Christ is the mystery that was revealed to Paul.

a. The mystery of Christ¹⁶

- 1) “He calls it in verse 4, as in Colossians 4:3, *the mystery of Christ*. So evidently it is a specially revealed truth ‘of which Christ is both the source and the substance’.” (Stott, 116-7, quoting *Exposition of Ephesians* by William Hendriksen, Baker, 1967)
- 2) “Jesus Christ is the essence and contents of the revealed secret (Col 2:2). ‘Christ among [or in] you, the Gentiles’ (Col 1:27) is its manifestation in person. While in I Cor 1-2 and 15 Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are placed in the foreground (and in Colossians, the hope), in Ephesians the accent is set upon the rule of Christ over all powers in heaven and on earth,

¹⁶ For a look at the grammar of “the mystery of Christ” in Ephesians 3:4, read Appendix C.

and upon the creation of a new man by the peace made between Jews and Gentiles and God. In all cases Jesus is proclaimed the Messiah. His secret is this: before the creation in God's counsel, during the historic fulfillment of God's decision, and at the consummation of God's will, he includes in himself a great people. His power over all powers guarantees their salvation." (Barth, 125-6)

- b. I will explain how the expansion of Paul's definition of the mystery in 3:6 fits with this theory in a moment. However, first please note how this concept carries on the major theme throughout all of Ephesians: In Christ.
- 1) "Paul places great emphasis on the crucial role of Christ. The writer cites Christ and his work extensively; the exact phrase 'in Christ' in Greek occurs nine times (though J. A. Allen asserts that the concept of 'in Christ' in its various grammatical forms actually occurs thirty-four times)." (Klein, 14)
 - 2) "The expression 'in Christ' and its parallels occur thirty-six times in the Book of Ephesians, and if the other similar expressions listed below are included, the total is thirty-nine times." (Hoehner, 173)
 - a) The expressions Hoehner lists include "in Christ," "in Christ Jesus," "in Jesus," "in the Lord," "in the Lord Jesus," "in Him," "in whom," "in the beloved," "in the blood of Christ," "alive together with Christ." (*Ibid.*, 173-4)
 - b) The passages are throughout the entire book: 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 20; 2:5, 6, 7, 10, 13; 2:15, 16, 21, 22; 3:6, 11, 12, 21; 4:1, 17, 21, 30, 32; 5:8; 6:1, 10, 21. (*Ibid.*) With this list as a guide, thirty-four verses contain these phrases, some contain more than one (e.g. 1:13; 2:21). Ephesians only has 155 verses. More than 1 out of 5 verses mentions this concept of "in Christ."
 - c) While the glory of God is clearly the thrust of the first half of Ephesians and sets the stage for the second half, it isn't mentioned in the last three chapters. However, "in Christ" is throughout the entire letter. In other words, the glory of God is accomplished in Christ. Which, of course, is exactly what Ephesians 3:21 says.
 - 3) "The blessings, which Paul enumerated in the verses following, are bestowed by God 'in Christ.' For Paul, this means at least two things. First, in an instrumental sense Christ is the one through whom God has acted to redeem the world. Second, in an incorporative sense Christ is the place where believers are located; through baptism they have identified with the crucified and risen Jesus and have entered a vital union with him." (Capes, 21)
 - 4) Ephesians 1:9-10: "unite all things in him"
 - a) The first time we read of the mystery in Ephesians is in 1:9-10. Here, the "mystery of his will" is set forth "in Christ" and is the plan "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." Place emphasis here on "in Christ" and "in him."
 - b) O'Brien explains what he sees as the central point of Ephesians based on 1:9-10: "Cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ are the central message of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This emerges initially from Ephesians 1:9-10, where it is proclaimed that God has made known to us the mystery of his will the content of which is 'that he might sum up all things in Christ'. This text provides the key for unlocking the glorious riches of the letter, 'draws together into a unity' many of its

major themes, and enables us to gain an integrated picture of the letter as a whole.” (O’Brien, 58)

c) He goes on to say: “Now in vv. 9 and 10 the stress is placed on the one in whom God’s overarching purposes for the *whole* of the created order are included. The emphasis is now on a universe that is centred and reunited in Christ. The mystery which God has graciously made known refers to the summing up and bringing together of the fragmented and alienated elements of the universe in Christ as the focal point. All things are to be summed up in God’s anointed one and presented as a coherent totality in him.” (*Ibid.*, 59, italics in original)

d) Do not miss the wordplay that connects this theme to Christ and the church.

1. The word translated “ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι” is the aorist, middle, infinitive of “ἀνακεφαλαιόω.”
2. In 1:22, Paul is going to write: “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church...” “head” translates “κεφαλήν” the aorist, singular of κεφαλή.
3. Do you see the wordplay between “head” and “unite”?
4. To be fair, multiple authors declare the connection I’m making invalid.
 - a. “ἀνακεφαλαιόω is thought to come from κεφάλαιον (‘main point, summary’) rather than κεφαλή (‘head’). This suggestion appears to fit the only other New Testament use at Rom. 13:9, where the commandments of the second table of the Decalogue are summarized in the command to love one’s neighbour, but this basic meaning is also appropriate in view of its usage for speech or letter conclusions throughout ancient Greek rhetoric down to Roman times (cf. Ps. 71:20 Theodotion). Whether the verb ἀνακεφαλαιόω (‘to sum up’) was chosen because it contains an echo of the term κεφαλή (‘head’) is doubtful.” (*Ibid.*, 111, n. 97)
 - b. However: “The word κεφάλαιον from which the verb is derived meant not only a summary but also the head or leading man in the state, and is here influenced by its connexion with κεφαλή, Christ the Head of the Body, i.22, iv. 15.” (Lock, 22)
 1. In other words, even if “unite” comes from κεφάλαιον, that word itself was used at times to refer to a governmental head of state because of its connection with κεφαλή.
 - c. Further, isn’t this exactly the same kind of wordplay we find from Paul in Ephesians 3:14-15?
 1. “Father” translates “πατήρ.” And “family” translates “πατριά.”
 2. As much as some want to turn the latter word into “fatherhoods,” consensus is that was never the meaning

of the second word. It means “family.” However, is there a doubt that Paul is making a play on words here? Of course not.

5. Therefore, Schlier in his essay on the Greek words for “head” and “unite” says: “The ἀνακεφαλαιοῦσθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ obviously consists in the διδόναι αὐτὸν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ (1:22). The summing up of the totality takes place in its subjection to the Head. The subjection of the totality to the Head takes place in the co-ordinating of the Head and the Church. As the Church receives its Head the totality receives its κεφάλαιον, its definitive, comprehensive and (in the Head) self-repeating summation. In the Head, in Christ, the totality is comprehended afresh as in its sum. To be sure, ἀνακεφαλαιοῦσθαι is to be derived from κεφάλαιον rather than κεφαλή. But it is most likely that what is meant by the designation of Christ as κεφαλή led the author of Eph. to choose this relatively infrequent but rich and varied term which agrees so well with his intention.” (Schlier, 681) What O’Brien found doubtful, Schlier finds certain.

e) Mackay, whose unifying concept of Ephesians is God’s Order says, “The Structure or ‘Order’ thus envisaged has its center in Jesus Christ. Christ constitutes its core.” (Mackay, ix)

1. He goes on to say, tying together the ideas of “uniting in Christ” and “headship of Christ”: “When Paul, however, envisioned the supreme spiritual structure of reality and announced that Jesus Christ was the ‘Head of His Body the Church,’ a society which God had constituted to be the pattern for true human unity and the seat of the power which alone could produce unity; and when he went on to say that God had designed a much vaster unity in which He would ‘sum up’ in Christ things terrestrial and things celestial, he was proclaiming what, according to his own deep conviction, had been unveiled to him by God Himself as the core of all reality and the clue to all understanding of reality.” (*Ibid.*, 3)

f) The key for our consideration in all this is that the very theme of the book is the summing up, the uniting, the bringing together of all things in Christ. And that plan was already called the mystery in 1:9-10.

5) Recognizing the mystery as Christ Jesus Himself, revealed to Paul on the road to Damascus and to the apostles on that very first day of resurrection, fits with Paul’s “in Christ” theme of this letter. And it makes the expanded explanation of the mystery in 3:6 all the more powerful.

c. Ephesians 3:6: “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” (Or more literally, “...the Gentiles to be fellow heirs and fellow body members and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”)

1) Especially as recorded in the ESV, the seeming natural definition of the “mystery of Christ” is that the Gentiles are blessed alongside the Jews as equals.

a) “More specifically here, it refers to the revelation that the Gentiles are included in Christ as equals (see esp. 3:6).” (Snodgrass, 159-60)

- b) "That the mystery of which he speaks in verses 3 and 4 is the fact that the Gentiles are included in God's plan of redemption (verse 6) is clear." (Mare, 80-1)
- c) "That God would bless the Gentiles, then, was not a new revelation. What then was the new revelation, the mystery hitherto concealed? It was this: that God's blessing of the Gentiles would involve the obliteration of the old line of demarcation which separated them from Jews and the incorporation of Gentile believers together with Jewish believers, without any discrimination, in the new, comprehensive community of God's chosen people." (Bruce, 314)
- d) "What was not expected, however, was that God purposed to include believing Gentiles in the same family and body as the Jews, the physical heirs or 'seed' of Abraham. Now in Christ they enjoy the same election, redemption, and future as their Jewish counterparts in the church." (Capes, 28-9)
- e) "All these references show that the mystery concerning the Gentiles was not that God would receive the Gentiles. The mystery was the Divine purpose of bringing Jew and Gentile together in one body, the church, to share equally in all spiritual blessings. The mystery was the place of the Gentiles in God's plan. No longer were there to be Jews and Gentiles. All would be Christians together on an identical footing. In the church, ethnic, racial, or national differences are inconsequential." (Caldwell, 114)
- f) "These observations lead to the conclusion that the mystery can be referred to as previously unknown because of the unexpected manner in which the Gentiles are saved. There are specifically two aspects of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the body of Christ that represent such a mystery. First, there is a degree of nearness enjoyed by the new covenant saints that transcends the expectations of the OT. Second, the inclusion of the Gentiles takes place on the basis of the abrogation of the Mosaic covenant. As a result, Paul's view of the Gentiles is radically different from that of his contemporaries. No longer was a right standing with God conditioned upon observance of the Mosaic law. Nor could compliance with the Mosaic law code be seen as an adequate expression of a life governed by the Spirit (cf. Gal 5,18). The Gentiles' inclusion in the new body could therefore take place on quite unexpected terms, without them having to become Jews in order to enter into the people of God. They are not seen as proselytes to Israel. To force them to become as Jews is a sin (Gal 2,11-14)." (Grindheim, 547)
- g) "Accepting this view does not exclude the fact that there were no references to Gentile blessings (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) or Gentile inclusion within Israel (Lev 19:34; Deut 10:18-19; 1 Kgs 8:41-43). However, in all these passages there was never the suggestion that Jews and Gentiles were one body. On the contrary, a Gentile had to become a Jew to be fully accepted within Israel. There are many passages which allude to Gentiles being blessed along with Israel (Isa 2:1-4; 11:10; 49:6; 60:1-3; 61:5-6; Jer 3:17; Zech 8:20-23; 14:16-19), but they do not refer to the past but rather to the future kingdom (cf. Acts 3:18-20). Again, there is no portrayal of one body; rather Israel and the Gentiles remain distinct, though both will enjoy God's blessing.

The body of believers is an entirely new concept in the NT.” (Hoehner, 440)

- 2) However, “This mystery is that” is supplied by the ESV translators to make the connection back to vs. 4 clear. The ESV footnote for this verse makes that clear, saying, “The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4.”
- 3) The addition of this phrase in the ESV makes it seem that 3:6 is the definition of the mystery. Rather, I believe we need to see 3:6 as an expanding explanation of the mystery which is Christ.
 - a) The infinitive “εἶναι” (*to be*, though translated in the ESV as simply “are”) appears to be exegetical. That is, it is a further explanation of the noun to which it is related. (Wallace, 606-7) In this case, “mystery” from vs. 4. Or perhaps, “Christ.”
 - b) If we were to remove the intervening explanation about the timing of the revelation of the mystery, the text might read: “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery, which is Christ, namely that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow body members, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel.”
- 4) I suggest that in Ephesians 3:6 the emphasis as far as the mystery is concerned is not Jews and Gentiles together, but rather that it is Jews and Gentiles together *in Christ through the gospel*. That is, the mystery is not so much that Gentiles receive a blessing or get to partake in the promise, it is that they do so *in Christ*.
 - a) Notice Hoehner’s comment about the mystery as used in 1 Corinthians 2:7: “In 1 Cor 2:7 the mystery, equated with the wisdom of God, is revealed as the crucified Christ who is the power of God for salvation.” (Hoehner, 431)
 - b) Hoehner’s train of thought seems to be that in 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul explains he knew nothing among the Corinthians except Christ and Him crucified. This word, according to 1 Corinthians 1:18, is the power of God for those being saved. And among the spiritually mature, this word of the cross is wisdom and also the power of God per 1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:6-7.
 - c) Please, don’t miss the parallels to Ephesians 3. In 1 Corinthians 2:7, this wisdom (the crucified Christ) is a hidden mystery (see Ephesians 3:9). However, it was decreed by God before the ages (see Ephesians 3:9, 10). And was for “our glory” (see Ephesians 3:14).
 - d) Keep in mind that this wisdom and the word of the cross is the gospel which Paul preached (1 Corinthians 1:17) and which he defined as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1-11).
 1. Paul preached this gospel because: “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:8-10).
 2. Can you miss the parallels between this and our passage in Ephesians?
 - a. The revelation of Jesus to Paul (Ephesians 3:3).

- b. The revelation of Jesus to the other apostles (Ephesians 3:5).
 - c. This was a grace from God to Paul (Ephesians 3:2, 7-8).
 - d. This grace commissioned Paul to work or laid a stewardship, an administration, and obligation on Paul (Ephesians 3:2, 7).
 - e. Paul was the least (Ephesians 3:8).
- e) The point being: this use of the mystery in 1 Corinthians 2:7 makes an emphasis on “in Christ through the gospel” in Ephesians 3:6 natural. The gospel, that is Christ crucified and resurrected, is the wisdom of God which had been hidden. It is the revealed mystery. It was revealed to Paul on the road to Damascus when Jesus was revealed to him.
1. While I am not sure he agrees with my assertion that Christ is the mystery, Smelser does see that the Gentiles being joint heirs, etc. is only part of the picture. The emphasis is on the gospel.
 - a. “What Paul describes as having been a mystery, now revealed, is in part the fact that Gentiles would be joint heirs, fellow members of the body, and sharers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul summarized the gospel as being essentially the following facts: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared. While even in that very passage, Paul mentions that Christ’s death, burial and resurrection were ‘according to the scriptures,’ *i.e.*, the OT prophecies, it had been a mystery that Gentiles’ status as joint heirs, fellow members of the body, and sharers of the promise would be accomplished in the gospel as essentially summarized in these facts. No one had understood that by a death and resurrection, indeed the humiliation of the very one anticipated as the Messiah, Gentiles would be reconciled to God along with Jews, in one body. That had been a mystery.” (Smelser, 151)
- 5) Paul brings “the Gentiles to be fellow heirs, fellow body members, and fellow partakers” to the front not because that is the crux of the mystery but because of the ties back to Ephesians 1:9-10 and 2:17-22
- a) Ephesians 1:9-10
 1. God’s plan from ages past was to unite all things in heaven and on earth under the headship of Jesus Christ (1:9-10).
 2. Gentiles and Jews are united under the headship of Jesus Christ through the gospel. The mystery is not so much that Jews and Gentiles are brought together, but rather that the location, the sphere, the instrument, the means of this uniting is Christ.
 - a. In other words, Paul is saying the mystery is Christ, namely that Christ is the uniting head over all things in heaven and on earth, starting with uniting the Gentiles and the Jews.
 3. Consider again 1:9-10, but this time keep it also in the context of the “in Christ” and “in Him” statements of Ephesians 1:1-14.
 - a. Ephesians 1:3: Every spiritual blessing is found where? In Christ.

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- b. Ephesians 1:4: Who was chosen before the foundation of the world? Those who are in Him. (Don't miss the connection to Ephesians 3:9, that the mystery was hidden from the ages in God who created all things.)
 - c. Ephesians 1:5-6: In love He predestined us for adoption, blessing us where? In the Beloved.
 - d. Ephesians 1:7: Where is redemption and forgiveness found? In Him.
 - e. Ephesians 1:11: Where do we obtain an inheritance? In Him.
 - f. Ephesians 1:12: Who is to the praise of God's glory? Those who hope in Christ.
 - g. Ephesians 1:13-14: Where are we sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit? In Him.
 - h. Ephesians 1:13-14: In whom must we believe to have all these blessings? In Him.
 - i. Ephesians 1:9-10: It is this "Him" in whom all things are to be united.
4. There are many parallels between Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 3. I can't help but notice in this part of the discussion the following.
- a. In Ephesians 1:11, we are God's heritage in Him. In Ephesians 3:6, the Gentiles are fellow heirs in Christ or, perhaps, a fellow allotment for God in Christ.
 - b. In Ephesians 1:13, we are sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit in Him. In Ephesians 3:6, the Gentiles are fellow partakers of the promise in Christ.
 - c. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Jesus is the head of the church which is His body. In Ephesians 3:6, the Gentiles are fellow members of the body in Christ.
 - d. Again, what is the actual emphasis in all of this? In Christ.
5. Consider also the parallels between Ephesians 1-3 and Paul's commission received on the road to Damascus. That is, with the record of the event in which he received the revelation.
- a. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:15-18).
 1. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting": Connecting with 1 Corinthians 15:9, this is called to mind by Ephesians 3:8 and the claim to be the least of all saints.

2. “Those things in which you have seen me and I will appear to you”: This is the revelation of Ephesians 3:3.
 3. “Delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles”: Though this speaks of the deliverance, it presupposes captivity, which is highlighted in Ephesians 3:1 when Paul declares himself a prisoner.
 4. “To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light”: Of course, this is a fascinating play on the fact that Paul is blinded on the road to Damascus and has his eyesight restored by Ananias. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prays for the eyes of the Ephesians hearts to be enlightened. And in Ephesians 3:9, Paul is to bring to light for everyone this plan of the mystery.
 5. “that they may turn...from the power of Satan to God”: In Ephesians 1:19-20, Paul wants the Ephesians to know the immeasurable power of God toward those who believe. In Ephesians 2:1-2, when the Ephesians were dead in their sins, they had followed the prince of the power of the air. In Ephesians 3:16, 20, Paul prays that they would be strengthened with God’s power because God can do far more than they ask and think by His power working in them.
 6. “that they may receive forgiveness of sins”: In Ephesians 1:7, they had received redemption the forgiveness of sins in Christ. Though “forgiveness” is not used, in Ephesians 2:1-10, life is given to those who are dead in sin.
 7. “a place among the sanctified”: In Ephesians 1:18, he wants the Ephesians to know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints. In Ephesians 2:19, the Gentiles are fellow citizens with the saints.
 8. “by faith in me”: In Ephesians 1:13, the Ephesians were sealed in Christ when they believed in Him. In Ephesians 1:15, Paul prayed for them based on hearing about their faith in the Lord Jesus. In Ephesians 1:19, he wants them to know the power “toward us who believe.” In Ephesians 2:8, they were saved by grace, through faith. In Ephesians 3:17, Christ will dwell in their hearts through faith.
 9. Seeing these connections, the letter of Ephesians is basically the written fulfillment of Jesus’s commission of Paul on the Damascus road.
- b. The key here is the recognition that it was in the revelation of Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus, when Jesus was revealed to him (per Galatians 1:11-24), that Paul received this message to go to the Gentiles. The emphasis in all of this was Jesus.

b)Ephesians 2:11-22

1. Do not forget “for this reason.” In Section I, we highlighted the aspects of Paul’s transition phrase that led into this section of Scripture.
2. Notice that “for this reason” points back to so much that is done in Christ.
 - a. 2:12: In other generations, the Gentiles had been separate from Christ.
 - b. 2:13: But now, they are brought near in Christ.
 - c. 2:14: The dividing wall was broken down in His flesh.
 - d. 2:15: That He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two.
 - e. 2:18: Through Him both Gentiles and Jews have access in one Spirit to the Father.
 - f. 2:20-21: Christ Jesus is the cornerstone in whom the Jews and Gentiles are being joined together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord.
3. Fellow participants: the three blessings for the Gentiles are compound words built off the preposition σύν. This concept of “together with” is so important to Paul it appears he even coined the second term to make his point.
 - a. In Ephesians 3:6:
 1. In Christ, the Gentile Christians are fellow heirs (συγκληρονόμα) with the Jewish Christians. They are fellow participants in the inheritance. Or rather, playing off his earlier statement in 1:11, the Gentile Christians are part of God’s heritage along with the Jews.
 2. In Christ, the Gentile Christians are fellow body members (σύσσωμα) with the Jewish Christians. As 2:15 says, Jesus created in Himself one new man from the two reconciling both Gentiles and Jews to God in one body.
 3. In Christ, the Gentile Christians are fellow participants (συμμέτοχα) in the promise with the Jewish Christians. Some suggest this is a reference back to 2:12 and the “covenants of promise.” Others connect it back to 1:13 and the promise of the Holy Spirit.
 4. Those who make the connection of fellow partakers of the promise to 1:13 see a parallel to the trinity in these three joint participations. Fellow heirs looks back to Ephesians 1:11, 18, being the heritage of the Father. Fellow body members points to 1:22-23, being members of Christ’s body. Fellow participants in the promise pointing to 1:13 and participating together in the promise of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. In Ephesians 2:17-22:

1. 2:19: The Gentiles are fellow citizens (συμπολίτης) with the Jews and members of the household of God.
 2. 2:21: The Gentiles are being joined together (συναρμολογέω) with the Jews, growing into a holy temple in the Lord.
 3. 2:22: The Gentiles are being built together (συνοικοδομέω) with the Jews into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
 4. Above, we noticed the potential connection to the Trinity in 3:6. Notice, in point 1}, Gentiles and Jews are fellow citizens and members in the household of God, the Father. In point 2}, Gentiles and Jews are growing together into a holy temple in the Lord, the Son. In point 3}, Gentiles and Jews are being built into God's dwelling place by the Spirit.
- c. The point is Paul brings these three points about the Gentiles forward because he is building off what he had said in chapter 2 that is the springboard for chapter 3.
- d. I certainly have no desire to get into a dogmatic argument over whether the mystery is that Gentiles get to be fellow heirs, fellow body members, and fellow partakers in Christ or that the mystery is Christ in whom the Gentiles get to be fellow heirs, etc.
- 1) There is little meaningful distinction. There is truly no applicational difference. It is a matter of emphasis.
 - 2) I do believe in Ephesians 3:4-6, as "the mystery" connects with the rest of the letter, as it connects with Paul's revelation of Jesus recorded in Galatians 1, as it connects with the Damascus road experience recorded in Acts, the mystery is Christ. Everything else is subordinate to that.¹⁷
- e. If I understand the mystery correctly, the emphasis is not that we Gentiles, who believe along with the Jews who believe, can be citizens of the kingdom and subjects of the King. The emphasis is that Jesus is the King. He is the King of both Jews and Gentiles. He is the King of the Universe. God is summing up, bringing under one head, uniting all things terrestrial and celestial in this King. He is the King. We are the subjects. He is the mystery. He is the victory. He conquered death and that was revealed to Paul on the road to Damascus. He was given the great grace to bring that message to Gentiles like us. We can only win the glory war when we know that all things are being united under Jesus Christ who is the head, who is the King. We can only win the glory war by submitting ourselves to Jesus, by being united under Him.
- 1) In the church, we are not united by politics. We are not united by education. We are not united by country. We are not united by language. We are not united by socio-economic class. We are not united by status. *Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.*
 - 2) We are united under and by Christ Jesus our King. He is the King of victory.

¹⁷ For a discussion of how Jesus can be considered the mystery if He was prophesied in the Old Testament, read Appendix D.

- 3) Though he writes in a bygone era, Mackay hits on the need for King Jesus to be the uniting fact in the supreme order of all things: “*This Letter proclaims the essential image.* Amid the Nihilism of our time, when men are desperately trying to make sure of their existence, searching earnestly for some useable mythology, and pledging their loyalty to some daring and meaningful symbol, yesterday to Fasces and Swastika, today to the Hammer and Sickle, Paul proclaims the essential image. That image is the figure of Jesus Christ. Christ is the token that God wills fellowship, that love is the ultimate reality. Christ is the center of a community, the Church, which is designed by God to be the precursor of a vast cosmic society.” (Mackay, 21, italics in original)

5. Revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit

- a. Remember that Paul started this section of Scripture with “For this reason.” In Ephesians 3:4, he was pointing back to what he had written in 2:17-22.
- 1) There he had stated that the apostles and prophets are our foundation (2:20).
 - 2) Earlier [I. C. 3. b.], I explained in 2:20, Paul was referring by metonymy to the writings of the apostles and prophets.
 - 3) Here in 3:4, Paul explains why those writings are the foundation. The apostles and prophets had received the truth from the Holy Spirit. Thus, what they wrote down was inspired by God through the Holy Spirit.
- b. What the apostles and prophets of the New Testament taught was from the Holy Spirit.
- 1) “For who knows a person’s thought except the spirit of that person, which is in Him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).
 - a) But this has been the very point of Paul’s statement in Ephesians 3:3-5. He has received his message by the revelation of the Spirit. What had not been revealed to the sons of men in past generations has now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets, of whom Paul is one.
 - 2) “And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret (μυστήριον) and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’ — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Corinthians 2:6-10).
 - a) Paul didn’t learn what he is teaching because he sat around thinking, philosophizing, theologizing. He received a revelation directly from God. He received the message from Jesus Christ. He received the message by the Holy Spirit as did the other apostles and prophets. He did everything he could to demonstrate the Spirit was the source of the message, not his own mind or the minds of other men.

- c. What the apostles and prophets received from the Spirit, they wrote down just as many of the Old Testament prophets had done.
- 1) As Paul had said in Ephesians 3:3-4, not only was he writing the letter we call Ephesians, he had written before. And if my assessment of that statement is correct, he means he had written another writing.
 - a) And when we read that writing, we learn, as stated above that Paul really does have an insight. Why? Because he did not come up with his message on his own, he received it from God by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) In 2 Peter 1:16-21, Peter demonstrates that he too wrote down what he received from the Spirit. His indication is that even his earlier teaching to his readers about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration had been committed to writing and it was now Scripture. (If Mark was written during Peter's final days, he may be referring to that. Though, some believe Mark was written after Peter's death.)
 - a) "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).
 - 3) Peter even demonstrates that by the time he is writing his letter, sometime in the early to mid-60s, Paul's writings were already being considered Scripture.
 - a) "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-17).
 1. First, Peter claims that Paul was writing based on the wisdom given to him. Further, he writes based on the wisdom given to him in all the letters he writes of these spiritual matters. It is not his own wisdom, it is wisdom granted to him, presumably by the Holy Spirit as Peter had said in 2 Peter 1:20-21.
 2. Second, there are Paul's writings and there are the rest of the Scriptures. That means Paul's writings are Scripture.
 - 4) This means Paul's statement to Timothy about Scripture applies to the writings of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.
 - a) "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - b) Though when Paul wrote this, the sacred writings and Scriptures were almost universally the Old Testament, he doesn't say the Old Covenant Scriptures or the writings of the Law and the Prophets. He simply says Scripture. That would include what any of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament wrote down.
 - c) "Breathed out by God" translating θεόπνευστος is almost definitely a play on words.

- d) It is a compound of θεός/“God” and πνέω/“blow/breathe.”
- e) The noun cognate, πνόνη/“breath/wind” was what was heard when the Holy Spirit came rushing on the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2:2). It is also what God breathed into the dust-fashioned man to bring him to life in Genesis 2:7 (LXX).
- f) There is a strong connection between πνεῦμα/“a blowing/breath/wind/spirit,” and πνέω.
- g) Thus, the Scriptures are the very breathing out of God’s Spirit. No, the Scriptures are not the Spirit. But the connection between the Spirit and the Scriptures is so strong we must never overlook it.
- d. The Scriptures, including those that were written by the apostles and prophets, are the breath of life. We must breathe them in if we will live.
6. The gift of revelation in our lives.
- a. In 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul wrote, “Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”
- 1) Paul recognized he was “untimely born.” There was a general time for when apostles were born and when they witnessed the resurrected Jesus. Thus, he recognized he was an exception to a rule. He was not the new rule.
 - 2) Paul declares he was “last of all.” That is, there would be no more exceptions.
 - a) “Here Paul equates his Damascus-road experience with the appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter, the Twelve, etc. ... The most striking feature of the reference is Paul’s claim that the risen Christ appeared last to him. Within the sequence ‘then, then, then’ ἔσχατον can only imply that there will never be another appearance of the risen Christ to anyone. Thus the event which either included or led to Paul’s commission to go to the Gentiles cannot be repeated. The belief that, some considerable time after the resurrection-appearances were finished, he, Paul, was granted a special appearance, and that there would never be any more appearances, must in any case have produced in Paul an intense feeling about his own unique position.” (Best, *JTS*, 20)
 - 3) There is no apostolic succession. There are none alive today who can say, “When you read about how I received revelation you can understand that I have insight into the mystery of Christ.” None of us can say that.
 - 4) None of us have received the gift of revelation.
- b. However, we do have the sacred writings. We do have the record of God’s Word revealed to the apostles. We do have the record of their insight into the mystery, into the gospel, into Jesus and all that is entailed in Him.
- 1) What a gift we hold in our hands when we open our Bibles.
 - 2) We ought to be thankful.
 - 3) We ought to proclaim it faithfully.
 - a) “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is

coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

- b) Considering God has given us the words of life, why would we change them. Why would we distort them, alter them, twist them? Why would we neglect them?
- c) I don't always like what God's Word says. But what good is it to disagree with God's Word? What good does it do me to change it?
- 4) We have a choice.
- a) I can, like Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 36, cut up the record of God's Word. I can pick and choose the bits I like and ignore the rest. I can toss the whole thing in the trash can and do what I want.
1. But that isn't uniting under the King and Head Jesus Christ, is it? That is making me the head. That is me trying to forge my own unity.
 - b) OR I can hang on every word. I can read it for all its worth. And I can govern my life by it, just as Jesus did with the Old Testament when tempted in Matthew 4:1-11. I can live by it and proclaim it whether anyone else likes it or not.
- 5) Some try to straddle the fence. They claim to be anchored in the word revealed by the Holy Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets, but then try to claim that because it is a mystery, they cannot be definite.
- a) Despite Lloyd-Jones's Calvinistic misunderstandings, his response to this is profound:
- “As we read these New Testament epistles we frequently meet this word ‘mystery’; it is therefore essential that we should understand what the Apostle means by it. There are many who teach that this term ‘mystery’ means that the Christian message, the Christian faith, is something vague and indefinite and nebulous, something which really cannot be defined at all; in other words, they assert that Christianity is but some form of mysticism. At this point we see the practical relevance of this portion of Scripture to our position today. The whole tendency of ‘modern thought’ is to discount definition and doctrine and dogma and all theological formulation. It is asserted that definitions of faith divide Christians, and as the one thing that matters is that we should all be united we must not give heed to precise definitions. Indeed many go further and say that Christianity by its very nature is something that eludes definition. You must not try to define Christianity, they say, because it is a wonderful mystical experience, it is a mystery. You cannot say what it is, but you can be initiated into it; you cannot state it on paper, but you can feel it and experience it. The moment you try to say what it is and to define it -- to say it *is* and it *is not* that -- you are destroying it, because it then ceases to be a mystery. So they interpret the word ‘mystery’ as meaning ‘mysticism’, or almost ‘mistiness’, a vague indefiniteness, something which cannot be expressed in propositions. But, surely, the Apostle himself here, and everywhere else, completely denies such an interpretation. What he

says is that the mystery has been ‘revealed’, that he is a preacher of it because the mystery has been ‘revealed’ to him. It is not something vague and indefinite, but a message that has been made plain and clear to him.” (Lloyd-Jones, 32-33, italics in original)

b) If we will win the glory war, we must surrender our will to what we read in the clearly revealed Word of God that came through the apostles and prophets.

7. It has been a long road to get here, but all of this leads us to understand Pickup’s brief conclusion:

“Nothing could be known and understood of God’s wise and eternal purpose except through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Today this revelation is found only in the New Testament (3:3-5). This full and complete revelation was given to selected men, chosen by Jesus Christ, known as apostles and prophets. This revelation is what is to be preached. Whatever is not a part of revelation, having no basis in God’s wise and eternal purpose, is without authority, lacks the approval of God, and is, therefore, wrong.” (Pickup, 136-7)

E. The Gift of Preaching

1. Earlier [II. C. 1. c. 3)], we recognized 3:8 as another expression of the grace Paul had been given by God.

- a. ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι (was given this grace, to the Gentiles to preach).
- b. “In Ephesians the special position of Paul is again brought out. In Eph. iii.8 no greater claim may be made than that Paul preached the gospel to Gentiles.” (Best, *JTS*, 24)
- c. “Paul saw himself as a man who had been given a double privilege. He had been given the privilege of discovering the secret that it was God’s will that all men should be gathered into his love. And he had been given the privilege of making this secret known to the Church and of being the instrument by which God’s grace went out to the Gentiles.” (Barclay, 125)
- d. There can be no greater statement than 3:8 about the wonderful nature of preaching. Preaching is a gift.
 - 1) I do not mean the ability to preach is a gift (though, of course, it is). I mean the opportunity to preach is a gift. Being allowed to preach is a gift.
 - 2) Certainly, the church, congregations, and Christians should recognize that those who preach, who proclaim, who evangelize are a gift from God (see Ephesians 4:8, 11).
 - a) Of course, this is not supposed to produce in us the arrogance of those who believe they are “God’s gift to mankind.”
 - b) However, it does show the importance of preaching.

2. Let us not lose sight of where we are in our study.

- a. Paul is imprisoned and fears the Gentile Christians may lose heart on account of his imprisonment.
- b. This digression in 3:2-13 is intended to encourage them.
 - 1) First, by pointing out that he is the prisoner of Jesus Christ, not of Rome. He is right where Jesus wants him.

- 2) Second, by expressing that, imprisonment is a small price to pay in exchange for the amazing gifts Paul has been given. He has been given the gift of Stewardship and the gift of Revelation. And now he highlights the gift of preaching. And not preaching to just anyone, preaching to the very Gentiles to whom he is now writing.
3. The awe-inspiring nature of this gift is demonstrated by the threefold impact of preaching expressed in 3:8-10. “This has three steps distinguished from one another in stating those to whom it is offered: the Gentiles (vs. 8), all people (v. 9), the powers (vv. 9f).” (Best, *ICC*, 316)
- a. “To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8).
- 1) Riches in Ephesians
- a) Ephesians 1:7-8: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.”
- b) Ephesians 1:18: “Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”
1. Though shockingly, connected back to 1:11, this actually refers to the saints as the inheritance of God. (Smelser, 77-8, 92)
- c) Ephesians 2:7: “So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
1. Though a different word, immeasurable riches are surely parallel to unsearchable riches.
- d) God lavishes the riches of His grace upon us through Jesus Christ, making us His own riches, a people for his own special possession (Tit. 2:14; 1 Peter 1:9-10).
- 2) What else would a steward have to manage but riches? And these are the unsearchable riches of Christ.
- a) Unsearchable
1. “The wealth of Christ that Paul is to proclaim is beyond man’s ability to fathom.” (*Ibid.*, 156)
2. This is a picture of investigation, of trying to search out the bottom of the pile. The riches of Christ pile so high we cannot see the horizon of them nor are we able to climb to their peak.
- b) Of Christ
1. “The precise relationship Paul intends to indicate between the ‘wealth’ and ‘Christ’ may be that the wealth comes from Christ...or that the wealth *is* Christ...” (*Ibid.*, italics in original)
2. “Those *unsearchable riches* were not simply the gospel, not doctrine, but Christ himself (cf. Matt. 13:44).” (Foulkes, 103, italics in original)
3. “‘The riches of Christ’ could be taken as a subjective genitive referring to the salvation of which Christ is the possessor and bestower (cf. Meyer, 164), but the other uses of πλοῦτος in

Ephesians, and the writer's dependence on the thought of Col 2:3, 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' and Col 1:27, 'the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ among you,' make it far more likely that it is to be interpreted as an objective genitive. Christ himself constitutes the content of the riches of the gospel, and the wealth of the salvation to be found in him is unfathomable. Yet, for all the glory attributed to Christ by this formulation, in the context its thought is subordinated to the ministry of the apostle. It is to Paul that grace has been given to make these glorious riches of Christ available to the Gentiles." (Lincoln, 183-4)

4. In Psalm 19:10; 119:72, 127, the word of God, His commandments, statutes, laws, rules, precepts are to be desired above gold and fine gold. In Job 28:12-19; Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:10-11, 19; 16:16, wisdom is to be sought more than riches. Jesus, the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1), the very wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24) is beyond all riches.
5. As the psalmist says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25).
6. No wonder Paul was willing to count everything else as rubbish, refuse, dung, suffering the loss of all things in order that he might gain Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

c) To the Gentiles

1. The first and foremost responsibility of any steward is to do what the owner wants done with his riches. The owner had commissioned Paul to preach His riches to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17).
 2. It was no waste to take the wealth God had offered the Jews and spread it around to the Gentiles. Because His riches are unsearchable and unending, it is not a zero-sum game. Paul can preach these unsearchable riches to the Gentiles without costing the Jews anything. There is enough to go around.
- b. "And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things."
- 1) "There is good reason, however, to see the following dynamic at work in Paul's argument. The second infinitive is built upon the first so that it is the result of the activity of the first." (Gombis, *WTJ*, 320)
 - a) Lenski agrees with this: "A second infinitive clause is added in order to bring out more fully what the first states in a more general way..." (Lenski, *Ephesians*, 477)
 - b) That is, "to enlighten" is built upon "to preach." Thus, it is that by Paul preaching to the Gentiles, all would be enlightened.
 - c) In other words, while this is a second stage in Paul's mission, it is not so much that Paul will preach to the Gentiles and then to all men. Rather, it is by preaching to the Gentiles all men will be enlightened.
 - d) Smelser explains how this is so: "Paul does not say *to enlighten all men what is the mystery*, but *to enlighten all men what is the dispensation of the mystery*. Remember that Paul is talking about the grace that was

given to him, namely the privilege to do two things, first to proclaim to the Gentiles the incomprehensible wealth of Christ, and second, to enlighten all men concerning the dispensation of the mystery. The point of contrast between these two goals is twofold. First, it is the audience. In the first clause, the audience is the Gentiles. In the second clause, it is all men. And then there is the contrast in task. Paul was privileged to proclaim wonderful news to Gentiles, and additionally his work was to enlighten all men, Jew and Gentile, concerning the dissemination of God's grace such that all men might understand the egalitarian nature of the gospel." (Smelser, 157)

e) Isn't that exactly what happened in Acts 15?

1. When the controversy concerning circumcision came up in Antioch because men from Judea (Acts 15:1), in fact men from the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 15:24), came saying the Gentile Christians had to be circumcised, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to straighten the situation out.
 2. Do not be confused. Paul did not go to Jerusalem to find out what he was supposed to teach on the matter. He didn't receive the gospel he preached from men, remember? He learned the mystery by direct revelation (Galatians 1:11-24).
 3. And in that debate, all men were enlightened about the plan for the dissemination of the news of Jesus Christ, the gospel, the mystery. In the resurrected Christ, Gentiles are welcome.
 4. Best describes it this way: "The total context of Ephesians may have strengthened the contrast between before and after conversion in that it relates to the Saul who persecuted *Jewish* Christians and the Paul who forced Jewish Christians to accept *Gentile* Christians as equals." (Best, *ICC*, 317, italics in original)
- 2) Ephesians 1:9-10 had said the mystery was set forth in Christ as a plan to unite all things in heaven and in earth in Christ. Ephesians 3:9 reminds us that God created all things. As the Creator, He is sovereign. If it is His desire to unite all things in Christ, He can do that with His creation.
- 3) In Ephesians 1:17ff, Paul prays that the Father of glory would give the Gentiles a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of their hearts enlightened so they could know the hope to which they were called and the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe. This is the very same power He used to raise Jesus from the dead. Paul, through preaching, is bringing to light every bit of this for everyone.
- 4) What a unique position Paul was in. He had learned the mystery by a direct revelation from God of Jesus Christ. If anyone else was to learn it, they had to hear it from Paul (or one of the other apostles). What a privilege for Paul.
- c. "So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."
- 1) In these three stages, we have been climbing up a peak to look on ever grander vistas and horizons. Now we reach the height. Paul's preaching impacts not only Gentiles, not only all men, but now it impacts the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Let that sink in for a moment.

- 2) Let me complete the quote from Gombis [II. E. 3. b. 1)] here: “There is good reason, however, to see the following dynamic at work in Paul’s argument. The second infinitive is built upon the first so that it is the result of the activity of the first. In other words, the proclamation of Paul in v. 8b (εὐαγγελίσασθαι) is the means by which the church is called into existence, and it is this emergence of the church through the preaching of Paul the prisoner that is in view in v. 9a when Paul speaks of ‘enlightening all/ everyone (πάντας) what is the administration of the mystery.’ Paul is claiming, therefore, that the cosmically wide-ranging enlightenment regarding the mystery is *an actual demonstration of it*, rather than having to do with his speaking of its content. It is by actually *seeing the church in existence* that ‘everyone’ -- *primarily the cosmic powers* -- is made to be enlightened as to the manner in which God is working out his plan of salvation. The enlightenment spoke of here, then, is not *informational*; it is *demonstrative*.” (Gombis, *WTJ*, 320, italics in original)
- a) Hoehner agrees with this: “In verse 7 Paul was made a minister of the gospel, the function of which was to preach the unsearchable wealth of Christ (v. 8b) and to enlighten all of the mystery (v. 9). The purpose or result of his ministry, then, is that the mystery (manifold wisdom of God) be made known to angelic leaders by means of the church (v. 10).” (Hoehner, 459)
- b) This corresponds with Romans 10:12-15. By the preaching of the gospel, people believe. When they believe, they call on the Lord. When they call on the Lord, they are saved. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek on this. Through preaching, the church is established and grows.
- 3) Keep in mind that Paul is writing this letter from Roman arrest. Yet, the wisdom of God is being manifested by his church-establishing, church-growing, church-strengthening proclamation.
- a) “In his current situation, Paul is in a position of utter defeat at the hands of the powers, being completely in their grasp. Seen in terms of the present age, he could not be in a weaker, more shameful, or more vulnerable position. Yet, astonishingly, it is by his preaching of the gospel that the creative power of God is unleashed and engaged, and the church, the arena of the triumph of God, is called into being, thereby displaying the wisdom of God to the powers.
“This paradoxical dynamic at work in v. 10 is the same as that in 1 Corinthians, where God, ‘destroys the wisdom of the wise’ by choosing the foolish and the weak to shame the wise and the strong (1 Cor 1:19-27). In living out this paradox, Paul is following the pattern of humiliation and exaltation set by his Lord, whereby in his shameful death, by being utterly defeated, Christ triumphed over the evil powers (Eph 2:13-16; 4:8-10; Phil 2:8-11; Col 2:15).” (Gombis, *WTJ*, 322)
- b) Isn’t this precisely what we see at the end of Acts? “‘Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.’ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:28-31).

- 4) O'Brien explains the "manifold" nature of God's wisdom: "The compound adjective meaning 'manifold, variegated, very many sided' was poetic in origin, referring to an intricately embroidered pattern of 'many-coloured cloaks' or the manifold hues of 'a garland of flowers.' It is used here in a figurative sense to speak of the *richly diversified nature* of the divine wisdom." (O'Brien, 245, italics in original)
- a) Is it too "on the nose" to talk of this "many-coloured" wisdom being demonstrated as people of every tribe, tongue, nationality, race, even skin color are united together in the church under Jesus Christ?
 - b) "The church, as a reconciled community of Jews and Gentiles, serves as God's model of reconciliation to the heavens and the earth. The church then becomes God's first installment of the reconciled creation which will ultimately fill the cosmos." (Capes, 29)
- 5) It is not by preaching that the church instructs the cosmos, but rather by Paul's preaching that the church exists and grows -- its mere existence teaches the heavenlies.
- a) "Some have supposed that Paul here charges the church with the responsibility for making known the wisdom of God. But Paul's point here is not to say the church needs to proclaim the wisdom of God to the world, but rather that the very existence of the church demonstrates the wisdom of God to heavenly beings. Specifically, the existence of the church, including Gentiles as well as Jews, demonstrates the wisdom of God. The culmination of God's eternal purpose vindicated all that had gone before." (Smelser, 158)
 - b) "As a mighty engineering feat demonstrates the skill of the workmen; as the magnificent painting demonstrates the artist's skill; so the church demonstrates the wise and eternal purpose of God." (Pickup, 135)
- 6) Teaching rulers and authorities in heavenly places.
- a) When we think of this, we must first recall Paul's purpose with this digression.
 1. He is hoping to assuage the Gentile's discouragement and keep them from losing heart over his imprisonment.
 2. Their losing heart was not about discouragement over persecution, but giving up because it looked like Paul was on the losing side. After all, how could he claim to be seated above the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, if he was under the lock and key of rulers and authorities in the earthly places?
 3. But Paul demonstrates his great victory and high standing by demonstrating not only that through his work are the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies being instructed, but they are being instructed by the very salvation of the Gentiles to whom he is writing. They are, as they respond to Paul's teaching, by their very response and involvement in the community of Christ, exercising a kind of authority over the rulers and authorities in heavenly places, teaching them the very wisdom of God.
 - b) Who are these rulers and authorities?

1. “Within the Pauline corpus, these powers are mentioned in a variety of specific contexts, most notably those corresponding to decisive episodes in the story of Christ: they were brought into existence by the preexistent Christ in his creative role (Col 1:16); were led in triumphal procession as defeated enemies at the cross (Col 2:15; cf. 1 Co 2:6, 8); were subjected to the triumphant, exalted, and reigning Christ (Eph 1:21; cf. Col 2:10; Php 2:10); and will be destroyed at the eschatological consummation of God’s plan (1 Co 15:24).” (Longman and Reid, 139)
2. In Ephesians
 - a. Ephesians 1:20-21: “That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”
 - b. Ephesians 6:12: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
 - c. In the first passage, we simply hear about heavenly authorities. In the second, we learn they are not all friendly. Some of them are attacking. But whether friend or foe, Christ’s church displays to them the wisdom of God.
3. Throughout the Bible
 - a. The throne room of God.
 1. God is described as sitting above the cherubim (e.g. 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Isaiah 37:16).
 2. In Ezekiel 1 & 10, we see a record of Ezekiel’s vision of the very throne of God above the cherubim.
 3. In Isaiah 6:2, we also see seraphim in the throne room of God.
 4. Thus, sitting with Jesus Christ at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, sets us above these heavenly authorities.
 - b. In Job 1:6; 2:1, Satan, the accuser is pictured as coming into the presence of God on the day that the sons of God come into His presence.
 1. In Job 38:7, these sons of God are not human worshipers, but heavenly beings who were there at creation.
 2. No doubt, the sons of God are to be seen as friendly, God-submitting authorities. However, Satan is the accuser.
 3. We sit above all these rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

c. In Daniel, we are introduced to heavenly authorities, both friend and foe.

1. We are introduced to Gabriel in Daniel 8:16; 9:21. Presumably, this is the same Gabriel who appeared to Zechariah and Mary in Luke 1:19, 26.
2. In Daniel 10:13, we are also introduced to Michael, called one of the chief princes. He is on the side of the Israelites. Clearly, he is one of the authorities in the heavenly places.
3. In Daniel 10:13, 20, we are introduced to the princes of the kingdoms of Persia and Greece. However, in their battle against the one in Daniel's vision, they clearly are not men. They are some kind of heavenly powers and authorities who are involved in a spiritual battle behind the scenes of the physical realms. They are opposed to God's people and to Michael and Gabriel.
4. We sit above all these.

d. Celestial bodies

1. As shocking as it may sound, when God created the world, God created the sun, moon, and stars. They were for signs and for seasons. They governed the times. The sun "rules" the day, and the moon and star "rule" the night (Gen. 1:16, 18). (Benoit, 8)
2. Certainly, as creations of God, they were not true spiritual powers. However, God warned the people against looking to them as powers to follow (Deu. 4:17).
3. To whatever degree these celestial bodies are heavenly rulers, we sit above them in Jesus Christ.

e. Demons and deceitful spirits

1. "The Demons appear in the surely genuine epistles of Paul only in 1 Cor 10:20f, in the precise sense of the false gods whom the pagans worship through their idolatrous practices." (*Ibid.*, 3)
2. While Zechariah 13:2 demonstrates when God removes the prophets from the land, He will also remove the spirit of uncleanness, "In 1 Tm 4:1 they are deceitful Spirits, whose doctrines will seduce the people of the later times." (*Ibid.*)
3. It seems that just as the Holy Spirit no longer works in miraculous manifestations, but is still able to influence people, just so these demons and evil spirits, while no longer in the land possessing folks, are able to influence and seduce through some means.
4. While these are fighting against us, we sit above them, and the church instructs them.

c) Mackay provides great comfort and insight regarding the role of the church in instructing these powers, whether friends or foes.

1. "It is surely significant that in the glowing thought of St. Paul the life and history of the Christian Church constitutes the chief lesson book in which spirits higher than human spirits, the Principalities and Powers in the heavenly sphere, will receive their deepest lesson into the 'manifold [the many-colored] wisdom of God.' Not only so, but it is only in the Christian community, when its corporate life functions as it ought, that men in general can be taught, by concrete illustration, the meaning of that abundant, sacrificial self-giving which alone constitutes true life." (Mackay, 22)
 2. "There is no sublimer thought in the Ephesian Letter or in all Scripture than this. The history of the Christian Church becomes a graduate school for angels. By studying the Body of Christ intelligences superior to man receive new flashes of insight into the divine nature. They come to understand things which had been to them inscrutable in God's dealing with men, and they catch a vision of the ultimate splendor and dimensions of the Creator's purpose in Christ. And what they contemplate is not that kind of wisdom which consists in grasping ideas that were always there; they behold the operation of power that becomes the source of new ideas." (*Ibid.*, 61-2)
- d) "In the mission of God the church is both token and instrument in the work of redemption which ultimately will embrace the entire universe. God's new people, Jew and Gentile gathered in Christ, exist as the colony of heaven in this world, bringing to pass a glorious purpose now and forevermore (cf. 3:21)." (Corley, 30)
1. God will unite all things terrestrial and celestial under Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:9-10).
 2. Surely, this will be accomplished in Jesus Christ, in Whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, when He, through Himself, will reconcile all things to Himself whether things on earth or in heaven. Which reconciliation is also accomplished by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:19-20).
 3. No doubt, this will be fully accomplished when ultimately at the name of Jesus, the name above every name, every knee should bow and every tongue confess in heaven and on earth to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).
- 7) Lock highlights a comparison and contrast that is important for us to note under this theme:
- a) "We have seen how the Roman Empire and its system influenced the missionary work of St. Paul, and how the Christian Church half consciously, half unconsciously entered into the imperial policy. It is therefore more probable that St. Paul saw a definite analogy between the Church and the empire, and that the picture of the ideal Church drawn in the Epistle to the Ephesians, while he was himself a prisoner in Rome, was partly framed upon the ideal of the empire. That empire had originated in one small Italian city which had triumphed over its enemies, which had extended itself throughout the world, which had broken down all barriers of nationality, which had admitted aliens and foreigners to be fellow-citizens, and all this was summed up in its one head, the Emperor, the object of worship, the security for peace among

the nations; while yet there still were enemies on the north and the east, against whom the empire had to be protected and the soldiers kept well armed for its defence (*sic*). In the same way the Christian Church had its origin in one small race, chosen out before the foundation of the world for God's work. In the fullness of time it had found its one Head; it was summed up in the Messiah, the one Lord, our Peace, who had broken down the barrier of Jewish distinction and made both Jew and Gentile one in their union with Him. Those who had been strangers and sojourners had been made fellow-citizens with the saints; those who had been estranged from the commonwealth of Israel were made its members. The kingdom was the kingdom of the Messiah as well as of God. Yet still there was conflict in store -- the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual battalions of wickedness in high places were threatening His work, and the Christian must stand as a soldier armed with the panoply of God." (Lock, 40)

- b) In our modern world, we miss the great contest that was going on. As in Exodus you had Israel against Egypt, Moses against Pharaoh, Yahweh against the idols, in the New Testament, we see the church against Rome, Jesus against Caesar, Yahweh against the idols.
 - c) In fact, as we have pointed out repeatedly, Paul is sitting in a Roman prison awaiting trial before Caesar.
 - d) Romans believed that all the world, in fact all the universe was seeing the wisdom of the gods in their world-conquering kingdom.
 - e) Not so! The cosmic powers, in fact eventually even the earthly Roman powers, were taught wisdom by Jesus Christ and His body the church. Praise the Lord!
 - f) They were much like Americans in this. The wisdom of God is not seen in the United States of America. It is not proclaimed by democracy. It is not housed in Congress. It is not recorded in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. The church is the only place God's wisdom is found.
- 8) A shocking comparison.
- a) Best gives some insight into ancient life. He suggests that churches of Christ, were not the only small group/fellowship communities in the ancient world. He likely wants to generalize what he shares too much and presents his case as more certain than it should be. However, I believe there is an important point to see in what he shares. It is a lengthy reading, but I hope it is insightful.
 - b) "A third factor relates to the wider content of the letter in which the nature of the church and the behavior expected from its members towards one another is presented. Those who became Christians came from a society containing many small groups based on common interests, e.g. burial clubs, trade associations, minor religious cults...Groups held regular meetings which members were expected to attend and their behaviour when they met for either business or social pressure was controlled; disruptive conduct was not permitted; those who offended might be fined or in some cases expelled. Those wishing to speak had to have the permission of the presiding officials. Even though the main purpose of the group might not be religious, sacrifices

were often offered. While groups might have ostensible public purposes, feasting was often one of their more important actual activities. In some groups stress was laid on the duty of members to keep internal peace and help one another.

“An inscription from Philadelphia dating from the first or second century BC gives an insight into one group...this group referred to itself as an οἶκος. Anyone, male or female, slave or free, could be a member. Members were sworn never to deceive anyone, use magic or spells, practise contraception or abortion, or use love potions. They are always to act favourably towards their own group and if they find others offending against its rules they are to expose them, for the gods will not bear with those who break the rules. Men are not to have sexual relations with boys, virgin girls or married women other than their wives; this apparently does not exclude the keeping of a mistress or resort to prostitutes. Freeborn women are more strictly controlled for they are not permitted sexual relations with any men other than their husbands; failure to observe this could lead to exclusion from the group. The god (singular) wishes obedience and the gods (plural) will be gracious (ἰλεως) to those who obey and give them the good things which the gods give to those they love; the disobedient will be punished. One goddess, that of the οἶκος, is asked to create good thoughts in members. We note that the picture of life within the group conflicts with what AE implies about Gentile behavior in 4.17-19 and, more importantly, if what is true of this group can be generalised, then those who became Christians were already used to membership in small groups with strict rules about conduct. To encounter similar, if not the same, regulations on becoming Christians would not then have surprised them. But they might have been surprised by the exclusive nature of their new group. This would have entailed them dropping out of some of these groups, particularly those of a religious nature and those concerned with members’ burials since believers now had an altered attitude to death. It would have been easier for them to have continued membership in trade associations though difficulties would arise when sacrifices were offered; probably some of the troubles Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 8-10 arose out of such membership.” (Best, *ICC*, 84-86)

- c) First, let me say that simply because groups like this existed, does not mean what Paul says in Ephesians 4:17-19 is at odds with the lifestyle of pagans generally.
- d) Second, I imagine Best is making more out of an inscription and some fragmentary facts than ought to be made. However, even if he is not, learning about such groups as these should not bother us.
- e) Even today, are there not “religious” groups, “spiritual” clubs that encourage a kind of morality and even spirituality in their members? Why would it have been different 2000 years ago?
- f) However, this doesn’t change what Paul explains in Ephesians 3:10. The wisdom of God is displayed in the church. Not in clubs, associations, guilds, societies. God’s wisdom is not displayed in the Masonic Lodge. It is not displayed in the Knights of Columbus. It is not displayed in Kiwanis, Rotary, or the Lion’s club. Christians can participate in some of these organizations and should eschew others.

But the wisdom of God is displayed in His church. And in the end, it will conquer not only the world, but the universe, and the heavenly realm as well.

4. The gift of preaching for us.
 - a. Of the gifts we have discussed so far. This is the one most easily translated into our lives.
 - b. What a gift we have in preaching. What a gift it is that God allows us to preach. God could have passed the message of His gospel along in any way He wanted. He chose to use preaching. And he is using us to be His instruments.
 - c. We have the amazing privilege to share with others, some who have never heard it before, the amazing riches of Christ. As the church grows and is built up through our preaching, we have a privileged part in instructing the heavenly powers of God's wisdom.
 - d. Why would he let men like you and me do this? It's a gift beyond compare.
 - e. If we will win the glory war, we will remember we are preaching as God's gift to us, not our gift to Him.

F. The Gift of Access

1. Access to God

a. In the tabernacle/temple

- 1) Since the construction of the tabernacle, priests ministered and worked to serve the Lord and the people. In fact, priests were free to enter the holy place and perform their rituals repeatedly, consistently, and continually.
- 2) However, only one had access to the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, behind the veil, before the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. Only one had access to the place where God would meet man, enthroned above the cherubim: the high priest.
- 3) And then, only if he brought blood. All of this can be found in Hebrews 9:6-7.

b. In the new temple

- 1) However, in Matthew 27:51, at the death of Jesus, the curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was torn asunder. This signified that the way to God had been opened by the death of Jesus Christ.
- 2) Thus, in Ephesians 2:18, Paul claimed both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians have access through the one Spirit to the Father.
- 3) Now, in Ephesians 3:12, hearkening back to 2:18, Paul describes the wonderful gift he has. In fact, not only him but all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ including the Gentiles.

2. The Paradox of Paul's Access

- a. "This paradoxical situation magnifying the triumph of God in Christ is still in view in v. 12, where Paul teases out the irony. He mentions the blessings of 'boldness' or 'freedom of speech' (*παρρησίαν*) and 'access in confidence' (*προσαγωγήν ἐν πεποιθήσει*) -- while he is in prison, a position in which he most likely enjoys little or no freedom or confident access to anything or anyone of consequence." (Gombis, *WTJ*, 322)

- b. In Acts 25:11, Paul's hand had been forced. He appealed to Caesar and had been sent to Rome. However, now he was sitting under house arrest. Any time Caesar wanted, he could see Paul and deal with this. But Paul did not have access to Caesar. He couldn't just walk in and talk to him and resolve this little misunderstanding.
- c. However, at the very time he was chained to a Roman guard, unable to access any place or any person he pleased, he always had access to God. What a blessing.
- d. Again, Paul very specifically is trying to encourage his Gentile readers not to lose heart at his imprisonment. Why did they not need to give up on Paul and Christianity, because even though he was under Roman arrest, he had free access with confidence to the Sovereign of the universe. Who cares if Caesar saw him or not?
3. Threefold bold access
- a. As if one term wasn't enough to get Paul's point across, he used three: *παρρησίαν, προσαγωγήν, and πεποιθήσις*. No doubt, Paul multiplied these terms because of their alliterative quality.
- b. "What all gain in their faith is confident access to God, a reconnection to the reason why they were created in God's image. In Christ we gain a reconnection to the living God. Three key terms describe this connection.
 "The first term, *parresiai*, means *boldness*. It appears in Acts 4:13, 29 and 31 to describe how Peter and John, before the Jewish leadership, declared without hesitation who Jesus is. The description means that believers approach God openly and address him as family members. They have every right to be there because of what Jesus has done. Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19 make a similar point. We can enter God's presence and approach the throne of grace because of what Jesus' death has accomplished. The same point is made in 1 Peter 3:18 by focusing on how Jesus' death as the just for the unjust brings believers to God. There is an absence of shame because of what Christ has given.
 "The second term is *prosagoge*, which refers to *access*, an open door. Paul already made this point in 2:18. Romans 5:2 also refers to the access we have by faith. God is approachable because of what has been done in Christ.
 "The third term, *pepoithesis*, speaks of *confidence*. It reinforces the other two descriptions in that it describes the context for boldness and access. We speak and enter confidently because of what has been done in Christ. The picture is of an open door for a family member, a citizen with full rights to know and approach God. This confidence we have as participants in the new covenant is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 3:4. The double use of ideas tied to confidence makes the point with emphasis." (Bock, 102-3, italics in original)
- c. "Whereas *παρρησία* gives the idea of the freedom of address, *προσαγωγή* has the idea of freedom of approach. Only one article governs both *παρρησία* and *προσαγωγή*, which may indicate it is a hendiadys,¹⁸ emphasizing the idea of free access to God." (Hoehner, 466)

¹⁸ Hendiadys: "Two words employed, but only one thing, or idea intended. One of the two words expresses the thing, and the other (of synonymous, or even different, signification, not a second thing or idea) intensifies it by being changed (if a noun) into an adjective of the superlative degree, which is, by this means, made especially emphatic." (Bullinger, 657) Thus, free access, bold access, confident access.

- d. Best gives similar definitions for the three terms. However, I really appreciate his comment on the third: “The positive reference to confidence is necessary since access of itself does not give confidence; the guilty prisoner is given access to the judge when brought before him but he wishes he was not there for he lacks confidence in the procedure. Christians however approach God without anxiety, not because of clear consciences or past good behavior, but because of Christ.” (Best, *ICC*, 329-30)
- e. All three terms are used in the New Testament to discuss our access to God.
- 1) In Hebrews 4:16; 10:19, we have confidence (παρησία) to draw near the throne of grace and to enter the holy places. However, like the High Priest of old, we must take blood — not the blood of goats and calves, but the blood of Jesus.
 - 2) According to Romans 5:2, we gain access (προσαγωγή) to grace by faith.
 - 3) Because of the sufficiency that comes from God through Jesus Christ, Paul says we have confidence (πεποιθήσις) toward God in 1 Corinthians 3:4.
4. I always think of Esther when this concept is discussed.
- a. According to Esther 4:11, King Ahasuerus had one rule. If someone came into his presence without being summoned, the rule was death unless the king held out his golden scepter for the person.
 - b. That is the way it ought to be when we approach God. He is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. He is Creator and Lord. If we deigned to enter His presence, we should be struck down where we stand. We are unworthy to approach God. We do not deserve it.
 - c. And yet, Paul points out that we Christians always receive the golden scepter treatment with God. We have access to Him.
5. He cares for us.
- a. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6).
 - 1) How many of our anxieties? All of them. Why? Because He cares. My problems are neither too small nor too large for Him. He wants to hear them.
 - 2) But, of course, as wonderful as access is, it is humbling. The only reason we approach God is because we understand how much we need Him. We cannot solve our problems on our own. We cannot accomplish our needs, our goals, our desires on our own. We need Him. That is humbling.
6. A case study.
- a. In Ephesians 6:19, Paul asks the Christians to pray for him that he might have boldness (παρησία) to proclaim the gospel, for which he is an ambassador in chains.
 - 1) To be clear, the boldness he is asking for is not the boldness to access God’s throne. This is the boldness to speak plainly the gospel. However, it is the use of that same word that catches my attention.
 - b. He is asking the disciples to pray for him. He is asking them to boldly use their free access to God, casting this anxiety before Him.

- c. You can understand why Paul might need some strength to be bold. He is already in prison. How easy it might become to back off.
- d. However, in Acts 28:31, even though he was under house arrest, he was “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”
- e. The Christians were boldly accessing God in prayer, requesting boldness for Paul. God was granting their request. Praise the Lord!
7. διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ/“through the faith of him”
- a. “But does this speak of the faith that we have in Christ, or the faith that Christ had? If genitive αὐτοῦ is understood as being objective, that is, *him* is the object of *the faith*, the meaning is equivalent to ‘faith in him.’ But if genitive αὐτοῦ is understood as being subjective, that is *he*, is the one who had faith, then the *faith of him* would mean ‘Christ’s faith.’” (Smelser, 158-9, italics in original)
- b. “‘Faith in Christ’ suggests the means by which believers enjoy bold access to God. Some translate the final phrase ‘through his [Christ’s] faith [or faithfulness].’ Given the first phrase in the clause, ‘in whom [= Christ],’ this reading appears redundant. Most interpreters translate the phrase ‘through [our] faith in Christ’ (*Christou* as an objective genitive).” (Capes, 29)
- c. “The classification of the pronoun αὐτοῦ has caused some discussion in recent years. Some expositors propose that this is a subjective rather than an objective genitive, meaning that it speaks of Christ’s faithfulness. This fits well with the present context, namely, the body of believers have free access with confidence through the faithfulness of Christ on behalf of the church. However, others suggest that this should still be considered an objective genitive, and thus the object of faith is Christ Jesus our Lord. This view emphasizes the believers’ faith rather than the faithfulness of Christ. The choice between these options is difficult; however, the latter is preferred. On the other hand, some suggest that rather than accepting the genitive as either subjective or objective, it should include both meanings. Hence, believers have faith in Christ’s faithfulness to God on behalf of the church.” (Hoehner, 466-7)
- d. Use of “faith” in Ephesians suggests αὐτοῦ is an objective genitive, thus speaking of our faith in Christ.
- 1) Ephesians 1:15: “Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus.” Paul is praying because he knows the Ephesians have faith in Christ.
 - 2) Ephesians 3:17: “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” This is the faith of the Christian.
 - 3) Ephesians 4:13: Attaining the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood is talking about each Christian having faith in and knowledge about the Son of God. It is not saying we grow to the level of His faithfulness.
 - 4) Ephesians 6:16: The shield of faith is our faith, not Christ’s.
 - 5) I am aware that people ask the same question regarding the objective and subjective nature of the genitive in Ephesians 2:8, but the consistent use of “faith” to refer to our faith, not Christ’s throughout Ephesians leads me to believe our faith in Christ is what is discussed in each passage.
8. The gift of access for us.

- a. “The whole passage calls the believer away from a *mere* discussion of phrases to the inner chamber of faith and prayer. ‘You have your Bible, and you have your knees; use them’; so said a venerable Christian, my grandfather, Carr John Glyn, who died in 1896, within twenty months of his hundred years. Let *us* ‘use them’ indeed, that the treasures of this Ephesian paragraph may become in some measure the current coin of our lives.” (Moule, 135, italics in original)
- b. In Acts 1:14, the disciples were described as “devoting themselves to prayer.” We need to ask if such can be said about us?
- c. Regrettably, with all the responsibilities of studying, teaching, meeting, counseling, preparing, leading, visiting, it is easy to get overwhelmed, stressed out, believe we just don’t have time, and let prayer drop off today’s checklist. I’ve done that more times than I care to count.
- d. However, we have access to God. What an incredible gift.
- e. When we consider who it is we are squaring off against in battle (Eph. 6:11-12), we should be so thankful that we have access to God in prayer. We are facing enemies too great for us. Only God can win those battles.
- f. In fact, have you ever noticed the stunning progression that takes place in Ephesians 6:13-18? We often talk about the armor of God. We are to put on the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace as shoes for our feet, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit. What comes after getting armed? Usually the battle, right? In this instance, getting armed is followed by “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.” What is the battle? Prayer is. The way we fight the battle is to get armed, and then get down on our knees.
- g. Prayer is a great indicator of how we are faring in the glory war. If prayer is constantly getting dropped from our schedule, it is because we think we have it handled. When we understand our true need for God, we’ll pray. When we pray, we’ll win the glory war.

G. The Gift of Suffering

1. “I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.”
 - a. In Ephesians 3:13, Paul has come full circle to where he began. He is suffering. And it is for the Gentiles. He is a prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles.
 - b. This has been the whole reason for the digression. In a shocking twist, Paul wants the Ephesians to see that his imprisonment is actually a positive thing. In fact, it is a gift all in its own right because it is for the glory of the Gentiles.
 - c. And in this we discover the very irony of victory for Paul. Victory in Jesus, for Paul, means sitting in a prison. And, while he will be released from this imprisonment, we know he will ultimately be imprisoned and executed.
2. Paul, the Prisoner of Christ Jesus.
 - a. “In these circumstances Paul calls himself the ‘prisoner of Christ.’ Here is another vivid instance of the fact that the Christian has always a double life and a double address. Any ordinary person would have said that Paul was the prisoner of the Roman government; and so he was. But Paul never thought of himself as the prisoner of Rome; he always thought of himself as the prisoner of Christ.” (Barclay, 121)
 - b. “Paul referred to himself as **the prisoner** (δέσμιους, *desmios*) **of Christ**. This could mean that he viewed himself as having been freed from the slavery of sin

and as having become a slave of Christ with absolute allegiance to Jesus. Paul often spoke of himself as the servant of Christ...It is more likely, however, that Paul used 'prisoner' here to refer to the fact that he was, at the time he was writing this letter, in prison for the first of two Roman imprisonments. He was a 'prisoner of Christ' in the sense that he was a prisoner for Christ's sake." (Lockhart & Roper, 151, bold and italics in original)

- c. Pages later they also say: "*Paul called himself 'the prisoner of Christ' (3:1). He wrote that he was in a Roman prison, awaiting trial before Nero. Day and night he was chained to a Roman soldier whose duty it was to make sure that he did not escape. Paul had been there for almost three years. Not once did he ever call himself 'a prisoner of Nero'! In all his letters he called himself 'the prisoner of Christ Jesus.'*" (*Ibid.*, 168, italics in original)
 - d. On the other hand: "Paul is probably not speaking here of his literal imprisonment, however. He said that he was the **prisoner** (*desmios*) of Christ, not the prisoner of Nero. He was 'bound' to the Lord. The Lord was his Master. Paul had been a prisoner of the gospel much longer than he had been bound in jail. He had been made a prisoner by Christ unto Christ." (Caldwell, 107, bold and italics in original)
 - e. Lincoln probably takes the wiser course by pointing out that we don't have to choose between the above two options: "The Philemon references [Philem 1, 9] and Phil 1:12-17, where his imprisonment is seen as ἐν Χριστῷ, show that Paul had already reflected on his captivity theologically. He can use the term 'prisoner' in both a literal and metaphorical sense at the same time, so that his physical imprisonment can be seen as simply the consequence of his spiritual captivity to Christ. This latter metaphorical sense is similar to Paul's use of δοῦλος, 'slave,' to speak of his unconditional allegiance to his Lord." (Lincoln, 173)
 - f. And so: "Because he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and very directly as a result of his stand for the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the people of God (see Acts 21:17-34; 22:21-24; 26:12-13) he was in prison. For the sake of the Gentiles he had been imprisoned, and even now his confinement was to their advantage (v. 13). He writes like this not because he was dispirited or disappointed. He wanted no pity and would allow no-one to be dejected because of his imprisonment. He saw it in a light which burnt out all self-pity. To outward appearance he was the prisoner of Rome, confined by the will of men. But just as his spiritual life 'in Christ' mattered far more to him than his outward circumstances and environment, so now he regarded himself as a prisoner by the will of his master. Therefore (translating more literally than RSV) he could gladly call himself 'the prisoner of Christ Jesus (cf. 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Phlm 1, 9); just as for every part of his life he could call himself the slave of Christ (e.g. Phil. 1:1)." (Foulkes, 97)
3. Not just a prisoner for Christ, a prisoner of Christ.
 - a. The final layer of Paul's imprisonment is quite shocking.
 - 1) On the surface, he was a prisoner under house arrest in Rome.¹⁹
 - 2) Peeling back the onion, we see he was not a prisoner because he was accused by Jews and arrested by Rome, but because that is where Jesus wanted him. [See II. A. 3. c. 3) b)]

¹⁹ For a consideration of the surface level of Paul's imprisonment with emphasis on when and from where Paul wrote Ephesians, please read Appendix E.

- 3) However, Paul is not the prisoner of Christ merely because at the moment of writing he happens to be under arrest. He is the prisoner of Christ because that is what he is at all times, whether physically in chains or not.
 - 4) As he is an apostle, a minister, a servant, a slave of Jesus, he is also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.
- b. The idea is not elaborated in Ephesians 3:1. However, this picture of Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ points us to a dramatic and often misunderstood statement in 2 Corinthians 2:14: “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.”
- 1) “The Roman triumph was an image that Paul applied to Christ on more than one occasion, as is evident from his allusion to it in 2 Corinthians 2:14. There he pictures himself as led in the triumphal procession of Christ. But the image is not of Paul as one of the high-ranking officers in Christ’s army. For as S. J. Hafemann has convincingly argued, Paul’s speaking of himself being led in triumph (*thriambeuonti hemas*) can mean nothing other than that he reckoned himself as one of Christ’s former enemies who had been conquered and was now marched as a captive, being constantly led to his death!” (Longman and Reid, 151-2)
 - 2) Paul sees the triumphal procession in which he is being led as a gift for which he thanks God. However, that does not mean, as some would have us believe, that he is marching alongside Jesus as a co-victor, leading enemies of the cross, persecutors, evil rulers and authorities behind them. Rather, he, who at one time was an enemy of the cross and persecutor of Jesus Christ, has been conquered and is being led in the procession of Jesus’s captives. Further, this triumphal procession ends in the death of the prisoners.
- c. Longman and Reid mention Scott Hafemann’s book *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit* which is largely about 2 Corinthians 2:14 and the triumph described there. Longman and Reid are correct, his arguments are very convincing.
- 1) After providing multiple historical references, including from Josephus, Hafemann observes the following regarding the nature of the Roman triumph.
 - a) “The use of ‘to lead in a triumphal procession’ with prepositional phrases to indicate its object or with a direct object alone, *always* refers to the one who has been conquered and is subsequently led in the procession, and never to the one who has conquered or to those who have shared in his victory (e.g., his army, fellow officers, etc.).” (Hafemann, 31, italics in original)
 - b) “The *explicit* purpose or goal of the triumphal procession, from beginning to end, was twofold: First, to render thanks to the deity who had granted the victory in battle (in Rome, Jupiter, and in Egypt, Dionysos;...), and second, to glorify the general or consul who had achieved it... These two goals were by no means independent of one another, but inextricably interwoven so that the political and religious aspects of the triumphal procession combined to form an indistinguishable unity.
 “Thus, although the focus of the procession itself was on the triumphator, with its displays of the spoils of war, the recounting of the high points of the decisive battle through dramatic presentations and paintings, the army’s praise for its general, and the parade of the

vanquished foes, the procession *itself, as a whole* was intended to be an act of worship to the god who had granted the victory.” (*Ibid.*, 29-30, italics in original)

- c) “Finally, the role of those thus ‘led in triumph’ was to reveal the glory and might of the victor by illustrating the *strength* of those conquered. In other words, the function of the captive led in triumph was to provide an *a fortiori* argument for the military strength of the victor: the greater the stature of those conquered, the greater the stature of the conqueror. And, as we have seen, this illustration often, or *even normally* culminated, as did the procession as a whole, with the execution of these prisoners (or a representative selection of them). To *be led in triumph could thus mean, in a word, to be led to one’s death in the ceremony of the triumphal procession as a display of the victor’s glory and, by implication, of the benevolence of the deity in granting this victory to the victor.*” (*Ibid.*, 31, italics in original)
- d) “In conclusion, therefore, there is, to my knowledge, no external evidence for the suggestion that ‘to lead in triumphal procession’ in Col. 2:15 and II Cor. 2:14 could refer either to Christ’s act of victory in triumphing over the principalities and powers in a battle (Col. 2:15), or to God’s triumph over Paul at his conversion (II Cor. 2:14), since this verb refers *only* to the specific Roman ceremony of the triumphal procession, which *presupposes* this prior conquest, but is by no means identified with it. Rather, the triumphal procession, which took place in Rome, was the result and expression of the victory which had *already* taken place on the battlefield.” (*Ibid.*, italics in original)
- e) “For although the verb and adjective forms [of the ‘triumph’ word group] occur less frequently than the noun, it is clear that all three refer specifically to the institution of the triumphal procession, and not to the more general idea of a triumph in battle, for which the word-group ‘to win a victory’/‘victory’ (*nikao [nikeo]--nike*) was most often used.” (*Ibid.*)
- f) “In addition, there is also no lexical evidence that to be led in triumph could refer either to the idea of somehow sharing as a co-victor in the triumphator’s victory, or for the factitive meaning of being ‘caused to triumph.’” (*Ibid.*, 32)
- g) “In other words, as startling as this may sound at first, our exegetical hypothesis is that in II Cor 2:14 Paul is rejoicing precisely because God, like a victorious general after his victory, is leading him *as a slave to death.*” (*Ibid.*, 33, italics in original)
- h) Let the above sink in for a moment.
1. In Ephesians 3:1, Paul is not a prisoner of Christ because he is a prisoner of Rome. He is a prisoner of Christ because he is a prisoner of Christ. Whether in a Philippian jail, in a Caesarean prison, under Roman house arrest, or freely walking along the road to his next evangelistic appointment, he is the prisoner of Christ.
 2. He has been conquered, taken captive, is put on display before the public for the glory of the God who defeated him, and is being led inexorably to his death.

3. However, he does not follow along behind his Conqueror with head bowed in shame.
 - a. No. Like the crowds before whom he is displayed a spectacle, he shouts praise to the Triumphator. He pumps his fist, not in anger at the crowds, not in defiance to his captivity, but as if he is just as victorious as his Captor.
 - b. He is bringing glory to His captor. Living and dying to the glory of his Conqueror, his Captor, his Christ is the greatest joy he has.
 1. "...as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20).
4. The gift of suffering in Paul's life
 - a. Hafemann sees a significant parallel between 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 and 1 Corinthians 1:17-18. (*Ibid.*, 51)
 - 1) "14But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).
 - 2) "17For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 18For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:17-18).
 - 3) The parallels:
 - a) In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul's preaching mode corresponds to the cross. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, Paul's being led to death corresponds to the cross.
 - b) In 1 Corinthians 1:18a, we read of the word of the cross, that is the message that points others to Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 2:15a, there is the aroma of Christ which is tied to the fragrance of the knowledge of him in 2:14 that goes everywhere.
 - c) In 1 Corinthians 1:18b, the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. In 2 Corinthians 2:15c, 16a, the fragrance of Christ is that of death to death for those who are perishing.
 - d) In 1 Corinthians 1:18c, the word of the cross is the power of God for those who are being saved. In 2 Corinthians 2:15b, 16b, the fragrance of Christ is one that is from life to life for those who are being saved.
 - 4) Hafemann's conclusion: "A study of II Cor. 2:14-16a has thus led to the conclusion that Paul understood his own experience of being 'led to death' as an apostle to be the 'flip side' of his apostolic mandate to preach the word of the cross." (*Ibid.*)
 - b. Hafemann sees another parallel between 2 Corinthians 2:14 and 1 Corinthians 4:9.

- 1) “For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9).
 - 2) The parallel is obvious. Men led in triumphal procession are sentenced to death, led as a spectacle before all. The apostles are men sentenced to death, led as a spectacle before all.
 - 3) Notice especially, wanting to stay connected to Ephesians 3, that the apostles are led as a spectacle not only before men, but before angels (1 Cor. 4:9). The church presents the manifold wisdom of God before the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10).
 - 4) “It is thus especially instructive for our study, and by no means coincidental, that Paul’s *central point* in I Cor. 4:9 forms an exact parallel to Paul’s statement in II Cor. 2:14.” (*Ibid.*, 57, italics in original)
 - 5) Do not miss the context of 1 Corinthians 4:9 as Paul goes on to describe the lives of the apostles: “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things” (1 Corinthians 4:10-13).
- c. Drawing the above parallels together, Hafemann concludes: “...in Paul’s conception, the experience of the apostle, pictured in terms of the suffering righteous of the Bible, functioned as a demonstration of the fact that God’s righteousness, and hence his power (cf. Rom. 1:16f.), is displayed in the lives of those who, like God’s Son, suffer at the hands of the world. Paul’s suffering in I Cor. 1-4 is therefore both a confirmation (I Cor. 2:1-5) and display (I Cor. 4:9) of the meaning of the cross. ‘Paul was convinced that he presented men with Christ crucified both in the gospel he preached and in his own life.’” (*Ibid.*, 59)
- d. Additionally, there are parallel purposes in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians 3.
- 1) “Consequently, in reading II Cor. 6:1-10 we are again made aware of the fact that the problem which now faced Paul in Corinth was the growing rejection of his authority as an apostle because his suffering seemed to disqualify his claim to be a ‘minister’ as that role was currently being defined by his opponents and accepted by the Corinthians.” (*Ibid.*, 75)
 - 2) “Paul counters this possibility by praising God for the very thing which the Corinthians are being led to believe disqualifies Paul as an apostle, namely, his suffering.” (*Ibid.*, 81)
5. The gift of suffering in our lives.
- a. Hafemann did not see Paul and the apostles’ roles within the triumph as exemplary, but rather as very specifically their role as apostles. In other words, not all preachers and not all Christians should see themselves as prisoners of Christ led in triumphal procession.
 - b. However, I do not think we should be so quick to dismiss the example of Paul.
 - 1) Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Discipleship is following in Jesus’s cross-bearing footsteps.

- a) Sadly, this picture has been diminished today to refer to any hardship anyone has to bear. Someone complains that their boss is a glory hound and won't give them credit for their work. Someone else complains that their spouse spends too much money. Someone else complains that their kids won't listen, won't study, and won't do their chores regularly. Then someone else says, "Oh well, I guess we all have our crosses to bear."
 - b) Bearing the cross does not mean enduring some difficulty. It means picking up the implement of our death and following Jesus step by step to the place where we are nailed to the cross and die to His glory.
- 2) Paul didn't just teach the cross, he lived the cross. Paul wasn't a victor because he had defeated; he was a victor because he had been defeated. Paul did not become a Christian to have his best life now or to get the most out of this life. He became a Christian because he knew this life had nothing to offer him. Thus, he was willing to count everything other than Jesus Christ as loss, as rubbish, as refuse, as dung (Philippians 3:7-11).
 - 3) Further, he taught Christians that the way to the kingdom of God is, in fact, through tribulation (Acts 14:22).
 - 4) Additionally, he taught if we are heirs we will suffer with Christ. And we suffer with Him so that we might be glorified with him (Romans 8:17).
- c. I worry about me when I consider this. I am humbled.
- 1) What do I have to complain about today? I gather with other preachers and complain about low wages, the struggle to have health insurance, living in a fishbowl, having been verbally mistreated by elders and their wives, long hours, emotional burnout.
 - 2) Then I look again at Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus. I see his "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger" (2 Corinthians 6:4-5).
 - 3) I see that Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, had "far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).
 - 4) And I want to gather together with preachers and talk about how much I need a sabbatical because the mental pressure and emotional strain is so great. I wonder what Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, would say about this. I recently heard from an elder how he wasn't sure if his congregation could afford a good preacher because they could only pay \$110,000/year. I wonder what Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, would say about this. I see posts on social media about how talented young men are being driven from preaching because of the fishbowl living and discouraging words of brethren. I wonder what Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, would say about this.
 - 5) Don't misunderstand me. I am not lobbying for low wages and hard living for all preachers or all Christians. I'm not saying we should all ask for a cut in pay. Churches can support at whatever level they wish. I am not saying we should all try to get arrested for our preaching. I'm not saying brethren

should verbally abuse preachers young or old. I am simply facing a struggle in my conscience as I consider Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ and how I have conducted and viewed my own ministry in contrast to him.

- 6) Michael Horton contrasts the theology of the prosperity gospel with the theology of the cross. It gives me pause and makes me concerned, as I compare myself with Paul, regarding whether or not I have latched on at least to the fringes of prosperity thinking.
 - a) “Although explicit proponents of the prosperity gospel may be fewer than their influence suggests, its big names and best-selling authors (T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, and Joyce Meyer) are purveyors of a pagan worldview with a peculiarly American flavor. It’s basically what Luther called the ‘theology of glory’: How can I climb the ladder and attain the glory here and now that God has actually promised for us after a life of suffering? The contrast is the *theology of the cross*: the story of God’s merciful descent to us at great personal cost—a message that the apostle Paul acknowledged was offensive and foolish to Greeks.” (Horton, 68, italics in original)
- 7) Peter explains that we need to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).
 - a) He wasn’t saying, “If you faithfully ‘go to church,’ folks will ask you why.” He wasn’t saying, “If you live more morally than those around you, they’ll ask you why you’re different.”
 - b) He was saying, “When you suffer greatly as Jesus once suffered, but stay true to Jesus and treat even your oppressors well, folks will ask why your hope is so different from theirs.”
 - c) When I consider the hope of Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, and then I examine me, I wonder if anyone would ask me about my hope at all. And I remember that when Paul was in prison, kings and governors wanted to hear from him. They wanted to know about his hope.
- 8) Perhaps Hafemann is right. Paul’s triumphal procession may not be the example we are to follow. Maybe that was just for the apostles.
 - a) Surely, however, there is something for us to learn from it.
 - b) May we learn to face whatever suffering we go through, no matter how small or great, excited to pay that cost for the opportunity to share the gospel with others and have the opportunity to bring them to our King where they can find forgiveness, salvation, and a share in God’s glory.
 - c) While we never seek suffering simply for the sake of suffering, may we recognize it for the gift it is when our Conqueror leads us into it.

III. The Prayer of Dedication (Ephesians 3:14-21)

A. In the footsteps of Solomon

1. For this reason

- a. If τούτου χάριν/“For this reason” were more common in Paul’s writings, I might think this was just a train of thought statement from the previous section in 3:2-13.
 - 1) It is only found in Ephesians 3:1, 14 and Titus 1:5.

- 2) Therefore, I agree with Foster that the primary background context of Paul's is 2:19-22.
 - 3) The background of this prayer is the construction of the Gentiles and Jews into a temple of the Lord to become a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.
- b. Earlier [I. C. 1. d.], I shared 28 links between Ephesians and the building, dedication, and follow up of the tabernacle and temples.
- 1) I believe I'm standing on good ground when I highlight the 2:19-22 background of this prayer to say that the larger background of this prayer is in fact the dedication of the first temple under Solomon.
 - 2) Paul is dedicating the New Covenant temple.
 - 3) The second temple did not fulfill the Ezekiel 43 prophecy of the returning glory of the Lord [see I. C. 2. b. 5) or Appendix B]. Paul is dedicating the New Covenant temple expecting it to be the fulfillment of those promises.
2. I bow my knees
- a. In 2 Chronicles 6:13, Solomon made a bronze platform that he stood before the altar at the newly built temple. He stood on it. Then in the presence of the entire assembly (ἐκκλησία) of Israel, he knelt down and spread his hands out toward heaven and prayed (see also 1 Kings 8:54)
 - 1) Paul is dedicating the temple of the Lord just as Solomon did.
 - 2) The one difference is Solomon was kneeling between the temple and the ἐκκλησία. For Paul, the ἐκκλησία is the temple.
3. Before the Father
- a. When David had blessed the Lord in the presence of the assembly as they were taking up the collection for the temple Solomon would build in 1 Chronicles 29:10, he prayed, "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever."
 - b. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He had started, "Our Father in heaven" (Mat. 6:9; Luk. 11:2).
 - c. In Ephesians 2:18, Paul had declared through one Spirit both Jews and Gentiles had access to the Father. In Ephesians 3:12, he had said that access was bold and confident. For this reason, he bows his knees before the Father.
 - d. But He is not just any Father. He is the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3:15).
 - 1) There are two views on the meaning of *πάσα πατριὰ*.
 - a) "The whole family" or "The entire family"
 1. "The R.V. here renders '*every family*,' or (margin) '*fatherhood*.'²⁰ And this would no doubt be right in view of classical usage, according to which 'the whole family' would almost certainly demand *πάσα ἡ πατριὰ*. But the usage of N.T. Greek is not so strict, and we may and must accordingly consult context along with wording. What does context say? Does the Apostle seem

²⁰ While there is clearly a play on words between *πάτηρ* (Father) and *πατριὰ*, the latter does not mean "fatherhood," it means "family."

most likely here to take up the thought of God's spiritual Father as the archetype of all family unions, spiritual or not, in earth and heaven? *or* the thought of the family oneness of saints and angels under the 'Father of spirits'? To me the answer seems clear for the *second* alternative. All through this great passage he is full of the thought of the spiritual and *universal* community. The phrase, 'in heavens and earth,' itself (compared with i.10) suggests such thoughts rather than those of 'families' in detail. I advocate therefore the Authorized Version." (Moule, 128, fn1, italics in original)

2. "Here he goes on to affirm that from this Father, before whom he kneels in reverent humility, *every family in heaven and on earth is named*. At least, this is the RSV and NEB translation, and *pasa patria* may quite properly be rendered 'every family'. Yet there is something inherently inappropriate about this reference to a multiplicity of families, since the dominant theme of these chapters is that through Christ the 'one God and Father of us all' (4:6) has only one family or household to which Jewish and Gentile believers equally belong. It seems better, therefore, to translate *pasa patria* 'the whole family' (AV), 'his whole family' (NEB margin) or 'the whole family of believers' (NIV). Then the addition of the words *in heaven and on earth* will indicate that the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven, though separated by death, are nevertheless only two parts of the one great family of God." (Stott, 133, italics in original)

b) "Every family" or "Each family"

1. "What is named is *every πατριά*, not the *whole πατριά*; the latter would be *πᾶσα ἡ πατριά*...In any case such an understanding would not suit the context which with its reference to heaven and earth implies *πατριά* indicates multiplicity." (Best, *JCC*, 338, italics in original)
2. "Some interpreters, as well as the NIV with its rendering *from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name*, make this a reference to the *one* family, that is, the church or the people of God, which includes past saints (note the words *in heaven*). But this would require the definite article in the Greek, which is missing. Instead, 'every family' is preferred to 'the whole family'. Every family *in heaven* points to family groupings and classes of angels...good and rebellious alike, which owe their origin to God, while every family *on earth* speaks of family groupings and so of the basic structures of human relationships which owe their existence to him." (O'Brien, 255-6)

c) Despite the goal to unite all things under Jesus Christ, that has not been accomplished yet. Therefore, I think the authors favoring the "every family" translation are correct.

d) Rather, than making a statement about the cosmic unity of all things, I believe Paul is rather expressing a different kind of unity.

1. God is the Father of the Gentile family as well as the Jewish family.
2. Both can pray to God. Paul can pray to the Father on behalf of both.

2) On naming

- a) “V. 15 is then saying something more than that God puts names on people and things; if that were all ὑπό would have been used instead of ἐκ. It is the source of the naming that is stressed rather than action of naming.” (Best, *ICC*, 338)
- b) “When God names, he does not simply label but rather creates and constitutes, giving identity (cf. Isa. 40:26; Ps. 147:4; Gen. 25:26; 1 Sam. 25:25).” (Witherington, 273)
- c) “In ancient thought a ‘name’ was not just a means of distinguishing one person from another; it was particularly the means of revealing the inner being, the truth nature of that person (cf. Gen. 25:26; 1 Sam. 25:25). So for God to give creatures a name was not simply to provide them with a label, but signifies his bringing them into existence, exercising dominion over them (cf. Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:26), and giving each their appropriate role. The verse thus affirms that the Father is the Creator of all living beings (cf. Eph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-18), so that their existence and significance depend on him.” (O’Brien, 256)

B. In order that He might powerfully give

1. Paul makes three requests marked by ἵνα.
 - a. The first is made up of vss. 16-17.
 - b. The second is made up of vss. 18-19a.
 - c. The third is vs. 19b.
 - d. All three ἵνα markers are followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood, creating a string of purpose ἵνα clauses. One leads to the next to the next with increasing purpose like climbing stairs until you reach the final goal.
2. Paul’s first request is that God may powerfully give to the Christians.
 - a. δυνάμει (power) is an adverbial dative of manner. Paul doesn’t just want God to give, but to give powerfully.
 - 1) In Ephesians 1:19, God’s power is immeasurable. Paul wants God to access that immeasurable power as He gives His gifts to us.
 - 2) In Ephesians 3:7, Paul was made a minister by the working of God’s power. As Paul is praying for us as the growing temple, He is asking God to work by His power, not ours, to accomplish the goals of this prayer.
3. Give according to the riches of His glory.
 - a. In Philippians 4:19, Paul declares: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
 - 1) Here, Paul is talking about supplying physical needs. That is not Paul’s request in Ephesians 3:14-21.

- 2) However, this helps us grasp the meaning. “The prep. κατά indicates that God will supply not merely ‘from’ (*pace* NLT; ‘out of’ [NJB]) his wealth, but ‘in proportion to’ his wealth (BDAG 512c; ‘according to’ [most EVV]).” (Hellerman, 270)
 - 3) In like manner, in Ephesians 3:16, Paul is praying that God will give in proportion to the abundant wealth of His glory.
- b. When David prayed during the collection for the temple, he declared, “Both riches and honor (glory) come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all” (1 Chronicles 29:12).
- 1) Riches, glory, strength, might all come from God because these things are in His hand.
 - 2) Paul asks that God will give powerfully according to the riches of His glory. Not according to our worth. Not according to what we deserve. Not according to our glory and riches and power and strength, but according to God’s.
- c. In 1 Kings 3:5-15; 2 Chronicles 1:7-13, God appeared to Solomon in a dream. He gave Solomon a blank check. “Ask for what you want.”
- 1) Solomon asked for wisdom and insight to rule and govern. This is what Paul had prayed for the Ephesians in 1:17.
 - 2) Because Solomon asked for wisdom, God not only gave him wisdom and discernment, but also riches and honor/glory (1 Kings 3:13; 2 Chronicles 1:12).
 - 3) Paul, of course, is not asking for us to receive riches and honor. However, his repeated use of these terms (riches, glory/honor, wisdom) calls Solomon’s prayers to God and God’s blessings to Solomon to mind.
 - a) He has asked for us to receive wisdom, revelation, knowledge. In fact, in that prayer he even asked that we might be able to see the riches of the glory of His inheritance (Eph. 1:18).
 - b) Further, recall that Paul has been able to preach to these Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8).
 - c) When God gives this gift of Paul’s request to us, He wants God to give powerfully. That is, exercising His immeasurable power while He gives. And then to do so according to the measure of His unsearchable riches.
 - d) As we see the lavishing of riches and wisdom on Solomon by God, we know only God has the ability and level of resources to bless anyone as Solomon was blessed. In like manner, Paul is asking God to lavish us with blessing according to the riches of God’s glory. That is, to give in the way only God can.
- d. For the sake of God’s glory.
- 1) Not only does Paul ask that God would work powerfully in proportion to the abundant wealth of His glory. This has the flavor of “for the sake of Your glory.”

- a) That is, when God works powerfully in proportion to the abundant wealth of His glory, the granting of this request will serve to magnify and reveal just how wealthy and abundant God's glory is.
 - b) Therefore, Paul is not asking for this level of action on God's part so we might be glorified (though, no doubt, when God acts in His glory toward His church, we share in that glory). Rather, even this request is so God will be glorified.
 - c) This is similar to Old Testament requests for God to act for the sake of His own name (i.e. Dan. 9:17-19).
- 2) The riches of God's glory are found in the declaration of His character.
- a) In Appendix B: "A History of the LORD's Glory" [I. E. 1.], Beale homes in on an exceedingly important aspect of God's glory: the declaration of His name.
 - b) When Moses, in Exodus 33:18-19, asked God to manifest His glory before Moses, God explained that part of that glory was the declaration of His name.
 - c) God, hid Moses in the cleft of the rock, covered him with His hand, then passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7).
 - d) When Paul asks for God to act powerfully in proportion to the abundant wealth of His own glory, this declaration of God fills us with hope regarding the extent to which God will actually respond.
 - e) He is merciful and gracious. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in steadfast love. He does forgive. And we have an entire history of God interacting with Israel in the midst of their failures again and again and again to know exactly how abundant the wealth of God's glory is.
4. A double gift.
- a. As with so many aspects of Scriptures, the double gift of vss. 16-17 are seen in two ways.
 - 1) Hoehner suggests that the first gift produces the second. As the ESV seems to translate it.
 - a) "First, some consider κατοικήσαι to be parallel with κραταιωθῆναι with both dependent on ἵνα δῶ in verse 16 — 'that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person and that Christ may dwell in your hearts.' This view has three problems: (1) there is no coordinating conjunction to indicate the parallelism of κατοικήσαι with κραταιωθῆναι, (2) it must reach a long way back to ἵνα δῶ and (3) there is no progress of thought. Furthermore, would Paul pray for Christ to dwell in the heart of believers? The second view is that κατοικήσαι serves as an epexegetical infinitive to κραταιωθῆναι — 'that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person, namely, that Christ may dwell in your hearts.' This is possible, although as with the

first alternative it has to reach way back to ἵνα δῶ. Again, would Paul pray for Christ to dwell in believers' hearts? The third alternative is that it is a contemplative result of the previous infinitive κραταιωθῆναι — 'that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person so that, being strengthened, Christ may dwell in your hearts.' This is the better view because it does not have to reach all the way back to ἵνα δῶ, for it is not a contemplative result of ἵνα but of the complementary infinitive κραταιωθῆναι. Also, this allows for progress in the prayer for the believer to be strengthened with the result that Christ may dwell in his heart. This differs from the second view in that it does not explain the previous infinitive but shows the result of receiving strength. Thus, it can be translated, 'that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person so Christ may dwell in your hearts.'" (Hoehner, 480-1)

b) I think Hoehner's explanation falls short.

1. First, Hoehner's question, "Would Paul pray that Christ may dwell in believers' hearts?" is just as applicable to the alternative he favors as to the two he dismisses. He does go on to make a distinction between the initial indwelling of Christ in the heart versus a settling in such that Christ feels at home. But my response would be Paul could be asking for the settling in and feeling at home kind of indwelling with the other two alternatives as well.
2. Second, so what if the sentence has to reach all the way back to the ἵνα δῶ? If that is what Paul is doing, then he can do that. Paul is using the ἵνα markers to show which requests produce the next step. He opts not to use one between these two requests on purpose. They are two parts of the same request that will lead to the next stage.
3. Third, Hoehner claims there is no progressive thought. The progressive steps are not made within each of the three requests, but from one ἵνα request to the next.
4. Fourth, even though there is no coordinating conjunction between the two clauses, there are other markers to show that these two requests are parallel (see Witherington below).

2) Others suggest that the two gifts Paul requests are parallel to each other.

- a) "Since no particle links this verse to the preceding it is probably parallel to it, yet also clarifies it. The parallelism is seen in the two διὰ clauses (faith and the Spirit are also linked in 1.13) and in 'inner person' and 'heart'. The two verses also express the same idea; v. 16 would have been more easily understood in the Hellenistic world; v. 17 is more Semitic....There is no temporal distinction between the two verses as if v. 16 were a necessary pre-condition of v. 17." (Best, *JCC*, 341)
- b) "Several EVV render these words as the purpose (or result) of the preceding (cf. the NIV's *so that*), and give the impression that Paul wants the readers first to be empowered by the Spirit so that subsequently Christ may dwell in their hearts. Although this interpretation is syntactically possible, it is unlikely. The language of the two clauses is parallel, and the experience of the Spirit's strengthening activity is the same as that of Christ's indwelling (cf. 1

Cor 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom 8:9, 10; Gal 4:6). *In your hearts* is equivalent to ‘in the inner person’ of v. 16, while Christ’s indwelling defines more precisely the strengthening role of the Spirit in v. 16. His indwelling is not something additional to the strengthening. To be empowered by the Spirit in the inner person means that Christ himself dwells in their hearts.” (O’Brien, 258, italics in original)

- c) “Vv. 16 and 17 also contain a carefully crafted parallel construction in which two clauses containing the same number of syllables (twenty) both speak of God dwelling in the believer’s inner being and thereby strengthening the believer (‘strengthened through his Spirit in the inner person’ and ‘Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts’). The parallelism is reinforced by the use in both of initial infinitives having -*ai* endings (homeoteleuton²¹), of *dia* as the first preposition, and of -*on/-on* as the last syllable.” (Witherington, 273, italics in original)
- b. Paul is asking God to give to us strengthening through His Spirit in our inner being.
- 1) The next ἵνα will explain why Paul believes we need to be strengthened.
 - a) However, we remember 2:18, that we gain access to the Father through the Spirit. Being strengthened by the Spirit seems natural. How can I have access to the Father by my own strength?
 - b) Further, how can I, by my own strength, bring God to dwell either within me or within the church as 2:22 says is the goal. We are being built up by the Spirit so that can happen. We need strength.
 1. We will read in Ephesians 4:12, 16, that we are supposed to be actively working to build up the body. It isn’t just something being done to us.
 2. Therefore, we need strength that goes beyond ourselves.
 - 2) This also calls to mind aspects of tabernacle/temple history.
 - a) In Exodus 31:2-6, we see one of the first instances of the working of the Spirit of God (See also Exo. 35:30-36:2).
 1. He gave ability, intelligence, knowledge, with all craftsmanship to Bezalel and Oholiab.
 2. They were in charge of building up the tabernacle, they were strengthened by the Spirit.
 3. The implication, and maybe the express statement, is without the strengthening of the Spirit, they would have been unable to fabricate the tabernacle to God’s specifications.
 - b) In Zechariah 4:1-7, the prophet has a vision of a lampstand surrounded by two olive trees.
 1. The angel declares the vision means, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”
 2. That is, Zerubbabel would not finish the temple by his own strength, but by the strength and power of the Holy Spirit.

²¹ Homœoteleuton: “The Repetition of the same Letters or Syllables at the end of Successive Words.” (Bullinger, 176)

3. In fact, doesn't the period in which the Israelites abandoned the building of the temple only to be prompted to start again by God's prophets Haggai and Zechariah demonstrate the need for the Holy Spirit's strength to build the temple?
- c) In 1 Chronicles 28:20, David gives a surprising charge to Solomon.
 1. "Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed..."
 2. What is that about? Solomon is building a building. What could be so fearful about that?
 3. Yet, the reason Solomon is to be unafraid is because God will not forsake him or leave him while he is building the temple. That is, God will strengthen Him to accomplish the work.
- d) Though not connected to the temple, I can't help but think of the times in Judges, when the Spirit rushed on various judges. I especially think of Samson.
 1. The Spirit rushed on him in Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14. Each time he was strengthened greatly.
 2. He was strengthened in the outer man. We however need strengthening in our inner man.
 3. That makes sense, if we are being made into a dwelling place for God, we need great strength internally.
- c. Paul is asking God to give us Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith.
 - 1) We are being made into a dwelling place for God. For that to happen, we need Christ to dwell in us.
 - 2) As the Spirit strengthens the inner man, Christ dwells in our heart. These two statements are parallel. They are accomplishing the same thing.
 - 3) In Galatians 2:20, Paul says we are to be crucified with Christ. However, we still live with Christ living in us by faith.
 - 4) That is, it is as if we are no longer in charge. It is as if Christ is living our lives through us because of the faith we have in Him and His way.
 - 5) "Thus κατοικέω connotes a settled dwelling, as opposed to παροικέω, a temporary sojourn (Luke 24:18; Heb 11:9). This permanence of dwelling is seen in the two other occasions that Paul uses the term where he states that all of the fullness of God's deity dwells in Christ (Col 1:19; 2:9). Here in Ephesians Christ is the one who dwells in the believer." (Hoehner, 480)
 - 6) Christ is not simply visiting. He is inhabiting. As the inhabitant, He is redecorating, if you will, until He is at home in our hearts. This "redecorating" is parallel to the strengthening the Spirit is accomplishing in our inner man.
5. Being rooted and grounded in love.
 - a. ἐν ἀγάπῃ could modify the dwelling Christ does in our hearts. In fact, because His dwelling is in our hearts, that naturally brings up the idea of love to us.
 - 1) However, Witherington makes good arguments about how carefully constructed the parallel between the two infinitive clauses is. If ἐν ἀγάπῃ is part of the Christ dwelling clause, it throws off the parallel.

- 2) More than that, if it is looking backward then the two participles “being rooted” and “being grounded” are left hanging. Rooted and grounded how? In what? With what?
 - 3) ἐν ἀγάπῃ modifies the participles. We are to be rooted and grounded in love.
- b. The purpose of these participles in this sentence.
- 1) It is true that discourse analysis is a relatively new development in the study of the Greek language. Even its present authors say there is a great deal to learn in this field.
 - 2) However, if Steve Runge is correct in his explanation in *Discourse Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, adverbial participles that follow the main verb have a particular function.
 - a) “Participles that follow the main verb have a somewhat different effect from those that precede it, in that they elaborate the action of the main verb, often providing more specific explanation of what is meant by the main action. In most cases, they practically spell out what the main action looks like... Rather than offering a distinct action in its own right, the participle relegates its action to supporting the main action. By using a participle rather than a finite verb, the writer places its action under the umbrella of the main verb, typically adding more detail or elaboration to the main verb.” (Runge, 262-3)
 - b) For instance, in Matthew 28:19-20, the participles “baptizing” and “teaching” explain what is meant by the main action to “make disciples,” practically spelling out what that main action looks like.
 - 3) If Runge is correct, then ἐρριζωμένοι (rooted) and τεθεμελιωμένοι (grounded) provide more specific explanation of the main verb (δοῦναι/“he may grant”, vs. 16).
 - a) That is, being rooted and being grounded in love are an explanation of what it looks like for God to give the strengthening of His Spirit and indwelling of His Son.
- c. The mixed metaphors may seem odd, but they are brought together other times in Scripture.
- 1) Paul mixed these metaphors in 1 Corinthians 3:9. We are God’s field and God’s building.
 - 2) Ezekiel 36:36 also gives these two pictures: “I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate.”
 - a) Coincidentally, or perhaps purposefully, Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you two walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”
 - b) This chapter actually contains every bit of Paul’s Ephesians 3:16-17 prayer request: the Spirit in the inner man, a new heart (though Christ is not mentioned), and planting and building (which takes being rooted and grounded).
 - 3) The word pictures provided are:
 - a) The soil in which we are planted is love.

- b) The foundation on which we are built is love.
- c) Though love is mentioned before this in Ephesians. This is actually paving the way for the second half of the letter in which we will be told...
 - 1. ...to bear with one another in love (4:2).
 - 2. ...to speak the truth in love (4:15).
 - 3. ...to grow the body by building it up in love (4:16).
 - 4. ...to walk in love as Christ loved us (5:2)
 - a. This last one helps us grasp the metaphors. We are planted and grow up to bear fruit in Christ's love. We are built on the foundation of Christ's love.
 - b. In fact, we were told in 2:4-5, that God was rich in mercy and grace toward us because of His love.
- d) As Baker says in his article on the ethics of Ephesians: "*The dominant principle of Paul's ethic is love.*" (Baker, 43, italics in original)

C. In order that you will be strong enough.

1. We find out now specifically why we need the strengthening of His Spirit in our inner being. We need to be strengthened because there is something we've got to do that takes strength.
2. The word picture:
 - a. Καταλαμβάνω means "I overcome" or "I catch up with/seize."
 - 1) With that definition you can understand why we might need to be strengthened.
 - 2) If we need to overcome or seize someone who is stronger than us, we'll need to be strengthened.
 - b. Figuratively, καταλαμβάνω can be used of overcoming or seizing or grasping an idea or concept.
 - 1) But some concepts are incredibly difficult to grasp.
 - 2) In fact, that is the situation we are in. What we need to grasp is beyond our ability to comprehend.
3. To comprehend and to know
 - a. First, we need the strength to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth...
 - 1) Of what?
 - a) "To what then do the measurements refer? We might have expected a genitive to follow giving the answer. Various suggestions have been made as to what the genitive might have been. In line with the attempts to explain the formula it has been supposed it refers to wisdom (Van Room, Feuillet), to the new Jerusalem and/or the heavenly inheritance (Dibelius, Conzelmann), the power of God (Arnold, 90ff), the cross (Schlier), the body of Christ (Usami, 178), God's plan of salvation or the mystery of salvation (Mussner, Percy, Schnackenburg), the redemptive activity of God (Beare)...It is difficult to argue for any of

these from the immediate context which is that of love (v. 19), and with the majority of commentators we take this to be the reference.” (Best, *ICC*, 346)

- b) “The best analogy is found in passages of wisdom literature where the infinite scope of divine wisdom is emphasized. Of this wisdom (equated with ‘the deep things of God’) Zophar the Naamathite said (Job 11:8-9): ‘*It is higher than heaven--what can you do? Deeper than Sheol--what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*’ The divine ‘wisdom in a mystery’ which is unfathomable to mortal intelligence has been made incarnate in Christ and revealed to his servants -- not least to Paul, whose mission is to make known to all ‘the mystery which was hidden from eternity in God’ (v. 9).” (Bruce, 327-8, italics in original)
- c) “But there is another possibility. The petition may be a prayer for them to grasp the full dimensions of God’s wisdom. Earlier in this chapter, Paul discussed the eternal plan for the ages and how ‘God’s multi-faceted wisdom’ was being made known to the powers through the church (3:10). In chapter one he acknowledged the revelation of God’s mystery made known by God’s wisdom and insight (1:9). The language employed, ‘breadth, length, height, and depth,’ may derive from dimensional descriptions of God’s wisdom in the sapiential tradition (e.g., Job 11:5-9). In Paul’s doxology in Rom. 11:33 he wrote: ‘O the depths of the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God.’ So wisdom may be the unwritten genitive in 3:18. For God’s saints to grasp the full measure of God’s wisdom, through which he created the world and of which Christ is the incarnation (1 Cor. 1:21-30), demands divine power.” (Capes, 30)
- d) “The odd part of the verse is that it looks incomplete: to comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth of what? There is no completion to the idea, and numerous single candidates abound. Is it love? Is it wisdom? Is it power? Or is it just the raw vastness of it all? Most opt for the first, because of the previous mention of love. It certainly is included. However, it may be that making this choice gets too specific. One could rightfully suspect that the writer has written exactly what he intended here. It is the vastness of God’s programme in all of its depth -- the boundless vastness of salvation, pictured in many dimensions, and the things tied to it -- that is being praised here.” (Bock, 110)
- 2) Is there another option? Foster thinks so. Or at least that there is a word picture here that gives a deeper meaning of the most commonly accepted option.
- a) First, this is another *anacoluthon*. That is, a breaking in the sentence structure.
- b) What makes most sense is that the very next sentence (3:19) explains this one (3:18). And in that sentence, what we need to know is love. It is, therefore, very likely that in the first half we need to comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ’s love.
- c) However, this odd picture is surely intended to call something to mind, the lack of completion begs us to chew on it and figure it out.
- d) Foster believes there is an answer in keeping with the background picture of the temple metaphor in 2:19-22.

1. “However, a tantalizing option occurs in the context of the presentation of the eschatological temple filled with the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel 43. After the description of the glory coming into the temple and the accompanying oracle (43:1-12), the voice of the Lord addresses Ezekiel to describe the dimensions of the altar before the Lord. Here one finds all four of the terms in Eph. 3:18 used as part of the description of the dimensions of the altar: one cubit as height (ὑψος) of the altar (v. 13), two references to the base (βάθος) of the altar (vv. 13, 14), the hearth twelve cubits long (μήκος) and twelve cubits broad (πλάτος, v. 16). Thus, the dimensions outlined in the prayer of Eph. 3:14-19 might refer to the sacrificial altar as described in Ezekiel 43. If the author does refer to the dimensions of the altar as a metaphor for the love of Christ, then perhaps the author intends to point to the ‘sacrificial love’ of Christ in his death.” (Foster, 92)
 2. Frankly, though I think it is impossible to prove, I love this idea. I think it very much fits with the temple background of this prayer. I want it to be true.
 - 3) Whether we are just supposed to supply “love” as the genitive in this sentence or whether we are supposed to be directed to a word picture that reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice offered because of love, the number of times Ephesians has talked about things being immeasurable and unsearchable, the breaking off of the sentence leaves us with the idea that the breadth, length, height, and depth were so great that Paul couldn’t even get them measured enough to tell us what he was measuring.
 - a) Therefore, we need the strength in our inner man and the fashioning in our hearts that only Christ and His Spirit can provide.
 - b. Second, we need to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.
 - 1) Paul now asks the impossible. Further, he states he is asking the impossible.
 - 2) The reason we need to be strengthened in our inner man, in our mental capacity and to have Christ dwelling in our hearts, rooting and grounding us in love is because we need to be strong enough to know something that goes beyond the ability to know.
 - 3) Immeasurable
 - a) In Ephesians 1:19, we read about the immeasurable greatness of God’s power.
 - b) In Ephesians 2:7, we read about the immeasurable riches of His grace.
 - c) And now, right after talking about comprehending the breadth, length, height, and depth of something, we have this statement about knowing something that is immeasurable, that is, that surpasses the ability to know, to comprehend, to measure and that is the love of Christ.
 4. Apart from the Spirit strengthening us in our internal man, Christ dwelling in our heart, and being rooted and grounded in love, we will not be strong enough to know the love Christ has for us. This, of course, means we will never be strong enough to pass that same kind of love on to others growing the body up in love.
 5. But why do we need to know this surpassing love?
- D. In order that you might be filled unto all the fullness of God.

1. We have reached the peak. The vistas cannot be grander. Paul has been climbing one step at a time, making increasingly grandiose requests. He has already asked the impossible. Now he asks the unfathomable.
 - a. “Of course the eternal God can never be limited to the capacity of any one, or all, of his sinful creatures; at the same time Paul does not want to pray for anything less than that God's people may be filled to (*eis*) the very fullness of himself that he seeks to bring into their lives.” (Foulkes, 112, italics in original)
2. Take care to notice what the request actually is.
 - a. He doesn't request that we be filled *with* all the fullness of God.
 - b. “I like to think of the apostle's petition as a staircase by which he climbs higher and higher in his aspiration for his readers. His prayer-staircase has four steps, whose key words are ‘strength’, ‘love’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘fullness’. More precisely, he prays first that they may be *strengthened* by the indwelling of Christ through his Spirit; secondly that they may be rooted and grounded in *love*; thirdly that they may *know* Christ's love in all its dimensions, although it is beyond knowledge; and fourthly that they may be *filled* right up to the very fullness of God.” (Stott, 134, italics in original)
 - c. “It is uncertain how this genitive should be understood. If it is objective, then God's fullness is the abundance of grace which he bestows. If it is subjective, it is the fullness which fills God himself, in other words his perfection. Staggering as the thought may be, the latter seems the more probable because the Greek preposition is *eis*, which indicates that we are to be filled not ‘with’ so much as ‘unto’ the fullness of God. God's fullness or perfection becomes the standard or level up to which we pray to be filled. The aspiration is the same in principle as that implied by the commands to be holy as God is holy, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.” (*Ibid.*, 138, italics in original)
 - d. “Instead, the final *ἵνα*-clause introduces the final purpose of the prayer, the summation of the two previous *ἵνα*-clauses. In other words, the author prays for their strength for Christ to dwell in their hearts, leading to the empowerment of the Ephesian ἐκκλησία to grasp Christ's love in all its dimensions, finally resulting in their being filled to all the measure of God's fullness.” (Foster, 89)
3. Filled up to the fullness of God, but with what?
 - a. Stott suggests above it is God's very own fullness or perfection. However, we know what we are talking about — the church as God's temple. We know for what reason Paul is praying this prayer — to dedicate this temple. We already know what is supposed to fill the temple.
 - b. “However, if this prayer links with the tradition that spans from Exodus 40 to Ezekiel 43, then we find the answer to our question quite readily. The writer wants the ἐκκλησία in Ephesus filled with the *glory* of God as his dwelling place.” (Foster, 94, italics in original)
 - c. The glory that never filled the second temple, is to fill this one.
 - 1) In Haggai 2:3, as the temple was being built, Haggai questioned the older generation who remembered the original temple. They knew it didn't measure up.
 - 2) In Haggai 2:6-9, God says, “Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all the

nations so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.”

- 3) In Ephesians 2:14, 17, Jesus Christ is our peace. He is preaching peace. He is making peace. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul has been preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to the nations. They have been accepting it and coming into the temple. God is shaking the nations and bringing us into the temple with Christ’s riches.
 - 4) We need to be strengthened by the Spirit in our inner being, having Christ dwell in our hearts, by rooting and grounding us in love so we can be strong enough to comprehend the incomprehensible love of Jesus Christ, because then the church can be filled up to the level of the fullness of God with the latter glory.
 - 5) How are we doing on this?
4. This has been Paul’s dedication prayer for the temple we are being built into. His prayer has essentially been 2 Chronicles 6:41-42:
 - a. “And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let your saints rejoice in your goodness. O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one! Remember your steadfast love for David your servant.”
 - b. He has been asking God to take up His place, with all His glory in His temple the church, which is the body of His Son, Jesus Christ the anointed son of David. He is asking God to take up residence in the collective of Jews and Gentiles coming together based on the revelation of the resurrected Savior, having learned the riches of Christ, being built into His dwelling place.
 - c. We are God’s resting place. We are the place where His name dwells. Paul is asking that God will dwell here. Recognizing, that we can accomplish the building up of this dwelling place, He will have to do it with us, in us, and through us.

E. God can and will accomplish this prayer.

1. Paul asked God to powerfully give us these requests. Then he asked things that can only be accomplished if God acts powerfully on our behalf. But this leads us into the doxology of Ephesians 3:20-21.
2. God can accomplish this prayer.
 - a. Why was Paul willing to ask such crazy large requests? Why was he willing to ask things that could only be accomplished if God Himself were to give and act powerfully? Because God is just that powerful. When He gives powerfully, it is beyond what we can imagine.
 - b. “Lincoln calls attention to the ‘build up of thought reflected’ in the language. It was not enough to say God is able to do *πάντα* (*all*) that we ask or think. More than that, God is able to do *ὑπὲρ πάντα* (*above all*) that we ask or think. But that is still insufficient. Paul could have said, *ὑπὲρ πάντα περρισῶς* (*exceedingly above all*). But that too was insufficient. He could have intensified the word *περρισῶς* (*exceedingly*) and said, *ὑπὲρ πάντα ἐκπερρισῶς*. But he went even beyond that and said *ὑπὲρ πάντα ὑπερεκπερρισῶς*. This is the language of

exultant praise. If we are not naturally effusive, we do well to look to Paul's example to learn how to extol the greatness of our God." (Smelser, 166, italics in the original)

- c. The idea that we can be strong enough to know what is unknowable so we can have the fullness of God's glory in us for all the world to see? How can we even ask? Because we aren't alone. God isn't asking us to go do that. We are asking God to go do that. And God can do that. And He can do it by His powerful working in us.
 - d. Paul asks what is difficult, what is impossible, and what is unfathomable, because God is able to do far more abundantly than what we ask or even fathom.
 - e. We know he can do it, because He did it in Paul. If Paul can go from the man who put Christians in prison, to the man who went to prison for the love of Christians, we can know that kind of love and shine the glory of God for all to see.
3. God will accomplish this prayer.
- a. It is one thing to know God can grant a request. It is another thing to know He will. God will grant this request.
 - b. God's promise to fulfill.
 - 1) When Solomon dedicated the temple to God, praying before all the people. God worked a mighty demonstration of His glory and then specifically responded, explaining He would do exactly what Solomon requested (1 Kings 9:1-9; 2 Chronicles 7:12-22).
 - 2) We do not have a response as plain as that to Paul's Ephesian letter of temple dedication.
 - 3) However, we can know that God has responded and will grant Paul's request.
 - a) In Numbers 14, Israel had defied the glory of God and refused to enter the Promised Land, a work that would have magnified God's glory. God determined to judge the people, but factored Moses's own intercession on their behalf into His judgment.
 - b) In Numbers 14:20-23, God said: "I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, *and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers" (italics mine *ELC*).
 - c) In other words, it was as sure that none of those men would enter the Promised Land (except Caleb and Joshua) as it was sure God's glory will fill the earth.
 - d) None of those men entered the Promised Land. Therefore, God's glory will fill the earth.
 - 4) Of course, in one sense, the glory of the Lord fills the earth no matter what (cf. Isaiah 6:3). That is, the mere existence of the earth, the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars is a testimony to God's glory (cf. Psalm 8).

- 5) In another sense, the entirety of human history has been the glory war we have described. God's plan was for His glory to fill the earth. In this sense, it hasn't happened yet.
 - a) This was, in part, the purpose behind God's commission to Adam to work and keep the Garden, to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, having dominion over all things on the earth.
 - b) The Garden, which was only in the east of Eden (Genesis 2:8), did not fill the earth. God's sanctuary, His dwelling place where He met with man was only in a small part of the earth.
 - c) His image bearers, who manifested His glory, only lived in one portion of the earth. Their job was to fill the earth. That is, their job was to bear the image of God, displaying His glory throughout the entire earth.
 - d) They failed.
- 6) This is why it is important to recognize the need to be recreated in Christ Jesus as Paul taught in Ephesians 2:10. This is why Paul will go on to say that we Christians are to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" in Ephesians 4:24.
 - a) Like the Garden, the church is the sanctuary of God. The church is the dwelling place of God's glory.
 - b) We are to work it and keep it, being fruitful and multiplying, building it up in love, with every part doing its job so that the sanctuary of God will fill the entire earth.
 - c) In such way, the whole earth will be full of God's glory.
- 7) This is the thrust of Paul's dedication prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21.
 - a) And, because of God's statement in Numbers 14:20-21, we can know that it will happen.
 - b) The question is not will it happen. The question is will we be part of it.
4. And so, Paul concludes the prayer: "To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen."
 - a. This is Solomon's prayer in Psalm 72:19: "Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory!" Amen!

Conclusion:

- I. We are in a glory war.
 - A. Unless we are seized by what seized Paul, we will be lost.
 - B. The church isn't about us. Preaching isn't about us.
 - C. Let us be seized, captivated by the glory of the Lord. Let us spend so much time with Him that He shines through in our own love. In this way, the world and the heavenlies will see and discover the wisdom of God through Jesus Christ and His church.
 - D. Again, the question is not whether God will win this glory war. The question is not whether God's glory will fill the earth. The question is whether or not we will surrender to the winning side and thus be part of His victorious glory that will fill the entire earth.
 - E. To God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen!

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Appendix A: Why must we win this glory war?

(A response to atheists, skeptics, and critics)

- I. Atheists, skeptics, and critics read Ephesians 3:21 and believe the God of the New Testament is an egotist, having created all things for the special purpose merely of stroking His ego.
 - A. We might hear an atheist, skeptic, or member of some false religion complain that if any human did anything like this, creating all things just for his own personal glory, we would peg him a sociopathic narcissist.
 - B. Why would we defend such a God and give glory to Him? Why even be part of this church designed to give glory to such a God?
- II. First, we should note the distinction between all mankind and God.
 - A. If the God of the New Testament exists (and I certainly believe He does), then trying to compare Him and His glory to any human (a mere creation) seeking glory is comparing apples to oranges.
 - B. The Creator God has by His very nature the greatest glory of all things in existence. Further, by the very nature of creation, everything He creates will naturally be about His glory. He doesn't demand that it be so, order it to be so, or even beg for it to be so. Rather, by its very nature, it must be so.
 - C. In the same way that a painting testifies to the talent of the artist and a building testifies to the wisdom and skill of its architect, all created things testify to the glory of their Creator.
 1. And if, given free will, they decide not to testify to His glory, they have deviated from their very purpose.
 2. In fact, if given free will, the revelation to the creation that it is to bring glory to its Creator is actually a gift. In that revelation, the creation is learning where true purpose and meaning really are.
 - D. When any of the created things tries to act as if they have the complete nature of the Creator, acting as if everything around him or her is for his own glory and ego, then he or she is to be condemned. The creature cannot take for him, her, or itself the glory of Creator.
 - E. However, when the Creator does this, He is to be praised. After all, that is merely the nature of being Creator.
- III. However, the glorious reason we must win this glory war (by losing and surrendering to God and His glory) is for a very different reason. We cannot, in any real sense, attribute to ourselves or take for ourselves the nature of God, the Creator. But what God, through the Bible, demonstrates is that we become what we worship. As Beale asserts, "What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration." (Beale, 16) That is, we cannot take God's glory to ourselves, but we can share in God's glory when God is the One we most glorify.
 - A. "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them" (Psalm 115:4-8; see also Psalm 135:15-18). We become what we worship.
 - B. "They went after false idols and became false" (2 Kings 17:15). We become what we worship.
 - C. "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless" (Jeremiah 2:5). We become what we worship.

D. The prototypical example of this principle is seen in Israel's foundational failure in the glory war at the base of Mount Sinai in Exodus 32. They gave Aaron their gold, and he fashioned it into a calf. What happened next? The people became like cows.

1. "In this regard, Exodus 32 may be instructive, since it shows that when the first generation of Israel worshiped the golden calf, Moses describes them in a manner that sounds like they are being portrayed as wild calves or untrained cows: they became (1) 'stiff-necked' (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9) and would not obey, but (2) they 'were let loose' because 'Aaron had let them go loose' (Ex 32:5), (3) so that 'they had quickly turned aside from the way,' (Ex 32:8) and they needed to be (4) 'gathered together' again 'in the gate' (Ex 32:26), (5) so that Moses could 'lead the people where' God had told him to go (Ex 32:34). The expression in Exodus 32:8, 'they quickly turned aside from the way,' is placed directly before the phrase 'they have made for themselves a molten calf.' This is followed by portraying the people as 'stiff-necked' in verse 9, so that the three descriptions are inextricably linked." (*Ibid.*, 77-8)
2. This imagery of Israel being like untrained cows or wild calves seems from this moment on to be indelibly imprinted on them.
 - a. "Stiff-necked" becomes almost a technical term to describe the stubbornness of Israel related to their repeated idolatries. It presents a picture of a stubborn cow that will not go the way the farmer tries to direct it, but stiffens its neck to go its own way.
 - b. Every time this idea of stiffening the neck is presented in the Bible, it points back to this event. See Deuteronomy 9:6, 13; 31:27; Judges 2:19; 2 Chronicles 30:8; 36:13; Nehemiah 9:16, 17, 29; Isaiah 48:4; Jeremiah 17:23; 19:15; Ezekiel 2:4; 3:7, Acts 7:51. The one possible exception is Proverbs 29:1.
 - c. In Jeremiah 31:18, "I have heard Ephraim grieving, 'You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the LORD my God.'"
 - d. In Hosea 4:16-17, "Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture? Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone."

E. But perhaps the most fascinating part of this discussion is Beale's argument from Psalm 106:20, bringing in all the passages that discuss exchanging the glory of God for the glory of idols or created things. (*Ibid.*, 86-92)

1. "They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass" (Psalm 106:19-20).
2. The ESV footnote to Psalm 106:20 explains "They exchanged the glory of God" in the Hebrew is actually "exchanged their glory." This is the point Beale expounds.
3. The ESV translation can be explained, no doubt, by the point Beale makes about many commentators: "A number of commentators understand the phrase *their glory* to be a metonymy of adjunct for *their God*, so that the phrase is a figurative way of referring to Israel's exchange of God for another god, the point of the figure perhaps being to emphasize the glorious nature of God." (*Ibid.*, 87, italics in original)
4. Beale goes on to argue that while the above explanation is possible, it is more likely that "their glory" is exactly what is meant. That is, when they worship God, they share in and reflect His glory. Thus, when they abandon God for idols, they abandon the glory God would share with them and reflect through them, preferring instead to reflect the "glory" of an idol.

5. The great illustration of this is the contrast Moses makes with Israel surrounding the entire golden calf incident. In Exodus 32-34, Israel worships a calf and is pictured as being like a calf. Moses, however, goes up onto the mountain, asks to see God's glory, and that glory is contagious. When Moses comes down from the mountain his face shines with the reflection of God's glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:7).
- a. "The point of this brief digression in Exodus 33-34 about God's glory and Moses' luminous countenance is that he was the representative leader of Israel who reflected God's glory in contrast to the idolaters who did not reflect the divine glory but resembled the calf idol." (*Ibid.*, 90)
 - b. "God's 'glory' in Exodus 33-34 refers to the expression of his glorious attributes acted out toward Israel in redemptive history (his mercy in delivering them from Egypt and his justice in judging sinners among them). But this is not all; this glory is contagious in that those who want to get close to it actually reflect it, as in the case of Moses." (*Ibid.*)
6. In Jeremiah 2:5, Israel went after worthlessness and became worthless. In Jeremiah 2:11, God goes on to say about them, "But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit." That is, when worshiping and glorifying God, they grow to reflect God's glory. But now they reflect a useless dead idol. The "glory" they reflect as idolaters has no profit.
7. In Romans 1:18-27, Paul speaks of three exchanges. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man. Which led them to exchange the truth about God for a lie. Which led them to exchange natural relations for relations contrary to nature. But consider how this progression fits with Beale's argument from Psalm 106:20.
- a. If they had glorified God, recognizing His eternal power and divine nature, they would have reflected that glory. If they had hung on to the glory of the immortal God, they would have reflected that immortality. As it is, they glorified images like mortal man, birds, animals, and creeping things.
 - b. Because of this, their foolish hearts were darkened, their thinking became futile and useless. Their bodies became dishonored. Their behavior became shameless. That is, they became like animals, following only their basest instincts and fleshly desires.
 - c. And ultimately at what cost? If they had hung on to the glory of the immortal God, they would have reflected immortality. However, they grew to be like their images of mortal creatures. They became mortal. That is, as Paul concludes, they practiced what deserved death and gave hearty approval to others who did so.
 - d. Which brings us full circle to Psalm 115:4-8; 135:15-18.
 - 1) Read again the psalmists' descriptions of idols. They have eyes that don't see, ears that don't hear, mouths that don't speak, etc. Have you ever seen anyone like that?
 - 2) I have. At a funeral, in a coffin. The dead have eyes that don't see, ears that don't hear, mouths that don't speak, etc.
 - 3) Those who trust in idols abandon the immortal glory of God and end up reflecting the non-glory of dead idols. That is, they die.

IV. Why does winning this glory war matter?

- A. Not because God needs us to glorify Him. But because we need what comes to us through glorifying God. We need the sharing in His glory. We need the reflection of His glory. We

need to become like Him, and that only happens as we bring glory to Him. Life comes from bringing glory to God. The only other option is death.

1. And so Paul proclaims elsewhere: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:16-18).

B. In Ephesians 3:13, Paul asks the Ephesians not to lose heart over his suffering for them, “which is your glory.”

1. Paul suffered for these Gentiles that they may be in Christ and in His church which brings glory to God.
2. As those who surrender to the mystery of Christ by listening to Paul’s teaching that he received by revelation and passed on as a faithful steward of the administration given him by God, as faithful participants in the God-glorifying church, they reflect God’s glory and are themselves glorified.

Appendix B

A History of LORD's Glory²²

- I. The Glory of the Lord, Sinai, and the Tabernacle in the wilderness
 - A. We are first introduced to the glory of the Lord in Exodus 15:7 when Moses and the people of Israel praised God for overthrowing his adversaries in the greatness of His glory (ESV: majesty).
 - B. The Israelites come face to face with God's glory in the cloud in Exodus 16:10, presumably the one that had been following them and had been used to overthrow Egypt at the Sea, when they had grumbled about the lack of food.
 - C. When Israel camped at Mt. Sinai, the glory of the Lord dwelt there. "Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel" (Exodus 24:17).
 - D. The glory of the Lord was not to linger on Mt. Sinai, but was to go with the people of Israel. He instructed them to build a tabernacle. He anointed priests to minister in the tabernacle. He described sacrifices that should be offered at the entrance to the tabernacle. And He declared, "It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God" (Exodus 29:42-46). The glory of the Lord was the very presence of God with His people, but was only able to dwell among the people because of atoning sacrifice.
 - E. Moses asked for a special audience of God's glory in Exodus 33:18-23. Apparently, Moses was aware that the magnificent wonder and terror of the presentation of God's glory on Sinai was only a taste of the true glory of God. Even still, though God granted the request to witness an even greater measure of His glory, He explained Moses could not see His full glory because it is too much for mortal man to witness.
 1. Beale highlights that when God allowed Moses to witness His glory, part of that was the declaration of God's name (Exodus 33:19). When God passed by, He proclaimed: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7).
 2. "The point is that God's glory here includes aspects of his character..." (Beale, 89)
 3. Though LXX doesn't use δόξα in Exodus 34:29-35, Paul does in 2 Corinthians 3:7ff to describe the result in Moses of being this close to the glory of God. It rubbed off on Moses, if you will. His face shone as a reflection of God's glory. So great was the radiance of that glory, Moses veiled his face so the Israelites would not fear to come near Moses.
 - a. Paul, however, says the veil was to hide the fact that the glory was diminishing, which he uses as an illustration of the surpassing glory of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ over the Old Covenant through Moses and the Law.

²² This survey is based on uses of δόξα throughout the LXX.

- F. The climax of Exodus is not, as one might think, the defeat of Egypt at the Red Sea and Israel's crossing on dry land. Actually, the climax is in the final verses of the book. God had threatened not to go with Israel because of their sin with the golden calf, leaving in doubt whether or not God would actually dwell with His people. However, when the tabernacle is complete, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle... For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel through all their journeys" (Exodus 40:34-35, 38).
- G. This glory of the Lord in the tabernacle was manifested again when Aaron offered the sacrifices to consecrate the priests. "And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:23-24). The only appropriate response to the presence of the glory of the Lord is prostration.
1. The fire of God's glory is displayed again in the next chapter, though it is not called the glory of the Lord. This time it consumes Nadab and Abihu because they offered unauthorized fire. God says of this execution, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3).
 - a. In LXX, God was to be δοξασθήσομαι ("I will be glorified") from δοξάζω ("I glorify") the verb form of δόξα ("glory"). Because God is glorious, He is to be glorified.
- H. When the Israelites decided not to take the Promised Land and instead turned to stone Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua, it was the glory of the Lord that appeared and intervened to save the leaders (Numbers 14:10).
1. We also see God's glory linked to this kind of intervention and judgment surrounding the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. See Numbers 16:19, 42.
- I. As God responded to Israel's refusal to take the Promised Land and to Moses's intercession for the nation, God makes a very important promise. It is almost a side comment, a throw away statement. But we must not miss it. "I have pardoned, according to your word," God said to Moses, "But truly, as I live, and *as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness... shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers" (Numbers 14:20-23; italics mine, *ELC*).
1. The basis for knowing that first generation of Israelites would never see the Promised Land was the surety that not merely would the tabernacle be filled with the Lord's glory, but the entire earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. That is, the entire earth will be the sanctuary of the Lord.
- J. Inexplicably, the glory of the Lord disappears from the record of Israel's history. Despite the very significant role it played in the wilderness wanderings, it is not mentioned in the conquest or during the time of the judges. However, note the following caveats.
1. Though it is not called the glory of the Lord, we do see the cloud fill the tent of meeting when Moses commissions Joshua in Deuteronomy 31:14-15.
 2. Though we do not see the cloud or the glory throughout the conquest period, God reminds the people of the cloud in His declaration at the renewal of the covenant in Joshua 24:7 (LXX).

3. In the period of the judges, the closest we get to a record of the Lord's glory is in 1 Samuel 4:22 when the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. Phinehas's wife named their newly born child Ichabod to declare the glory had departed from Israel. Of course, this was a misunderstanding because she was equating God's glory with the Ark which was the mistake that had led to it getting captured in the first place.

II. The Glory of the Lord and the Temple in Jerusalem

- A. Not only is the glory of the Lord conspicuously absent throughout the conquest and period of the judges, it is not mentioned during the reign of Saul or David either.
- B. The next mention of the Lord's glory is found in 1 Kings 8:10-11 (parallel in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14). When the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the newly constructed temple, the glory of the Lord filled the temple in the form of the cloud such that the priests could not stand to minister in the temple. This repeats what happened at the consecration of the tabernacle when Moses was unable to enter the tabernacle for the glory of the Lord.
1. A point of clarification considering an earlier observation [I. C. 1. j. 3)]. While the Lord's glory entered the temple when the Ark of the Covenant did, the Ark is not the glory of the Lord. It was a mistake for Phinehas's wife to equate the glory of the Lord with the Ark. It would be a mistake for us to do the same.
- The glory of the Lord was said to dwell above the Ark as it was also said to dwell in the temple. Thus, God is described as the one who is enthroned above the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). However, it is a mistake to equate the glory of the Lord with the place where it dwells or the throne above which it sits.
 - This is the mistake made by Israel in Jeremiah 7:4 when they trusted in the deceptive words "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD." They assumed that because they had the temple, the glory of the Lord was with them.
 - This is the same mistake of the Israelites in 1 Samuel 4, thinking that because they had the Ark of the Lord with them in the battle, they had the glory and presence of the Lord. And it is the reverse mistake of Phinehas's wife, believing that when the Philistines had captured the Ark, they had captured and taken the glory and presence of the Lord so that He couldn't be with Israel.
- C. According to 2 Chronicles 6:41-7:3, the filling of the temple with the Lord's glory was repeated when Solomon offered his prayer of dedication.
- Solomon concluded his prayer saying, "And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let your saints rejoice in your goodness. O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one! Remember your steadfast love for David your servant."
 - And as Solomon finished this prayer, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple."
 - This recalls Leviticus 9:24. Once again, the priests couldn't minister because of the Lord's glory. When the people saw the glory of the Lord, they fell on their faces and worshiped, proclaiming, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."
- D. Once again, almost inexplicably, the glory of the Lord drops out of the historical record. This is not to say that the glory and presence of the Lord was not with Israel [see the section on the Psalms; I. C. 3. c)]. However, this manifestation of it is not mentioned again.

E. We do see significant accounts of the glory of the Lord connected to the temple in the prophets.

1. Ezekiel

a. The glory of the Lord forsakes the temple.

- 1) In Ezekiel 8:1-18, God brings Ezekiel in a vision to the Jerusalem temple. There he finds all manner of abomination in the temple. The people declare, “The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see” (Ezekiel 9:9). They were mistaken. However, because of this, the Lord really does forsake and leave the land.
- 2) In Ezekiel 8:4, the glory of the Lord is at the entrance of the gateway of the inner court.
- 3) In Ezekiel 9:3, the glory of the Lord moves to the threshold of the house.
- 4) In Ezekiel 10:4, the glory of the Lord filled the temple again as He did at the consecration of the tabernacle and the dedication of the temple.
- 5) In Ezekiel 10:18-19, the glory of the Lord leaves the threshold of the house and sits again on the cherubim that moved to the entrance of the east gate.
- 6) Finally, in Ezekiel 11:22-25, the cherubim carry the glory of the Lord out of the temple and even out of the city to a mountain on the east side of the city. Ezekiel was brought to the exiles to share with them this vision of the Lord and His glory forsaking Jerusalem.
- 7) It is no shock, having read of this vision, that the temple that was once filled with the glory of the Lord was destroyed by the Babylonians.

b. The glory of the Lord returns.

- 1) As tragic as the above was, God did not leave Ezekiel and Israel without hope. At the end of his prophetic book, Ezekiel receives another vision. This one is of the return of the Lord and His glory to an idealized version of the temple.
- 2) “Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory...As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (Ezekiel 43:1-5).
- 3) And again, “Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple, and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD. And I fell on my face” (Ezekiel 44:4).

2. Isaiah

a. Isaiah 4:2-6 provides this picture bringing to mind God’s presence with Israel in the wilderness: “In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all

the glory there will be a canopy. There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.”

- b. Again, in Isaiah 60, a picture reminiscent of the cloud separating Egypt from Israel, giving darkness to Egypt but light to Israel is promised. “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples, but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1-2).

- 1) Take note in Isaiah 60:3, when this happens, “And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”

- 2) And in a fascinating twist, when the glory of the Lord rises upon them, the Lord will become their glory (Isaiah 60:19).

- F. It is important to notice the absence of the glory of the Lord at the building of the second temple, which leaves the distinct impression that the second temple did not fulfill the prophecies mentioned above.

- 1. As the second temple was being rebuilt, God sent Haggai to prophesy concerning it.

- a. “Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?” (Haggai 2:3).

- b. Granted, this was at the very beginning of its construction. But the message is clear. This second temple does not have the glory of the first. And the point is surely not about gold, silver, and beauty.

- 2. However, God makes a promise. “And I will shake the nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine declares the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:6-9).

- a. Please, do not miss that the glory of the temple is tied to the riches of the nations coming into it.

- 3. However, when the second temple is completed, there is a shocking absence of the glory of the Lord.

- a. In Ezra 6, the temple is completed. It is dedicated. Sacrifices are offered. The people celebrate. The Passover is kept. However, there is no cloud. There is no fire. There is no glory.

- b. In contrast to recording how Moses, Aaron, and the priests could not minister due to the cloud and glory of the Lord (Exodus 40:35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3), Ezra records how the priests and Levites were reestablished in their divisions (Ezra 6:17-18). The contrast is, to me, startling.

- c. Just when you expect to read a repeated design pattern, its absence is telling.

III. The Glory of the Lord elsewhere in the Old Testament

- A. Before Ezekiel envisioned the glory of the Lord leaving the Jerusalem temple or returning. He simply described the glory of the Lord.

- 1. Like Paul, Ezekiel was seized, he was captivated by the glory of the Lord.

- 2. First, recognize in Ezekiel 1:4-25, that God is seated above the cherubim.

- 3. “And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I

saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face..." (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

- a. Notice the repeated use of "likeness." In other words, as glorious as all of this is, it is only the "likeness" of the glory. It is a representation and not even the real thing. For remember, no human could truly see the glory of the Lord and live (Exodus 33:20).
- b. Notice again the natural response to the presence of even merely the likeness of the glory of the Lord. "I fell on my face." And it even took the special strengthening power of the Spirit for him to stand (Ezekiel 2:2).
 - 1) Men today think they want to see God. Men today think they want God to break into the world and show Himself. They have no idea. If God were to reveal Himself in this way, we would melt in our shoes. We would faint dead away in fear if we survived at all.
 - 2) The appropriate response to the glory of the Lord is falling on our faces. If it didn't happen involuntarily because of our utter fear, it ought to happen voluntarily out of worshipful reverence.

B. In Isaiah 6:1-7, Isaiah sees a vision of God on his throne in the year Uzziah died.

1. While the Hebrew text speaks of the train of His robe filling the temple, LXX says His glory filled His house.
2. So glorious was He that the seraphim about Him covered their faces with two of their wings (presumably because God's glory is too great even for the Seraphim to behold) and covered their feet with two others (presumably to keep from defiling His glory by the trampling of their feet). And they cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

C. The Glory of the Lord in the Psalms.

1. According to Psalm 19:1, the heavens declare the glory of God (see also Psalm 97:6). Paul calls this to mind in his explanation that all men are without excuse because what is true about God is evident from the creation, namely "his eternal power and divine nature" (Romans 1:19-20). That is, His glory is evident by what He has created. For, if the sun, the moon, the stars have a glory, surely the One who spoke them into existence and flung them across the sky has more glory.
2. Psalm 24 is perfectly written by David in preparation for Solomon to build the temple. It could be the song sung in worship as the king led the way for the Ark of the Covenant to enter the temple and the glory of the Lord to take residence there. However, the real King is not David or any of his descendants (except One). The real King is the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts. It is a poetic picture of the doors opening up for the glory of the Lord to enter in.
3. While we do not see the cloud of the Lord's glory in the historical record during the reign of David, in Psalm 26:8, David recognized that the glory of the Lord did still dwell there.
 - a. Take note of this. It indicates that there is a difference between the presence of the Lord and the manifestation of His presence.
 - b. The cloud was a manifestation. It wasn't the actual presence.

4. In Psalm 29:1-3, David speaks of the God of glory.
 - a. Because He is the God of glory, His worshipers should ascribe to Him the glory due His name (see also Psalm 96:7-8).
 - b. His glory is demonstrated by the power of His voice in Psalm 29:3-9. His voice is like thunder, like many rushing waters. His voice breaks cedars. His voice flashes in flames of fire. His voice shakes the wilderness.
 - c. What is the response of all those who are in His temple, having heard and been shaken by His glorious voice? “Glory,” they cry (Psalm 29:9). How can they (we) cry anything else?
5. The faithful worshiper is one who sings, prays, and praises the glory of the Lord all the day (Psalm 71:8). The true worshipers in all the earth will “shout for joy to God...sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise” (Psalm 66:1-2). “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!” (Psalm 57:5, 11; 108:5). His glory should be declared not just among His people, but among the nations (Psalm 96:3).

Appendix C

Ephesians 3:4: “The Mystery of Christ”/ τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Grammatical Considerations

- I. What is “the mystery of Christ”? How should we translate it?
- A. “The following genitive (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) most likely is an objective genitive meaning that the mystery is about or is concerning Christ. Others have classified it as a genitive of apposition, which corresponds well with the parallel passage in Col 1:27 where it speaks of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you (ἐ ὅστιν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν). However, as Abbott points out, there is a difference because in Col 1:27 it is not ‘Christ’ but ‘Christ in you’ that constitutes the mystery. Although there is a difference between these two passages, this difference should not be exaggerated. Some use this difference to demonstrate that the two epistles were not written by the same author. However, the difference is not so much content as emphasis. In Col 1:27 Paul states that Christ is resident in individual Gentile believers, whereas in Ephesians he emphasizes that both Jews and Gentiles are fellow partakers. Colossians emphasizes the Christological aspect and Ephesians focuses more on the ecclesiological element. Thus, it is not a different author but a different situation with a distinct emphasis.” (Hoehner, 436)
- B. The above statement is technical, but it presents two options.
1. Objective Genitive
- In an objective genitive, “The genitive substantive functions semantically as the *direct object* of the verbal idea implicit in the head noun.” (Wallace, 116, italics in original)
 - To determine if it is an objective genitive, attempt to convert the head noun into its verbal form and turn the genitive into the direct object or replace “of” with words like “*for, about, concerning, toward, or sometimes against.*” (*Ibid.*, 116-117, italics in original)
 - In the phrase “mystery of Christ,” “mystery” is the “head noun” and “of Christ” is the genitive substantive. Converting our English word “mystery” into a verb form and retranslating the phrase is awkward. However, the Greek verb form (μυστηριάζω) was the idea of initiating, which would include the idea of disclosing the secrets. Thus, the translation could be, “my insight into the disclosed Christ.”
 - Applying the second test, one could easily say, as Hoehner does, this is the “mystery concerning Christ.”
 - With either test, the meaning essentially equates the mystery with Christ Himself.
 - “Now Paul speaks of his insight into ‘the mystery of Christ’, an expression which signifies either the mystery which is equated with Christ or, more probably, that which consists in Christ -- it is ‘the mystery which is disclosed in him’. According to the latter, it is in Christ that the unseen God is fully revealed.” (O’Brien, 230, italics in original)
 - Notice, O’Brien sees the same two possibilities as Hoehner. He also favors the objective genitive. Yet, how different is the mystery that is disclosed in Christ and the mystery which is Christ?

2. Genitive of Apposition

- a. In the genitive of apposition, “The substantive in the genitive case refers to the same thing as the substantive to which it is related. The equation, however, is not exact. The genitive of apposition typically states a specific example that is part of the larger category named by the head noun. It is frequently used when the head noun is ambiguous or metaphorical.” (Wallace, 95)
- b. “To test whether the genitive in question is a genitive of apposition, replace the word *of* with the paraphrase *which is* or *that is, namely*, or, if a personal noun, *who is*.” (*Ibid.*, italics in original)
- c. Another note regarding this construction is important. “As we have said, in a *genitive of apposition* construction, the head noun: (1) will state a large category, (2) will be ambiguous, or (3) will be metaphorical in its meaning, while the genitive names a concrete or specific example that either falls *within* that category, clarifies its ambiguity, or brings the metaphor down to earth.” By example, he says, “‘the sign of circumcision’ (ambiguity-clarification).” (*Ibid.* italics in original)
- d. If “mystery of Christ” is a genitive of apposition, then the meaning would be along the lines of, “my insight into the mystery, which is Christ” or “my insight into the mystery, namely Christ.”
- e. Though recognizing this construction would somewhat parallel Colossians 1:27, Hoehner dismisses the idea that this is a genitive of apposition.
- f. However, the ESV translates Χριστοῦ in Colossians 2:2 as a genitive of apposition translating, “God’s mystery, which is Christ.” Despite textual difficulties and translational options, Hoehner also sees the genitive of apposition here, saying: “In Col 1:26-27 the mystery which had been hidden and is now manifest to the saints is that Christ is among or in them, the hope of glory...in 2:2-3 Paul reveals his desire that believers have full understanding and thus comprehend God’s mystery, namely, Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.” (Hoehner, 431)
- g. If indeed, this is to be seen as a genitive of apposition, one more statement from Wallace about why this kind of genitive was used is fascinating to me: “Indeed, one of the chief reasons to identify a particular genitive as a genitive of apposition is that it is related to a noun which begs to be defined. The ambiguity of the head noun is forcefully dissipated with the genitive. But the reason for an author using the head noun in the first place becomes clear: the collocation of the two nouns often suggests provocative imagery (‘the breastplate of righteousness,’ ‘the down payment of the Spirit,’ ‘the temple of his body’) which would be the poorer if the genitive simply replaced the head noun. Thus, the two nouns stand in symbiotic relation: they need each other if both clarification and connotation are to take place!” (Wallace, 96)
 - 1) In other words, if Paul is using this genitive appositionally, it is because the imagery of Christ the mystery is provocative, challenging, thrilling.
 - 2) If Paul simply wrote, “when reading this you are able to understand my insight into Christ,” what a much flatter image that would have portrayed. However, it is not simply an insight into Christ. It is an insight into the mystery. It is an insight into what had been hidden, but is now revealed in Christ, by Christ, through Christ.

3. To be clear, there are other options for translating this genitive.

- a. Subjective genitive: My insight into Christ's disclosure.
 - b. Possessive genitive: The mystery belonging to Christ.
 - c. Genitive of source: The mystery from Christ.
 - d. Genitive of reference: The mystery with respect to Christ.
4. However, seeing the two common options between which, according to Hoehner, scholars commonly choose is indicative of the direct connection between the mystery and Christ Himself.
- C. Which is it? Is it "disclosing Christ," "the mystery concerning/about Christ," or "the mystery which is Christ"? Either way, Christ is the mystery.

Appendix D

How is the Mystery a Mystery if Jesus is Prophesied in the Old Testament?

- I. In II. D. 4 of the body of the paper and in Appendix C, I assert that the mystery is Jesus. The immediate objection is, of course, how is Jesus a mystery not revealed until the apostles and prophets of the New Testament if He is prophesied in the Old Testament?
 - A. Specifically defining the mystery is a struggle for many, namely because so much of everything that gets discussed under the heading of “the mystery” is actually prophesied in the Old Testament.
 1. “In what sense, then, could it be said that this ‘mystery’ was a new revelation if the prophets of the Old Testament had already looked forward to the saving purpose of God in which Gentiles along with Israelites would be embraced within its scope?” (O’Brien, 232)
 2. Please note: This is not just an issue for those who claim the mystery is Jesus. Rather, it is an issue for just about any nuance of the salvation of the Gentiles someone wants to claim is the mystery.
 - B. Again and again, commentators check off aspects of the gospel, the church, the salvation of Gentiles that cannot be the mystery because there is some statement in the Old Testament or some prophecy that reveals just that aspect.
 1. “That the Gentiles would be saved was not in reality a mystery. God had revealed that fact by many prophets:...” (Caldwell, 112)
 - a. Over the next page and half, Caldwell quotes or references numerous passages supporting his claim: Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Isa 11:10; 49:6; 60:1-3; Mal 1:11; Hos 1:10; 2:23; Deut 32:21; Isa 65:1; 2 Sam 22:50; Ps 18:49; Deut 32:43; Ps 117:1; Isa 11:10.
 2. “The mystery was not the idea of a coming Messiah. The OT clearly spoke of a coming Messiah. Even Herod understood this (Mt 2.2). The priests and the scribes were able to point to the OT prophet Micah in order to tell the king where the Messiah would be born, and this much seems to have been fairly common knowledge among Jews (Jn 7.42).

“Even the prospect of a blessing for Gentiles was not itself a mystery, having been revealed to Abraham. God had promised Abraham that he would be a blessing for all nations (Gen 12.3), and in repeating that promise to Isaac (26.4) and then to Jacob (28.14), the Lord had specified that this would be accomplished in their descendants. In Isaiah in particular, but also in other prophets, it was revealed that Gentiles would be welcomed in the house of the Lord (Is 2.2ff, 56.6-8), that Gentiles would come to the light of God’s people (Is 60.3), and that Gentiles would assist in the building up of the city of God (Is 60.10). In Psalm 87, there is even clear indication that Gentiles would be naturalized citizens in the city of God, an idea that comes very close to the concept of Gentiles becoming Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise (Gal 3.29). When the circumcision controversy erupted in Jerusalem, it was on the basis of the Old Testament scriptures that James argued for Gentile equality, specifically on the basis of the LXX rendering of Amos 9.12.” (Smelser, 150-1)
 3. “The fact that the Gentiles are included in the divine promise is nothing new (Gen 12,3; 18,18; Isa 2,2-4; 11,10; 42,6; 49,6; 66,20; Jer 3,17; Mic 4,1-3; Zech 2,15; 9,9-10) and Paul elsewhere stresses how the salvation of the Gentiles is in accordance with the promises of God in the Old Testament (Rom 4,16-17; Gal 3,22,29; 4,28).” (Grindheim, 533)

- a. Grindheim's entire essay is predicated on this concern about what had been previously revealed in the Old Testament prophets. The essay is entitled, "What the OT Prophets Did Not Know: The Mystery of the Church in Eph 3, 2-13."
- II. This leads to a debate. Was the mystery something completely unknown before the revelation to Paul or at least to the apostles in general? Or does this revelation to Paul and the apostles merely mean a clarifying of something already revealed?
- A. The debate usually centers around the use and meaning of "ὥς" in Ephesians 3:5. This word is translated "as." The mystery "was not made known...as (ὥς) it has now been revealed." Is that a complete revelation or a comparative revelation?
1. On the side of completely and newly revealed, consider Best:

"In the light of this ὥς could be given a comparative meaning, 'as clearly as'; God's purpose for the Gentiles was not understood as clearly in the OT as now after the death and resurrection of Christ...How does such an understanding accord with the concept of revelation to Paul in v. 3? It suggested something new, not that Paul came to appreciate a truth which had lain hidden from the Jews though written in their scriptures. Were the latter the case, then v. 3 ought to have run '*the understanding of the mystery was made known to me by revelation*' and something similar would be expected here and in 3.9f. Since it is almost impossible to find OT passages to parallel 3.9f, those verses cannot refer to the imparting of a true understanding of already known passages. Those who take ὥς as 'as clearly as' sometimes argue that the new revelation means that the Gentiles are now incorporated into the same body as the Jews...this is to split hairs. There are moreover no good grammatical or stylistic reasons for modifying the absolute nature of the contrast implied by ὥς. This absolute nature is supported by 1.9 and is found in, or can be read into, other parts of the NT (Rom 16.25-27; Col 1.26; Gal 4.21-31; 1 Cor 2.7ff; Tit 1.2f; 2 Tim 1.9f). In the commission to the Twelve (Mt 28.16-20; Acts 1.8) to go into all the world the command is presented as something new and not as the unfolding of an existing though partly veiled secret. Eph 3.2ff stands under the general schema in relation to revelation of 'once hidden--now revealed' which appears to exclude OT revelation. There is both continuity and discontinuity between the testaments; our passage stresses the discontinuity, perhaps over-stresses it, but it is corrected elsewhere by the importance given to the OT by AE when he quotes it." (Best, 305-6, italics in original)
 2. On the side of comparatively revealed, consider Mare:

"How do the words ὥς νῦν ('as now'), in Ephesians 3:5 fit into the above proposition? It is true, as Robertson²³ notes that ὥς can be used in comparative, declarative, causal, temporal, final, consecutive, indirect interrogative, and exclamatory ways. However, Robertson also says 'ὥς is more often comparative than anything else,' and a look at the concordance will verify this." (Mare, 83)

a. However, Mare does not completely rely on the potential definition of this word with a broad spectrum of meaning. In fact, it was his final consideration. Rather, he bases his consideration on the meaning of "mystery" from Daniel: "In the canonical Old Testament the only book where the Septuagint translates the original by μυστηριον is in the Aramaic section of Daniel. The Aramaic word so translated is *raz* which according to the Brown, Driver and Briggs Lexicon is a Persian loan word and is to be translated 'secret.' The word and its Greek translation is used in Daniel 2 (verses 18, 19, 27, 28 29, 30, 47) and once in Daniel 4 in verse 9. In Daniel 2 the secret or mystery is something which Nebuchadnezzar has known but now has forgotten, but it is also something, when

²³ He is referring to A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*.

known, he did not understand. Daniel is to reveal (εκφαινω or αποκαλυπτω) the facts of the dream and the interpretation. In the Daniel 4:9 reference the situation is different: the μυστηριον is not something unknown (Nebuchadnezzar knows the facts of the dream) but is only something which the king does not understand.

“Thus in these passages in Daniel μυστηριον or *raz* can be used to indicate that which is factually known but not understood; or they can be used to designate that which is both unknown (or rather, forgotten) factually and also not understood.” (*Ibid.*, 79, italics in original)

- b. And later he writes: “Therefore, we conclude on the basis of these comparisons that Paul in speaking of the mystery concerning the Gentiles in Ephesians 3 is not intending to convey the thought that the basic facts of the inclusion of Gentiles in the plan of salvation and in the spiritual body of the redeemed (the terms used to indicate this organism being differently expressed at different times by different writers such as the terms, ‘children of Abraham,’ ‘seed of Abraham,’ ‘assembly,’ ‘congregation,’ ‘church,’ etc.) is excluded from the text of the Old Testament. What he does mean is that this mystery truth, although known and written in kernel form in the text of the Old Testament, was not fully comprehended nor understood until the times of the New Testament, and so can be spoken of, relatively speaking, as being hidden.

“This agrees with the usage of μυστηριον and *raz* seen in Daniel 2 and 4; in the use of *raz* in some of the passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls; and in the extra-Pauline passages in the New Testament, where the basic facts of the mystery are known (or have been known) and yet their deeper meaning is unknown or hidden to some.” (*Ibid.*, 83, italics in original)

III. Honestly, I believe the search to find some aspect of Gentile salvation, the church, or the gospel of Jesus that is not prophesied in the Old Testament is fruitless. The attempts to do so usually split hairs and rely on nuanced concepts.

- A. The first time the promise of the blessing of salvation is given it was, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). I can’t help but connect back to this Paul’s statement about praying to the “Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14-15).
- B. Then it is repeated in Genesis 22:18: “And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”
- C. Though multiple commentators claim the completely unrevealed portion that makes up the mystery is the Gentiles being able to come into the one body, or doing so without proselytizing, in Acts 15:13-17, James believed the prophets foresaw that and then quoted Amos 9:11-12 as meaning such.
- D. Though I may struggle to know how the Old Testament scriptures foretold the suffering of Jesus and the coming gospel message, Jesus told the two on the road to Emmaus, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).
- E. Jesus later appeared to the apostles and “said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled... Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:44-47).

- F. In fact, in Romans 16:25-27, a passage that parallels the discussion of the mystery in Ephesians 3, Paul says, “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command or the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of the faith...”
1. The revelation has now been disclosed, but it is also being made known through the prophetic writings.
 2. Mare considers this a strong point in his argumentation: “What Paul is saying [in Romans 16:25-27] is that, although this mystery of the Gospel with the Gentiles being partakers of it was not generally understood in its deeper implications in ages past and to that extent was actually hidden, yet the elementary facts of the mystery were included in the scriptures of the prophets, which scriptures are now being expounded and explained to the Gentiles.” (Mare, 82)
 3. Mare quotes Charles Hodge on Romans 16:26, “that is, ‘this gospel or mystery hidden from eternity, is now revealed, not now for the first time indeed, since there are so many intimations of it in the prophecies of the Old Testament.’ It is evident that the apostle adds the words, *and by the Scriptures of the prophets*, to avoid having it supposed that he overlooked the fact that the plan of redemption was taught in the Old Testament; compare chap. 1:2; 3:21” (*Ibid.*, fn11, italics in original)
 4. Lenski says, commenting on these prophetic writings: “Most pertinent is the phrase: ‘by means of the prophetic writings.’ ‘Writings’ differentiates this means from the κήρυγμα, which is oral, the voice of the heralds, Christ’s apostles. But the apostles preached Christ or God’s revelation in Christ, but not apart from, or as different from, the Old Testament prophets. They ever preached that Christ was foretold by the prophets. Paul’s epistle constantly quotes the prophets. He must do that, for a Christ who is apart or different from the Messiah of the prophets would be a false Christ.” (Lenski, *Romans*, 930)
 - a. Though he sees “mystery” used in two distinct ways in Ephesians 3, Lenski also argues that the mystery in Ephesians was revealed in the Old Testament. “While the whole of it, including also this significant part, was revealed in the Old Testament...It was indeed *revealed* in those past generations, for all of the prophets tell about it, but it was not *made known* to the sons of men, not carried abroad to men in general, as Christ now revealed it to his apostles when he revealed to them that they should go and proclaim it to all the nations (Matt. 28:19), to every creature (Mark 16:16)...” (Lenski, *Ephesians*, 469, italics in original)
- G. Even the notion of being together in one body was revealed before the Holy Spirit revealed it to the apostles or Paul. In John 10:14-18, Jesus explained He was going to lay down His life and take it up again on behalf of the flock. Further, He explained He would bring sheep from another fold and form one flock. This is clearly a reference to bringing the Gentiles and Jews together. Will we really split hairs that this says flock instead of body?
1. Further, an argument can be made that this is a fulfillment of Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34:13.
 - a. In the latter, God explains He will search for all His sheep, saying, “And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land.” In LXX, “the peoples” is the same as “the nations” or “the Gentiles.”
 - b. “There are messianic implications in [Ezekiel 34] 11-16 that are spelled out even more clearly in verse 23 and in 37:24. In these verses the Lord promised a

shepherd as ruler over his people who will be of the family of David (see also Jer. 23:4-6 for a similar messianic statement).” (Huey, 81)

c. Granted, the original reading of these prophecies point to the restoration of Israelites from their dispersion back to the land. However:

- 1) Jesus is most certainly calling to mind the “one shepherd” of Ezekiel 34:23. Why would we deny He is calling to mind the rest of this prophecy, but applying it to Gentiles?
- 2) Doesn’t something similar happen in Romans 9:24-26? Here, Paul applies Hosea 1:10-11; 2:23 to the Gentiles. However, originally, it referred to God’s restoration of Israel whom He had formerly judged as “not my people.”

IV. In what way then is any of this a mystery?

A. First, it seems to me the only doctrinal position that relies on claiming the revelation of this mystery to Paul and through the apostles must be completely new is dispensational premillennialism.

1. “The mystery of Ephesians 3:1-12 is a touchstone of interpretations. Amillennial eschatology is quite certain that in this passage Paul is not saying that the mystery is something that was not revealed until New Testament times but is a further revelation of the covenant promises made with Abraham. Oswald T. Allis, for instance says: ‘... It was new and unknown in a relative sense only, being in its essentials an important theme of prophecy from the time of Abraham....’” (Ryrie, 24) He then goes on to quote Mare as well.
2. “On the other hand, dispensational premillennialism has insisted that the mystery is something unrevealed in the Old Testament (though now revealed) in order to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the church from Israel and to emphasize its unique place in God’s program for this age. Pentecost, for instance, writes as follows: ‘Paul then, is explaining, not limiting the mystery there set forth. The concept must stand that this whole age with its program was not revealed in the Old Testament, but constitutes a new program and a new line of revelation in this present age.’” (*Ibid.*, 25)
3. It is no surprise then that Frank Van Dyke, particularly addressing Dispensational Premillennialism, asserts the revelation of which Paul speaks is not completely new: “The mystery ‘in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets.’ (v. 5). This is taken to mean that no reference to the mystery was made in prophecy; because, it is said, if the Old Testament prophets foretold the great mystery, then it was made known in the sense that Paul says it had not been made known. Peter plainly states, however, that the prophets ‘prophesied of the grace that should come unto you’ and that they ‘testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ.’” (Van Dyke, 5)
4. However, even if Ryrie or anyone else were able to definitively prove that the church or the new program of the present age was not at all prophesied in the Old Testament, Ephesians 3 still refutes this Dispensational error. “κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων, ‘according to the eternal purpose.’ This prepositional phrase indicates that this manifold wisdom of God was not the result of a last minute idea which God had. Israel’s rejection of their Messiah did not make it necessary for God to create hastily a new plan, namely, the church.” (Hoehner, 462-3)
5. Dispensational Premillennialists must assert and prove this mystery is a 100% completely, totally, new and not at all prophesied teaching. For the rest of us, this is an exercise in merely trying to understand exactly the meaning of these passages.

Whether the revealed mystery was completely revealed by the apostles or comparatively (for lack of a better term) revealed will not change our practice and application of the mystery we have discovered.

- B. I believe the reason we so struggle with this question is because we are reading the Old Testament after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are reading it after the New Testament has been revealed. We cannot unsee what we have seen. We cannot unhear what we have heard. Therefore, when we read the Old Testament, we do so having had the veil of mystery lifted. We cannot ever read the Old Testament as the Jews did before Jesus Christ. Therefore, what Paul calls a mystery doesn't seem so mysterious when we read the Old Testament in which the mystery was hidden.
1. "But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).
 2. Can you and I ever read Isaiah 53 and not see the crucified Christ? And yet in Acts 8:30-31, when Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch if he understood what he was reading, he responded, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" Further, after reading the passage, the Ethiopian asked, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" How did Philip answer this question? "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus." Isaiah 53 is clear to us, having had the veil lifted in Jesus Christ. It was hidden to the eunuch until Jesus was preached to him.
 3. The idea is conveyed by some that if we can find the mystery prophesied in the Old Testament, then it wasn't hidden in ages past and then revealed to the apostles. Even those who, like Mare, see it in the OT, want to speak of it as a kernel, rather than finding it in its fullness because there is the idea that there has to be some lack of clarity to justify calling it a mystery.
 - a. However, the fact that something was hidden doesn't mean that it wasn't completely and fully there.
 - b. Consider the use of "mystery" as it pertains to the parables.
 - 1) When asked why He spoke in parables, Jesus told the apostles it was because to them it had been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but not to the crowds (Matthew 13:11).
 - 2) Yet, the teaching was right there. The mysteries were in them, yet they were still mysteries to the crowds.
 - c. By way of illustration, think of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus (John 20:11-18).
 - 1) She turns and sees Jesus. He is right there in front of her, plain as the nose on your face. He is fully and completely there. He is not there in kernel form.
 - 2) But He was hidden from her, if you will. Somehow, she didn't recognize Him until He said her name.
 - d. Perhaps more to the point, consider the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).
 - 1) Jesus was right there. He was completely there. He was clearly there. He wasn't there in truncated form or kernel form.

- 2) But He was hidden from them. “Their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” Only in the breaking of the bread it said “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”
 - 3) In wonderful literary irony, the moment their eyes are open to see Him, He vanishes from their sight.
 - 4) In keeping with the point I’m making, notice that once their eyes were opened and it was revealed to them that it was Jesus, they then reinterpreted the whole event. “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”
 - 5) In other words, once they knew it was Jesus, they reinterpreted their pre-revelation experience based on the new knowledge. They would never again look back on those moments prior to the revelation without knowing it was Jesus talking to them. While He was talking, He was hidden from them. He was a mystery. But once the mystery was revealed, they couldn’t see the pre-revelation experience with those same veiled eyes.
- e. In connection with the Emmaus road disciples, just a few verses later, in Luke 24:45, Jesus explained that He must fulfill what was in the Old Testament. The text says, “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” It doesn’t say He revealed something completely new to them that wasn’t in the Scripture. It says He opened their minds to what was there. It had previously been hidden. This is exactly parallel to the eyes of the Emmaus road disciples being opened.
- f. Consider Mark 9:30-32.
- 1) Jesus plainly tells the disciples He is going to be killed and will rise after three days. The disciples, however, don’t understand.
 - 2) This sort of thing happens repeatedly. You and I can’t misunderstand it. Why? Because we are post resurrection. But the disciples didn’t understand.
 - 3) It seems they couldn’t understand. In fact, Jesus performs a miracle in a very odd way in Mark 8:22-26 as if to say to the apostles, “You are like this man. You are blind. You see men like trees walking. You do not see clearly. But you will.”
- g. Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this principle is in John 2:18-22.
- 1) The Jews ask for a sign to demonstrate Jesus’s authority for cleansing the temple. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
 - 2) The people didn’t understand this at all and thought He was talking about the Jerusalem temple. The text says He was actually speaking about His own body.
 - 3) Even the disciples didn’t understand the prophecy until the resurrection. After the resurrected Jesus was revealed, it became clear. They remembered it and believed it and the Scripture.
- h. A few years ago, in our study on Acts, I addressed the apostles’ seemingly odd use of the Old Testament Scriptures. At that time, I posited the following:
- 1) “The apostles used the Old Testament the ways they did because the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the singularly central event of God breaking into human history that ultimately defines everything before and after it.” (Crozier, 184)

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- 2) “Does it not stand to reason when whatever the Old Testament is looking forward to actually comes to be, it will open up keys to understanding at least parts of the Old Testament, if not the entire thing, in unforeseen ways. Does it not stand to reason when the actual substance it was shadowing breaks on the human scene that previously blurred images, confusing passages, and troubling concepts will become clearer?” (*Ibid.*)
 - 3) And that event was the resurrection. It changed everything. It redefined everything before and after it. Everything before and after it must be interpreted through the lens of it. And we who have come to believe in it cannot unsee it or unhear it. We cannot read the Old Testament as if we don’t know about it. Therefore, for us the veil is lifted. The mystery is uncovered.
- C. This is why the revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus is the revelation of the mystery. Once he had witnessed the risen Lord (Galatians 1:11-24; 1 Corinthians 15: 8-9), the mystery was laid bare along with all its implications.
- D. The reason why Paul must here, and elsewhere (such as Romans 16:25-27), speak of a mystery revealed that can also be taught through the Old Testament is because Paul was constantly teaching and writing in the face of Judaizing teachers who would say Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament was wrong. Why should the Gentiles (or even Jews for that matter) listen to Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament when so many other Jews disagreed? Because Paul and the other apostles, by witnessing the resurrected Lord Jesus, had received a revelation that lifted the veil off the Old Testament (2 Corinthians 3:14-16), redefining and reinterpreting it.

Appendix E

The Surface Meaning of “Paul, the Prisoner,” with Emphasis on When and from Where Paul Wrote Ephesians

- I. In Ephesians 6:20, Paul describes himself as an ambassador in chains. That is, he wrote this letter while in one of his imprisonments.
 - A. In 2 Corinthians 11:23, Paul indicates he had been imprisoned multiple times. Surely, Paul’s description of “far more imprisonments” refers to more than the two recorded imprisonments in Acts.
 1. In Acts 16:16-40, Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, leading to the conversion of the Philippian Jailer.
 2. Beginning in Acts 21, he was in a lengthy imprisonment that began in Jerusalem, led to Caesarea, and finally took him to Rome.
 3. “We may miss a clue when we analyze the writings of the New Testament as if they came together by happenstance, forgetting that the Holy Spirit inspired them and intended them to function collectively. Surely it is no accident that the book of Acts provides an illuminating backstory to Paul’s letters to churches. We can identify at what point in Luke’s narration Paul wrote Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians, and we have a pretty good idea as to about where 2 Thessalonians fits. If this is intentional, and I believe it is, should we be surprised if the imprisonment Paul mentions in his letters is one Luke describes?” (Smelser, 45)
 - a. I think Smelser makes a great argument. I realize there is the shortcoming that it appears an imprisonment is mentioned in 2 Timothy that is not in Acts. However, there is a really good, contextually holistic approach to scripture that produces that conclusion, which actually corresponds to Smelser’s thesis. That is, it sees the books and letters taken together as a collective whole meant to inform one another.
 - B. When Paul wrote Philippians, almost certainly from a Roman imprisonment (see Philippians 1:13; 4:22), he was convinced he would be released in order to serve and help at least the Philippian Christians and, no doubt, Christians in general (see Philippians 1:25).
 - C. Paul additionally wrote while in prison to Philemon (see Philemon 1, 23).
 1. The letter to Philemon was almost certainly a companion letter to the one written to the Colossians.
 - a. Similar references to Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, and Epaphras (Colossians 4:10-16; Philemon 23-24) supports this.
 - b. The references to Archippus (Colossians 4:17; Philemon 2) certainly connect Philemon to the congregation in Colossae.
 - c. The references to Onesimus (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 10-12) make the connection between Philemon and Colossians practically certain.
 2. Based on Philemon 22, Paul clearly was convinced he would be freed from this imprisonment.
 - D. The similarities between Ephesians and Colossians suggest they were written around the same time.
 1. These similarities coupled with the references to sending Tychicus to report on Paul’s circumstances, worded almost identically in Ephesians 6:21-22 and Colossians 4:7-8, make it almost definite that these letters were written at about the same time and delivered by the same person on the same trip to the various congregations.

- E. Paul also wrote 2 Timothy from prison (see 2 Timothy 1:8).
1. However, the tone of this letter is significantly different from the other prison letters.
 - a. While in Philippians and Philemon (by extension Colossians), Paul seemed certain he would be released, in 2 Timothy 4:6, he sees himself as “already being poured out as a drink offering.”
 - b. As far as he is concerned, he has finished his course (4:7).
 - c. He is now going on to receive his crown of righteousness from his Lord, the righteous judge (4:8).
 - d. He envisions a spiritual release and deliverance of going to be with the Lord, but not an earthly release to be able to continue helping the brothers and sisters.
 2. Additionally, there are other markers that 2 Timothy is written in completely different circumstances from the other prison epistles.
 - a. Namely, according to Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24, Mark was with Paul when he wrote those letters from prison. However, according to 2 Timothy 4:11, while Luke is with Paul, Mark is not.
 - b. According to Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, Demas is still with Paul. However, according to 2 Timothy 4:10, not only is Demas no longer with Paul, it appears Demas has fallen away due to a love for the present world.
 - c. The above significant differences make the common references to sending Tychicus merely coincidence (see 2 Timothy 4:12; Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8). Some workers had gone on to other fields. Some had fallen away. Tychicus was still working with Paul and had simply at both times been sent on missions into Asia.
 3. Thus, while it is not explicitly stated in the New Testament, the traditional notion that Paul was released from the Roman imprisonment where he was left at the end of Acts and was later imprisoned in Rome again leading up to his execution in the mid-60s, seems to me to be well-supported by the epistolary evidence.
 - a. As Smelser pointed out above, Acts informs the epistles, the epistles inform Acts, the epistles inform one another. They are a whole that can be taken collectively.
- F. Tying all the above together, I believe we can ascertain with relatively high confidence that Paul wrote Ephesians during the time of that first lengthy imprisonment recorded at the end of Acts. Around the same time, he wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. He wrote 2 Timothy later during a different and final imprisonment that led to his death.
1. Paul certainly had time during his Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 24-26) to write Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. To my knowledge, there is no theological reason or even apologetic reason to rule that out.
 2. However, as said above, Philippians, in which Paul had confidence of a coming release, seems almost certainly to have been written in Rome.
 - a. In Philemon, Paul has even more confidence of a coming release than he did in Philippians, requesting that a guest room be prepared for him by Philemon in Colossae.
 - b. Thus, it makes sense to me that Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians, were written toward the end of the two years he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31).

- II. Not only was Paul in prison, but if this was, as argued above, his Roman imprisonment at the end of Acts, he was literally imprisoned on behalf of the Gentiles.
- A. “It is however just possible that the phrase ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν could be taken differently and regarded as a link to v. 14 as if the sentence was intended to run ‘I pray on behalf of you Gentiles’; this however would leave the phrase hanging at its present point without any connection; it is therefore better to relate it to what preceded, ‘Paul, Christ’s prisoner on behalf of you Gentiles’. Since the passage ends (v. 13) by speaking of his sufferings for the glory of the Gentiles ... ὑπὲρ can probably be given the more precise meaning ‘to benefit you Gentiles’.” (Best, 296)
- B. In Galatians 2:7-10, though we know that Peter taught Gentiles and Paul taught Jews, Paul explains that in general, Peter was an apostle to the circumcised while Paul was chosen by God to go to the Gentiles.
1. This corresponds with the accounts of Paul’s conversion in Acts.
 - a. In Acts 9:15, God tells Ananias to go to Saul despite the evil he had done to Christians because Saul “is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”
 - 1) While this mentions both Gentiles and Israel, the precedence given to the Gentiles, especially since there was no record in Acts up to this point of Gentiles being converted, is significant.
 - b. According to Paul’s testimony in Acts 22:21, when it became clear to Paul that the Jews in Jerusalem would not listen to him, God specifically sent Paul away, saying, “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”
 - c. According to Paul’s testimony before Agrippa in Acts 26:16-18, even on the road to Damascus, Jesus revealed to him that He was sending him to the Gentiles so their eyes would be opened, that they might be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and that they might receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the saints.
 - d. In fact, in this final testimony, in Acts 26:19-21, Paul explains to Agrippa it was because he had fulfilled Jesus’s commission to go to the Gentiles that the Jews had him arrested. This leads to our next point.
- C. Paul’s arrest in Acts 21 was, from beginning to end, bound up in his work among the Gentiles.
1. In Acts 21:17-26, because of misunderstandings surrounding Paul’s work among the Gentiles, James asked Paul to demonstrate to the many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that he was not telling Jews to forsake Moses, circumcision, or Jewish customs. The demonstration was to participate in a votive offering with four of the Christian Jews.
 2. In Acts 21:27-29, while Paul was participating in the rituals of that votive offering, Jews from Asia stirred up the crowds against him. In fact, having earlier seen Paul in the city with Trophimus the Ephesian, they assumed Paul had brought the Gentile into the temple triggering their accusations.
 3. Paul writes in Ephesians 3:1 that he is a prisoner on behalf of the Gentiles. Not only was he in prison because of his work among the Gentiles, it was literally because of his connection to an Ephesian Gentile. Even if Ephesians should be considered a circular letter for Asian churches, the connection is still very on the nose.

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