

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH
Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians
Week of October 8 (Week 6)
Ephesians 3:1-13



REVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO

We just finished studying Ephesians 2 and saw that it has two major divisions with similar structure and thought. Both halves of Ephesians 2 begin with a description of life without Christ: dead (vv. 1-3) and separated (vv. 11-12). Then, in both cases, we have the great reversal: “But ... God” (v. 4) and “But now” (v. 13). In the first half of Ephesians 2 - verses 1-10, Paul’s main argument is that despite the depth and darkness in which we lived, God raised us up to the heavenly heights by grace through faith. In the second half – verses 11-22, Paul addresses the Gentiles specifically by pointing out how alienated they were from God and from His people – the Jews. Paul reminds the two hostile communities that in Christ they are now one new humanity, and they are built as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Paul’s emphasis in the second half of Ephesians 2 is on the “oneness” of the two groups of people.

BIG IDEA

God, in his grace, called and entrusted us to proclaim the unity of the church through the gospel because the unity of the church has a central place in God’s plan. Therefore, we do not lose heart in doing what God has called and entrusted us to do.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

Ephesians 3 begins with the phrase “For this reason,” which refers to the theological concepts that have been articulated in the section before and that moved Paul to prayer. But his actual prayer in Chapter 3 begins at v. 14 with the same phrase “For this reason.” In verses 1-13, Paul, instead of continuing his prayer, diverted to another topic of discussion which is the focus of our study for this week. Ephesians 3:1-13 can be divided into two major sections. First, in verses 1-6 Paul discusses the mystery made known to him. The mystery, as he elaborates on in verse 6, is that the Gentiles are now one with the Jews in Christ Jesus. Second, in verses 7-13 he talks about the ministry entrusted to him that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. John Stott succinctly states the message of Eph. 3:1-13 when he says, “It is clear that these two gifts of divine grace, the revelation and the commission, the ‘mystery’ revealed to him and the ‘ministry’ entrusted to him, were closely related to each other. For once he had received his special revelation from God, he knew that he was under obligation to make known to others what had been made known to him” (John Stott. *The Message of Ephesians*. 116).

OBSERVING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. Let us start by observing what Ephesians 2:11-22 says or describes, particularly about Christ the second person of the Godhead. Read the passage carefully and find out how God is described. How is His character, nature, and work described in this passage?

Continuing the Conversation

2. As you read Eph. 3:1-13, identify the key word(s) or phrase(s) around which Paul's thought is centered.
3. In Ephesians 3:1-13 Paul makes eleven references to himself, once by his name and 9 times by the pronouns – "I" and "me." The several references to himself reveal to a great degree who Paul is and what is close to his heart. As you read Eph. 3:1-13, how does Paul view himself, the mystery, and the ministry that pertains to the mystery?
4. How does Paul elaborate the ministry entrusted to him by God in verses 7-13?
5. What do you learn from Eph. 3:10-13 about God's purpose for the church?
6. Ephesians 3:2 makes it clear that Paul views the ministry of the gospel of grace as a "stewardship" for the Gentiles. In what way has Paul been a faithful steward of the gracious gospel of God for the Ephesian believers?

CONNECTING WITH OTHER TEXT

Plan for the Gentiles: Several Old Testament passages talk about Israel as a nation called by God so that nations might come to them to gain revelation about the true God (Deut. 7:6-8; Ps. 96:10; Isa. 49:6; 60:3). In contrast, Gentile nations appear as enemies of God and his people and as objects of divine judgment (Amos 1:2-15; Isa. 17-21). Therefore, it might seem that God's inclusion of the Gentiles to share the inheritance in Christ comes because of the failure of Israel to reveal Christ to the nations. But Paul reveals in Ephesians 3:6 that God had planned that Jews and Gentiles will be "fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eric Redmond. *Ephesians: A 12-Week Study*. 45-46).

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. How should Paul's example encourage you to willingly accept potential losses of privilege, position, or power for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. If Paul thought of himself as the "least of all the saints" (3:8), how should we think about ourselves in light of the gracious salvation we have received through Jesus Christ? How might Paul's amazement at God's gracious calling remind us to be astonished by His grace in our lives?
3. How should this passage inspire you to engage in gospel witness, both as an individual and through your involvement in the church?

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

October 9-13, 2023

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

Paul explains his calling and ministry to the Gentiles. That is similar to our calling and ministry to those outside of our church family. He sees it as a great privilege. As you read this passage in Ephesians, thank God for the privilege of explaining this life-changing message to other.

Monday: ⁷ *By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.* Think about the privilege God has given you to spread the Good News. Who needs that in your life? Stop and pray for them right now. Begin by listening to their story and their hesitation in trusting Jesus.

Tuesday: ⁸ *Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures.* Think about what Paul said about being *least deserving*. Write down how you compare and thank God for his grace.

Wednesday: ⁹ *I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things wants revealed to all people.* This is the third time Paul emphasizes the privilege of spreading the gospel. What is your next step in explaining the plan of God to someone? Write it down. Ask God for wisdom and direction to act.

Thursday: ¹⁰ *God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety.* As a part of the church, how will you *display his wisdom* to someone close to you? Remember to first listen to their story of what they believe and why they believe it. Allow them to express any hurt or disappointment with church or God. Ask God to give you ears to hear and understand. Write out your prayer for them.

Friday: ¹² *Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.* Wow! Think about the privilege of coming into *God's presence*, the creator of all the universe - and even you and me. *Boldly and confidently come into God's presence.* Listen to him. Write down your response.

For more resources, visit www.briarcliff.church/ephesians