



# THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

## EPHESIANS 3:1-13

### Cosmic Proclamation through the Church

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A philharmonic orchestra is a full orchestra that includes string, brass, woodwind, percussion, and mallet percussion instruments. Hearing a philharmonic orchestra where all instruments play together one song is a profound experience. A sold-out sporting arena for a championship sporting event is likewise a profound experience. Here, we witness a sympathy of fans celebrating and singing one song together. Witnessing the chants of the champions can be incredibly moving. Time is heading toward a philharmonic orchestra of immense quality. Time is heading toward the roars of celebration of immense quantity. Time is heading toward the announcement made by people from every tribe, tongue, and nation that Jesus is King. This proclamation makes the angels rejoice and the demons shutter!

The main point of this sermon is that the church proclaims the manifold wisdom of God to the cosmos – to angels and to demons. Let's investigate this incredible truth together.

## PAUL A PRISONER WITH A STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S GRACE (3:1-6)

“*For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is[a] that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

Because of the glorious reality discussed in Ephesians 2 – God has established the church as one new man (as new creation) – Paul prays for the church (3:14). Before praying for the church, Paul explains in more depth his role in this new creation which is the church of Jesus Christ.



First, Paul tells us that he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles. Paul is writing this letter while in prison, most likely, prison in Rome in 62 AD. Paul is in prison because Paul's teaching about the church as one new man greatly offended some Jews. The thoughts that Gentiles, those who were not a part of God's covenant people in the OT because of their culture, were fellow heirs was repulsive to them. We see this in Acts 22:21 when Paul makes his defense before his Jewish accusers in Jerusalem. As soon as he mentioned that Jesus called him to preach to the Gentiles, they reply, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live" (Acts 22:22). Currently while writing this letter, Paul sits in house arrest because of his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul is a prisoner.

Second, we have to understand that Paul is a prisoner because he has been faithful to his stewardship. A steward oversees another person's household; the steward is not the owner of the household but is simply a manager. Now, there are good and bad managers. Paul is a good one. He stewards what has been entrusted to him even to the point of prison, even to the point of death.

Third, Paul is a steward of God's cosmic mystery. We all enjoy a good mystery – a story about a secret hidden from the public and authorities. God has uncovered the greatest secret of all to Paul, and he has entrusted him to



make that secret known to all peoples. Paul tells us in verse 6 that the mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (3:6). Now, Jews in the OT were aware of God's plan to save the nations. They knew that the mission of God was to spread his glory over the planet (see Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 67). Yet, what seems to be hidden from them is how God would save the Gentiles – Gentiles would be saved in the New Covenant without first becoming a Jew. Paul is preaching to everyone that God's purpose in history and time is to unite Jews and Gentiles to Christ. The Old Covenant – the 10 commandments – and the rest of the law given on Mt. Sinai is in reality a shadow that points to its substance. Christ is that substance. Thus, Gentiles who are united to Christ – the substance – have no need to look to the shadow any longer.

### PAUL A MINISTER WITH A GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE (3:7-9)

“ *7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,*



Paul not only understood his calling as a stewardship of God's grace (3:2) but also as a gift of God's grace. This means that although on the one hand, Paul was obligated to make the mystery of Christ known (steward), on the other hand, this was also a gift given to him. Ministry for Paul is not merely a duty, it is a joy! Let's see why.

First, it is a gift to Paul because of the nature of the gift. When we proclaim the gospel to the nations, we are preaching the message on which the universe hinges. We are preaching the message that displays the worth of our glorious God – that he, in his sovereign freedom would make for himself a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation for the joy of the hopeless. The fact that we get to preach this message is a gift of grace given to us.

This is also a gift of grace to the nations who will hear the gospel through Paul. Remember, the Ephesians were formerly in an awful state prior to hearing and believing the gospel. Paul talked about this in Ephesians 2:1-3 and 2:11-12. Likewise, I was recently talking to Roma, a member of our church, whose family is from Pakistan and India. I asked how she became a Christian, and she explained how missionaries came



to India and preached the gospel to her grandparents. She then said, “We praise God for those missionaries.” Roman and her family know that prior those missionaries, their families were damned, lost, and separated from God, but the missionaries came and preached the good news of Jesus Christ. Roma said, “Those missionaries have had an immense impact since four generations now in her family have trusted in Jesus.” What a gift of God’s grace. So, Church family, for the sake of the stewardship and gift given to us, let’s preach for the glory of God and the joy of the lost.

Second, ministry is a joy because what is preached. Paul describes what he preaches as the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” Now, this verse gives us insight into the nature of Christ’s kingship, and the view is breathtaking. Notice, that a person’s riches are typically a treasure to be kept to himself. I think of uncle Scrooge Mcduck whose dive into his money vault was iconic. Do you remember him duck tails? Or I think of the Crown Jewels of England. The treasures of Scrooge Mcduck belongs to him – no one is allowed in his money vault. Similarly, the Crown Jewels of England belong to the monarchy and are used on special occasions to aggrandize the monarchy. Not so with Christ. The “unsearchable riches of Christ” are none treasures



reserved for himself. The riches and treasures of Christ are his grace. We learned about that in Ephesians 2:7. There, Paul said for eternity we would see the “immeasurable riches of (God’s) grace.” Think about the glory of our God. Our God’s greatest riches is his grace which by definition is not a treasure reserved for his own personal consumption but a treasure to be lavished on those who do not deserve it. In other words, our King has decided that grace would be his immeasurable treasure, and this depicts the grandeur of our king – his riches is his grace. Our God is breathtaking.

Paul, then, describes what he preaches as bringing to light what was previously hidden (9). Notice how Paul describes God at the end of verse 9 – “who created all things.” I think the idea here is that God controls everything even from the beginning of time, and in God’s sovereignty, he decided to make his plan for time known to Paul at this particular time. The purpose is to encourage the Ephesians – it is no accident that they are hearing this message now. God controls time and when his mystery is unveiled.



## THE PURPOSE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY, OUR MINISTRY, AND THE UNIVERSE (3:10-12)

“ *10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

Verse 10 is really an incredible verse. Notice that it begins with the phrase “so that.” This phrase indicates purpose. Now let’s look back at verse 8-9 to determine what action is being described here. The action is God gave grace to Paul (8). The purpose is that a cosmic proclamation might be made in the heavenly places. Let’s unpack this together.

First, notice that the pathway to cosmic proclamation is the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles – every nation on earth outside of the Jewish nation. Now, remember, the Jewish nation heard the gospel preached from Jesus himself during his earthly ministry. Now though the gospel is to go to every corner of this planet.



Second, after Gentiles from every nation, every tribe, every language come to Jesus in faith, churches are established, and churches are the sign that new creation has come. 11th Street Baptist Church, we are a sign not only to our society that new creation has broken into this world, but we are also a sign to the angels and demons that a new man has been created! This is why Paul says, “Through the church.” Church family, the greatest institution in this world is not a government; it is not a company like Amazon or Apple; it is not a social justice non-profit; it is not even a Christian non-profit organization like Compassion International. The greatest institution in this world is the church – local churches. This is where the nations gather right now as one new man praying for one another, hearing the Bible preached, and singing songs together – all of which is a cosmic act of worship for the glory of our God.

Third, our very existence as one new man is cosmic proclamation. On the one hand, Paul has in mind good angels. The hosts of heaven here the gospel spreading over the entire planet and they rejoice. We read about this in a passage like Psalm 103. Here, the angels bless God because of his grace to sinful humans. We also learn in 1 Peter 1:12 that angels desire to look into the



gospel preached by the apostles. On the other hand, Paul also seems to have in mind the bad angels – those who are fallen. To them, the message is not one of joy but one of damnation. As the gospel spreads, the fallen angels see a visible picture that they lose, and Jesus wins. The stewardship and ministry entrusted to Paul and to us is a proclamation that reverberates into the heavenly places.

Church family, Paul's mission was to preach the mystery of Christ – that is, the gospel – to the Gentiles. Jesus gave us this same mission in Matthew 28:19-20. We are to make disciples of all peoples. We, at 11th Street Baptist Church, have a role to play in this grand drama since this mission is not yet complete. Still, roughly 3.22 billion people have never heard the name of Jesus. This job is not yet done, and thus, the angelic hosts do not yet here the sympathy of the redeemed in all its splendor. Indeed, they here the proclamation that Jesus is Lord from roughly 7000 people groups. Our goal is to preach, make disciples, and establish churches among every people group for as we do the heavenly beings will hear the full sympathy of the redeemed.

Church family, the purpose of the universe is to unite Jews and Gentiles together in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10). A cosmic proclamation is made to the angelic and demonic beings when people from every tribe, nation, and tongue come to trust in Jesus, and this is on purpose according to verse 11.



## THE EPHESIANS' GLORY (3:13)



*13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*

Finally, church family, we have to remember that Paul's ministry and our own will involve suffering and joy. Remember, Paul is a prisoner for the Gentiles – he is under house arrest as he wrote this letter. The message he preached – that Gentiles were fellow heirs – led to grave suffering; and yet, it was a gift – a joy!

If we embrace our task of taking the gospel to the nations, we will suffer for it. We may be verbally abused, physically abused, perhaps economically abused. Many have died for this task; many are dying right now; and many will die, but if we believe the gospel, that Jesus has conquered death and has given to us eternal life as a gift, then we will boldly make disciples of these peoples. We will suffer, but we will suffer for the glory of those who have not yet heard.

Right now, billions have never heard. Let's embrace our joy despite the suffering for this will be the glory of the unreached.

This week, I am asking that you would commit to praying for these unreached people every day this week. Joshua project has a resource called unreached people group of the day. I challenge you to pray for these people. As they

As they hear and believe, a cosmic proclamation will be made – a full sympathy of the redeemed that will move the angels to profound worship and the demons to utter anguish.

## LET'S PRAY

Oh God, you are good. Please help us this week to pray for the unreached people of the nations. Give us grace to preach the gospel to the lost for your glory, in Jesus name we pray, amen.

<https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday>

**USE THE CHART BELOW TO WRITE DOWN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE GROUP YOU ARE PRAYING FOR THAT DAY.**

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>
<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>