

04ID973

Ephesians Chapter 3, Verses 1 through 13

All right let's open our Bibles tonight, Ephesians Chapter 3, Verse 1 as we continue our verse by verse study through the Book of Ephesians. Just imagine if you were Paul for a minute and you had spent more than half of your life serving the Lord as a church planter and a missionary and now you are in your late 50's early 60's and you've been in jail for five years just for sharing the faith with the Gentiles. It has come back to haunt you so to speak, you are just stuck now. His great love for the church where he had laid down his life and been beaten and chased from one end of the country to the other. Opposed and made lots of enemies just because of the Gospel. Now he writes a letter to what were more than a half dozen churches in an area that he had loved and seen planted and what do you share with them, what do you want to tell them? So from a house arrest situation in Rome he writes this letter to Asia Minor with really one view in mind or two, he wants the church to know what God sees when He looks at them and so he writes in Chapter 1 through 3, here are the doctrinal outlooks of the church and then what should the world see when it looks at the church of the Lord in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. So Paul began his first Chapter by making this long list and a very long sentence of all of the blessings that we can have now as Christians in Christ. How God had chosen us and redeemed us, given us an inheritance, sent His Holy Spirit and on and on. He just couldn't stop writing and then in Chapter 2 Paul focused solely on salvation by grace. That the work of God that brought Gentiles into the kingdom and brought Jews as well making us one was this growing by grace through Jesus Christ. He used a lot of examples that the Jews of his day would have understood and Paul was a Jew so he knew where he had come from. He talked about the wall of partition being broken down in the Lord and that we're now one building and one habitation and family members and just beautiful you know, the view that the Lord has of the church. How He views us as one. How we need to reach out to anyone who wants to come to the Lord. I think I mentioned to you a couple weeks ago there was a young man that came to church here recently who was asked not to return to the church he was attending though he knew the Lord because of how he was dressing, a little radical looking

young kid and he said they don't want me to come back and I said, come here if you want to worship Jesus I don't care what you look like. If you drank and everything pours out your head in five different places you know all the holes you put in, that's fine. As long as you want to come worship the Lord I don't care. What you look like God sees your heart. So we're made one by God's grace.

Tonight in Chapter 3 and we'd like to look at the first 13 verses Paul almost starts to pray and then remembers something he wanted to share. So you can almost put Verses 1 through 13 in a parenthesis if you will. In fact if you look at Verse 1 for this reason, I Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles and then he stops because there is really no verb there. But yet in Verse 14 you read, for this reason I bow my knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and then he begins to pray. So I think in Verse 1 he goes this is why I as a prisoner of Jesus am praying and then he goes, oh by the way. Verses 2 through 13 literally are an aside if you will where Paul has a couple more things he wants to just share that are on his heart and he kind of gets ahead of himself. So he throws those in there and then next week we will look at his prayer but tonight we look at his, oh I just remembered.

Call this oh I just remembered. There is something about repeating things that are to me very important. The older you get the more important repetition is. When Peter wrote his second letter, Peter said I'll never neglect to remind you of these things though I know that you know them, in fact I know you're established in this truth but it doesn't hurt to remind you. I discovered that this week I think more than ever because I had to get a phone number for someone that I've known for years and I couldn't remember it and my little phone that has a computer where you type numbers in and you just go call so and so at home wasn't working. Call so and so at home. Ah not working. Now how do I get a hold of him? I have no idea what their number is. I only know to dial that star thing and that zero and then I can just ask for the world. Call the President, I'll get him, everything works. Wasn't working. Years ago when my wife and I were dating, Josh McDowell used to do a lot of seminars around town. In fact every year he'd go to the Long Beach Arena and it would be called three days with Josh. You'd go Friday, Saturday and Sunday all day from 8-9 in the morning to 6-7 at

night. What it really turned out to be was six hours with Josh repeated over and over and over again. It would be one set and then he'd come at it at a different angle but you learned it by the time you were done. But a lot of it was repetition, I figured that the things I remember the best are the things that I had to use over the years. You ever try to call your own house and forget what number it is? You never call your own house, you know? I've learned now that I'm in my 50's that the things I learned before I was 20 are readily accessible to me. But the things since then I haven't got a clue. Had I known that the first 20 years were that critical I would have studied a lot more **early**. Cram as much junk in there as you can. I learned not to shoot spit wads in class by writing 5,000 times I will not shoot spit wads in class. Paul goes for this reason I'm going to pray is what he says in Verse 14 but wait a minute, I want to share a couple of other things with you.

Verse 1

Notice in Verse 1 something I really like for an old time Christian in jail here. Paul says that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles.

Five years he'd been in jail roughly. He'd been in Caesarea for a couple of years, he was in Rome for several years, he was in transit for several months and he was there as the direct result of telling Gentiles that they could go to Heaven by believing in Jesus. That was his crime, Gospel that was his crime not he didn't steal anything, he didn't lie to anybody and he didn't hurt anyone he just said you know you can go to Heaven if you believe in Jesus. Oh that's not going to fly. As a Jewish man who had been a perfect educated Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling party if you will of the Jewish nation before his conversion. It wasn't until Paul and Jesus had a meeting on the road outside of Damascus there in Acts, Chapter 9 that Paul understood first of all that salvation was by grace because he realized that he hadn't at all done the way the Lord wanted him to. Second of all that his job his ministry was going to be for the rest of his life primarily to the Gentiles. The Lord told him that there in Acts Chapter 9, He said to Ananias when Ananias said man I don't want to go pray for that guy, he's a mean guy. The Lord said no no you can go pray for him, he's a vessel that is going

to be Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles before kings and before the children of Israel. But the primary job that Paul the Jew had was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Now you can just for five seconds try to put yourself in his shoes but boy how that must have rubbed just about everyone the wrong way. To the unbelieving Jew who loved the ceremony and the sacrifices and saw himself so much greater than the Gentiles, Paul was an enigma, one to be silenced. To the believing Jews who had come to the Lord and had faith in Christ they also fought against the very thought that somehow these Gentile dogs, these uncircumcised heathen could simply wander in by faith and be saved. I mean the task that Paul was given was huge and yet everywhere Paul went to preach people got saved not by the handful but by the hundreds upon hundreds. Church here, six miles down the road another church there, ten miles up the street another church there and fifteen miles south, there came another group of believers. I mean it was phenomenal, it couldn't have been any better and Paul at every place saw this is the way that God works. But it caused him great consternation amongst the people. The first job that God gave to Paul was to pastor a church in Antioch in Syria which was a mixture of Gentiles and Jews. He at least got an early start at trying to reconcile the two in his own church. He would go to Jerusalem later on and in Acts 15 there to defend the Gospel of grace and how Gentiles came in by faith. He spoke to James and James agreed and the letter was sent out to everyone. He took three mission trips that certainly took 20 years or more of his life planting churches amongst the Gentiles. He knew that was his job and even when it got hard he stuck with it. Paul when he stood before Agrippa already in chains in Acts 26, talked to him about how he'd gotten saved and how that light had come from Heaven and how he heard the Lord speaking to him and he said He spoke to me in Hebrew Paul says. Interesting. Yeah I heard Him in Hebrew. Being a Jewish boy I liked that, the Lord spoke Hebrew to me. Paul and Saul are asking Him about kicking against the goads and Jesus identifying Himself and telling them that He was going to deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you. To open up their eyes to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God so they can receive forgiveness. So they can get an inheritance of mine all those that have been set apart by having faith in Me. Years later Paul

knew still what the job was. He had tried bridging the gap, that's no easy gap to bridge. He had ended up in jail because he had tried to meet James and the people in Jerusalem half way. Brought money from other Gentile churches he had founded. Here we love you, here's what we want to give to you. James imposed on him to support some young men who were making Nazarite vows, Paul paid out of his own pocket for these men. It was only towards the latter part of the week accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple proper, beyond that gate that partitioned him off and the riot ensued and the arrest came to be and since that day Paul had been in jail. He had suffered greatly for this one job. Bring good news to the Gentiles. I like the fact that Paul writes here, I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He could have said I'm a prisoner of Rome after all it was Nero that was hearing his case. I'm a prisoner of Rome because there were four Roman guards that were at his house day and night. He couldn't move he couldn't go out, his freedom was gone he could have said I'm a prisoner of the Jews who turned me in, who falsely testified. I liked his outlook and I think perspective is everything. To Paul in his late 50's and early 60's after years of faithful ministry, he saw his years in prison as the will of God for his life. I'm here as a prisoner of Jesus, I'm only here because He wants me here, he didn't blame anyone, he didn't seem to be angry or bitter. If this is where the Lord wants me I'm going to serve from here, I'm going to make the best of it and for the many years that Paul was locked up he prayed and he wrote and he met and he shared even some of the soldiers got saved. The whole country began to hear of the Gospel from this poor man locked up in a house. You couldn't quiet Paul down he was a prisoner of Jesus. His perspective was absolutely right. When he was stoned in Lystra on one of his journeys and they left him outside of the town for dead, he later wrote to the Galatians in Chapter 6 you know no one can really trouble me anymore because I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He could have said the marks of those Lystra stone throwers, those unbelievers who tried to kill me. But no, these guys who cut me up and hurt me and dented my forehead and put that scar over my eye but that wasn't what he saw. The marks of the Lord, they are the marks of a life given to Him. When Jesus spoke to the Disciples in Mark Chapter 9 He said look if you can just give a cup of water to drink in My name to someone because you belong to Christ, I'll tell you what,

you'll not lose a reward. Hey give me a drink of water, no no I give it in the name of the Lord. To Paul his service to God was very much wrapped up and tied into what he found himself in now. I think it was to the Colossians that Paul said look whatever you do you do it heartily as to the Lord not to men knowing of the Lord you'll receive reward. So I love the way he starts to write and I trust that's his attitude. I'm a prisoner because of Jesus. I'm a prisoner because I did what I was called to do. I was faithful to the calling of taking good news to the Gentiles. It's what I am here for. Housework, my wife was gone this week to a retreat. Housework is a drag. I started just not having stuff because then you have to clean up after yourself. Well I don't really need it that bad. But after the week the dishes were full and you hate cleaning them. You know the minute you clean dishes they are just dirty again. There is really no winning there. The dishwasher it doesn't matter. Clean, clean, clean. Then here's what you do, you grumble, you gripe, throw soap in, ahhh, mutter mutter mutter, ahh. Then I'm thinking over this study because this is the one I'm working on a week early and I'm thinking yeah, I'm supposed to do this with joy. Ahhh. As soon as I get done with this I'll do something of joy. Ahhh. It did, it took forever and then I'm thinking if I did this for the Lord I bet I could get through it a lot quicker and be a lot happier. I can't imagine this poor man in his early 60's going yeah I'm here because of Jesus, good man, right where the Lord wants me. In fact, he'll end this little section in Verse 13 by saying, oh I hope you don't feel bad I'm in jail, if you're learning about the Lord that's all working out. Its real good, it's all been worth it. I mean that's amazing to me but it is a matter of perspective, isn't it? When Paul wrote to the Philippians in Chapter 4 about having to learn to rest in the Lord he said to them in Verse 11, look I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. You look at the one statement and you realize immediately that contentment has nothing to do with what you have or what you don't have. It has everything to do with who you know. I've learned in whatever place I am to be content and then he goes on to describe. He says I've been full more then I've needed, I've been needy having nothing to eat, but in every situation and in every place I've just learned to be content. I'm aware of God's presence I rest in His care. So he's able to write here, I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ. It is okay, I don't blame anyone, I don't think I got a bad break, he certainly got a lousy trial he certainly was unfairly treated, he

was certainly left to sit for months rotting, he could have had all kinds of bitterness. Yeah I'm a prisoner of Jesus. When He wants me out I'll be out. If He wants me out I'll be out. Then he says for this reason I Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus **free and** Gentiles and he's going to pray and then he goes no, if and it's a conditional word, so it literally the word if there **is sins** indeed you've heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you. He had just said I'm in prison for Jesus but for you Gentiles and certainly you've all heard of the reason I'm in jail or of my calling. The word dispensation means trust. In other words Paul had been called by the Lord to the Gentiles it was a trust that he took very seriously and he saw his ministry as that. Something that God said here, I entrust this to you. I don't know if you see your ministry that way but you should. Whatever it is that God's called you to do it is a trust. Here I'm trusting you to handle this part. I'm relying upon you to be faithful in this area. And, Paul had been, you've heard of the dispensation I've been given by the Lord, by the grace of God given to me for you. Paul saw it as such a treat, he said to the Corinthians if I preach the Gospel I really can't boast, God's laid this necessity on me to preach, woe of me if I don't. I really can't take credit this is my calling. Paul writes to Timothy, his first letter as pastor in Ephesus and says to him you know I thank Christ Jesus. He enabled me, He counted me faithful He put me in the ministry but I'm a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man, I got mercy from God, I did it ignorantly in unbelief but the grace of our Lord has been exceedingly abundant toward me in faith and in love that's coming from Christ. I can't believe I'm getting to do this. This has been my dispensation this has been my gift from God and my calling. This is what God wants me to do. Paul would write to the Corinthians, hey look if you're a steward this is your job be faithful to your stewardship same word as dispensation here. Same job, so I'm a prisoner because I've been given a stewardship and I've preached the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles and he begins to explain how come that's been such an issue.

Verse 3

He says how that by revelation God revealed knowledge, He the Lord made known to me the mystery as I've briefly written already.

Verse 4

By which, when you read, you might understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

Verse 5

Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy Apostles and to the prophets

Verse 6

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel

Now the word mystery in the Bible does not mean some eerie kind of goose bump, problematic, I wonder what it means. It is always a word that speaks of a truth of God that wasn't previously revealed. Paul said I'm in jail because of the Gentiles for Jesus' sake. You've heard my stewardship or my trust, that's been my job, I'm an Apostle to the Gentiles and I understood by the revelation of God that this is the way people get saved. It's a mystery that wasn't revealed before but it's been revealed to me personally and it wasn't just revealed to Paul but we will read that it's been revealed to the other Apostles and prophets as well. What was the mystery? The mystery is not that the Gentiles could be saved. In fact that's a message that was as old as Abraham. The Lord said in Genesis 12 through you all of the nations of the world would be blessed. 750 years earlier from this point, Isaiah stood up and he said there is coming, a root of Jesse one day. It'll stand as a banner for the people to him the Gentiles will see and their peace will be glorious. So that's not the mystery. The mystery that the Gentiles would be saved gosh that's always been God's will. But what had been a mystery and what hadn't been understood was that for both Jew and Gentile to partake of God's promises they would have to experience this new birth, this ability if you will or this work of God where God came to live in your life. The new birth experience that was a total mind blower for everyone. Up until then it had always been ceremony and ritual and observation of rules and religious practices. But now in the New Testament here is the salvation message. You believe and I'll come dwell

in you. Paul when he wrote to the Colossians said to them, speaking of the Colossians, God will make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you and that's your hope of glory. If you're born again you got a hope of glory but you see now every Gentile and every Jew has to come the same way, you have to be born again. It's a mystery, hey it wasn't a big Old Testament revelation it was something that was revealed in the New Testament.

Verse 6

But notice that the Gentiles could now be fellow heirs of the same body, partakers of His promises all of us through Christ or in Christ through this good news of the Gospel so all of us come the same way.

The consequence of this mystery is that we're made one. We're made one people, one body because that's the way we were saved. When Paul talked to the Corinthians about all their constant bickering with each other he said you know you say I'm of Paul, **I'm of Appolis, I'm of Cephus**, I'm of Christ, well Christ isn't divided and Paul wasn't crucified for you. We're going to make this, we're going to all make this together and we are going to be one, why? Because there is only one way, there is only one door, there is only one access and the access is through Jesus Christ. Paul just says this has been my job. As God has revealed to me this new birth and this understanding of this mystery and the other ages God hadn't revealed it but now the Spirit has been showing it to the Apostles and the prophets but hey everyone the Gentiles in Paul's case could come in by the new birth. Not through being circumcised not through going through any kind of ritual to first become Jews but just to come to God by faith and be saved. Big mystery Christ in you. Most religions today even western religions will say you've got to clean up your act, do a good job, make the effort and perform to the best of your ability and it is only the Christian that goes no no, you've got to be born again. You need to have Christ in you and that is the hope of glory and without that there is no way to Heaven.

Verse 7

Paul said it is to this that I've been called to be a minister or a servant and I'm doing that according to the gift of the grace of God that has been given to me by the effective working of His power.

Now I love Paul's attitude because Paul understood his job, he recognized that there was conflict, he knew that this message was new and it was revolutionary and yet it was from the Lord and he said this is what I've been preaching but my only hope of it being accepted by anyone is that the power of God might somehow bring it to your life. This is the calling that I've had as a minister, God's gift in calling me, God's power and effectively working through me. I love the fact that a 60 year old man sitting in jail after years of church planting where he could have written a book and said no one has done as much as I've done in the last 25 years said the only hope I have of continuing on is if the Lord uses me. Is if God pours out His Spirit upon me and ministry to me is so interesting because it is never really something you can create. It is only something you can do as you respond to God. It isn't something you can make happen. I find that so often people in churches especially and those who know the Lord in particular, rather than recognizing their need for God's power to work, begin almost immediately in their service of the Lord to try to create something for God. Begin to strive I'm going to do a work for God. Paul says 40 years later, I can't do anything, I've got a calling, I know what the message is, I'm excited about my hope but man if the Lord isn't effectively working in me by His Spirit, there is no way that I'm going to be able to accomplish this work. I think if we saw that the Holy Spirit has to work there would be more praying and less strife. One of the things that I see so often is when people get involved in ministries that they get excited about, whether it's going to the prisons or singing or missions or whatever it might be, there is invariably this desire to go tell other people that they should be involved. Hey why don't you join us we're out there every Thursday? Come on down to the jail, you'll love it I've got the application I know the guy, I'll put in the good word for you, you'll be great. Join us if you can. Then people go well maybe I should do something. Oh dude you got to come with us, we missed you Thursday we're praying for you, we're praying about it, we're praying about it with you. I'm sure

you'll be there Thursday, let me just call you Wednesday and help remind you. Well oh are you coming tomorrow, well come on dude, drop and go, you got to be there, okay see you. Hey I'm just one more thing before I and you pretty well go. I don't know if God's called you but I know the guy that's been calling you has called you. There is a lot of that striving and the striving in one sense is very good because you've been touched by what God is doing so it's an exciting thing to see. However it is never the way that God builds ministry. You won't find it in the Bible where there is a sales campaign and a personality struggle to win workers to themselves and the offer of rewards or honor to those who will serve and struggling programs designed to get people to join, be a part, get a taste, take a look, see what's going on, come join us one and all, ah constant pressure. Paul is so cool, he's sitting in jail he goes you know, I've got this calling but man if the Lord ain't doing it, it's hard. But I trust that by God's grace His power is going to work and lives are going to be changed oh like these have been. I always liked that Scripture in Zechariah which says in Chapter 4, it's not by your might or power but by My Spirit saith the Lord. I think that we would be better off sharing God's love and watching God move hearts than we will ever be trying to move hearts by pressure methods. Yet so often the church relies or lives in that place where there are pressure methods to try to get you involved. Our policy as a church has been over the years, we'll let the needs be known as they arise and the opportunities and that will be it. If you don't respond, if God doesn't move your heart, if it isn't something you're interested in then we'll just forego it. We'll try something else we'll go somewhere else because if the dependence on the success of any work of God depends not upon God but upon the workers, we're probably in the wrong place. We're certainly struggling and I think that it is often the folks who we get involved in things that later on require constant care. Well they didn't thank me for coming. I didn't know I needed to thank you I thought you were serving the Lord. Well I'm serving the Lord but you can take notice. But I don't really keep track. Well you should you're the pastor. Had you thanked me I'd a stayed for years but since you're not thanking me I'm going now. Then all the pressures on me all because some ambitious person is seeking to tell them what God wants them to do with their lives and not wait for God to move on their heart. Look I'll tell you what as the body grows here we have plenty of places to

serve. In fact we had a guy call us this week and goes how do I know where to get involved? I said where do you want to get involved? He goes well I don't know. I said well when you know give me a call. You want to know how to serve where to serve? Just ask, we'll tell you where the needs are and you can just go wherever God wants you to because if the Lord is the Lord of the church then the Lord can build the church. You can ask, you can seek, you can knock, you can let God guide you and He'll put you in the right place. But Paul is so good he says you know it is such an awesome dispensation from God that I've been given and I'm a minister to that work but it's by God's grace and according to His power. God has to show you, God has to move you. I just remember growing up at Costa Mesa ministry school and Pastor Chuck saying to us the job isn't to tell people what to do for God, tell them what God has done for them. What they do for God will all come out of that knowledge of God's love. We love Him because He first loved us. It always works in that order you know. Then you'll do it for Him. We have had people working in our Sunday School that have been there for 17 years. Now I'll tell you what, no one is good enough to talk you into staying there 17 years. Someone will make you mad, someone won't thank you, some kid will throw up just once too often, some parent will leave you standing there for an hour while they are visiting and you're just come on, I've got to go home. You never do that but there are parents who do, they're not here tonight but they do it. You'll just, 17 years you'll quit but not if God has touched your heart. Paul is in prison, he's in his 60's, he's lived a fine life, he could give it up and he is still looking for what God might want him to do. He hasn't lost his zeal or his desire or his excitement. When you talk people into doing stuff, you know what you got to do, you got to constantly be talking them into showing up, caring, showing concern, putting in the effort but if you just leave it alone and let God work, love will dictate all kinds of good behavior. Love for God, I can't do enough for the Lord but they can do way too much for you. Paul understood that he had a vision and a dream but he had an awareness as well that unless the Lord was working through him he could do nothing. So what does Paul do? He speaks, he has great vocabulary, he's got wonderful training, he's tremendously wise, he grew up with a brain that was real big but he used them all and then he relied on the Lord. He did the best that he could, used them to the fullest and then turned and said God you're my

confidence, work. I think that if we ever lose the perspective that God has to work we forfeit ourselves from becoming effective. You know the minute you begin to say well the Lord needs to work but I can get in there and help. I think you're done. You know if you begin to glory in your labor or rely upon your wisdom, you're no longer serving God as a vessel; you're competing with God for glory. Oh Lord, look what I did. Yeah but it's My way. Yeah, but I should get a little high five and God doesn't give high fives. He doesn't share His glory with anyone and Paul in his old age if you will could still be useful because he's never forgotten his place. Neither should you.

Verse 8

Notice he says just to make it clear. To me, who am less than the least of all of the saints, this grace has been given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

You got to love Paul's humility, don't you think? It certainly keeps him usable and it is certainly a lack of humility that will hinder God's work through our lives. Our flesh, all of us would like to be honored and thought of with good thoughts and recognized but Paul saw himself as someone who really didn't deserve what he had been given and it just blew his mind that he could serve in such a glorious place. Such a privilege that had landed him in jail for five years. It's been such a privilege to serve the Lord I know I'm in jail. I may never get out, I may lose my head but oh what a privilege to serve the Lord. Why? Because he humbly understood where he had come from. Now most of us will say these words. Oh brother you really blessed me and oh it wasn't me it was the Lord. In the back of my mind, you're darn right I blessed you. Tell me again how much I blessed you, wait till these people come over and say it a little louder. Thank you, thank you very much. We love when we are blessed by others, don't we? Paul goes I'm the least, less than the least that's a big mouth full. If you truly mean that, I think you're useful to God. I am less than the least of the saints. I am no way that I can begin to hope God could use my life. The less deserving you truly feel, not just lip service because we're all pretty good at concealing our pride but if you from the heart just feel you really aren't a candidate God could use and yet you're so

thankful that He is using you then you're ready to be used. God uses the foolish to confound the wise men. The unlearned, Paul meant it. Paul was sent to and he writes it here preach, to the Gentiles the things about Jesus that would make them rich beyond their full understanding but he's blessed. Now let me ask you something. What has God called you to do personally to serve Him that you see as a tremendous honor for which you really don't believe you qualify? What would you put on that list? I am doing these things in the Lord but I don't really deserve to be here. I don't know why He'd let me do something like this. But I am so grateful, I am so thankful, I am so honored to be serving in that capacity. What would you put on the line? What would it be, because to Paul after many years of serving, he finds himself with tremendous joy, sitting in jail because he is right where God wants him. He's done the things that he was supposed to do serving the Lord and relying upon Him. What do you see as an honor that you'd find yourself constantly having to depend upon the Holy Spirit to work? I think there are a lot of people that are frustrated because they're where someone else talked them into being rather than finding where they are supposed to be. I have gone to places to speak where I felt extremely nervous and insecure. I don't know if I should be up here, this is weird, those people look scary, I hope they like what I have to say, maybe I should have picked a different study, there is not very many jokes in this one, I should break the ice, I don't know what to do now. I'm trying everything in my mind but all I know is I'm supposed to do this. Though I am fearful and hesitant, I know I'm in the right place. I know that's what I'm supposed to be doing. Then there is that I'm just frustrated in what I do because I shouldn't be doing this. I went out street witnessing with a guy one time who hated it. He hated it, he was intimidated, he was discouraged, he hated it and he said I don't think this is for me. I said I don't think it is either. You got to go find something God has called you to. Hey you may be nervous but you also know if God has called you or not. Paul said I am so blessed and so privileged to be in this position, I don't deserve it if God doesn't work in me it won't get done but I know what my calling is. I'm supposed to tell the Gentiles about salvation through faith. I'm supposed to tell them about the unsearchable riches of Christ. The word unsearchable means without bottom or unable to fully trace if you will, God has more available than He could even begin to describe. Was Paul telling people

what they needed to do for the Lord? No. He was telling them what the Lord had done for them. I want to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches they have in Christ. I have found that the best method you could ever find for helping people discover what God's will for their life is, is fill them to the brim with the knowledge of what God has done for them. If you know that, nothing will keep you down. People may turn on you, things may get difficult but hey, God has blessed my life, blown my mind, look all that I have in Him. Teach the people what God has done for them. I think it was Peter who wrote in his last Epistle, I want you to know about the divine power that has given to us everything that pertains to life and the Godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us by His glory. Just want you to know what you have. That's really the best isn't it? Make a list of what we have.

Verse 9

Paul goes on and says and my calling is to make all see what is the fellowship of this mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.

Verse 10

To the intent that now this manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Verse 11

According to the eternal purpose which He has accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word for fellowship there in Verse 9 is responsible care or stewardship if you will. It isn't the word for **oikonomia** but it is the word for stewardship. It's the same word as the word dispensation earlier on. Paul says that this care for this mystery that had been hidden in the heart of God from the beginning has now been entrusted through Jesus to the church. As the church would make known to all men that they could be born again not only are people's lives being changed but the heavens, the angels, the devil are learning God's plan from the church.

That to me is remarkable. God reveals His plan through the church to His creation, to the angels and the powers that be that God would one day come now to live in our hearts and that's how people would be saved, born again. When Peter wrote his first Epistle he said in Chapter 1, of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, when they prophesied of the grace that would come, they were searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ was indicating when He testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that not to themselves but to us they were ministering the things which have now been reported to you. Those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Spirit sent from Heaven, things which even the angels desire to look into. I imagine the angels are going how is God going to save them? He's going to live in them? Whoa. Oh Gabriel giving high fives to the other angels. Michael scratching his head, I don't get it. Some third grade demon you know, having trouble thinking he was on the right side now finds out he's on the wrong side. The angels watched the church. Paul writes to the Corinthians in Chapter 4, I think that God has displayed us, the Apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world both to angels and to men. Paul writes to Timothy, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice. Angels have a lot to learn from you. God's creation learns from the church. But was it that the writer of Hebrews says, we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us run with patience the race set before us, laying aside every **weight** and those things so easily ensnare us. What did Jesus say about salvation in Luke 15? He says there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. They get it now. They watch you and they get it. I think sometimes they watch us and they don't get it. What's wrong with those guys, they're saved, they're born again, what's wrong with them guys? Don't they realize what they have? Understand what they've been given? So the church, according to Paul and he in his ministry was the vehicle through which this mystery of God which in the beginning had been God's plan but it was now revealed through Jesus. His eternal purposes of God would be that the church would reveal the manifold; it is a word that means multifaceted, plan of God in bringing people to Jesus through faith. All men, one church through Christ. Then

Paul says as he heads back towards that concept of going to pray for us, which is what his intention to begin with.

Verse 12

In whom we have this boldness and this access with confidence through faith in Him.

Verse 13

And so I would ask you that you don't lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is for your glory.

Paul heads back to the thought of praying which he had had in Verse 1 and says you know it is through Jesus that we can walk right into God's throne room and talk to Him boldly by prayer. Now lest you take that for granted, if you were a Jew in the days of Paul the last thing you would ever think about was kind of hop, skipping and jumping into God's presence. God's presence was guarded as a place where really no one could come. You could be out there with lots of sacrifice and blood and animals and incense and hopefully you got it all right and then you kind of see Him from here but you could never just walk in. That holy of holies where that priest could only go in once a year with bells on his skirt according to Exodus and a rope around his leg unless he maybe he had done something wrong. If he was moving and the bells were ringing, all was well but if the bells stopped, no good. Because then the assistant high priest would have to go in and that would be worse, somebody just died and now it's your turn. I don't want to go, I resign. But it was all of that holiness of God in fact, to the Jewish mind if you were even near the tabernacle in sin that would produce a great hazard. At the time of the sacrifice when Aaron's two boys, Nadab and Abihu showed up kind of drunk, kind of making fire on their own, trying to get people to join in them, false stimulus and fire came off the temple, the worship, the altar and it consumed them and they died. Then the Lord said to Aaron, don't you weep and everybody else better learn this is no way to show up here. God is holy everyone went man this is heavy. Now how do you come to the Lord? By faith in Christ just come right in boldly. Hebrews Chapter 4, where it says we have this

great high priest who has passed through the Heavens, Jesus, who is touched with our weaknesses and tempered like we are, let us come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in time of need. Paul's oh man, such a good Gospel; you know I can get right in now. I don't have to worry about whether God is in a good mood today or convince Him that I'm really sincere, I'm welcome there. Jesus has made me clean, the Holy Spirit lives within me. You know what Jesus said there in John 10, He said I'm the only door into the sheep fold. If you enter by Me, you'll be saved and you can go in and out and you can find pasture. You get saved man you are welcome. Paul as he begins to pray for these folks says you know I'm welcome, but when Jesus is not your door the door is shut, you know that, right? Isaiah 59, the Lord's hand isn't short that He can't save He ear isn't heavy that He can't hear but you're sins your iniquity separate you from your God that He will not hear you, He will not. So without Jesus that door is shut, no entrance, keep out. But the minute you get saved, the door is wide open, He's the door. Paul couldn't be happier. So Paul ends his little aside by saying in Verse 13.

Look if you can see this incredible truth of what it means to be a Christian, to be a part of the body of Christ, to have the privilege and access that you have to God. To know what the grace of His calling is, that even the angels that are learning about the Lord from the born again church and that if you are right in God's will then God will work through your life, even if it means suffering in jail. It's okay with Paul, he's done what he's called to do and the fruit will follow. Then you don't have to lose heart about my struggles and boy how is a 60 year old man in jail going to make it? Hey man just be praising the Lord, that's why I'm here, that's what got me here. Just walk with God that's all he was interested in. What a heart to serve Paul had. Get the message out at all cost that was Paul's marching orders. He was certainly faithful to what God called him to do.