

# (Ephesians) Ephesians 2:10-3:9

by Zac Poonen

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*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, and we should cooperate with God's plan by seeking humility and fellowship with others.*

**Duration:** 58:21

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 2:9, Ephesians 1:2

**Topics:** "Humility In Ministry", "Holy Spirit Guidance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of humility and lowliness in proclaiming the word of God. He highlights the fact that God gives the anointing and privilege to those who have low thoughts about themselves. The speaker also points out that clever people who rely on their own understanding may miss out on 95 percent of the Christian life. He encourages believers to seek revelation from the Holy Spirit and to understand the mysteries hidden in the scriptures. The sermon emphasizes the need to trust in God's wisdom and not rely solely on human reasoning.

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## Transcript

We turn today to Ephesians, in chapter 2, and verse 10, which we were looking at at the conclusion of our last study. Ephesians 2.10 says, We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. See, salvation, we already saw in verse 9, is not a reward for all the good we've done.

So, no one can boast or take any credit for it. But, God planned long, long ago, that after we are saved, our life should manifest good works. In fact, Jesus said to His disciples, You are the light of the world.

He said in John chapter 9, verse 5, As long as I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. But, He said in Matthew 5.14-16, Now you are the light of the world. So, strictly speaking, it's we, Christians, who are the light of the world today.

That's quite a challenging thing. A lot of people put their responsibility on Christ by saying, well, He's the light of the world. Well, that's true when He was on earth.

But today, people can't see Him. And that's why Jesus said, You're the light of the world. And then He said, in Matthew 5.16, Let people see your good works.

That's the light they've got to see. Let them see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Not glorify you, for what a wonderful saint you are.

A true Christian is one who does good works, and people look at that and glorify the Father. Because he's a humble person. He doesn't take credit for his good works.

He points to the Father. That's how Jesus was. It says in Acts 10.38, Jesus went around doing good and delivering people who were oppressed by Satan.

That's His ministry. And that's what He came to do. And that's what He has called us to do.

Now that we're saved. And we're the light of the world. So, we're saved unto good works.

And not just any good works that we think up of doing. It's true that we should do whatever good our hands can find. But it's also encouraging to know that God has planned beforehand.

That means way back when He thought of us before the foundation of the world. And He knew we were going to be saved one day. He also made a plan for our life.

Now a lot of believers don't believe this. But I thank God that I believed that when I was a young man. That God had a specific plan for my life.

Which was far better than any plan that I could ever have made for myself. I wonder if you realize that. I wonder if you young people who are listening to me realize this.

That God has got a specific plan for your life. A blueprint already made up for you in heaven. What does it say here? Good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Now if I were to paraphrase that, it means that God has got a perfect plan for your life. And He has taken into account a lot of factors that you don't take into account when you plan your life. How many of you take into account what's going to happen next year when you plan your life? You don't know what's going to happen next year.

You don't know what somebody else is going to do to you next year. You can't prepare for that. But isn't it wonderful to have a God in heaven who not only knows what's going to happen to you next year.

But what somebody else is planning to do to you next year. And takes into account all of these things and makes a perfect blueprint for your life. How in the world can you beat that? Impossible.

And so the wise Christian is the one who right from the time he's born again surrenders totally to God's plan. And says, Lord, I don't want to do my will. In any area.

You know some of us think that we can probably plan the way we spend our time better. Than if he asked God to guide us how we should spend our time. You're a fool if you think like that.

Do you really think that almighty God can't plan your life and your time better than you can? Another area where a lot of believers think that they can plan better than God is in the use of their money. Most believers, I think it's true to say, do not consult God in the use of their money. A few believers live by the Old Testament principle which is, God, here's your 10%.

Now don't disturb me about how I use the other 90%. That's Old Testament. In the New Testament, there's no such law of giving God 10%.

Why? Because God says, you must recognize that everything you have belongs to me. And I'll guide you in the best way to use 100% of your money. In the Old Testament, I told them to give me 10% just to teach them to put me first in their lives.

But now, that was only a shadow. Like in the Old Testament, they had one day and seven. Now we have seven days and seven where we fellowship with God and our rest in God.

Every day is a Sabbath. Not a physical rest, but a spiritual rest. In the same way, in the Old Testament, they gave 10%.

Today, we give all to God. It doesn't mean we have to take all our salary and give it for God's work. That's not what I mean.

What I mean is we recognize every single cent we receive, every paisa we receive, belongs to God. And say, now Lord, I want you to tell me how to use it. And God will guide you.

Don't think He's going to take it all away for His work. He may tell you to save up something to build a house, perhaps. He'll give you money to go out and have a good meal once in a while.

Get clothes for yourself. But you recognize that it all belongs to God. God has planned good works that we should spend our life doing.

With the time we have, with the money we have, with the energy we have. Imagine that God would take the trouble to make a plan for your life. And imagine that you wouldn't even bother to find out from God what that plan is.

I believe that's what grieves the heart of God, not for His own sake, but for your sake. I think a lot of believers are going to find when they stand before the Lord on the final day, what a mess they made of their life because they did not seek the will of God day by day. Jesus lived His entire life on earth seeking the Father's will.

He said, I came from heaven, John 6, 38, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. What does it mean when it says Jesus lived by faith? He's called the author of our faith in Hebrews 12, 2. He lived by faith means He was absolutely convinced that the Father's plan for His life was better than anything He could plan as a human being. And if He is the author of your faith, it means you're also convinced that the plan God's made for your life is far better than anything you could ever plan for yourself.

The good works He has planned before the foundation of the world are what you want to find out. That's the way we're supposed to live. Meditate on that verse and see how it applies to your life concerning whom you're to marry, where you're supposed to go and live, what job you're supposed to take, everything.

Then it goes on to say, therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, He's writing to people who were non-Jews. The Jews felt that we alone are God's people. And in a sense, for those 1,500 years when they were under the law, they were God's people.

God didn't have much to do with the outside, those outside of Israel. He sent His prophets only into Israel. He spoke only to Israel.

But yet God had a heart for the people outside. And that was manifested fully when Christ came. And so He says, remember this, you who were Gentiles in the flesh, whom these people call uncircumcision, the circumcision people call you uncircumcision, the circumcision performed in the flesh by hands, remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world.

That was our condition. A lot of verses in Ephesians 2 refer to our former condition. But now, see what's happened.

In Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. It's the blood of Jesus Christ that's brought us near to God. And when we came near to God, we found ourselves also near to other people who are different from us, whom also God accepted.

See, what Paul is working up to here, and the Holy Spirit's working up to, is the wonderful truth that God has broken down barriers. The greatest dividing wall that's ever existed in the human race is that between the Jews and non-Jews. We see a lot of that conflict today.

And it's been there all through the ages. A Jew feels he's special. And the difference between the Jew and the non-Jew is the widest gap or the biggest wall, whichever way you want to put it, that exists between any two groups in humanity.

We have this wretched caste system in our country that separates the high caste from the low caste. They will have nothing to do with each other. There's a big gulf between the two.

But that is nothing compared to the gulf between the Jew and the non-Jew. And when Jesus died on the cross, He bridged that gulf. He broke down that dividing wall.

He brought us near to God and to each other. Once upon a time we were far away from God. But it says you were brought near by the blood of Christ.

That's how we were brought near to God. By the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, we who were far away were brought near. And when we were brought near to God, we were also brought near to each other.

It says, He Himself is our peace, verse 14, who has made these two groups into one and broken down the barrier of the dividing wall. There is a dividing wall between many, many groups in humanity, even, unfortunately, in Christendom. There are dividing walls that man has built between one denomination and another, between one group and another.

And Jesus came to break down every dividing wall. There is a separation God makes between light and darkness, but within the light there is no separation. There may be different degrees of light people have, but there is no separation within the light.

God has broken down walls. He is seeking to unite people. The most widely separate groups are brought together in Christ.

This is the will of God. And this is why we should cooperate with God. This is where we must surrender, not only to personal salvation, but as He goes on in the next few verses, the great theme of Ephesians is the body of Jesus Christ.

This is what the Lord is seeking to build. Turn today to Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 13. He is speaking about how Jesus Christ has brought widely separated groups together.

First of all, through His blood. If it were not for the blood of Jesus Christ, we would not be able to come near God. It says here, we who were far off were brought near by the blood of Christ.

Brought near to whom? Brought near to God, first of all. But, when we are brought near to God, we are also brought near to one another. You cannot be brought near to God without being brought near to other believers.

Just like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. At the rim, right on the outside, at the outer end, they are far apart from each other. But as they come from that outer rim towards the center, they not only come closer to the center, but they also come closer to each other.

This is how it is when we draw closer to God. If a man says he is drawing close to God, and he is not drawing close to his fellow believers, even if they are in another denomination, he is not really drawing close to God at all. Just like John says, if a man says he loves God, and he does not love his brother, he is a liar.

So, here the Holy Spirit is emphasizing, first of all, being brought near to God through the blood of Christ. And then He says, if that is the case, He is going to bring you near to a lot of people who are very different from you. He Himself has become our peace now, verse 14.

Who made both groups into one. He made us one family. Breaking down the wall, the Living Bible says, the wall of contempt that used to separate us.

You know, it is true in every society, wherever there is a distinction between people, one group despises or holds another group in contempt. The upper caste will despise the lower caste, and the Jews would despise the Gentiles, and probably the Gentiles despise the Jews. And this wall of contempt keeps getting built up over the years.

Finally, it is so high, nobody can see each other on the other side of the wall. And even where some of those layers of bricks have been taken away, the fellowship between people on each side of the wall is only over the wall, a shake hand over the wall. The wall is still there.

Unfortunately, even in Christendom. It could be between caste and Christendom, very often it is between denominations. A denomination has built a wall, and the believers fellowship over it.

But Jesus broke down this dividing wall. He made us into one, the two most extreme groups in the world, the Jews and the Gentiles. Jesus united.

How did He do it? When He died, He abolished the enmity, the angry resentment that there is between one group and the other. Do you resent something in another child of God? That is the thing Jesus died to destroy. And what Jesus destroyed, you are nourishing.

You are nourishing something Jesus died to destroy. This angry resentment of somebody who doesn't agree with you, Jesus came to abolish it. He abolished in His flesh this enmity between every group and another group in the whole world.

No one can say he has come near to God if he has not abolished, if he has not accepted this abolition of the enmity in His flesh towards people who are different. Unfortunately, in Christendom, we see people divided by language groups, people seeking fellowship only with those of their own community, and building walls between them and people of another community, walls that Jesus came to destroy. And He destroyed not only this enmity, this wall is also built, it says here, by the law of commandments.

It's laws that build a wall. The Jews had the Ten Commandments and the laws of God, the ceremonial law and many, many other things. And they despised the Jews, the Jews despised the Gentiles because those Gentiles did not keep these commandments.

And so the Jews felt we're special. Now there's something of that also in Christendom. One denomination feels we've got certain doctrines which other people don't have.

And those doctrines may be right. They may be given by God. After all, the Ten Commandments were given by God, but God never gave the Ten Commandments to separate one group of His creation from another, far from it.

He gave it to the Jews so that they could share it with others and bring others also up to their level, not to separate them from the others. And if God has given us understanding of Scripture, the purpose is not for us to separate ourselves from others of His children who don't see Scripture exactly the way we see it. No.

He's given us Scripture to build fellowship between people, not to destroy fellowship. And unfortunately, a lot of people in Christendom and a lot of groups have used Scripture to destroy fellowship rather than build it. Here it says Jesus came to abolish, to break down that dividing wall, to abolish the enmity caused by commandments, by laws.

And it's not just laws and doctrines. A husband and wife can have walls between each other. Walls that are created by demands that one can make upon the other person.

A husband can have a whole lot of unwritten laws. Unwritten laws which he has in his mind that his wife must keep. Or vice versa, a wife can have unwritten laws that she feels her husband must keep.

For example, a husband may feel that tidiness in the home is very important. A wife may feel, well, tidiness is not the main thing in life. We must spend our time more profitably than just spending the whole time tidying up the house.

And there you have tensions. Because neither of these things has got anything to do with spirituality. But here is an unwritten law that you must keep the house tidy.

And maybe the wife has an unwritten law that the husband must always come home from work on time. And what's the result of these unwritten laws? Tension, difficulties, break of fellowship, the law of commandments. It's not just the Ten Commandments.

It's any unwritten demand you have on a fellow believer with whom God is seeking to make you one. With your partner in marriage with whom God is seeking to make you one. Jesus died to break down that wall.

To destroy that enmity. And the purpose, so that he make the two into one new man. Thus establishing peace.

God's purpose is to make one. Make two into one. This is the thing which no human being has ever been able to do.

Holiness is not just reforming our character. It's also building fellowship. Like I said the other day in an earlier study.

That a holiness without humility is a counterfeit. Let me also say that holiness without fellowship is also a counterfeit. Holiness must produce humility in your life and must produce fellowship with others.

In fact, fellowship with others is lacking when there is no humility. Humility is necessary for fellowship. And when there is no fellowship it's because there is no humility in one or both sides.

So, here is true holiness. It produces humility and it produces fellowship. God is seeking to make two into one.

It's not just husband and wife that he is seeking to make two into one. Here it says two believers. Any two believers.

That he might make the two into one. Did you get that? That he might make the two into one. That he might make the three into one.

And the four into one. And the five into one. And the fifty into one.

And the five hundred into one. God wants a church, a local church to function exactly like a human body. If it's got a hundred members, all hundred working together, it's not a question of numbers.

In the Old Testament it was a congregation. In the New Testament it's a body. And as I told you in Ephesians 1, 2, and 3, there is no exhortation.

We're not told what to do. We're only told what God did. And if we understand what God did, then, like it says in chapter 4 onwards, we will live according to these truths.

So we need to understand what God did on the cross. On the cross, He destroyed this enmity. He broke down this dividing wall.

And the purpose of it all was that two might become one. That all believers might become one, establishing peace. How do you know you're one with somebody? Whenever you think of that person, you have peace in your mind.

Whenever you think of someone, if there's disturbance in your mind, you're not one with that person. If you think of your wife and you're disturbed about something, you think of your husband, you're disturbed about something, you think of a brother and there's a disturbance, you're not one with that person at all. You're disturbed.

And Jesus died that He might reconcile. It says in verse 16, this is a wonderful New Testament word, reconciliation. That means people who could not get along with each other can now get along with each other.

Reconcile both these widely disparate groups into one body to God through the cross. By it having put to death the enmity. Look at this emphasis again and again.

One new man, verse 15. One body through the cross. The whole purpose of Christ's death was to make people one.

Not only to forgive our sins. Not only that we might have victory over sin as it says in Romans 6. But it must ultimately lead to the building of one body. Where Jew and Gentile and this language and that language and this community and the other community can come together and become one body in Christ.

And that is it says here what Jesus is going to present to the Father. He's not going to present a whole lot of believers. He's going to present one body.

So once we see this, the Holy Spirit can help us to cooperate in building that body. Today to Ephesians in chapter 2 verse 17. In our last study we were seeing how Christ died on the cross that he might not only forgive our sins and save us from a defeated life.

It's not only personal sanctification but also that all these people who are sanctified might together become one body without the differences that there are in us as human beings coming in the way. All enmity is slain. All dividing walls are broken down.

And remember this once again my brother, sister, that if you try to build something which causes dividing, which becomes a dividing wall between you and your wife, you and your husband, you and another brother or sister, that is contrary to the will of God. It is building what Jesus destroyed on the cross. We need to see this very clearly because so many Christians don't seem to take this seriously, this matter of unity.

The power of the Christian church is in being united. If you are not united, the devil gets the victory. And the test for this unity is peace.

He established peace it says in verse 15 and here in verse 17 Jesus came and preached peace. We say He preached the forgiveness of sins. Right.

That brought peace with God. And if it brought peace with God, the proof of it is it brings peace between believers. Peace on earth and good will among men.

That was the Christmas message. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Right from the time the angels proclaimed the birth of Christ.

He preached peace to those who were Gentiles and peace to the Jews. So Jesus came to both groups saying peace. Peace be unto you, peace be unto you.

And through Him, verse 18 we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. Here is a Jew converted coming to Christ through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. Here is a Gentile coming to God the Father through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

They have to come the same way. Why can't they have fellowship with each other? Why can't two groups who see things differently in many areas but were both born again come together and fellowship? We're not talking here about everybody sitting in the same church. In fact, it's a good thing that we don't have

100,000 people sitting in one church in a city.

God divided us into small, small groups and there's nothing wrong with that. Jesus never said all men will know you are my disciples when you all sit in one building. He said all men will know you are my disciples when you love one another.

He didn't even say when you all belong to the same group. No, there's nothing wrong in being in different groups. We have certain differences of opinion.

Sometimes we have to be in different groups because of language. We can't all understand the same language. We have different language fellowships.

But that's not the problem. The problem is that these folks who live in these different groups can't love one another. There's no fellowship.

There's no peace. There's tension. That's the problem.

I think the ideal thing is as God has planned it is that churches should be small in size and in many, many churches in different places but they should love one another. That's God's will. And that is what the devil has sought to destroy.

It says here further in verse 19. Before we get to that, let me point out, just like we saw in Ephesians 1, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 2, we see the same thing.

In verses 1 to 10, we see how this body of Christ has been brought to life by the Father. God, rich in His mercy, God in His great love, has quickened us. Brought us to life.

Made us alive in Christ. And then, in verses 11 to 17, we see how this body is formed by the cross and the death of the Son of God. Through His blood and through His death on the cross, this body is formed.

So it's brought to life by the Father and all enmity and dividing walls are broken down through the death of the Son. And then, when we come to verse 18, we have, as one body, we have access to the Father through the Holy Spirit. So there again we see all the persons in the Trinity working together, not only for our salvation, but also for building the body of Jesus Christ.

The emphasis in Ephesians chapter 1 was individual salvation by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Ephesians chapter 2, the emphasis is on corporate salvation. Altogether, forming one body and being saved from their disunity, being saved from their enmity towards each other, from their contempt for each other, being saved from building walls between each other.

That's a great salvation where we come together and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are working towards this unity. Therefore, it says in verse 19, you are no longer strangers and foreigners or aliens, but your fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's family or household. There are many names given to God's people, to the church in the New Testament.

We already saw the body, which is a great theme of Ephesians. It's also called God's family or God's household, verse 19. When we think of body, we think of this human body.

That's what the church should be like. Different members of this body work together, function together and cooperate in doing what the head wants it to do. And that's how the body of Christ should also be.

But the other picture here is of a family and that's also a beautiful picture. We're not strangers. You know how it is in a family.

What fun there is when all the children love each other, play together, do things together, go for picnics together, go for outings together, travel together. There's no stranger in a family. In a good family, nobody feels excluded.

Even if a child is retarded or stammers, he's made to feel welcome. Even a child who's seriously sick, the other family members get together to help that child. So that's how a family is.

A family is a number of people that really care. And that's another picture used for God's people. So in the church where Jesus has saved people, our relationship with one another must be one of God's family.

And this is really so true. Those of us who know the Lord and have traveled to different places, we've seen that, how we can meet strangers whom we hardly know at all. And in a few moments, when we discover they are born again children of God, in a few moments it's as though we have known them for years.

Because we are part of a family. God's family. And that's the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

And the local church must be like a family. A family atmosphere must be there in every local church. A local church must not be like a huge organization or like a cinema theater where people go to watch a performance up in front.

Unfortunately, a lot of large churches are like that. They go to watch a performance. I personally don't believe in mega churches.

I don't believe it is ever God's will to build huge churches. Because they can never function as a family. Those are all for display.

God would want many of these mega churches to split up into small, small families with individual leaders. That's the will of God. Because God's building a family where each knows and cares for one another.

And then the third picture, we saw the body, we saw the family. The third picture that we have here is of a house. The church is not only a body, it's not only a family, it's also a building.

And building is another beautiful picture of a church where one brick is on top of the other. Now you know the difference between a pile of 50,000 bricks and a house. A pile of 50,000 bricks can be used to build a house.

But a pile of 50,000 bricks is not a house. In the Old Testament, they had a pile of bricks. In the New Testament, we have a house.

When there's a pile of bricks, each brick is on its own. It's not cemented with the other. People can walk off with one brick.

But when you're part of a house, nobody can walk off with one brick. You know, we have a lot of complaints sometimes. Pastors say, somebody's coming and stealing my members.

Well, why are they stealing your members? Because you're a pile of bricks. People who walk by the road can steal those bricks. But if you had built them together, you'd find that nobody can come and steal them.

How can you steal a brick from out of a wall which has got one brick on top, another underneath, another to its left, another to its right, cemented together with all of them? Nobody can ever steal a brick from a wall. And unfortunately, a lot of churches are just a pile of bricks. But here it says about God's church being built as a house with the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

That means the doctrine laid down by the apostles and prophets is the foundation. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. He's a perfect right angle.

A cornerstone had to be very important in the old days. It had to be a perfect right angle, a perfect right angle in all three dimensions, so that all the others would be aligned correctly. Christ is the cornerstone and the whole building is fitted together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

God Himself dwells there, being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. So we're supposed to be built together. I've got to accept the inconvenience of having a brother on top of me, left side of me, right side of me, behind me, underneath me.

Because that's the only way a house can be built. And if I keep complaining and I want to be an individual brick, I'll never be a part of God's house and I'll be an easy target for the devil to steal. God's building a temple.

And when that temple is there, God Himself can come and dwell in it. He's not going to come and live in a pile of bricks. So let's cooperate with God as He seeks to build a family and a house through us.

Turn today to Ephesians and chapter 3 and verse 1. Before we start in Ephesians 3, let me just briefly recap what we've covered. We saw in Ephesians chapter 1, individual salvation through the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In chapter 2, how we were brought out from the pit and made one body.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together. And we see the Trinity again in the last two verses of Ephesians 2, verse 21 and 22. A holy temple in the Lord Jesus Christ being built together into dwelling of God the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father, in the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity is there. And for this reason, since God is building a body, a family, and a building, a temple, therefore I, even though I'm a prisoner, He says, for the sake of you Gentiles locked up often in prison, but in prison He wrote some of these wonderful letters.

I feel one of the reasons why the Lord locked up Paul in prison was because He could never get Paul to sit down and take a few moments to write down all the wonderful things that God had revealed to him. What a loss it would have been to the church if Paul had never been imprisoned, because it's unlikely that he would ever have written these wonderful letters. He was a man who was always on the go.

You couldn't stop him. He was going here, looking for opportunities to evangelize, to encourage believers to do so many things. But the only way God could stop him was lock him up.

And when he was in prison for months or years, whatever it was, there he had nothing else to do, but he had the opportunity to write. And he wrote these wonderful letters. Sometimes Paul himself may have wondered why God allowed him to be in prison, but today we know.

Many things that limit us, which we think are a hindrance, because we think the great thing is to be going around on the go, doing something for God. And we think if we are brought into a net, and we are limited in movement, there's a loss. Not necessarily.

There are people who are bedridden, who accomplish more for God in that bed than they did in all the years they traveled. Perhaps they pray more and accomplish more that way than with all their activity. God is sovereign.

So when Paul says in verse 1 here of chapter 3, a prisoner, that was God's sovereign choice and purpose through which He fulfilled that perfect plan for Paul that we read of in Ephesians 2.10. A prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles. There was no need for Paul to have gone to prison if it were not for his passion to go and preach Christ to those who had never heard. And that's why he says it's for the sake of you Gentiles that I'm being in prison.

If I lived a comfortable life in Tarsus as a Christian businessman, and just set up my shop and was a regular church member, going to the meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays, I probably would never have been in prison. But I'm in prison because I decided to give my life for the spread of the gospel to you Gentiles. And he says, if you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, a stewardship, a responsibility, a charge that God had committed to Paul to preach and proclaim and manifest the grace of God by His words and His life to other people.

There was a stewardship, a sacred responsibility, a sacred charge that was given to him by God for the sake of the Gentiles. And here's a long passage and we need to think through it carefully because Paul is saying something very, very important here. He says, you've heard of this charge that God has given me and by revelation there was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief.

He mentioned it a little earlier, but he expands on it here. He says there was a mystery. A mystery means a deep secret of God.

We saw that in chapter 1. Something which cannot be understood by study or by analysis, by an analytical mind, the use of the mind alone. It has to be understood by revelation. Revelation is a word that occurred in chapter 1 too.

Here Paul says, I got revelation. God revealed something to me which my natural mind could never have understood. Paul was a brilliant mind.

One of the most brilliant minds I think that man has ever had, any man has ever had. And with that brilliant mind he could not understand God's revelation. In fact, he was so completely wrong he was going in 180 degrees the opposite direction to the way God wanted him to go.

So a brilliant mind took Paul completely astray. But revelation brought him back. That his spirit opened up to what the Holy Spirit revealed to his spirit which his mind could not explain.

That's why clever people have a problem being disciples of Jesus because they're always seeking to analyze everything. They're always seeking to evaluate and see whether their mind can understand it. And if their mind can understand it, they accept it.

And if the mind can't understand it, they don't accept it. And if you accept only what your mind can understand, I would say you'll miss out 95% of things in the Christian life. And that's what a lot of people

do.

They say, if my mind can't understand it, I don't accept it. But 95% of the Christian life our mind can't understand. Can you explain the Trinity? Can you explain why we need to pray? Why do we need to pray at all when God knows everything, God's concerned for us? Why do we need to fast? Why should we go without food? Why meet regularly? There's so many things which the mind cannot explain easily.

Why does God allow the devil to exist? Why doesn't he just destroy them? Why has God allowed so many religions to exist? Why does God allow false religions to exist? Why does God allow cults to proliferate in Christendom? No, our mind doesn't have an answer. But in our heart, the Holy Spirit can give us revelation. And that's what you need to seek for when you read the Scriptures.

Revelation on the mysteries, the hidden things that are hidden in the Scriptures. And by referring to this, he says, verse 4, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. He says, if I want to explain this to you, I'll tell you, this is how I came to know these things.

I understand these things through the Holy Spirit revealing things to me, which in other generations, verse 5, was not made known. Even to the holy, even to the great prophets in the Old Testament, but has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. The Old Testament prophets didn't understand this.

Nobody understood it. But now, in this New Testament age, the Holy Spirit has revealed certain things which were not, which is not known in olden times. There's a wonderful verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. It's a quotation from Isaiah 64.

It says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9, I has not seen, neither has your heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him. There are wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love him. That's what Isaiah says.

But Isaiah said, the human eye has not seen it, the human ear has not heard it, and has not entered into the heart of man. But, he says, he goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 2.10, what Isaiah could not say in Isaiah 64, but now God has revealed them to us through the Holy Spirit. So, Isaiah couldn't say that, because Isaiah didn't have that revelation.

It was all hidden from his eyes and his ears and his mind. But now it says it's not hidden. It's been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

That's not referring to things that we're going to see in heaven. It's things we're going to experience and hear and understand and see in this earthly life. By revelation, this mystery was made known to me, which was not Ephesians 3.5, not made known in other generations to the sons of men.

We don't realize what a tremendous privilege we have in the day in which we live, in this new covenant age, to know the things, the secret things of God. The things that have been hidden from other people for ages. And what is this mystery? Now, after building up this suspense, you begin to think, well, it must be some grand, fantastic thing, this great mystery.

And it isn't. It's a very simple thing. It says to be specific, this is the mystery.

That the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers Ephesians 3.6 of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. In other words, there's no special group now for God. He

has no favorites.

The Jews are not His favorites like in the Old Testament. He's not going to work only for this group or that group. I think people and believers in many Christian denominations need to recognize that.

God doesn't have any favorites, and you're not His favorite. There's no group that's His favorite. God uses you in spite of your mistakes and blunders, and He uses the other group in spite of their mistakes and blunders.

And God's aim is that both groups might be one. This is the mystery, that we shall be fellow heirs. We shall reign together.

You can't reign alone. You can't be an heir all by yourself in your little group. You have to be a fellow heir with somebody who sits in the other group whom you don't quite agree with, but who is a born again child of God.

Fellow heir and fellow member of the bodies, like the left hand and the right hand. Different, complete opposites, and yet, working together. That is the mystery.

Fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers of the promise. The promise cannot be obtained by yourself. You've got to receive the promise along with your fellow believers who are different from you.

And very often, when we try to reign on the throne alone, to be an heir all by ourself, or to work all by ourselves, or partake of the promise by ourselves, it just doesn't work. We need to get revelation on this mystery. Today, to Ephesians in chapter 3, and verse 6, Paul is speaking here about this mystery, where the Gentiles and the Jews, the two greatest opposites in the world, have to reign together to get the throne.

It's almost as though God says, listen, fellas, if you want to reign, you've got to reign along with that other person who is different from you. The Gentiles have got to reign with the Jew, and the Jews have got to reign with the Gentiles. The throne too, if you've got to sit together, otherwise nobody gets it.

Fellow heirs. And then it says, fellow members. You can't have one half of the body doing anything.

It's like if you were to cut your body right down the middle, what would that one half be able to do? And that's what the Lord is saying. The Jew is incomplete without the Gentile, and the Gentile is incomplete without the Jew. The left hand and the right hand need each other.

The left leg needs the right leg to move forward. So, fellow members, and fellow partakers of the promise, you've got to come together to get God's promise. It's like a joint account in a bank that can be operated only by both signatories.

If one signatory comes alone, he gets nothing. You've got to come along with the other. Whether you agree with him or not, if you want to draw any money, you've got to come together with him.

And if you come alone, you get nothing. And a lot of people get nothing because they don't want to fellowship with other people who are different from them, fellow partakers of the promise. Think of that.

God has made you a joint signatory with certain other believers, husband and wife together. The Bible says if a husband does not live in an understanding way with his wife, his prayers will not be heard. In 1

Peter chapter 3, verse 7 to 9, his prayers will not be heard.

Whatever he may pray, it'll just bounce off the roof and come back. Because he's a joint signatory. He's a joint heir, it says there, along with his wife in Christ.

And so, here also, a fellow partaker of the promise. That's why it's so important that when you pray and try to claim a promise from God, make sure that your heart is open to all of God's people. Those who have harmed you, those who have cheated you, those who have done wrong to you, those who disagree with you, those who are a different community, that your heart is open to all of God's people.

That you have a warm, welcoming heart to all of them. And he says, this mystery is the one of which God has made me a minister according to the gift of God's grace which is given to me according to the working of His power. So, God's power was given to Paul in order that he might proclaim this wonderful mystery all across the world.

That we don't have to live individualistic lives. We're not here to be individual holy people. The biggest hindrance to the body of Christ are these individual holy people who can't get along with other people.

God doesn't want them in the body. God's not looking for some Old Testament prophet like Elijah or Moses today. No, we're living in a new age.

We're living in a day and age when Christ is everything. And we're members of His body. There is no Elijah or Elisha or Moses today.

We are members of His body. And we are fellow heirs. You can't make it on your own.

You can't do anything on your own. And what you do will be so pathetically little. It's multiplied a million times when you work together with others.

So, this is the gospel of which Paul became a minister. One who was to proclaim this everywhere as a result of the gift of God's grace and according to the working of His power. And he says concerning himself, it's a wonderful expression of his humility we have here in Ephesians 3 and verse 8, he says, to me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

It's a tremendous verse which teaches us that God gives the anointing and the privilege to proclaim His word to those who have low thoughts about themselves. What does Paul think about himself? He's the very least of all the saints. Now, unfortunately, there's a teaching in Christendom that makes people feel you must value yourself.

Now, there's a sense in which that is true. But you need to get it in the right sense. Otherwise, you get puffed up.

Everything in Ephesians chapter 1, we mentioned that. You're a person with dignity. You're a very, very important person, being a crown prince, a son of God.

A son of God, a daughter of God. And you need to recognize who you are. We've come past that.

But don't let that puff you up. When you compare yourself with other believers, what do you think of yourself? I'll tell you what Paul thought of himself. He thought he was the very least of all the saints.

In other words, he felt every believer is superior to me. He was the least. He didn't think he was the most carnal.

He was not the most carnal. He called the Corinthians carnal. He was a spiritual man.

But he considered others as more important than him. Now, there's a lot of difference between considering other people as more important and considering other people as more spiritual. Humility does not mean that you consider other people as more spiritual than yourself.

Because if that is the mark of humility, then Jesus had no humility. Because Jesus never considered anyone as more spiritual than himself. How could he do that? That would have been a lie.

Paul didn't consider Galatians and the Corinthians, all the Christians, as superior to himself. Sorry, as more spiritual than himself. But I'll tell you what Jesus did consider other people.

Jesus considered every human being he met as more important than himself. He considered himself to be a servant to all human beings. That's why he washed the feet of his disciples.

That's why he took the lowest place. That's why he was willing to be born in a stable. He chose that from heaven.

Before he came to earth, he decided from heaven where he was going to be born. And he chose a cow shed where the cows and donkeys were. He chose to be born into a poor family.

He considered everyone as more important than himself, even though nobody was as spiritual as him. He said, which of you convinces me of sin? Learn of me, he said. I'm meek and lowly in heart.

But yet he considered others as more important than himself. That's what Paul is speaking of here. I am the least of all the saints.

In Philippians chapter 2, this is exactly what it says. Let each of you consider, Philippians 2-3, regard the others as more important than himself. Not more spiritual.

So, remember that, because a lot of people are trying to do the impossible. They're trying to consider everybody else as more spiritual and it's just not true. And they're wondering how in the world they can do it.

Well, you don't have to do it. Because Jesus didn't do it and Paul didn't do it. But what they did do was consider others as more important.

That they themselves were servants. And the more spiritual you are, the more of a servant you'll be and the more you will consider yourself the least of all the saints. Paul considered himself the very least.

He considered himself last in the list. I'm called to be a servant to everybody. And he says to a person like this, God gave this tremendous honor of preaching the unsearchable, unfathomable riches of Christ.

Think of that. The riches of Christ. To proclaim, to share with others the wealth that there is in Christ.

Not just wealth from interesting thoughts in the Bible. There was no written Bible those days. There's a difference between the wealth there is in the Scriptures and the wealth there is in Christ.

It's the wealth in Christ that Paul is speaking of here. To whom does God give the honor and the privilege of proclaiming His mysteries? To those who consider others as more important than themselves. That's what we read here in this verse.

And this ministry was the purpose of this ministry that God gave Paul. Verse 9, Ephesians 3. Was to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery. To explain this secret which has been hidden in God.

This mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things. So, his calling was to reveal this mystery to people in the power of the Holy Spirit so that they could also understand it. To bring it to light.

The stewardship of this mystery. This, he says, in order that, verse 10, that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places. You know that God is seeking to do something through the church to teach the angels and the evil spirits something? You see, the evil spirits say, well, it's impossible for two human beings on earth to be one.

Go and ask any husband and wife. Go and ask Christian husband and wife and see if it isn't really difficult. It certainly is.

Go to any church and you'll find it's so difficult to get two people to be one. We're talking about being one in spirit, not one in every little detail. God doesn't demand that.

He's not asking for uniformity in little detail. He's asking for unity in spirit. And it's so difficult.

And the demons say to God, God, that's impossible. You'll never get these human beings anywhere, no matter what you do, to become one. And God says, I'm going to show you that there will be a certain number of people who would really have become one.

I'm going to show you a few husbands and wives. God says to the devil, we're going to be one. I'm going to show you a few believers.

Not everybody, because not everybody is willing to pay the price, but I'm going to show you a few believers here and there across the face of the earth who become one. That's the meaning of this verse, that God is going to show his manifold wisdom through the church to these evil rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Speaks about these rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, that's the demons.

The devil and his hierarchy of demons who challenge God like the devil challenged God in the time of Job, and God says, I'm going to show you how people are different from each other are going to be one. Is God able to do that in your life? Allow the Holy Spirit to do that work.

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