

A NEW BODY OF PEOPLE: THE GREAT MYSTERY OF CHRIST EPHESIANS 03:01–13

DIVISION OVERVIEW (*Ephesians 03:01–21*)

God's Purpose

Chapter three begins a new division in Ephesians, “The Purpose of God for Christian Believers.” But note: the passage discusses “The *Eternal* Purpose of God.” God’s purpose for believers involves much more than life on this earth. God has planned an eternal purpose for believers.

1. First, His purpose is to make a new body of people on earth who will love Him supremely. This is what is called the *mystery of Christ* (Eph. 3:1-13).
2. Second, His purpose is to make the believer into a *mature person* filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-21).

Introduction (Ephesians 03:01–13)

Prejudice, bitterness, segregation, hatred, disturbance, hurt, anger and division rage between people. They rage in the hearts of husbands and wives, children and parents, students and teachers, employers and employees. They exist within races and religions, denominations and organizations, neighbourhoods and nations. Division in all its various forms is one of the greatest problems confronting the world. It is the most serious problem confronting God, for as long as men are divided from Him and from each other, there is no hope of men ever being reconciled to God. This is the subject of this passage: how God has dealt with the terrible division in the world. God’s eternal purpose has been to create a new body of people, a people who will love Him and each other supremely. Note that this is what is known as the great mystery of Christ.

- I. It gave Paul purpose for existing (vv. 1-2).
- II. It was a mystery: it required a special revelation to become known (vv. 3-5).
- III. It was a threefold revelation (v. 6).
- IV. It affected Paul — profoundly (vv. 7-9).
- V. It affects heavenly beings even now, profoundly so: causes them to stand in stark amazement (vv. 10-12).
- VI. It stirred a willingness within (v. 13).

I. Ephesians 03: 01–02 Purpose and Mission of Paul's Life

These two verses give a glimpse into the very purpose for Paul’s existence.

1. Paul existed to serve Christ, no matter the cost. Note: he says that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He was speaking literally; he was a prisoner in Rome when he was penning these words. He was there because he was enslaved to Christ, enslaved to the point that he would bear any suffering to share the glorious news of Christ even if it meant imprisonment and death.
2. Paul existed to be a steward of God. The word *administration* (*oikonomian*) means stewardship, management, ownership. Paul was given the duty to oversee and administer the grace of God to the world.

Thought 1. What an enormous responsibility laid upon ministers of God!

- 1) Every minister of God is a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to serve Christ no matter the cost — even if it means imprisonment.

Mat 20:28 “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:43-44 “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”

Luke 22:27 “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

John 13:14 “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

- 2) Every minister of God is a steward of God’s grace. He is responsible for ministering the grace of God to men.

1 Cor 4:1-2 So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Col 1:25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.

1 Th 2:4-5 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.

1 Tim 1:11-12 That conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me, thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

Titus 1:3 And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.

II. *Ephesians 03:03–05 The Mystery and the Revelation*

The mystery of Christ required a special revelation to become known. Note two points.

1. The mystery is called the mystery *of Christ* (v. 4). Just what the mystery involves is discussed in the next note (v. 6).
2. The word mystery (musterion) is defined in these verses. It was some truth that had to be revealed by God for man to know it. As verse five says: “in other generations [it] was not made known to men.” Glance at verse nine where it is said to be “this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God.” All this simply means that the mystery of Christ was...
 - a truth that was not known before the apostles and prophets.
 - a truth that could not be discovered by human reason.
 - a truth that had to be revealed by God if it was to ever be known.

Note a striking point that needs to be noted by all men. The mystery of Christ was not a creation of man’s mind, of his rationalizations, concepts, thoughts, and ideas. Man could have never Figured out the mystery. No man in this physical world could ever penetrate the spiritual world and discover the truth, no matter what some have claimed. Jesus said so:

John 3:13 “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.”

The spiritual world and the mystery of Christ had always been a mystery, and they would have remained a mystery if God had not acted and revealed them to Paul and the other apostles and prophets of his day.

III. *Ephesians 03:06 Mystery of Christ: Church, the Body of Christ*

The mystery of Christ was a threefold revelation.

1. We, the Gentiles, are fellow heirs of God with the Jews. Scripture declares that “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn. 4:22). Before Jesus Christ, if a person wished to be saved, he had to approach God through the Jewish religion. The Jews who really believed the promises of God were the heirs of God. (See Eph. 2:11-18; 2:11-12; Gal. 3:6-7; 3:8-9; See *Abraham*, Gal 3:8, 16; *Israel, God’s Special People*, Jn. 4:22.) However, since Christ, Gentile believers - all peoples of the earth — no longer have to approach God through any other people or religion. No matter who we are, we are now to approach God face to face through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Every person now has the glorious privilege of approaching God no matter...

- who he is
- where he is or has been
- how he comes
- what he has done
- when he comes
- why he comes

If a person is genuine in seeking after God, he can now approach God through Jesus Christ. There are no barriers — none whatsoever — to prevent him from coming to God and being adopted by God as an heir of God with all other believers.

Rom 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Heb 6:17 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.*

1 Pet 1:6-7 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet 3:7 *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

2. We, the Gentiles, are of the same body with the Jews. No longer does man have to approach God through one body or nation of people. God’s love is universal. God is now allowing all men to approach him through the Lord Jesus Christ. God is now creating a new body of people made up of people from all nations and races - all centred around His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers now form what is called the body of Christ. But note: this means far more than just an organizational body. The body of Christ (believers in Christ) *is actually a living organism*. How is this possible?

=> By the Spirit of God. Believers are actually indwelt by the Spirit of God who energizes and empowers the spirit of believers. He creates a spiritual union by melting and moulding the heart of the Christian believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches the life of one believer to the lives of other believers. Through the Spirit of God, believers become one in life and purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings, needs and gifts together.

John 17:20-21, 23 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

1 Cor 12:27 *Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

Eph 1:23 *[The Church] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

Eph 2:21- 22 *In him [Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Col 1:24 *Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*

Col 2:19 *He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

1 Pet 2:5 *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

3. We, the Gentiles, receive the same promise of Christ as the Jews did. The promise in Christ, of course, involves all the promises of God. But note: God had promised Abraham that he would inherit the promised land and have a great nation born of his loins. That great nation was the Jewish nation. This is the reason the Jews, even today, consider Palestine their land. However, there was a spiritual meaning to God’s promise: Canaan is a type of heaven and of the new heavens and earth God is going to recreate. Therefore, the primary promise in Christ has to do with the glorious privilege of being saved and living with God and Christ for eternity in the new heavens and earth.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Rom 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Titus 3:4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

2 Pet 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

GALATIANS 03:08, 16 ABRAHAM

The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. The scripture does not say “and to the seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to the seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 03: 08, 16

The Scripture...announced the gospel to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). What does this mean?

God had promised Abraham an earthly son and a great earthly nation. But behind God’s promise lay something more than just an earthly, human fulfillment. Abraham’s son, Isaac, was a type of the real offspring (the *real seed*) that was to come, and the Jewish nation was a type of the *real nation* that was to be born. (See *Abraham’s Seed*, Rom. 4:1-25.)

Paul gives at least two proofs for this typology.

1. The word “seed” is singular, not plural (Gal. 3:16). God’s promise does not point to a great crowd of people, but to one single person. That person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. And the nation promised is the new nation of believers that God is creating to inherit the new heavens and earth (Gal.3:16; Eph. 1:9-10; 2:11-18; 3:6; 4:17-19).

2. The major events of Isaac’s life parallel the life of Christ.

=> First, Isaac was miraculously born (Gen. 15:2-3; 18:11; see Rom. 4:18-22; Heb. 11:11).

=> Second, Isaac was to be offered up as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, and God accepted his willingness and motive as an actual fact. The word of Heb. 11:17 tells us this: “by faith Abraham...[who] received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son.”

=> Third, Isaac was delivered from death by a miracle of God (Gen. 22:10-13). Abraham knew that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, in order to fulfill His promise, if need be (Heb. 11:19). □

JOHN 04:22 ISRAEL – GOD’S SPECIAL PEOPLE

*“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.” **John 04:22***

Why did Jesus Christ come to the Jewish nation and come to earth as a Jew? Very simply stated, the Jews were God’s special people. They had been born by a special act of God. It all started long, long ago. God had wanted four things.

1. He wanted a people who would love Him supremely and give Him their first loyalty. (See Gen. 17:7; Isa. 43:10.)
2. He wanted a people who would witness to all other nations that He and He alone was the one true and living God. (See Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 13:26, 47.)
3. He wanted a people through whom He could send the promised Seed, the Saviour and Messiah, Jesus Christ, to all men everywhere. (See Gen. 3:15; 17:7; 22:18; Gal. 3:16; Jn. 4:22.)
4. He wanted a people through whom He could send His written Word, the Holy Bible, and preserve it for all generations. (Rom. 9:4-5; 1 Pet. 2:10-12.)

In searching the earth for such a people, God could find none (Rom. 1:18-32). God could do only one thing. He had to find one man and through him raise a new people, a new nation.

1. God found and chose Abraham and through him established the Jewish nation. (Gen. 12:1-5; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:16-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 31:13; 35:9-12.) God chose one man and challenged him to worship God supremely. If that man would worship God supremely, then God would cause a special people to be born of his seed. That man was Abraham. Abraham was the first Jew (Gen. 12:1-4; Gal. 3:16). In the Old Testament the Jews and their land (Palestine) were continually pointed to as the very special people and land of God. They were called...

=> God's treasured possession (Exo. 19:5; Deu. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psa. 135:4).

=> the LORD's portion (Deu. 32:9).

=> the LORD's land (Lev. 25:23; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Hos. 9:3).

=> the holy land (Zec. 2:12).

However, the Jewish nation failed to obey God supremely. The whole plot of the Old Testament centres around God's pleading and dealing with the Jews. Again and again, He gave the nation the opportunity to obey Him. He dealt with them in mercy and in judgment, but at every turn they refused to heed His pleading.

2. God chose the family of David. (see *Jesus Christ, King of Israel*, Jn 1:49). God had no choice but to make another move, so He chose one faithful family within the Jewish nation and gave to that family one great promise. The family was that of King David, and the promise was that of the Messiah, God's great King, God's very own Son. God's Son was to come through the line of David and establish an eternal nation of people who would love God supremely. However, the Jewish nation again failed God. They misinterpreted God's Word – the prophecies of His coming.

a. The Jews misinterpreted God's Word by saying the seed of Abraham included only the Jewish nation. In their minds, God had no children except the children of the Jewish nation. The Bible says explicitly that the seed of Abraham is Christ, and the special people of God are those individuals within all nations who worship God supremely (Gal. 3:16).

b. The Jews misinterpreted God's Word by saying that the eternal kingdom promised to David was the Jewish nation and the Jewish nation only. They expected Israel to be established as an earthly nation forever and all other nations to be subservient to Israel. But again, God's promise was not that narrow, nor was it that prejudiced. The Bible says there is not, and never has been, any respect of persons with God (Deu. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7; Job. 34:19; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). God did say that Christ was to come from the Davidic line, but He also said that He was going to establish an eternal nation made up of people everywhere who would love God supremely (Rom. 2:28-29).

By misinterpreting God's promises, the Jews failed to be the missionaries to the world that God had chosen them to be. They became earthly bound and materialistic minded. They twisted the idea of the promised Messiah to fit their own schemes. They conceived of Him as One who was to establish an earthly kingdom for the Jewish nation alone. They failed to see that God was speaking...

- of an eternal kingdom of righteousness.
- of a kingdom that is of another dimension entirely — the spiritual dimension.
- of a new heaven and a new earth that would give each person an eternal life beyond just one earthly generation.

3. God had no choice but to make a third move. This He did by sending His own Son into the world through the Jewish nation. God sent Him so that the world through Him might be saved (Jn. 3:16-19). However, man rejected God's Son and crucified Him. This act — the killing of God's Son — was the final blow. When man slew the only Son of God, the whole world *was* involved. Both Jew and Gentile were represented symbolically in the Jewish religionists and the Roman authorities. They both actually did the plotting, sentencing, and execution. If the world were ever to be saved, it was now perfectly clear that God had to make every move Himself.

This He did once-for-all. In His eternal purpose and plan for man's salvation, God took the sins of all men and laid them upon His Son while He was being slain upon the cross. He allowed His Son to bear the sins of the world (1 Pet. 2:24). Then He took His Son and raised Him from the dead — never to die again. He did what man had always failed to do: in His Son's resurrection God began to build a lasting kingdom of righteousness, a new nation that is presently being made up of men from all earthly nations who desire and are willing to follow Jesus Christ supremely. He is calling out and forming a new people who have genuinely been born again — spiritually. These new born people shall live eternally — beyond just one earthly generation. These people are identified as His church, as a body of people who genuinely believe and follow Him. They are destined to be the inhabitants of the new heavens and earth. Believers become God's new community, new society, new race, new nation of people. They become His church, His new creation - spiritually and supernaturally born again — who comprise the true family of God (Lk. 8:21; Eph. 2:11-18; 4:17-19.)

***Eph 2:18-22** For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner-stone. In him the whole building*

is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

God, acting solely upon His own through the death and resurrection of His Son, has fulfilled His promises to both Abraham and David. All the people of the nations of the world now have the opportunity to become children of God, the special people of God. □

IV. *Ephesians 03:07–09 Paul, the Minister of God*

The mystery of Christ profoundly affected Paul. Barclay points out that Paul's greatest glory was God's call and God's work (*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 145). Paul saw the dignity of the ministry, the dignity of being especially chosen by God. The ministry was a radiant privilege for Paul. God did not have to persuade Paul to be a minister. No one had to persuade Paul to teach (Eph. 4:1); to sing (Eph. 5:19); to speak for God (Eph. 4:17); to visit (2 Cor. 13:1f); to administer the affairs of the church (1 Cor.7: 1f); to give his money (2 Cor.8:1f; 9:1f). Paul did not have to be coerced. He saw his call to be a minister of God as the greatest of all privileges.

Something else of primary importance: Paul says that his call to be a minister and a preacher was a gift, a free gift of God's grace. God had the right to call him simply because God has all rights. God is God. There was no merit, no worth, no value within Paul that caused God to choose him as a minister and as a preacher. Paul simply exclaims, "what a privilege! What a responsibility! the less of the least called by God to minister and to preach!"

1. The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a minister (v. 7).

2 Cor 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Cor 4:1-2 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Cor 5:18-21 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Eph 3:7 *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.*

Col 1:23 *If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

Col 1:25 *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.*

1 Tim 1:12 *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

2. The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become preacher. Note Paul's utter humility. He had what we need: a deep, intense sense of unworthiness before God.

Acts 9:20 *At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Acts 17:2-3 *As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, Explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said.*

1 Cor 1:17 *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

1 Cor 1:30 *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

1 Cor 2:2-4 *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.*

1 Cor 9:16 *Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*

2 Cor 4:5 *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

1 Th 1:9-10 *For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

2 Tim 1:11 *And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.*

3. The salvation in Christ caused Paul to become a dynamic witness or evangelist. Note the statement “to make *plain to every one...* this mystery [salvation].”

Acts 18:9-10 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.”

Acts 22:14-15 Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.’

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

1 Th 2:4-5 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.

2 Tim 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

2 Tim 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Titus 2:15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

V. Ephesians 03:10–12 Church and Salvation

The mystery of Christ profoundly affects heavenly beings. It causes them to stand in stark amazement at three things.

1. Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at what God is doing in the church. This is the meaning of verse ten. Looking at several different translations will show this.

“In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (NASB).

“So that the many phases of God’s wisdom may now through the church be made known to the rulers and authorities in heaven” (Williams).

“So that through the church God’s many-sided wisdom would now be shown to the rulers and authorities in heaven” (Beck).

God’s glorious purpose in salvation and in the church is to show His love and wisdom to the whole universe — to stir every creature in heaven to stand in stark amazement at what He is doing. Note that the heavenly beings see what is happening right now.

Rom 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

Rom 14:11 *It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'*

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Rev 5:9-13 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"*

2. Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. (See Eph. 1:3-14; 2:7.)

2 Tim 1:9 *Who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*

Titus 1:2 *A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.*

3. Heavenly beings stand in stark amazement at the believer's access into God's presence – at the fact that access is granted to us by *faith in Christ* (see Eph. 2:18).

John 10:9 *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

Rom 5:1-2 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

Eph 2:18 *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

Eph 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

VI. Ephesians 03:13 Conclusion

Paul is, therefore, willing to suffer for the church. The glory of all that lies ahead for the believer is so glorious that any suffering is worth the reward. Therefore, no believer should ever *be discouraged because of* suffering or in seeing other believers suffer. It is all worth the price of whatever suffering we are called to bear, even martyrdom. ■