

Eph 3:7-8

7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

And Paul's encounter with the Lord, he dove in all the way!

Paul said:

1 Cor 15:9-10

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle (sent out), because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

NKJV

Paul never forgot his past.

1 Timothy 1:13-16

13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent (violent) man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

The reason we may feel like the chief sinner at times

- we have an enemy that condemns us.
- He wants us to feel as though we've failed God.

The truth is, most of us feel the same at times.

2308 Still A Chief Sinner

Many years ago John Newton, the converted slave trader who became a preacher and a Christian poet, lay upon his deathbed. A young clergyman came to see him and expressed deep regret at the prospect of losing so eminent a laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

Then John Newton replied, "True, I'm going on before you, but you'll soon come after me. When you arrive, our friendship will no doubt cause you to inquire for me. But I can tell you already where you'll most likely find me—I'll be sitting at the feet of the thief whom Jesus saved in His dying moments on the cross!"

Although a distinguished man, Newton felt with Paul that he could only class himself among the chief of sinners who have been saved through marvelous grace.¹

¹ Tan, P.L. (1996) *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., p. 571.

Rev 5:11-12

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

The Lord chose Paul "to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And He chose to use him to inform the world of the church.

9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

Why did God wait so long to reveal the mystery?

One: to give Israel an opportunity to be a light to the Gentiles that they never became.

Two: To educate the angels.

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom (the many colors or diverse) of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers (designations for angelic beings) in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

1 Peter 4:10

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God has plenty of grace for us!

Angelic beings in the heavenly's marvel at God's wisdom.

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angels, as God's servants

Angels have specific yet limited roles to play in declaring God's will and purposes for humanity.

Angels are God's servants

Ps 103:20 *See also* Heb 1:7; Ps 104:4

Named angels

The archangel Michael: Da 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7

Gabriel: Da 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19,26

Angels as agents of God's salvation

Heb 1:14 *See also* Ex 23:23; 32:34; 33:2; Nu 20:16; Isa 63:8-9

Angels do not fully understand God's salvation 1Pe 1:10-12

Angels deliver God's people from their enemies 2Ki 19:35 pp 2Ch 32:21 pp Isa 37:36; Ac 5:19; 12:6-11

Angels as mediators

Ac 7:53 *The law was mediated by angels to Moses and Israel See also* Job 33:22-26; Ac 7:38; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2

Angels as revealers of God's will

Zec 1:8-10 *See also* Da 7:15-16; Zec 4:11-14; Rev 17:1; 21:9

Angels convey and fulfil God's instructions Zec 3:4 *See also* Nu 22:21-35; Zec 3:6-7; Mt 2:13; Gal 1:8; Rev 7:2

Angels attend to the needs of God's people

Angels provide food at special times 1Ki 19:5-7 *See also* Ps 78:23-25

Angels provide protection Ps 91:11-12 *See also* Ge 19:15; 48:16; Ps 34:7; Da 3:28; 6:22; Mt 18:10; Ac 27:23-24

Angels give guidance

Ex 23:20 *See also* Ge 24:7,40; Ac 8:26

Angels serve Jesus Christ

Angels care for Jesus Christ's needs Mt 4:11 pp Mk 1:13 *See also* Lk 22:43

Angels are ready to protect Jesus Christ Mt 26:53 *See also* Mt 2:13,19-20; 4:6 pp Lk 4:10; Ps 91:11-12

Angels are inferior to Jesus Christ Heb 1:5-13¹

Jesus said,

Matt 18:10

10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Job 38:7

7 ~~When~~ the morning stars sang together,

¹ Manser, M.H. (2009) [*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*](#). London: Martin Manser.

And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Angels don't fully understand God's salvation:

John Stott, the English theologian once said

“It is through the old creation (the universe) that God reveals his glory to humans; it is through the new creation (the church) that he reveals his wisdom to angels.”²

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things which angels desire to look into. (this literally means the angels stoop to look)

The NL says, It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

Peter was saying that the OT prophets

- didn't quite understand all.
- Neither did the angels.

As the angels study us, they're learning about God's wisdom according to verse 10.

Luke 15 says there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

One day we will judge the angels 1 Cor 6:3.

Paul says, all of this was part of God's plan:

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

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart (to not lose courage) at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Paul was encouraging the Ephesians not to lose heart.

He wanted the church to press on!

² Hughes, R.K. (1990) [*Ephesians: the mystery of the body of Christ*](#). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books (Preaching the Word), p. 109.

The mystery was important enough for Jesus to die for it,

- it was important enough for Paul to write about it.
- How important is it to you and I.

Paul now writes down the second prayer for the church.

- He prays something similar in his letter to the Philippians
- then again to the Colossians.

It's as if he were saying,

- this is my prayer for you,
- and I want future generations to know this prayer.

In Luke 11 one of the disciples approached Jesus and he said to Him,

- “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught the disciples.”

This particular disciple didn't ask Jesus to show him HOW to pray, but, teach us pray!

The disciples remembered John as a man of prayer.

Jesus said of John in Luke 7:28 that he was the greatest of the prophets,

- yet, he had to pray.

Jesus prayed and depended on prayer.

The tragedy of our day is not unanswered prayer,

- it's unoffered prayer.

Paul opens this section of chapter 3

- “For this reason.”

He opened chapter 3 with the same words, “For this reason.”

- Then he went into a parenthetical sentence from verses 2-13.

Then he said God's plan was

- to bring all people together
- into one big family
- that we know as the church.

Eph 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul bowed his knees before the Lord.

He says, "For this reason,"

- In other words, I bowed my knees,
- because of what the Lord has done,
- he's made a way for all to come to the throne.

Keep in mind that Paul was writing from a prison cell

- most likely chained at each wrist.

So Paul would drop to his knees and pray.

- These guards would have to listen to Paul's prayer.

According to court etiquette in Paul's day,

- when a person approached the throne,
- he bowed the knee.

Paul bows both knees.

Nothing in scripture that tells us to have a specific posture when praying.

Paul chose to kneel.

Abraham chose to stand when he prayed for Sodom in Genesis 18.

Solomon stood when he dedicated the temple in 1st Kings and

David sat before the Lord when he prayed about the future of his kingdom in 1st Chron 17.

Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. Matt 26 says He fell on His face.

It's the posture of the heart,

- not of the body that matters.

The hypocrites loved standing in the synagogues in prayer

- to be seen by men.

How should we pray when it comes time to facing our adversary, Satan?

- When facing a wild animal most will say to make yourself as intimidating as possible.

How should we face our adversary? Stand!

Eph 6:10-13

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Something worth noting in Paul's prayer here in chapter 3

- and in two of the other prison epistles, Philipians and Colossians,
- they all deal with the spiritual condition of the inner man.

When we pray, we should always come to the Lord in adoration.

Eph 3:14-15

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

After the disciple asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus said, when you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Notice next in Paul's prayer is intercession. Praying for someone else.

Intercessory prayer may be the hardest of prayers for an individual. Why?

- Because we're selfish

When Paul said to pray without ceasing,

- he didn't mean for us to pray only for our needs.
- We are to pray for the needs of others as well.

Eph 3:16

16 that He (God) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

What is the evidence of the Spirit in a person?

Gal 5:22-23 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. A believer will exemplify the fruit of the Spirit.

In Acts 1:8 we're told that we will receive power when the Spirit is come upon you.

Jesus Himself performed His ministry on earth in the power of the Spirit, Luke 4:1.

Someone has said, "If God took the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what we Christians are doing would continue moving on—and nobody would know the difference!"

We can all thank God that he gives us His power

- according to the riches of His glory
- and not out of His riches.

We have the choice, give a portion or a proportion.

So we are to take the power that is available to us from God's Spirit,

- and use it for our growth in the Lord.

But, we have a dual nature if you will.

And depending on which you choose to feed,

- the old nature or the new nature,
- will determine which is going to rule your life.

In nature, during rutting season,

- male animals fight one another
- to determine which will go on to mate with the females.

Those battles are won long before rutting season.

- They are won earlier in the year
- when it's time to build up.

The same is true for us believers.

- We are to prepare ahead of time so that when it comes time to our spiritual battles we should be prepared.

Our battles are won or lost

- depending on our preparation for those battles.

Next in verse 17 Paul uses 3 verbs to describe a person's spiritual depth.

17 that Christ may dwell (live or to reside) in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted (dug in) and grounded (to hold firm) in love,

Paul is saying that Christ wants to be firmly rooted in your life.

- He wants us to be rooted like a tree
- that is planted by the water.
- He doesn't want a surface relationship.

Why are trees uprooted?

- Because the roots didn't dig in deep,
- they were surface roots.

Uprooted trees can also be a result of disease.

If we are not rooted and grounded in the Lord,

- we too can stumble and fall.

If we are diseased with sin,

- that too will take us down.

When we are rooted and grounded and dwell in the Lord,

- we will be full of love.

Our love for others will not be shallow.

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:20-21

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.