

**Leader: Alden Laird**

**Text: Ephesians 3:1-13**

**A. A Profound \_\_\_\_\_ v. 1**

1. Background:
2. Illustration:

**B. A Profound \_\_\_\_\_ vv. 2-6**

1. (v. 2) - "stewardship" (*oikonomia*) means: oversight, \_\_\_\_\_.
2. (v. 3) - "mystery" (*mysterion*) - the mystery or secret plan...*"as I wrote before in brief"* - the mystery is not the Gospel itself, but the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gospel. This was the revelation from Jesus Christ that Paul personally received.
3. (v. 4) mystery was introduced in 1:9 and \_\_\_\_\_ in 2:11-22. MacArthur notes: *"What is not properly understood cannot be properly applied...Paul disclosed a truth that not even the greatest prophets understood – that within the church, composed of all the saved since Pentecost in one united body, there would be no racial, social, or spiritual distinctions."*
4. (v. 5) - Gen. 12:3 - that God would bless other nations is stated, but not fully \_\_\_\_\_.
5. (v. 6) - the mystery is clearly revealed - the Gentiles would now be received on an equal \_\_\_\_\_.

**C. A Profound \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 7,8a)**

1. (v. 7) - "minister" (*diakonos*) or servant from which we get the word \_\_\_\_\_ - literally means *"one who runs at the call of another."* (*"...working of His power."* - *dunamis*). Navigator quote: *"If your output exceeds your input, your upkeep will become your downfall."*
2. (v. 8a) - the previous thought evokes the sense of his own \_\_\_\_\_. I Cor. 15:9 - *"For I am least of the apostles...because I persecuted the church of God."* II Cor. 12:11 - *"...for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody."* Theologians refer to this as a comparative formed on a \_\_\_\_\_. Even Socrates thought he could only be wise if he knew he was \_\_\_\_\_. *"...this grace was given..."* links 8(a) with 8(b). Paul sees himself as a \_\_\_\_\_ of God's grace to others.

**D. A Profound \_\_\_\_\_ (vv. 8b-12)**

1. (v. 8b) *"to preach"* - means to proclaim - to announce the Gospel, lit. is *"to gospelize."*
2. *"unfathomable"* lit., "that which cannot be traced out." Rom. 11:33 we see the word, "\_\_\_\_\_."
3. (v. 9) *"bring to light"* - to make plain - to shed a flood of light on it. Compare Romans 16:25-27
4. (v. 10) *"manifold wisdom"* - original word (*variegata*) means many-colored, *"a many-splendored thing."*  
Kenneth Wuest - *"The church has become the university for angels, and each saint a professor. Only in the church can angels come to an adequate comprehension of the grace of God. They look to the church to investigate the mysteries of redemption."*
5. Principle: What we do as Christians always has a bearing elsewhere - not only on earth but also in heaven.
6. (v. 11) - No \_\_\_\_\_! **This was God's eternal, deliberate, and predetermined plan.**
7. (v. 12) - When Christ is central in our hearts it has a \_\_\_\_\_ on our everyday lives and we can confidently have \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ through faith -- not by self-confidence, but in Christ-confidence.

**E. A Profound \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 13)**

1. (v. 13) Paul concludes this great parenthesis with an unusual request - lit. *"faint not."*
2. It is not a penalty to suffer for Christ, but an \_\_\_\_\_.  
F. R. Maltby - *"Jesus promised His disciples 3 things - that they would be absurdly happy, completely fearless, and in constant trouble"*

**Application:**

### Ephesians 3: 1-14 John MacArthur Overview

Now Paul is about to pray in chapter 3. And you know what his prayer's about? He's going to pray, "Oh, God, I pray that they'll understand this stuff. Such great truth, so life changing, so revolutionary in the world. If it could just have all these Christians in perfect harmony and they'd rub out all their old animosities and all their old hatreds and all their prejudices and all their separatistic feelings, Lord, it would be so great." And so, he wants to pray for them. He wants to bow his knee and really pray that they'll understand it.

But before he gets into his prayer, he stops and says, "I don't think I better pray yet. I think maybe you don't quite understand it, so I'm going to give a few more verses so you'll understand it before I pray for you." And that's what we have in chapter 3. Paul launches into a prayer and just gets started and stops, and goes back to cover more of the truth of the mystery of the body. And in this chapter, he gives us real details so that we ought to have a great understanding of it by the time we get down to verse 13.

Now for our study we're going to look at verses 1 through 14 as a unit. And we're not going to get all through them today. In fact, we'll probably just cover down through verse 4. And the next few weeks we'll get the rest of it all put together. But I want you to look at this passage, as Paul talks about the mystery of the church.

And I want you to see the prisoner of the mystery, the planning of the mystery, the preaching of the mystery, the purposes of the mystery and the privileges of the mystery. And we're going to see those five points in time to come. For this morning, we're going to look just at the first, the prisoner of the mystery, because it's such a tremendous point as we look at the first four verses.

Let's read verse 1 as a start. "For this cause" – What cause Paul? The fact that verse 15 says you are one new man. That verse 16 says, of chapter 2, you are one body. That verse 17 says you who are far off are now made near. That verse 18 says we both have access by one Spirit. That verse 19 says we are fellow citizens and of the household of God. That 20 says we are built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles. That 21 says we are a building that grows to a holy temple of the Lord. That 22 says we are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

In other words, he says the fact that we are one building, built on one foundation, one household, one kingdom, one Spirit in us, one body, one new man. In other words, because of our unity, that's what he's saying. For the reason of our unity, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. You say, "Now wait a minute. What? What, what, what?" Well, there's no verb there. There's no verb in the first verse. What Paul? For this cause you what?

Well, the sentence is continued in verse 14. Huh? Yes, the verb of verse 1 is in verse 14. "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," then he goes to verse 14. "For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, the implied verb is I pray for you. You say, "Well, what's going on here? What's all the verses in the middle?" Oh, that's a parenthesis.

You say, "A parenthesis?" Yes, he starts out to pray and he says, "for you Gentiles – Oh, wait a minute. I can't pray yet. I want to bow my knee" – verse 14, he's talking about prayer. "I want to bow my knee" – and he picks up the same phrase for this cause to let you know that's where he connects up again. "I want to pray for you, but I'm not sure I can pray for you yet, because I'm not sure you understand this." You see his prayer's going to be, "Oh, God, I pray those people will work this truth out. I pray that this truth will change their life." But he stops and says, "I'm not sure you understand the truth yet." So verses 2 to 13 is a parenthesis. And in that parenthesis, he goes back over this whole mystery again.

You say, "But he just did it chapter 2." That's right, and now he's going to do it again in chapter 3. You say, "Well, why does he repeat himself?" Because that's the way you learn. Isaiah said you learn line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, here a little there a little. That's the way. That's the way I learned. I learned great truths that way. I learned the truth I will not talk in class, because I repeated it over and over again, 500 times on a page of paper. You may have learned the same truth the same way. We learn by repetition, repetition, repetition.

Somebody said to me recently – people say funny things to me. You'd think they wouldn't say this. But he said – this fellow says to me, "I don't listen to your tapes because you repeat yourself too much." You know, and a few weeks ago, a lady came to me in the front of the congregation and she says, "I'm just visiting from the east," and she said, "I – I just thought that the Lord wanted me to tell you something." And I said, "well, that's wonderful. What did the Lord want you to tell me?" And she said, "The Lord just really spoke to my heart that I should tell you that there's a great truth about preaching, stand up, speak up, and shut up." And I said, "well, thank you very much." She said, "You know," she said, "you just go on and on and on about the same stuff." I said, "Well, I appreciate very much what you said." And she said, "and then I'd like to give you one of my poems." My first reaction was to say good, I'll make a glider out of it, you know. But I didn't say that. I felt – I felt maybe the Lord was giving me an opportunity to give her a little of her own medicine. Anyway, I resisted that and graciously took the poem and even read it. It wasn't a very good poem.

Any – anyway, the apostle Paul wanted to pray for these people, but he didn't want to pray for them yet, because he was going to pray for an application. And he wasn't sure they had enough information to make an application. Do you understand that? You see, it's a basic point in spiritual life. You can't apply what you don't comprehend. That's why Romans 12:2 says, "That your mind has to be renewed." You've got to know it and then live it. And so, he's going to go over it again so that we'll understand it and that's why I'm saying to you people that if you'll come and be exposed to the principles, then the activities will take care of themselves.