

Ephesians 3:1-7

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

I. For this reason - For what reason?

- a. This is a little bit of classic Paul. He will begin a thought only to have his mind move to a tangent on something concerning that thought. That is the case here.
- b. Paul is going to begin a thought about himself and his ministry only to be moved to think about a grand thought about how he arrived at this ministry. That he has been allowed to be a part of something that's so much larger than himself.
- c. We see this thought and how it trails by jumping all the way down to verse 14 to see that he picks his original thought back up and finishes it:

- i. **Ephesians 3:1,14 (NASB95)** 1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

d. the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

- i. **Prisoner** - Paul was incarcerated when he wrote this. As a matter of fact he was in prison for four of the books that he wrote. He is incarcerated here because of a false charge brought against him:

1. **Acts 21:27-29 (NASB95)** 27 When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

- ii. Notice who he says he's a prisoner of: **Jesus Christ**. Paul understood who he was bound to though. He was in physical chains but his words were a reminder to his readers that the chains weren't his master, that the guards or anyone holding him captive weren't his master. He was bound to Christ.

1. *Paul was apparently "in Rome, a prisoner of Caesar, awaiting trial before Nero. But never once does he say that he is a prisoner of Caesar; it is always "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." The reason is obvious when you read his letters. He saw that Caesar was not the one who had the final*

say about him; Jesus did. The duration of his confinement was not determined by Caesar, but by the Lord Jesus. As Paul

came to understand the One whom he served, he knew that Jesus is in control of history. He saw him as John did in the book of Revelation -- as sitting on his throne, holding the reins of government in his hands. He is the One who opens, and no man shuts, who shuts, and no man opens, who orders, and his will is carried out. Paul knew, therefore, that anytime the Lord Jesus decided Paul's imprisonment would be of no further value, he would be set free, that when the Lord Jesus spoke, Caesar acted. Therefore, he never saw himself as being the prisoner of Caesar. This is a tremendous lesson to us, who sometimes become worried and anxious about what the political powers-that-be are doing in the world today. Would that we had the faith of this mighty apostle who understood so clearly that Caesar was not in control; Jesus is.
https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians_31-3

2. Paul tells King Agrippa in Acts why he is really in prison:
 - a. **Acts 26:20-21 (NASB95)** 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. 21 “For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.
 - i. *“Paul was not suffering because he denied the truth, but rather because he boldly proclaimed the truth. You can dodge a lot of hassles as a preacher if you tiptoe around difficult doctrines and just preach “nice” messages that make everyone feel good. But God had revealed certain truths to Paul, and he lived to please God, who examines the heart, not to please people (1Th 2:4). It would have been much easier for Paul just to make peace with the Judaizers, saying, “We don’t agree, but unity is more important than truth.” But, instead, he always stood firmly for the truth of the gospel of grace, even if it meant hardship and persecution.”*
3. **1 Corinthians 7:21-22 (NASB)** 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave.
 - iii. Jesus is the only individual that I can be bound to or a slave to and actually still be free:
 1. **John 8:36 (NASB)** 36 “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.
 - iv. The question of the day: What am I a prisoner to here? What am I bound to here?
- e. the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

- i. It's this part of the phrase that Paul is going to use as his jumping off point.
- ii. We have to remember that Paul has just spent the latter part of chapter 2 talking about what Christ has done to break down the barrier between the Jew and Gentile:
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:13-16 (NASB95)** 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.
- iii. Paul seems to be pondering this thought that he, of all people has been tapped by God as the one He is going to use as an Apostle to bring the Gentiles into this family.
- f. **2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;**
 - i. **Acts 9:15 (NASB)** 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
 - 1. It's interesting who God chooses to do His work? Almost always it's the last person we would think.
 - 2. We've seen it in scripture:
 - a. Jacob - His name means "usurper"
 - b. David - His father didn't even think to have him with his brothers when Samuel came to choose a king.
 - c. Joseph - Brothers hated him and sold him
 - d. Even Jesus, from Man's standpoint, would've seemed like too meek and weak a pick to save the world.
 - ii. **Ephesians 3:8 (NASB95)** To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 15:9 (NASB95)** For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

- II. Paul was given a revelation and he had actually written briefly about this to the Ephesians previously: “**as I wrote before in brief.**” This can be referring to Eph 1:9 or an entirely different letter that Paul wrote.
 - a. **Ephesians 1:9 (NASB95)** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

 - b. He tells them “**by referring to this**” they can they can understand how he came to this insight that he received.

- III. **The mystery** - mysterion (mü-sta'-re-on) - a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding
 - a. The mystery of all mysteries is that God was going to create the church. This was completely unknown in times past. It was completely unknown to everyone and everything except for God Himself:
 - i. **Ephesians 3:9 (NLT)** I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

 - ii. Why did He keep it a secret?

 - iii. **Ephesians 3:10-11 (NASB)** 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,