

# “Ephesians”

## Fall Series 1

### Lesson 4

## “Ephesians 3:1-21”

**Objective:** To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

**Materials:** We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

#### **Procedures**

- 1.** We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
- 2.** We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
- 3.** From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
- 4.** We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

# Translation

Ephesians 3:1 **For this reason I, Paul am the prisoner of Christ [Jesus] for your sake, for the nations (Gentiles) <sup>2</sup> for surely you have heard of the stewardship of God's favor (grace) having been given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> [that] according to the mystery made known to me by revelation, just as I wrote formerly in a few words, <sup>4</sup> (which, moreover, after reading, you will be able to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ,) <sup>5</sup> which in former generations was not known to the sons of humans, which now has been revealed to His holy ambassadors and prophets in the Spirit: <sup>6</sup> the nations (Gentiles) have become fellow heirs and part of the same body and co-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the good news: <sup>7</sup> Of which I have become a servant according to the gift of God's favor (grace) which was given to me according to the working of His power. <sup>8</sup> This favor (grace) was given to me, the very least of all the saints, for the nations (Gentiles) to proclaim the good news of the boundless riches of Christ <sup>9</sup> and to give light [to all] regarding the plan of the**

mystery hidden for the ages in God who created all things, <sup>10</sup> in order that now the diverse wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and powers in the heavenlies through the assembly (the church). <sup>11</sup> (This was) in accordance with the purpose of the ages which He (God) worked out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have the boldness and access (to Him) in confidence, through His faithfulness. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, I pray that you may not become discouraged because of my sufferings on your behalf, which are for your glory. <sup>14</sup> For the sake of this I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every lineage in heaven and upon the earth takes its name, <sup>16</sup> in order that He might give to you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inward part of mankind, <sup>17</sup> for Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith, having been rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup> In order that you might be able to grasp with all the holy ones, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ, in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to the one who is able, beyond all expectations, to accomplish more

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**than what we might ask or imagine according to the power working in you, <sup>21</sup> to him be the glory in the assembly (the church) and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of eternity, amen.**

## Lesson

As we begin this lesson it might prove helpful to note a few things regarding the nature of communication in the ancient world. It is often easy for us to believe that we are viewing Scripture through a lens that aids in our understanding of what the author is seeking to communicate. However, it is often the case that as we interpret Scripture we are viewing Scripture using a mirror rather than a lens. In so doing what we find in Scripture looks very much like what we would expect and seems very familiar to us. That is the nature of mirrors. There are a great many aspects of the ancient world that are significantly different from what they are in our world today. Communication in written form was hugely different, and had hugely different expectations than it does in our modern world.<sup>1</sup>

The person that delivered a letter was a crucial factor in the communication process of the ancient world. “When individuals brought letters, the oral report could be just as significant and more thorough than any text.”<sup>2</sup> Calculations vary, but a recent

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<sup>1</sup> Richard A. Burridge, “About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences, in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 113-145.

<sup>2</sup> Michael B. Thompson, “The Holy Internet,” in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 49-70.

major study estimates that the percentage of literate people in the ancient Mediterranean world would have been no more than 10 percent overall, though there may have been certain cities where it was 15 or 20 percent.<sup>3</sup> This being the case, it means that written documents were composed differently and with a different objective than they are today. Since it was not possible for people to read documents themselves they were forced to rely upon what they heard from others. People will have been accustomed to the public and dramatic performance of writings in a manner that is not at all familiar to us today. Even personal letters will have often been delivered orally with a flair that was a critical element in the communication process.

When we read Paul's letters we need to keep these things in mind. His writings would have been read as a whole and not dissected into small bits and dealt with in the way that we so often do today. There was also a personal nature that could not be conveyed through written texts as the deliverer of the text was able provide in the oral presentation and by providing additional information and answering questions that might arise from the

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<sup>3</sup> W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp. 3-24. Michael B. Thompson, "The Holy Internet," in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 49-70.

audience. There were times that the person who delivered the letter was actually given more credence than what was written in the letter itself.<sup>4</sup> This means that the letters of Paul were designed to primarily to have been presented orally to his audience. It would do us good to keep this in mind as we read Ephesians and as we consider its meaning for us today.

As Paul begins this section of his letter he starts by explaining his own motivations. His audience is being joined together (*συνοικοδομηθήτε* - *sunoi kodoeisthe*) in to a “house” or “dwelling place” of God, or for God. Paul explains that this is the reason he is a prisoner. <sup>3:1</sup> **For this reason I, Paul am the prisoner of Christ [Jesus] for your sake, for the nations (Gentiles)....** Here he especially focuses on the Gentile contingent within his audience. He uses the fact that he is a prisoner to shift the focus slightly off axis here. He focuses not upon the Romans, or the officials that had been responsible for placing him in prison, but he focuses upon being a “prisoner of Christ.” Perhaps the implication he means to convey here is that if he were to cease his activities of proclaiming the Gospel he would no longer be in

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<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, 5.4.1; cf. 5.6.1.



conflict with the Roman officials in the way that had led them to imprison him. This means that the actual reason that he is a prisoner is because of Christ compelling him to proclaim the Gospel message. If he were to cease his insistence on proclaiming the gospel there would no longer be a conflict with the Roman authorities.

However, Paul never even appears to entertain such a possibility, of ceasing his proclamation of the Gospel. In fact, He is intent upon encouraging his audience to not even consider such a possibility in their own lives either. As he develops his reasoning in this section he will weigh such things against the surpassing magnitude of the “love” (*ἀγάπην - agapen*) “of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> This stands at the heart and core of the motivation for what Paul does and for creating in him the willingness to endure all the hardships that he faces. Because of his love, that originated with an understanding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul lives his life in the light of the sacrificial and loving nature of His Lord, Jesus Christ. He is ready and willing to pour out his life for the benefit of others because of the great “love” of Jesus. His

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 3:18-19.



inconvenience is of no importance as the focus of love is upon the other, not upon the self if it is the type of love that Christ has and displayed in the actions of His life and upon the cross.

As Paul continues the admonition of his audience he reminds them once again of the “stewardship” (οἰκονομίαν - *oikonomian* - here *stewardship, or plan*) that has been given to him. Jeremias indicates that Jesus was constantly changing images in order to communicate with His audience.<sup>6</sup> Paul continues using a variety of metaphors in a similar fashion and here uses the metaphor of the household steward to convey to his audience his position in the household of God. He uses this very rabbinic language, that is reflected in Hebrew using the expression “son of the household” (בֶּן־בֵּית - *ben-beyith*), as a designation of one who was the steward of a household.<sup>7</sup> This is a stewardship that is given to Paul in order to convey to his audience the “favor” or “grace” of God that is entrusted to him as God’s steward, to make known to them God’s favor. **<sup>2</sup> for surely you have heard of the stewardship of God’s favor (grace) having been given to me for you, ....**

<sup>6</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Wilfred Tooley, “Stewards of God,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19:1 (1966), pp. 74-86.

Paul makes it clear that it is his mandate to reveal the great mystery of God, that God has revealed to him for this purpose. A part of this mystery is that God chooses to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to Himself in Jesus. <sup>3</sup> **[that] according to the mystery made known to me by revelation, just as I wrote formerly in a few words,....** This has been revealed to him, and so now he discloses something that has been previously a “mystery,” but is now revealed through the steward of the household of God, Paul. He makes it clear that “a plan for the fulness of time” (1:10) has been given with the resurrection as the guarantee of its veracity.<sup>8</sup>

This was something that previously was kept hidden in some sense, hence why it is called a mystery. It was revealed to Paul not by some human agency, but from Jesus Himself first on the road to Damascus<sup>9</sup> and then perhaps in some type of revelatory experience with the Lord in Arabia.<sup>10</sup> <sup>4</sup> **(which,**

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<sup>8</sup> Wilfred Tooley, “Stewards of God,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19:1 (1966), pp. 74-86.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 9:3-7; 22:6-11; 26:12-18.

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 1:17 **I didn’t go up to Jerusalem to see the men who were apostles before me either, but I went away into Arabia and I returned again to Damascus.** CEB. N. T. Wright, writes: “On the surface, Paul is saying: I did not learn my gospel from other human beings, but from the one true God, through the revelation of his son. You Galatian ex-pagans need not suppose that you must go over my head to a message from Jerusalem, a message about Jewish ethnic identity, zeal for Torah, and the victory of the true God against paganism. I know all about that battle, and it was that that I renounced because of the gospel revelation.” N.T. Wright, “Paul, Arabia and Elijah (Galatians 1:17),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115:4 (1996), pp. 683-692.

moreover, after reading, you will be able to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ,) <sup>5</sup> which in former generations was not known to the sons of humans, which now has been revealed to His holy ambassadors and prophets in the Spirit: <sup>6</sup> the nations (Gentiles) have become fellow heirs and part of the same body and co-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the good news: <sup>7</sup> Of which I have become a servant according to the gift of God's favor (grace) which was given to me according to the working of His power. Paul challenges them to read what he has written and in this reading he believes it will be apparent to his audience that he has an understanding of this mystery. Though this mystery was previously kept hidden from human beings it has now been revealed to those chosen by God as His "ambassadors and prophets" as well as to those in the heavens themselves.


In the midst of this choosing of the followers of Jesus as instruments of proclaiming the new creation, the role of the Spirit stands at the center of what God is doing. The Spirit will act as a unifying force drawing Jews and Gentiles together in one body and in doing so He will join these two groups to the one body of Christ

and to one another. Unity is a mark of the Spirit, it is a mark of the presence of God. These two groups (Jew and Gentile) will become co-partakers of the “promise.” This promise is again connected to Jesus. These two groups will be joined to the body of Christ and in this one body there will reflect the unity of God Himself. All of this will happen as the result of what God has done in Jesus. This is the “good news,” the “gospel.” Paul acts as a servant of this gift of God’s favor, which was given to Paul through the power of God. There is a continuing focus here on God’s “favor” or “grace.” This was “given” to Paul as an outworking of the power of God. Paul is not a free-agent acting on his own behalf or in his own will or through the power of his own creative intellect. He has not imagined these things, they have come from God.

As Paul continues his focus upon the favor of God, Paul expresses a sense of humility that also acts as an element of the recognition that the “good news” has come to him as the result of the favor that has been bestowed upon him personally. The favor of God that Paul proclaims reflects his comprehension of the “boundless riches of Christ.” <sup>8</sup> **This favor (grace) was given to me, the very least of all the saints, for the nations (Gentiles)**

**to proclaim the good news of the boundless riches of Christ <sup>9</sup>  
and to give light [to all] regarding the plan of the mystery  
hidden for the ages in God who created all things, <sup>10</sup> in order  
that now the diverse wisdom of God might be made known to  
the rulers and powers in the heavenlies through the assembly  
(the church).** Again there is a recognition here of the fact that the  
message of Paul is something unique in the historical context of  
humanity as formerly it was a “mystery” that had previously  
remained hidden through all the preceding “ages.”

Paul now goes onto express something more about his  
mission in that it is described as an expression of the  
“wisdom” (*σοφία - sophia*) “of God.” In a time when we no longer  
seem to value “wisdom” this expression does not likely have the  
same impact that it will have had for the original audience. In the  
ancient world “wisdom” was highly prized and valued. The  
ancients understood that the one who had access to the “wisdom”  
of God had access to something that was extraordinarily  
important and powerful. There is a great deal of literature in the



Old Testament that is devoted to wisdom.<sup>11</sup> Since today we do not recognize the value, significance, and power of wisdom this verse needs to be unpacked some in order to help convey the meaning that it will have had for its original audience.

First, it should be noted that this wisdom is being highlighted by Paul as being displayed to the “rulers and powers in the heavenlies.” **“... wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and powers in the heavenlies through the assembly (the church).** This is a wisdom that has not been revealed in heaven before it was on earth: it comes via what Christ did on earth, through the cross. It is also of note that this wisdom is being transmitted to all creation, even to the heavenly realm, via the vehicle, the mechanism of the “assembly” (the church). God chooses to proclaim the initiation of this great transformation, His great wisdom, to all of the cosmos through the agency of His chosen people, the community of believers, the church. God has entrusted this great “wisdom” to the individuals making up the

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<sup>11</sup> Works that we often think of in this context such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. Perhaps others that we not place in this category such as the Song of Solomon and even some of the Psalms. In the Apocryphal works there are additional works devoted to this genre such as the *Wisdom of Solomon* and the *Wisdom of Ben Sirach*. In the New Testament the book of James is considered to stand as an example of this genre.

assembly (the church).<sup>12</sup> Though this may seem to us and to the world as foolhardy, this is what God has done.

All of this was in fulfillment of the “purpose” (πρόθεσιν - *prothesin*) “of the ages” (eternal - from the beginning) set forth by God and now “worked out” in Christ Jesus. <sup>11</sup> **(This was) in accordance with the purpose of the ages which He (God) worked out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have the boldness and access (to Him) in confidence, through His faithfulness.** Paul lays out for his audience a great message that reflects a fresh revelation: God had a plan all along and that plan is actually “worked out” (ἐποίησεν - *epoiesen*) “in Christ.” It is in the midst of Christ that the “purpose” of God is revealed to all creation. Christ is the “wisdom” of God. What may appear as foolishness and weakness to some is in fact this amazing and transformative shattering of what most have come to see as reality. God has shattered the status quo. God has begun His new creation and His community of faith is an integral part of the plan of God for the transformation of all of creation.

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7 **But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us.** CEB.

Paul is telling the believers this because He wants them to press into their destiny. He wants them to face their fear, their apathy, their disillusionment and to press ahead with diligence and faith. <sup>13</sup> **Therefore, I pray that you may not become discouraged because of my sufferings on your behalf, which are for your glory.** Paul lifts this prayer up to God because he is concerned that the believers are being discouraged because of the fact that Paul is a prisoner. Perhaps they have begun to doubt the message of the Gospel, perhaps they have just begun to doubt the words that Paul spoke to them and to wonder whether he was indeed the ambassador of Christ that they thought he was. Normally ambassadors of great kings are not imprisoned and mistreated for fear that there would be severe retribution from that powerful sovereign. They still do not understand that God does not do things the way the Romans do them, or the way the other great world powers do. They still do not understand that power and force are not enough. The real battle is fought in the heart. One can win the battle if the war that is waged in the heart and the mind is not won.



The real victory comes when people can truly begin to understand the message of Jesus. When they can begin to live and breathe the life of their Lord; when they begin to understand that the life of a disciple of Jesus is a life of service and inconvenience and they actually live in way that reflect this understanding. So often today there is the perception that life should be free from inconveniences and hardships; that it should be easy, convenient and safe. Often it is the case that people think become a disciple of Jesus will remove obstacles, dangers, inconveniences and hardships. This is not the promise of God nor the message of the Gospel. When these early disciples see and hear of the hardships of Paul they are beginning to come to understand that such is indeed not the promise nor the reality of the life of a disciple of Jesus. To be a disciple of Jesus means to take up your cross, your form of execution, and follow Him into a life of pain, suffering, service and inconvenience for others as a replication of the life of the master, Jesus Christ.

Paul realizes that this message, and this life, is going to be hard for those that choose this road. He knows this road because

of actual experience.<sup>13</sup> How is it possible that anyone would choose such a life? Paul understands that human beings cannot, and will, often not maintain their focus on such a path without help. In light of this, Paul seeks help for them; he pleads to the only source of help possible for them. They must have help from the Father, from the creator of the universe. So Paul prays: **14 For the sake of this I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every lineage in heaven and upon the earth takes its name, 16 in order that He might give to you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened through His Spirit in the inward part of mankind, 17 for Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith, having been rooted and grounded in love.**

Paul understands that without the transformative power of God there is no possibility that people would choose and remain on such a path of life. Such a challenge was not for them alone, it

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<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 **23 Are they ministers of Christ? I'm speaking like a crazy person. What I've done goes well beyond what they've done. I've worked much harder. I've been imprisoned much more often. I've been beaten more times than I can count. I've faced death many times. 24 I received the "forty lashes minus one" from the Jews five times. 25 I was beaten with rods three times. I was stoned once. I was shipwrecked three times. I spent a day and a night on the open sea. 26 I've been on many journeys. I faced dangers from rivers, robbers, my people, and Gentiles. I faced dangers in the city, in the desert, on the sea, and from false brothers and sisters. 27 I faced these dangers with hard work and heavy labor, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, and in the cold without enough clothes. 28 Besides all the other things I could mention, there's my daily stress because I'm concerned about all the churches.** CEB.

is still a challenge for us today. Maybe in some ways it is even more of a challenge for us today than it was for them in their day. We have so great a multitude of choices and there are so many conflicting voices that we encounter each day. How is it possible to distinguish between them all? We must be strengthened in our inward being. Today we might speak of this as being in our soul, but the early Christians would not speak in such a manner for fear of being misunderstood as being somehow Platonic in their perspective. During this period there were a great many who held the view that the highest ideal attainable was for the body to be separated from the soul, because after all the body was corrupt and evil and so only through separation could the soul be saved.<sup>14</sup>

Such a perspective is not at all what Paul is teaching here nor what Jesus taught. God created the body and the soul and they are both the creation of God. They are both something that God could describe as “very good.”<sup>15</sup> The salvation of God is not a rescue of the soul, it is the promise of the resurrection of the body that is strengthened from the inside out by the power of God’s

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<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, *Republic*.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 1:31 **God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.** NRSV.

Spirit. Through this strengthening and transformative work of God it begins to become more and more the case that those who are disciples of Jesus look like Him, sound like Him, act like Him and think like Him. They are transformed into His likeness, His image, because Christ dwells in their hearts and His love, and the power of that love, transforms the disciples.


Paul then breaks into one of his great and powerfully poetic appeals on behalf of his audience. He appeals that they might be able to “grasp” or “comprehend” (*καταλαβέσθαι - katalabesthai*), along with all the “holy ones,” the dimensions of the “love of Christ.” **18 In order that you might be able to grasp with all the holy ones, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, 19 and to know the surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ, in order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.** This love is described by Paul in such a way that there is a sense of equivalence expressed between the “love of Christ” and the “fullness of God.” This is perhaps the way Paul expresses what John expresses in terms of the statement that “God is love.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 1 John 4:16 - **So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.** NRSV.

Paul communicates his great confidence in God. He conveys confidence that God, through His great power, will indeed accomplish His purposes. The vehicle of that accomplishment will include His assembly of those who follow Jesus Christ. God is able to accomplish far more than it is possible for the readers even to imagine. <sup>20</sup> **Now to the one who is able, beyond all expectations, to accomplish more than what we might ask or imagine according to the power working in you, <sup>21</sup> to him be the glory in the assembly (the church) and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations of eternity, amen.**

In this chapter, Paul continues to lay out his case for the magnificent things that God has already done for the audience along with explaining His place in the plan of God. This then stands as the motivation for their continued trust and obedience to the Gospel. Despite the fact that it appears that Paul is in a weak position, he seeks to transform their understanding and their perceptive reality so that they will stay the course as a disciples of Christ. Only as they can begin to see things more and more through the eyes Jesus Christ, as a true disciple, can they hope to begin to comprehend the plan of God. God has conveyed




His great plan through the steward of His household, Paul. Paul now seeks to persuade them that in fact his life reflects what one should expect if they are following Jesus. There should not be the expectation of ease, luxury, safety and convenience. Disciples of Jesus are called to live into the magnitude of love as expressed most powerfully in His life, His death, and His resurrection.

# Synopsis

Communication in the ancient world was primarily oriented toward oral communication. Even when there were written letters it was anticipated that these would be read out loud to the intended audience. Additional communication very often was sent through the one who delivered the letter. This in fact should change how we read and interpret ancient letters. Sometimes we have the tendency to see that which is familiar and comfortable to us in letters because we view them in a fashion that creates a reflection of ourselves in them rather than viewing them as through a lens to see what is genuinely contained in the letter.

Paul will begin this section of the letter by laying out for his audience his motivations for ministry. He does this hoping to create a bridge of understanding, in order to alter the perceptual reality and in order to challenge his audience to walk in faithfulness. He will focus especially on the element of joining together the Jews and the Gentiles into one household, the household of God. Paul acts as a “steward” in God’s household as one who has been entrusted with the great mystery of the wisdom



of God. All of this is granted to Paul and to those that will believe as an act of God's divine favor (grace).

Paul seeks to generate a new sense of understanding and a transformation of values amongst his audience. They, like all of us, find it difficult to stay focused on the perceptual reality revealed in Christ Jesus. We are continually bombarded by things seeking to orient us to comprehend the world through the lens of the world. The world values power and force as the means to change and transformation. However, power in the sense of force is not the way of change and domination is not the goal of God. God uses love as the impetus for His change and as the foundational precept behind the kingdom that He is implanting in the midst of His new creation. It is in focusing on the great magnitude of the love of God, through its power that transformation was initiated and continues to expand to fill all of creation. Paul is the ambassador, the steward, of God's household. God's new creation that began in Jesus still flows through the assembly of His followers, the church, in the day of Paul and still in our day. The challenge for us is to remain faithful to our calling that is proclaimed most vividly in Jesus Christ.



# Questions

1. On what basis do you decide whether something is heroic or not?
2. Since Christ suffered, bled, and died why do you think people somehow think that life as His disciple should be easy and free from trouble?
3. When you think of all the sufferings of Paul do you think of them as the marks of a heroic figure? Why, or why not?
4. How would you define “wisdom?”
5. Why do you think people do not value wisdom today as they once did?
6. What are some ways that you see Jesus fulfilling the promises of God?
7. What is the “good news” that Paul proclaims?
8. What is the “mystery” of God that was hidden until it was revealed by Christ?
9. In what ways are their connections between the “knowledge” that Paul writes about and the “love of God?”
10. Why do you think Paul speaks of “boldness” to access God?
11. Why do you think that the sufferings of Paul might have discouraged his audience?
12. What are some ways that you think the Spirit helps followers of Jesus to hold their course of trusting in Jesus and His resurrection?
13. Why do you think Paul places so much emphasis on love?



14. What do you think it means to be filled with the “fullness of God?”

15. What are your expectations of what the redeemed world will look like when God has completed His new creation?

16. What role do you perceive the “assembly” (the church) fulfilling in God’s plan of redemption?

17. In what way might the church glorify God today?

18. What challenges your faith the most in today’s world?

# To Take Home

## **What is Important to know?**

It is important to know that God has a plan and that He always has had a plan. This plan has remained hidden from the cosmos until it was revealed by God's Anointed One, Jesus. Even the hosts of heaven have sought to see and comprehend God's great plan. What are some ways that understanding the plan of God for His creation changes your lifestyle today?

## **Where is God in these words?**

God is in these words revealing His great love for His creation and encouraging them to be a part of the plan of redemption that will transform the world into the reality of God's great vision. God will bring order out of the chaos as he did at the very beginning of creation. God promises restoration of His rule and reign. Paul seeks to draw his audience into understanding the reality of what God has done and what He continues to do. When you think of the rule and reign of God what are some thoughts that come to your mind?

## **What does any of this mean for how I live my life?**

The words of Paul in this chapter are a part of the larger narrative of making it clear what God has already done for those that have become believers. Paul reminds His audience so that it will spur them on, so that they continue walking in the way of Jesus. Paul seems to be concerned that they are becoming discouraged and losing their focus. In reminding them of what God has already done and what He is still doing he will set the foundation for challenging them to act as agents of change in God's plan. What are some ways that you see your life as a part of the plan of God to redeem the world as His agent of change?

## **What is the word of God calling us to do?**

The word of God is calling us to transform our perceptions of reality, to be able to see the world as God knows it can be and to live as agents of His vision. God chose to initiate the re-creation of the world through His Son, Jesus. We are called to walk as He walked, to live as He lived, to love as He loved, and to serve as He served. What are some ways that you find it difficult in your life to live fully as a follower of Jesus?