

# Ephesians

3:1-21

## Introduction

You have been introduced to two “men” in Ephesians: One is called the “new man,” and the other is called the “inner man.”

1. You were first introduced to the new man in chapter two. Paul described the breaking down of all spiritual barriers between Jews and Gentiles and said, in verse fifteen, that God had created “one **new man** from the two.”
2. You are introduced to the inner man in verse sixteen of chapter three. Paul wants you to be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the **inner man**.”

These two men serve as illustrations. **You** are the new man and **you** are the inner man.

1. You are the new man because, as a believer, God has put you into His Church on the earth. You’re no longer a Gentile; you’re no longer a Jew; you’re the Church, the one new man on the earth.
2. You are the inner man because, as a believer, God has made you alive. You were spiritually dead; but you were saved by grace through faith, born-again and made spiritually alive. You are a Christian, the inner man now alive to God.

Corporately we are the Church; individually you are a Christian. It is so basic that we miss the significance. Paul is about to launch into three chapters of practical Christian living. He’s about to say, in verse one of chapter four, “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” You will *not* “walk worthy” unless and until you understand what it means to be the new man, the Church, and what it means to be the inner man, a Christian.

Chapter three spells it out for you. We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 As A Church You Bring Out The Mystery Of

## The New Man, and #2 As A Christian You Bow To The Mastery Of The Inner Man.

### #1 As A Church You Bring Out The Mystery Of The New Man (v1-13)

A *mystery* in the Bible is a truth that was previously hidden but is now revealed. Paul uses the word “mystery” three times in these opening verses. This mystery is so important that Paul was in prison for it:

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles -

Paul was a prisoner of Rome... Or was he? He considered himself “the prisoner of Christ Jesus.” He had a high regard for the sovereignty of God over all his circumstances.

Paul was in prison because of a riot he caused in the Temple at Jerusalem. The Jews thought that Paul had brought a Gentile past the wall of separation in the Temple. He hadn't, but they tried to tear him apart anyway. As he attempted to explain himself, he mentioned that God had broken down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles, and they tried again to kill him. The guards took him into custody for his own safety, and thus began his journey to Rome as a prisoner.

Ephesians 3:2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

“Dispensation” is a word that refers to the proper running of a household. “The grace of God” here refers to the teaching that both Jews and Gentiles now are saved by grace through faith. Paul was “given” this mystery to reveal by God Himself. He was like the overseer of a household dispensing the resources of that household on behalf of the Master.

Ephesians 3:3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

Ephesians 3:4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

The mystery of the new man was “made known” to Paul by direct “revelation” from God. It was made known by revelation because it

had not been revealed in the Old Testament. There were *hints*, but it was *hidden* until Paul revealed it.

Ephesians 3:5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

Ephesians 3:6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

Ephesians 3:7 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.

This mystery of the new man was also revealed to other New Testament “apostles and prophets.” Still, Paul was uniquely called upon to be the apostle to the Gentiles and to reveal most fully the mystery.

Ephesians 3:8 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,

Ephesians 3:9 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;

Paul was not being boastful in declaring his unique ministry. It was by God’s gracious calling upon his life that he went about revealing that the barriers between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by the Cross upon which Jesus died to save all men who would believe. It was by the working of grace upon the hearts of his hearers that they could be made to “see” the reconciliation God had planned for the human race all along.

Ephesians 3:10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*,

Ephesians 3:11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

“Principalities and powers in the heavenly places” refers to the angels who did not rebel with Satan. The new man, the Church, shows angels “the manifold wisdom of God.” God’s “eternal purpose” to reconcile lost, sinful men was “accomplished in Christ.” People may look at the Cross and think it is foolishness; they may look at the Church and see its failures. Angels see that the Cross, by which the Church is formed, is the deepest wisdom ever revealed.

Ephesians 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

“Boldness and access and confidence through faith in Him” is a summary of the privileges of the new man. The Jew had limited

access to God under the Old Testament system of sacrifices. The Gentile was even further separated from God and must convert to being a Jew. **No more!** The one, new man – the Church – now has unlimited access to God because of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Paul was in prison because he had set them free with his preaching. His “tribulations” had a “glor[ious]” spiritual purpose; they were nothing for anyone to “lose heart” over.

You football fans: Do you remember Reggie White? He had a nickname – the “Minister of Defense.” Paul was the “Minister of the Mystery”... *And so are you!*

It was both *easier* and *harder* to be ministers of the mystery in the early centuries of Christianity than it is now. It was easier because the barriers between Jews and Gentiles were so severe that when you both were together in fellowship it was nothing short of supernatural. But it was harder in that it led to persecution and imprisonment.

Now it is easier because, at least in our country, there is little persecution and imprisonment. But it is harder because no one sees the Church as a new man. Even believers see the Church as an institution that they might or might not be a part of – depending on what the Church can do for them. The sense of supernatural membership in a living, vibrant community is lost in our independence from one another.

The Church was so important to Paul he went to prison for preaching about it. It can be no less important to us.

Corporately you are the Church... Individually you are a Christian.

#2 As A Christian You Bow To  
The Mastery Of The Inner Man  
(v14-21)

Paul is still not ready to tell you how to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” He’s not ready until you are “strengthened with might through [God’s] Spirit in the inner man.”

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Ephesians 3:15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

“Bow my knees” is the posture of a servant or a subject before His Master or King. Since Paul uses the word “family,” let’s say that the picture is that of the servant and Master in the household. The Master is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus was and is God; while on earth He walked as a man in the power of the Spirit of God as our example, “bowing” as it were to the Father as a servant to His Master. Paul did the same; he followed in Jesus Christ’s “knee steps.”

The “family in heaven” probably refers to Church-age believers who have already died and are with the Lord as opposed to those still on “earth.” All believers are to be like Christ and like Paul in their submission to the Father; they are to bow their knees to Him as servants subject to the Master of the household.

The Master wants to confer something upon His bowed down servants. We see what it is in verse sixteen:

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

If there is one, basic, fundamental key to the Christian life, it is what we’ve just read. God wishes to “strengthen” you. Let’s take it apart.

“God would grant you” is a reminder that this strengthening comes to you as a **gift**. It is by grace – *never* by working for it, meriting it, or earning it.

“According to the riches of His glory” is a reminder that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and returned to His glory. Because of what Jesus did for you, and because of where He is for you, you have access to all of heavens “riches” and resources all of the time.

The intent of God's grace in giving you His riches and resources is for you to be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." "Strengthened" means *empowered*; "might" is the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get our word *dynamite*. You can be empowered with spiritual dynamite.

This all occurs "through [God's] Spirit in the inner man." The inner man is the spiritual part of your life where God dwells in you by His Spirit. We learned in chapter two that your inner man is dead in trespasses and sins, but that it is made alive when you receive Jesus Christ. The Scripture describes the inner man as having spiritual faculties of sight (Psalm 119:18), hearing (Matthew 13:9), taste (Psalm 34:8), and feeling (Acts 17:27). The inner man must be exercised (1Timothy 4:7-8), cleansed (Psalm 51:7), and fed (Matthew 4:4). The outer man – your physical body – is perishing, but the inner man is constantly being renewed spiritually despite your outward decay (2Corinthians 4:16-18).

Your inner man is your born-again spirit. It can be empowered with spiritual dynamite because God's Holy Spirit dwells within you. It is all a gift, given to you by grace by simply believing.

Why do we not know more of this dynamite power? The truth is, we are almost always more interested in the outer man who is perishing rather than the inner man who is being renewed. We focus on the outward problems or circumstances rather than on the inner strength to bear our problems, to endure our circumstances. Face it - if I was in prison, I'd be *bummed*; Paul was *blessed*. He was blessed because he believed the truth that his inner man was able to be strengthened no matter his outward circumstances.

Paul next gives you three illustrations of the spiritual stability of a Christian who is strengthened.

Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Paul uses three verbs, each of which suggests a different picture of stability. The first is "dwell." If you are a Christian, Christ is already in your heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The word "dwell" indicates something further. It indicates that Jesus is *settled down* in your

heart and is completely at home there. It is the difference between a lodging and a residence.

Paul is saying that it is possible to have Jesus *lodging* in your heart almost as a guest rather than having Him *residing* in your heart as your Master. If you lack dynamite spiritual power, chances are it's because you see Jesus as merely an invited guest rather than the Master who rules the house.

“Through faith” reminds you that at any moment, in any circumstances, you can bow to the Master and be strengthened.

“Rooted” is a verb that illustrates spiritual stability as a tree sending down its deep roots for both nourishment and stability. “Grounded” is a verb that illustrates spiritual stability as a foundation below ground upon which everything is established.

You are to be “rooted and grounded **in love**.” The love Paul is talking about is in verses eighteen and nineteen.

Ephesians 3:18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height -

Ephesians 3:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

There is a sense in which you can never fully know the love of Jesus. It “passes knowledge.” But you can “comprehend it.” “Comprehend” means *apprehend*. It means *to seize, to grasp*. It stems from the Latin word *prehendere* from which we get *prehensile*. Animals with a prehensile tail can grasp a tree limb and hold on to it. **You are to think of yourself as having a spiritual prehensile tail – a spiritual faculty by which you are to grasp the love of Christ and hold on to it!**

Paul gives dimensions to Christ's love. Jesus Christ's love is *broad* enough to encompass all of mankind, *long* enough to last for all eternity, *deep* enough to reach the most depraved sinner, and *high* enough to exalt Him to heaven.

**You can grasp this love...** And still there is always more of it that “passes knowledge.” It is limitless, inexhaustible.

“Filled with all the fullness of God” is another amazing statement. You can never contain the “fullness of God.” But you can obtain more of the fullness of God by grasping hold of His love each day by faith, regardless the circumstances surrounding you.

Jesus bowed to the Father as His Master and was empowered with dynamite spiritual strength. Paul bowed to Jesus and was empowered with dynamite spiritual strength. **You and I are to bow to Jesus and be empowered with dynamite spiritual strength.**

It's really that simple... *But it's not that easy!* The world, the flesh, and the devil all cooperate to conspire against us so we will concentrate on the outward man rather than on the inner man. Spiritual success comes only when we are content to be strengthened in the inner man.

When you desire to be a better husband or wife, rather than desiring new marriage, you are being strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man... When you desire to be a better son or daughter, rather than rebelling against your parent(s), you are being strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man... When you desire to be a better employee, rather than desiring another supervisor or another job, you are being strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...

Paul will get practical for three chapters. Before he does he assumes you understand this basic, fundamental principle: Life on earth is about the inner man being renewed rather than the outward man who is perishing.

## Conclusion

There could be no better conclusion to this study, and to chapters one through three, than Paul's closing doxology of praise:

Ephesians 3:20 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,  
Ephesians 3:21 to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.