

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Ephesians 3:1-13 (nlt) *I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles² assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending His grace to you Gentiles.*

Paul never thought of himself as the prisoner of Rome; rather as a "***prisoner of Christ.***"

Like Paul, we find ourselves possessing two identities - a Biblical one and a real life one.

We wrestle with the tension of resolving the gap between who and what the Scriptures say we are in Christ and what we feel in real life.

John 10:10b (gnb) *"...I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness."*

Romans 8:1 (gnb) *There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus.*

Romans 8:37 (gw) *The one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (cev) *Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.*

Philippians 4:13 (cev) *Christ gives me the strength to face anything.*

1 John 4:4b (niv) *...greater is He that is within me than he that is in the world.*

We also find we have double addresses too.

We live in this world, but *We, however, **are citizens of heaven**, and we eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. ²¹ He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body.*
Philippians 3:20-21 (gnb)

Like Paul, we have the same choice to make when we are in a difficult situation.

When we are going through hardship, unpopularity or material loss for the sake of Christian principles, we can regard ourselves as **victims of unfairness** or as **saints of Christ**.

³As I briefly wrote earlier, God Himself revealed His **mysterious** plan to me. ⁴As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this **plan** kjv: mystery regarding Christ. ⁵God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by His Spirit He has revealed it to His holy apostles and prophets. ⁶And this is God's **plan** kjv: mystery Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. ⁷By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving Him by spreading this Good News. ⁸Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, He graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in

Christ. ⁹ *I was chosen to explain to everyone this **mysterious** plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.*

Paul uses the word mystery in vs. 3, 4, 6, 9.
The Greek translation is *musterion*.

Meaning: 'secret' - God's secret plan.

What is God's mystery and His secret plan?

3:6 (nlt) *And this is God's **plan** (KJV: mystery): Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.*

In **Acts 9:15** God told Ananias why Paul was chosen, "Go, because I have chosen him to serve me, to make my name known to Gentiles..."

Paul spoke of God's calling for him; "...Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me." **Acts 26:18** (niv)

The Jews despised the Gentiles as worthless. At worst they existed to be wiped out, (*Isa 60:12*). At best they existed to be slaves of Israel (*Isa 45:14*)

Leading up to Paul's encounter with God, no one ever dreamed that God's salvation and blessings would not only be for the Jews but for all people.

3:10-11 (niv) *His intent was that now, through the church, the **manifold wisdom** of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The '**manifold wisdom of God**' in the Greek means **many-coloured**.

The idea is that God's wisdom in all its variations is adequate to meet all circumstances and situations that we face in life.

How does God make His *manifold wisdom* known through the Church?

Primarily through proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation and love.

3:6 (nlt) *And this is God's **plan**. Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children...*

Through the church's proclamation of the gospel of faith hope and love, we declare God's great secret to the world around us and to the *rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms*.

God's eternal purpose is only realised in the finished work of Christ.

3:12 (nlt) Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.

Thanks to the work of Jesus and our faith in Him, we can now enter directly into God's presence through prayer. His arms are open wide to embrace us.

3:13 (nlt) So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

Our persecution for our faith in Christ just may be the catalyst for others to come to Christ.