

UNLOCKING OUR SPIRITUAL BANK ACCOUNT

PART 6: EPHESIANS 3:1-14

[Note: In February 2026 I had hip replacement surgery and was unable to teach for a month. This lesson was my first time back teaching the Level Ground class since the surgery]

It has been exactly a month since I last taught in here.

And so, it has been a while since I was with you and it is great to be back.

But before we go diving right into Ephesians Chapter 3, I think it would be a very good idea for us to briefly review what we have covered up to this point.

We have covered two chapter in Ephesians and you all cannot remember what we have covered, can you?

[Class members nod in agreement] OK – honesty. I love it.

But we have covered a lot of really good material and it is going to be important because Paul is going to build on that in Ephesians Chapter 3.

Paul began his letter back in Chapter 1 by praising God for His blessings.

Specifically, what Paul focuses on in Chapter 1 is God’s awesome blessing of our salvation.

How many in here are thankful for your salvation? Let’s see a show of hands.

Are you thankful for your salvation? Most of you all – good! Alright.

No, I mean everybody is thankful for their salvation. And so, that is what Paul focuses on.

God’s plan all along – “*before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4) – was to save us.

That was God’s plan. Paul says that “*He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ*” (Ephesians 1:5).

When we were saved, we were adopted into God’s family.

God’s plan of salvation was accomplished by Jesus’s death on the cross.

“*In [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*” (Ephesians 1:7).

We sang a couple of songs today [in our worship service] about that very subject, about how we got forgiveness because of what Jesus did on the cross.

The act of love that Jesus displayed on the cross paid our ransom. We were redeemed, right?

That act removed us from under the curse of sin.

We were then “*sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13).

Paul says that the Holy Spirit is “*the guarantee of our inheritance*” (Ephesians 1:14).

Paul reminds us that, after Jesus was crucified and buried, that God raised Jesus from the dead. Praise the Lord!

And He “*seated Him at His right hand in heaven*” (Ephesians 1:20).

And then Chapter 1 closes with that great statement about the supremacy of Jesus -- that He is “*head over all things to the church...*” That is us, right?”

“...which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23). That is all Chapter 1.

Then you get into Chapter 2 and Paul reminds us of who we were before we were saved.

We were not just sick. We “*were dead in our trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1).

Do you all remember that from Chapter 2? “*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved*” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

What a great chapter Ephesians Chapter 2 is!

Now, the latter half of Chapter 2 really is of particular importance for us as we get into Chapter 3. In the last part of Chapter 2 Paul talks about how the Gentiles – who are the Gentiles?

That is us, non-Jews, right? –were once “*alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. “[They were] strangers to the covenants of promise.”*

Paul says they had “*no hope and they were without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12). But then Paul says, “*You [speaking to the Ephesian believers who were Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:13). That was great news for the believers there in Ephesus, wasn’t it? They were Gentiles. It was great news for them [and it is] great news for us because we also Gentiles. So, what Paul says to the church at Ephesus in 61 A.D. (that is when he wrote this letter) applies to us here at First Baptist Church Rockwall in 2026. It is amazing how that works. The gap that existed between Jews and Gentiles for centuries has been closed because of what Jesus did. As a result, we Gentiles are “*no longer strangers and aliens, but we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*” (Ephesians 2:19). Praise God, right?

And that takes us to Chapter 3. In this chapter Paul is going to talk about “*the mystery*” made known to him [to Paul] by revelation (Ephesians 3:3).

He is going to mention his “*insight into the mystery of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:4).

Twice Paul will reference “*this mystery*” (Ephesians 3:6 and 3:9).

The million-dollar question before us, then, is “*What is the mystery that Paul is referring to?*”

Now, he just talked about it in Ephesians Chapter 2. It had to do with the Gentiles.

It is obviously important enough for Paul to bring it up again in Chapter 3. He is going to be repeating what he already talked about.

Why does Paul do that? Because he is senile? Because he is old and cannot remember what he said?

Or does he have a reason behind it? What do you think? Why is he repeating himself in Chapter 3?

[Long pause] Because it is important.

If I were to come in here every Sunday and make the same statement, in a couple of years you would probably remember it, right?

Repetition. So, Paul wants his audience to get it. I just said all that stuff about the Gentiles [in Chapter 2] and Paul is basically going to bring it up again [in Chapter 3].

He calls it a “*mystery*.” So, it is important theology for his audience [and] for us.

So, let’s get into Chapter 3.

[On my PowerPoint slide I showed a gap between v 1 and v 14 with v 2-13 removed]

Look at the way Paul starts this chapter...

READ Ephesians 3:1

And then there is this pause. Paul’s train of thought is broken temporarily. “*For this reason...*” – What reason Paul?

Well, you have to go back to Chapter 2. In Chapter 2 it brings up all that stuff about the Gentiles... that you are one new man, v 15. Then in V 16 he says you are all one body. He says that we Gentiles were far off are now we have been brought near (v 17). In v 19 he says we Gentiles are fellow citizens and of the household of God. In v 20 says we are built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles. In v 21 says we are a building that grows to a holy temple of the Lord. V 22 says we are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. We are one building, built on one foundation, one household, one kingdom, one Spirit in us, one body, one new man. Paul is driving home the idea of UNITY, that we are all one in Christ. We Gentiles and Jews have been brought together. We are all one in Christ. There is no more distinction between us.

“*For this reason,*” Paul says, v 1, and then he pauses.

And then he continues his thought in v 14. Notice how v 14 begins, “*For this reason...*” and he is continuing his thought from v 1. Because of our unity in Christ, “*I bow my knees before the Father.*”

And Paul breaks out into a prayer of praise. That will be our lesson next time as we pick it up in v 15 with that prayer.

But in between v 1 and 14 (this broken thought that Paul had), he feels compelled to go back and spell out what “*this reason*” is.

So, let's just stay here with v 1 for a minute.

"For this reason," because of this unity that we now have, *"I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles..."* Paul calls himself here *"a prisoner of Christ Jesus."*

Notice he does not say, *"I am a prisoner of Rome."*

He sees himself, not as a prisoner of Rome, but as a prisoner of Christ. Why is that?

Because he knows that ultimately Jesus Christ is the One who is in control of his life.

He knows that every aspect of his life is in the Lord's hands.

The events that have happened to Paul have been orchestrated by God's sovereignty.

So, our attitude toward life's circumstances (even some bad circumstances) is everything.

Paul could have been angry and bitter about all the injustice and the hardships that he suffered.

We studied the book of Acts. You all remember that he was in Jerusalem minding his own business. He gets falsely accused. [The Jews begin] to beat him up. The Romans rescue him and he ends up for five years passing from hand to hand with the Romans and being kept prisoner for his safety. He didn't even do anything wrong! But Paul is not angry or bitter at all. He realizes that God has allowed these events in his life for a reason! *"On behalf of you Gentiles."* That is the reason. Everything that Paul has gone through the last 5 years or so, all the events that have led him to his imprisonment in Rome, have been for the benefit of the Gentiles. That is who Paul was called to minister to, right?

[One class member brought up The Message's quotation of v 1 which says, *"This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ..."* To them it made more sense that Paul was a prisoner FOR Christ rather than OF Christ. My response to them was that while I agree that Paul certainly went through persecution FOR the cause of Christ, I think v 1 speaks more to God's sovereign hand on his life.]

Paul doesn't see himself as a victim. He sees that as all part of God's plan for him.

If you read the book of Acts, you see that all along his journey to Rome, Paul ministered to the people he was with. He helped out with the shipwreck. He was responsible for the saving of lives there. He healed people on the island of Malta. In Rome he was ministering to people who came to visit him. Paul had this dynamic ministry even behind bars. He even witnessed to some of the Romans soldiers and to some of the leaders while he was in Caesarea. So, a lot of things going on with Paul and he is not angry or bitter. He sees that he has gone through all this for Christ's sake and for the Gentiles.

Let's get into the meat of Chapter 3...

READ Ephesians 3:2-3

Paul is saying basically in v 2, *"I am assuming you all know my story."*

He ministered to the Ephesians for several years when he was on his second missionary journey.

They all knew him pretty well. But then all [these events over the last five years] have happened since he has been with them and he is assuming they know what has happened. It has been passed on to them by other people. Well, it is because the Lord directed all this. He is the One that was in sovereign control of all it.

Paul says in v 2, *“the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you.”*

Paul sees himself as a steward, a manager, of God’s grace to the Gentiles, to these Ephesian believers and others.

Paul [probably] thought that when he got saved, that he would be a minister to the Jews. That made the most sense to him. But Jesus said, *“No. I am calling you to go to the Gentiles.”*

If you read Acts, Paul did not argue with Jesus. He went. He submitted to Jesus’s calling and went to the Gentiles and was a very effective witness.

[Paul says,] *“I was given this responsibility and I accepted it.”*

Then, in v 3 Paul says that *“God revealed the mystery to me.”*

I have already told you what the mystery is. It is this unity of Christ that the Gentiles and the Jews share.

Now, it is interesting that Paul uses this term *“mystery.”*

In the New Testament -- and we have talked about this before in our studies of several different books where it comes up -- A *“mystery”* in the New Testament refers to a truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament that [is made known or] becomes clearer in the New Testament. There are many examples of these in the Bible. One of them that is not clear in the Old Testament that becomes clear in the New Testament is The Incarnation (Jesus coming in human flesh, the Messiah, God Himself in human flesh). Now, the Jews all knew from the Old Testament scriptures that the Messiah was coming and that he was going to have all these wonderful characteristics. We studied this. But it was not real clear as we went through and studied the Old Testament that the Messiah was going to be GOD. We just thought he was going to be a servant of the Lord, some really great prophet like Moses. But the fact that he actually was God Himself, that was not real clear. And then the New Testament comes along and it was like Wow! God Himself, God with us. This was hinted at [in the Old Testament] but it was not real clear. Another mystery is this idea of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit coming to permanently indwell believers. Because in the Old Testament it was not that way. The Holy Spirit would come and indwell [certain] people for specific purposes temporarily. But He was not there [indwelling them] permanently like He is with us [believers]. So, that mystery of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of believers becomes clearer in the New Testament. And then you have the book of Revelation, which gives us (even though it is not super clear) a better idea of what is going to happen at the end times. It is clearer for us than it was for the people in the Old Testament. All they had in the Old Testament was judgment, judgment, judgment. *“The Day of the Lord.”* All of these things were going to happen. But they were not really clear on when it was going to happen, the order of events is going to be and all that. That becomes clearer in the New Testament. And then, of course, The Church is another mystery. This is the mystery Paul has been talking about here in Ephesians. This idea of a body of believers, one in Christ, Jews and Gentiles on an equal footing. Now, certainly, the Jews [in the Old Testament] knew that God’s plan was to save the Gentiles. That is talked about in a lot of places in the Old Testament, how the Gentiles were going to be saved, how the nation of Israel was going to bless the world (the nations). But for the Gentiles to be on same footing with the Jews -- that was something that they did not really see coming. Those were all mysteries from the Old Testament

that were not clear, maybe hinted at, but not real clear. They were kind of muddy, kind of fuzzy to them. And then in the New Testament all those mysteries became clearer.

So, let's get into this mystery because now Paul is going to lay it out for them. V 4...

READ Ephesians 3:4-5

The Holy Spirit is the One that revealed this to Paul and others.

So, the mystery that Paul has been talking about here in Ephesians, the mystery of the church and our unity in Christ, Paul says, *"now that I've explained it to you, you can comprehend it and understand it better. It is clearer."* The people in the Old Testament (like I said) were given some hints about God's plan for [the salvation of] the Gentiles but never did they see this coming (Genesis 12:2-3, Genesis 26:4, Isaiah 49:6, and Isaiah 57:19). BUT they did not understand the full extent of what all of that salvation of the Gentiles really meant. In the New Testament it becomes clearer. This mystery has been revealed by the Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, v 5. And also, through the apostles and the prophets.

And then Paul, after telling them all this, goes into v 6 and he spells out what this mystery is.

READ Ephesians 3:6

That is good news, isn't it? Here Paul is talking about our inheritance. We are heirs. We are part of the same family. We get the same inheritance that they (the Jews who are saved) do. We are one in Christ. That is what this mystery that they did not understand in the Old Testament that now has become clearer in the New Testament. Paul and other apostles are going to reveal this to the church. Remember we talked about the Jerusalem Council (in Acts 15). The church at Jerusalem was wondering, *"What do we do with all of these Gentile believers?"* Do you remember that? That was a real problem for the early church. They had all of these Gentiles getting saved and what do we do? Do we make them become Jews first before they can become Christians? What do we do? So, they hashed all this out in a council and they came to the conclusion, *"No, they are saved the same way we are, by faith in Christ. They are on an equal footing with us. They do not have to keep the Jewish traditions to be saved. They are saved through [faith in] Christ Jesus. And that was something that they hashed out at the Jerusalem Council. So, that was a problem that the early church had to come to grips with because, remember, they were all Jews. The first Christians were all Jews. And now you have all these Gentiles getting saved. You had this prejudice for years between Jews and Gentiles. "What are we going to do with these people?"* It was a real problem. So now, here is Paul and he is talking to mostly Gentile believers and he is telling them the good news. *"You are all fellow heirs with Christ Jesus."* When we got saved, us Gentiles, we received the same benefits, the same promises, as the Jews when they got saved! We now get to enjoy the same blessings as our Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ.

[At this point in class the question was raised, "Do you think that God extends a special blessing on the nation of Israel?" This is a very complex issue and we actually spent several minutes discussing it. The fact is that the nation of Israel as it exists today is NOT the same Israel that we see in the Old Testament. That being said, I firmly believe that God will keep His covenant promises to Abraham and David. I believe He still has a plan for the Jewish people (based on how I read Revelation Chapter 7). Everything changed when Jesus came. We are no longer under the old covenant. We are under a new covenant. I believe that God blesses individuals and even nations who honor Him.]

Yes, [the Jews] are God's chosen people. I think God still has a purpose for them as a people group.

But there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile any more as far as Christ is concerned.

And all that was made possible through the gospel.

READ Ephesians 3:7

Paul says "*Of this gospel,*" the gospel of Jesus Christ that has made all the difference in the lives of you Gentiles... God is the One who made me a minister [to preach the gospel]." God saved me and then He gave me this task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and He gave me the power to carry it out."

READ Ephesians 3:8-10

There is a lot to chew on here. I am just going to focus on a couple of things. Paul is a very humble man, which is interesting given his background. He says, "*I am the least of all the saints.*" Do you really think that Paul was the least of all the saints? To me he is like at the very top of the list, right? But his own humility [causes him to say], "*I am the least of the saints.*" And then in 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul calls himself "*chief of sinners.*" Paul, no one considers you the chief of sinners and the least of the saints. No, Paul. You are up here with Jesus when we list all the important people in the Bible. But he is humble and he does not brag about his credentials. He is focusing on the fact that he was selected by God and it was a privilege for him to do it. All the success that he has is because of God's grace to him. Not because he is such a great preacher. Now, v 8, we could read right over this and I do not want us to do that. It talks about "*preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" And that sounds really good, but let me make this personal for you. Do you realize all you have in Christ? Do you realize it? Have you ever really thought about all you have in Christ? Maybe you should think about it. All of this that we have been reading here in Ephesians is OURS! Those are treasures that we have available to us. Those are the resources that we have. One of the things Paul prayed back in Chapter 1 – he prayed that the Ephesian believers would "*have the eyes of their hearts enlightened, that they would know what is the hope to which God has called them, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints*" (Ephesians 1:18). That is one of the things he prayed back in Chapter 1, that they recognize what they have in Christ. That is what Chapter 1 is all about. So, if we could only catch a glimpse of all that is ours in Christ, I think it would radically change us.

This happened years ago – my granddaughter and I were talking. She was I guess 6 or 7. She was pretty young. And for whatever reason she was curious about Robin's and my financial situation. She has always thought we were rich or something. But anyway, she asked me the question out of the clear blue, "*How rich are you?*" Typical kid question. Now, my response was probably not what she wanted to hear. She was thinking in terms of material wealth. But I said, "*In Jesus, Robin and I are very wealthy.*" I thought it was a pretty good answer. And that was a true statement. We have been talking about our spiritual bank account in this series. Our bank account (our material money bank account) at times may be lacking for various reasons. It may not be what we want it to be. But our heavenly account, our spiritual bank account, suffice it to say, in Christ all that we have is limitless. "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13). Great verse, right? His resources are always available for us to draw from. The only question is, will we draw from it? I'm afraid – this is just my personal opinion – that too many Christians are like the church at Laodicea. They are true believers but Jesus described them this way: "*For you say [this is what the church at Laodicea was saying] I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing...*" And then Jesus says this: "*...not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked*" (Revelation 3:17). That was their spiritual condition. They thought "*Well, we are in a pretty affluent society and we*

are doing well.” Jesus says, *“No, you are not!”* So, yes, we are rich in Christ, but are we living that way? In v 9-10 Paul is declaring this amazing truth. God’s ultimate plan and purpose for the church is to be a testimony of God’s glory. And we know from the Great Commission that we are supposed to be going out and presenting the gospel to the people around us, right? But here [v 10] Paul does not say that. It says *“through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...”* Not to the people around us. But Paul says something else which is very interesting. It is being made known *“to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”* Well, that is an interesting statement. In other words, what Paul is saying is, *“being made known to the angels and all spiritual beings.”* Do you realize the angels in heaven are actually listening to us and to our conversations? And they are amazed at the insights we have that they do not have. You see, angels do not get to be saved. They do not get the benefit of salvation. So, they hear us share with each other in the church and with others. They are amazed by it. They are amazed at the whole topic of salvation and the preaching of the good news. In First Peter, Peter says that when it comes to the gospel that angels long to look at these things (1 Peter 1:12). They don’t get to experience what we have experienced. They are amazed by it and hearing our voices talk about it. Just realize all you have in Christ. Your salvation is amazing. Do not take it for granted. I like what John MacArthur says about this passage, v 9-10. He says, *“So God is the teacher, the universe is the classroom, the angels are the students, the church is the illustration, and the lesson is wisdom. And when it is taught well by a church -- the angels glorify God.”*

Now let me wrap it up with these verses...

READ Ephesians 3:11-12

We can go to God 24-7. We have direct access to God all the time. What a privilege! God does not ever say, *“Chris, what do you want now? Come on, man! I’m busy right now, but if you will come back at 6 PM maybe we can make an appointment and talk about it.”* God never does that. I can go right to Him. I do not care how busy He is, He has time for me. And I can lay my petitions out before Him.

READ Ephesians 3:13

“Don’t feel sorry for me,” Paul says. *“I am in prison, but I am OK. God is taking good care of me. What I went through, I would gladly do it again for you. I would endure it for your sake all over again. It is well worth it.”* Paul’s perspective is not focusing on himself and his problems. It is heavenward. His focus is on pleasing the Lord. Then he breaks out in v 14 and following into that prayer which we are going to cover next time. In Romans 8:18 Paul says, *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time [things he has also been going through] are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* Paul had his sights set on heaven. He was not focused on what happens here on earth. What a perspective! [The following appears in my original notes and I think it is a fitting end to this lesson...] Oh, that we could catch of glimpse of all that is ours in Christ – now and in the future. The mystery has been revealed. We Gentiles have been granted the privilege to share in God’s plan. We get to be a part of His church. We receive all the blessings that He has promised. As Gentiles reading what Paul has been saying so far in this letter, we can’t help but get excited. It’s a cause for celebration!