




## Going Deeper Questions

- Week Six -

These questions cover Ephesians 3:1-13, please read the passage out loud.

1. Let's focus on **Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— and verse <sup>13</sup> I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.** In these two verses Paul reminds the Ephesians that he is in prison and is suffering, but he also asks them not to be discouraged about his suffering. Paul is saying suffering for Christ and suffering in general is unavoidable, don't let it discourage you. In our rather comfortable American world, we often do our best to avoid suffering and generally don't see it as the norm but as a malicious interruption. While Paul accepts suffering, he also points to a source of comfort. **2 Corinthians 1:5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.** God is the source of our comfort. How do you deal with suffering? Do you see it as normal and accept it as a part of life on earth or do you allow your suffering to become a source of discouragement? Have you ever found comfort in God? How do you think someone finds comfort in God?
2. Now let's focus on (NLV) **Ephesians 3:2 Surely you have heard that God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles.** God has given Paul a special responsibility, a mission, a calling. He explains it in **1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.** Paul has been called to share the gospel with gentiles and bring them to Christ. In the sermon I said Paul had a calling and so do you. First, you are called to accept Christ. Then you are called to spiritual formation, to grow mature and be formed in Christ. But God also longs to call you to your own **special responsibility**. A specific calling just for you. Have you accepted Christ? How about spiritual formation, do you sense Christ is formed in you? What about a mission or calling? In a sense every Christian parent has a special calling, to raise that child. Everyone with a vocation has a calling, to represent Christ and his love through their work. God calls us to serve him through our gifts and personality, how would you articulate your calling in Christ in this season of your life?



3. Now focus on this section **Ephesians 3:3 As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. <sup>4</sup> As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. <sup>5</sup> God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the gospel 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.** Beyond Paul's obvious topic of Jewish and gentile inclusion in the Church, Paul speaks of God's mysterious ways. Clearly God is comfortable with mystery. Most of us, however, in this modern digital age where we can know just about anything in an instant, are not comfortable or well acquainted with mystery. Mysteries create tension in our lives. The tension of not knowing the outcome of future events, I call this the tension of the unknown. In the sermon this point was stressed, God is comfortable with mystery. We need to trust Him. How do you do with the tension created by mystery? How difficult do you find it to trust God? How might you trust God more fully?

4. Let's conclude by focusing on **Ephesians 3:10-12 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,<sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.** These verses have a lot to say. Paul is stressing that the church demonstrates to all the beings in the heavenly realm his wisdom. His wisdom in including all who call on Christ for salvation and his will that we approach Him with freedom and confidence. I know there is a lot here but let's focus on this transformational last section, God wants us to approach Him with freedom and confidence. Freedom means we can pray to him anytime, anywhere, every place can become a sacred space where we meet God. He is with us and we have freedom to approach Him. The word confidence could also be translated boldness. God wants us to approach him boldly, confidently. What do you make of these three verses? Do you struggle with approaching God with freedom? Do you pray with boldness? How might you grow in these areas?