

# Ephesians 3 – The Unsearchable Mystery of Christ’s Love

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## Mysteries Revealed

Up until 400 years ago, all we knew about the universe came through seeing it with our naked eyes. But when Galileo turned his telescope toward the heavens, he saw things that were hidden for all of human history. Mysteries were revealed: Saturn had rings. Jupiter had moons. That hazy band across the centre of the sky was not a cloud but a countless collection of stars. And the news changed the world. The universe was even more glorious than we could ever imagine. And now we have managed to send a Hubble observatory into space so we can see the universe without the distortion of the earth’s atmosphere and pollution.

Today we see that God revealed to Paul a mystery that was kept hidden for ages and generations. That Jews and Gentiles are equally loved by God. Equally saved by Jesus Christ. And this news changed the world. It brought the possibility of unity to all peoples and cultures. And showed that God was even more glorious than we could ever imagine. Today we’ll see 1. The Unsearchable Mystery Revealed. 2. The Inconceivable Love of Christ, and 3. The immeasurable Glory of God.

### 1. The Unsearchable Mystery Revealed

Last week, we heard how Christ brought down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. In today’s passage, Paul starts to pray in response, but then interrupts himself. It’s like he doesn’t want them to miss how outrageously amazing it is that they are included in God’s plan. Because it didn’t always seem that way.

For thousands of years, it seemed like God only loved the Israelites. He chose them to be his special people out of all the nations of the earth. He promised them land and fame and blessing. He promised them that he will send his forever king to defeat their enemies and give them a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

But now, God has revealed the mystery that the Gentiles, the non-Israelites, were always part of God’s plan. Now the word ‘mystery’ here is not used the way we normally use mystery. It’s not difficult to understand, or something we try to figure out, like a puzzle. It’s more like a hidden secret that has now been revealed. A bit like Galileo and his telescope. The planets and stars were always there. But they were hidden from view until the telescope revealed them.

God’s plan was always to save the Gentiles, but this plan was hidden from previous generations, and only revealed by God after the coming of Christ. It was impossible to see the wonders of the universe with our naked eyes. And it is impossible for human beings to see the plan of God with our human wisdom and understanding. Only God could reveal it, and he only did so after the coming of Christ.

*Ephesians 3:4-6 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

The mystery is that Jews and Gentiles have equal access to God’s riches in Christ. Paul uses three ‘together’ phrases to unite Jews and Gentiles. He says they are ‘heirs together’, ‘members together’ and ‘sharers

together'. Each of these phrases is one word in the original Greek. It's like saying, they are 'co-heirs', 'co-members' and 'co-sharers'.

I remember when I was growing up, whenever my mum bought snacks for my brothers and me, she would always buy the same flavour. Three packs of pizza shapes or three lime jelly packets. Because otherwise there would be fights about who would get which flavour. Paul is saying that God is being completely equal with Jews and Gentiles. They are equal heirs and children of God, equal members of one body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus.

But why did he make it seem like only the Jews were saved? I think there were two reasons. Firstly, he wanted to show how there was only one way to have access to God, through Christ. So he chose one nation, Israel. One tribe, Judah. One dynasty, David's. And then sent his one and only Son to be the King and Saviour. It was not through our many human religions and human intelligence that we can be saved. But only through the one Saviour God has provided, Christ Jesus our Lord.

***Ephesians 3:12*** *In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

In fact, that verse shows that those who believe have even greater blessings than Israel in the Old Testament. They had to offer sacrifice after sacrifice. But they still could not come near to God because of their sin. But we have confidence and freedom to approach him through the blood of Christ.

Secondly, he wanted to show that it's only through his King Jesus, that cultural barriers can be broken down. Human societies and nations always struggle to be united. We all think we do things the best way, and we naturally feel fear and judgement towards other cultures.

We say things like, 'If we all just loved one another, we would end violence, war and poverty.' And we all long for world peace. But if it's that simple, then why can't we achieve it? After thousands of years of human civilization, we still don't get along.

So God chose one nation, gave them strict clothing, religious and food laws, to separate them from the other nations. It was forbidden to even eat with Gentiles. But then with the coming of Christ, those barriers came crashing down. And God showed he could create beautiful unity between the most divided people.

God showed that he had unsearchable riches in Christ; more than enough to share with both Jews and Gentiles. And their share in Christ would make them one body, one Church. It was all to show his glorious power and wisdom:

***Ephesians 3:10-11*** *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.*

Not only will all people one day see God's power and wisdom. But right now, through the church, all the angels and demons and Satan himself is witnessing how God is accomplishing the beautiful unity of Jews and Gentiles and all nations, through the love and power of Christ.

Friends, no matter what background you are from, you are welcome in Christ's Church. Our different languages, clothes and food do not stop us from being brothers and sisters in Christ. As we love and welcome one another, even the angels will marvel at God's wisdom and power in Christ. This is the picture in Revelation:

**Revelation 7:9-10** *After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice:*

*“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.”*

## **2. The Inconceivable Love of Christ**

In verse 14, Paul finally comes back to the prayer that he introduced in verse 1. He prays that they would see that they are deeply loved in Christ. Again, this love is impossible to grasp with our human eyes. That's why Paul prays that God would do the impossible:

**Ephesians 3:16-19** *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

It takes great strength to grasp the love of Christ. And that strength can only come from his Spirit. In our weakness we let the distractions, and sufferings and frustrations of this life affect our view of God. We don't always feel loved.

But God wants us to grasp just how big Christ's love for us is. It's so wide and long and high and deep that we can't conceive of how big it is. But we can know it truly. It's like when you swim in the ocean. You can feel and know the ocean. You can perceive how massive it is, but there is no way you can comprehend how wide and deep it is. It's unfathomable.

It reminds me of the kids song, 'Wide wide as the ocean, high as the heavens above, deep deep as the deepest sea is my Saviour's love.' Whatever you are going through right now, know that Christ loves you more than you can ever understand or imagine. And one day, we will see that everything we have been through is for our good. Is preparing us for a love that we can't possibly comprehend. As Christ dwells in us, he shows us more and more of his love, until we are filled with all the fullness of God.

For many religions in the world, prayer is about asking for physical things, spiritual protection, or earthly success. And we who follow Jesus can often come to him with a shopping list. But God wants to give us so much more than just stuff. He wants a personal relationship. He wants to give us himself, and surround us with his inconceivably big love.

If you are listening today and don't feel like God loves you, pray to him. Ask him to fill you with his love by his Holy Spirit. Ask him to open the floodgates and show you just how big is his heart towards you. You won't regret it.

### **3. The Immeasurable Glory of God**

Paul has told us God's vision – Jews and Gentiles united in the one body of Christ. And it's easy to lose hope when we don't always express this wonderful unity in the Church. When we fail to include people, or actively exclude them, or are just insensitive to see how the way we do things and accidentally alienate people. But Paul knows that God can achieve his glorious dream, even despite our human sin and failures. So he ends with a doxology of praise to God:

***Ephesians 3:20-21** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

We are reminded that it is God's work, not ours, and he is able to do the impossible. Just as God is able to make the immeasurable vastness of the universe, so God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

But notice that it's also all for his glory. This is a great motivation for us. We exist for his glory. When we are too focused on our goals, our problems, our desires, we can get disappointed, or even discontent.

You can achieve all your dreams and earn all the money you want, but you won't be fulfilling your potential. Because you weren't made to glorify yourself. You were made for the glory of God. And when we grasp that, it gives us hope and purpose and value which you can't find anywhere else.

One day, God will bring everything in heaven and earth, seen and unseen together under one head, Jesus Christ. Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And we will all see the glory of God. And in that moment, our tiny lives will be seen for what they are. One thread in the beautiful tapestry that God is making to bring glory to his Son. And we will rejoice in God's inconceivable love, that he would include us in his plan, and make us his children.