

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ephesians: Overcoming Our Insecurities In Christ
Part II: The Believer's Secure Position In Christ, Ephesians 1:1-3:21
K. Overcoming The Dread Of Suffering Persecution For A Biblical Church Ministry
(Ephesians 3:1-13)

I. Introduction

- A. God calls and equips believers to minister in the local church, Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:3-8.
- B. However, such a ministry is opposed by Satan, so the servant of God can find himself persecuted by the ungodly whom Satan influences both from inside as well as from outside the Church, 2 Timothy 2:24-3:5.
- C. That such suffering is inevitable for the upright (2 Timothy 3:12) gives reason for some to fear, but Paul countered this dread by his revelation of the **value** of Church ministry in Ephesians 3:1-13 (as follows):

II. Overcoming The Dread Of Suffering Persecution For A Biblical Church Ministry, Ephesians 3:1-13.

- A. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul began a sentence that mentioned he was a prisoner of Christ for Gentiles and broke it off to expand on the idea before starting the sentence again in verse 14, B. K. Com., N. T., p. 628, 631.
- B. The reason for this expansion is explained in Ephesians 3:13 NIV: Paul did not want his Gentile readers to be discouraged that his ministry for them was costing him the suffering of being a Roman prisoner!
- C. To explain *why* he felt this way, Paul launched into one long explanatory sentence in Ephesians 3:2-13:
 - 1. Paul explained that God had assigned him an administration of God's grace in behalf of Gentiles, 3:2.
 - 2. Specifically, the Lord had revealed a previously unrevealed "mystery" that had been hidden through all past ages, but now had been revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 3:3-5.
 - 3. That incredibly important and new revelation was the fact that Jews and Gentiles would be fellowheirs, of the same body, and partakers of God's Genesis 12:1-4 promise to Abraham by means of their faith in the Gospel of Christ, Eph. 3:6 with Gal. 3:13-14. We explain this revelation's uniqueness as follows:
 - a. The Old Testament repeatedly predicted the coming Messianic Kingdom blessing when God would favor believing Gentiles as He would believing Jews, cf. Amos 9:12; Isaiah 19:24-25.
 - b. However, nowhere had the Old Testament revealed that Jews and Gentiles would become a single spiritual body, the Church; this was a new revelation in the New Testament, *Ibid.*, p. 629.
 - c. Thus, Paul's ministry to reveal that the Church would be composed of Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, male and female as one spiritual body is a uniquely new revelation, cf. Galatians 3:28-29.
 - d. The fact that this new body would open up saved Gentiles in Christ to be fellowheirs and partakers of God's Abrahamic promise of Genesis 12:1-4 was an astounding revelation of God's great grace.
 - 4. God had given Paul the gracious opportunity to be a spokesman of this new body's revelation, and equipped him with great spiritual power so that he could make this revelation known, Ephesians 3:7.
 - 5. God's grace is further seen in God's selection of Paul to be this revelation's spokesman, for he claimed to be the least of all saints as a former persecutor of the Church (Ephesians 3:8a; 1 Timothy 1:12-15).
 - 6. Nevertheless, Paul had been assigned the ministry of making this new institution of the Church known to Gentiles, opening up the blessings of Abraham to the Gentile world, Ephesians 3:8b.
 - 7. Paul noted that his ministry involved being "a theologian-teacher as well as a missionary," Ephesians 3:9; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., ftn. to Ephesians 3:7-10.
 - 8. God's purpose in giving Paul this ministry was to display to the angels God's "manifold" wisdom, "manifold" being translated from *polypoikilos*, "the beauty of an embroidered pattern or the variety of colors in flowers", picturing God's great wisdom in weaving far different groups of people together into a single embroidered work, the Church, to the glory of His great grace, Ephesians 3:10; *Ibid.*, p. 630.
 - 9. For such a teaching, Paul had suffered tremendous opposition from his countrymen, which suffering had led to his Roman imprisonment, *Ibid.*, p. 614 with Acts chs. 22-28. Yet, so great was this revelation that Paul taught, he gladly suffered persecution in expounding it unto others, Eph. 3:11-13!

Lesson: *Paul's ministry of giving the Gospel for all men to believe to be included in the true Church was so valuable and so magnified God's grace even before angels, he gladly suffered persecution for it!*

Application: *May we not dread spiritual persecution for godly Church ministry, for the value of that ministry in terms of giving glory to God's grace is so great, all such suffering is easily worthwhile!*