

Ministry Transformed Communications

May 24, 2009

Ephesians 3

1 This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called. **2** I take it that you're familiar with the part I was given in God's plan for including everybody. **3** I got the inside story on this from God himself, as I just wrote you in brief. **4** As you read over what I have written to you, you'll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ. **5** None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God's Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order. **6** The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board. **7** This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details.

8 When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities. And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. **9** My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along.

10 Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!

11 All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. **12** When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go.

13 So don't let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud! **14** My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, **15** this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. **16** I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength— **17** that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, **18** you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! **19** Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

20 God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

21 Glory to God in the church!
Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!
Glory down all the generations!
Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!
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