

# Joyful Life Bible Studies

## EPHESIANS CHAPTER THREE

### "God of the Impossible"

Lesson 4

*"Have you ever prayed for what seems the impossible?  
In this chapter Paul asks the Lord to do humanly impossible things for you.  
Prayer never considers the human impossibilities  
but focuses on the God of the impossible."  
Pastor Chuck*

Before you begin today's study, read these verses, Jeremiah 32:17; Jeremiah 32:27; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; Romans 4:20,21. Meditate on them, then write the most impossible situations you face and appropriate these scriptures to that place.

Before Paul writes the prayer of verses 14-21, he pauses to describe his ministry which is to make known to all nations the truth that the church has been planned from the beginning to include the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This chapter gives us rich insights into the heart and mind of this apostle.

#### DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

As Paul is writing Ephesians, he is a prisoner in his own rented house in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier, awaiting his trial before Nero. Do you know why he was imprisoned? It was the fact that he preached that the Jews and Gentiles were one in Christ. He was literally a prisoner of the mystery he was preaching!!

*"I, Paul, the servant of Christ, am here in jail because of you - for preaching that you Gentiles are part of God's house." (Ephesians 3:1, Living Bible)*

1. Paul begins Chapter 3 KJV with the words "For this cause". For what cause was Paul imprisoned? (see Acts 21:27-36; Acts 26:20,21).
2. Acts 28:16-31 will give you a brief historical background of Paul's imprisonment. How did Paul take advantage of his imprisonment to continue to minister?
3. Note that in Ephesians 3:1, Paul does not say, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Rome. . ." He never thought of himself as a prisoner of Rome. Whose prisoner does Paul say he was?
  - a. An old secular song has a line, "I'm just a prisoner of love." Does your love for Jesus make you a prisoner of His? Selah.

4. From these scriptures, what attitudes did Paul have that made him victorious over the circumstances of his imprisonment?
  - a. Acts 20:24
  - b. Romans 8:28
  - c. II Timothy 1:8,9
  - d. Philippians 4:11
  - e. II Corinthians 12:9,10
  
5. How could these attitudes make you victorious in the circumstances that might imprison you?

Realize that God holds your life and its circumstances in **HIS** hands, just as He did Paul's. Selah.

**"Many things about tomorrow  
I don't seem to understand.  
But I know who holds tomorrow  
and I know He holds my hand."**

*Isaiah 41:13*

#### **DAY TWO**

Read Ephesians 3:2-6. For the next 3 days we will study verses 2-13. Paul was again so overwhelmed by the revelation of this mystery that before he writes his prayer for the Ephesian believers, he returns to the thought that is the very heart of the letter. Into his life had come the revelation of the great mystery. That secret or mystery was that the Jews and Gentiles would be one body, the church, with Christ as the head. These verses are parenthetical.

A mystery in Scripture is a previously hidden truth, now divinely revealed, but in which a supernatural element remains in spite of the revelation.

1. In Ephesians 3:3, Paul speaks of the "mystery". What is this mystery? (verses 3-6).
  - a. How was this mystery made known to Paul?
  - b. In your own words, write the three statements that Paul makes concerning the Gentile Christians in Ephesians 3:6.

(1.) Contrast these with their previous state in Ephesians 2:11,12.

(2.) What has brought about such a dramatic change in these people?  
Ephesians 2:13.

2. Read verse 5. Why do you think God withheld revealing that mystery of the Jews and Gentiles forming the church from prior generations? (See Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 9:26)

*God's purposes center wholly in Christ*

3. Ephesians 3:6 NIV: 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.

Paul suffered beatings, ridicule, stonings, imprisonment, and even death so that we Gentiles might have the knowledge of Christ and know that we are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. How does the revelation of that mystery touch YOUR heart today? How does it influence your life?

**DAY THREE**

Read Ephesians 3:7-8

Paul was not only a prisoner of the mystery, but a minister of the mystery as well.

1. How did Paul see himself?
2. How did he become a minister?
  - a.
  - b.
3. What did Paul say about himself in Ephesians 3:8?
  - a. What does I Corinthians 15:9 add to this?
  - b. In spite of what Paul said he was, what does Ephesians 3:8 say was given to him?

"Minister" is the Greek word **diakonos**, which means, "servant, waiter, or busboy", not even one that has a little status - just a common, run-of-the-mill servant.

(1.) How did Paul show his deep appreciation of grace in I Corinthians 15:10.

*"There is no pit too deep for which God's grace is not triumphantly adequate"*

4. What was Paul preaching to the Gentiles? (Ephesians 3:8b).
5. Personalize the following scriptures to help you understand some of the "unsearchable riches" in Christ. Don't rush through them. **Think about how rich you are.**

"Unsearchable" means unfathomable, untraceable, unable to be measured, without any bottom, endless treasures.

Ephesians 1:3b- *He has given me everything - every spiritual blessing*

Ephesians 1:7-

Ephesians 2:4-

Ephesians 3:16-

Colossians 2:10a-

I Timothy 6:17b-

II Peter 1:3a-

The word UNSEARCHABLE used here is the same Greek word translated "past finding out" in Romans 11:33. Our riches in Him are so abundant that to try to enumerate them would be like trying to count all the stars. We can never on this earth know all the riches we have in Christ. All through eternity we will be continually discovering riches we have in Him. Ephesians 2:7.

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!  
Romans 11:33 KJV*

#### DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 3:9-13

- 1: Read verse 9. Verse 8 states that Paul was commissioned by the Lord to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. In verse 9a his task was also to make very clear to everyone the "fellowship of the ministry". What does "fellowship of the ministry" mean? (see verse 6).

a. Complete these phrases about the mystery from verse 9. (KJV)

(1.) Which \_\_\_\_\_  
hath been \_\_\_\_\_.

(a.) When did God plan that Jews and Gentiles would make up His church?

(2.) Who \_\_\_\_\_ all things by \_\_\_\_\_.

b. With this phrase in mind read John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2. What do these verses teach us about Genesis 1:1.

2. Read verses 10 and 11 and answer the following questions.

a. From verse 10, what did God want made known by the church?

b. To whom did God intend the church make known His manifold wisdom?

(1.) Who might Paul have been referring to here? (I Peter 1:12b).

(2.) Who did God set above all of these principalities and powers? (Ephesians 1:20,21).

CHALLENGE: The word "manifold" used here (KJV) could be defined as many facets or aspects. Our world, created by God, shows forth the marvelous wisdom of God. Psalm 19:1-6. How does the church show forth to the heavenly hosts, the angels, and other ranks of powers and beings, other aspects of God's glorious wisdom?

c. Through Whom has this purpose of God, for the establishment of the church been accomplished? (See also Ephesians 2:18).

3. According to verse 12, how can we approach God because of what Christ has done for us? (Also see Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22).

a. What prevented this access to the throne of God before Christ died for our sins? (Exodus 26:31-33)

- b. What was the significance of the event in Matthew 27:51?

NOTE: The veil, which was torn supernaturally, was the veil which divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a room in the temple where the presence of God dwelt. Only The High Priest could enter there, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The rending of that veil, which was a type of the human body of Christ signified "a new and living way" was opened for all believers into the very presence of God with no other sacrifice or priesthood except Christ's.

*"Oh behold the Man of Sorrows !  
Oh behold Him in plain view.  
Lo, He is a Mighty Conqueror  
He has rent the veil in two."*

- c. Let the impact of verse 12 have its full affect on you. Behold, ponder what Christ has done for you; you now have access to the Creator of the universe. Boldness is not to be confused with casualness or irreverence. He is King God. Boldness means with assurance and confidence. Knowing we have this access to God, why do you suppose there is so much prayerlessness?

(1.) How will Ephesians 3:12 affect your prayer life?

4. Read Ephesians 3:13. Record some of the tribulations Paul experienced during his ministry. II Corinthians 23-28.
5. In Ephesians 3:1,13, who did Paul say he was suffering for?
- a. In light of this read II Corinthians 1:3-11. From these verses list some of God's purposes for others in our tribulations, afflictions and sufferings.
- b. Recount a time when you were able to comfort or encourage someone else as a result of comfort or help you received from the Lord when you were going through a trial.

#### **DAY FIVE**

Read Ephesians 3:14-19

In Ephesians 3:14, Paul picks up the original thought or prayer from verse 1 which he hadn't even expressed yet. Notice the phrase "for this cause" in verses 1,13. "For this cause", proclaims the apostle, that is, in view of the grace which gave new life to the Gentiles, uniting them in one body with Jewish believers, and built them into the living temple for God's Spirit to dwell, Paul prays that this divine indwelling may result in a greater knowledge and deepening spiritual experience of the presence and love of Christ.

**"Bow my knees"**  
 (v.14) The ordinary Jewish position for prayer was to stand with palms upward and hands outstretched. Bowing the knee meant to prostrate oneself in prayer before God.

1. What does bowing his knees in prayer indicate about the earnestness of Paul's concern in prayer?
  
2. How is the church described in Ephesians 3:15?
  - a. To Whom did Paul pray in verse 14?
  
  - b. To Whom do we pray? Matthew 6:9; John 15:16b.
  
  - c. Briefly state what it means to you to be part of the family of God.
  
3. Read carefully Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in 3:16-19. Fill in the following chart. In the lefthand column write each of the specific requests that Paul prayed for the Ephesians. Then, in the righthand column write Paul's request in your own words by paraphrasing it as a prayer for yourself.

What Paul prayed for the Ephesians	What I need to ask God for in my life

"inner man" (Eph. 3:16)  
That part of the believer  
which was made alive  
by the indwelling of the  
Spirit. (See Eph.2:5;  
Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor.4:16)

"Dwell" (Eph.3:17)  
denotes a permanent  
residence, an abiding  
presence, or making  
oneself at home.

"Rooted and grounded"  
(Eph.3:17)-These are  
horticultural and  
architectural terms,  
respectively. Christians  
are to have deep roots  
and firm foundations.

"Width"-indicates  
the breadth of people  
now included in the  
Church through  
Christ's reconciling  
work.

"Length"-the  
eternal aspect  
of God's love.

"Depth" God's stooping  
down to our sinful con-  
dition in order to give  
us spiritual life through  
Christ.

"Height"-God's raising  
us up with Christ and  
seating us with Him in  
the heavenly realms.

"Know"-refers to  
knowing by exper-  
ience rather than  
just head knowledge.

4. Note God's favorite measuring stick - "according to. . ." According to Ephesians 3:16, how is God able to grant all of these petitions?

5. What does it mean to be "strengthened. . ." in the inner man?" How can you find help when you feel spiritually weak?

6. If Paul's readers are already Christians, why does he pray "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"?

7. How can you be "rooted and grounded" in love?

8. In Ephesians 3:18, Paul graphically describes the extent of God's love for us. What was the greatest demonstration of Christ's love for you?

Note: Ancient commentators have noted that wide, long, high, and deep could be seen as the bars on the cross.

9. Think about Ephesians 3:19. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge? What do you think Paul meant?

10. The result of knowing Christ's love is to be "filled with all the fullness of God." How can you be "filled up to the measure of all the fullness of God?" Colossians 2:9,10.

#### DAY SIX

Read Ephesians 3:20-21

Notice that Paul now shifts his emphasis in verses 20-21 as he closes this beautiful prayer.

1. What do these two verses teach you about:

**G o d** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Your relationship to Him: (I Corinthians 2:9) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Study the doxology (verses 20-21) very carefully. It is a very important part of Paul's prayer. Who is the central person here? What does Paul ascribe to Him?

*"Now to Him Who, by the power that is at work within us, is able to do superabundantly far over and above all that we ask or think - infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes or dreams. . ."*  
Ephesians 3:20, Amplified Version

3. Compare what God is "able to do" with what we "ask or think."
4. Note Ephesians 1:19-20. What two exceeding great things does verse 20 state were wrought by God's power?
  - a. What does I Corinthians 6:19 tell us about this power?

**PERSONAL:** What are you asking God for right now? Are you limiting His abilities in any way? Rewrite verse 20 in your own words to reinforce what God is able to do.

*Paul's prayer in Ephesians Chapter 3 is a "launching pad" for the journey into the final three chapters of Ephesians. Because of the power of God, the riches of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are able to walk as new creatures in Christ.*

