

Text: Eph 3.1-3

We just covered Ephesians 2. Here is our outline of the chapter:

1. Verses 1-10: The work of God in Saving Men (individual salvation)
2. Verses 11-22: The Work of God in Creating a New Order
 - a. 11-13: The work in the Gentiles (drawing near)
 - b. 14-18: The work of peacemaking (breaking the wall)
 - c. 19-22: The work of church building (building with living stones)

The revelation of a “new order” (*i.e.* the Church) is the BIG IDEA of Ephesians, and Paul will continue to reflect on it as we move to chapter 3.

I. Structure of the passage**A. In relation to the whole book**

1. Most divide Ephesians into two sections (1-3, 4-6)
2. One commentator seems to have three (1-2, 3-4, 5-6)
3. The first section (1-3) is further subdivided
 - a. Chapter 1
 - b. Chapter 2-3

B. Putting chapter 3 in context

1. Begins with a reference to what went before (“for this reason”)
2. But he has an immediate interruption, then interrupts himself again
 - a. “For this reason ...” (1); “For this reason ...” (14)
 - b. “If ...” (2); “therefore...” (13)

C. Breaking up the thought of 1-13

1. From my Gk NT, three sentences (though commentaries say 2-13 is one long sentence)
 - a. First 1-7
 - b. Second 8-12
 - c. Third 13
2. NASB gives us five sentences
 - a. First 1-3
 - b. Second 4-7
 - c. Third 8-10
 - d. Fourth 11-12
 - e. Fifth 13

My plan is to follow the NASB divisions to help us work through the logic of the passage

II. The special nature of apostleship (1-3)

A. The opening fragment (1)

1. Backwards pointing — ‘for this reason’
2. Emphatically identifies himself
3. Two expansions on his identity
 - a. Prisoner
 - b. For your sake
4. Prisoner of Christ
 - a. Literal: in a Roman prison for the cause of Christ
 - b. Metaphorical: enslaved to Christ, imprisoned by Christ — he uses a striking figure to express his loyalty to Christ
5. For the sake of you Gentiles

Lit. “on behalf of you the ethnics”

- a. Literal: his ministry to the Gentiles enraged the Jews which led to his present predicament (Acts 21ff.)
- b. Metaphorical: he was willing to suffer in the place of those to whom or for whom he preaches

B. The description of the stewardship (2-3)

1. if indeed you have heard
 - a. His mention of imprisonment for Gentiles leads to this digression
 - b. Most likely they have heard of his special appt to Gentile ministry
 - 1) Directly from Paul
 - 2) Possibly “about Paul” from others
 - 3) Note: God still gives specific ministries, in specialized areas — a location, a group of people, a certain niche in the Kingdom
2. of the stewardship of God's grace

a. Stewardship (NAU) = dispensation (KJV) [economy, English derivative]

“Administration (Gr. *oikonomia*, dispensation, v. 9; 1:10) here has the idea of the management of someone else’s business (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Col. 1:25). Paul viewed God as in the process of dispensing His grace throughout history through various administrators. Paul’s responsibility was to carry God’s grace to all people but particularly to the Gentiles (cf. v. 8; 2:7).”¹

b. Stewardship is the special task of giving the gospel to Gentiles “which was given to me for you”

“Paul does all of this ‘for you’—that is, the goal of his ministry is not self-aggrandizement but the salvation of the lost. He has no interest in what he might get out of it, only in what God can do through him for the benefit of the Gentiles. Ministry is not a job or a career; it is a joy and a privilege, a high calling and sign of divine grace for all who are gifted to be a part of it.”²

c. This stewardship is a “mystery”

1) Previously unknown

2) Now revealed

d. This stewardship made known to Paul by revelation

Ac 9.15-16 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

Ac 22.17-21 ¶ “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, ¹⁸ and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Eph 3.2.

² Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, 80.

testimony about Me.’¹⁹ “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.’²⁰ ‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’²¹ “And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Gal 2.7,⁹ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised ...⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.