

# To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace

## Ephesians 3:1–5

*Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,*

The Greek word for *prisoner* is #1198 *desmios*. Strong's defines the word "a captive (as bound) — in bonds, prisoner." Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the word "bound, in bonds, a captive, a prisoner." The word is used in Matthew 27:16, Mark 15:6, Acts 28:16,<sup>1</sup> etc. When the apostle spoke these words they were true both figuratively and literally. The apostle was bound to his call, just as he was prisoner, and bodily held captive in Rome.<sup>2,1</sup> What Paul's captivity in Rome reveals is the great extent that the apostle was willing to suffer for the expansion of the gospel. In both body and soul he consented to being bound, in order that the great revelation of Christ's resurrection, ascension, and glorification might be fully proclaimed in the world. In seeking to make known his Christ, the apostle was willing to endure the imprisonment of himself. So great was Paul's love for the truth, that he was willing to sacrifice his own bodily freedom for it. To Paul, his own life was

not nearly as important as the ministry that he had received from the Lord Jesus. (Acts 20:24) *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Acts 20:24) *Neither count I my life* — I do not consider my life as so valuable as to be retained by turning away from bonds and persecutions. I am certain of bonds and afflictions; I am willing also, if it be necessary, to lay down my life in the prosecution of the same purpose.

*Dear unto myself* — So precious or valuable as to be retained at the sacrifice of duty. I am willing to sacrifice it if it be necessary. This was the spirit of the Saviour, and of all the early Christians. Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered. (END QUOTE)

There is nothing more precious that a man can give, than his life. This was visible in the Savior;<sup>3</sup> it was equally manifest in the

1 Matt. 27:16 *And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.*

Mark 15:6 *Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.*

Acts 28:16 *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*

2 Acts 28:16 *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*

Acts 28:30–31 *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, <sup>31</sup>Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

3 John 10:11 *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Matt. 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

I Tim. 2:5–6 *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; <sup>6</sup>Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

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apostles He chose to bear His name. At the base of all true ministry, is a heart of selflessness. Ultimately none will ever be effective in ministry, than those willing to suffer loss and sacrifice for it. At their core, true Christians must be generous Christians. It is this that Christ demands of His followers, and this that His followers will not hesitate to demand of themselves.

*For this cause.* The cause spoken of concerns what has just been mentioned in the previous verses. It entails the Ephesians being included in the building of the Lord's holy temple, wherein God shall eternally dwell, through the Spirit, both in and among His people. This revelation at the time was considered new revelation, detailing the heavenly construction of a holy, albeit spiritual temple, having Jesus Christ as its cornerstone, and proclaimed through the apostles and prophets, whom Christ had sent. In this divine, holy, and eternal structure, the Lord shall be worshiped and praised as He justly deserves to be. Understandably, for the Lord, Who is Spirit, to be properly worshiped, there needed to be created spiritual beings born of the same nature as Him,<sup>4</sup> whereby through His own holy, spiritual nature, He could be worshiped in the purity and holiness, which alone is worthy of Him. (John 4:24) *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

(Benson Commentary, John 4:24) If we do not worship God, who is a Spirit, in spirit, we neither give him the glory due to his name,

and so do not perform a real and proper act of worship, nor can we hope to attain his favour, and acceptance with him, and so we miss the end of worship. (END QUOTE)

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(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, John 4:24) *God is a Spirit.*—Better, God is spirit. His will has been expressed in the seeking. But His very nature and essence is spirit, and it follows from this that all true worship must be spiritual. (END QUOTE)

The day of Pentecost—which was that day the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with divers kinds of tongues the wonderful works of God<sup>5</sup>— is the first New Testament example of spiritual worship, produced through the inspiration and prompting of the Spirit in Christ's followers. The book of Acts records this earth-shattering and stunning event. (Acts 2:1–4) *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Once the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit prompted, inspired, and enabled them to speak clearly and distinctly in the languages of the people present, concerning the glorious work that God had accomplished through His Son. The sending of the Spirit was one of

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Tit. 2:14 *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

I Pet. 2:24 *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

4 Ezek. 11:19–20 *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: <sup>20</sup>That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

Eph. 4:24 *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

5 Acts 2:11 *Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

the last promises of the Son of God,<sup>6</sup> and practically fulfilled His earthly mission of saving those called to God through Himself. Jesus also prophesied how His followers would speak with new tongues,<sup>7</sup> providing even more enlightenment to the prophecy in Isaiah 28:11: *For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.* The difference between the prophecy in Isaiah, and what is observed in Acts, is that in Isaiah the foreign tongues spoken by the Assyrian conquerors, would accomplish what Israel's tongue could not. Thus, captivity by a foreign power, who spoke a foreign language would instruct Israel, where God's prophets had failed. Because Israel refused to hear God's voice through those messengers sent by Him, another, more forceful and harsh nation would teach them, what they stubbornly refused to believe in their own language.

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Isa. 28:11)* Here it means in a foreign or barbarous tongue; and the sense is, that the lessons which God wished to teach would be conveyed to them through the language of foreigners — the Chaldeans. They should be removed to a distant land, and there, in hearing a strange speech, in living long among foreigners, they should learn the lesson which they refused to do when addressed by the prophets in their own land. (END QUOTE)

What is different on the day of Pentecost, is that it was not a foreign and barbaric power that would chasten Israel, reminding them to believe the truth of God's Word, but rather that it would be the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, who through their speaking in new tongues, provided a glimpse of the day that all mankind, of every language, and of every tongue will

worship and praise God as one. Ultimately, it was evidenced on the day of Pentecost that through the giving of the Spirit of God, and the unity it produces in all who receive it, the Lord shall be praised throughout the earth, whereby all peoples and all languages shall glorify the Lord in one harmonious Spirit.

*(Benson Commentary, Acts 2:4)* They spake not from any previous thought, *but as the Spirit gave them utterance* — He furnished them with the matter, as well as the language. And this family, praising God together with the tongues of all the world, was an earnest that the whole world should, in due time, praise God in their various tongues. (END QUOTE)

The result of those hearing the apostles who were themselves Galileans speak the wonderful works of God in their own languages, prompted them to marvel and be overcome with spiritual amazement. (Acts 2:7–11) *And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Acts 2:11)* *The wonderful works of God* — τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ Θεοῦ *ta megaleia tou Theou.* The great things of God; that is, the great things that God had done in the gift of his Son; in raising him from the dead; in his miracles, ascension, etc. Compare Luke 1:49; Psalm 71:19;

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:4–5 *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.* <sup>7</sup>For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 16:17 *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*

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Psalm 26:7; Psalm 66:3; Psalm 92:5; Psalm 104:24; etc.<sup>8</sup> (END QUOTE)

The *wonderful works of God* spoken by the apostles, undoubtedly, when we consider the context of events previous to the giving of the Spirit, related to Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and glorification. It was also through sending forth the Spirit, that provided proof to all whom it came upon, that they were now regarded as the children of God.<sup>9</sup>

The day of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after the Passover, was a reminder and celebration in the Jewish tradition<sup>10</sup> of the Law being given to Moses. It was on this ceremonious day—when all

the males were required to be in Jerusalem, like also they were required to do at the other two major Jewish feasts, Passover and the Feast of tabernacles—that the Lord chose to send the prophesied Holy Spirit upon His people,<sup>11</sup> indicating the arrival of a new covenant, whereby through Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification, sinners could be made righteous before God.<sup>12</sup> From Passover,<sup>13</sup> which celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt, to Pentecost (the feast of weeks), which celebrated the giving of the Law,<sup>14</sup> the Spirit was given to reveal that a new dispensation had arrived replacing the Law. Where before the feast of weeks was a celebration of the giving of the Mosaic Law, now it would mark, and

8 Luke 1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

Ps. 71:19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

Ps. 26:7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

Ps. 66:3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

Ps. 92:5 O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

Ps. 104:24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

9 Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

10 Exod. 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

11 Isa. 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Isa. 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Joel 2:28-29 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

<sup>29</sup>And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Ezek. 36:26-27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

12 Rom. 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

II Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Phil. 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

I Cor. 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

Rom. 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; <sup>22</sup>Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

13 Lev. 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's passover.

14 Lev. 23:16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

be remembered for the Lord sending the prophesied Holy Spirit through His Son.

For the gospel to quickly and fully spread, it was necessary that through a miracle of God, and the inspiration of the Spirit, the redemptive and saving ministry of the Son of God might be fully known. Because all the Israelite males were required to be at Pentecost,<sup>15</sup> the time for sending the Spirit could not have been better. What ultimately prompted such amazement when the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ's followers, was that the languages spoken by them, were not known to them, but rather were the tongues of the varying visitors at Jerusalem, who would ultimately return home and recount all the marvelous events they had both seen and heard. Thus, we see one of the great purposes for the apostles speaking in divers kinds of tongues, was for the purpose of Christ's name being spread abroad. The praises of God that came out of those filled with the Spirit, were in languages and dialects completely foreign to them. By this was evidenced the tremendous power of the Spirit, which enabled those who received It, to praise God both in a holiness and in a beauty, which prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not available. The deeper reality of this moment also revealed, that now, there had arisen a new way of worshiping and praising the Lord, through the Spirit of the Lord. It is this same Holy Spirit that lives within the children of God today,

which enables them to praise, worship, and glorify God, as He rightly should be.

*I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.* What is remarkable about Paul defining himself as a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*, is that to truly spread a knowledge of the freedom found in the Son of God,<sup>16</sup> those ministers sent by Him, must forfeit their own personal freedom. Consequently, Paul's personal ministry demonstrates that for the gospel to fully spread and become made known to the world, then it is necessary that those called to ministry, bind themselves to their call. Revealing that for sinners to be set free, it is both necessary and essential that others who themselves have been chosen by Jesus Christ, become bound to the Lord's call for their life. It is this denial of self, which is the foundation of becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ. It is also this selflessness, which is critical for believers to carry their cross, in advancing the gospel throughout the world. (Matt. 16:24) *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Matt. 16:24*) *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross.*—Our common thoughts of "self-denial," *i.e.*, the denial to ourselves of some pleasure or profit, fall far short of the meaning of the Greek. The man is to deny his whole self, all his natural motives and impulses, so far as they come into conflict with the claims of Christ. If he does not so deny

15 *Exod. 23:14–17* Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. <sup>15</sup>Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty.) <sup>16</sup>And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. <sup>17</sup>Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the LORD God.

16 *Luke 4:18* The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

*John 8:36* If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

*II Cor. 3:17* Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

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himself, he is in danger, as Peter was (it is significant that the same word is used in both instances), of denying his Lord. The self-denial here commanded has, accordingly, its highest type and pattern in the act by which the Son of God, in becoming man, “emptied Himself (see Note on Philippians 2:7<sup>17</sup>) of all that constituted, if we may so speak, the “self” of His divine nature. (END QUOTE)

***Ephesians 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:***

The apostle Paul’s ordination had specific relationship to the Gentiles and the door opening for their salvation,<sup>18</sup> through faith in the Son of God, and being made new creatures through Him. It is this which entails *the dispensation of the grace of God*.<sup>19</sup> No doubt, Paul was fully aware of the great spiritual responsibility entrusted to him by the Son of God.

It was for this reason that he counted it an inestimable privilege, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, even if it both entailed and required his own imprisonment. The great honor also,<sup>20</sup> of being selected and chosen, to bear Christ’s name, the apostle realized, was solely because of grace.<sup>21</sup> It was also for the purpose of helping the unsaved believe that Paul was willing to allow his own life to be both bound and held captive. Knowing that faith is precious<sup>22</sup> is what ultimately inspired the apostle to give his own life in service to the Son of God, so that others might also believe and be saved through Him. (Tit. 1:1) *Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.*

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Tit. 1:1) *According to the faith of God’s elect* — Compare the Romans 8:33 note; Ephesians 1:4 note;

17 Phil. 2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

18 I Tim. 2:7 *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.*

II Tim. 1:11 *Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*

Eph. 3:8-9 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; <sup>9</sup>And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*

Gal. 2:8 *(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)*

Acts 22:21 *And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*

19 II Cor. 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Gal. 6:15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Eph. 4:23–24 *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; <sup>24</sup>And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

Col. 3:10 *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

Rom. 7:6 *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

20 I Cor. 3:10 *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

21 Gal. 1:15–16 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup>To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

Gal. 2:9 *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*

22 II Pet. 1:1 *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:*

2 Timothy 2:10 note.<sup>23</sup> The meaning of the word rendered here, “according to” — *κατὰ kata* — is, probably, with reference to; that is, he was appointed to be an apostle with respect to the faith of those whom God had chosen, or, in order that they might be led to believe the gospel. God had chosen them to salvation, but he intended that it should be in connection with their believing, and, in order to that, he had appointed Paul to be an apostle that he might go and make known to them the gospel. It is the purpose of God to save His people, but he does not mean to save them as infidels, or unbelievers. He intends that they shall be believers first - and hence he sends his ministers that they may become such. (END QUOTE)

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(Benson Commentary, Tit. 1:1) *According to the faith of God's elect* — That is, God's true people; the propagation of which faith was the proper business of an apostle. (END QUOTE)

It was for the spiritual reason, of helping others to believe, that prompted the apostle to forfeit his own freedom. Teaching us that faith is so important that it is more than reasonable, to both yield and sacrifice our own lives for its advancement. It was this *dispensation*, and/or stewardship of the gospel, purposed to bring others to faith, that ultimately defined the apostle's reason for living.

The *dispensation of the grace of God* spoken of, of which Paul was commissioned to be a steward, had direct relationship to the grace of God provided to man, through God's Son. It is from *his fullness*, Jesus' own fullness, that Christians are blessed with both *grace and truth*. (John 1:16–17) *And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* There is no greater revelation offered to man, than that which reveals that sinners need not to be saved through themselves, but can be saved through the grace of faith whereby through it, and not through any work of self, salvation can be gained.<sup>24</sup> Abraham is one of the great early biblical examples of an individual receiving God's righteousness, through possessing faith in his God.<sup>25</sup> (Rom. 4:3) *For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* Today, this same righteousness is made available through faith in the Son of God.<sup>26</sup> To sincerely and genuinely believe upon the Son of God, shall result in being made righteous before God. It is this *dispensation* of the gospel, which was entrusted to Paul, that he sought to make known to the world. It is also this same knowledge of the truth, that we have been entrusted with today. To declare to sinners, that if

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 8:33 *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

Eph. 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

II Tim. 2:10 *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

<sup>24</sup> Eph. 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

Phil. 3:9 *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 15:6 *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

Rom. 4:9 *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

Rom. 4:22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

Gal. 3:6 *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

Jas. 2:23 *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 3:21–22 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; <sup>22</sup>Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.*

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they truly desire to stand righteous before the Lord, then they need only to, sincerely and genuinely believe upon the One sent to reveal Him.<sup>27</sup>

**Ephesians 3:3** *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,*

*(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Eph. 3:3) How that by revelation — see the notes at Galatians 1:12.<sup>28</sup> He refers to the revelation which was made to him when he was called to the apostolic office, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and that he was converted for the special purpose of carrying it to them; see Acts 9:15; Acts 22:21.<sup>29</sup> (END QUOTE)*

The Greek word for *mystery* is #3466 *mustérion*. *Tayer's Greek Lexicon* defines the word as "1. a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding ... 2. a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will ... [3.] it denotes the mystic or hidden sense." The *Strong's Concordance* defines the word, "a mystery or secret doctrine." In regard to its usage, *The Strong's* states "a mystery, secret, of which initiation is necessary; in the NT: the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation."

Practically, *mustérion* is used in connection with God revealing some new and previously hidden spiritual truth, through divine inspiration. The word is

used in the context of, generally something beautiful being revealed, that was previously unknown. Some of the places where *mustérion* is seen in Scripture include the *mystery* of God, that hidden wisdom, purposed for our glory. (I Cor. 2:7) *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.* Ephesians also previously spoke of the *mystery* of God's will, concerning that day when all things both in heaven, and in earth, shall be gathered together in one, under God's Son. (Eph. 1:9–10) *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.* Jesus also spoke of the *mystery of the kingdom of God* revealed to His disciples, but only vaguely made visible to the multitudes in parables. (Mark 4:11) *And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.* Colossians also speaks of that *mystery* concerning Christ in you, which is the great hope of believers being raised in glory with the Son of God. (Col. 1:25–27) *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom*

<sup>27</sup> *Matt. 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

<sup>28</sup> *John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

<sup>29</sup> *John 17:25–26 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. <sup>26</sup> And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

<sup>28</sup> *Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>29</sup> *Acts 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*

*Acts 22:21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*

*God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* Lastly, First Timothy speaks of that *mystery of godliness* found in Jesus Christ when He was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and received up into glory. This mystery regarding the person of Jesus the Son of God, from Whom all true godliness originates, is perhaps the greatest mystery of all. (I Tim. 3:16) *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* By these verses and others, it is easy to see, that the word *mustérion* is almost always used in connection with some beautiful spiritual truth being revealed, which was previously hidden to man, truth that only God's Holy Spirit, can ultimately initiate and enlighten men to.

***Ephesians 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)***

What was true of the Ephesians coming to know that apostle's knowledge of the mystery of Christ, is also true of us, which is that God's Word must be *read*, studied, and meditated upon, if we are ever to come to know, the mysteries of God's secret plans for the saved. The mere reading of God's Word is also not a new concept, especially when we remember that only those who read, listen to, and obey

God's Word will be blessed.<sup>30</sup> Jesus also rebuked many in His day, for not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God, simply because they had either not read, or believed what was previously revealed concerning the resurrection of the dead.<sup>31</sup> What this teaches us is that for a man to come to know the truth, and the power of God made available through it, reading the Word of God is essential. For none can believe, unless they hear,<sup>32</sup> and there is no greater way to privately hear God, than when we are willing to meditate and dwell on His holy Word. Jesus also stated that the words He spoke were both Spirit and life,<sup>33</sup> and the same reality is true concerning the holy Scriptures we hold today. Because God's Word is God's life, then it can, when both read and believed upon, result in the life of God entering ourselves.

***Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;***

The means by which the mystery of God was made known, Paul reveals is through the ministries of Christ's *holy apostles and prophets*. There has always been an argument that the Bible, the Word of God, was written by men. But what is unknown to the unsaved and unbelieving, is that God's Word never has originated in the will of man. (II Pet. 1:21) *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

30 Rev. 1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

31 Matt. 22:29-32 *Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. <sup>30</sup>For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. <sup>31</sup>But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, <sup>32</sup>I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

32 Rom. 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

33 John 6:63 *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

## To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, II Pet. 1:21) The word “prophecy” here is without the article, meaning prophecy in general — all that is prophetic in the Old Testament; or, in a more general sense still, all that the prophets taught, whether relating to future events or not.

*By the will of man* — It was not of human origin; not discovered by the human mind. The word “will,” here seems to be used in the sense of “prompting” or “suggestion;” men did not speak by their own suggestion, but as truth was brought to them by God.

*But holy men of God* — Pious men commissioned by God, or employed by him as his messengers to mankind.

*Spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* - Compare 2 Timothy 3:16.<sup>34</sup> The Greek phrase here (ὑπὸ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου φερόμενος *hupo Pneumatos Hagiau pheromenos*) means “borne along, moved, influenced” by the Holy Ghost. The idea is, that in what they spake they were “carried along” by an influence from above. They moved in the case only as they were moved; they spake only as the influence of the Holy Ghost was upon them. They were no more self-moved than a vessel at sea is that is impelled by the wind; and as the progress made by the vessel is to be measured by the impulse bearing upon it, so the statements made by the prophets are to be traced to the impulse which bore upon their minds. They were not, indeed, in all respects like such a vessel, but only in regard to the fact that all they said as prophets was to be traced to the foreign influence that bore upon their minds. (END QUOTE)

Examples of God’s Spirit prompting His prophets to bring forth spiritual truth include:

*I Samuel 10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.*

*II Samuel 23:2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.*

*Jeremiah 20:9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*

*Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

The means by which God revealed both His Word, and his will, in the Old Testament, was by His Spirit speaking through those divinely appointed messengers, appointed by Him. What was true in the Old Testament, is equally true in the New Testament whereby Jesus’ apostles and prophets, have brought forth that which Christ revealed to them. Hence, both in the Old Testament and in the New, *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. This is the means by which the apostle received an understanding of the mystery of Christ. And this is also why saints can maintain great confidence, that what is being revealed in the wonderful book of Ephesians, has its source in God, and not man.

<sup>34</sup> *II Tim. 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

Endnotes

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PAUL'S LETTERS AND MISSIONARY JOURNEYS				
YEAR A.D.	MAJOR EVENTS	ACTS	PERIOD	LETTERS
34	Conversion, Damascus, Arabia	9	3 years - Arabia	
37	Jerusalem, Tarsus, Syria, Cilicia			
46-47	Antioch, Jerusalem	11	1 year - Antioch	
48-49	First Missionary Journey and Antioch	13-14		Galatians
50	Jerusalem Council and Antioch	15		
51-53	Second Missionary Journey	16-18	18 months - Corinth	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians
53-54	Antioch			
54-57	Third Missionary Journey	19-21	3 years - Ephesus	1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans
57	Jerusalem Arrest	22-23		
57-59	Caesarea Prisoner	24-26	2 years	
59-60	Journey to Rome	27-28		
60-67 circa	Rome House Arrest	28	5-7 years circa	Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy

“Paul’s Letters and Missionary Journeys Chart.” ConformingToJesus.Com, [www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/paul’s\\_letters-journeys\\_chart.htm](http://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/paul’s_letters-journeys_chart.htm). Accessed 12 Oct. 2024.