

The Hidden Mystery of the Christ

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[0:00] How we doing? Fair play to Midland, Texas.

! Fair play is about the middle of Colorado. Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Ephesians.

I know, you're used to going to Haggai. Flip on over to Ephesians chapter 3, where we continue as we walk through this great book.

Remember, this book of Ephesians really is about the essentials for healthy Christianity. What is healthy Christianity?

What is sound? What is growing? What is growing toward maturity? What does Christianity really look like? So on one half, the first part of the book is what do Christians believe?

[1:17] What has God done? So chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Ephesians are about what God has done, the blessings. And chapters 4, 5, and 6 are about how we walk.

What is the walk of a Christian? What does the lifestyle look like of a Christian? What are the choices and values of a Christian? So these are the essentials, the basics, the fundamentals of what a true Christian life is, what we believe and what we do.

Remember, chapter 1, we saw the blessings, right? Blessed is the Lord Jesus who has blessed us in every way with every spiritual blessing.

And then he begins to enumerate things that we've been chosen, we've been adopted, we've been redeemed. Right? And so he's talking about these blessings that we have.

And then he offers a prayer into chapter 1 to understand what these blessings are about. Chapter 2 gets into salvation. What does it mean that we're saved? And so Paul goes into explicit detail about what we're saved from, what we were before, and then how we've been made alive and we've been raised up with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

[2:34] That's our salvation and then what it results in, in good works. And then the second part he talks about the formation of the church. The church that is central to the mission of Christ.

The church that is essential and central to every Christian's life. Every true Christian's life is embracing the Christian community where they live.

And then now we come to chapter 3 where Paul kind of takes a little bit of a diversion. He starts chapter 1, you'll see, as he's going to start to pray and then he interrupts himself.

He prays later, but he kind of interrupts himself and talks about, for some reason, something comes to mind, something the Spirit brought to his mind to talk about that is essential for us to understand about the mystery of Christ, the hidden mystery of the Christ.

And that's what we're looking at today in chapter 3, verses 1 through 7. So it's a little different.

Paul's going to talk about himself a lot, which is not normal.

[3:47] But it's essential. There's something we need to understand about Paul because it impacts us. What God has called him to do has an impact on us.

So let's read first and then we'll pray and then we'll jump in and dig into the text. So if you're able, please stand. As I read from chapter 3 of the book of Ephesians.

Chapter 3, verses 1 through 7. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you, that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

To be specific, that the mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

[5:32] Of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of his power.

So it reads. Let us pray for God to come and teach us. Father, we ask you to come. This is your day.

We are your people. We are in your house. This is about you. And so as we take these moments, Lord, to consider carefully the words of Paul, as he writes about himself, about his own role, his own identity, what you've given him to do for us.

Help us to grasp the significance, to see the impact of what this mystery is and what difference it makes in our own lives. So teach us, change us, transform us, grow us.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. So Paul, just a little quick background on Paul.

[6:49] We know that Paul was converted quite dramatically. It's described in the book of Acts chapter 9.

Paul is on his way on the Damascus road. He's on his way to go persecute more Christians. He believes Jesus and Christianity is a cult and he is zealously going to stomp it out.

And so he's on his way. He's even got authority from the chief priests to go and arrest more of these so-called Christians and drag them by the hair if he has to into court, force them to blaspheme, force them to deny this Jesus whom they proclaim.

And on his way, we remember, he's on his way and there's this light that shines. And Paul is blinded by the light, literally blinded by the light. And he hears a voice from heaven.

Paul. Well, Saul back then. Saul. Why are you persecuting me? Saul. Kind of going, excuse me.

[8:01] He says, who are you, Lord? And to his great surprise, he finds out that the Lord, the voice from heaven is Jesus himself.

Is Jesus himself. And then he is given not an option. Not a, not a, not a invitation to sign up.

Not a choice to walk down an aisle. Not a choice to raise his hand and accept Jesus into his heart.

He is given a commission.

He doesn't get a choice. I have called you to go to the Gentiles and to preach my name and to suffer for my name's sake.

Here's a change. Here's Paul going this way. He knows he's right. He's got his Judaism doctrine down pat. He knows this Jesus is wrong.

[9:06] And here he goes. And on the way, the light shines. And all of a sudden, he's going this way. It's called conversion. Called conversion.

And Paul explains this conversion later on in the book of Acts chapter 26. He's before King Agrippa.

And he's been arrested and he's explaining what's going on. He says this in Acts 26, 12. Talking about how he was sent to go and to punish all these people who are believing in Jesus.

Forced them to blaspheme and furiously enraged at them. He said, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. Verse 12. While thus engaged, as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven.

Brighter than the sun. Shining all around me and those who are journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground. So he sees the light, falls to the ground.

[10:24] That's a knock off the horse kind of ground. Kind of light. We had fallen to the ground. I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

It is hard for you to kick against the goads. In other words, man, you're going the wrong way here, dude. And I said, who art thou, Lord?

And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But arise and stand on your feet. For this purpose I have appeared to you. To appoint you a minister and a witness.

Not only to the things which you have seen. But also to the things in which I will appear to you.

Delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles.

To whom I'm sending you. Here's your mission. To open their eyes. So that they may turn from darkness to light. And from the dominion of Satan to God.

[11:29] In order that they may receive the forgiveness of sins. And an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.

Here's your commission, Paul. Here's your new life plan. He was arrested in Jerusalem for preaching a law free gospel to the Gentiles.

He was accused in Acts 21 of teaching against the law. As a prisoner, he went from prison in Jerusalem. To prison in Caesarea for two years.

And then in Acts 28 he finally ends up in Rome. Where the letter of Acts ends in chapter 28.

Paul is now in Rome. This is where he will be on trial. And he will face the Caesar himself. He will go before Caesar himself.

[12:28] He's gone before authorities. He's gone before kings. Now he will go before the ultimate earthly authority. Caesar himself. Who will ultimately at the end kill him.

This is the well-known Caesar. Not Augustus. Is it Nero?

Yeah, it was Nero. It was Nero. Put him in that arena. The Colosseum. Where they put Christians out.

And they let the lions out. That was Paul's end. Anyway, he's in prison. And he's in Rome.

And where he writes a whole bunch of letters. When he's in prison, Paul doesn't just sit around in prison. He writes letters. Right? That's how we have most of the New Testament. It's Paul's letters to churches. Because he's got time on his hands.

[13:28] And he's still pastoring people. He's caring about people. He's sending people. And one of those letters that he writes from Rome at the end of Acts. Is the letter of Ephesians. So, here we have in Ephesians 3.

Paul talking about himself a lot. In fact, I want you to notice how personal it is. Verse 1. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner. Verse 2.

He's talking about a stewardship of God's grace. Which was given to me. Right? Verse 3. By the revelation there was made known to me the mystery. Verse 4.

When you read about this. You can understand my insight into the mystery. And then verse 7. I was made a minister. And the gift of God's grace was given to me.

Verse 8. To me. So, there's a bunch of me's in there. There's a bunch of I's in there. There's a bunch of descriptions about his ministry. His identity. His role. To me.

[14:29] To me. To me. Actually, 8 times he refers to himself in the 8 verses. Which is not normal. That's not Paul. Paul's focus is on other things. But there's something important.

I bring it up because there's something important we need to understand about Paul. So, why is it that he wants us to understand his role as a steward and as a minister? It is God's revelation of the hidden mystery given to Paul impacts us.

That's why. He wants us to understand how this mystery of the gospel came to Gentiles. Since the Old Testament, the prophets before were all about the Jewish nation.

How does the Gentiles come in all said? It's called a hidden mystery. A hidden secret. Something that God did not reveal before but now reveals specifically to the apostles and the prophets and to Paul.

So, this is what we know. So, note the personality thing. The person part here. He's going to talk about his identity. His role as ministry. We will gain insight into Paul himself as he reveals this.

[15:44] I already mentioned, notice, you know, that he interrupts his thought. He begins in verse 1. For this reason. And then he talks about himself as a prisoner. He interrupts himself. And you go down to verse 14.

He picks it back up in verse 14. For this reason, I bow the knee. So, most scholars believe that's where he was going in verse 1. For this reason, I bow my knee.

We bow our knees before the Father. But as he thinks of that, he's interrupting himself and brings something else to us for us to understand. It's a topic of value for us.

He tells us his identity in verse 1. How does he describe himself in verse 1? I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ.

Actually, he's a physical prisoner of Rome. But his identity is, I'm a prisoner of Jesus. I'm in bonds for Jesus.

[16:58] That's not a bad thing. I belong to Christ. I owe everything to Christ. I am under Christ's control and his will. Whatever he wants is what I do.

He wants me in prison. That's where I'm to be. I mean, you read through Acts and it's kind of this developing story. Right?

And he's been accused wrongly. But he's in prison. And while he's in prison, what's God's purpose for him in prison? He's writing all these folks.

He's writing all these folks that are benefiting in the first century. Now, we're benefiting in the... Are we in the 21st century now? Yeah, sorry. Okay. I'm slow to catch up. But it's only 26 years into it, so it's...

I'm still... So for... But he's a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you. So he sees his identity not only as I belong to Jesus Christ and I'm a prisoner, but I'm a prisoner for you.

[18:02] I serve the church. I serve you. Which is interesting. His identity affects his perspective. His identity as a prisoner of Jesus affects his perspective on the trials that he's going through and the sufferings that he's going through through the hardships that he's going through.

See, and that applies to us. Our identity affects our perspective. What's your identity? What's your identity? Is your identity a prisoner of Jesus Christ?

Or a servant of Jesus Christ? If that's your real identity, that will impact. It will affect your perspective on whatever's going on in your life. Hardship, health issues.

Right? Waiting on God. It will impact you. Then he wants to tell us about his role. He's going to bring up this...

That he's a steward of the mysteries. And so we learn also from Paul that your role affects your impact. Whatever your role is, what's the role that God gave to Paul?

[19:19] Well, he's a steward. He's been given this revelation. He's to be faithful with it and pass it on. So that's his role as an apostle.

He will talk about himself as a steward. Somebody entrusted with the gospel to give that out. What's our role? So that's a way to apply this next part.

What's your role? What's your role? How do you know what your role is? So we'll get to that in a minute. But your role will affect, will impact the body of Christ.

The role that God has given you will impact your impact on the body. So let's look at this.

What is Paul's role? So two clarifications he wants to make. First of all, in verses 2 through 4, he's going to talk about his role as a steward. And because he's got a stewardship of the mysteries of God, can we wait, Raj?

[20:25] Raj? You're fine. Go ahead. No, you're distracting. I'm sorry. I need to turn this off. Turn it off. Go ahead.

Sorry, folks. All right. Where am I? Two to four. So as a steward, his role as a steward impacts our confidence that Paul's word is Christ's word.

He wants us to understand that his stewardship as of the mystery of what he's what's been revealed to him and what he's passing on to us. We can have confidence in because it's not Paul's word.

Because it's not Paul's word, but Christ's word. That's the point. And then secondly, in verses 5 through 7, he's going to show us that the revelation of the mystery brings assurance to us.

He wants us to understand this mystery, this hidden mystery of Christ will give us assurance when we understand what the mystery is.

[21:33] Pray for me. I'm distracted. Sorry. Sorry. So first clarification. Paul says, he talks about his role as steward of the mystery gives us confidence that the word that Paul gives us is the word of Christ.

That's really important. If you're reading the Bible, we're saying, well, well, that's what Paul says. I only care about what Jesus says. Jesus is the son of God. Jesus is the one who's given. Right. The father gives him the words to say and he says the words.

And I can trust what Jesus says. But Paul's different. But in fact, Paul has some views that I don't like. And I hear that. You know, we take those verses out if we don't agree with Paul.

What Paul says about women. What Paul says about authority. I'm not comfortable with those things. I don't agree. I agree with that. That's Paul. Paul says, nope.

That's from him. What I say is what he says. Therefore, you can have confidence that his word is Christ's word.

[22:43] So student, what's stewardship? Three points here. He's going to talk about the stewardship. He's going to mention this mystery. And then he's going to talk about understanding the insight. So the stewardship, a steward is a house manager.

Literally, one who manages a house. So he's taking care of things. He's a trustee. Supervising and directing. Caring and administering those things that belong to the house.

Or in Paul's case, he's a trustee of those things that God has given to him. What belongs to God. So he's entrusting. He's entrusted with something valuable that he's going to call this mystery. And a steward. Paul later says in Corinthians, a steward is required to be trustworthy. He's required to be faithful. Because it's not his things.

It's God's things. So we're taking care of those things. He's given us this responsibility. And we're to carry out the responsibility faithfully. And with honesty and trustworthiness.

[23:46] Then verse 3 refers to the mystery. Some translations have it as secret. The secret. And that word in Greek, *mysterion*, is also understood as a secret.

This mystery is what he's entrusted with. It's the stewardship of the mystery. And he tells us in verse 3 that this mystery came by revelation.

By revelation that was made known to me the mystery which I wrote before in brief. Back in chapter 1 verse 9 he referred to it before. But a mystery is something that's previously unknown.

It's a secret. It's a hidden secret. Or as we've titled this, a hidden mystery. In the Old Testament this was hidden. This was not revealed before.

And God revealed it to Paul. Paul says I did not learn it from others. I did not learn it through my study. It was a direct revelation. An uncovering.

[24:53] So revelation means to uncover. So it makes sense. He's revealing a mystery. A secret. A hidden secret. A hidden mystery. Previously not known.

Then he says in verse 4, why am I doing this? By referring to this, why is he giving us all this background about what he has? By referring to this he says, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.

So he wants us to have understanding. So you will be able to understand. When he uses the word understand, he means literally to think through carefully. So how do we have understanding?

By thinking through carefully. It doesn't just come automatically. But understanding takes a little bit of work.

I got to think through carefully. To direct my mind to this subject. And Paul talks about his insight.

[25:57] That you might have understanding into my insight. Insight is a word that means to bring something together. It's a word Jesus used with his disciples a lot of times.

He said, do you get it yet? Have you, do you understand? And there he's using the same word Paul's using here for bring something together.

The way I translate bring something together is connect dots. Have you brought it together? Have you brought this thought and this thought together yet? So Jesus told the disciples, do you get who I am yet?

Do you understand who I am? Have you taken what I've taught you here and taught you over here? And have you put the dots together? Have you made the connection? He's, he's always forcing his disciples to think.

He doesn't just give them the full answer. He wants them to think it through. He wants them to come to a grounded understanding. If we understand something through our own discovery, we remember it better, don't we?

[27:02] Amen. If I'm just given the answer, you know, and I'm studying for a test. Okay, what did the professor say? I don't know what he said. I don't know what he meant. But here's the words. I don't get it.

But if I've come to understand, if I've connected the dots. And when we're talking about the mystery of Christ, that takes some connecting of dots. It takes some connecting of dots.

And Paul's wanting us to get it. He said, okay, I'm going to give you the information so you can take this and you can take this and you start putting it together. Stuff that the prophets and the teachers of the Old Testament didn't get.

They didn't get it. Because God didn't show. God hid it until Christ came. It was for us.

Isn't that amazing? It was for us. We get to be part of that. So you might be able to understand.

[28:07] So how? When you read aloud. So how do we get this insight and this understanding? When you read it aloud. Wait a minute. Reading?

Reading comes to understanding? Yeah. Yeah. Read. When you read. When you read aloud.

When you read slowly. When you read carefully. When you read the scriptures.

How do you read it? Are you racing through? To get it done? Maybe you're in that mode of like, I've got to check the box. I've got to get my scripture reading done.

So I can feel good. And I've got to admit, I do that sometimes. It's not a good way. It's not the right way. Right?

It's better than not reading at all, I tell myself. But to read slowly. To read carefully. Especially Paul. Slow down.

[29:05] Pay attention to the commas and the periods. Right? And the question marks. If we read too fast, we tend to miss words and misunderstanding. When you read carefully.

Thoughtfully. So he's teaching the Ephesians. Something that they don't understand at this point. So he's giving them insight so they might understand. So how does understanding.

Paul's role help us to trust his words. To trust that. That his words give us confidence. That it is Christ's word. Over in Galatians 1.

Paul makes the same point. In fact, in Galatians 1. He's giving us some more background to his history. Galatians 1.11. He says, For I would have you know, brothers.

That the gospel that was preached to me. Or preached by me. Watch each word. Is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man.

[30:07] Nor was I taught it. But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. A revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have known my former life.

In Judaism. How I persecuted the church of God violently. And tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism. Beyond many of my own age.

Among my people. So notice the kind of person that God chuds. Here is a guy that is absolutely against Jesus.

Violently against. Violently against. I get the impression he kind of liked being. It's kind of like an excuse to be violent. Because he's zealous for Israel.

And he's an advancing guy. He's the top guy coming up. He's going to be the special guy in Judaism. He's under one of the great rabbis of the time.

[31:04] Gamaliel. He's learning. And he's advancing. Incredible knowledge. So extremely zealous was I.

For the traditions of my fathers. But. But. When he who had set me apart. Before I was born. And who called me by his grace. Was pleased.

To reveal his son to me. In order that I might preach him among the Gentiles. I did not immediately. Interesting. When he revealed Jesus to me. I did not.

That I might preach among the Gentiles. I did not immediately consult with anyone. Interesting. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem.

To those who were apostles before me. You'd think. I got to go talk to Peter. I got to go talk to James. I got to go talk to the guys that were with him. That would be the normal thinking. But he says.

[31:58] I didn't do that. I didn't do it. What did he do? But I went away to Arabia. Oh there you go. You'll find some Gentiles there.

And then returned again to Damascus. He doesn't tell us that it was 14 years. 14 years he spent in Arabia. And I believe what he was doing was studying the scrolls.

He was studying the scrolls. He was studying the scrolls. Where is this in Genesis? Where is this in the prophets?

Where is this in Isaiah? He's studying the scrolls for 14 years. I say 14 because he mentions 14 years somewhere else. I don't remember right now. And then he comes back to Damascus.

Then after three years. I went up to Jerusalem. So 17 years before he goes to Jerusalem. After he's been. Got this revelation about Jesus Christ. Okay.

[32:56] So he didn't right away start. You know. He didn't. You know. Start preaching right away. He wanted to understand. Then he went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas. Peter.

And remained with him for 15 days. Cool. Spent time with Peter. Hey Peter. Did you check this text out? Hey Peter. Have you read this scroll? Hey Peter. Yeah man.

I've already been there. What was that like right? So why can we trust. Point is. Why can we trust Paul's teaching? Because it's not his own ideas and opinions.

It is what he has directly received from Christ. So it's not his word. It's Christ's word. He's simply a steward of what he. He's being faithful with what he heard to pass on faithfully.

The mystery has been entrusted to him. To preach faithfully. What he had received. So. Hopefully.

[33:53] We gain a little insight into Paul that we can trust him. Because he's been. Because he's had revelation from Jesus himself. Second clarification is about the mystery then. The content of the mystery.

Gives us assurance. Gives us assurance. So what is this mystery? So he's going to talk about the mystery. And specifically the mystery to the.

About the Gentiles. So in verse five he mentions this mystery again. Well. The end of verse four. He talks about. Referring to this when you read. You can understand my insight into.

The mystery. Of the Christ. Which in other generations. Verse five. When other generation was not made known. To the sons of men. As it has now been revealed. To his holy apostles and prophets. In the spirit. So here's this mystery. Previously unknown. Something that was held back. Something that was secret. From the Old Testament prophets. From the Old Testament people.

[34:55] And it's about the Gentiles. It is not that. It is not that God didn't talk about the Gentiles. In the Old Testament. It is not that God didn't say.

He would bless the Gentiles. Because he did say that. All the way back in Genesis 12. Through Abraham. He would bless all the families of the earth. So from day one.

From the beginning of God's promises. It was meant to go to the Gentiles. Meant to go to all the families of the earth. So that's not the secret. The secret wasn't that the Gentiles.

Would be included. The secret was how they'd be included. The secret was how much they'd be included. Because in the Old Testament. They were included. But they're on the outside.

Remember? They're the farthest away from the holy place. Right? They can only be included so much. They had kind of a. Kind of a.

[35:52] Adjacent membership. Something like that. Yeah. You remember. But you know. Not. Not like us. So. But that was. That was simply. The way God designed it in the Old Testament.

So it's how. God would bless. The Gentiles in Christ. That's the secret. So what was hidden. What was hidden was that.

To bless the Gentiles. God must do something first. He must. Remove the barrier wall. Which Paul talked about.

In Ephesians chapter 2. Verse 14. Remember there's this barrier wall. Remember the picture of the temple. Right? The holy place. And then the holy.

The holy of holies. And the holy place. Right? And that's where the priests go in. And that's where the. Why am I looking around here? We don't have a menorah. No. The candlestick. Right?

[36:50] And the show bread. And the incense. Table for incense. Was right in front of the curtain. Right? And you got the light. And the bread over here. So they'd go in and minister. Those things. So the priest could go in there.

Right? The chosen priest. Can go in there. And then you had the courtyard of Israel. Which was only the men. And that's where they did their. You know. The sacrifices. And those kind of things. They're doing those things. Again. Priests. Primarily. And outside that. You have the. So you have the court of the priests. Then you have the court of the. Of Israel.

Then you have the court of women. And then you have what? Gentiles. And right there. There was a wall. Between. The court of women. And the Gentiles.

There's a wall. And on the wall. There was a very serious. Warning. If you pass. You shall die. This is a holy place.

[37:49] So. How did Jesus break down that barrier? He broke down that barrier wall. And what was the barrier wall? He said in chapter 2. Anybody remember? What's the barrier wall?

Between us and God? Enmity. There was an enmity. And what created the enmity? What was our enemy? That wall was our enemy.

And what's that wall? Thou shalt. Thou shalt. Thou shalt.

Thou shalt. And if you do it. I'll bless you. If you break one of these thou shalts. I will kill you. It wasn't gospel. It was law.

And the law is. Is the law bad? No. The law is holy, righteous, and good. It's good. It tells us what's right. Where's the problem? My heart.

[38:53] I can't. Even my best stuff, I can't. Even our best guys in the Old Testament couldn't do it. Abraham couldn't do it. Moses couldn't do it. David certainly couldn't do it. Although he got close, didn't he?

Seemed like he got really close. Solomon. Solomon seemed like he was a pretty good guy. And then he wasn't such a good guy. In fact, he was a pretty bad guy. He's burning children. Kind of a wise guy is that. Right? So even our best efforts are filthy rags. Right? The barrier is the law. The law says what God says. This is what you shall do. And we can't do it. And so that's the bad news. And what's the good news? God sent somebody to do it for us. Jesus broke down that wall because he fulfilled the law by doing every righteous deed. And then he took upon himself our sin and paid for our debt with his death.

[39:59] Canceled our debt. Canceled our debt. Canceled our debt. Broke down that wall that gave us and wiped out this whole thing. Remember when he died?

What split? The veil before, right? Before the Holy of Holies. All of a sudden we can go all the way in. We couldn't even go to the wall. Now we can go all the way in.

And I don't need a high priest. Well, he's my high priest. I got my one high priest, right? He invites me in. Because he's the curtain. Or his flesh was the curtain.

So there's that mystery. Right? What Jesus did, they didn't see it either. The prophets saw it. But the people of Israel did not. When the Christ would come, what did they consider, what did they think Christ would be? When God finally brought Messiah, what would he be?

[41:03] A conquering king like David. Because the prophet said he will sit on David's throne. And so we think, oh, he's going to be just like David.

Except he won't fail. But he didn't do it, did he? They had it all wrong.

Even the disciples still expected that. Even after Jesus rose from the dead. They're like, okay, now? Now? You going to do it now? Yeah. No, boys.

Wait for Pentecost. Spirit will come. You'll start getting stuff. It'll start connecting for you. You're going to need the Holy Spirit to connect some of those dots. So this whole mystery thing.

The Old Testament prophets were not given full revelation about everything that would happen. Some of that was given after Christ's resurrection to the apostles. Peter said, Rick just read this in 1 Peter 1.10.

[42:04] Concerning the salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that would be yours, searched and inquired carefully. Inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

They knew that Christ would suffer. The prophets of the old knew there would be a suffering Messiah. And then there would be glory afterwards. They knew that. But they were trying to figure, how does this happen?

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you. It was revealed to them that there were some things that were going to come later for others.

In the things that have now been announced to you. So we're, you know, we're on the other side of that. The things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. Angels don't know this. Angels long to look. That's a fascinating thought.

[43:13] Can you imagine Michael and Gabriel going, what, what, what, what, what? What, what, what, what? And Gabriel's like, I'm a little bit ahead because I got to say this to Mary.

Right? That mysterious. Angels who behold the face of God didn't know. They're longing to understand it.

They're excited because they know it's, phew. This is new stuff. This is going to change the world. Jesus said in Matthew 13 to his apostles, he said, blessed are your eyes for they see.

And your ears for they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see. And did not see it.

And to hear what you hear. Did not hear it. You're special. Are you special because you deserve it?

[44:16] No. You're just special because you're at a time when God decides to do this. To get stuff other prophets and righteous people didn't get.

Angels didn't even get. So how does that impact the Gentiles? So here's the mystery. Here it is.

Verse six. To be specific. What is this mystery of the Christ?

What is it that Christ brings now that didn't come before? To be specific, verse six, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Three things. Three things which emphasize their unity with Israel. Each word adds together with. So heirs together with. Fellow heirs, fellow members together. Fellow partakers together with.
[45 : 32] So like he said in chapter two, he made the two. One. Jew and Gentile. One. One. Did that did that obliterate Israel?

No. There's still stuff for Israel. God's still going to do some more mysterious stuff, I think, for Israel. I'm not sure how that works. I'm not going to, you know. Used to have that all figured out and then it blew up.

So never mind. But I know he's I still there's a future of some kind. Right. For his Jewish people. But right now the church is united.

Not just Jew and Gentile. Gentile means what? Every other kind of people group in the world. Every other nation. Tongue. Tribe. Whatever we are.

America. What's American? Because we're like all kinds of different. We're like a boy. You know, we're kind of like. Oh, well. OK. Huh? Gentile. Yeah. Gentile.

[46 : 38] We're a Gentile nation, aren't we? So. So. Right. So the fellow heirs with. They have. They receive an equal share.

Gentiles receive an equal share. The Jews had the land that they inherited. Right. They had their plots of land that there was equally. Not equally divided, but divided among them. Now the Gentiles come in and they get an equal share.

And then they're in a fellow members together with in a body where they have an equal participation in need. And then their fellow partakers along with the promises of the Holy Spirit.

There's assurance. The content of the mystery is assurance. The mystery is good for us. And then the outcome of all this in verse seven, Paul says to me, this is this is the ministry.

I've become a minister of this, of the gospel. This this hidden mystery revealed through the gospel. This I became a minister of.

[47 : 43] Minister. Same word for servant. Diakonos. Right. A servant. One who one who stirs up dust. Deacon is when he stirs up dust.

Right. They're working. They're in the dirt. They're working. They're servants. He became that. It's passive. He didn't make himself that. He became that. He was made a minister.

And then he emphasizes two things. The second part of verse seven. It's this being made a minister was according to the gift of God's grace. First of all.

It was a gift. It's not a choosing. It wasn't a wasn't a vocation that he chose. It was it was God chose him. God appointed him. He became the minister. That's his servant. He's a he's a he's a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

He's in bonds for Jesus Christ. And he's glad to be in bonds to Jesus Christ. And that then his role becomes a steward and a minister.

[48 : 43] A servant of the gospel. So it's a gift. And then secondly, notice that the universe seven. It was grace given this. It was grace given to me according to the working of what?

His power. God's power. Right. So it's a gift. And it's an empowerment. It's an empowerment.

If God's going to give you an assignment. Then he's going to empower you for that assignment.

Amen. He calls us to do the impossible.

Right. Walk in a manner worthy. Of the Lord. OK. OK. I'll give it my best. I got the right attitude.

I'm prayed up. I've confessed everything I know to confess. I'm going to walk worthy. OK. What's that look like? How in the world do I do that? How can I ever walk worthy?

[49 : 45] Well, he empowers me. To do what I cannot do. I bear fruit of. The spirit.

Not the fruit of me. If it's my fruit. Part for me you can do. Nothing. Right. But abide in me and you'll bear much fruit.

You'll bear it, not produce it. You will bear it. Because it will be produced by the Holy Spirit working through you. To love that person. To have mercy on that person. To encourage that person.

To stand up for Jesus Christ and say something in public. Whatever that means. He will empower you to do. That's how Paul did it.

He never felt worthy. So how do we apply all this? We do not just decide what, where, how I want to serve God. God decides. Well.

[50 : 48] I want to pick it. I just want to set up chairs every once in a while. That's how I started. I set it up. I set up a chair. I chose to do that.

It was serving. And nothing wrong. I'm sort of setting up chairs by the way. I did it with enthusiasm. Like every week I set them up different. I was having fun. So I was, it was my brother, my older brother's youth ministry.

And I was the, the dust bearer. Right? And I had set up chairs. So every Saturday night I'd come in, set up 150 chairs. And one week I decided I'm going to make it a round.

So I put his, his pulpit in the middle and I just started circling. And I waited for him to come in Sunday morning, see his face.

I'm like, you made me a chair guy. So. Anyway. It was popular. Until it wasn't.

[51:52] So ministry is a gift, right? So Paul says it was, first of all, it was a gift. And then, and then it's an enabled and empowered by, by God's power.

So how we serve, how, how we do our ministry in the, in the body, how we serve is by the spiritual gift we've been given. How do I know what my ministry is in the body?

It's determined by the gift that God has given me. Do you know your gift? Paul talks about spiritual gifts in Romans. He talks about spiritual gifts in, in Corinthians.

Peter talks about spiritual gifts. It's something that was regular and that's what determined where you serve. Your spiritual gift is not a, a, a, a spiritualizing of my natural gifting.

It's probably not related to your natural gift. But when God gave me the gift of teaching, I was not, I'm an introvert.

[52:59] And I like to set up chairs, you know, on the round, but then nobody's around. Right? I'm happy to be a back row Baptist. I don't want to be up front.

I really don't. But then he gives this gift of teaching and you just, you do it. So what the gift has God given to you? And how did I find that out?

Because you're an introvert. How do you find out if you're poor Josiah, right? Not poor Josiah. Good for Josiah. He's an introvert too, right? He's an introvert too, isn't he? He is an introvert and he doesn't want to be up front.

But bless his heart. And I mean that in the right way. He asked us for that opportunity to see, right? Think he's gifted? See, that's part of the confirmation. That's the confirmation of the gift. He's up in the mountains this weekend praying.

[54:00] He's up in the mountains. He's seeking God. I do. Because by the end, he was worn out. Bless his heart. I worked with him, I don't know how many weeks, how many Thursdays with Zach and Josiah.

We looked through, I was a, what was it? Haggai. One of those age prophets. Right? And we worked together. Jose. Jalapeno.

I mean, yeah. I mean, I can't say enough. I so appreciate his humility and his gentleness.

He's probably over humble. But is that a bad thing? So anyway, we prayed for him.

But that's kind of a way. Do you see if that's a, if preaching is something that God's calling him to? Right?

[55:07] If you're an introvert, how do you find that out? Right? So thank you for letting him minister. So what's your gift?

Is it serving? Leading? Encouraging? Exhorting? Teaching? Giving? Mercy? Those are the gifts Paul lists in Romans.

So how has God directed you? Right? The other thing is opportunity. What opportunities does he give to you?

Right? That's where you can step out in faith and do it. Right? What opportunities does he bring? So be praying about that.

What people does he bring into your life? And what needs do they have? What situations does God put you in at work and in home and at church and in the community?

[56:10] Right? So you look at those things and you're asking, okay, Lord, I belong to you. Right? So what do you want me to do? And I determine that by praying. I determine that by the people that God brings in my life.

I determine that by the opportunities that he brings. I determine that by figuring out what gifting he's brought me. And the gifting relates to opportunity.

It relates to challenge. It relates to issues of faith because if you're not an upfront person and he wants you to be an upfront person, to exhort, to encourage, to teach.

So. So. So it's not about what you're naturally good at. It's about something that would be spirit empowered.

It's something that will point to God's glory and not you. It will require faith. You will need to depend and cling to God to do this.

[57 : 13] It will be a sacrifice. It will take a toll. I always think about the people that God gives the gift of mercy to. I so admire those folks.

I mean, they just have, there's full compassion. You know, they just go to the needy and I'm thinking, oh, wow, wow, wow. But then they have a hard time saying no. Because they got all this compassion.

It's kind of like, and Paul says, the gift of mercy, yeah, the gift of mercy, you need to do with cheerfulness. So I tell folks that have that gift, I said, okay, are you still cheerful?

Because if you're not cheerful, maybe you need to back off a little bit. Not say yes to everything. Okay.

You can tell I've been out of the swing for a while. I'm kind of wandering. It's all right. It's all right. Thank you. You're very kind. No, I mean that. You're very kind. All right.

[58 : 12] So if you're unsure that God would work in you, let's close with the final verses of Ephesians 3. Where Paul says, now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Do you believe those verses? Do you believe he powerfully works in you? Do you believe that he can do above and beyond not just what you ask, but even what you even think?

I mean, be surprised what he'll do. That's close. Thank you.