

NOTES FOR THIS COMING WEEK: 8/10-8/11 2020

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ephesians 3:1-13

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7 PM MONDAY NIGHT & 7 AM TUESDAY MORNING ONLINE BIBLE STUDY MEETINGS: CONTINUING IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS!

MEETING ID# - 87858644763 Mon pm; 85309150746 Tues am!

Topic: Monday 7pm Bible Study - Time: 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZMlCuGuqj8tHNeJYqMIZbE8IKiMqtpYL88G/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGvpj4iHNCRtx-ERpwEGo_4We7wiClago1Ytib0LixpYCauOslLH6NrAOH8

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Topic: Tuesday 7am Bible Study - Time: 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada).
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Weekly:

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OPENING PRAYER

THE WONDER OF IT ALL – *George Beverly Shea*

There's the wonder of sunset at evening, The wonder as sunrise I see; But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul Is the wonder that God loves me.

Refrain: O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all! Just to think that God loves me. O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all! Just to think that God loves me.

*There's the wonder of springtime and harvest, The sky, the stars, the sun; But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul Is a wonder that's only begun.
(Refrain)*

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: **Ephesians 3:1-13**

One in Christ

Eph 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Eph 2:15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

Eph 2:16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Eph 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

Eph 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Eph 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Eph 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

Eph 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

Eph 2:22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Introduction:

Verses 1 & 14 begin exactly the same way, creating a wonderful digression in verses 2-13:

- At the end of chapter two, Paul is sharing a glorious truth. That Jesus Christ has broken down the walls that once divided men into Jews and Gentiles. And that He has made us all one in Christ. That we Gentiles who were once alienated from God and from the promises of God have been brought near through the blood of Jesus Christ. We share now in the covenants and in the promises that God gave unto the nation of Israel because of Abraham. This glorious gospel of Jesus Christ is now to the Gentiles. We as Gentiles can share in the wonders of God's grace through Jesus Christ. We are brought in and made partakers of the covenant and of the promises. The grand objective which the Apostle has in his mind is that these Ephesians Christians might be kept from fainting at the tribulations and the trials which the Apostle, (now in prison), himself was being called upon to endure; and to turn their concerns for Paul into glorifying God!

The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

Eph 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

- ***for this reason*** vs. 1, - vs. 14 What reason? ***Prisoner of Christ Jesus - for you Gentiles;*** Why this 12 verse interlude/digression?
- ***Paul's pastoral heart,*** not wanting Ephesians to be stumbled by his imprisonment - Why do God's people suffer? Why are they put in prison, when they seem to be so needed doing God's work?
- ***Our response?*** How are we, as Christians to respond when the righteous suffer or are facing great trials and difficulties
- ***What not to do!*** No complaining! No self-resignation to stoical fortitude, - not just to endure and get over it!
- ***What should we do?*** Come to the place of rejoicing in the difficulty! – a marvelous element if can see it!
- ***Thank God*** for the difficulty – ***2Ti 3:12*** Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ***1Pe 4:12-13*** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you [13] but rejoice to the extent that you

partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

- **To glorify God!** The Apostle wants these Ephesians to look at his imprisonment and his sufferings in such a way that they will really see the glory shining through it all and will glorify God in it!
- **How** do Christians arrive at this position? This is the most practical question of all. **Learn that secret.** Instead of allowing things to overwhelm us and to depress us, sit down, stop and look at the circumstances. Ask questions about the thing itself, not about God. Put the whole matter into its context and relate it to the whole of the Christian faith and life. We shall find that an argument will emerge.
- **Why I am here** at all? Why am I a prisoner? How has it come to pass? What is the explanation? What is the reason?
- **The first thing** he tells us is that he is not an ordinary prisoner. Look at the answers given in the first verse — *‘For this reason I, Paul, **the prisoner of Jesus Christ**’*. In a sense, he has already solved his problem. He is not Rome’s prisoner. He is not in prison because of the mighty Roman Empire. Why then, is he in prison?
- **I am the prisoner of Christ Jesus!** What a staggering statement! He does not hesitate to say that he is in prison for one reason only, namely, because he is *‘in Christ’*. He is *Christ’s prisoner*.
- **He is really suffering for Christ’s sake**, He is not in prison because of any wrong he personally has committed. He is there because he is a preacher of Christ’s gospel, because of his zeal for the name and the glory of Christ. He is literally suffering as a Christian, and for the sake of Christ. This to Paul was one of the most marvellous things of all.

Eph 3:2 if (since) indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, (Act 9:15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

- ***heard of the dispensation*** (steward, house manager, like Joseph in Genesis) Paul says he is a steward, a distributor of the gospel of grace to the Gentiles! God had filled him with His Spirit, had enabled him to understand. He had sent him out to preach and given him power to preach, and to attest the truth by the performance of miracles.
- ***grace of God*** - Paul understood – the measure of grace that met on the Damascus road, as he was out to slaughter the church. He was killing

Christians! The antichrist of the book of Acts! He heard Jesus' voice - **Act 9:4** *Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* He realized he was fighting against his own Messiah! I stand here today where I'm supposed to be. The measure of grace that was needed in my life, to cleanse me, to bring me into His service is certainly adequate to save any of the Gentiles, or of us! He is assured of that.

- **What a perfect plan it is!** All this has been ordained by God, the Apostle says, and as a part of it he was called by God to be an Apostle. Observe the beautiful language in which he expresses it: ***the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me for you.*** God, he says, has entrusted to me a stewardship of this marvellous grace of His. He has appointed me to be one of the custodians and guardians of this precious favour which He is showing to mankind in the Son of His love, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- **God had filled him** with His Spirit, had enabled him to understand. He had sent him out and given him power to preach, and to attest the truth by the performance of miracles. In due course he had come to the Ephesians and preached to them, and those who believed were added to the Church. He is in prison because of that.

Eph 3:3 how that by revelation (Act 26:16) *But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.*

- **The mystery 'revealed'**, The apostle Paul is a preacher of it because the mystery has been 'revealed' to him. It is not something vague and indefinite, but a message that has been made plain and clear to him. He was taught it by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when He appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He had received it by direct revelation from the Lord of glory, making Paul an apostle!
- **No apostolic succession** - There can be no repetition of the apostleship. Any talk of 'apostolic succession' is simply to deny the scriptural teaching. There can be no successor to the apostles; the truth has been revealed once and for ever!
- **I am a called apostle**, said Paul, a dispensation of the grace of God has been entrusted to me, and I have delivered it to you. You have it, you are Christians, I am suffering for it. But forget that; **think of the glory** and the marvel and the wonder of what God has provided for you in His infinite love and kindness, and what you have become as the result of His amazing grace.

He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

Eph 3:4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

(Rom 16:25) Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began

- **Two mysteries** being referred to. –“General” and “Particular” . We start, within the brackets, with the “general” mystery referred to in verse 4, in which he describes it as the **‘mystery of Christ’**, which is just another way of referring to the whole message of the gospel, or to the whole truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is all **‘in Him’**. The Apostle is referring to the message committed to him, that he had already preached by word of mouth to these people. That message is Christ, the **mystery of Christ**, the message the Apostle is always talking about. *(1Ti 3:16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*
- **This mystery of Christ** is the amazing way in which God has sent salvation to men. It is the way in which He has done it. It is all that has happened in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. What a mystery! No one would ever have known it, were it not for the illumination, the revelation that the Holy Spirit alone can give.

Eph 3:5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

- The “particular”, now revealed, **mystery -- that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs** which he now takes up again in verse 5: **(Eph 3:4-6) by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), [5] which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: [6] that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,**

Eph 3:6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ

through the gospel, (Gal 3:28-29) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- **The particular relation**, is being referred to, of the Jew and the Gentile in the Christian Church. The Apostle tells us elsewhere that he glories in the fact that he is in particular ‘the apostle to the Gentiles’, and he glories in that office. He refers to it at this point because he is writing to Ephesian Christians who had been Gentiles and pagans, and his object is to enable them to realize the marvel and the wonder of their salvation.
- **Dispensationalists** - This particular mystery invalidates the “Dispensationalists” claim of, drawing a sharp line between the church and the kingdom – that the church has replaced Israel, because the Jews refusing Christ and all the Old Testament prophecies apply only to Israel. (***Gal 3:8***) *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed.*
- **The Church, the new thing!** This mystery that has now been made clear is not simply that the Gentiles are to be saved, but that Gentile and Jew are to be together in the Christian Church, that the Gentile had now come in, not as an addition, nor as a proselyte, but into the new thing, the Church, in exactly the same way as the Jew had come in. He is asserting that the Church is now the Kingdom, that what the Jewish nation was in the Old Testament the Church is now; and that there is no longer that old distinction fulfilling our Lord’s prophecy: (***Mat 21:43***) *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*
- **A new nation** - The Apostle Peter repeats this by applying to the Church, consisting of Jew and Gentile, the very words that God used through Moses about the nation of Israel in Exodus 19, (***1Pe 2:9***) *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*
- **The old distinction gone** between the Jew and the Gentile is abolished once and for ever. He has already shown that in the second chapter, stating that ‘***the middle wall of partition***’ has gone, that Christ has demolished it, and has made ‘***one new man, so making peace***’.

- *fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise* - He expresses it by using similar words three times. But Paul actually said, '**fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, fellow-partakers of the promise**', which means that all the promises God had made to the Jewish people in the Old Testament are now open to the Gentiles.
- **Looking Forward** - To us it means that we can look forward to the resurrection of the body, to a glorified body, to dwelling on a new earth under new heavens, where righteousness dwells; fellow-partakers of the promise; '*Christ in you, the hope of glory*'.
- **The two mysteries** which the Apostle tells us he has been given to preach; the general mystery, the mystery of Christ, and the particular mystery, newly revealed to him, that God's purpose is now manifest and in operation in the Church; and that the Church is the final form of this purpose until it is completed. Jew and Gentile are in Christ together, are sharing God's blessings now, and shall share the benefits of the everlasting and eternal glory!

Eph 3:7 of which I became a minister (Rom 15:16) that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

- **Benefits preached** - The Apostle wants the Ephesian Christians to know that all the benefits which they were now enjoying as fellow-heirs with the Jews had come to them through the gospel which he, being a minister, had preached God's great revelation concerning Himself, the only way of reconciliation of man and the kind of life mankind is meant to live.

according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by (Rom 1:5) Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name,

- **Paul's amazement** - The Apostle expresses his amazement that this call to the ministry should ever have come to him. - *to me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given*'.
- **given** - This is the word that introduces the gospel and salvation. It is all of grace, it is all '**given**'. The Apostle did not feel worthy of anything; everything had been **given** to him (and to us!) freely in God's love and mercy and compassion.
- **True humility** - Paul was a man who lived so near to his Lord that he was conscious of his deficiencies and shortcomings demonstrating. true humility, true Christian meekness. The more we realize these things, the more we

shall be amazed, with the Apostle, at the grace and goodness and kindness of God. How well do we realize that?

the effective working of His power. (Rom 15:18) *For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—*

- ***the effective working of His power*** - What can turn any man from being a hater of God into one who loves God? What can turn the natural man, to whom the things of God are ‘foolishness’, into a man who delights in them, and enjoys them, and lives for them, and whose highest ambition is to know them more and more? There is only one answer, ***the effective working of His power!*** Nothing else!
- **Only one answer** - The Apostle Paul himself was very conscious of this power. As a persecuting, blaspheming Pharisee, he had heard about the preaching of Christ, the preaching of Stephen. But he hated the ***good news***. What happened to this man? There is only one answer. He had been made a new man. He had been regenerated, born again, ‘a new creation’, nothing less than that! All the result of ***the effective working of His power!***
- ***The effective working of the power*** of God that makes anyone a Christian. It means a rebirth, a regeneration. It is not the result of our decision. It is not something that you and I decide to do; it is what is done to us!
- **You?** Do you know anything about this? Have you felt the hand of God upon yourself? Do you know God’s working in your own life and in your own soul? Do you know what it is to be dealt with and to be molded and to be fashioned? This is involved in true Christianity. It is all the result of ***‘the effective working of His power!’***

Eph 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles (1Co 15:9) *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

- **Amazing grace!** The Apostle is amazed that this call to the ministry should ever have come to him, a former blasphemer and one severely persecuting Christians, to be an apostle, and given the unique privilege of being in a very special manner ‘the Apostle to the Gentiles’.
- **Saved by grace alone!** We must always realize that it is by grace we are saved, that we are what we are, solely and entirely by the grace of God! If we fail to do so, we shall lose the element of thanksgiving and praise in our

Christian witness. Do you realize that it's only by His grace! Oh, the wonder of it all!

the unsearchable riches of Christ, (Col 2:2-3) that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- ***The unsearchable riches of Christ'*** - What a phrase! what a profound, what a sublime statement! Any man who claims to have been called to be a minister of the gospel is to preach '***the unsearchable riches of Christ'***. Not first, the many unsearchable riches available, but Christ Himself as the ***unsearchable riches***.
- ***The unsearchable riches of Christ***, which He offers to all believers! How much do you know about them? Are you thrilled by the very term? Does it mean something concrete and real to you?
- ***Riches unsearchable!*** How about forgiveness, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, rest, peace, joy, hope, wisdom, life-now and forever, His love? Nothing in the whole world is comparable to that, to be loved by Christ, to feel it and to know it. What are the riches of the whole universe in comparison with this! To be loved by the Son of God!
- **Another gift** - But apart from the gift of Himself, Christ also gives us the Holy Spirit. We receive the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit resident within us; and, further, His power activating us and enabling us to 'work out our own salvation' and to be witnesses of all this to others.

Eph 3:9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; (Heb 1:2) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

- ***Hidden from the beginning of the ages*** - The Christian message and salvation are not only personal, but go beyond the personal to something greater and larger.
- **Illumination in darkness** - He says, ***to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery***. A part of his calling is to illuminate the minds of men with regard to the very great darkness in the minds of men as to all this.

- **Only source of light** - The great good news of the gospel is that, in spite of the darkness, light is available, but only in the gospel. There is no light anywhere, except here in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Christian Church stands at this hour in such an important and unique position. God has a plan, a purpose, a great scheme, for the whole of life in this world and for man.
- **God's world plan** - Do we know God's plan for this world? That is a part of Christian knowledge. Christian people should have a unique understanding of the world situation at this moment,
- **Non-changing** - This plan was in God's mind *from the beginning of the ages*. God has hidden it from the ages until Christ came and began to reveal it. But it was there, irrespective of all that happens; and it is certain. There is nothing contingent about God's plan. God never has or will improvise, or to modify His policy because of what someone else has done.
- **Now revealed even to angels** - It had been hidden throughout the ages but '... now *to the principalities and powers in heavenly places* shall be demonstrated by the church the manifold wisdom of God'. This is so wonderful, he says, that it had not only been hidden from man, but even from the angels.
- **We are His workmanship** - God's great purpose is brought to pass through what Christ Himself has done for us. Salvation is the activity of God, not your activity and mine. 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus'. It is what God has done and is doing in Christ that will yet bring this great divine purpose to pass.
- **Certainty of blessings to believers** - Because this is God's plan it is absolutely certain of fulfilment, but above all, God's plan is always in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ. All is fulfilled in Him. It is also fulfilled through the Church. If you are not a Christian you have no right to look to God for benefits and blessings. All His blessings come only through Christ, and through the Church, to those who belong to the body. But, if you are a believer, Christ's blessings are yours!

Eph 3:10 to the intent that now (1Pe 1:12) To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church (1Ti 3:16) And without controversy great is the mystery of

godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

to the principalities and powers in the heavenly

places, (Col 1:16) *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

- **God's manifold wisdom** - Christianity, and salvation in and through Christ is the supreme, the highest, the greatest manifestation of the wisdom of God, that attribute by which He arranges His purposes, plans and means which bring forth the results that He purposes.
- **Being of infinite wisdom and glory**, God wants His creatures to know His great and **manifold wisdom**. One purpose in His great plan of the ages is to reveal this wisdom.
- **Might be made known by the church**: This explains **how** God will reveal His wisdom, and to **whom** He reveals it. He will reveal it *by* His work in **the church**. Those who are gathered together in congregations as members of the body of Christ, are the most wonderful phenomenon in the universe. There is nothing beyond the Church. She is the highest and the most supreme manifestation of the **wisdom** of God; and to look forward to something beyond the Church is to deny Scripture. The Church is the final expression of the wisdom of God, the thing above all others that enables even the angels to comprehend the wisdom of God.
- **To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places**: This means that angelic beings are interested and instructed by the lives of Christians. The conduct of the church is so important because angelic and demonic beings are looking on, and God's intent is to teach them through us.
- **Angels staggered and amazed** - What is happening in the Church is so stupendous, so glorious, that even the bright angelic beings who have spent their entire existence in the presence of God, even they are staggered and amazed at what they see in and through the Church.
- **The Church** is the medium through which this wisdom becomes manifest. The Church is a kind of prism in the path of the light to break up the whiteness into the colors of the spectrum. The Christian Church to which you and I belong, is the most astonishing phenomenon the world has ever seen.

Eph 3:11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Eph 1:4) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (Eph 1:11) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

- **God has established His *eternal purposes***, and they shall stand! Nothing can stop or hinder the purposes of God from being fulfilled! We have an opportunity of joining with God in the accomplishing of His purposes. The privilege, the blessing. If I fail, the purposes of God will not fail. The purposes of God will be fulfilled.
- ***Which He accomplished***: There is a sense in which Paul can say that this eternal purpose is already ***accomplished***. Its fulfillment is a certainty (as shown by the initial work of bringing Jew and Gentile together in Jesus), so he can speak of it as already finished.

Eph 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. (Heb 4:16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 10:19) Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, (Heb 10:35) Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

- ***In Christ, we have boldness*** (free speech) ***and access*** (*entrée*) ***unto the promises of God in Him.*** We have boldness of access through Jesus Christ, one God, one Mediator, the Man, Christ Jesus. Jesus has removed the veil, let us therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.
- ***Through faith in Him***: The fact of this unity is shown by the truth that **we** all have the identical ***boldness, access*** and ***confidence*** before God - because it has nothing to do with national or ethnic identity, only with ***faith in Him***, in Jesus.
- **Fellowship – worshipping and praying** - Paul brings this part of his message to a kind of grand climax and conclusion. The ultimate purpose of all Christian doctrine and teaching, indeed the end of the Christian salvation itself, is designed to bring us into the presence of God, enabling us to worship and to pray.

- **Nothing greater than access to God in prayer!** This is something of which we also need to remind ourselves, for it is in many ways the highest pinnacle of salvation. Of all the blessings of Christian salvation none is greater than this, that we have access to God in prayer!!
 - **Our approach to God in prayer.** How do you pray? What is the character of your prayer life? How do you feel when you get on your knees in prayer to God? What happens? Do you enjoy it? Is it free? Is it certain? Is it assured? What kind of praying is your praying?
 - **Boldness, access with confidence** - According to the Apostle our approach should be one which is characterized by *'boldness'*. *'Access with confidence'* is true Christian prayer. Is your prayer life so characterized?
 - **Only through Jesus!** There is no possibility of prayer, or of entry into the presence of God, except in and through and by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If there were other ways of entering He need never have come into this world. He came and did all that needed to be done 'to bring us to God'. Without Christ we cannot truly pray. There is only One who can introduce you, there is only One who can countersign your visiting card. It is the Son of God, and He has written His Name with His own blood.
 - **Wandering mind?** -When you kneel to pray, have you not often found that you suddenly become hard, and that your mind seems to wander far away?
 - **From the body and the devil** - The first thing we have to do is to deal with all these moods, feelings and inward conditions. We have to realize that they arise **not only from the body but also from the devil**, whose supreme object is to keep us from this communion with God. We must regard them all as sent by him. They are the 'fiery darts' which the devil throws at you, especially when you are on your knees in prayer.
 - **Reject evil thoughts – agonize in prayer!** Take them firmly in hand, reject them. You have to do it. Prayer is hard work! It is a task. You must not 'relax' as the cults teach, but rather energize yourself and discipline yourself. You must learn to agonize in prayer.
 - **Into His presence** - Go into the presence of God with *boldness and access with confidence in the faith of Jesus Christ*, and you will meet God. You will realize His presence; you will be supported not only by a sense of His glory and His comfort, His strength and His might, but also by a sense of His love and kindness and compassion. *'Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you'.¹*
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Eph 3:13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, (Php 1:14) and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

which is your glory. (2Co 1:6) Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

- **Do not lose heart:** Paul didn't want them to be discouraged for *his* sake, because Paul was still being used in the service of God's eternal plan. **Don't faint or lose heart, at what I am going through. It's for your glory.**
- **My tribulations for you:** Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians from prison, and it is useful to remember why Paul was in prison. Even though Paul was imprisoned in Rome, waiting for his trial before Caesar - and there because he knew God wanted Gentiles to share in the good news of the Messiah, and he wasn't afraid to preach that truth.
- **Which is your glory:** Paul was being used, and probably in a greater way than he ever imagined. This Roman imprisonment produced the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. They all certainly have a place in God's eternal plan.
- In the same manner, **each of us has a place in the service of God's eternal plan.** Knowing this and working towards it is a great guard against losing heart in the midst of tribulation.

Closing Prayer: