TRANSFORMED IN CHRIST

Ephesians



LifeGroups
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Gentiles

- The inclusion of the Gentiles is an essential core teaching of the Gospel
- Ephesians 3:1
- Christ tore down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile and brought the two together into one body.

Gentiles

- Paul was in prison because of Jewish opposition to his ministry—and one of the greatest points of controversy was his proclamation that God's salvation had gone to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22; 28:28).
- Although Christ had broken down the dividing wall between Jewish and Gentile believers, that hostility remained in the hearts of many unbelieving Jews.

Gentiles

- His imprisonment was not evidence that his ministry had failed; it resulted from his faithfully carrying out the ministry God had given him to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- In that sense, his suffering was “their glory,” not a reason for discouragement (3:13).
- He was showing them just how strongly he believed the Gospel was equally open to the Gentiles.

Gentiles

- There were theological issues about which Christians could legitimately disagree (1 Corinthians 10:23–33), but the equal standing of Jews and Gentiles in Christ was not one of them.
- Gentile believers did not not need to become Jews or keep the Mosaic law to have full standing among God’s people.

Mystery

- God revealed the mystery that Jewish and Gentile believers are one in Christ
- Ephesians 3:2-9
- The “mystery of the Gospel” is that Gentiles are fellow heirs to God’s kingdom, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise was made known to him by revelation.

Mystery

- In the story of Paul's conversion, God told Ananias that Saul was His chosen instrument to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, kings and the Jews (Acts 9:15).
- Ananias said he had heard how much evil Saul had committed against the believers. Acts describes him as ravaging the Church, entering house after house and dragging them off to prison (Acts 8:3).

Mystery

- After his conversion experience, when Paul started preaching the Gospel in Damascus, the believers there were shocked (Acts 9:20–21).
- When he went to Jerusalem and tried to join the church there, they were afraid of him and didn’t believe he had really converted (Acts 9:26).

Mystery

- This only makes the Gospel more believable coming from Paul, because he didn’t benefit from the inclusion of the Gentiles.
- He only suffered from it (Acts 9:15–16).
- If Paul wanted to do what was best for himself, he would have continued in his noble position in the Jewish faith.

Mystery

- Paul explained that the “mystery” of the Gospel was not understood by previous generations but had now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (3:5).
- The inclusion of Gentiles was God’s plan all along, His eternal purpose (3:11). That truth remained hidden in God until He revealed it through the Spirit to His apostles and prophets (3:5–6, 9).

Mystery

- Here is a key principle: spiritual truth ultimately depends on God's revelation, not human intelligence.
- The Gospel is foolishness to the world (1 Corinthians 1:18–25), even to the wisest people of the world.
- We need the Holy Spirit to open our understanding to the truth God has revealed in His Word (1 Corinthians 2:6–16).

Mystery

- Key application: We should be ready to give a logical defense for what we believe (1 Peter 3:15).
- We faithfully explain the Gospel, but we also pray because only God can change the heart.
- Just as Paul prayed that the eyes of the Ephesians' hearts would be enlightened (Ephesians 1:18), we should pray that God would open people's hearts to His truth.

Confidence

- Through Christ, all believers may approach God with confidence
- Ephesians 3:10-12
- Paul tells us that God is displaying His wisdom through the Church even to the spiritual realm (unsearchable riches of Christ, and manifold wisdom of God).

Confidence

- In Christ, all who believe—Jew and Gentile alike—can approach God with freedom and confidence (3:12).
- Hebrews describes this access as drawing near to God's heavenly throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14–16).
- Yet if our access were based on our own works, none of us could stand before Him (Romans 3:10, 23).

Confidence

- When Isaiah saw a vision of God's heavenly throne, he cried, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).
- He could remain in God's presence only because the Lord atoned for his sin (Isaiah 6:7).
- Our freedom to approach God is not based on our righteousness but on the atoning work of Christ.

Confidence

- This is the “manifold wisdom of God” that will be made known through the Church (3:10).
- In context, Paul is pointing especially to something he has emphasized throughout this section: God has taken believing Jews and Gentiles, once separated from one another, and made them one body in Christ (2:11–22; 3:6).

Paul’s Extraordinary Language

- The “immeasurable greatness” of God’s power (Ephesians 1:19)
- God raised Christ “far above” all rule and authority (Ephesians 1:21)
- The “immeasurable” riches of His grace (Ephesians 2:7)

Paul’s Extraordinary Language

- His love that “surpasses” knowledge (Ephesians 3:19)
- God is able to do “far more abundantly” than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)
- He ascended “far above” all the heavens (Ephesians 4:10)

Prayers

- Paul prayed for spiritual strength for God's people
- Ephesians 3:14-17
- Paul began this passage, like before, with "for this reason," pointing back to all he had just said: that Gentile Christians are one body with Jewish Christians.

Prayers

- In ancient culture, “name” represented identity and origin.
- Saying every family “derives its name” from God affirms that all human beings were created by God and originated from God. But this especially applies to believers (and the Gentiles).
- This language of every family was intentional.

Prayers

- He prayed for the Holy Spirit to strengthen us with His power, but not the kind of power we may think of when we hear “the power of the Spirit.” It’s not supernatural power to do miracles but power in our inner being (3:16).
- When God chose David as king, He said, “The Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Prayers

- This can only be done by the Holy Spirit, by Christ dwelling in our hearts (3:16–17). Jesus promised that when we abide in Him, we will “bear much fruit” (John 15:1–8).
- The Spirit working in our hearts changes us from the inside and grows love, joy, peace, etc. in us (Galatians 5).
- These are the “riches of his glory” – not wealth or possessions but the Fruit of the Spirit.

God’s Love

- <u>God’s love for us is without measure; we cannot comprehend it</u>
- Ephesians 3:17-19
- Paul described believers as “rooted and grounded in love” picturing Christ’s love as both the soil from which we draw strength and the foundation of our lives.

God’s Love

- Those of us who have experienced God’s grace have an understanding of the depth of His love for us.
- It’s not just at our conversion that we can appreciate the depth of God’s love for us.
- We can see it by how, like a loving father, He provides for us in times of need (Matthew 6:25–34; 7:9–11).

God’s Love

- The more we understand God’s love, the more we will understand His character, because God is love. God isn’t just loving; He is love (1 John 4:8).
- Paul prayed that we would grasp Christ’s love—not just know about it in our heads, but experience its transforming power in our lives—so that we may be “filled with all the fullness of God” (3:19).

God's Actions

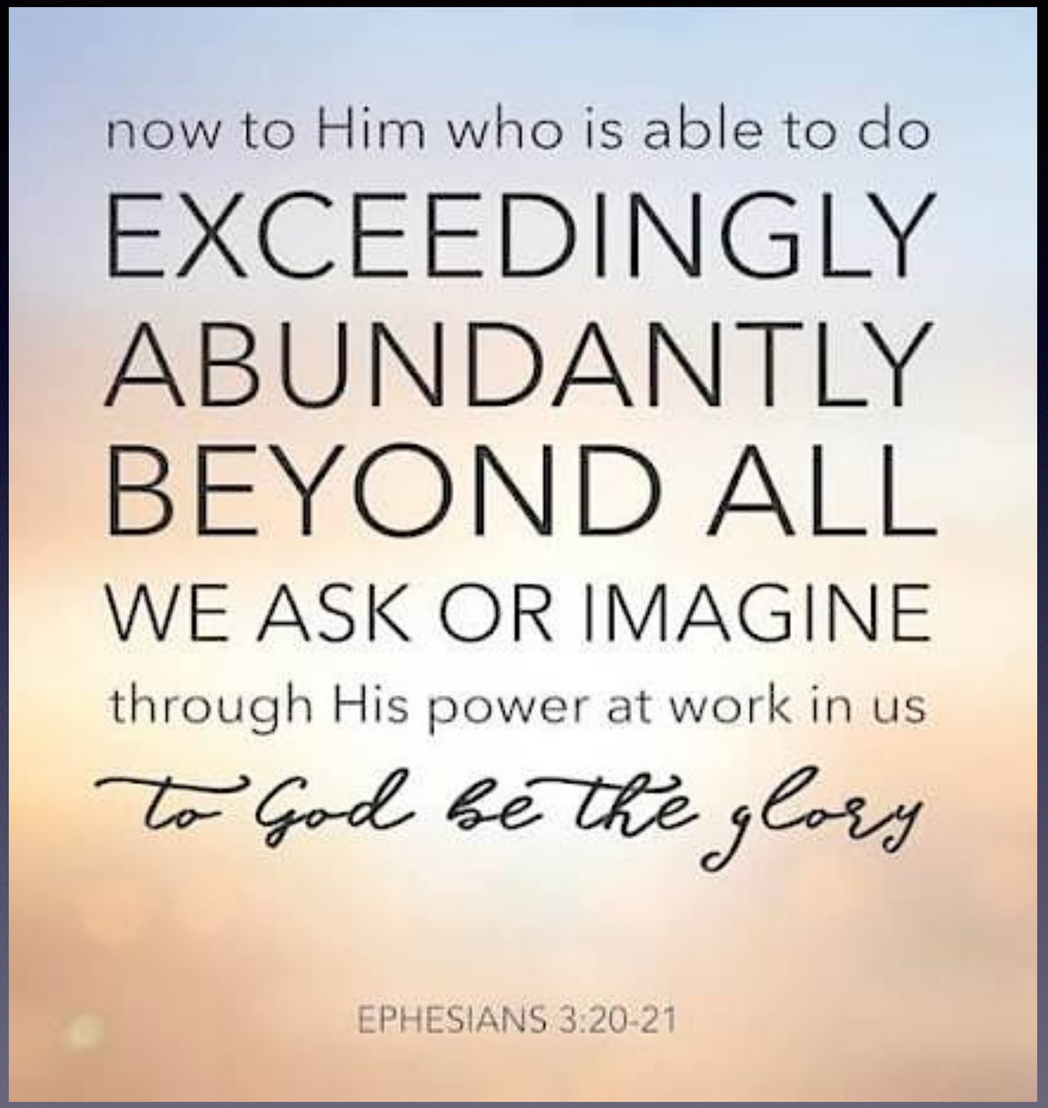
- <u>God can do super-abundantly more than we can even think to ask</u>
- Ephesians 3:20-21
- Paul closes this section with a short hymn of praise, giving glory to the One who is able to do "immeasurably more" than anything we could even think to ask (verse 20).

God's Actions

- This is the perfect response to both how powerful God is and how much He loves us.
- Paul was not only telling us God *can.*
- He was also claiming God *would* shower these spiritual blessings on us. This power is "already" at work in us (verse 20).

A Final Disclaimer

- Sometimes people read verse 20 out of context and think the “super abundantly more” is about God giving us material things.
- That God will be blessing us with more stuff.
- But the context is clearly about the spiritual blessings of love, power, wisdom and understanding.


now to Him who is able to do
EXCEEDINGLY
ABUNDANTLY
BEYOND ALL
WE ASK OR IMAGINE
through His power at work in us
to God be the glory
EPHESIANS 3:20-21