EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS 3:8

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Original Text of Ephesians 3:1-8

Ephesians 3:1 Τούτου χάριν ἐγὼ Παῦλος ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν 2 — εἴ γε ἠκούσατε τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς, 3 [ὅτι] κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον, καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ, 4 πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 5 ὃ ἑτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι, 6 εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 7 οὗ ἐγενήθην διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. 8 Ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. (NA28)

The Less Than Least of All the Saints

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. 4 When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ. 5 Now this secret was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, 6 namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power. 8 To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. (NET)

"**To me—less than the least of all the saints**" is composed of the following: (1) dative first person singular form of the personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ), "**to me**" (2) articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "**the less than least**" (3) genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *pas* (πᾶς), "**of all**" (4) genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος), "**the saints**."

The dative first person singular form of the possessive personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ) means "me" and refers of course to the apostle Paul.

The word functions as a dative indirect object, which takes place when the dative substantive is that to or for which the action of the verb is performed and will only

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occur with a transitive verb. When the transitive verb is in the active voice, the indirect object receives the direct object and when the verb is in the passive voice, the indirect object receives the subject of the verb. Here in Ephesians 3:8, the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is in the passive voice. Therefore, this indicates that Paul received at his justification the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel.

The articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος) means "the less than least" since the word is the comparative form of the superlative adjective and pertains someone who is the less than least of those people who are of little importance or least importance.

Wallace writes that this word here in Ephesians 3:8 "is the comparative of the superlative, perhaps coined for the occasion![1] A more literal translation would be something like 'leaster.'[2] An interesting argument for the authenticity of Ephesians is this autobiographical note in comparison with 1 Cor 15:9. First Corinthians, on any reckoning, was written earlier than Ephesians. There, Paul viewed himself as the least of the apostles; here, the circle has widened. Several scholars (e.g., Barth, Beare, Bruce, Wood) see in this statement the stamp of apostolic authenticity, for a forger would be unlikely to make Paul lower than he himself had done.

Lincoln argues against this: 'but this intensification also fits the tendency of the post-apostolic churches to accentuate the unworthiness of the apostles in order to highlight the greatness of Christ's grace in their lives (cf. 1 Tim 1:15, where Paul now becomes not just the least worthy Christian, but the foremost of sinners).…'[3] But Lincoln's approach equally assumes that the pastorals are inauthentic (a view increasingly abandoned nowadays), rendering his argument circular. When one actually compares the apostolic autobiographical notes found in the NT with those in the postapostolic pseudepigrapha, he notices a marked difference in tone. In the pseudepigrapha, the apostles are typically put on a pedestal; in the NT letters, they marvel at the grace of God in their lives.[4]"[5]

The articular construction of this adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος) functions as a substantiver meaning it is converting this adjective into a substantive.

This word functions as a dative in simple apposition, which means that this word stands in apposition to the dative first person singular form of the possessive personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ), "for the benefit of me, for my benefit." This means that this adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος) is clarifying something about this personal pronoun and thus Paul who is the referent of this word. Therefore, this construction identifies Paul as the less than least of all the saints.

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[1] There is no other superlative-comparative form in the NT, though a double comparative occurs in 3 John 4 (μειζοτέραν).
[2] Though Robertson suspects that it has the elative sense (*Grammar*, 670).
[3] Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC) 183.
[4] Lincoln cites *Barnabas* 5.9 as an illustration of the postapostolic denigration of the apostles. But this statement is not autobiographical, nor is it even typical of most postapostolic writings (cf., e.g., Ignatius, *Ephesians* 12.1–2).
[5] Wallace, D. B. (1996). *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (p. 302). Zondervan.

As was the case when the word appeared in Ephesians 1:1, 15, and 18, the genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) functions here in Ephesians 3:8 as a substantive. In each instance, the word means "saints" or "holy ones" since it describes all the members of the body of Christ who have been set apart through the baptism of the Spirit at the moment of justification in order to order serve God exclusively.

The adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) is modified by the genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *pas* (πᾶς), which pertains to the totality of people. Therefore, in context this word pertains to the totality of church age believers or members of the body of Christ who are the future bride of Christ.

This adjective is in the first attributive position (adjective-noun) indicating that the adjective *pas* (πᾶς)expresses an attribution relation to the substantive use of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος). Therefore, this adjective is ascribing the attribute of totality to the saints, i.e., members of the body of Christ, the church.

The adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) could be interpreted as functioning as as a partitive genitive, which takes place when the substantive in the genitive denotes "the whole of which" the head noun is a part. In context, the head noun is the articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "the less than least," which we noted is used here to describe the apostle Paul. Therefore, this construction indicates that the substantive use of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) is the whole of which the articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "the less than least" is a part. Thus, Paul is a part of the body of Christ.

However, it would be better and more accurate to interpret this word as functioning as a genitive of comparison, which takes place when the genitive substantive is used to indicate a comparison and almost always comes after a comparative adjective. This would be the case here in Ephesians 3:8 because this word follows the comparative form of the superlative adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "the less than the least." Paul is obviously comparing himself to the members of the body of Christ, i.e., the church in order to accentuate the Father's grace policy towards him.

Grace was Given to Paul

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. 4 When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ. 5 Now this secret was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, 6 namely, that through the gospel the

Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power. 8 To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. (NET)

"**This grace was given**" is composed of the following: (1) third person singular aorist passive indicative conjugation of the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι), "**was given**" (2) articular nominative feminine singular form of the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" (3) nominative feminine singular form of the demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**."

The articular nominative feminine singular form of the noun *charis* (χάρις) means "grace" and in context, it speaks of a particular unmerited blessing that flowed to the apostle Paul from the function of the Father's attribute of love. Specifically, it refers to the contents of Ephesians 3:7, which asserts that Paul assumed the position and responsibility of serving the gospel according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to him according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power.

The genitive feminine singular form of the immediate demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" pertains to a reference to an entity regarded as a part of the discourse setting,[6] with pejorative meaning in certain contexts.[7][8] The referent of this word is the gift of Paul serving the gospel by communicating the mystery that Gentiles church age believers are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

This word *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" is in the predicate position to indicate an attributive function, which means that it is pointing out or singling out this noun *charis* (χάρις) in a special way. Therefore, it is singling out the Father's grace policy which He employs in relation to sinners and sinners He justifies through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

As was the case in Ephesians 3:7, the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) here in Ephesians 3:8 means "to bestow as a gift" since the word pertains in this context to giving someone something which is of great value and as a gift. It speaks of giving someone something as an expression of generosity.

The referent of the third person singular form of this verb is articular nominative feminine singular form of the noun *charis* (χάρις), which we noted refers to the

[6] The reference in the discourse may be to that which precedes or follows.
[7] The pejorative meaning of οὗτος depends primarily upon the total context and not upon οὗτος as such.
[8] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 816). United Bible Societies.

unmerited blessing which was given to Paul at the moment of justification. Namely, the position and responsibility of serving the gospel according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to him according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power.

The passive voice of this verb means that the subject receives the action of the verb from either an expressed or unexpressed agency. Of course, the subject is Paul. The expressed agency appears in Ephesians 3:7 and is identified by the prepositional phrase *kata tēn energeian tēs dynameōs autou* (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ), "**by the exercise of his power**." (NET) Therefore, this indicates that Paul as the subject received the action of being given the unmerited blessing, which originated from the Father's grace policy, which was in the form of being a servant of the gospel, according to the exercise of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of justification.

The aorist tense of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is a consummative or culminative aorist which emphasizes the cessation of an act. Therefore, here the aorist tense of this verb emphasizes the cessation of the act of Paul receiving the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel in accordance with the exertion of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of his justification.

The indicative mood of this verb is declarative meaning that it is presenting this assertion as a non-contingent or unqualified statement.

Proclaiming the Unfathomable Riches of Christ to the Gentiles

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. 4 When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ. 5 Now this secret was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, 6 namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power. 8 To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. (NET)

"**To proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ**" is composed of the following: (1) articular dative neuter plural form of the noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος), "**the Gentiles**" (2) aorist middle infinitive conjugation of the verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω), "**to proclaim**" (3) articular accusative neuter singular form of the adjective *anexichniastos* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος), "**the unfathomable**" (4) accusative neuter

singular form of the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), "**wealth**" (5) articular genitive masculine singular form of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**."

As was the case in Ephesians 2:11, 3:1 and 6, the noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος) here in Ephesians 3:8 means "the Gentiles" since the word pertains to persons from an ethnic group or nation not allied with and trusting in the God of Israel who is Jesus Christ and is used in a collective sense for these people. Thus, this word is used of those members of the human race who are not of Jewish racial descent and thus not members of the covenant people of God, Israel.

The articular construction of the word is "generic" which means that the article is distinguishing the Gentile race from the Jewish race.

The noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος) functions as a dative indirect object, which takes place when the dative substantive is that to or for which the action of the verb is performed and will only occur with a transitive verb. When the transitive verb is in the active voice, the indirect object receives the direct object and when the verb is in the passive voice, the indirect object receives the subject of the verb. Here in Ephesians 3:8, the verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) is in the middle voice. Therefore, this indicates that the Gentile Christian community received from Paul the proclamation concerning the unfathomable wealth produced by their faith in Jesus Christ at justification and union and identification with Him.

As was the case in Ephesians 2:17, the verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) here in Ephesians 3:8 pertains to announcing or convey a message. Specifically, it pertains to the proclamation of the gospel message. In both instances, it speaks of Paul proclaiming the gospel to the Gentile community. Specifically, it speaks of Paul proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth produced by their faith in Jesus Christ at justification and union and identification with Him.

As was the case in Ephesians 1:7, 18, and 2:7, the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος) here in Ephesians 3:8 means "wealth" since the word pertains to a high point on any scale and having the implication of value as well as abundance.[9] It speaks of plentiful supply of something.[10] As was the case in Ephesians 1:7, this word refers to the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that were received by the church age believer as a result of their justification and union and identification with Jesus Christ. Specifically, it refers to the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that Paul received as a result of the Father declaring him justified based upon the merits of object his faith, Jesus Christ as well as his union and identification with Him.

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[9] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 685). United Bible Societies.
. . **someth. someth.** = something

[10] Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 832). University of Chicago Press.

The noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος) is modified by the articular accusative neuter singular form of the adjective *anexichniastos* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος), which is composed of the alpha prefix *an*, "without" and the verb *exereunao*, "to search out," thus the word literally means "not searched out." This word does not appear in the Septuagint and only twice in the Greek New Testament, here in Ephesians 3:8 and in Romans 11:33.

In Romans 11:33, the adjective *anexichniastos* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος) means "unsearchable" and is used as a predicate nominative meaning that it is making an assertion that God's judgments are unsearchable. They are unsearchable in the sense that they are impossible for both men an angels to understand on the basis of careful examination or investigation. They are unsearchable unless God the Holy Spirit provides revelation, which He has by inspiring the Scriptures. They are unsearchable unless the Spirit provides illumination, which He does by giving understanding to the believer when he or she studies the Scriptures.

Now, here in Ephesians 3:8, the adjective *anexichniastos* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος) means "unfathomable" since the word pertains to something being impossible to understand on the basis of careful examination or investigation."[11]

This word functions in the first attributive position (article-adjective-noun), which indicates that this adjective receives greater emphasis than the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), which it modifies. Therefore, this construction emphasizes the unfathomable nature of the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that Paul received as a result of the Father declaring him justified based upon the merits of object his faith, Jesus Christ as well as his union and identification with Him.

As was the case in Ephesians 1:9, 12, 2:6, 7, 10, 13, and 3:6, the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" here in Ephesians 3:8 contains the figure of metonymy. This means that the Christ is put for Paul's faith in Him at justification as well as his union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at his justification.

The articular construction of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" is anaphoric, which means that it is pointing back to the previous use of this word in Ephesians 3:6 indicating that the word retains the same meaning and referent here in Ephesians 3:8 as it does in Ephesians 3:6. As we noted in our study of the latter, the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός) contains the figure of metonymy, which means that the person of Christ is put for Paul's faith in Him at justification as well as his union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification.

The proper name *Christos* (Χριστός) functions as a genitive of production, which takes place when the genitive substantive "produces" the noun to which it stands

[11] Greek-English Lexicon Based On Semantic Domains, volume 2, page 383

related, which in our context is the the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), "wealth." Therefore, this construction expresses the idea that this unfathomable wealth, which Paul was proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community was "produced by" their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification.

The noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος) functions as the accusative direct object of the verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω), which means that it receives the action of this verb. Therefore, this indicates that the unfathomable riches produced by justification by faith in Christ and union and identification with Him receives the action of being proclaimed by Paul to the Gentile Christian community.

The infinitive conjugation of the verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) functions as an infinitive of purpose, which means that the word indicates the purpose or goal of the action or state of its controlling verb, which in our context, is the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι). The latter was used of Paul being given the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel. This type of infinitive answers the question as to "why" Paul was given this unmerited blessing. It looks ahead to the anticipated and intended result. Therefore, this indicates that it was "for the purpose of" proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth produced by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him that the Father gave Paul the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel at the moment of justification.

The aorist tense of this verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) is a constative aorist, which describes in summary fashion the action of the verb without focusing on the beginning or end of the action specifically. Therefore, here in Ephesians 3;8, the aorist tense of this verb describes in summary fashion the action of proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth produced by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him.

The middle voice of this verb is an indirect or benefactive middle which means that the subject acts for himself or herself or in their own interests. Therefore, it is expressing the idea that it was "for Paul's own benefit" that he entered into the state of proclaiming for the benefit of the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth produced by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him.

Translation of Ephesians 3:1-8

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason, I myself, Paul, the prisoner owned by and under the authority of the one and only Christ who is Jesus for the benefit of each and every one of you as a corporate unit, who are Gentiles—2 if and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that each and every one of you

as a corporate unit have surely heard about the stewardship, which is unique to the grace, which originates from the one and only God, which was given to me for the benefit of all of you as a corporate unit without exception. (Of course, every one of you have in fact heard about it.) 3 Namely that, the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself as revelation as I wrote beforehand in a concise manner. 4 Concerning which, that is, by each one of you making it your habit of hearing read publicly, all of you will for your own benefit become able to comprehend my insight into this incomparable mystery, which is produced by your unique union and identification with Christ. 5 This mystery was by no means made known to members of the human race in previous generations as it has now been revealed through the personal agency of His holy apostles as well as prophets by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit. 6 Namely, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel. 7 I assumed the position and responsibility of serving this gospel according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to me according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power. 8 To me, the less than least of all the saints, this grace was given in order to proclaim for my benefit to the Gentiles the unfathomable wealth brought about by this justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ. (Author's translation)

Expanded translation of Ephesians 3:1-8

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason, I myself, Paul, the prisoner owned by and under the authority of the one and only Christ who is Jesus for the benefit of each and every one of you as a corporate unit, who are Gentiles—2 if and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that each and every one of you as a corporate unit have surely heard about the stewardship, which is unique to the grace, which originates from the one and only God, which was given to me for the benefit of all of you as a corporate unit without exception. (Of course, every one of you have in fact heard about it.) 3 Namely that, the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself as revelation as I wrote beforehand in a concise manner. 4 Concerning which, that is, by each one of you making it your habit of hearing read publicly, all of you will for your own benefit enter into the state of being able to comprehend my insight into this incomparable mystery, which is produced by your unique union and identification with Christ. 5 This mystery was by no means made known to members of the human race in previous generations as it has now been revealed through the personal agency

of His holy apostles as well as prophets by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit. 6 Namely, that the Gentiles exist in the state of possessing the characteristics of being fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the most important promise because of justification by faith and union and identification with Christ, who is Jesus by mean of the proclamation of the true and legitimate gospel. 7 I entered into the state of assuming the position and responsibility of serving this gospel according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to me according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power. 8 To me, the less than least of all the saints, this grace was given in order to proclaim for my benefit to the Gentiles the unfathomable wealth brought about by this justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ. (Author's translation)

Exposition of Ephesians 3:8

We noted in our introduction that Ephesians is divided into two main sections. Chapters 1-3 contains the "indicatives of the faith" while chapters 4-6 contain the "imperatives." Therefore, the latter presents the practical application of the former. The prologue or preface of the letter appears in Ephesians 1:3-14. There are also two magnificent intercessory prayers offered by Paul to the Father for the recipients of the epistle. The first appears in Ephesians 1:15-23 and serves as a hinge to chapters two and three. Its purpose is for the recipients of the letter to gain understanding regarding the contents of the first two chapters. The second intercessory prayer for the recipients of the letter appears in Ephesians 3:14-21 and serves as a hinge to the final three chapters. It presents the practical application of the first three chapters.

The letter begins with Paul's customary present greeting in the first two verses. He notes that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:1) and that grace and peace originated not only from the Father but also the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:2).

As we noted, the preface of the letter appears in Ephesians 1:3-14. Paul begins by asserting that along with the Father, the Lord is worthy of praise and glorification (Eph. 1:3). The apostle then states that the Father chose the Ephesian Christian community "in Christ" before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) because of their union and identification with Christ which took place at the moment of their justification through the baptism of the Spirit. Paul then teaches that the Father predestined them for adoption as His sons through their union and identification with Christ (Eph. 1:5). He asserts that they received the Father's grace through His Son, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6). Not only this, but they have received redemption through the blood or death of Jesus, namely the forgiveness of our trespasses (Eph. 1:7). The Father did this when He revealed to the church the mystery of His will, according to

His good pleasure that he set forth through the person of Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). Paul teaches that all things will be summed up in Christ, namely the things in heaven and the things on earth. The Christian has been claimed as the Father's own possession because of their union and identification with Jesus Christ because they were predestined according to the Father's purpose (Eph. 1:11). They were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit because they trusted in Jesus Christ at their justification (Eph. 1:13).

The first prayer, which we noted appears in Ephesians 1:15-22, teaches that the omnipotence of the Father was manifested when He raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:20). The Father also put all of creation and every creature under the authority of His Son who He gave to the church as head over all creation and every creature (Eph. 1:21-23).

In chapter two, Paul teaches that despite the fact that the recipients of the epistle were spiritually dead in their trespasses and sins and as a result were children of wrath as the rest of the human race prior to their justification, God the Father raised them up and seated them with His one and only Son, Jesus Christ because of His great love (Eph. 2:1-7). He asserts that the Father raised the church age believer up with Christ and seated them with Him at the moment of their justification through the baptism of the Spirit (Eph. 2:5-6). They were saved from the wrath of God by grace through the object of their faith, namely Jesus Christ and absolutely not on their own meritorious actions (Eph. 2:8-9). The believer is the Father's workmanship who has been created through their union and identification with Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so they would perform them (Eph. 2:8-10). Paul then asserts that the Father reconciled Jews and Gentiles through the person and work of His Son (Eph. 2:11-22). Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of this spiritual temple.

Now, in chapter three, the apostle Paul teaches the Christian community regarding the mystery of Christ, which is that Gentile believers are fellow-heirs with Jewish believers, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:1-6). Paul teaches that the Father's eternal plan was accomplished through His Son (Eph. 3:7-11). The believer has confident access to the Father in prayer because of their union and identification with Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:12). The apostle also asserts that he prayed to the Father that Christ would dwell in the hearts of the Christian community in the Roman province of Asia and that they would know experientially Christ's love for them (Eph. 3:14-21).

In Ephesians 3:1, the referent of the genitive neuter singular form of the immediate demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" is the contents of the Ephesians 2:11-22 since this word is put in the neuter gender indicating the writer is not referring to a particular word in Ephesians 2:11-22 but rather the entire contents of this pericope.

The genitive neuter singular form of the immediate demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" is the object of the improper preposition *charin* (χάριν), which always appears after its object. It can express purpose or cause. Here it is marker of reason indicating that the contents of Ephesians 2:11-22 are the basis or the reason for Paul's intercessory prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21.

It does not function as a marker of purpose, which would indicate that the contents of Ephesians 2:11-22 are the purpose for which Paul intercedes in prayer to the Father on behalf of the recipients of this epistle. This is indicated by the fact that these verses are not an object or end to be attained or the intended result Paul communicating this mystery of Christ. In other words, these verses do not constitute the intended result of Paul communicating this mystery because in Ephesians 3:2 he asserts that the reason why he communicates this mystery, i.e., the gospel is that the Father gave him this stewardship to do this. Rather, the contents of Ephesians 2:11-22 serve as the basis for Paul interceding in prayer on behalf of the recipients of this epistle since they constitute the new humanity, which along with Jesus Christ, will rule over the works of God's hands during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, this expression *Toutou charin* (Τούτου χάριν), "**for this reason**" is anaphoric rather than kataphoric. The former means that it is pointing to the immediate preceding context and specifically, the contents of the Ephesians 2:11-22, which serves as the basis for the intercessory prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. The latter means that it is pointing forward to the contents of Ephesians 3:2-13, which is autobiographical. Specifically, it is a digression in that Paul does not communicate his intercessory prayer on behalf of the recipients of this letter until Ephesians 3:14-21 in order to remind them that he is a communicator of the mystery of Christ, which he also identifies as the gospel in Ephesians 3:7. Paul interrupts himself and digresses in order to provide the reader with more insight into the church as a mystery and his responsibility to communicate this mystery to the Gentiles. He describes it as a mystery because it was not known to Old Testament prophets but has now been revealed by the Spirit through the teaching of the apostles and specifically himself. In Ephesians 3:2-6, he defines this mystery by asserting that Gentile believers are fellow-heirs with Jewish believers, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. Then in Ephesians 3:7-11, he asserts that the Father's eternal plan was accomplished through His Son. In Ephesians 3:12, he teaches that the believer has confident access to the Father in prayer because of their union and identification with Jesus Christ. Lastly, in Ephesians 3:13, he asks the recipients of this letter to not lose heart because of this imprisonment, which was for their glory.

Therefore, the contents of Ephesians 2:11-22 could not possibly be the basis for the digression in Ephesians 3:2-13 because the church composed of both Jewish and Gentile Christian communities and permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not the

reason why Paul's has a stewardship to communicate the mystery of Christ. In fact, he asserts in Ephesians 3:2 that the reason why he possesses this stewardship is that the Father gave it to him. Rather, the contents of Ephesians 2:11-22 are the basis for Paul's intercessory prayer recorded in Ephesians 3:14-21.

Lastly, the expression *Toutou charin* (Τούτου χάριν), which appears in Ephesians 3:1, appears again in Ephesians 3:14 indicating that Paul is resuming his thought which began in Ephesians 3:1 and interrupted with an autobiographical digression in Ephesians 3:2-13. This is not the first time in Ephesians that Paul has begun a thought but breaks it off temporarily but then resumes it again since he does this in Ephesians 2:1-5. The thought begun in Ephesians 2:1 is not completed until Ephesians 2:5-6, which thus creates an "anacoluthon" in Ephesians 2:2-4, which means that there is a break in the grammar. In Ephesians 2:1-3, the main verb and the subject have not been mentioned until Ephesians 2:4 where the subject God the Father is mentioned and the main verb is mentioned in Ephesians 2:5, which we noted is the third person singular aorist active indicative conjugation of the verb *syzōopoieō* (συζωοποιέω), "**made alive together**" (NET). Ephesians 2:1-4 is one incomplete sentence in order leave the readers in suspense as to how God the Father would solve the dilemma the recipients of this epistle were in prior to their justification. To mark the resumption of this thought Paul employs almost the same identical protasis of a concessive clause, which appears in Ephesians 2:1. If you recall, in Ephesians 2:5, Paul asserts *ontas hēmas nekrous tois paraptōmasin* (ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν), "**Even though each and every one of us as a corporate unit were spiritually dead ones because of our transgressions**." (Author's translation). The only difference between the two is that the one in Ephesians 2:1 employs the accusative second personal plural form of the personal pronoun *su* (σύ), which refers to the recipients of the Ephesian epistle. On the other hand, the one in Ephesians 2:5 employs the accusative first person plural form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ), which refers to both Paul and the recipients of this epistle. Therefore, the conjunction *kai* (καί) in Ephesians 2:5 introduces a concessive clause, which resumes and completes the one it introduces in Ephesians 2:1 but with a slight difference in subject.

Therefore, in Ephesians 3:1-14, Paul once again employs the figure of anacoluthon and in Ephesians 3:14, he marks the resumption of his thought by repeating the exact same expression *Toutou charin* (Τούτου χάριν), which begins Ephesians 3:1. Thus, the evidence within Ephesians itself indicates that the expression *Toutou charin* (Τούτου χάριν) in Ephesians 3:1 is anaphoric rather than kataphoric. This expression appears in only one other place in Paul's writings, namely, Titus 1:5.

Therefore, in Ephesians 3:1, the expression *Toutou charin* (Τούτου χάριν), "**for this reason**" is anaphoric, which means that it is pointing to the immediate preceding

context and specifically, the contents of the Ephesians 2:11-22, which serves as the basis for the intercessory prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21.

Now, in Ephesians 3:1, the nominative first person singular form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ), "**I myself**" serves to emphasize with the reader that the apostle Paul is a prisoner of Christ Jesus Christ on behalf of the Gentile Christian community in order to proclaim this mystery of Christ.

The use of the nominative first person plural form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ) here in Ephesians 3:1 is unnecessary in Greek since the form of a finite verb in this language indicates the person, number and gender of the subject. In context, the finite verb appears in Ephesians 3:14 and is the first person singular present active indicative conjugation of the verb *kamptō* (κάμπτω), "**I kneel**" which indicates the person, number and gender of the subject, which we noted is nominative first person singular form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ) and refers to Paul. This is what makes Greek an "inflectional" language. When the personal pronoun is used therefore, it may serve to clarify the subject or contrast the subject with someone else or for emphasis.

Here it is used for emphasis since it serves to emphasize with the reader that the apostle Paul is a prisoner of Christ Jesus Christ on behalf of the Gentile Christian community in order to proclaim this mystery of Christ. It is also used to mark a contrast between the apostle Paul who was Jewish Christian and the recipients of this epistle who were Gentile Christians.

The referent of the nominative first person singular form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ) is the apostle Paul, which is indicated by the nominative masculine singular form of the proper name *Paulos* (Παῦλος), "**Paul**," which means "little" or "short." He uses this name to refer to himself when he is communicating to or living among the members of the Gentile Christian community. When living among the Jews, he used his Jewish name Saul. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ authorized him to be the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; Romans 11:13; 15:16; Galatians 1:15-16; 2:2, 7-9).

The proper name *Paulos* (Παῦλος), "**Paul**" is further evidence in the Ephesian epistle that the apostle Paul was the author of Ephesians. As we noted in our introduction of this letter, the traditional view of the church from its inception is that the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians. However, in modern times, this view has been challenged. Some of the modern critics contend that the vocabulary, style and teaching differ from the writings which are universally accepted as Pauline. They also argue that the letter is "pseudonymous." The term "pseudonymity" refers to the practice of publishing one's writings under a revered person's name.

Ephesians was extensively, indisputably and universally accepted throughout the Roman Empire in the early church as a letter written by the apostle Paul. Church

fathers such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, and Origen all regarded the epistle as written by Paul. Both Marcion and the Muratorian canon list it as Pauline.

Furthermore, as in Ephesians 3:1, Ephesians 1:1 identifies *Paulos*, "**Paul**" as the author of the epistle to the Ephesians. The letter itself contains Pauline language including words that appear not only in this letter but also in the undisputed letters of Paul and yet these words do not appear anywhere else in the Greek New Testament. In typical Pauline fashion, Paul ascribes his apostolic authority to the will of God (cf. Eph. 1:1; cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1). Paul's name is even found in Ephesians 3:1 just as it does in his so-called undisputed letters (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:2; Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:18).

The structure of the Ephesian epistle is in accordance with the rest of the Pauline corpus. It follows the usual structure of a Pauline letter in that it begins with a salutation followed by a thanksgiving section, then the body of the letter and ending with final remarks and a benediction. The entire letter is in line with Pauline theology found in his other letters.

The Ephesian epistle is not a "pseudonymous" letter since this practice was frowned upon by the early church. This is supported by the fact that Paul would guarantee the authenticity of his letters to protect against forgeries or someone posing as him in a letter by putting his own distinguishing mark at the end of the letter. (cf. 2 Thess. 3:17-18; Gal. ; Col. 4:18). Furthermore, as we noted, Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter, which bears his name and there is no evidence whatsoever that this epistle was written by someone else.

The existence of the practice of pseudonymity in the ancient world is not disputed since it is well documented. It was used in Greco-Roman cultures as a literary means of drawing on ancient authorities to address contemporary situations. This process was accepted and understood and was not consider something that was deceptive. However, this cannot be applied to Christianity.

Tertullian describes an elder who has falsely written under the name of Paul in an attempt to increase Paul's fame because he loved him. However, he was removed from his office (*On Baptism*). The early church was very much concerned about receiving authentic Pauline epistles and would totally reject the practice of pseudonymity. The early church was very concerned with problems of literary fraud and Paul was too as we can see in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and Galatians 6:11.

Some critics contend that Ephesians is pseudonymous because the contents are impersonal in nature. They argue that we would expect that Paul's lengthy stay in Ephesus would prompt him to send personal greetings in this epistle. However, the absence of personal greetings and specific issues and conditions supports the idea that the Ephesian epistle is a circulatory letter intended for all the various house churches in the Roman province of Asia.

Lastly, the scholars who reject Pauline authorship of Ephesians because of the close relationship between this letter and Colossians. They argue that it could not be possible for one person to write two letters which resemble each other so strikingly (cf. Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8) and yet have significant differences (cf. Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:3-6). Guthrie answers by asserting "that two minds could not have produced two such works with so much subtle interdependence blended with independence."[12]

In the final analysis, the epistle of Ephesians should be regarded as written by the apostle Paul because the authenticity of this letter cannot be disproven.

In Ephesians 3:1, the nominative masculine singular noun *desmios* (δέσμιος), "**the prisoner**" is used of Paul's first Roman imprisonment because of the gospel. Acts 28 indicates that Paul was under house arrest during his first Roman imprisonment while awaiting his appeal before Caesar. However, in Second Timothy 1:8, the word is used of Paul's second Roman imprisonment.

The articular construction of the noun *desmios* (δέσμιος) is monadic, which expresses the "uniqueness" of Paul being a prisoner of the Roman civil authority despite the fact that he is owned by Jesus Christ and under His authority.

As we noted in our introduction to the Ephesian epistle, where Paul was imprisoned has been debated by scholars in recent years. The traditional view of the church is that the Ephesian epistle was written while Paul was under house arrest in Rome awaiting his appeal before Caesar. This view went unchallenged for eighteen centuries. However, in modern times, there are those who dissent. Two locales have been put forth by scholars, namely Ephesus and Caesarea.

The burden of proof rests with an Ephesus and Caesarea origin since church tradition holds to Paul writing Ephesians, Philemon and Colossians while under house arrest in Rome. A critical factor in a Roman origin of this epistle is that Luke is with Paul during his imprisonment (see Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24). This is supported by Acts since it makes clear Paul's Ephesian ministry does not occur in the "we" section of Acts. The traditional view, that Paul was in Rome when he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, is still by far the best view because of the obvious connection between Colossians and Ephesians. This is indicated by the fact that Tychicus is named the courier of both letters (cf. Col. 4:7-8; Eph. 6:21-22), thus both letters were written at the same place and time, namely during his first Roman imprisonment, which we noted took place from approximately 60-62 A.D.

Paul had two Roman imprisonments: (1) A.D. 60-62: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon (2) A.D. 68: 2 Timothy, Hebrews. The apostle Paul wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon during his first Roman imprisonment while he was awaiting his appeal before Caesar and he was actually

[12] Guthrie, 511

permitted to have his own rented quarters in Rome with a Roman soldier guarding him (See Acts 28).

As was the case in Ephesians 1:2, the proper nouns *Iesous* (Ἰησοῦς), "**Jesus**" and *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" here in Ephesians 3:1 are used by Paul to describe the incarnate Son of God as well as His person and work and what He has accomplished in history through this work as well as His status in relation to creation and every creature. Thus, they also describe His relationship to the church.

The word *Christos* (Χριστός) denotes the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth; thus He is the Deliverer of the human race in three areas through His death, resurrection, ascension and session: (1) Satan (2) Cosmic System (3) Old Sin Nature.

The Lord's Messiahship has a four-fold significance: (1) Separation unto God. (2) Authorization from God. (3) Divine enablement. (4) The coming Deliverer. It also signifies the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth who is the God-Man.

Christos (Χριστός) signifies that Jesus of Nazareth served God the Father exclusively and this was manifested by His execution of the Father's salvation plan which was accomplished by His voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross. The word signifies that Jesus of Nazareth has been given authority by God the Father to forgive sins, give eternal life, and authority over all creation and every creature as a result of His execution of the Father's salvation plan. It denotes that Jesus of Nazareth was perpetually guided and empowered by God the Holy Spirit during His First Advent. Lastly, *Christos* (Χριστός) signifies that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised deliverer of the human race from the bondage of Satan, his cosmic system and the old Adamic sin nature.

The articular construction of this word indicates that the referent of this word is in a class by himself and the only one deserving of the name since there were many individuals in the first century A.D. who claimed to be the Christ or were proclaimed to be the Christ. Thus, this construction emphasizes the "incomparability" of Jesus Christ.

The genitive masculine singular form of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" functions as a possession, which indicates that Jesus Christ "possesses" or Paul or we could say that the Lord "owns" him. This word also functions as a genitive of subordination, which would indicate that Paul was under the authority of Jesus Christ. This expression *ho desmios tou Christou Iēsou* (ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), "**the prisoner, owned by and under the authority of Christ, who is Jesus**" is not only used by Paul in Ephesians 3:1 to describe himself but also he used it in Philemon 1 and 9. He uses the expression *ho desmios en kyriō* (ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ), "**prisoner of the Lord**" in Ephesians 4:1 to describe himself. In each instance, he was under house arrest during his first Roman imprisonment awaiting his appeal before Caesar.

The proper noun *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), "**Jesus**" refers to the human nature of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth and functions as a genitive of simple apposition, which indicates that it clarifies who is Christ here, namely Jesus of Nazareth since there were many in the first century who made the claim.

The genitive second person plural form of the personal pronoun *su* (σύ) means "each and every one of you as a corporate unit" or "all of you without exception" since the word not only refers to the recipients of this epistle as a corporate unit but is also used in a distributive sense emphasizing no exceptions. As we have noted throughout our study of the first two chapters of Ephesians, the referent of the second person plural form of the personal pronoun *su* (σύ) are Gentile Christians according to the contents of Ephesians 2:11.

The articular genitive neuter plural form of the noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος), "**who are Gentiles**" pertains to persons from an ethnic group or nation not allied with and trusting in the God of Israel who is Jesus Christ and is used in a collective sense for these people. Thus, this word is used of those members of the human race who are not of Jewish racial descent and thus not members of the covenant people of God, Israel. The articular construction of the word is "generic" which means that the article is distinguishing the Gentile race from the Jewish race. This word functions as a genitive of simple apposition, which means that it is identifying specifically who the referent of the former is. Thus, this indicates that they are Gentiles racially.

The genitive second person plural form of the personal pronoun *su* (σύ) is the object of the preposition *huper* (ὑπέρ), which means "for the benefit of, on behalf of" since the word functions as a marker of benefaction or advantage expressing the idea that it was "for the benefit of" these Gentile Christians that Paul was a prisoner of the one and only Christ. This interpretation is supported by the contents of Ephesians 3:2, which asserts that the stewardship of God's grace, i.e., being a communicator of the mystery of Christ, i.e., the gospel, was given to Paul for the benefit of the Gentile Christian community. It is also indicated by the contents of Ephesians 3:8, which asserts that this grace which was given to Paul by God the Father in order to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.

Therefore, this prepositional phrase reveals that Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of the Roman civil authorities but rather a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Thus, he views his imprisonment as a part of the Father's sovereign plan for his life as an apostle to the Gentiles. Consequently, he is comforted in his imprisonment by this fact. In fact, Paul was imprisoned because of the opposition of unregenerate Jews possessed with regards to him communicating the gospel to the Gentiles.

Therefore, in Ephesians 3:1, the apostle Paul informs the recipients of this epistle, who we noted were Gentile Christians that he was suffering persecution because of his ministry on behalf of the Gentiles. References to persecution abound in Paul's letters.

The apostle Paul taught Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12 that every believer who does at any time desire to live a godly life by means of fellowship with Jesus Christ will certainly be persecuted.

Second Timothy 3:12 Now, in fact, each and every one who does at any time desire to live a godly life by means of fellowship with the Christ, who is Jesus, will certainly be persecuted. (Author's translation)

Persecution can take various forms in different countries and at different ages. Some persecution is blatantly overt and some persecution is very subtle taking the form of rejection which can include being ignored, patronized or mocked. It can take the form of condescension as well. Both forms express the hostility of those who are enslaved to sin and Satan and his cosmic system.

Ephesians 3:2 is composed of a protasis of a first class condition that indicates the assumption of truth for the sake of argument and begins a sentence, which ends in Ephesians 3:7. The apodosis is not introduced until Ephesians 3:13, which leaves the protasis dangling. It is introduced explicitly in Ephesians 3:13 with the inferential use of the conjunction *dio* (διό). The first class condition is a tool of persuasion in that the writer uses it to persuade his audience to come to his conclusion in the apodosis. The idea behind the first class condition is not "since" but rather, "if-and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that, then..." Here in Ephesians 3:2-12, the protasis of this first class conditional statement is designed to persuade the recipients of this epistle, who we noted were Gentile Christians, to follow a particular course of action, which in our context is obedience to the command in the apodosis to not become discouraged by Paul's Roman imprisonment.

Now, the protasis is not only contained in Ephesians 3:2 but also in Ephesians 3:3-12 with the latter explaining in greater detail the contents of the former. In other words, in Ephesians 3:3-12 explains in detail what Paul means by the expression "**the stewardship of God's grace**," which he also asserts was given to him for the benefit of the recipients of this epistle who are Gentile church age believers.

The idea of the protasis is "if and let assume that it is true for the sake argument that all of you as a corporate unit without exception have heard about the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for the benefit of each and every one of you as a corporate unit."

This is a responsive first class condition indicating that the recipients of this letter, whom Ephesians 2:11 identifies as Gentile church age believers, would all agree with the protasis. This is indicated by the fact that these Gentile Christians are the direct result of Paul communicating the gospel to them. Specifically, they are the result of him communicating the mystery doctrine that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel. In fact,

Paul affirms in Ephesians 3:3-12 that this stewardship of God's grace, which was given to him for the benefit of these Gentile church age believers was communicated to these Gentile church age believers by Paul through the Holy Spirit. As noted, "**the stewardship of God's grace**" is then explained in greater detail in Ephesians 3:3-12.

The apodosis, which we noted, is in Ephesians 3:13 and is "I ask each and every one of you as a corporate unit to not lose heart because of what I am suffering on behalf of all of you without exception, which is for the glory of each and every one of you as a corporate unit."

So therefore, as we noted the protasis is introduced in Ephesians 3:2 but explained in detail in Ephesians 3:3-12. In Ephesians 3:3-5, the apostle Paul defines this stewardship of God's grace as the revelation of the mystery and asserts that he was given insight into this mystery of Christ, which was not known to Old Testament saints but has now been revealed to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Spirit. In Ephesians 3:6, he defines this mystery of Christ as Gentile church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel.

Then, in Ephesians 3:7-8, Paul asserts that he became a servant of the gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to him by the exercise of God's power to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to enlighten everyone about God's plan concealed from the saints in living in past dispensations. Thus, the implication is that Paul enlightened the recipients of this letter regarding God's secret plan to have Jewish and Gentile believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him with the Jewish church age believers as a result of their obedience to the gospel.

In Ephesians 3:10, Paul asserts that the purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaced wisdom of God would be disclosed during the church age to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms, which is a reference to Satan and his fellow evil spirits. Then, in Ephesians 3:11, he asserts that this was according to the eternal purpose that the Father accomplished by means of the Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father.

Therefore, in this first class condition in Ephesians 3:2-12, Paul is persuading these Gentile church age believers to not lose heart because he was imprisoned unjustly because they have heard about his stewardship of God's grace, which was given to him on their behalf. He is attempting to engage them in dwelling upon God's amazing grace, i.e., unmerited blessing, which God bestowed upon him at his conversion.

This stewardship is the mystery of Christ, which was communicated through the gospel by the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. The content of this revelation is that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. It was a mystery in the sense that it was a secret plan not known to Old Testaments but now communicated during the church age through the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ.

Paul became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to him by the exercise of God's power in order to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. He also was given this gift in order to enlighten everyone in the Christian community about God's secret plan that was hidden for ages in God.

The purpose of this enlightenment we also noted was to disclose to Satan and his kingdom in the heavenly realms through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God. The implication is that they were not to lose heart because his imprisonment was the result of Satan and his kingdom persecuting him because of proclaiming this mystery that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.

Now, in Ephesians 3:2 and 13, the relationship between the protasis and the apodosis is "cause-effect." The cause appears in the protasis, which we noted appears in Ephesians 3:2-12. The effect appears in the apodosis, which we noted appears in Ephesians 3:13. Therefore, this indicates that the Gentile Christian living throughout the various cities and towns in the Roman province of Asia must not be discouraged by Paul's imprisonment because the purpose of this stewardship was for him to disclose to Satan and his kingdom in the heavenly realms through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God. The implication is that they were not to lose heart because his imprisonment was the result of Satan and his kingdom persecuting him because of proclaiming this mystery that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. In other words, these Gentile Christians should never be discouraged by his imprisonment because Paul's proclamation of this mystery doctrine is an affront and presents a threat to Satan and his kingdom. Thus, it is no surprise that Satan and his fellow evil spirits, who temporarily govern the earth, attacked him to the point of causing him to be imprisoned unjustly by his own people, the Jews.

Why was Satan upset by Paul communicating the gospel throughout the Roman Empire? Because the message of the gospel meant the demise of his kingdom on the earth. As we noted in our study of Ephesians 2:11-22, both Jewish and Gentile church age believers constitute the new humanity which will dispossess Satan and his fellow evil spirits when Jesus Christ returns with the church at His Second

Advent, which brings to an end the times of the Gentiles and the seventieth week of Daniel. The Son of God had to become a human being in order to restore the human race to rulership over the earth (cf. Heb. 2:5-13). The Father placed His incarnate Son Jesus Christ as ruler over the earth as a result of His Son voluntarily suffering a spiritual and physical death on the cross as a substitute for the entire human race (Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 2:9-11). When He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father, He was given the title deed to the earth and rulership over it (Rev. 5:1-5). At His Second Advent, He will bodily assume rulership over the earth (Rev. 19:11-20:4). At that time, He will imprison Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). He will along with the church assume rulership over the earth for a thousand years.

Satan was instrumental in the fall of Adam and Eve because he tempted Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in disobedience to God's prohibition to not do so. Consequently, Adam did so as well as a result of his wife's prompting. Thus, the entire human race was not only enslaved to sin but also to Satan and his kingdom. However, the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ destroyed his works according to 1 John 3:8 as a result of His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. Those sinners who trust in Him as their Savior are delivered from not only eternal condemnation, i.e., the wrath of God but also delivered from enslavement to sin and Satan and his cosmic system. At His Second Advent, the Lord Jesus Christ and His bride the church will dispossess Satan and his angels from the rulership of the earth and will restore the human race to the rulership over the earth.

God's plan from the beginning was that Adam and Eve would rule over the works of His hands according to Genesis 1:26-27. However, they lost this rulership because of their disobedience. However, Jesus Christ, and His bride, the church will restore the human race to its rightful place as rulers of the earth (Heb. 2:5-9). The sentence of Satan and his angels to suffer eternal condemnation in the lake of fire will be executed at the end of human history according to Revelation 20:10-15.

Therefore, no wonder Paul was imprisoned unjustly because the god of this world, Satan was unhappy about this mystery doctrine of the church age, which asserts that Jewish and Gentile church age believers in resurrection bodies will dispossess him and his fellow evil spirits as rulers of planet earth. The proclamation of the gospel and in particular this mystery doctrine that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and their union and identification with Him meant the end of Satan's kingdom on earth.

The second person plural aorist active indicative conjugation of the verb *akouō* (ἀκούω) pertains to learning or becoming aware of something, conceived of as hearing about it. The referent of the second person plural form of this verb is the

recipients of this letter, who were Gentile Christian community living throughout the Roman province of Asia. The word not only speaks of them as a corporate unit but is also used in a distributive sense emphasizing no exceptions. Therefore, in context, this verb speaks of these Gentile church age believers who lived in the various cities and towns in the Roman province of Asia receiving information about Paul's stewardship to communicate the mystery doctrine of the church age by hearing him and other teachers and prophets communicating it to them.

The enclitic particle *ge* (γέ), "**in fact**" emphasizes that each one of the recipients of this letter without exception, who were Gentile church age believers, heard about the stewardship of God's grace that was given to Paul for the benefit of each and every one of them. In other words, in relation to the first class conditional statement, it is an emphatic confirmation that they have heard about his stewardship to the gospel and in particular the mystery doctrine of the church age that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and their resultant union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification.

Now, as we noted in our study of Ephesians 1:10, the noun *oikonomia* is derived from *oikos*, "house" and the verb *nemo*, "to administrate," thus the word literally means "to administrate a household." From the time of Xenophon and Plato, the word represented household administration, the management of a household or of household affairs. It was generally used for the administration of the state and was eventually used to designate every type of activity that accrued from the position.[13] So it takes on the meanings "direction, provision" or "administration." It appears only twice in the Septuagint where it retains its original meaning of "office, administration" (Isaiah 22:19, 21).

The noun *oikonomia* occurs 9 times in the Greek New Testament (Luke 16:2, 3, 4; 1 Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:4). In Ephesians 3:9, *oikonomia* means "dispensation" and refers to the church age. However, in the remaining passages, it refers to a stewardship entrusted to someone. In 1 Timothy 1:4, the noun *oikonomia* means "administration of a household" and refers to these unidentified individuals in Ephesus fulfilling their stewardship as pastor-teachers. Specifically, it refers to "the administration" of God's household, which is the church. In 1 Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 3:2, and Colossians 1:25, the word is a reference to the stewardship that God gave to Paul as an apostle.

In Ephesians 1:10, the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) means "dispensation" since the word pertains to "a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's

[13] The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, General Editor, volume 2, page 253; Regency, Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967, 1969, 1971

purpose."[14] Specifically, it refers to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ when the Father's kingdom will be visibly present on planet earth under the rulership of Jesus Christ and His bride. They will also be accompanied by Old Testament saints, tribulational martyrs in their resurrection bodies as well as the elect angels.

However, here in Ephesians 3:2, the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) means "stewardship" because it pertains in this context to Paul's responsibility as an apostle to communicate the gospel. Also, it speaks of his responsibility to communicate God's secret plan that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. In other words, it speaks of his responsibility to communicate this mystery doctrine of the church age.

The idea of this word is two-fold: (1) It speaks of the office or spiritual gift of apostle. (2) It speaks of the activity of an apostle. Thus, the word not only speaks of Paul's apostleship but also the responsibility he was given to communicate the Father's secret plan to make Jewish and Gentile church age believers fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and their resultant union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification.

Acts 26:15-18 records Paul recounting to King Agrippa the Lord bestowing upon him this stewardship to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles.

Acts 26:15 So I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason, to designate you in advance as a servant and witness to the things you have seen and to the things in which I will appear to you. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (NET)

The apostle Paul employs the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" for the seventh time in this epistle (cf. 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8) and in each instance, the word refers to God the Father's grace policy towards unregenerate sinners, which manifests His attribute of love. Grace is also a major theme in this epistle since the noun *charis* (χάρις), "grace" appears 12 times in this epistle (Eph. 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5:, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7, 29; 6:24). It is all that God the Father is free to do in imparting unmerited blessings to those who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior based upon the merits of Christ and His death on the cross. It is God treating the sinner in a manner that they don't deserve and excludes any human works in order to acquire eternal salvation or blessing from God. Grace means that God saved us and blessed us despite ourselves

[14] Dispensationalism Today, page 29

and not according to anything that we do but rather saved us and blessed us because of the merits of Christ and His work on the Cross. It excludes any human merit in salvation and blessing (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) and gives the Creator all the credit and the creature none. By means of faith, we accept the grace of God, which is a non-meritorious system of perception, which is in total accord with the grace of God. Grace and faith are totally compatible with each other and inseparable (1 Tim. 1:14) and complement one another (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). Grace, faith, and salvation are all the gift of God and totally exclude all human works and ability (Eph. 2:8-9).

However, here in Ephesians 3:2, the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" is employed by the apostle Paul to describe the stewardship the Lord Jesus Christ bestowed upon him at his justification as being an "unmerited blessing." Thus, it is not only describe his spiritual gift of apostleship as an unmerited blessing but also the responsibility and task the Lord called or commissioned him to perform on behalf of the Gentiles. This interpretation is supported by the contents of Ephesians 3:8.

Ephesians 3: 8 To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ (NET)

Now, in Ephesians 3:2, the referent of the articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun *theos* (θεός), "**the one and only God**" is God the Father. The articular construction of the noun *theos* (θεός) expresses the idea that there were many gods in the world, but the God Jewish and Gentile Christians worshipped was the one and only true God in contrast to unregenerate humanity in the first century A.D. which worshipped the pantheon of Graeco-Roman gods.

The noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" functions as a genitive of apposition or epexegetical genitive, which indicates that the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" is identifying or describing the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία), "**the stewardship**" as God's grace. Specifically, it identifies this stewardship as an unmerited blessing given to Paul, which originates from God the Father. In other words, Paul did not earn or deserve this stewardship but rather it was a gift from God the Father. The noun *theos* (θεός) functions as a genitive of source, which expresses the idea that this grace or unmerited blessing bestowed upon Paul "originates from" God the Father. When Paul describes himself in Ephesians 3:8 as "**less than the least of all the saints**," he is alluding to the fact that his stewardship was manifestation of God's grace in the sense that the task the Lord gave him to communicate the gospel to the Gentile was an unmerited blessing. In other words, he certainly did not earn or deserve it.

As we noted in our exegesis of Ephesians 3:2, the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) means "to bestow as a gift" since the word pertains in this context of giving someone something as an expression of generosity. The referent of the feminine singular form of this verb is the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία), "**the stewardship**," which we noted

is modified by the genitive adjunct *tēs charitos tou theou* (τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ), "**God's grace**."

The dative first person singular form of the possessive personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ), "**to me**" and refers of course to the apostle Paul. The word functions as a dative indirect object, which indicates that the apostle Paul received this stewardship, which was an unmerited blessing originating from God the Father.

The accusative second person plural form of the personal pronoun *su* (σύ) means "each and every one of you as a corporate unit" or "all of you as a corporate unit without exception" because it not only refers to the recipients of this letter but is also used of them in a distributive sense emphasizing on exceptions. The referent of this word we noted is the Gentile Christian community living throughout the Roman province of Asia. This word is the object of the preposition *eis* (εἰς), which functions as a marker of benefaction or advantage expressing the idea that the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to Paul, was "for the benefit of" each and every Gentile church age believer without exception.

The aorist tense of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is a constative aorist, which describes in summary fashion Paul receiving as a gift the stewardship of communicating the Father's secret plan to make Jewish and Gentile church age believers fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of the faith in Christ Jesus at justification and their resultant union and identification with Him.

If you recall, the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία), "the stewardship" not only speaks of Paul's apostleship but also the responsibility he was given to communicate the Father's secret plan to make Jewish and Gentile church age believers fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and their resultant union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification. Therefore, the aorist tense is not only describing the moment Paul received this stewardship at justification but also describes Paul receiving the revelation of the content of this mystery after justification.

The passive voice of this verb means that the subject receives the action of the verb from either an expressed or unexpressed agency. Here the agency is expressed in Ephesians 3:5, which asserts that this mystery or God the Father's secret plan to make Jewish and Gentile believers fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus during the church age was revealed to the apostles and prophets *en pneumati* (ἐν πνεύματι), "**by the Spirit**." Therefore, the passive of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) indicates that the stewardship of God's grace receives the action of being given to Paul when he received the gift of apostleship through the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit at justification and after

justification when he received the revelation of the content of this mystery from the Holy Spirit.

The participle conjugation of this verb is in the genitive case and functions as a genitive of apposition or epexegetical genitive, which indicates that the participle conjugation of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is identifying or describing the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία), "**the stewardship**" as being given to Paul at justification for the benefit of the Gentile Christian community and after justification when he received the revelation of the content of this mystery.

In Colossians 1:25, the apostle Paul also mentions this same stewardship from God.

Colossians 1:24 Now, I am presently rejoicing because of my sufferings on behalf of each and every one of you. In fact, I am supplementing that which remains of the one and only Christ's intense sufferings by means of my physical body on behalf of His body which is, as an eternal spiritual truth, the church. 25 Of which I myself became a servant because of the stewardship which is from God (the Father) which was given to me on behalf of each and every one of you in order to fulfill the task of communicating the message originating from God (the Father). 26 Specifically, the mystery which has been concealed from past ages, in other words from past generations but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 For the benefit of whom, God (the Father) wanted to make known what is of infinite value, namely the glorious revelation of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is, as an eternal spiritual truth Christ in each and every one of you, who is the confident expectation of glory, 28 whom we make it our habit of proclaiming everywhere. Specifically, by making it our habit of instructing each and every person, yes by making it our habit of providing authoritative instruction for each and every person by means of a wisdom which is absolute. The purpose of which is to present each and every person as mature in the presence of the Christ. 29 For which purpose, I in fact continue making it my habit of working hard. Specifically, by making it my habit of striving for my own benefit in the face of opposition because of His activity which is regularly made effective through me by means of power. (Author's translation)

Ephesians 3:3 is composed of the following: (1) *hoti* (ὅτι) epexegetical clause *hoti kata apokalypsin egnōristhē moi to mystērion* (ὅτι κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον), "**Namely that, the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself as revelation**" (Author's translation) (2) comparative clause *proegrapsa en oligō* (προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ), "**as I wrote beforehand in a concise manner**." (Author's translation)

The *hoti* (ὅτι) epexegetical clause explains the noun *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία), "**the stewardship**" and specifically, it explains the nature of this stewardship, namely it

is being a steward of the mystery or the divine secret that was made known to Paul by revelation from the Holy Spirit.

As was the case in Ephesians 1:17, the noun *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις) here in Ephesians 3:3 means "revelation" since the word in both instances pertains to communication of knowledge which was previously hidden to man by a divine or supernatural agency. However, in Ephesians 1:17, it refers to the revelation the Holy Spirit provided Paul and his fellow apostles regarding the Father's plan for the church age believer, which now appears in the Greek New Testament. But here in Ephesians 3:3, it refers to the revelation the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:5) provided Paul in relation to his stewardship, which he describes in Ephesians 3:2 as unique to the grace, which originates form the one and only God which is a reference to the Father.

As we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:2, the protasis is introduced in Ephesians 3:2 but explained in detail in Ephesians 3:3-12. In Ephesians 3:3-5, the apostle Paul defines this stewardship of God's grace as the revelation of the mystery and asserts that he was given insight into this mystery of Christ, which was not known to Old Testament saints but has now been revealed to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Spirit. In Ephesians 3:6, he defines this mystery of Christ as Gentile church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel. Then, in Ephesians 3:7-8, Paul asserts that he became a servant of the gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given to him by the exercise of God's power to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to enlighten everyone about God's plan concealed from the saints in living in past dispensations. Thus, the implication is that Paul enlightened the recipients of this letter regarding God's secret plan to have Jewish and Gentile believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him with the Jewish church age believers as a result of their obedience to the gospel. In Ephesians 3:10, Paul asserts that the purpose of this enlightenment is that through the church the multifaced wisdom of God would be disclosed during the church age to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms, which is a reference to Satan and his fellow evil spirits. Then, in Ephesians 3:11, he asserts that this was according to the eternal purpose that the Father accomplished by means of the Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father.

Therefore, in Ephesians 3:3, the noun *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις), which we noted means "revelation" refers to Paul's stewardship, which we also noted, he defines as the mystery of Christ, which was communicated through the gospel by the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The content of this revelation is that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are now fellow heirs,

fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. It was a mystery in the sense that it was a secret plan not known to Old Testaments but now communicated during the church age through the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this enlightenment we also noted was to disclose to Satan and his kingdom in the heavenly realms through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God.

There has been much conjecture as to when Paul received this revelation. It could refer to Paul's Damascus road experience at his conversion (Acts. 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18),or the teaching of Ananias in Damascus (Acts 9:10-19), or the vision in Jerusalem Paul received (Acts 22:17) or lastly, his training by God in Arabia (Gal.1:12,17-18). However, none of these accounts reveals or suggests that Paul received this revelation that Jewish and Gentile Christians are now fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.

Now, in Ephesians 3:3, the prepositional phrase *kata apokalypsin* (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν), "**as revelation**" not only modifies to the *hoti* epexegetical clause *egnōristhē moi to mystērion* (ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον), "**the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself**" but also corresponds to it. Specifically, the former corresponds to the latter in that both speak of Paul receiving revelation from the Holy Spirit. In other words, they are equivalent to each other in that they both refer to the same thing. Namely, this divine secret or mystery was made known to him by the Spirit is "equivalent" to receiving revelation from the Holy Spirit.

As was the case in Ephesians 1:9, the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον) here in Ephesians 3:3, the word means "mystery, divine secret" since the word pertains to the content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency.[15] It pertains to a secret whose concerned party is a deity alone and those to whom he chooses to share the information; especially concerning the method and history of God's redemption or other supernatural information.[16]

In Ephesians 1:9 and 3:3, the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**mystery**" speaks of a truth which was not known to Old Testament saints but has now been revealed by the Father through the Spirit during the church age to the apostles who communicated it to the church.

In Ephesians 1:9, this word refers to the divine secret or mystery of the Father's will for church age believers.

Ephesians 1:3 The God, namely the Father of the Lord ruling over us, who is Jesus Christ, is worthy of praise. Namely, because He is the one who has

[15] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 344). United Bible Societies

[16] Logos Bible Software Bible Sense Lexicon

blessed each and every one of us by means of each and every kind of Spirit appropriated blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. 4 For He chose each and every one of us for His own purpose because of Him alone before creation in order that each and every one of us would be holy as well as uncensurable in His judgment. 5 He did this by predestinating each and every one of us for the purpose of adoption as sons because of His love through Jesus Christ for Himself according to the pleasure of His will. 6 This was for the purpose of praising His glorious grace, which He freely bestowed on each and every one of us because of the one who is divinely loved. 7 Because of whom, each one of us are experiencing that which is the redemption through His blood, namely the forgiveness of our transgressions according to His infinite grace. 8 This He provided in abundance for the benefit of each and every one of us because of the exercise of a wisdom, which is absolute and divine in nature resulting in the manifestation of an insight, which is absolute and divine in nature. 9 He did this by revealing the mystery of His will for the benefit of each and every one of us according to His pleasure, which He planned beforehand because of our faith in and union and identification with Himself. (Author's translation)

In Ephesians 1:9, the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**mystery**" speaks of a truth which was not known to Old Testament saints but has now been revealed by the Father through the Spirit during the church age to the apostles who communicated it to the church. This mystery is identified by the word's genitive adjunct which is *tou thelēmatos autou* (τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ), "**of His will**." This mystery of the Father's will is identified in Ephesians 1:3-4 as the Father electing church age believers by predestinating them for the purpose of adoption as sons for His purpose because of His love through Jesus Christ. Thus, it was according to His will to elect church age believers by predestinating them for the purpose of adoption as sons for His purpose alone because of His love through Jesus Christ.

This mystery is developed further in Ephesians 3:5-6 in that it asserts that the Gentile believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus with Jewish Christians. Both groups compose those who have been elected by the Father which was accomplished by predestinating them for the purpose of adoption as sons for Himself alone because of His love through their faith in and union and identification with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the development of this mystery in Ephesians 3:5-6 is that these verses are identifying that not only Jewish Christians are elected and predestinated and in union with Christ and identified with Him but also Gentile Christians. This development was necessary since the promise of the Holy Spirit was originally given to His apostles and disciples who were all Jewish since this promise was given to the Jewish people under the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27) and the recipients of the Ephesian epistle were Gentile Christians.

So therefore, in Ephesians 3:3, the referent the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**mystery**" is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel. Ephesians 3:3 expands or explains in greater detail or provides more information about the Father's will for the church age believer in Ephesians 1:9. Namely, that it also involves Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel. Therefore, in each instance, the word has the same referent because the Father's will for the church age believer, which was not known to the Old Testament prophets, is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

Some commentators argue that this comparative clause alludes to Colossians 1:25-27. However, this very unlikely since Tychicus not only delivered Ephesians to the Christian community in the Roman province of Asia but also Colossians (Col.4:7). He also delivered what we know as "Philemon" to Philemon since it can be inferred that Philemon lived in Colossae because the Onesimus mentioned in Philemon 10 is Philemon's slave is the same Onesimus who appears in Colossians 4;9.

Now, therefore, in Ephesians 3:3, the statement *kata apokalypsin egnōristhē moi to mystērion* (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον), "**Namely that, the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself as revelation**" means that the divine secret or mystery that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him was made known for the benefit of Paul as revelation.

As we noted in our exegesis of Ephesians 3:3, the aorist tense of this verb *gnōrizō* (γνωρίζω) is a constative aorist, which is describing in summary fashion the action of Paul receiving this divine secret or mystery that Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him being made known for the benefit of Paul.

There is nothing in Scripture which would indicate that this is a consummative aorist which is used to stress the cessation of an act, which would thus indicate that Paul received this revelation at the moment of justification or at some other point of time after his conversion. The Scriptures also do not indicate if he received this revelation in stages over a period of time. Therefore, it is better to take the aorist

tense of this verb as a constative aorist which takes no interest in the internal workings of the action of the verb. It simply describes in summary fashion without focusing on the beginning or end of the action.

The passive voice of the verb *gnōrizō* (γνωρίζω) indicates that this mystery or divine secret about Jewish and Gentile church age believers receives the action of being made known to Paul by revelation from the Holy Spirit.

The comparative clause *proegrapsa en oligō* (προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ), "**as I wrote beforehand in a concise manner**" which follows this hoti epexegetical clause refers to Paul writing about this mystery concerning Jewish and Gentile church age believers in Ephesians 1:3-14 and 2:11-22.

The adverb *kathōs* (καθώς) functions as a marker of comparison which means that it is marking a comparison between the *hoti* (ὅτι) epexegetical clause *hoti kata apokalypsin egnōristhē moi to mystērion* (ὅτι κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον), "**Namely that, the mystery was made known for the benefit of myself as revelation**" (Author's translation) and the comparative clause *proegrapsa en oligō* (προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ), "**as I wrote beforehand in a concise manner**" (Author's translation), which follows it. The latter refers to the contents of Ephesians 1:9, which we noted speaks of mystery of the Father's will for church age believers, which is explained in greater detail in Ephesians 3:2-13. Therefore, this adverb *kathōs* (καθώς) is marking a comparison between the contents of Ephesians 3:2-13 with the contents of Ephesians 1:3-14 and 2:11-22.

In this comparative clause, the verb *prographō* (προγράφω) means "to write beforehand or previously, to write in advance or in anticipation of" and is modified by the prepositional phrase *en oligō* (προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ), which identifies Paul as writing about this divine secret or mystery in a brief manner in Ephesians 1:9.

The aorist tense of the verb *prographō* (προγράφω) is used of Paul writing in Ephesians 1:3-14 and 2:11-22 about this mystery not known to Old Testament prophets that Jewish and Gentile church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

This author not only believes that this comparative clause in Ephesians 3:3 refers to Paul's teaching in Ephesians 1:3-10 but also to his teaching in Ephesians 2:11-22. This is indicated by the fact that these verses develop the idea of these Gentile Christians being elected by being predestinated in eternity past to adoption as son of the Father, which is taught in Ephesians 1:3-14. Ephesians 2:11-22 teaches that Gentile church age believers are united with Jewish Gentile believers because of their faith in Jesus Christ at justification and their union and identification with Him accomplished through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification. Thus, the election and predestinated of church age believers to adoption as sons of the Father taught by Paul in Ephesians1:3-14 also involves Jewish and Gentile church age

believers being united together to form the new humanity led by Jesus Christ which will dispossess Satan and his fellow evil spirits in order to rule over the works of God's hands during Jesus Christ's millennial reign.

Thus, the comparative clause *proegrapsa en oligō* (προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ) is emphasizing that Paul wrote about this mystery or divine secret about Jewish and Gentile church age believers briefly in Ephesians 1:3-14 and 2:11-22 before writing about it in detail in Ephesians 3:2-13.

Ephesians 3:4 is composed of the participial clause *dynasthe anaginōskontes noēsai tēn synesin mou* (δύνασθε ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου), "**that is, by each one of you making it your habit of hearing read publicly, all of you will for your own benefit become able to comprehend my insight**" and is modified by two prepositional phrases. The first is *pros ho* (πρὸς ὃ), "**Concerning which**" and the second is *en tō mystēriō tou Christou* (ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), "**into this incomparable mystery, which is produced by your unique union and identification with Christ**." These two prepositional phrases serve as bookends to this participial clause with the first placed in the emphatic position in the clause and the second completing the clause.

In the participial clause, we noted in our exegesis that the nominative masculine plural present active participle conjugation of the verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) pertains to having a particular piece of literature read publicly or aloud to people and thus involves verbalization.

The referent of the masculine plural form of this verb is the Gentile Christian community living in the various cities and towns throughout the Roman province of Asia. This is indicated by the fact that Paul identifies the recipients of this epistle in Ephesians 2:11 as Gentile Christians and this is a circular letter written.

Therefore, this verb in Ephesians 3:4 refers to the contents of Ephesians being read publicly to each member of the Gentile Christian community in the Roman province of Asia who were the recipients of this epistle by their lectors and pastor-teachers. In other words, it describes these Gentiel Christians hearing read publicly the contents of this epistle, which explains in detail this mystery doctrine of the church age.

As we noted in our exegesis, this word *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) functions as a nominative in simple apposition which means that it describes the recipients of this epistle hearing the contents of this epistle read to them publicly by their lectors and pastors in the public worship service and which contents explains in detail this mystery doctrine for the church age.

The present tense of this verb is a customary present, which is used to describe these Gentile Christians as "making it their habit of" hearing read publicly in the public worship service this mystery doctrine.

This verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) also functions as a participle of means which indicates the means by which the action of a finite verb is accomplished. This type of participle defines the action of its controlling verb and makes more explicit what the author intended to convey with the verb. This type of participle usually follows the main verb. In this context, the finite verb is the second person plural present middle indicative conjugation of the verb *dunamai* (δύναμαι), "**you will be able**" whose thought is completed by the aorist active infinitive conjugation of the verb *noeō* (νοέω), "**to understand**." Also, in this context, the verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) follows the main verb, which we noted is the verb *dunamai* (δύναμαι), "**you will be able**." Therefore, the participle conjugation of the verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) is describing the means by which the recipients of this letter will be able to comprehend Paul's insight into this mystery of Christ. Namely, by making it their habit of hearing read publicly the contents of this letter by their lectors and pastors in the public worship service, which explains in detail this mystery doctrine for the church age.

Some interpret the participle conjugation of this verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) as a temporal participle, which in relation to its controlling verb, answers the question, "when?" Therefore, this type of participle would be expressing the idea of the recipients of this letter will be able to comprehend Paul's insight into this mystery of Christ "while" hearing read publicly the contents of this letter read in the public worship service. Though a participle might have a temporal force, one must determine if a more specific semantic value is intended by the writer before interpreting the participle as being temporal. This is the case here where *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) has a more specific semantic value, namely means.

The second person plural aorist middle indicative conjugation of the verb *dunamai* (δύναμαι) pertains to possessing the capacity to understand a particular subject. We noted that the referent of the second person plural of this verb is of course the recipients of this epistle who were members of the Gentile Christian community living in the various cities and towns in the Roman province of Asia. The middle voice of this verb is an indirect middle, which means that the subject acts for himself or herself. Therefore, this would express the idea that it would be "for the benefit of" the recipients of this epistle to be able to comprehend Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ.

The aorist active infinitive conjugation of the verb *noeō* (νοέω), "**to understand**" pertains to understanding, or comprehending on the basis of careful thought and consideration and speaks of grasping the meaning of a particular subject intellectually.

It functions as complementary infinitive which means that it is completing the thought of the second person plural present middle indicative conjugation of the verb

dunamai (δύναμαι) because it identifies for the reader what they will be able to do by reading the contents of this epistle.

The aorist tense of this verb *noeō* (νοέω) is an ingressive aorist, which emphasizes the entrance into a particular state or condition. Therefore, this indicates that the recipients of this epistle will be able to "enter into the state of" comprehending Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ by making it their habit of hearing the contents of this epistle read to them publicly by their lectors and pastors.

The noun *sunesis* (σύνεσις), "**insight**" pertains to possessing the ability to understand the meaning and importance of something. As was the case in Colossians 1:9, 2:2 and 2 Timothy 2:7, the noun *sunesis* (σύνεσις) here in Ephesians 3:4 pertains to the result of apprehending the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively. It pertains to the quality of being able to grasp and comprehend what is obscure, skill in discerning, and the power to see what is not evident to the average mind.

The nominative first person singular form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ) means "my" and its referent is of course Paul. The articular construction of the noun *sunesis* (σύνεσις) is employed with this personal pronoun in order to denote possession indicating that this insight or discernment is the possession of the apostle Paul.

Now, in the first prepositional phrase *pros ho* (πρὸς ὃ), "**concerning which**," we noted in our exegesis that the referent of the accusative neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) is the articular nominative neuter singular form of the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**the mystery**," which appears in Ephesians 3:3. This mystery refers to revelation Paul received from the Holy Spirit and was not known to the Old Testament prophets of Israel. The content of this revelation is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

As we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:3, this verse expands or explains in greater detail or provides more information about the Father's will for the church age believer in Ephesians 1:9. Namely, that it also involves Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel. Therefore, in each instance, the word has the same referent because the Father's will for the church age believer, which was not known to the Old Testament prophets, is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

We also noted in our exegesis that the accusative neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) is the object is the object of the preposition *pros* (πρός),

which marks this mystery doctrine of the church age as being the connection between what he wrote about it in the first two chapters and what he is going to write about in Ephesians 3:5-13.

The second prepositional in Ephesians 3:4, which completes this verse contains the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον) means "mystery, secret, divine secret" since it pertains to revelation that was not known to the Old Testament prophets of Israel but has been given to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Holy Spirit. As was the case in Ephesians 3:3, here in Ephesians 3:4 the referent of this word is the revelation that Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel.

The articular construction of this word is monadic, which means that this mystery is "unique" or "one of a kind" because the content of this mystery is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification. Thus, this mystery is unique because never before in history were Gentile believers on equal footing with Jewish believers.

The noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον) is the object of the preposition *en* (ἐν), which marks the content of what Paul possessed insight into, namely, this unique mystery or secret, which is produced by union and identification with Christ, which is unique to those Jewish and Gentile sinners who have been declared justified through faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" contains the figure of metonymy which means that the one and only Christ is put for the church age believer's union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification. This interpretation is indicated by the contents of Ephesians 3:5-13 reveal the content of this mystery, namely that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him. Gentile Christians were entered into a relationship with God the Father and with His covenant people Israel by being declared justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, through the baptism of the Spirit, they were placed in union with Jesus Christ and identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the Father's right hand. Through the baptism of the Spirit, they were united with Jewish Christians. Consequently, they benefit from the four unconditional covenants that God established with His covenant people, namely the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New covenants. They received the gift of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins because of benefiting from the New covenant, which promises these two benefits.

The articular construction of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" is monadic emphasizing that Jewish and Gentile church age believer's union and identification with Jesus Christ as being unique in history. This is indicated by the fact that unlike the church age, Gentile believers in previous dispensations have never been on equal footing with Jewish believers in the sense that Gentiles have never given the privilege of entering into a covenant relationship with God as Jewish believers. At the moment of justification, Gentile church age believers have been entered into a covenant relationship with God because through the baptism of the Spirit, not only have they been united with Christ and identified with Him but they have also been united with Jewish church age believers as well (cf. Rom. 11:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22).

The articular construction of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός) functions as a genitive of production, which takes place when the genitive substantive "produces" the noun to which it stands related, which in our context is the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**mystery**." Therefore, this construction expresses the idea that this mystery or secret doctrine that Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise with each other is "produced by" their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

Notice, in Ephesians 3:4 that Paul speaks of this mystery being read publicly to the recipients of this epistle who we noted were Gentile Christians living in the various cities and towns in the Roman province of Asia. The public reading of Scripture is commanded by Paul since he instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13 to be occupied with the public reading of Scripture. The public reading of Scripture is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:27 in that Paul commanded the Thessalonian Christian community to have the contents of First Thessalonians read to each person in their community.

Now, some expositors argue that the content of the mystery of Christ here in Ephesians 3:4 is the same as in Colossians 1:26, 27, 2:2 and 4:3. However, this is not the case. In fact, the content of the mystery of Christ here in Ephesians 3:4 refers to one of several doctrines which are described by Paul in his writings as a "mystery," i.e., not known to the Old Testament prophets of Israel but revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and New Testament prophets. Namely, that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

In the New Testament, the church is never actually called a mystery but we know it is a mystery because its major elements are specifically designated as mysteries. For example, the first major element is the body concept of Jewish and Gentile believers united into one body to form one "new man" or "new humanity." This is

described a mystery in Ephesians 3:1-12. The second major element is that the church is the Bride of Jesus Christ which is taught in Ephesians 5:22-32. The third element is the rapture or resurrection of the church which is described as a mystery as well in First Corinthians 15:51-52. Lastly, the fourth and final major element is the concept of Jesus Christ indwelling each and every church age believer which is taught here in Colossians 1:24-27 and also in 2:10-19; 3:4 and 11.

Ephesians 3:5 is composed of the following: (1) relative pronoun clause *ho heterais geneais ouk egnōristhē tois huiois tōn anthrōpōn* (ὃ ἑτέραις γενεαῖς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), "**This mystery was by no means made known to members of the human race in previous generations**." (Author's translation) (2) comparative clause *hōs nyn apekalyphthē tois hagiois °apostolois autou kai prophētais en pneumati* (ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις °ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν πνεύματι), "**as it has now been revealed through the personal agency of His holy apostles as well as prophets by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit**." (Author's translation)

We noted in our exegesis that the referent of the nominative neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) is the articular nominative neuter singular form of the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**the mystery**," which appears in Ephesians 3:4, which is indicated by the fact that they agree in gender (neuter) and number (singular). As we also noted in our study of this verse, the latter means "mystery, secret, divine secret" since it pertains to revelation that was not known to the Old Testament prophets of Israel but has been given to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the Holy Spirit. As was the case in Ephesians 3:3, here in Ephesians 3:4 the referent of this word is the revelation that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him. In Ephesians 3:4, we also noted Paul asserts that this mystery is "produced by" these Jewish and Gentile church age believer's faith in Jesus Christ at justification and union and identification with Him. Therefore, the referent of the nominative neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) here in Ephesians 3:5 is the articular nominative neuter singular form of the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**the mystery**," which Paul asserts is produced by the church age believer's union and identification with Jesus Christ.

In our study of Ephesians 3:3-4, we noted that this verse expands or explains in greater detail or provides more information about the Father's will for the church age believer in Ephesians 1:9. Namely, that it also involves Gentile and Jewish church age believers being fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him as a result of their obedience to the gospel.

Therefore, in each instance, the word has the same referent because the Father's will for the church age believer, which was not known to the Old Testament prophets, is that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

Ephesians 3:1-13 teaches that it was a mystery that the Gentiles through faith in Christ would become fellow heirs with Jewish believers, fellow members of the body of Christ and fellow partakers of the four unconditional covenants of promise to Israel. The mystery is *not* that the Gentiles would be saved since this was prophesied in the Old Testament (Isa. 11:10; 60:3). Rather, the mystery concerning the Gentiles is that they would become fellow heirs with Jewish believers, fellow members with Jewish believers in the body of Christ and fellow partakers of the covenant promises to Israel.

The content of this mystery is three-fold: (1) The Gentile believers are fellow heirs with Jewish believers in the sense that they share in the spiritual riches God gave them because of His covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:26-28). (2) Gentile believers in Christ are fellow members of the body of Christ with Jewish believers. There is one body, the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4), which has no racial distinctions (1 Cor. 12:13) and has the Lord Jesus Christ as its head (Eph. 5:23). Each individual member of the body of Christ shares in the ministry (Eph. 4:15-16). (3) Gentile believers in Christ are fellow partakers of the four unconditional covenants of promise to Israel. The four great unconditional covenants to Israel will be fulfilled: (1) Abrahamic deals with the race of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:16; 22:15-18). (2) Palestinian is the promise of land to Israel (Gen. 13:15; Num. 34:1-12). (3) Davidic deals with the aristocracy of Israel (2 Sam. 7:8-17) (4) New deals with the future restoration of Israel during the millennium (Jer. 31:31-34).

This mystery about Jewish and Gentile church age believers is not only alluded to in Ephesians 1:3-14 and Ephesians 3:2-13 but is also alluded to in Ephesians 2:11-22 because the latter develops the idea of these Gentile Christians being elected by being predestinated in eternity past to adoption as son of the Father, which is taught in Ephesians 1:3-14. Ephesians 2:11-22 teaches that Gentile church age believers are united with Jewish Gentile believers because of their faith in Jesus Christ at justification and their union and identification with Him accomplished through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification. Thus, the election and predestination of church age believers to adoption as sons of the Father taught by Paul in Ephesians1:3-14 also involves Jewish and Gentile church age believers being united together to form the new humanity who along with Jesus Christ dispossess Satan and his fellow evil spirits as rulers over God's creation in order to rule over the works of God's hands during Jesus Christ's millennial reign.

Now, in Ephesians 3:5, the dative feminine plural form of the noun *genea* (γενεά), "**generations**" refers to generations of human beings extending from Adam up to the church age. In other words, the referent of this word is the dispensations prior to the church age. We noted in our exegesis that this noun *genea* (γενεά) is modified by the dative feminine plural form of the adjective *heteros* (ἕτερος), "**previous**" which refers to the dispensations that came before the church age.

These dispensations, which preceded the church age, would include the dispensation of the Gentiles and Israel. The dispensation of the Gentiles begins with the Edenic period, which can be divided into four periods: (1) Edenic: Adam to the Fall (Gen. 1:26-3:6). (2) Ante-Diluvian: Fall of Adam to the Flood (Gen. 3-9). (3) Post-Diluvian: Noah Leaving Ark to Call of Abraham (Gen. 9-12). (4) Patriarchal: Call of Abraham to Giving of Law on Sinai (Gen. 12-Ex. 19). The dispensation of Israel is broken into six periods: (1) Theocratic Kingdom: Exodus to Samuel (B.C. 1441-B.C. 1020) (2) United Kingdom: Saul to Rehoboam (B.C. 1020-926 B.C.) (3) Northern Kingdom: Jeroboam to Hosea (B.C. 926-B.C. 721). Lastly, the last dispensation before the church age is the dispensation of the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ or in other words, His First Advent, which of course began with the birth of Christ and culminated in His death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father.

Now, as was the case in Ephesians 2:2, the articular dative masculine plural form of the noun *huios* (υἱός) here in Ephesians 3:5 does not mean "the sons" but rather "the offspring" since the word pertains to the offspring of human beings without reference to the gender. It refers to the offspring of the human race who lived during the dispensations prior to the advent of the church age.

The articular genitive masculine plural form of the noun *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος) is used in a generic sense for the human race. It functions as a genitive of apposition or epexegetical genitive, which means that the word stands in apposition to the articular dative masculine plural form of the noun *huios* (υἱός), which indicates that it is identifying what race these offspring belong to, namely the human race as distinguished from the angelic race.

Therefore, this expression *huioi tōn anthrōpōn* (υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων) literally means "the sons of men or human beings" and is a Semitic idiom designating members of the human race (Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 144:12; Ezek. 2:1, 3, 6, 8; Mk. 3:28).

Now, the reader must understand that this expression does not refer to unregenerate humanity but rather regenerate humanity because this mystery doctrine can only be understood by those who have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ since the Spirit inspired this revelation and gives illumination with regards to its application and significance (cf. 1 Cor. 2; Eph. 1:17-18). Therefore, in context the referent of this expression is church age believers who

have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when they were declared justified through faith in Jesus Christ and were consequently placed in union with Jesus Christ and identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father through the baptism of the Spirit, which they received at justification.

The third person singular aorist passive indicative conjugation of the verb *gnōrizō* (γνωρίζω) pertains to causing information to become known to others and is emphatically negated by the emphatic negative adverb *ou* (οὔ), which expresses an absolute, direct, full negation.

The passive voice of the verb *gnōrizō* (γνωρίζω) means that the subject receives the action of the verb from either an expressed or unexpressed agency. Here the agency is expressed here in Ephesians 3:5, namely, the prepositional phrase *en pneumati* (ἐν πνεύματι), "**by the Spirit**." Therefore, this is a divine passive. This indicates that this mystery doctrine never received the action of being made known to members of the human race who lived in the dispensations prior to the church age through the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit as it has now been made known during the church age.

Now, in the comparative clause which completes Ephesians 3:5, we have the conjunction comparative particle *hōs* (ὡς), "**as**," which is used to mark a comparison between members of the human race living in the dispensations prior to the church age and those living during the church age.

The adverb of time *nun* (νῦν) "**now**" indicates that Paul composing in writing this epistle and the dispensation of the church age take place simultaneously.

The verb *apokalyptō* (ἀποκαλύπτω) pertains to something becoming known to the public and specifically information that was previously unknown to people.

Now, as was the case in Ephesians 2:20, the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) here in Ephesians 3:5 is employed as designation for the temporary spiritual gift assigned to the twelve men Jesus Christ sovereignly chose and delegated authority to exercise over the church. Here it refers to the exercise or function of the spiritual gift of apostle. This word contains the figure of metonymy, which means that the apostles are put for their communication of the gospel to the members of the church.

As was the case in Ephesians 2:20, the noun *prophētēs* (προφήτης) here in Ephesians 3:5 refers to the exercise of the temporary or discontinued spiritual gift of being a prophet, which is no longer existent since it existed during the pre-canon period of the church to fill the void until the New Testament canon had been completed (See 1 Corinthians 12:10; 13:2; 14:22; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). This word also contains the figure of metonymy, which means that these New Testament prophets are put for their communication of the gospel to the members of the body of Christ prior to justification and which communication resulted in their justification as a result of them exercising faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

As was the case in Ephesians 2:20, the articular construction of the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) here in Ephesians 3:5 does not signify that the Granville Sharp rule is in effect, which would signal that the prophets and apostles are one in the same.

Therefore, as was the case in Ephesians 2:20, the presence of the article before the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) here in Ephesians 3:5 does not indicate that the Granville Sharp rule is in effect. If it was in effect, this would indicate that the nouns *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) and *prophētēs* (προφήτης) are one in the same. However, as Wallace points out, this rule does not apply to plural nouns but only singular nouns since both these nouns are in the plural. Rather, the articular construction of the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) is simply used by Paul to tie both the temporary spiritual gifts of apostles and prophets together as being the recipients of the doctrine that was a mystery or secret to the Old Testament prophets and asserts that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him. Specifically, the article simply binds these two temporary spiritual gifts together signifying that the exercise of both of these discontinued communication spiritual gifts constitutes the recipients of this mystery or secret doctrine and agencies which communicated this mystery doctrine to the members of the church. Therefore, this author interprets the articular construction of the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) as simply joining both the temporary spiritual gifts of apostle and prophet together identifying them as the recipients of this mystery doctrine. Specifically, the article simply binds them together signifying that the exercise of both of these discontinued communication spiritual gifts constitutes the recipients of this mystery or secret doctrine that Gentile believers are by no means second class citizens in relation to Jewish believers. It also binds them together signifying that the exercise of both of these discontinued communication spiritual gifts constitutes the personal agencies, which the Holy Spirit employed to communicate this mystery doctrine to the members of the body of Christ.

The articular construction of the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) also indicates that both nouns, *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος), "apostles" and *prophētēs* (προφήτης), "prophets" are modified by the articular dative masculine plural form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος).

The articular dative masculine plural form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) means "holy" since the word pertains to someone who is dedicated to God or in other words, it pertains to someone who is set apart to serve and worship God exclusively. Therefore, this word describes the apostles and New Testament prophets as dedicated to God and His purposes in the sense that they have been set apart from the rest of the human race in order to serve and worship Him.

The referent of the genitive third person masculine singular form of the intensive personal pronoun *autos* (αὐτός) is the articular genitive masculine singular form of the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός). This is indicated by the fact that the latter which appears in Ephesians 3:4, agrees with the former in gender (masculine) and number (singular) as well as case (genitive). The intensive personal pronoun *autos* (αὐτός) emphasizes Jesus Christ's identity and is the demonstrative force intensified.

The articular construction of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) is also employed with the genitive third person masculine singular form of the intensive personal pronoun *autos* (αὐτός) in order to denote possession or ownership indicating that the apostles and New Testament prophets are the "possession" of Jesus Christ.

Both the noun *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος), "apostles" and *prophētēs* (προφήτης), "prophets" function as a dative of agency. Therefore, both these nouns identify the apostles and New Testament prophets as the personal agencies employed by the Holy Spirit and sent by the Son to reveal the mystery doctrine of the church age that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

The referent of the dative neuter singular form of the noun *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), "**the Spirit**" is of course the Holy Spirit, who is the third member of the Trinity in the sense that He proceeds from both the Son as well as the Father. This word also contains the figure of metonymy, which means that the person of the Holy Spirit is put for the exercise of His divine omnipotence.

The dative neuter singular form of the noun *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), "**the Spirit**" is the object of the preposition *en* (ἐν), which functions as a marker of means, which means it marks this word as the means by which the action of the *apokalyptō* (ἀποκαλύπτω) is accomplished. Therefore, this prepositional phrase indicates the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit is "the means by which" members of the body of Christ received the revelation of the mystery or secret doctrine that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

The passive voice of this verb *apokalyptō* (ἀποκαλύπτω) means that the subject receives the action of the verb from either an expressed or unexpressed agency. Here the agency is expressed in Ephesians 3:5 by the prepositional phrase *en pneumati* (ἐν πνεύματι), "**by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit**." Therefore, the passive of this verb indicates that this mystery doctrine received the action of being revealed to members of the church through the apostles and New Testament prophets by the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:26 echoes the contents of Ephesians 3:5.

Colossians 1:24 I am presently rejoicing because of my sufferings on behalf of each and every one of you. In fact, I am supplementing that which remains of the one and only Christ's intense sufferings by means of my physical body on behalf of His body which is, as an eternal spiritual truth, the church. 25 Of which I myself became a servant because of the stewardship which is from God (the Father) which was given to me on behalf of each and every one of you in order to fulfill the task of communicating the message originating from God (the Father). 26 Specifically, the mystery which has been concealed from past ages, in other words from past generations but now has been revealed to His saints. (Author's translation)

The contents of Ephesians 3:5 helps to explain the content of Paul's intercessory prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, after I myself heard about the faith among each and every one of you in the one and only Lord Jesus as well as you are practicing divine-love, which is on behalf of each and every one of the saints, 16 I never permit myself to cease regularly expressing thanks to the one and only God because of each and every one of you. I do this while disciplining myself to make it my practice of remembering each and every one of you during my prayers. 17 I make it a habit of occupying myself with praying that God, that is, the glorious Father of the one and only Lord ruling over each and every one of us as a corporate unit, who is Jesus Christ, would cause each and every one of you to receive divine wisdom, specifically, divine revelatory wisdom provided by the one and only Spirit with respect to an experiential knowledge of Himself. 18 Namely, that the eyes of your heart are enlightened in order that each and every one of you would possess the conviction of what constitutes being the confident expectation of blessing produced by His effectual call, what constitutes His inheritance, which is characterized by glorious wealth, residing in the person of the saints. 19 Also, what constitutes being His incomparable, great power on behalf of each one of us who believe which is equivalent to the exertion of His sovereign, omnipotent power to overcome. 20 This He caused to enter into the state of being exerted on behalf of the incomparable Christ. Specifically, by causing Him to be raised out from the dead ones. Then, by causing Him to be seated at His right hand in the heavenlies 21 above each and every sovereign ruler, authority, power exercised, dominion as well as each and every designated rank, by no means only during this age but in fact also during the one certain to come. 22 In other words, He caused each and every animate and inanimate object to be placed in subjection under His feet. Correspondingly, He gave Him as a gift as head over each and every animate and inanimate object for the benefit of the church, 23 which uniquely is His body, specifically, which is being brought to completion by the one who is

bringing each and every animate and inanimate object to completion for the benefit of each and every member. (Author's translation)

Ephesians 3:5 helps to explain the contents of this intercessory prayer because Paul's intercessory prayer on behalf of these Gentile church age believers in Ephesians 1:15-23 was a mystery or secret doctrine not known to Old Testament prophets but rather revealed to the apostles like himself and New Testament prophets by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit. Thus, Paul interceded to the Father for these Gentile church age believers that the Holy Spirit who gave him this mystery or secret doctrine would give them enlightenment with regards to this revelation.

Not only does the contents of Ephesians 3:5 help to explain the contents of Paul's intercessory prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 but it also helps to explain the reference to the teaching of the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church in Ephesians 2:20.

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore, each and every one of you as a corporate unit must continue to make it your habit of remembering that formerly each of you who belong to the Gentile race with respect to the human body, specifically, those who receive the designation "uncircumcision" by the those who receive the designation "circumcision" with respect to the human body performed by human hands, 12 each one of you used to be characterized as without a relationship with Christ. Each one of you used to be alienated from the nation of Israel's citizenship. Specifically, each of you used to be strangers to the most important promise, which is the product of the covenants. Each of you used to not possess a confident expectation of blessing. Consequently, each one of you used to be without a relationship with God in the sphere of the cosmic world system. 13 However, because of your faith in and your union and identification with Christ Jesus each and every one of you as a corporate unit who formerly were far away have now been brought near by means of the blood belonging to this same Christ. 14 For He Himself personifies our peace. Namely, by causing both groups to be one. Specifically, by destroying the wall, which served as the barrier, that is, that which caused hostility (between the two and the two with God). 15 In other words, by nullifying by means of His human nature the law composed of the commandments consisting of a written code of laws in order that He might cause the two to be created into one new humanity by means of faith in Himself at justification and union and identification with Himself through the baptism of the Spirit at justification. Thus, He caused peace to be established (between the two and the two with God). 16 In other words, in order that He would reconcile both groups into one body to God (the Father) through His cross. Consequently, He put to death the hostility (between the two and the two with God) by means of faith in Himself at justification and union and identification with Himself through the baptism of the Spirit at justification. 17

Correspondingly, He as a result came proclaiming peace for the benefit of each and every one of you, namely, those who were far off likewise peace to those were near. 18 Consequently, through the personal intermediate agency of Himself each and every one of us as a corporate unit, namely, both groups are experiencing access by means of the omnipotence of the one Spirit to the presence of the Father. 19 Indeed therefore, each and every one of you as corporate unit are no longer foreigners (to the covenants of promise), that is, foreign citizens. But rather each and every one of you as a corporate unit are fellow citizens with the saints, that is, members of God's household 20 because each and every one of you as a corporate unit have been built upon the foundation, which is the communication of the gospel to each one of you by the apostles as well as prophets. Simultaneously, He Himself, namely, Christ Jesus is the cornerstone. 21 On the basis of its being continually fitted inextricably together by means of justification by faith and union and identification with Him, the whole building is growing into a holy temple by appropriating by faith your union and identification with the Lord. 22 In other words, by appropriating by faith your union and identification with Him, all of you without exception are being built together into God's dwelling place by means of the omnipotence of the Spirit. (Author's translation)

The contents of Ephesians 3:5 help to explain Paul's reference to the teaching of the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church in Ephesians 2:20 because this mystery or secret doctrine that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him was given to the apostles and New Testament prophets by the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit in order to communicate to the church.

Ephesians 3:6 is composed of the infinitival appositional clause *einai ta ethnē synklēronoma kai syssōma kai symmetocha tēs epangelias* (εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), "**Namely, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise**." (Author's translation) It is modified by two prepositional phrases. The first is *en Christō Iēsou* (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), "**because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus**." (Author's translation). The second is *dia tou euangeliou* (σ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), "**by means of the proclamation of the gospel**." (Author's translation)

As we noted in our exegesis, the infinitive conjugation of the verb *eimi* (εἰμί) functions as an appositional infinitive, which takes place when the substantival infinitive stands in apposition to a noun, pronoun or substantival adjective or some other substantive and typically refers to a specific example that falls within the broad category of named by the head noun. This type of infinitive defines the noun or

adjective whereas the epexegetical infinitive explains it. The epexegetical infinitive cannot typically substitute for its antecedent while an appositional infinitive or phrase can.

In context, the infinitive conjugation of the verb *eimi* (εἰμί) stands in apposition to the nominative neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς), "**this**" which appears in Ephesians 3:5. The referent of the latter is the articular nominative neuter singular form of the noun *mustērion* (μυστήριον), "**the mystery**," which appears in Ephesians 3:3-4, which is indicated by the fact that they agree in gender (neuter) and number (singular). Therefore, the infinitive conjugation of the verb *eimi* (εἰμί) in Ephesians 3:6 introduces a clause which defines the content of this mystery. Namely, that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the Messianic promise with Jewish church age believers because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

So therefore, as we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:5 that this mystery or divine secret not known to Old Testament prophets not only refers to the doctrine that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers but also it refers to the reason why this is the case, namely, because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him.

As was the case in Ephesians 2:11 and 3:1, the noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος), "**the Gentiles**" here in Ephesians 3:6 means "the Gentiles" since the word pertains to persons from an ethnic group or nation not allied with and trusting in the God of Israel who is Jesus Christ and is used in a collective sense for these people. Thus, this word is used of those members of the human race who are not of Jewish racial descent and thus not members of the covenant people of God, Israel.

The adjective *sygklēronomos* (συγκληρονόμος), "**fellow heir**" is used to describe Gentile church age believers as "joint heirs" of God with Jewish church age believers. This came about because they both have been declared justified by the Father because of the merits of their faith, Jesus Christ and simultaneously, placed in union with Christ and identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This was the result of accepting by faith the proclamation of the gospel whose subject is Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This word is making the assertion that these Gentile church age believers are "joint heirs" with Jewish church age believers.

Being a fellow or joint heir with Jesus Christ means that Gentile and Jewish church age believers possess a share in the spiritual and temporal blessings, which the Father bestowed on His Son, Jesus Christ as a result of His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. These events in the

life of our Lord provided salvation or deliverance for unregenerate humanity from eternal condemnation, condemnation from the Law, spiritual and physical death, the consequences of personal sins, and enslavement to the sin nature and Satan and his cosmic system. Jewish and Gentile church age believers appropriated this great deliverance when the Father declared them justified because of the merits of the object of their faith, Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, the Father placed them in union with Christ and identified them with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father through the baptism of the Spirit.

Being a joint or fellow heir is related to the church age believer's inheritance. The reader will recall that in Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul asserts that the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit is the down payment of the church age believer's inheritance.

The apostle Paul not only speaks of the church age believer's inheritance in Ephesians but also in Colossians.

Colossians 3:23 Whenever any of you, at any time, should do something, each of you from your entire being, for your own benefit, must continue making it your habit of working hard as for your one and only true Lord, indeed, never for people 24 The reason for this command is that each of you know without a doubt that each of you will certainly receive for your own benefit your reward, which is your inheritance. Each of you continue making it your habit of serving the Lord, who is the Christ. (Author's translation)

Paul mentions this inheritance in Colossians 1:12.

Colossians 1:3 We continue making it our habit of giving thanks to God namely the Father of our Lord, who is Jesus, who is the Christ when we make it our habit of occupying ourselves with praying on behalf of each and every one of you as a corporate unit. 4 We do this because we heard about your faith in Christ, who is Jesus and in addition your love which you continue to regularly demonstrate for the benefit of each and every one of the saints. 5 All of you do this because of the confident expectation which is, as an eternal spiritual truth reserved in the heavens for all of you. All of you heard this by means of the teaching, which is the truth, namely the proclamation of the gospel 6 which all of you continue to appropriate for the benefit of all of you. Just as in fact throughout the entire world, it continues to produce fruit as well as spread so also it continues to produce fruit as well as spread among all of you from the day all of you obeyed. Consequently, all of you acquired an objective experiential knowledge of the grace originating from God by means of the truth. 7 Just as all of you learned the truth from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant who is faithfully serving the Christ on behalf of each and every one of us. 8 The one who also revealed to us your divine-love by means of the Spirit's power. 9 For this reason also, from the day we ourselves heard about all of you,

we never permit ourselves to cease making it our habit of occupying ourselves with praying on behalf of each and every one of you. Specifically, we make it our habit of occupying ourselves with making urgent requests that (God) would cause all of you to be filled with that which is knowing His will experientially by means of a wisdom which is absolute resulting in a discernment which is spiritual. 10 The purpose would be all of you living your lives in a manner worthy of the Lord so as to be fully pleasing to Him. This would result in all of you bearing fruit by means of each and every kind of action which is divine good in quality and character and in addition increasing in knowing experientially God the Father. 11 This is because of all of you are empowered by means of a power which is absolute, because of a power which is sovereign, namely, His glory. The purpose of which is to perfectly embody perseverance as well as patience with joy. 12 All the while, all of you making it your habit of giving thanks to the Father who has qualified each and every one of you with regards to sharing in the saints' inheritance residing in that which is characterized by light. (Author's translation)

Every church age believer has the opportunity to receive their eternal inheritance if they fulfill the condition of being faithful till death or the rapture whichever comes first and thus executes the Father's will for their life. Both the Old and New Testament's speak of an inheritance, which could be forfeited due to unfaithfulness. As we have been noting, Paul teaches in Colossians 3:23-25 that if the Colossians are faithful, they will receive the inheritance which clearly implies if they are not faithful, they will not receive this inheritance.

The inheritance in the Bible: (1) Related to God's plan for the believer after conversion. (2) Added blessings to the Saved (i.e., Rewards on top of salvation). (3) Possession. (4) Is meritorious ownership of the kingdom (i.e., Millennium and eternal state) (5) Conditioned on faithful obedience to the will of God. (6) Can be forfeited through habitual disobedience to the will of God. (7) Two Types of inheritance (God and the possession of land in the Millennium) (Every believer receives God as their inheritance).

Although the believer's salvation *cannot* be merited but is received when a person expresses faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9), the believer's inheritance on the other hand is meritorious meaning they have to fulfill the condition of being faithfully obedient to the will of God till physical death or the rapture (i.e., resurrection of the church). Because the church age believer can forfeit their eternal inheritance through unfaithfulness to the Lord, there are many warnings regarding being unfaithful (Heb. 10:35-39). The believer is promised that if they fulfill the condition of being faithful, they will be given the privilege to reign with Christ (Rom. 8:16-18; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-1; Eph. 5:5-10; Heb. 12:12-17).

God's plan for blessing the believer may be compared to an escrow contract. An escrow is a deed, bond or other agreement by which one person conveys some form of property to another person. Rather than being conveyed directly, however, the property is deposited with a third party, to be delivered when the intended recipient fulfills certain conditions set forth in the terms of the escrow agreement. Just as an escrow agreement has three parties, so also Ephesians 1:3 mentions three parties: (1) God the Father is the Grantor, He's the Giver. (2) Jesus Christ acts as a depository or escrow officer. (3) The believer is the grantee or the receiver. Every person who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is the grantee of blessings, which stagger the imagination.

However, God in His infinite wisdom requires that capacity must precede the conveyance of these greater blessings. God designed His plan of God to produce capacity, which makes the distribution of blessings meaningful, enjoyable, and glorifying God. The first thing that God ever did for believers is the means of glorifying Him. The first thing that God the Father ever did as the Grantor is deposit in escrow greater blessings both time and eternity for every believer without exception. These greater blessings are based upon God's grace policy, which says that God does all the work. God gave the believer a system so that the deposit could be conveyed without compromising His integrity.

The believer who fulfills the condition of the escrow by faithfully executing God's plan for their life in time will receive the conveyance of their escrow blessings for time and in eternity. The believer who does *not* fulfill the conditions of the escrow in time and does not reach spiritual maturity will *not* receive the conveyance of their escrow blessings for both time and eternity. The believer who does not fulfill the conditions of the escrow will have these greater blessings remain on deposit in heaven as a memorial to the justice of God. The only reason a believer's escrow blessings are not delivered to them is that they fail to fulfill the conditions of the escrow agreement. The only condition is that the believer execute God's plan for their life to become like Christ. The unfaithful believer's escrow blessings belong to them irrevocably, but they will remain undistributed, on deposit forever as a memorial to lost opportunity and as a monument to the eternal bounty of God's grace.

So while the believer cannot lose their salvation, they can lose the conveyance of escrow blessings for time and eternity. A treasury of blessings has the believer's name on it and they are irrevocable, "**imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away**" (1 Pet. 1:4). The location of the deposit is "**in the heavenlies**" and the date of the deposit is "**before the foundation of the world**" (Eph. 1:3-6).

The term escrow blessings is an analogy based upon a bible doctrine. It describes what God the Father in eternity past did as the grantor when He deposited greater blessings for both time and eternity for every believer with the Lord Jesus Christ,

the depository and escrow officer. The release of these blessings takes place when the believer fulfills the conditions of the escrow contract by being faithfully obedient to the will of God to death. God the Father as the grantor has placed Himself under the legal obligation by an act of His sovereign will to provide fantastic blessings both temporal and eternal for the believer who fulfills the conditions of the escrow.

These escrow blessings or in other words our eternal inheritance is mentioned in other places in the Scriptures (Col. 1:9-12; 3:23-25; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).

So, the inheritance mentioned in Colossians 1:12 and 3:24 is a reference to the rewards that will be given to a believer at the Bema Seat for being a faithful steward with the time, talent, treasure and truth that God bestowed upon them as trusts.

The apostle Paul not only mentions the church age believer's inheritance in Ephesians 1:14 but also in Ephesians 1:18 when he presents the first of two intercessory prayers on behalf of the Gentile Christian community in the Roman province of Asia.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, after I myself heard about the faith among each and every one of you in the one and only Lord Jesus as well as you are practicing divine-love, which is on behalf of each and every one of the saints, 16 I never permit myself to cease regularly expressing thanks to the one and only God because of each and every one of you. I do this while disciplining myself to make it my practice of remembering each and every one of you during my prayers. 17 I make it a habit of occupying myself with praying that God, that is, the glorious Father of the one and only Lord ruling over each and every one of us as a corporate unit, who is Jesus Christ, would cause each and every one of you to receive divine wisdom, specifically, divine revelatory wisdom provided by the one and only Spirit with respect to an experiential knowledge of Himself. 18 Namely, that the eyes of your heart are enlightened in order that each and every one of you would possess the conviction of what constitutes being the confident expectation of blessing produced by His effectual call, what constitutes His glorious, rich inheritance residing in the person of the saints. (Author's translation)

In Ephesians 3:6, the adjective *syssōmos* (σύσσωμος), "**fellow members of the body**" is also used to describe Gentile church age believers as being fellow or co-members of the body of Christ with Jewish church age believers. This also came about because they both have been declared justified by the Father because of the merits of their faith, Jesus Christ and simultaneously, placed in union with Christ and identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This too was the result of accepting by faith the proclamation of the gospel whose subject is Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This word also is

making the assertion that these Gentile church age believers are “fellow members of the body” of Christ with Jewish church age believers.

The body of Christ metaphor is employed by Paul in Ephesians 1:23.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, after I myself heard about the faith among each and every one of you in the one and only Lord Jesus as well as you are practicing divine-love, which is on behalf of each and every one of the saints, 16 I never permit myself to cease regularly expressing thanks to the one and only God because of each and every one of you. I do this while disciplining myself to make it my practice of remembering each and every one of you during my prayers. 17 I make it a habit of occupying myself with praying that God, that is, the glorious Father of the one and only Lord ruling over each and every one of us as a corporate unit, who is Jesus Christ, would cause each and every one of you to receive divine wisdom, specifically, divine revelatory wisdom provided by the one and only Spirit with respect to an experiential knowledge of Himself. 18 Namely, that the eyes of your heart are enlightened in order that each and every one of you would possess the conviction of what constitutes being the confident expectation of blessing produced by His effectual call, what constitutes His inheritance, which is characterized by glorious wealth, residing in the person of the saints. 19 Also, what constitutes being His incomparable, great power on behalf of each one of us who believe which is equivalent to the exertion of His sovereign, omnipotent power to overcome. 20 This He caused to enter into the state of being exerted on behalf of the incomparable Christ. Specifically, by causing Him to be raised out from the dead ones. Then, by causing Him to be seated at His right hand in the heavenlies 21 above each and every sovereign ruler, authority, power exercised, dominion as well as each and every designated rank, by no means only during this age but in fact also during the one certain to come. 22 In other words, He caused each and every animate and inanimate object to be placed in subjection under His feet. Correspondingly, He gave Him as a gift as head over each and every animate and inanimate object for the benefit of the church, 23 which uniquely is His body, specifically, which is being brought to completion by the one who is bringing each and every animate and inanimate object to completion for the benefit of each and every member. (Author’s translation)

The body of Christ metaphor for the church is not only employed by apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:23 but is also used by him in Colossians 1:18 and 24.

Colossians 1:18 Furthermore, He Himself, as an eternal spiritual truth exists in the state of being the head over His body, namely His church who, as an eternal spiritual truth exists in the state of being the founder that is the firstborn from the dead ones. The divine purpose was accomplished so that He alone

became the Preeminent One among each and every person with no exceptions. (Author's translation)

The head and body metaphor is one of eight metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the relationship between the church and the Lord Jesus Christ: (1) The last Adam and the New Creation (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 5:17a). (2) The Great Shepherd and the Sheep (Heb. 13:20). (3) The True Vine and the Branches (John 15:5a). (4) The Chief Cornerstone and the Stones in the building (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:5-6). (5) The Great High Priest and members of the Royal Priesthood (Heb. 4:14a; 1 Pet. 2:9a). (6) The Groom and the Bride. (Our wedding occurs at the Second Advent) (Rev. 19:7). (7) The King of Kings and the Royal Family of God (Rev. 19:14-16).

Now, in Ephesians 3:6, the adjective *symmetochos* (συμμέτοχος), "**fellow partakers**" is used also to describe these Gentile church age believers in relation to Jewish church age believers. What these Gentile church age believers are partakers of with Jewish church age believers is identified by the expression *tēs epangelias en Christō Iēsou* (συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), "**fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus**." **(NET)** Therefore, this adjective describes these Gentile church age believers as fellow partakers of the Messianic promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in Christ Jesus and union and identification with Him. This word is making the assertion that these Gentile church age believers are Gentile church age believers as "fellow partakers" of the Messianic promise because of justification by faith in Christ Jesus and union and identification with Him.

Now, these three adjectives, namely, *sygklēronomos* (συγκληρονόμος), "**fellow heirs**," *syssōmos* (σύσσωμος), "**fellow members of the body**" and *symmetochos* (συμμέτοχος), "**fellow partakers**" which appear in Ephesians 3:6 contain the figure alliteration because of the repetition of consonants used in these words. Here we have the repetition of *sun* prefix in these three words. The purpose of this figure is emphasis. Specifically, to emphasize that Gentile church age believers are not second class citizens in relation to Jewish church age believers but rather equal partners.

As was the case in case in 2:12, the noun *epangelia* (ἐπαγγελία), "**the promise**" here in Ephesians 3:6 refers to the Messianic promise of a Savior. This is indicated by the articular construction of this word, which is anaphoric, which means that it is pointing back to the previous use of this word in Ephesians 2:12 indicating that it retains the same meaning and referent here in Ephesians 3:6.

In our study of Ephesians 2:12, we noted that the noun *epangelia* (ἐπαγγελία), "**the most important promise**" refers to God entering into a promise with the nation of Israel to provide them a Savior who will deliver them from eternal condemnation, condemnation from the Law, enslavement to sin and Satan, personal sins and

spiritual and physical death. This promise appears of a Savior appears in the Mosaic, Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New covenants.

The articular construction of this word is "par excellence" which is used to point out a substantive that is the extreme of a certain category. Here it indicates that this promise is the most important of all the covenant promises God communicated to Israel and which promise is that of a Savior. It is the most important promise for unregenerate Jew because they are under God's wrath and they can never benefit from the other covenant promises without first appropriating by faith the promise of a Savior by exercising faith in Jesus, the Christ.

We also noted in our study of Ephesians 2:12 that the noun *epangelia* (ἐπαγγελία) functions as a genitive of product, which is expressing the idea that this promise of the Messiah to deliver Israel is "the product" of these five covenants, which God established with the nation of Israel. In other words, this promise of a Savior is "the product" of the contents of these covenants.

In Ephesians 3:6, the articular construction of this word *epangelia* (ἐπαγγελία), "**the promise**" also indicates that this promise is the most important of all the covenant promises God communicated to Israel and which promise is that of a Savior.

As we noted earlier, the prepositional phrase *en Christō Iēsou* (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), "**because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus**" (Author's translation) is modifying this infinitival appositional clause *einai ta ethnē synklēronoma kai syssōma kai symmetocha tēs epangelias* (εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), "**Namely, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise**." (Author's translation) It presents "the reason why" Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the Messianic promise.

As was the case in Ephesians 1:9, 12, 2:6, 7, 10, and 13, the proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" here in Ephesians 3:6 contains the figure of metonymy. This means that the Christ is put for the church age believer's faith in Him at justification as well as their union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification.

The proper noun *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), "**Jesus**" and refers to the human nature of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth and simply clarifies who is Christ here, namely Jesus of Nazareth since there were many in the first century who made the claim.

As we noted in our exegesis, the noun *Christos* (Χριστός) is the object of the preposition *en* (ἐν), "**because of**" functions as a marker of cause or reason, which indicates that the church age believer's faith in Jesus Christ at justification as well as their union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at

justification is "the reason why" Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow partakers of the Messianic promise or promise of a Savior.

Lastly, as we noted, the prepositional phrase *dia tou euangeliou* (σ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου), "**by means of the proclamation of the gospel**" (Author's translation) is also modifying this infinitival appositional clause *einai ta ethnē synklēronoma kai syssōma kai symmetocha tēs epangelias* (εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), "**Namely, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise**." (Author's translation) However, it presents "the means by which" Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the Messianic promise.

Now, as was the case in Ephesians 1:13, the noun *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) here in Ephesians 3:6 contains the figure of metonymy meaning that the gospel is put for the communication or proclamation of the gospel message to the recipients of the Ephesian epistle when they were unregenerate sinners. This noun pertains to communicating the good news to the unbeliever that Christ died and rose from the dead for them and that through faith in Him they could receive the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins and avoid experiencing the wrath of God.

The articular construction of this word is anaphoric, which means that it is pointing back to the previous use of this word in Ephesians 1:13 indicating that it retains the same meaning and referent here in Ephesians 3:6. It also indicates that the Christian gospel is the most important of gospels since the Roman civil authorities like the emperor published their gospels.

As we noted in our exegesis of Ephesians 3:6, the noun *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) is the object of the preposition *dia* (διά), which functions as a marker of means. This indicates that the proclamation of the Christian gospel is "the means by which" Jewish and Gentile believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the Messianic promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him. The proclamation of the gospel is "the means by which" Jewish and Gentile believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the Messianic promise because they were justified by the Father through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ and placed in union with Him and identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father through the baptism of the Spirit at justification as a result of responding in faith to the proclamation of the gospel. In other words, they could never be justified by faith in Jesus Christ and placed in union and identified with Him unless they heard the proclamation of the gospel.

This union between Jewish and Gentile church age believers that Paul described in Ephesians 2:11-22 and now here in Ephesians 3:1-6 does not mean that the church

is the “new” Israel or that the church does not have any relationship to the nation of Israel. There is discontinuity with regards to the relationship between Israel and the church, but there is also continuity. This is indicated by several factors.

First of all, Paul taught in Romans 2:28-29 and 3:21-31 that a true Jew is one who is not only a biological descendant of Jacob whose name was changed by God to “Israel,” but also they have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Paul teaches in Romans 9:1-5 that the nation of Israel was given the covenants which is a reference to the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New covenants. In Romans 11:17, Paul also teaches that Gentile believers, who he describes as a “wild olive tree,” are engrafted into regenerate Israel who he describes an “olive tree.” Consequently, regenerate Gentiles benefit from the promises of the four unconditional covenants God established with Israel, namely the Abrahamic, Palestinian (land), Davidic and New covenants.

The Abrahamic covenant is the “rich root” in Romans 11:17. The apostle to the Gentiles also taught in Galatians 3:26-28, Ephesians 2:11-22 and Colossians 3:11 that the church is composed of both regenerate Jew and Gentiles. Paul also teaches in Romans 11:5 that regenerate Jews living during the church age compose the remnant of Israel. Thus, the church and Israel are connected by this remnant of regenerate Jews living during the church age and by the fact that regenerate Gentiles have been engrafted into regenerate Israel and during the church age. Jewish church age believers.

However, they are distinguished from each other because of race. In fact, in support of this, the Lord Jesus taught His apostles in Matthew 19:28 that they would be judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This implies that they have authority over Israel. So we know that the apostles’ teaching was the foundation of the church as we noted in our study of Ephesians 2:20 and here the Lord is saying in Matthew 19:28 that they would have authority over Israel implying that though they are a part of the church, they are also a part of the nation of Israel.

Now some like Hoehner argue that the land promises to Israel would not extend to the church. However, if the church is the bride of Christ and Ephesians 5:22-33 asserts that she is, then if Jesus Christ, the King of Israel inherits the land promised by God in the Palestinian or land covenant, which is related to the Abrahamic covenant, wouldn’t the bride of Christ inherit this land as well?

Since the Gentile church age believer’s union with Jesus Christ establishes their union with Jewish church age believers, we can infer that Gentile church age believers will also inherit the land God promised to Jewish believers under the Palestinian or land covenant. A comparison of Romans 4:13 with Genesis 13:14-17 would also indicate that Gentile church age believers would inherit the land promised to Abraham since they assert that Abraham and his spiritual descendants will inherit the land the Lord promised to Abraham and his spiritual descendants.

Now, as was the case in Ephesians 1:13, the noun *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) here in Ephesians 3:6 contains the figure of metonymy meaning that the gospel is put for the communication or proclamation of the gospel message to the recipients of the Ephesian epistle when they were unregenerate sinners. This noun pertains to communicating the good news to the unbeliever that Christ died and rose from the dead for them and that through faith in Him they could receive the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins and avoid experiencing the wrath of God.

Ephesians 3:7 concludes Paul's description of the content of the mystery, which began in Ephesians 3:1. It is composed of the relative pronoun clause *hou egenēthēn diakonos* (οὗ ἐγενήθην διάκονος), "**I assumed the position and responsibility of serving this gospel**" (Author's translation). It is modified by two prepositional phrases. The first is *kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou* (κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ), "**according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to me**" (Author's translation). The second is *kata tēn energeian tēs dynameōs autou* (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ), "**according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power**" (Author's translation).

Now, in this relative pronoun clause, we noted in our exegesis that the referent of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) is the articular genitive neuter singular form of the noun *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον), "**the gospel**" which appears in Ephesians 3:6. As we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:6, the noun *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) means "the proclamation of the gospel" since the word contains the figure of metonymy meaning that the gospel is put for the communication of the gospel message to the recipients of the Ephesian epistle when they were unregenerate sinners. This noun pertains to communicating the good news to the unbeliever that Christ died and rose from the dead for them and that through faith in Him they could receive the gift of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins and avoid experiencing the wrath of God. Therefore, this is the referent and antecedent of the genitive neuter singular form of the relative pronoun *hos* (ὅς) here in Ephesians 3:7.

We also noted in our exegesis that the verb *ginomai* (γίνομαι) pertains to entering into a particular position with its accompanying responsibilities. In other words, the word pertains to assuming a particular position and responsibility. The referent of the first person singular form of this verb is of course the apostle Paul.

The noun *diakonos* (διάκονος), "**a servant**" here in Ephesians 3:7 identifies the position and responsibility Paul assumed at justification. The latter is used to describe the apostle Paul as someone who serves the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is used to describe Paul's service as an apostle who faithfully communicated the gospel of Jesus Christ. It also describes him as someone who serves the gospel on behalf of Jesus Christ and His church. It is used in a spiritual sense of Paul's function as a communicator of the gospel to describe the relationship between Paul and the Lord

Jesus Christ. This servanthood is manifested by Paul communicating to the non-Christian community and Christian community the gospel.

Therefore, this relative pronoun clause in Ephesians 3:7 expresses the idea that Paul entered into the state of assuming the position of being" a servant of the gospel "with its accompanying responsibilities." He entered into this position and responsibilities which are associated with it, the moment the Father imputed His Son's righteousness to Him when he exercised in His Son for eternal salvation and was declared justified by the Father. Simultaneously, this resulted in Paul receiving the gift of apostleship and the command to publicly proclaim the gospel to every creature on earth.

The passive voice of the verb *ginomai* (γίνομαι) indicates that Paul as the subject received the action of being entered into the position and responsibility of serving the gospel because of the gift of God's grace and the exercise of His omnipotence. This again took place at the moment of justification when Paul was not only declared justified by the Father through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ but he also simultaneously received the gift of apostleship. Therefore, this is another "divine-passive" employed by Paul in this epistle.

In Colossians 1:23, Paul employs this same term *diakonos* (διάκονος), "**a servant**," to describe himself in relation to the gospel.

Colossians 1:23 Of course, if and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument each one of you continues to persevere according to the standards of the Christian faith so that each one of you is established, and thus solid individuals. In other words, so that each one of you is not moved away from the confident expectation (of blessing) produced by obedience to the gospel which each one of you has obeyed. This gospel was publicly proclaimed throughout all creation which is under the heavens, of which I myself, Paul became a servant. (Author's translation)

The apostle Paul concludes his remarks in Colossians 1:23 by asserting that he had become a servant of the gospel. Paul was one of the most prominent individuals in the church to publicly proclaim the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. When he says that he became a servant of the gospel, he is referring to his conversion experience which resulted in him receiving the gift of apostleship and the command to publicly proclaim the gospel to every creature on earth. This servanthood is manifested by Paul communicating to the non-Christian community and Christian community the gospel. By stating he was a servant of the gospel, he is stating he has a stewardship related to the gospel and for which he will have to give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat. At the same time, he is reminding these faithful Christians in Colossae that they have the same stewardship as well.

Now, as we noted, in Ephesians 3:7, the first prepositional phrase modifies this relative pronoun clause is *kata tēn dōrean tēs charitos tou theou* (κατὰ τὴν δωρεὰν

τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ), "**according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to me**" (Author's translation). It expresses the idea that Paul becoming a servant of the gospel at the moment of justification was "according to" or "corresponding to" or is "in agreement with" the gift, which originates from God the Father's grace policy towards justified sinners.

The noun *dōrea* (δωρεά), "**gift**" is used of the non-meritorious blessing that Paul received at the moment of justification, namely, the gift of apostleship which was given to Paul at the moment of justification by Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11), who was authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ to do so (Eph. 4:7).

The articular construction of this noun is monadic which indicates that this particular gift is in a class by itself in that it was given exclusively to the apostle Paul and his fellow communicators of the gospel, which would include his fellow apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors. Therefore, the articular construction of this word indicates that this gift of being a servant of the gospel is unique to those men in the body of Christ who are communicators of the gospel whether they are apostles, prophets, evangelists or pastors.

For the eighth time in this epistle, the apostle Paul employs the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" (cf. 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2). In each instance, the word refers to God the Father's grace policy towards unregenerate sinners who He declares justified through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, and which grace policy manifests His attribute of love.

The articular construction of this word *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" is also monadic, which indicates the "uniqueness" of this grace. It emphasizes that this grace is "unique" to God the Father in that it is His policy towards sinners who exercise faith in His Son, Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun *theos* (θεός) refers to the Father which is indicated by the articular construction of the noun, which in the New Testament commonly signifies the Father unless otherwise indicated by the context. Furthermore, in every instance in which the word has appeared in this epistle up to this point in the Ephesian letter, the Father is this word's referent (1:1, 2, 3, 17, 2:4, 8, 10, 16, 19 and 22).

The articular construction of the noun *theos* (θεός) expresses the idea that there were many gods in the world, but the God Jewish and Gentile church age believers worshipped was the one and only true God in contrast to unregenerate humanity in the first century A.D. which worshipped the pantheon of Graeco-Roman gods.

The noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" functions as a genitive of apposition or epexegetical genitive, which indicates that it identifies this gift, which is identified as being a servant of the gospel, as an unmerited blessing given to Paul, which originates from God the Father.

The noun *theos* (θεός) functions as a genitive of source, which expresses the idea that this grace or unmerited blessing in the form of becoming a servant of the gospel that was bestowed upon Paul at justification "originates from" God the Father.

The verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) means "to bestow as a gift" since the word pertains in this context to giving someone something which is of great value and as a gift. It speaks of giving someone something as an expression of generosity.

The passive voice of this verb indicates that Paul as the subject received of being given the gift originated from the Father's grace policy, which was in the form of being a servant of the gospel, according to the exercise of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of justification.

The aorist tense of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is a consummative or culminative aorist which emphasizes the cessation of the act of Paul received gift of being a servant of the gospel in accordance with the exertion of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of his justification.

The participle conjugation of this verb is in the genitive case and functions as a genitive of apposition or epexegetical genitive, which indicates that the participle conjugation of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is identifying or describing the noun *dōrea* (δωρεά), "**the gift**" as being given to Paul at justification.

As we noted the relative pronoun clause is modified by the second prepositional phrase *kata tēn energeian tēs dynameōs autou* (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ), "**according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power**" (Author's translation). It expresses the idea that Paul receiving the gift of being a servant of the gospel at the moment of justification was "according to" or "corresponding to" or is "in agreement with" the activity produced by the exercise of the Father's divine omnipotence.

In this second prepositional phrase, the noun *energeia* (ἐνέργεια) refers to the Father's activity on behalf of the apostle Paul the moment He imputed His Son's righteousness to him and declared him justified. Therefore, this word speaks of the "activity" on behalf of Paul at justification, which was produced by the Father's omnipotence. In context, this activity was that of the Father entering Paul into the state of serving the gospel the moment he declared him justified through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, the Lord Jesus Christ authorized the Holy Spirit to bestow Paul with the spiritual gift of apostleship, thus giving him the gift of communicating the gospel.

The articular construction of this word is monadic which means that this particular activity of the Father giving Paul the spiritual gift of apostleship is the moment He declared him justified through faith in His Son is "unique" to the Father and in particular His divine omnipotence.

The noun *dunamis* (δύναμις) contains the figure of metonymy which means that the Father's omnipotence is put for the exercise of His omnipotence. Specifically, it

refers to the omnipotence of God the Father which He exercised on behalf of the apostle Paul at his justification by giving him the gift of being a servant of the gospel, i.e., the spiritual gift of apostleship.

The noun *dunamis* (δύναμις) functions as a genitive of production, which indicates that the activity which Paul was the beneficiary of at the moment of his justification, which resulted in him receiving the gift of being a servant of the gospel, was "produced by" the exercise of the Father's omnipotence.

Now, Paul's statement here in Ephesians 3:7 is very similar to his assertion in Ephesians 3:2. The difference between the two is that in Ephesians 3:2, he describes his relationship to the gospel as a stewardship whereas in Ephesians 3:7, he describes this relationship as a service. Thus, here in Ephesians 3:7, Paul is restating his special and unique relationship to the gospel. However, in both verses, he asserts that the grace of God is responsible for both his stewardship and his service on behalf of the gospel. This repetition of God's grace serves as an *inclusio* and thus serve to bracket Ephesians 3:2-7. This also serves to emphasizes the fact that the content of the mystery that the Gentile church age believer that Gentile and Jewish church age believers are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise because of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him, which Paul received, was based upon God's grace policy. In other words, he didn't earn or deserve this revelation from God.

Ephesians 3:8 is composed of the following: (1) relative pronoun clause: *Emoi tō elachistoterō pantōn hagiōn edothē hē charis hautē* (Ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη), "**To me, the less than least of all the saints, this grace was given**." (2) infinitival purpose clause: *tois ethnesin euangelisasthai to anexichniaston ploutos tou Christou* (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), "**in order to proclaim for my benefit to the Gentiles the unfathomable wealth brought about by this justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ**."

In the relative pronoun clause, the dative first person singular form of the possessive personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ), "**to me**" refers of course to the apostle Paul is fronted in the verse. Thus, it is in the emphatic position in order to emphasize with the readers that Paul is less than least of all the saints. The purpose of this emphasis is to accentuate the grace of God in his life. It expresses the apostle's deep humility and gratitude in light of God's incomparable grace policy towards him in bestowing the great unmerited blessings to him at the moment of justification to be a servant and steward and apostle to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Specifically, he expresses deep humility and gratitude that God would bestow him the great honor and privilege and unmerited blessing to proclaim to the Gentile Christian community the good news that they are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because

of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

The articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "**the less than least**" serves to compare Paul to the rest of the members of the body of Christ. It describes himself as "the less than least" of all those in the Christian community.

The genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος), "**saints**" describes all the members of the body of Christ who have been set apart through the baptism of the Spirit at the moment of justification in order to order serve God exclusively. It is modified by the genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *pas* (πᾶς), which pertains to "the totality" of church age believers or members of the body of Christ who are the future bride of Christ. The adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος) functions as a genitive of comparison, which serves to compare Paul with the rest of the members of the body of Christ, i.e., the church.

The articular nominative feminine singular form of the noun *charis* (χάρις), "**grace**" speaks of a particular unmerited blessing that flowed to the apostle Paul from the function of the Father's attribute of love. Specifically, it refers to the contents of Ephesians 3:7, which asserts that Paul assumed the position and responsibility of serving the gospel according to the gift originating from the one and only God's grace, which was given to him according to the activity produced by the exercise of His power. Thus, it refers to the unmerited blessing of serving the gospel by communicating the mystery that Gentiles church age believers are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

The referent of the genitive feminine singular form of the immediate demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" appears in Ephesians 3:7 and is the articular genitive feminine singular form of the noun *charis* (χάρις) because they agree in gender (feminine), number (singular) and case (genitive). As we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:7, the referent of the latter is the gift of Paul serving the gospel by communicating the mystery that Gentiles church age believers are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

Thus, the immediate demonstrative pronoun *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" in Ephesians 3:8 links this verse with Ephesians 3:7 and in fact, in a broader sense, it links it to the contents of Ephesians 3:2-7. It also indicates that Ephesians 3:8 is a relative pronoun clause with the dative first person singular form of the possessive personal pronoun *egō* (ἐγώ), "**to me**," the articular dative masculine singular form of the adjective *elachistos* (ἐλάχιστος), "**the less than least**," the genitive masculine plural

form of the adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος), "**saints**" and the genitive masculine plural form of the adjective *pas* (πᾶς), "**all**" fronted in order to emphasize the grace of God in Paul's life.

This word *houtos* (οὗτος), "**this**" is in the predicate position to indicate an attributive function, which means that it is singling out the Father's grace policy which He employs in relation to sinners and sinners He justifies through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

As was the case in Ephesians 3:7, the verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) here in Ephesians 3:8 means "to bestow as a gift" since the word pertains in this context to giving someone something which is of great value and as a gift. It speaks of giving someone something as an expression of generosity. The referent of the third person singular form of this verb is the unmerited blessing of Paul serving the gospel by communicating the mystery that Gentiles church age believers are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

The passive voice of this verb indicates that Paul as the subject received the action of being given the unmerited blessing, which originated from the Father's grace policy, which was in the form of being a servant of the gospel, according to the exercise of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of justification.

The aorist tense of this verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) is a consummative or culminative aorist which emphasizes the cessation of the act of Paul receiving the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel in accordance with the exertion of the Father's omnipotence at the moment of his justification.

This description of Paul here in Ephesians 3:8 is further indication that the Ephesian epistle is not a pseudonymous writing. A. Skevington Wood writes "Is it conceivable that an admirer of Paul, writing in his name to enhance his reputation in the late-first-century church, would ascribe such a self-demoting confession to him?"[17]

In 1 Timothy 1:12-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, Paul identifies the reason why he describes himself in Ephesians 3:8 as the less than least of all the saints, i.e., members of the body of Christ, the church.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, 15:2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 15:3 For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, 15:4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the

[17] *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon)*; page 47; Zondervan Corporation; Grand Rapids, MI 1978.

third day according to the scriptures, 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 15:6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 15:8 Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain. In fact, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 15:11 Whether then it was I or they, this is the way we preach and this is the way you believed. (NET)

Andrew Lincoln commenting on this declarative statement here in Ephesians 3;8 in relation to 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, writes "Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that in relation to the words of Paul in 1 Cor 15:9, the formulation here in Ephesians involves both intensification and generalization. The intensification is twofold. Whereas in 1 Cor 15:9 Paul uses the superlative of himself, ἐλάχιστος 'least,' here in Ephesians a superlative with a comparative ending is employed for greater emphasis, ἐλαχιστότερος, 'very least' (cf. BDF §60[2]; 61 [2]). Again, whereas in 1 Cor 15:9 Paul compares himself with the other apostles, here the comparison is extended to one with all believers (*contra* Gaugler, 139 and Conzelmann, 103, who wish to restrict the reference of ἁγίων to those who are called 'holy' in v 5, namely, the apostles and prophets). It should be noted that Ignatius is capable of similar sentiments: 'Remember the church of Syria in your prayers. I am not worthy to be a member of it: I am the least of their number' (Trall. 13.1). But this intensification also fits the tendency of the post-apostolic churches to accentuate the unworthiness of the apostles in order to highlight the greatness of Christ's grace in their lives (cf. 1 Tim 1:15, where Paul now becomes not just the least worthy Christian, but the foremost of sinners; also *Barn*. 5.9: 'But it was in his choice of the apostles, who were to preach his gospel, that he truly showed himself the Son of God; for those men were ruffians of the deepest dye, which proved that he came not to call saints but sinners"). The generalization in comparison with 1 Cor 15:9 can be seen in that here in Ephesians there is no mention of Paul's violent persecution of believers, which in 1 Cor is given as the specific reason for his talk of himself as the least of the apostles, which may also have been his taking up of the judgment of his critics (cf. also ἔκτρωμα, "prematurely born" or "abortion," in the previous verse). In Ephesians, the self-designation "the very least of all the saints" is quite unprovoked and stands in the context of a general reflection on the apostle's ministry. In its juxtaposition with 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,' it serves to give greater

BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)
contra in contrast to

emphasis to the measure of God's grace with which Paul was endowed in order to be fitted to proclaim such wealth."[18]

First Timothy 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. (NASB95)

"**Even though I was formerly a blasphemer**" is composed of the articular accusative singular neuter form of the adjective *proteros* (πρότερος), "**formerly**" and the accusative masculine singular present active participle form of the verb *eimi* (εἰμί), "**even though I was**" and the accusative masculine singular form of the adjective *blasphemos* (βλάσφημος), "**a blasphemer**."

The adjective *blasphemous* is used by Paul to describe himself prior to his conversion and is used as a substantive meaning "slanderer." It describes Paul defaming Jesus Christ's character and those who have faith in Him and are His disciples as a result of bitterness towards them. As a Pharisee, prior to his conversion to Christianity, Paul did not slander God knowingly. However, by slandering Jesus Christ, He was slandering the Father and the Holy Spirit in the sense that the former was His Son and the latter was testifying that Jesus was the Son of God through His miracles and words.

The adjective *proteros* is used substantivally as indicated by the word's articular construction. The word is modifying the verb *eimi*. The word functions as a temporal adverb and means "formerly." It refers to Paul before his conversion to Christianity.

"**Persecutor**" is the accusative masculine singular form of the noun *dioktes* (διώκτης), which does not appear in pre-Christian literature and only once in the New Testament. Although its cognate verb form, namely *dioko* occurs 21 times in Paul's writings. This noun *dioktes* refers to a person who engages in persecuting others. It speaks of someone who is preoccupied with causing others to suffer. It is used here by Paul to describe himself prior to getting saved. He is thus describing himself as a persecutor of the church. The verb form of this noun, *dioko* is used by Paul in Philippians 3:6 to describe himself as engaged in the act of persecuting the church prior to his salvation.

"**Arrogant man**" is the accusative masculine singular form of the noun *hubristes* (ὑβριστής), which is used by Paul to describe one of the sins that characterized himself prior to his conversion to Christianity. In this verse, the term means "a violent insolent person." It describes the pre-conversion Paul as a self-centered and violently cruel and having no regard for others. It implies that he possessed an attitude of superiority, which results in mistreatment of and violent acts against others as a result of his own revolt against the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18] Lincoln, A. T. (1990). *Ephesians* (Vol. 42, p. 183). Word, Incorporated.

First Timothy 1:13a Even though I was characterized as being a slanderer as well as a persecutor and in addition, an insolent violent person. (Author's translation)

This verse is a concessive clause that is connected to Paul's thought in verse 12, which records Paul stating that he continually possessed an attitude of gratitude to the one who empowered him, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. He states that this gratitude was because the Lord, in eternity past considered him as faithful which manifested itself in time when the Lord appointed him as an apostle for the purpose of serving Him.

Now, in verse 13a, Paul employs a concessive participle to teach his readers in Ephesus that the Lord considered him faithful in eternity past "in spite of" the fact that prior to his conversion he slandered the Lord, persecuting His church and was an insolent violent person towards the church.

The first description describes Paul defaming Jesus Christ's character and those who have faith in Him and are His disciples as a result of bitterness towards them. As a Pharisee, prior to his conversion to Christianity, Paul did not slander God knowingly as he says in the adversative clause of this verse he did so out of ignorance. However, nonetheless by slandering Jesus Christ unknowingly, He was slandering the Father and the Holy Spirit in the sense that the former was His Son and the latter was testifying that Jesus was the Son of God through His miracles and words.

The second description of himself describes him as engaged in the act of persecuting the church prior to his salvation. The Lord tells Paul that his persecution of the church was in fact against Him (Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15). This persecution, like all persecution of God's people in history, was inspired by Satan himself.

The third and final description of Paul prior to his conversion indicates that he was a self-centered person who was violently cruel against the church. It says that he had no regard for others and specifically, no regard for the church or Jesus Christ. It implies that he possessed an attitude of superiority with regards to the church. This resulted in mistreatment of the church and violent acts against her as a result of his own revolt against the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's threefold description of himself in verse 13 serves a distinct purpose in that it magnifies God's grace and mercy toward him. He is presenting testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners and in fact, saved him, the worst of all sinners. This would refute those pastors in Ephesus who were emphasizing adherence to the Law and it would rebuke them. It would also serve to remind them that like Paul they too were saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not by obedience to the Law.

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Paul was transformed by faith in the gospel, which centered upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Law did not transform him into a faithful servant of Christ but the Lord's grace and mercy. Thus, Paul in verse 13 is setting up his readers and in particular those pastors who sought to be teachers of the Law that the proclamation of the Law does not have the power to transform the sinner into an obedient child of God. Rather, only the gospel could do such a thing and Paul could testify to this fact. It transformed him, the worst of all sinners. So he is in effect saying that only the gospel is the power of God for salvation. Only the gospel could transform a wicked sinner like Paul into an obedient child of God and compel him to proclaim it to both Jew and Gentile and even suffer for it.

"**Because I acted ignorantly in unbelief**" is composed of the conjunction *hoti* (ὅτι), "**because**" and the nominative masculine singular present active participle form of the verb *agnoeo* (ἀγνοέω), "**ignorantly**" and the first person singular aorist active indicative form of the verb *poieo* (ποιέω), "**I acted**" and the preposition *en* (ἐν), "**in**" and the dative feminine singular form of the noun *apistia* (ἀπιστία), "**unbelief**."

The conjunction *hoti* is employed with the indicative mood of the verb *poieo* in order to form a dependent "causal" clause that presents the reason why Paul obtained grace from the Lord Jesus Christ. He obtained grace "because" being in a state of rejection of the gospel, he acted due to unbelief. In other words, he obtained grace because he was qualified for grace since grace is for those who have no merit with God whatsoever. Paul describes himself in the concessive clause as a terrible sinner who opposed the Lord Jesus Christ and persecuted His church violently. This *hoti* clause parallels the concessive clause since Paul's unbelief was the reason for his deplorable conduct. So, this *hoti* clause is saying that Paul obtained grace from the Lord Jesus Christ because he was a terrible sinner with no merit with God whatsoever.

The verb *agnoeo* does not mean "to be ignorant" but "to be in rejection" since Romans 10:3 makes clear that unregenerate Israel of which Paul was a part of, rejected the righteousness of God because they zealously sought to establish their own righteousness and thus never submitted to the righteousness from the Father, namely Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:1 Spiritual brothers, indeed, the desire produced by my own heart and in addition my specific detailed request on behalf of them is always for their deliverance. 2 Because I testify concerning them that they possess a zeal for God, however by no means according to an experiential knowledge. 3 Because they have in the past rejected the righteousness originating from God the Father and continue to do so up to the present moment. In fact, because they have in the past zealously sought to establish their own and continue to do

so up to the present moment, they never submitted to the righteousness originating from God the Father. (Author's translation)

In First Timothy 1:13, the verb *agnoeo* means "to be in a state of rejection" due to unbelief in Jesus Christ as Savior. It speaks of being in rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior due to unbelief. It thus means to be in rejection of the gospel since the gospel is about Jesus Christ. This is how it is used in Romans 10:3.

Paul, like the rest of unregenerate Israel did not have an experiential knowledge of God in the sense that they did not personally encounter God through faith as He is revealed in the person and works of Jesus of Nazareth. They did not have an experiential knowledge of God in the sense that they did not personally encounter God through faith as He is revealed in the pages of their own Old Testament Scriptures so as to be affected by this encounter with God.

The word does not mean "to be ignorant" since the nation of Israel was exposed over and over again as to the manner in which God justified a sinner through their own Old Testament Scriptures, the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles. That Israel did indeed hear about the righteousness of God through the gospel and their own Old Testament Scriptures and rejected it is indicated by Paul's statements in Romans 10:14-21.

Romans 10:14 Therefore, how will they, themselves, call on Him in whom they never exercised absolute confidence in? Consequently, how will they exercise absolute confidence in Him whom they never heard of? Consequently, how will they hear apart from someone, as an eternal spiritual truth, publicly proclaiming as a herald in a dignified and authoritative manner to them? 15 Consequently, how will they publicly proclaim as heralds in a dignified and authoritative manner, if they are not commissioned? As it stands written for all of eternity, "How beautiful are the people, who themselves proclaim the good news, which is divine in quality and character." 16 But on the contrary, by no means did everyone obey the gospel for Isaiah says, "Lord, who will exercise absolute confidence in our message?" 17 Therefore, faith (in Christ) is, as an eternal spiritual truth based on hearing the (the gospel) message as a source. Consequently, hearing the (the gospel) message is, as an eternal spiritual truth by means of the proclamation concerning Christ. 18 But on the contrary, I ask, have they never heard? Indeed, they have heard! "Their voice has gone out extending throughout all the earth, that is, their teachings extending throughout the ends of the inhabited world." 19 But on the contrary, I ask, has Israel never understood? They have understood! First of all, Moses says, "I myself will provoke each and every one of you to jealousy by a non-nation. By a nation without insight, I will provoke each and every one of you to anger." 20 In fact, Isaiah is even very bold, saying, "I was found by those who always existed in a state of not diligently seeking after Me. I permitted Myself to

become accessible for the benefit of those who always existed in a state of not diligently inquiring about Me." 21 However, concerning Israel, he says, "All day long I stretched out My hands to an unbelieving and obstinate people." (Author's translation)

Paul like the rest of unregenerate Israel "rejected" God's righteousness in the sense that they refused to recognize that the righteousness of God can never be attained by obedience to the Law but rather is received from God as a gift and imputed by means of faith in Jesus Christ, which results in justification. Thus by implication they rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ since this is the content of the gospel for those sinners who seek to be justified by God.

Paul like the rest of unregenerate Israel was in rejection of the gospel about Jesus Christ due to unbelief since they zealously sought to establish their own righteousness and thus never submitted to the righteousness of God in that they did not obey the gospel and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior so as to receive this righteousness.

In First Timothy 1:13, the noun *apistia* means "unbelief" and is used of Paul's rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It speaks of his unwillingness to trust in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and his Savior. This was due to the fact that like the rest of unregenerate Israel, he zealously sought to establish his own righteousness through obedience to the Law.

This word is the object of the preposition *en*, which functions as a marker of cause indicating that Paul obtained grace from the Lord because being in a state of rejection (of the gospel), he acted "because of" or "due to" unbelief. Paul's zealous pursuit of righteousness through obedience to the Law caused him to reject the gospel and as a result to not exercise faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Savior. He didn't see his need for Jesus because he was looking to himself to get right with God.

First Timothy 1:12 I continually possess gratitude to the One who empowered me, namely Christ, who is Jesus, our Lord because He considered me for Himself as faithful by appointing me for Himself for the purpose of service. 13 Even though I was characterized as being a slanderer as well as a persecutor and in addition, an insolent violent person. But in direct contrast to this, I obtained grace because being in a state of rejection, I acted due to unbelief. (Author's translation)

"**But in direct contrast to this, I obtained grace because being in a state of rejection, I acted due to unbelief**" is a strong adversative clause that presents a strong contrast with the previous concessive clause "**even though I was characterized as being a slanderer as well as a persecutor and in addition, an insolent violent person**." The latter describes Paul's pre-conversion sinful character and the former describes the Lord's gracious character. Therefore, Paul is

contrasting God's gracious character with that of Paul's sinful character before his conversion.

The causal clause "**because being in a state of rejection, I acted due to unbelief**" presents the reason why Paul obtained grace from the Lord. Therefore, the clause says that Paul obtained grace from the Lord because being in a state of rejection, Paul acted due to unbelief. This unbelief is why he was a slanderer, a persecutor and a violent insolent person.

He was in a state of rejecting the gospel and thus acted in unbelief prior to his conversion. He was in a state of rejecting the gospel resulting in unbelief because like the rest of unregenerate Israel Paul zealously pursued righteousness through obedience to the Law. His attempt to justify himself through obedience to the Law caused him to reject the gospel and as a result to not exercise faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Savior. He didn't see his need for Jesus because he was looking to himself to get right with God. Paul loved God but not on God's terms but on his own.

This rejection and unbelief that led to his being a slanderer, persecutor and a violent insolent person qualified him to receive grace, which is for sinners with no merit whatsoever with a holy God. Grace is for the unworthy and undeserving who have no merit with God whatsoever. This is what Paul is saying in verse 13. Therefore, Paul's statements in verse 13 magnify God's grace policy. Thus, those pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Law and did not understand the three-fold purpose of the Law would be rebuked since God's grace saved a terrible sinner like Paul and transformed him into an obedient child of God and not his obedience to the Law. In fact, his attempt to get right with God by obedience to the Law blinded him to his need for Jesus Christ as Savior!

The Law did not have the power to save the sinner but only to condemn him. However, the gospel which expressed God's grace policy could since its message is about Jesus Christ and that His death and resurrection has delivered sinful humanity from sin, Satan and his cosmic system. Through faith in Him, which is based on God's grace policy, the sinner like Paul can be transformed into an obedient child of God.

Therefore, when Paul says that he obtained grace because being in a state of rejection, he acted due to unbelief he wants to emphasize the Lord's grace policy towards him. Thus, he is not attempting with this statement to deny his unbelief was sinful since his sinful behavior was the direct result of his unbelief in the gospel. Rather, Paul's statement in verse 13 demonstrates to his readers that the gospel has the power to save even a person like himself who was violently opposed to Jesus Christ and His disciples in contrast to the Law, which can't.

If you notice, Paul's unbelief is the reason for his deplorable conduct. They go hand in hand thus, when he says that he obtained grace because being in a state of

rejection, he acted due to unbelief he is in effect saying I obtained grace because of my sinful character since his sinful character was the direct result of his unbelief.

Paul wants not only to magnify God's grace but also His power, the power that is in the gospel message. Thus, those pastors in Ephesus who taught false doctrine and sought to be teachers of the Law were failing to appropriate the power of God by rejecting the gospel. They were also hurting their flocks since the gospel presents how they can be delivered from the power of the sin nature. No wonder the conduct of these pastors was appalling since only the power of the gospel could transform them and their congregations into obedient children of God in contrast to the Law, which can't.

Harold Hoehner writes "Paul wishes to convey that he considers himself to be less than the least of all believers who have been given this grace. 'The expression "least of all the saints," rather than "least of the apostles," perhaps expresses a sense of solidarity between Paul and the early Christians.'[19] This is not false modesty but a true humility. There are two reasons for this sentiment. First, he considered himself to be the foremost of sinners and not worthy of the salvation God graciously gave (1 Tim 1:15). Second, he had blasphemed and persecuted Christ (1 Tim 1:13; Acts 9:4–5; 26:11, 14–15) and persecuted the church, trying to destroy it (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; cf. Acts 7:58; 8:1–3; 9:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; 26:9–11, 14–15). Thus, he felt unworthy not only of God's grace for salvation but also God's grace in appointing him to preach the gospel and to be an apostle to the Gentiles (1 Tim 2:7). This is an important indication of Paul's authorship of Ephesians. Such deprecation likely would not have been expressed about Paul by a pseudonymous author.[20]"[21]

Peter O'Brien writes "As he reflects on his commission to be Christ's missionary to the Gentiles Paul is filled with amazement at the extraordinary privilege that has been given to him.[22] Using a very striking expression in which he neither indulges in hypocrisy nor grovels in self-deprecation,[23] he indicates how deeply conscious he is of his own unworthiness and of Christ's overflowing grace to him: to me who am *less than the least of all God's people has this grace been given.*[24] As if the superlatives 'least' (among the apostles, 1 Cor. 15:9) or 'first and foremost' (of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15) were insufficient to express his unworthiness, Paul creates a new form of this Greek adjective, that is, a comparative of a superlative ('leaster', less than the least).[25] What grounds are there for such self-effacement? Barth rightly

[19] MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches*, 125–26.
[20] Cf. Beare, 10:669; Barth, 363; Bruce, 318–19; *contra* Lincoln, 183. On this point, Wallace interacts with Lincoln (*Greek Grammar*, 302).
[21] Hoehner, H. W. (2002). *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (p. 452). Baker Academic.
[22] A new sentence begins here and continues to the end of v. 12. The thought now moves forward from the grace of God embodied in the gospel (v. 2) to the process of preaching that gospel (cf. v. 7). This has three steps 'distinguished from one another in stating those to whom it is offered': the Gentiles (v. 8), all people (v. 9), and the powers (vv. 9, 10); so Best, 316.
[23] Stott, 119.
[24] Schlier, 152, aptly remarks: 'Preaching to the Gentiles is a privilege which paradoxically is given to the least of all the saints'.
[25] Gk. ἐλαχιστότερος. Cf. BDF §§60(2), 61(2); cf. S. E. Porter, *Idioms*, 124; and D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 302.

points out that the apostle is not just thinking in general terms about the weakness of his flesh or the continued struggle of the 'old man' against the 'new.' He considers lifelong weakness, temptation, and failure to be characteristic of all believers. Rather, he has in view here his violent persecution of the church *of God*[26] (1 Cor. 15:9). His repeated, specific references to his role as a persecutor reveal his consciousness of sin.[27]

But the paragraph is not dominated by the notion of Paul's unworthiness, real though this was. He has experienced the amazing grace of God, and so he goes out of his way to emphasize it. In this instance 'the grace given' is that grace which enables him to discharge his missionary commission, although one needs to realize that this 'special' grace is part and parcel of the comprehensive grace by which he became a Christian. Further, God works effectively in Paul's life, for although he is deeply conscious of his own unworthiness, this does not hinder him from assuming his missionary responsibilities in relation to the Gentiles.[28] He sets about fulfilling this task energetically, profoundly aware that God has called him to it."[29]

Ralph Harris writes "One should not get the impression from Paul's terminology about himself that he was putting himself down. That would have been false humility, which really is just another form of pride. People sometimes become 'proud of their humility' by trying to manifest it to other people. No one can read Paul's writings and think he was like that. He did not boast about his abilities, even though he had many of them. Exceptional abilities and positions of prominence in themselves do not corrupt individuals, but the temptation to allow one's self to become proud definitely increases in such situations. The antidote to the danger is a very simple but effective one: allow God to keep you humble. He certainly did it for Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1–10)."[30]

Ben Witherington writes "Paul's sense of unworthiness was profound, because, even while he was persecuting Jesus' followers of Jesus, Jesus' grace was extended to him.[31] This is not false modesty but rather profound gratitude, indicating how Paul really felt about the matter, as a text like 1 Cor. 15:9 shows. This sort of language falls under the ancient rhetorical rules for inoffensive self-praise.[32] The rhetorical aim of such statements is to create a deep emotional response (pathos) in the

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[26] τοῦ θεοῦ ('of God') stresses the enormity of the crime: it was *God's* church that Paul sought to destroy.

[27] Barth, 340, adds: 'because this awareness has a specific focus, it is distinct from a possibly morbid preoccupation with himself or with sin in general. His self-humiliation is unlike the expression of hidden pride and its concomitant fishing for compliments'. Cf. O. Haas, *Paulus der Missionar. Ziel, Grundsätze und Methoden der Missionstätigkeit des Apostels Paulus nach seinen eigenen Aussagen* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme-Verlag, 1971), 19; and Caird, 66. Some have argued that the phrase 'I am less than the least of all saints' is too exaggerated and artificial a self-denigration to be authentic to Paul. But it is even less likely that a Paulinist, who is thought to have penned these words, would speak of his hero in this fashion! On the other hand, if Barth's suggestion is right, then the apostle's statement is quite understandable. (Note, e.g., the criticisms of Lincoln, 183, by D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 302.)

[28] Schlier, 152, rightly observes that 'to the Gentiles' picks up the 'on behalf of you Gentiles' of v. 1.

[29] O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (pp. 240–241). W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

[30] Harris, R. W., ed. (2009). *Galatians–Philemon* (p. 125). WORDsearch.

[31] The rhetorical device here is notatio (Quintilian, *Inst. Or* 9.2.58–63), in which character delineation is meant to persuade the audience to accept the word of the speaker. See Jeal, *Integrating Theology and Ethics*, p. 170.

[32] See my discussion in *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, pp. 432–41.

audience, but it also makes it difficult to reject for if Paul is giving all the credit to God, to object to what he says is to object to what God has done. Humility, while not considered a virtue in the larger Greco-Roman world, was seen as a virtue in the Christian community and so could be referred to in a persuasive manner.[33] The remarks also have a leveling effect, placing Paul in the same situation as the Gentile converts. Paul then very aptly says that the riches of Christ are fathomless, inscrutable, incomprehensible, untraceable.[34] They can be announced but never fully explained. But whatever and whenever true revelation is announced, it comes into effective operation.[35]"[36]

Now, the infinitival purpose clause in Ephesians 3:8 present the purpose for which God the Father gave to Paul the unmerited blessing of proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth brought about by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him. It presents the purpose of the Father giving Paul the unmerited blessing of being a servant of the gospel at the moment of justification.

The noun *ethnos* (ἔθνος), "**the Gentiles**" refers to those members of the human race who are not of Jewish racial descent and thus not members of the covenant people of God, Israel.

The verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) refers to Paul proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth produced by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him.

The reader must understand that when Paul speaks of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, he is not referring to communicating the gospel to them as unbelievers but rather as people who are already children of God because his statement in Ephesians 3:8 is directly to his statements in Ephesians 3:2-7. In fact, in Ephesians 3:7, we noted in great detail that Paul served the gospel by communicating the mystery that Gentiles church age believers are fellow heirs as well as fellow members of the body likewise fellow partakers of the promise with Jewish church age believers because of justification by faith in and union and identification with Christ Jesus by means of the proclamation of the gospel.

As we noted many times in our study of Ephesians, the term *euangelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) was the central concept of Paul's theology. For Paul, *euangelion* was not only the content of what is proclaimed, but also the act, process and execution of the proclamation. Content and process of proclaiming the message are one for him. The gospel is not of human origin but the word of God (1 Pet. 1:12). It was

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[33] See Jeal, *Integrating Theology and Ethics*, p. 170.
[34] The adjective here (cf. Rom. 11:33) comes from the noun for footprint or track. Thus what is meant is that which cannot be tracked down or traced back to its source. See O'Brien, *Ephesians*, pp. 242–43.
[35] See Caird, *Paul's Letters* p. 66.
[36] Witherington, B., III. (2007). *The letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : a socio-rhetorical commentary on the captivity Epistles* (pp. 266–267). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

entrusted to Paul as an apostle and teacher (2 Tm. 1:11). Its message of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, and descended from David (2 Tm. 2:8) is not limited to a single, past event, but rather is experienced as a word charged with power in the present so that it cannot be fettered by human chains (2 Tm. 2:9). This message of Christ's victory at the Cross of Calvary produces regeneration and eternal life. It brings peace (Eph. 2:17; 6:15) and incorporates both Jews and Gentiles under the Headship of Christ (Eph. 3:1-9). It not only gives salvation but has "**brought life and immortality to light**" (2 Tm. 1:10).

The gospel is the manifestation of divine glory in history. It is the presence of Christ. The gospel is divine power (Rom. 1:16) and as an instrument of the Holy Spirit it convicts (1 Thess. 1:5) and converts (Col. 1:6). Although it is good news, it is strenuously opposed by a rebellious unregenerate world (1 Thess. 2:2). Opposition to the message takes the form of opposition to the messenger (2 Tm. 1:11-12; Phlm. 13). Yet those who proclaim it must do so boldly (Eph. 6:19) and with simplicity (2 Cor. 4:2), not with eloquence lest the cross of Christ be robbed of its power (1 Cor. 1:17). To those who refuse to respond to the gospel it is both foolishness and a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:18 ff.), but to those who respond in faith it proves itself to be "**the power of God unto salvation**" (Rom. 1:16).

"**Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David**" (2 Tm. 2:8) may well stand as a summary of what the entire New Testament means by "gospel." It has to do with the Person of Christ, though with an equal stress on Christ's saving work centered in the cross and resurrection. The advent of salvation is depicted in the Old Testament terms of promise and fulfillment (Rom. 3:21; 15:4-9; 1 Cor. 10:11). The present availability of that salvation is offered "**by grace alone, through faith alone**." The work of reconciliation is both complete meaning God in Christ has affected the salvation of the entire cosmos (2 Co. 5:19, 21) and incomplete meaning that God has entrusted the gospel to His servants who as ambassadors for Christ call men and women to accept all that has been accomplished (5:20).

In Romans 1:16-17, the apostle Paul describes the gospel in that it is the power of God for salvation and that it reveals the righteousness of God, who is Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (NASB95)

The context of Romans 1:16 indicates that the noun *soteria*, "**salvation**" refers to the deliverance from sin, Satan and his cosmic system that is available to every member of the human race and is received as a gift through faith in Christ. Paul is referring to the salvation or deliverance that is available to the unbeliever since it is used within the context of Paul pointing out the universal need for salvation

regardless of whether they are a Jew or Gentile, which is indicated by the phrase "**to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek**."

"**Who believes**" is the articular dative (of recipient) masculine singular present active (substantive) participle form of the verb *pisteuo*, which means to "trust, place complete confidence in" the Person of Christ in order to receive the gift of eternal life.

The present tense is "gnomic" used to make a statement of a general, timeless fact indicating that it is an "eternal spiritual truth" or "spiritual axiom" that the one who believes in the gospel message of Jesus Christ will receive salvation since the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

When a person believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior heis in effect trusting in the authority of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, which declare the Person and Work of Jesus Christ as the object of faith for salvation. Our faith is the only system of perception that God will accept because it is compatible with His grace policy. The believer is saved based upon the merits of Christ and His death on the Cross.

Therefore, the expression "**who believes**" refers to making the non-meritorious decision to trust or place one's complete confidence in the Person of Jesus Christ for salvation. Then the apostle Paul notes the universal nature of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ with the phrase "**to the Jew first and also to the Greek**." This phrase demonstrates that God desires all men to be saved and that Christ died for all men, which theologians call the "unlimited atonement" (1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2).

The expression "**to the Jew first and also to the Greek**" does "not" mean that every Jew must be evangelized before the gospel can be presented to the Gentiles but rather means that the Jews were elected by God as noted by Paul in Romans 9-11. Also, this expression "**to the Jew first and also to the Greek**" places the Jew on equal footing with the Gentile with respect to the need for salvation.

In Romans 1:16, the apostle Paul reveals three principles: (1) The effect of the gospel is salvation. (2) The extent of the gospel is that it is for all men. (3) The condition attached to the gospel is faith in Christ.

Romans 1:17 For by means of it, the righteousness originating from God is as an eternal spiritual truth revealed from faith to faith. (NASB95)

In Romans 1:17, the noun *dikaiosune* means, "righteousness" and refers to the righteousness of Christ since Paul writes that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God and in Romans 1:3-4 he writes that the gospel message centers upon the Person of Christ.

The righteousness of Christ refers to the character of Christ having perfect integrity in the sense that His character is perfectly sound, perfectly adhering to the will of God, which is upright, honest, perfectly whole, undiminished, sound, unimpaired and in perfect condition. The righteousness of Christ refers to the

character of Christ having perfect virtue in the sense that His character is perfect moral excellence, goodness, and His conduct is conformed perfectly to the will of God.

"**Of God**" is the noun *theos*, which is a genitive of source indicating that the righteousness referred to in Romans 1:17 "originates" from God and was "not" of human origin.

The righteousness of God refers to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ since the gospel centers upon the Person of Christ according to Romans 1:3-4 and the gospel message reveals the righteousness of God according to Romans 1:17. Therefore, the genitive of source *theos* indicates that the righteousness referred to in Romans 1:17 "originates" from God and is in fact the second member of the Trinity, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ who is the object of faith.

"**Is revealed**" is the third person singular present passive indicative form of the *apokalupto*, which is a compound word composed of the preposition *apo*, "from" and the verb *kalupto*, "to conceal, hide."

Interestingly and surprisingly, the result of combining these two words is that *apokalupto* means the exact opposite, "to reveal, disclose, uncover." So thus far, we can see that the righteousness of God in the Person of the impeccable, incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ is revealed by means of the communication of the gospel.

"**From faith**" is composed of the preposition *ek*, "**from**" and the genitive feminine singular form of the noun *pistis*, "**faith**."

The preposition *ek*, "**from**" is a marker of the extent of time from a point in the past whereas the noun *pistis*, "**faith**" is a genitive of time and together, they emphasize time with emphasis upon the beginning. Therefore, *ek pisteos*, "**from faith**" emphasizes that by means of the communication of the gospel, the righteousness of Christ was revealed in the believer the moment he accepted Jesus Christ as His Savior since at that moment God the Father imputed the righteousness of His Son to him (See Romans 4).

"**To faith**" is composed of the preposition *eis*, "**to**" and the accusative feminine singular form of the noun *pistis*, "faith." The preposition *eis*, "**to**" is a marker of continuous extent of time up to a point whereas as the noun *pistis*, "**faith**" is an accusative of measure or extent of time and together, they emphasize the extent of time.

Therefore, the prepositional phrase *eis pistin*, "**to faith**" emphasizes that by means of the communication of the gospel, the righteousness of Christ is revealed in the believer "after" his conversion. This is accomplished by the believer appropriating by faith the teaching of the gospel that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ (Romans 6:11-23; 8:1-17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5-17). It also emphasizes that the righteousness of Christ is revealed in the believer when he receives a resurrection body at the rapture of the church, which

completes the Father's plan to conform the believer into the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-29).

Therefore, in Romans 1:17, the expression *dikaiosune gar theou en auto apokaluptetai ek pisteos eis pistin*, "**For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**" indicates that by means of the communication of the gospel, the righteousness of Christ is revealed in the believer in three stages: (1) Positionally, at the moment he exercises faith in the gospel message and trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior. (2) Experientially, after salvation when the believer exercises faith in the gospel message that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ. (3) Perfectively, when he receives his resurrection body at the rapture of the church.

Now, when the New Testament uses the term *euangelion*, "gospel" it does not always refer to communicating the gospel to the unsaved but is often used in relation to the Christian. Depending upon the context the noun *euangelion*, "gospel" refers to: (1) The gospel presentation to the unbeliever.

Ephesians 1:13 And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation) – when you believed in Christ – you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit. (NET Bible)

In relation to the unbeliever, the noun *euangelion* is God's victorious proclamation of God's love in delivering the entire human race from sin, Satan, his cosmic system and eternal condemnation and has reconciled them to Himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This reconciliation with God and deliverance and victory over sin, Satan and the cosmic system that God accomplished through His Son's crucifixion, burial, death, resurrection and session is received as a gift and appropriated through faith in Christ (John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1-2).

(2) The communication of Bible doctrine to the believer.

Romans 16:25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that had been kept secret for long ages. (NET Bible)

In relation to the believer, the Gospel message is God's victorious proclamation regarding the believer's deliverance and victory positionally from the power of Satan, the old sin nature and the cosmic system of Satan (See Romans 5-7). By positionally, I mean that God views the believer as crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ, which was accomplished at the moment of salvation through the Baptism of the Spirit when the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit placed the believer in an eternal union with Christ.

The baptism of the Spirit identifies the believer with Christ in the sense that the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit causes the believer to become identical and united with the Lord Jesus Christ and also ascribes to the believer the qualities and

characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. It identifies the believer with Christ in His crucifixion (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20), His death (Romans 6:2, 7-8; Colossians 2:20; 3:3), His burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), His resurrection (Romans 6:5; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 2:12; 3:1) and His session (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1). The believer can experience this victory and deliverance by appropriating by faith the teaching of the Word of God that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ (Romans 6:11-23; 8:1-17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5-17).

Notice, in this passage, Paul is addressing the Christians in Rome and reveals his desire that the gospel that he communicating to them in the Roman epistle would be able to strengthen them spiritually, thus indicating that *euangelion*, "**gospel**" is used in relation to the saved and not just the unsaved.

Ephesians 6:15 Also, I solemnly charge all of you to make it your top priority to strap on your own feet combat boots and do it now, equipped with a firm foundation, namely, the Gospel, which produces a peace that is divine in quality and character. (Author's translation)

Paul is addressing the Ephesian believers and commanding them to fit their feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace. They were to strap on their combat boots, equipped with a firm foundation, which is the gospel, which produces a peace in the believer that is divine in quality and character. So again, the gospel is used in relation to the believer.

Now, in Ephesians 3:8, the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), "**wealth**" which appears here in the infinitival purpose clause here in Ephesians 3:8 also appeared in Ephesians 1:7, 18 and 2:7. In Ephesians 1:7, the word refers to the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that were received by the church age believer as a result of their justification and union and identification with Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:18, the word is again used in a figurative sense to refer to a spiritual and material abundance of material and spiritual possessions and spiritual resources possessed by God the Father. In other words, it is used figuratively of the spiritual and material prosperity of the Father. In Ephesians 2;7, this word is used again in a figurative sense by Paul to refer to a spiritual and material abundance of material and spiritual possessions and spiritual resources possessed by God the Father. In other words, it is used figuratively of the spiritual and material prosperity of the Father.

Now, as was the case in Ephesians 1:7, the noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), "**wealth**" here in Ephesians 3:8 refers to the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that Paul received as a result of the Father declaring him justified based upon the merits of object his faith, Jesus Christ as well as his union and identification with Him. This word is modified by the articular accusative neuter singular form of the adjective *anexichniastos* (ἀνεξιχνίαστος), "**unfathomable**" which emphasizes the unfathomable nature of the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits

that Paul received as a result of the Father declaring him justified based upon the merits of object his faith, Jesus Christ as well as his union and identification with Him.

Francis Foulkes writes "We have seen already the apostle's love for terms that speak of wealth to express the blessings of Christ that infinitely transcend the world's riches (see on 1:7). Here he adds an adjective (*anexichniaston*) that speaks of something that cannot be traced out by human footprints. It is used of the works of God in the Septuagint of Job 5:9 and 9:10. If Paul tried to measure and define that grace, he would find himself like a man 'tracking out the confines of a lake', and discovering that it was no lake at all 'but an arm of the ocean, and that he was confronted by the immeasurable sea'.[37] Or the word might suggest 'a reservoir so deep that soundings cannot reach the bottom of it' (Mitton *NCB*). Those *unsearchable riches* were not simply the gospel, not doctrine, but Christ himself (cf. Matt. 13:44). And the inestimable privilege of Paul's calling was to present Christ to the Gentiles who had not heard of him before, nor been included in his kingdom (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17–18; Rom. 11:13; 15:16–21; Gal. 2:7–9)."[38]

The proper name *Christos* (Χριστός), "**Christ**" contains the figure of metonymy, which means that the Christ is put for the church age believer's faith in Him at justification as well as their union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at their justification. Specifically, it means that the Christ is put for Paul's faith in Him at justification as well as his union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at his justification. This word functions as a genitive of production, which expresses the idea that this unfathomable wealth, which Paul was proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community was "produced by" or "brought about by" their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification. In other words, this unfathomable wealth is "the product" of their faith in Christ Jesus at justification and union and identification with Him through the baptism of the Spirit at justification.

The middle voice of this verb *euangelizō* (εὐαγγελίζω) is an indirect or benefactive middle which expresses the idea that it was "for Paul's own benefit" that he entered into the state of proclaiming to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth brought about by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him. It would be for Paul's benefit or advantage because it would result in rewards at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which immediately follows the rapture of the church, which is imminent (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

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[37] *The Best of John Henry Jowett*, edited by G. Kennedy (London, 1948). p. 1.
Mitton C. L. Mitton, *Ephesians* (*New Century Bible*; London, 1976).
NCB C. L. Mitton, *Ephesians* (*New Century Bible*; London, 1976).
[38] Foulkes, F. (1989). *Ephesians: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 10, p. 103). InterVarsity Press.

Romans 14:10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (NASB95)

"**The judgment seat of God**" is compose of the articular dative neuter singular form of the noun *bema* (βῆμα), "**the judgment seat**" and the articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun *theos* (θεός), "**of God**."

Moulton and Milligan state that in the papyri, the noun *bema* is very common in the official sense of "tribunal, judgment seat" as in the New Testament.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition list the following meanings for bema: (1) a step forward made by a foot, step (2) a very limited space, step (3) a dais or platform that required steps to ascend, tribunal.[39]

Louw Nida define the noun bema, "A raised platform mounted by steps and usually furnished with a seat, used by officials in addressing an assembly, often on judicial matters—'judgment seat, judgment place.' ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ βήματος εἰς τόπον λεγόμενον Λιθόστρωτον 'he sat down on the judge's seat in the place called The Stone Pavement' Jn 19:13. The association of a βῆμα with judicial procedures means that there is almost always an important component of judicial function associated with this term. Therefore in translating βῆμα, it is often best to use a phrase such as 'a place where a judge decides' or 'a place where decisions are made' or 'a judge's seat.' The focus upon judgment is particularly important in those passages which refer to the judgment seat of God (Ro 14:10) and of Christ (2 Cor 5:10)."[40]

The NET Bible makes the following comment, "The judgment seat (βῆμα, bēma) was a raised platform mounted by steps and sometimes furnished with a seat, used by officials in addressing an assembly or making pronouncements, often on judicial matters. The judgment seat was a familiar item in Greco-Roman culture, often located in the *agora*, the public square or marketplace in the center of a city."

The noun *bema* appears only four times in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 2:5; 2 Maccabees 13:26; Sirach 19:30; 45:9). It occurs twelve times in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 7:5; 12:21; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The noun is used in Acts 7:5 for a very limited space of ground where Abraham did not possess even a foot of the land of Canaan as an inheritance yet God promised to give him this land as a possession. It is used for the judgment seat of Pilate (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17), Festus (Acts 25:6, 17) and Caesar's (Acts 25:10). Lastly, the noun appears in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 for the judgment seat of Christ. This event will take place immediately after the rapture of the church. This is indicated by the

[39] Page 175
[40] Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, 7.63

fact that Luke 14:12-14 teaches that rewarding a believer is associated with resurrection and the rapture is when the church is resurrected.

Also, Revelation 19:8 reveals that when the Lord returns to earth at His Second Advent to bring an end to Daniel's Seventieth Week, the church is portrayed as already rewarded since she is described as dressed in fine linen, which refer to the righteous acts of the saints, a reference to rewards.

Furthermore, 2 Timothy 4:8, 1 Corinthians 4:5 teach that rewards are associated with "that day" and with the Lord's coming, which refers to the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 that refers to the rapture. 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 4:2 and 19:8 make clear that the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church will take place somewhere either in the earth's atmosphere or the stellar universe. Every passage in the Greek New Testament that is either addressing rewards or the Bema Seat are addressed to believers or church age believers specifically (Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 John 2:28; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Timothy 6:18-19; Titus 2:12-14).

Old Testament saints are resurrected and rewarded after the church age believers are resurrected and rewarded (Revelation 19:8; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 24). Each and every church age believer, regardless if they were faithful or not, will receive their resurrection bodies at the rapture and all will thus stand before the Bema Seat of Christ to have their works evaluated by the Lord.

The New Testament writers make clear that Jesus Christ Himself will be the judge of the church (Revelation 1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:5f; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 2:28). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself declared to the Jews that the Father had given Him authority to judge the living and the dead (John 5:22-29).

The Father awarded His Son Jesus Christ the sovereign rulership over the entire cosmos as a result of His voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross. Consequently, Jesus Christ will preside over and conduct the following judgments: (1) "Bema Seat Evaluation": The "evaluation" of the church age believer's life after salvation to determine if they merit rewards or not (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 2:28). (2) The judgment of "Israel" will take place immediately after the Second Advent and prior to the millennial reign and involves the removal unregenerate Israel from the earth leaving only regenerate Israel to enter into the Millennial reign of Christ (Ezekiel 20:37-38; Zechariah 13:8-9; Malachi 3:2-3, 5; Matthew 25:1-30). (3) The judgment of the "Gentiles" and also takes place immediately after the Second Advent of Christ and prior to His millennial reign and involves the removal unregenerate, anti-Semitic Gentiles from the earth (Matthew 25:31-46). (4) The judgment of Satan and his fallen angels and will take place at the end of human history and is their sentence for their pre-historic rebellion against God (Matthew 25:41; 1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10). (5) The "Great White Throne" judgment, which will

take place at the end of human history and is the judgment of all unregenerate humanity in human history for the rejection of Christ as Savior (Revelation 20:11-15).

The *bema* seat of Christ is an evaluation of the Christian's works to determine if they merit rewards or not. Eternal salvation is not the issue at this judgment since this was determined the moment the Christian was declared justified through faith alone in Christ alone.

Samuel L. Hoyt presents three views of the Bema that appear in Christianity, he writes, "Some Bible teachers view the judgment seat as a place of intense sorrow, a place of terror, and a place where Christ display all the believer's sins (or at least those unconfessed) before the entire resurrected and raptured church. Some go even further by stating that Christians must experience some sort of suffering for their sins at the time of this examination. At the other end of the spectrum another group, which holds to the same eschatological chronology, views this event as an awards ceremony. Awards are handed out to every Christian. The result of this judgment will be that each Christian will be grateful for the reward which he receives, and he will have little or no shame. Other Bible teachers espouse a mediating position. They maintain the seriousness of the examination and yet emphasize the commendation aspect of the judgment seat. They emphasize the importance and necessity of faithful living today but reject any thought of forensic punishment at the Bema. Emphasis is placed on the fact that each Christian must give an account of his life before the omniscient and holy Christ. All that was done through the energy of the flesh will be regarded as worthless for reward, while all that was done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be graciously rewarded. Those who hold this view believe that the Christian will stand glorified before Christ without his old sin nature. He will, likewise, be without guilt because he has been declared righteous. There will be no need for forensic punishment, for Christ has forever borne all of God's wrath toward the believer's sins."[41]

At the Bema Seat, the believer's sins are never mentioned whether these sins were confessed by the believer on earth or were not. These sins were judged at the cross (1 John 2:12). Therefore, the Bema Seat is not punitive.

Hoyt writes, "Scripture teaches that for the believer God's justice has already been fully and forever satisfied at the Cross in relation to the believer's sins. If God were to punish the believer judicially for his sins for which Christ has already rendered payment, He would be requiring two payments for sin and would therefore be unjust. Such a concept (punishment for sin) erroneously disparages the all-sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross."[42]

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[41] Bibliotheca Sacra, volume 137, number 545, January-March 1980; The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective-Part 1: The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins; page 33

[42] Bibliotheca Sacra, volume 137, number 545, January-March 1980; The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective-Part 1: The Judgment Seat of Christ and Unconfessed Sins; pages 34-35

The purpose of the Bema Seat is to evaluate the quality of every believer's work whether it is good in the sense of acceptable or bad in the sense of being unacceptable. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ evaluates the church every day according to Revelation 2-3.

The Bema Seat Evaluation of the church is a time when those works that the believer performed in the energy of the sin nature will be destroyed.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (NASB95)

The Bible teaches that every sin committed by the believer in his lifetime, both confessed and unconfessed have been forgiven as a result of Christ's substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross, which the Holy Spirit appropriated for the believer when they trusted in Christ as Savior (Psalm 102:12; John 3:18; Romans 5:1-2, 19; 8:1; 1 John 2:12).

The believer must confess his sin in order to be restored to fellowship with God. Personal sin does not sever his relationship with God but it does knock him out of fellowship with God, thus the need for the confession of sin.

The Bema Seat is a time when the believer will be rewarded for his actions that were empowered by the Spirit and in response to God's love for him. The believer who was properly motivated to serve Him and the body of Christ out of love and appreciation for what the Lord did for him will be rewarded at the Bema Seat.

The believer will be rewarded for living in light of the imminent return of Christ at the rapture of the church. Every moment that the church believer lives, is an opportunity to bring glory to God and receive rewards for loving one's neighbor as oneself.

The "overcomer" church age believer or in other words those who were faithful till death or the rapture will receive rewards at the "Bema Seat Evaluation" of the church, which takes place immediately after the rapture of the church.

There are two words in the Greek New Testament that are used to describe rewards for believers: (1) *Stephanos*, "wreath, garland, crown." (2) *Brebeion*, "prize."

In the ancient world, the *stephanos* was the wreath or garland, the actual crown for winning an event whereas the *brabeion* was the prize given to the victor in the athletic games of the ancient world.

Believers who execute the Father's plan for their life are called in Revelation 2 and 3 "**overcomers**," meaning that they overcame their old sin nature, the devil and his cosmic system by obeying the Word of God, which is motivated by love for God. These believers will receive the following rewards from the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation:

The "**crown of righteousness**," is a reward given to believers for their faithfulness in executing their own spiritual life and functioning in their spiritual gift.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NASB95)

"**The Incorruptible Crown**" describes all the crowns and is also a special crown given for faithfulness in running the race and exercising self-control in order to serve the Lord and finish the race.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (NASB95)

The "**crown of life**" is given to the believer for enduring testings (trials) and temptation.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (NASB95)

Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (NASB95)

The "**unfading crown of glory**" is a reward promised to pastor-teachers for their faithfulness in the discharge of their responsibilities in shepherding their flocks.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (NASB95)

"**White garment**" is a reward for faithfulness in the form of a translucent uniform of glory over the resurrection body.

Revelation 3:4 "But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." (NASB95)

The overcome or winner believer will receive a "**white stone**" and "**hidden manna**" and a "**new name**" written on the stone, which refers to intimate access to the Lord Jesus Christ and great responsibility in Christ's millennial government and in the eternal state (Revelation 2:17).

Revelation 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it." (NASB95)

The "**hidden manna**" in Revelation 2:17 refers to the special intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity and will be given only to the overcomer or winner believer.

The new title on the white stone in Revelation 2:17 refers to the privilege of having intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and throughout all of eternity which will be exclusively to the overcomer. He will also receive a New Title in the Lamb's book of life and will have a membership to the Paradise Club and access to the Gazebo in the Garden (Revelation 2:7).

Revelation 2:7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God." (NASB95)

The winner believer will have his name recorded in the historical record section of heaven (Revelation 3:12).

Revelation 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name." (NASB95)

The overcomer will have a special audience with God the Father.

Revelation 3:5 "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (NASB95)

The noun *brabeion*, "prize," refers to the believer's inheritance or escrow blessings, which are released to the believer upon executing the Father's plan for their lives (Ephesians 1:14, 18; Philippians 3:14; Colossians 1:12; 3:23-24; 1 Peter 1:4; Hebrews 9:15).

Philippians 3:14 I am sprinting towards the finish line for the prize, which is God the Father's invitation to privilege residing in the Person of Christ Jesus. (Author's translation)

Every church age believer has the opportunity to receive his eternal inheritance if he fulfills the condition of being faithful till death or the rapture whichever comes first and thus executes the Father's will for his life.

If the church age is not faithful and doesn't stay habitually in fellowship with the Lord, then they will be disqualified from receiving rewards.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (NASB95)

The prize is given to the overcomer and refers to the privilege of ruling with Christ during His millennial reign and throughout the eternal state, and only the overcomer will receive it (Romans 8:16-18; 2 Timothy 2:12a; Revelation 2:26; 3:21).

Revelation 2:26 "He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS." (NASB95)

Revelation 3:21 "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (NASB95)

The prize is also intimate access to the Person of Christ during His millennial reign and the eternal state and thus it involves having the privilege of being a companion to the Lord during His millennial reign and throughout the eternal state.

The believer who does not execute the Father's plan by habitually remaining out of fellowship through disobedience and will experience loss of rewards and temporary shame and embarrassment when he stands before the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation.

1 John 2:28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. (NASB95)

Hoyt commenting on 1 John 2:28, writes, "The Bible suggests that there will be shame at the judgment seat of Christ to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the measure of unfaithfulness of each individual believer. Therefore, it should be each believer's impelling desire to be well-pleasing to the Lord in all things. Although Christians apparently will reflect on this earthly life with some regret, they will also realize what is ahead for them in the heavenly life. This latter realization will be the source of boundless joy. English strikes a proper balance on this subject. 'Joy will indeed be the predominant emotion of life with the Lord; but I suspect that, when our works are made manifest at the tribunal, some grief will be mixed with the joy, and we shall know shame as we suffer loss. But we shall rejoice also as we realize that the rewards given will be another example of the grace of our Lord; for at best we are unprofitable servants' (E. Schuyler English, "The Church At the Tribunal," in Prophetic Truth Unfolding Today, ed. Charles Lee Feingberg [Old Tappan, NJ:

Fleming H. Revell Corinthians, 1968], p. 29) The elements of remorse, regret, and shame cannot be avoided in an examination of the judgment seat of Christ. But this sorrow must be somewhat relative because even for the finest of Christians there will be some things worthy of unceasing remorse in the light of God's unapproachable holiness. This would mean that the finest of Christians could be sorrowful throughout eternity. However, this is not the picture that the New Testament gives of heaven. The overwhelming emotion is joyfulness and gratefulness. Although there is undeniably some measure of remorse or regret, this is not the overriding emotion to be experienced throughout the eternal state. The emotional condition of the redeemed is that of complete and unending happiness. Emotion proceeds from the realization of facts in personal experience. Hope will at last become reality for all those who are delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:18-25). Elimination of the curse, pain and death will also remove sorrow, tears and crying (Revelation 21:4). The judgment seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the judgment seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential."[43]

J. Hampton Keathley III has an excellent comment on the noun *bema*, he writes, "Both Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:9 speak of the "judgment seat." This is a translation of one Greek word, the word *bema*. While *bema* is used in the gospels and Acts of the raised platform where a Roman magistrate or ruler sat to make decisions and pass sentence (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13), its use in the epistles by Paul, because of his many allusions to the Greek athletic contests, is more in keeping with its original use among the Greeks. This word was taken from Isthmian games where the contestants would compete for the prize under the careful scrutiny of judges who would make sure that every rule of the contest was obeyed (cf. 2 Timothy 2:5). The victor of a given event who participated according to the rules was led by the judge to the platform called the *Bema*. There the laurel wreath was placed on his head as a symbol of victory (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25). In all of these passages, 'Paul was picturing the believer as a competitor in a spiritual contest. As the victorious Grecian athlete appeared before the *Bema* to receive his perishable award, so the Christian will appear before Christ's *Bema* to receive his imperishable award. The judge at the *Bema* bestowed rewards to the victors. *He did not whip the losers.*'

[43] Bibliotheca Sacra, volume 137, number 545, January-March 1980; The Judgment Seat of Christ in Theological Perspective-Part 2: The Negative Aspects of the Christian's Judgment; pages 131-132

We might add, neither did he sentence them to hard labor. In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination, but it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins. Such would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the Cross because He totally paid the penalty for our sins. Chafer and Walvoord have an excellent word on this view: With reference to sin, Scripture teaches that the child of God under grace shall not come into judgment (John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37; Romans 5:1; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 11:32); in his standing before God, and on the ground that the penalty for all sin—past, present, and future (Colossians 2:13)—has been borne by Christ as the perfect Substitute, the believer is not only placed beyond condemnation, but being in Christ is accepted in the perfection of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 10:14) and loved of God as Christ is loved (John 17:23). (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scripture Simplified and Explained*, rev. John F. Walvoord, editor, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 282) Again, Chafer writes concerning the *Bema*, 'It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the judgment is unrelated to the problem of sin, that it is more for the bestowing of rewards than the rejection of failure'[44]."[45]

By proclaiming the gospel to the Gentile Christian community the unfathomable wealth brought about by their justification by faith in Jesus Christ and union and identification with Him, Paul would demonstrate that he is a faithful steward of the time, talent (spiritual gift) and truth (the gospel), which God gave to him as a trust at the moment of justification. This would result in rewards at the Bema Seat.

In Romans 14:11, Paul cites Isaiah 45:23 to affirm the certainty that each and every Christian must present himself to the Lord Jesus Christ at His Bema Seat in order to have their works evaluated by the Lord to determine if they merit rewards or not. The implication is obvious in that the strong Christian is never to regard and treat with contempt the weaker believer for his convictions and the weak are never to condemn the strong for theirs since the Lord Jesus Christ will determine at His Bema Seat if the believer's service, whether weak or strong, merits rewards.

Romans 14:11 For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." (NASB95)

Then, in Romans 14:12, Paul draws an inference from these statements in Romans 14:10-11 and teaches that each and every church age believer without exception will have to give an account of himself to the Son of God.

Romans 14:12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. (NASB95)

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[44] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. IV: Ecclesiology-Eschatology, Dallas Seminary Press, Dallas, TX, 1948, p. 406

[45] J. Hampton Keathley III, The Doctrine of Rewards: The Judgment Seat (*Bema*) of Christ; page 2; Biblical Studies Press; www.bible.org 1997

"**Each one**" is the nominative masculine singular form of the adjective *hekastos* (ἕκαστος), which functions as a substantive and denotes each one of a totality in a distributive sense. Thus, it refers to "each and every" member of the body of Christ who have been declared justified through faith alone in Christ alone without exception regardless of race, gender or social status. The word makes clear to Paul's Christian readers that "each and every member" of the body of Christ "without exception" will give an account of himself to the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church. It functions as a nominative subject meaning that it is performing the action of the verb *didomi*. We will translate the adjective *hekastos*, "**each and every one without exception**."

"**Of us**" is the genitive first person plural form of the personal pronoun *ego* (ἐγώ) and refers to Paul and his fellow Christians in Rome. It functions as a partitive genitive or wholative genitive meaning that the word denotes the whole of which the head noun *hekastos*, "**each and every one without exception**" is a part. This indicates each and every person, "who is a part of the body of Christ" will have to give an account of himself to the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat. We will translate *hemeis*, "**of us**."

"**Will give an account**" is composed of the third person singular future active indicative form of the verb *didomi* (δίδωμι), "**will give**" and the accusative masculine singular form of the noun *logos* (λόγος), "**an account**."

The verb *didomi* means "to give" and is used with each and every member of the body of Christ as its subject and the noun *logos*, "account" as its object. Together, these two words form an idiom that denotes the act of the believer making himself accountable to the Lord since to be "accountable" means to be subject to giving an account. These two words denote the act of the believer making himself accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer is subject to giving an account to the Lord in order that his service and stewardship of his time, talent, truth and treasure can be evaluated by the Lord to determine if he was faithful in his service or not and to determine if his stewardship was profitable or not. This will take place at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which will be conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ immediately after the rapture.

Therefore, the verb *didomi* and the noun *logos* refer to the act of the believer presenting himself at the Bema Seat and having his actions as related to his service evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat to determine if these actions related to his service merit a reward or not. They refer to the Christian giving an account to the Lord or in other words, being held responsible by the Lord for his service, which involves a four-fold stewardship: (1) Time: Were they profitable in how they used their time on earth that the Lord gave them? (2) Talent: Were they profitable in how they used their spiritual gift the Lord gave them? (3) Truth: Were

they profitable in how they used the truth the Lord gave them? (4) Treasure: Were they profitable in how they used their finances that the Lord gave them?

They are to be good stewards with their talent (they are to operate in their spiritual gifts) and treasure (they are to financially support each other when necessary) and truth (they are to apply the Word of God in their relationships with each other).

Time: **Galatians 6:9-10, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."**

Talent: **1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."**

Treasure: **Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure -- pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."**

Truth: **Colossians 4:5-6, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."**

At the Bema Seat, the believer's service, as expressed through their stewardship in these four areas, will be evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ to determine if they were a faithful and profitable steward in these four areas or not. If they were a faithful and profitable servant and steward with their time, spiritual gift, truth and finances that were given to them by the Lord as trusts, they will receive a reward from the Lord and if they were not, they will not receive a reward.

Therefore, the verb *didomi* and the noun *logos* do not refer to the believer offering an explanation for actions in life since no explanation could alter or change what the believer said or did in life. To give an account to the Lord does not mean that the believer will be giving an explanation as to why he did not do something or did do something. It will not be a time for explanations or excuses but rather it will be a time when his actions as related to his service and stewardship in life will be evaluated to determine if they were a good steward with their time, talent, truth, and treasure that the Lord gave to them as trusts to be invested for His kingdom.

To give an account to the Lord is thus making oneself accountable to the Lord in order to have one's service and stewardship evaluated by the Lord to determine if they merit rewards or not.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 reveal that the believer's works as related to service will be evaluated by the Lord to determine if they merit rewards or not. There is nothing in these passages mentioning the believer giving an explanation for what he did since no explanation could justify or change that which the believer said and did in life.

"**To God**" is the articular dative masculine singular form of the noun *theos* (θεός), which is absent from some mss (B F G 6 630 1739 1881 pc) but are found in a A C D Ψ 0209 33 Majority text lat sy co.

Moo writes, "The last words of the verb τῷ θεῷ ("to God") are omitted in the important primary Alexandrian uncial B, in the secondary Alexandrian minuscule 1739 and in the sister western bilinguals F and G. The omission could be original, later scribes feeling it necessary to complete the text. But the omission of the words renders the text perhaps too difficult; we should probably follow the primary Alexandrian a, the secondary Alexandrian MSS A, C, 33 and 81, Ψ, the western uncial D and the majority text and include it."[46]

The NET Bible commenting on this textual problem, writes, "External evidence somewhat favors their inclusion since Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine mss are well represented. From an internal standpoint, however, it is easy to see the words as a scribal gloss intended to clarify the referent, especially as a reinforcement to the quotation of Isa 45:23 in v. 11. Not only that, but the abrupt ending of the verse without "to God" is harsh, both in Greek and in English. In this instance, the internal considerations seem overwhelming on the side of the omission. At the same time, English stylistic needs require the words and they have been put into the translation, even though they are most likely not original. NA27 places the words in brackets, indicating doubt as to their authenticity. tn Or "each of us is accountable to God."

As Cranfield points out, "The reading which omits τῷ θεῷ is undoubtedly the more difficult; but we are inclined to think that this is a case where we should pay more heed to the argument from intrinsic probability than to the principle of *difficilior lectio potior* (here intrinsic probability is surely in favor of accepting the longer reading, for, without τῷ θεῷ the sentence is most unsatisfactory as the conclusion to the paragraph, although there can be no doubt about Paul's meaning)."[47]

Bruce Metzger commenting on this textual problem, writes, "On the one hand, the combination of such witnesses as A C D 33 81 614 and most versional testimony makes it difficult to reject the reading τῷ θεῷ. On the other hand, however, it is easy to understand why, if the words were originally absent from the text, copyists would have supplied them in order to clarify the reference of the verb. To represent the balance of external and internal considerations, it was decided to include τῷ θεῷ in the text, but to enclose the words within square brackets."[48]

Therefore, if we take into account each of these observations, we can conclude that the words τῷ θεῷ were in the original autograph based upon the combination of

[46] Moo, Douglas J., The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle to the Romans, page 834; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Corinthians, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 1988

[47] Cranfield, C.E.B., International Critical Commentary, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, volume 2, page 711; T and T Clark, A Continuum imprint, London, New York, 1975

[48] A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament; second edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: 1994, page 469

witnesses, that the inclusion of the words is the most difficult reading and because of intrinsic probability.

The noun *theos* refers to the Lord Jesus. This is indicated in that 2 Corinthians 5:10 teaches that the Lord will conduct the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church. Also, the article is anaphoric meaning that the word was used previously in verse 11 and its meaning is retained here in Romans 14:12.

In Romans 14:11, the noun *theos* referred to the Lord Jesus Christ emphasizing His deity and equality with the Father and the Spirit. In this passage, the articular construction of the noun *theos* refers to the Lord Jesus Christ since it is anaphoric indicating that the word's meaning in Romans 14:10 where it referred to the Lord Jesus Christ is being retained here in Romans 14:11.

In Romans 14:10, the noun *theos* refers to Jesus Christ with emphasis upon His deity as indicated by the fact that 2 Corinthians 5:10 teaches that the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church will be conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, John 5:22-29 and Philippians 2:5-11 make clear that He will be conducted all the judgments in history, which would include the Bema Seat.

Therefore, in Romans 14:12, the articular construction of the noun *theos* is anaphoric indicating that the word was used in Romans 14:11 and its meaning in that passage is used here again in Romans 14:12. The articular construction of the noun *theos* also emphasizes the personality of the Son of God. The noun *theos* functions as an indirect object meaning that the word is that to or for which the action of the verb is performed. This indicates that the believer who is making himself accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ at His Bema Seat is received by the Lord. We will translate the articular form of *theos*, "**to God the Son**."

Therefore, in Romans 14:12, Paul is teaching us that each and every member of the body of Christ will be required to give account of himself at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which will be conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to the evaluation by the Lord Jesus Christ of the believer's four-fold stewardship. At that time, the believer's service for the Lord and stewardship of his time, talent, truth and treasure will be evaluated to determine if they merit a reward or rewards for their service.

When the believer stands before Christ at the Bema Seat it is not to determine their eternal destiny since that was decided when they trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior and as a result were declared justified by the Father.

"Justification" is a judicial act of God whereby He declares a person to be righteous as a result of crediting or imputing to that person His righteousness the moment they exercised faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Consequently, God accepts that person and enters that person into a relationship with Himself since they now possess His righteousness. Justification is God declaring a person to be righteous as a result of acknowledging or recognizing His righteousness in that person, and which

righteousness He imputed to that person as a result of their faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a once and for all declaration, which never changes or can be rescinded since God is a perfect Judge who because He is immutable, always makes perfect decisions (Romans 3:23-26; 5:1-2).

Justification causes no one to be righteous but rather is the recognition and declaration by God that one is righteous as He is. To be justified by God through faith alone in Christ alone means that God can never condemn us for our sins. It means that a believer can never lose his salvation because of any sin since God, who is a perfect judge, rendered a perfect decision when he declared righteous the person, who exercised faith in His Son Jesus Christ! Thus, Paul declares the following in our completed corrected translation of Romans 8:1: **"Therefore, there is now, as an eternal spiritual truth, never any condemnation, none whatsoever for the benefit of those in union with Christ who is Jesus."**

There is absolutely never any condemnation whatsoever for the Christian because of a legal decision rendered by the Father the moment they exercised faith in His Son Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Father is a perfect judge and once He renders a decision, it can never be rescinded. It is a once and for all, final decision. He never makes a mistake. He saves the Christian based upon the merits of His Son and His Son's deaths (spiritual and physical) on the Cross.

The Christian has no merit with God. The object of his faith, Jesus Christ has all the merit with God the Father. Therefore, the Christian salvation and the fact that he avoids eternal condemnation is based upon the merits of the Person of Christ and what He did at the Cross for sinners.

Therefore, in Romans 14:12, Paul is teaching us that each and every member of the body of Christ will be required to give account of himself at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which will be conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to the evaluation by the Lord Jesus Christ of the believer's four-fold stewardship. At that time, the believer's service for the Lord and stewardship of his time, talent, truth and treasure will be evaluated to determine if they merit a reward or rewards for their service.

A steward is a manager, not an owner. He is one who manages the property of another. God is the owner and we are the managers of the various stewardships He has given. This includes the whole of life, of course. But to be good stewards of His grace, we must know the precise areas of stewardship for which God is holding us accountable.

Stewardship is one of four concepts related to Christian fellowship: (1) Relationship with Christ: We are all permanently united together by the common (eternal) life that we share as a result of regeneration and the Baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:42; 1 C. 1:9; 1 John 1:3). (2) Partnership: We are to work together for a common purpose to obtain common objectives for the glory of God and the gospel

of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 1:27; Philippians 1:5; Galatians 2:9; Hebrews 1:9). (3) Companionship: We are to communicate with one another and have fellowship with one another sharing with one another the things (viewpoint and thinking) of Christ (Acts. 2:42; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Romans 1:11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Phlm. 6). (4) Stewardship: We must recognize that all we have belongs to the Lord and has been given to us as trusts from God to invest for His purposes.

Believers need to be willing to share their material possessions for the promotion of the gospel and to help those in need. Good stewardship stems from recognizing our relationship to Jesus Christ, but it also means recognizing our partnership in Christ's enterprise on earth. (Romans 12:13; 15:27; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:15; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Timothy 6:18). We must recognize that all we have belongs to the Lord and has been given to us as trusts from God to invest for His purposes.

A steward is one who manages the property of another and is not an owner; he is a manager. As stewards we must recognize that all we have belongs to the Lord and has been given to us as trusts from God to invest for His purposes. Believers need to be willing to share their material possessions for the promotion of the gospel and to help those in need. Everything that we are and possess as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, both spiritually and materially, namely, our time, talent and treasure are in fact, trusts given to us by God which we are to invest for God's kingdom and glory (1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; 4:10-11; Luke 19:11-26).

Good stewardship stems from recognizing our relationship to Jesus Christ, but it also means recognizing our partnership in Christ's enterprise on earth. In any good partnership, the partners share equally in both privileges and responsibilities, the assets and liabilities, and the blessings and burdens.

What kind of partnership would it be if one partner took all the income and enjoyed all the privileges while the other partner did all the work and paid all the bills? No one would enter into a partnership like that, yet that is what goes on in the church today. Partners are to share and share alike in all the aspects of their enterprise. They may not do the same things since there are diverse spiritual gifts distributed to individuals in the body of Christ. In fact, members of any partnership will be much more successful in their enterprise if they work and share according to their abilities, expertise, and training, but still share the load.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples the importance of being obedient servants of God. He taught His disciples to be profitable rather than unprofitable servants of God. A profitable servant is obedient whereas the unprofitable servant is disobedient (Matthew 24:47-51; 25:14-30).

The first area of stewardship that we will note that the believer will have to give an account for in that it will be evaluated by the Lord at the Bema Seat is that of his stewardship of time.

God has allotted twenty-four hours to each one of us. God has given us days not years.

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. (NASB95)

Scripture commands a believer to make the most of his time, to conduct his life with respect toward God and according to the will of God.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (NASB95)

Ephesians 5:15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (NASB95)

1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. (NASB95)

Remember, God allots us a certain amount of time on this earth, and we are held accountable as to how we use that time. The principle of our stewardship of time is taught by our Lord in the parable of the minas in Luke 19:11-26.

Every believer must use his time wisely if he is to be acknowledged by the Lord as a good steward (Psalm 90:1-17).

Psalm 39:4 LORD, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. 5 Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. (NASB95)

Colossians 4:5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. (NASB95)

"**Opportunity**" is *kairos* and again, rather than emphasize a point of time, the focus is on a period of time filled with all kinds of opportunities through the privileges and responsibilities given.

In connection with our witness to the unbelieving world, we are responsible for two things: (1) Our conduct, which includes our behavior, must be opportune in relation to the time in its various possibilities; and (2) Our conduct, as it is occurs in our speech, must be appropriately seasoned to fit the person we are seeking to reach for Christ.

1 Peter 1:17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers. (NASB95)

"**Time**" in 1:17 is *chronos*, which simply focuses on the duration of one's life on earth as well as its temporality. On the other hand, the word "**stay**," while also pointing to the element of temporality, focuses our attention on the attitude and the manner of life that should characterize how we should conduct ourselves during that time. We are to live as sojourners. As believers in Christ, we are now citizens of heaven from whence we are to be looking for the Savior (Philippians 3:20-21).

In Romans 13:11-14, Paul emphasized with his readers the importance of being good stewards with their time. Paul in Romans 13:11 commands his Christian readers in Rome to continue making it their habit of loving their neighbor as themselves as a result of what he taught in Romans 13:8-10 that loving one's neighbor fulfills the requirements of the Mosaic Law. In this passage, he teaches that they are to continue obeying this command because they are well aware of the significance of the period of history in which they were living in, namely, they were living in the church age preceding the imminent return of Christ at the rapture. This period he teaches is characterized by urgency and opportunity for them, demanding immediate action on their part in that they can gain rewards for obeying the command to love your neighbor as yourself.

The apostle also teaches in this passage that it is now already the moment for his readers to be awake spiritually. To awake from spiritual sleep refers to the confession of sins to be restored to fellowship with God and maintaining that fellowship by obedience to the Word of God. Lastly, he teaches that it is now already the moment for Paul's readers to be awake spiritually because their deliverance from the sin nature, Satan and his cosmic system at the rapture of the church is now nearer to taking place than when they first became Christians.

Romans 13:11 So then, all of continue making it your habit of practicing this because all of you are well aware of the significance of this particular period of history characterized by urgency and opportunity, demanding immediate action, namely that, it is now already the moment for each and every one of you to be awake from sleep because our deliverance is now nearer to taking place than when we believed. (Author's translation)

Then, in Romans 13:12 Paul informs his readers that the night has drawn to a close and the day is approaching. He then draws an inference from these two statements by exhorting his readers to lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Romans 13:12 The night has drawn to a close. Indeed, the day is approaching. Therefore, let us for the duration continue to lay aside for ourselves the activities, which characterize the kingdom of darkness. Indeed, let us for the duration continue to clothe ourselves with the weapons, which characterize those belonging to the kingdom of light. (Author's translation)

This passage contains four sections. The first statement "**the night has drawn to a close**" teaches that the period in which the church age believer is not in his or her resurrection body and is living during a period of history in which Satan is the god of this world has drawn to a close.

The second statement "**the day is approaching**" emphasizes with Paul's readers that the period of time when each and every one of them is living in their resurrection body and is permanently delivered from living in Satan's cosmic system is approaching or is imminent. This period begins for the believer with the rapture of the church and will never end and will go on throughout eternity future.

The third statement is an exhortation "**Therefore, let us for the duration continue to lay aside for ourselves the activities, which characterize those who belong to the kingdom of darkness**" which is making an inference from these previous two statements. This inferential exhortation involves the confession of sin (1 John 1:9) to be restored to fellowship with God since the noun *ergon*, "**deeds**" refers to activities and the noun *skotos*, "**darkness**" refers to those who belong to the kingdom of darkness. They were to continue to confess their sins, keeping short accounts with God the Father during this interim period prior to being permanently delivered by the return of Christ at the rapture.

The fourth and final statement in Romans 13:12 "**Indeed, let us for the duration continue to clothe ourselves with the weapons, which characterize those who belong to the kingdom of light**" speaks of the believer appropriating by faith his union and identification with Christ. This statement speaks of the act of the church age believer exercising faith in the Spirit's revelation in the Word of God that they are crucified with Christ, died, buried, raised and seated with Him.

The expression "**armor of light**" refers to the Christian's union and identification with Christ but from the perspective that it gives the believer victory over spiritual and physical death, personal sins, the sin nature and Satan and his cosmic system. The believer's identification with Christ in His crucifixion, spiritual and physical deaths, burial, resurrection and session when appropriated by faith gives them the victory experientially over spiritual and physical death, the sin nature, personal sins and Satan and his policy of evil promoted and propagated by his cosmic system.

In this final statement in Romans 13:12 Paul is contrasting those who belong to the kingdom of light and those who belong to the kingdom of darkness. This antithesis between light and darkness used often by the apostle in his writings (2

Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8, 11; Colossians 1:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, 8) and is used by John (John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35; 1 John 1:5; 2:8-9).

The apostle Paul in Romans 13:13 exhorts his readers to unite with him in conducting their lives properly as those who exist in the day, not by means of drunken parties, licentious promiscuity and jealous contention.

Romans 13:13 Let us for the duration continue to conduct our lives properly as those who, as an eternal spiritual truth, exist in the state of being in the day, not by means of drunken parties, not by means of licentious promiscuity, not by means of jealous contention. (Author's translation)

"**The day**" refers again to the period of time when each and every church age believer is living in his or her resurrection body and is permanently delivered from living in Satan's cosmic system. This period begins for the believer with the rapture of the church and will never end and will go on throughout eternity future. Therefore, when Paul exhorts his readers to unite with him in conducting their lives as those who exist in the day he means that they are to conduct themselves as those who are positionally resurrected with Christ and delivered from the sin nature, Satan and his cosmic system. They are also to conduct themselves as those who exist in the day ultimately meaning they are to conduct themselves as those who will ultimately be resurrected and will be permanently delivered from the sin nature, Satan and his cosmic system at the rapture.

Then, to complete the verse he lists three pairs of vices that Christians are to avoid. They are not to conduct their lives by means of drunken parties, licentious promiscuity and jealous contention.

In Romans 13:14, the apostle Paul in this passage issues a command and a prohibition.

Romans 13:14 But rather, I solemnly charge all of you to make it your top priority to clothe yourselves with the Lord, who is Jesus, who is Christ. Also, all of you continue the discipline of not allowing yourselves to make provision with regards to the lusts produced by the flesh. (Author's translation)

In the command, Paul solemnly charges the Roman Christians to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to appropriating by faith the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God that the Christian is union with Christ and identified with Him in His crucifixion, His spiritual and physical deaths, His resurrection and session. Then, in the prohibition, he wants his readers to continue not allowing themselves to make provision with respect to the desires produced by the flesh, i.e. the sin nature.

Another area of stewardship for the believer is that the Lord Jesus Christ will evaluate at the Bema Seat is that of his spiritual gift. Every believer has been given a spiritual gift for the purpose of serving other members of the body of Christ (See 1 Peter 4:10).

The distribution of spiritual gifts was authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of His strategic victory over Satan at the cross during the dispensation of the hypostatic union (Ephesians 4:7-10). However, the actual appointment of the believer's spiritual gift is made by God the Holy Spirit as per 1 Corinthians 12:11.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, "**manifestation**" refers to the fact that every believer receives *one* spiritual gift since the word is in the singular (See 1 Peter 4:10).

Spiritual gifts are assignments of position within the body of Christ. Identification of one's spiritual gift and production from this gift is a direct result of spiritual growth which can only be achieved through the consistent and persistent learning and applying of the Word of God which in turn enables the Holy Spirit to identify for you, your spiritual gift.

Just as a car operates on gas so the believer's spiritual gift operates on God's love. This is indicated in that in Romans 12 after Paul discusses spiritual gifts in verses 6-8, he then discusses loving one's fellow believer in verses 9-16. Also, after discussing spiritual gifts extensively in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul then discusses the importance of the believer operating in the love of God in 1 Corinthians 13 and even teaches that loving one's fellow Christian is more important than spiritual gifts since they run on love.

The believer discovers for himself and manifests to others his spiritual gift by loving God and his fellow believer.

Nature of Spiritual Gifts: (1) Gifts are never merited or earned. (2) Gifts are a special grace-given ability (nature or essence) (3) Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit (a divine endowment) (source) (4) Gifts are given to each believer in Christ (recipients) (5) Gifts are for service to the body of Christ that it may grow quantitatively (evangelism), qualitatively (edification), and organically (developed ministries and offices in the church) (immediate purpose) (6) Gifts are for the glory of God (ultimate purpose) (7) Spiritual gifts are God's special gifts given to believers to enable them for special service to the body of Christ and in the world. When related to the gift of ministry or service or helps, it may include natural talents received at birth.

The following is a list of what a spiritual gift and what it is not: (1) It is not an office in the local church like elder or deacon. Certain gifts are needed to function effectively in those offices, but an office and a gift are not the same thing. (2) It is not a particular geographical area or a place of service. It is the ability to serve, not the place where one serves. (3) A spiritual gift is not a particular specialty or method of ministry. The gift of teaching may be used through radio or through writing or through the classroom, etc. (4) It is not a certain personality type (vivacious, scintillating, dynamic, etc. (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5 with 2 Cor. 10:10).

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I appeal to each and every one of you spiritual brothers and sisters on the basis of the merciful acts produced by God the

Father to offer your bodies as a sacrifice-alive, holy, extremely pleasing and beneficial to God the Father, which is your reasonable service. 2 "Consequently, do not conform your behavior in accordance with the standards of this age. On the contrary, permit yourselves to be transformed by renovating your mind in order that each and every one of you may discern what is, as an eternal spiritual truth, God the Father's will, that which is good as well as extremely pleasing and in addition perfect. 3 In fact, by means of the spiritual gift, which was assigned to me for the benefit of myself and others I say for the benefit of each and every person, namely those who are at this particular time living among all of you not to think more highly of oneself than what one is, as an eternal spiritual truth, obligated to think. On the contrary, make it a habit to think so that you think properly about yourselves consistent with the objective standard God the Father distributed to each and every person without exception for their benefit, namely justifying faith. 4 Because in fact, just as in one body, we, as a physiological fact, possess many members however all the members, as a physiological fact, by no means possess the same function. 5 So in the same way, we, the many, as an eternal spiritual truth, exist as one body in union with Christ, thus logically are, as an eternal spiritual truth, members individually belonging to one another. 6 Thus logically, as a result we, as an eternal spiritual truth, do possess and experience diverse spiritual gifts according to the grace which was given for the benefit of each and every one of us: whether the function of prophesy, according to the standard, which is the Christian faith 7 or the function of service, by service, or the one whose function it is to teach by teaching, 8 or, the one whose function it is to encourage by encouragement or the one whose function it is to give sincerely or the one who devotes himself to exercising leadership diligently or the one whose function it is to demonstrate compassion cheerfully. (Author's translation)

"**Prophecy**" refers to the exercise of the temporary or discontinued spiritual gift of being a prophet, which is no longer existent since it existed during the pre-canon period of the church to fill the void until the New Testament canon had been completed (See 1 Corinthians 12:10; 13:2; 14:22; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11).

"**Service**" refers to the permanent spiritual gift of service and is synonymous with "**helps**" in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and "**whoever serves**" in 1 Peter 4:11.

The gift of service or helps expresses itself in a variety of ways and activities that aid the church and its members.

"**Teaching**" refers to the permanent spiritual gift of teaching or communicating the Word of God to the congregation.

The noun *didaskalos*, "**teachers**" is used to signify this gift of teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and in Ephesians 4:11.

"**Exhortation**" is a permanent spiritual gift manifesting itself by encouraging members of the body of Christ to live in a manner worthy of their calling, to grow up to become like Christ. This gift manifests itself in the person who gives advice to other members of the body of Christ that is consistent with Scripture and under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. It manifests itself by encouraging other believers to live according to the Word of God and can involve not only encouraging but also warning other believers in a humble and loving way when they are going astray from doing the will of God.

This spiritual gift can involve comforting those members of the body of Christ who have lost loved ones or are experiencing suffering whether emotionally or physically. It can manifest itself through helping and giving support to a weaker, or immature believer when they are having problems with a certain temptation or difficult trial that they are facing. This spiritual gift can involve helping those members of the body of Christ deal with a particular burden that is too heavy to bear alone. It can manifest itself by simply being available to another believer when they need someone to talk to so as to encourage them when they are depressed, frustrated or grieving. It is also manifested by helping other members of the body of Christ understand and apply that which is taught by the pastor-teacher.

Though all believers are commanded to encourage one another according to 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11, the spiritual gift of encouraging functions or manifests itself in manner that goes beyond what is normally exercised by Christians who obey the command to encourage one another.

"**Giving**" is concerned with distributing one's own money to others and is to be done with simplicity, i.e., with no thought of return or gain for self in any way. Though all believers are commanded to give to one another (Matthew 5:42; 10:8) the spiritual gift of giving functions or manifests itself in manner that goes beyond what is normally exercised by Christians who obey the command to give to one another.

"**Leadership**" refers to the function of the permanent spiritual gift of leadership and is identified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28 as "**administrations**" which translates the noun *kubernesis*.

The men who possess the spiritual gift of leadership help the pastor-teacher lead and administrate the affairs of the church.

"**Showing Mercy**" is the gift of compassion rather than mercy because the latter has the connotation of withholding judgment whereas the former connotes the intense desire to act to alleviate the pain and suffering of another or remove its cause (1 John 3:16-17). This gift has been given to both men and women in the body of Christ and is a permanent gift in that unlike the gift of prophecy it was not discontinued with the completion of the canon of Scripture.

Though all believers are commanded to be compassionate towards one another according to Ephesians 4:32 and 1 John 3:16-17, the spiritual gift of compassion functions or manifests itself in manner that goes beyond what is normally exercised by Christians who obey the command to be compassionate.

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, 10 and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (NASB95)

"**Word of wisdom**" is a temporary gift that was needed during the pre-canon period of the church and proclaims that Jesus Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, which is superior to the wisdom of men (See 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Colossians 2:3).

"**Word of knowledge**" is a temporary gift that was needed during the pre-canon period of the church and proclaims specific revelation from God and reveals great knowledge or insight regarding the person of Christ and the plan of God (See Colossians 2:3).

"**Faith**" is the ability to have trust in the Lord in a great crisis beyond that exercised by most Christians in a crisis (See Matthew 17:20; 1 Corinthians 13:2).

"**Healings**" was also a temporary spiritual gift given to the apostles to establish their authority as being from God (Acts 3:7; 5:16; 9:34; 14:10; 16:18; 19:12; 28:8).

"**Miracles**" was a temporary "sign" gift that was given to the apostles to establish their authority as coming from God and was an instrument used to draw the unsaved to hear the message of the gospel.

"**Distinguishing of spirits**" is the ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation when it was being given in oral form and was essential before the canon of Scripture was completed for there were those who claimed to bring revelation from God who were not true prophets.

"**Tongues**" was a temporary spiritual "sign" gift designed to evangelize the Jews in Gentile languages during the pre-canon period of the church age (See Isaiah 28:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:21-22; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

"**Interpretation of tongues**" was also a temporary gift that was used to interpret the message that was communicated in a foreign language to the unsaved.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, 29 then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 30 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? (NASB95)

"**Apostles**" is the unique and temporary spiritual gift which held maximum authority in the church and was sovereignly delegated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"**Helps**" is synonymous with "service" in Romans 12:7 and is a permanent spiritual gift and expresses itself in a variety of ways that aid the church and its members and often individuals who hold the office of deacon have this gift.

"**Administrations**" is synonymous with the gift of "leadership" that appears in Romans 12:8 and is a permanent gift and provides the recipient the ability to administrate the affairs of the church and those with this gift often hold the office of deacon or some type of administrative capacity in a church.

Hindrances to Good Stewardship of Our Gifts: (1) The belief God only calls preachers, evangelists, missionaries, etc. (2) Fear that we will fail, we will be persecuted, or that we don't know how. (3) Personal agendas in ministry for various reasons of covetousness—position, power, praise, applause. (4) Apathy, lack of devotion to the Lord and the body of Christ. (5) A wrong view of the church as an organization rather than an organism.

Another area of stewardship that the believer will have to give an account at the Bema Seat is that truth. We must understand that the Word of God is a treasure that has been entrusted to each one of us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (NASB95)

Here the apostle reminds us that this message, the message about the Lord Jesus that brings men into an eternal relationship and fellowship with the eternal God of the universe, is both a treasure and a trust. The only message (i.e., the Gospel) that brings men into the kingdom of God, reconciles them to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), and gives them eternal life and life more abundant (John 10:10) is truly a treasure beyond measure or a pearl of great value (Matthew 13:44-46).

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Timothy is charged with the responsibility of entrusting what he had learned from Paul to other faithful men who in turn would teach others and so on, and so on.

2 Timothy 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (NASB95)

As stewards of God's Word we must evangelize the unbeliever. We are not only royal priests but also royal ambassadors who have been entrusted with the privilege and responsibility of presenting the message of reconciliation, i.e., the Gospel to a lost and dying world (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

In Romans 1:11-14, the apostle Paul is referring to the stewardship of "truth" meaning that Paul sought to communicate the Word of God to all men in order to multiply himself through evangelism and discipleship.

Romans 1:11 For I have been and continue up to the present moment to earnestly desire to visit all of you that I might impart a spiritual blessing to all of you with the result that all of you might be stabilized and strengthened. 12 Namely, that is, in order that it might cause me to be encouraged while among all of you by means of each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 Now, I absolutely do not want all of you to be ignorant spiritual brothers that I have often planned in order to come to all of you and was prevented so far in order that I might also produce some fruit among all of you. 14 I am at the present time obligated to both the Greeks and the barbarians, to both the wise and the ignorant. (Author's translation)

Also, Paul is referring to the stewardship of "talent" meaning he functioned in his spiritual gift of apostle in order to provide the blessing of an eternal relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ for all men. Lastly, Paul is referring to the stewardship of "time" in that he was redeeming his time on earth for eternity by presenting the gospel to all men.

The believer's stewardship of treasure will also be evaluated by the Lord at the Bema Seat. The believer also must be a good steward with money.

Scripture has a tremendous amount to say about money or material possessions. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus deal with money. It is interesting that one out of every ten verses in the New Testament deal with this subject.

Scripture has 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but over 2,000 verses on the subject of money. Money is an extremely important issue because a person's attitude toward it is so determinative of his relationship with God, on fulfilling his purpose in this life, and on his character.

Financial planning is biblical and is a means to good stewardship, to freedom from the god of materialism, and a means of protection against the waste of the resources God has entrusted to our care (Proverbs 27:23-24; Luke 14:28; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Financial planning should be done in dependence on God's direction and in faith while we rest in Him for security and happiness rather than in our own strategies (Proverbs 16:1-4, 9; Psalm 37:1-10; 1 Timothy 6:17; Philippians 4:19).

Financial faithfulness ultimately flows out of the recognition that everything we are and have belongs to the Lord (1 Chronicles 29:11-16; Romans 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Life is a temporary sojourn in which Christians are to see themselves as aliens, temporary residents, who are here as stewards of God's manifold grace. Our spiritual gift, time and finances are all trusts given to us by God which we are to invest for God's kingdom and glory (1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; 4:10-11; Luke 19:11-26).

One of God's basic ways to provide for our needs is through work meaning an occupation through which we earn a living so we can provide for ourselves and our families (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Proverbs 25:27). The money we earn is also to be used as a means of supporting God's work and helping those in need, first in God's family and then for those outside the household of faith (Galatians 6:6-10; Ephesians 4:28; 3 John 5-8).

Believers must have discipline with regards to saving money. The first principle with regards to this is that the believer must maintain a proper view of ownership. Remember, all his wealth ultimately belongs to God. We are managers, not owners (1 Chronicles 29:11-16; Luke 16:12). Also believers must maintain a proper view of our security. We are to put our trust in the Lord and not in our investments (1 Timothy 6:17).

The Christian must beware of impure and unbiblical motives, priorities, and reasons for saving such as anxiety and hoarding as a result of insecurity or covetousness (Matthew 6:25-33; Luke 12:13-31). He or she must make decisions concerning future investments by going to the Father in prayer in order seek His will (James 4:13-15). They must never use money in saving/investment programs that God desires be used for giving. This occurs when savings or investments become extreme and for the wrong reasons as seen above (Luke 12:16-21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19; 1 John 3:17). The Christian must avoid high-risk investments or get-rich-quick schemes (Proverbs 21:5; 28:20, 22; 1 Timothy 6:9). Lastly, the believer must watch his priorities in the sense that they are to make the kingdom of God his number one investment (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

The Christian is required by the Word of God to evaluate purchases according to Biblical principles. They must ask themselves, "Can I pay cash or will the purchase put me in debt?" They ask, "Do I have complete peace about this purchase with no doubt?" (Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:15)

We must be careful and understand that our sin nature can make us rationalize a purchase that we shouldn't make. The believer must ask "Is it a real need or a matter of greed?" (1 Timothy 6:9; 1 John 2:15) They must ask "Will it be profitable to my

family, our spiritual growth, our health, our ministry, the Lord's reputation, and will it increase our love for the Lord or could it hinder it?" (1 Timothy 3:4: 5:8; 1 Corinthians 6:12). They should also ask "Is my lifestyle adequate or more than adequate?" or "Do I need to reduce my spending by lowering our expected standard of comfort?" (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15, 23; Proverbs 15:16-17; 16:8; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11).

God favors lending (investing) over borrowing because it promotes freedom and wise stewardship (Deuteronomy 15:5-6). The Bible teaches that unwise borrowing can put us in a position of servitude (Proverbs 22:7). It also teaches us to use credit wisely and avoid it whenever possible. Though not prohibited by Scripture, credit is generally mentioned in a negative sense.

Romans 13:8 is often used as an absolute prohibition against borrowing, but it does not necessarily forbid the use of credit. It simply teaches the necessity to pay one's obligations whether physical or spiritual as they come due.

Concerning credit there are two basic alternatives: (a) Buy now on credit and pay the installments with interest. (b) Save now and buy later with cash and save the interest.

Remember that interest adds to the cost of living and consequently reduces our capacity for wise stewardship. If we must borrow, we should seek low interest for short terms. We must be aware of the fact that credit can be risky because it can place people in bondage to creditors and to their own desires rather than to God's will. It makes impulsive buying too easy.

Satan's cosmic world system depends heavily on impulsive buying to cover over a bored, frustrated life. Credit can be used as a substitute for trusting God or to get what we want in place of waiting on Him. Sometimes people use credit to prevent themselves getting into a situation where they have to depend on God. They do this because they are afraid He won't give us what we want when we want it (Psalm 37:7-9, 34; 147:11; Matthew 6:30-34; Philippians 4:19).

Another important principle to remember is that credit reduces our ability to give to God and to those in need. The use of credit is often nothing more than a failure to be content with what we have (Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5). A materialistic person is never content with what he or she has but the spiritual person learns to be content with what he has or doesn't have. When it comes to borrowing, we must not purchase something on credit if it will jeopardize our financial freedom. We must never go into debt today based upon a future event like a raise or a potential sale. This is nothing more than presuming upon the Lord and His sovereignty.

Another principle is that we are never to go into debt for a house before we have secured a source of income (Prov. 24:27). We are never to finance daily needs, living expenses, or pleasure items.

A Christian should never finance items that depreciate quickly, except on very short terms (i.e., 30-90 days). On appreciating items, such as a house or for business investments, the Christian should never borrow beyond their ability to cash out of the obligation through sufficient collateral plus the value of the item, should it be necessary to sell.

A believer must never allow debts (excluding mortgage) to exceed 20 percent of their take-home pay. They must seek after ten percent or less. They must never allow a mortgage payment (including insurance and taxes) to exceed 25 or 30 percent of their take-home pay.

In regards to borrowing the believer must always ask himself or herself the question, "Do I really need this?" or "Have I asked the Father for it in prayer and waited long enough for Him to supply it?" or "Am I impatient and seeking immediate gratification?" or "Is God testing my faith, values, or my motives?" The believer should ask himself or herself, "Did I wrongly spend the money God provided for this item or have I violated God's financial principles?" or "Am I guilty of being stingy?"

In Romans 13:8, Paul prohibits the Roman Christians to owe nothing to anyone meaning that they are to fulfill their financial obligations to everyone, thus he is teaching by way of implication that they are to be good stewards with their finances.

Romans 13:8 All of you continue making it your habit to owe absolutely nothing to anyone except to continue making it your habit of divinely loving one another because the one who, at any time does divinely love the other person fulfills the Law. (Author's translation)

Therefore, the believer who fulfills the condition of being faithful in executing God's plan for their life in time and becomes an overcomer as a result will receive the conveyance of their eternal inheritance which will come in the form of rewards at the Bema Seat. The believer who is unfaithful in time and does not reach spiritual maturity will *not* receive the conveyance of their eternal inheritance. While the believer cannot lose his salvation, he can lose rewards.

The church age believer must be an overcomer in order to receive his eternal inheritance. An overcomer is one who executes the Father's plan for his life and overcomes the following: (1) Old sin nature (2) Cosmic system of Satan (3) Satan.

To be an overcomer involves perseverance, which by way of definition is steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, and a state. The believer who perseveres is one who is faithfully obedient to the Word of God. He is persistent in executing the Father's will for his life. Perseverance suggests activity maintained in spite of difficulties, steadfast and long continued application. It is remaining faithful and obedient to the Word of God despite the obstacles in life such as the old sin nature, self, the cosmic system of Satan.

Perseverance is being steadfast and faithful in applying the Word of God despite the many obstacles and cares of life in the cosmic system of Satan. It is being steadfast in picking up one's cross daily and being willing to experience identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. This is why the Christian way of life is characterized as a race to be run (1 Co. 9:24; He. 12:1; 2 Ti. 4:7). It is also described in Scripture as a struggle or athletic contest to be fought (1 Th. 2:2; 1 Ti. 4:9; 6:12; 2 Ti. 2:5; He. 10:32). There are other terms such as labor or toil or work (1 Co. 3:8; 15:58; 2 Co. 11:27; 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8). The Word of God also characterizes the Christian way of life as testing or trials (Ja. 1:2-4; 1 Pe. 1:6; 4:12).

Now, this unfathomable wealth that Paul mentions here in Ephesians 3:8 is directly to the fact that the church age believer, both Jew and Gentile is a joint heir with Christ and has received an inheritance at the moment of justification because of their union and identification with Jesus Christ.

As we noted in our study of Ephesians 3:6, being a fellow or joint heir with Jesus Christ means that Gentile and Jewish church age believers possess a share in the spiritual and temporal blessings, which the Father bestowed on His Son, Jesus Christ as a result of His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. These events in the life of our Lord provided salvation or deliverance for unregenerate humanity from eternal condemnation, condemnation from the Law, spiritual and physical death, the consequences of personal sins, and enslavement to the sin nature and Satan and his cosmic system. Jewish and Gentile church age believers appropriated this great deliverance when the Father declared them justified because of the merits of the object of their faith, Jesus Christ. Simultaneously, the Father placed them in union with Christ and identified them with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father through the baptism of the Spirit.

Being a joint or fellow heir is related to the church age believer's inheritance. The reader will recall that in Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul asserts that the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit is the down payment of the church age believer's inheritance.

Ephesians 1:3 The God, namely the Father of the Lord ruling over us, who is Jesus Christ, is worthy of praise. Namely, because He is the one who has blessed each and every one of us by means of each and every kind of Spirit appropriated blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. 4 For He chose each and every one of us for His own purpose because of Him alone before creation in order that each and every one of us would be holy as well as uncensurable in His judgment. 5 He did this by predestinating each and every one of us for the purpose of adoption as sons because of His love through Jesus Christ for Himself according to the pleasure of His will. 6 This was for the purpose of praising His glorious grace, which He freely bestowed on each and every one of us because of the one who is divinely loved. 7 Because of whom, each one of us

are experiencing that which is the redemption through His blood, namely the forgiveness of our transgressions according to His infinite grace. 8 This He provided in abundance for the benefit of each and every one of us because of the exercise of a wisdom, which is absolute and divine in nature resulting in the manifestation of an insight, which is absolute and divine in nature. 9 He did this by revealing the mystery of His will for the benefit of each and every one of us according to His pleasure, which He planned beforehand because of our faith in and union and identification with Himself. 10 This was for the dispensation which brings to completion the various periods of history. Namely, to unite for the benefit of Himself each and every animate and inanimate object in the sphere of the sovereign authority of the person of the one and only Christ. Specifically, to unite for the benefit of Himself those things in the heavens as well as those things on the earth in the sphere of the sovereign authority of Himself. 11 Because of whom, each and every one of us has been claimed as a possession because of having been predestinated according to the predetermined plan. Namely, the one who is causing each and every animate and inanimate object to function according to His purpose, that is, His sovereign will 12 in order that each and every one of us would belong to a particular group of people. Namely, those who are certain of possessing a confident expectation of blessing because of their faith in and union and identification with the one and only Christ for the purpose of praising His glory. 13 Correspondingly, because of whom, each and every one of you were sealed by means of the omnipotence of the one and only promised Spirit, who is holy because each and every one of you obeyed the one and only message, which is truth, namely, the proclamation of the one and only gospel, which produced your salvation. Specifically, because each one of you believed in Him. 14 The Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance until He redeems His possession for the praise of His glory. (Author's translation)

The noun *klēronomia* (κληρονομία), "**inheritance**" refers here in Ephesians 1:14 to the church age believer not only receiving a resurrection body at the rapture or resurrection of the church but also rewards for faithful service at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which immediately follows the resurrection or rapture of the church. With regards to rewards for faithful service, this word also speaks of the church age believer acquiring valuable possessions, property and exalted position of authority from the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat as a reward because of faithful service on earth. This exalted position of authority would refer of course to being a member of Jesus Christ's millennial government.

Interestingly, the noun *klēronomia* (κληρονομία), "**inheritance**" is the cognate of the verb *klēroō* (κληρόω), which appears in Ephesians 1:11 and is expressing the idea of being chosen by God. Specifically, it speaks of the church age believer being

claimed by God as His own possession. This verb actually identifies the referent of the noun *peripoiēsis* (περιποίησις), which appears here in Ephesians 1:14. The former identifies the referent of the latter as being the church age believer as the Father's possession, which is the direct result of the substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of His Son on the cross, which redeemed the entire human race out of the slave market of sin in which they were all born physically alive yet spiritually dead and under the wrath of God. This redemption was appropriated by the church age believer when they exercised faith in the Father's Son, Jesus Christ, which resulted in the Father declaring them justified. Simultaneously, the Father identified them with His Son in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at His right hand through the baptism of the Spirit.

The apostle Paul not only speaks of the church age believer's inheritance in Ephesians but also in Colossians.

Colossians 3:23 Whenever any of you, at any time, should do something, each of you from your entire being, for your own benefit, must continue making it your habit of working hard as for your one and only true Lord, indeed, never for people 24 The reason for this command is that each of you know without a doubt that each of you will certainly receive for your own benefit your reward, which is your inheritance. Each of you continue making it your habit of serving the Lord, who is the Christ. (Author's translation)

Paul mentions this inheritance in Colossians 1:12.

Colossians 1:3 We continue making it our habit of giving thanks to God namely the Father of our Lord, who is Jesus, who is the Christ when we make it our habit of occupying ourselves with praying on behalf of each and every one of you as a corporate unit. 4 We do this because we heard about your faith in Christ, who is Jesus and in addition your love which you continue to regularly demonstrate for the benefit of each and every one of the saints. 5 All of you do this because of the confident expectation which is, as an eternal spiritual truth reserved in the heavens for all of you. All of you heard this by means of the teaching, which is the truth, namely the proclamation of the gospel 6 which all of you continue to appropriate for the benefit of all of you. Just as in fact throughout the entire world, it continues to produce fruit as well as spread so also it continues to produce fruit as well as spread among all of you from the day all of you obeyed. Consequently, all of you acquired an objective experiential knowledge of the grace originating from God by means of the truth. 7 Just as all of you learned the truth from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant who is faithfully serving the Christ on behalf of each and every one of us. 8 The one who also revealed to us your divine-love by means of the Spirit's power. 9 For this reason also, from the day we ourselves heard about all of you, we never permit ourselves to cease making it our habit of occupying ourselves

with praying on behalf of each and every one of you. Specifically, we make it our habit of occupying ourselves with making urgent requests that (God) would cause all of you to be filled with that which is knowing His will experientially by means of a wisdom which is absolute resulting in a discernment which is spiritual. 10 The purpose would be all of you living your lives in a manner worthy of the Lord so as to be fully pleasing to Him. This would result in all of you bearing fruit by means of each and every kind of action which is divine good in quality and character and in addition increasing in knowing experientially God the Father. 11 This is because of all of you are empowered by means of a power which is absolute, because of a power which is sovereign, namely, His glory. The purpose of which is to perfectly embody perseverance as well as patience with joy. 12 All the while, all of you making it your habit of giving thanks to the Father who has qualified each and every one of you with regards to sharing in the saints' inheritance residing in that which is characterized by light. (Author's translation)

Every church age believer has the opportunity to receive their eternal inheritance if they fulfill the condition of being faithful till death or the rapture whichever comes first and thus executes the Father's will for their life. Both the Old and New Testament's speak of an inheritance, which could be forfeited due to unfaithfulness. As we have been noting, Paul teaches in Colossians 3:23-25 that if the Colossians are faithful, they will receive the inheritance which clearly implies if they are not faithful, they will not receive this inheritance.

The inheritance in the Bible: (1) Related to God's plan for the believer after conversion. (2) Added blessings to the Saved (i.e., Rewards on top of salvation). (3) Possession. (4) Is meritorious ownership of the kingdom (i.e., Millennium and eternal state) (5) Conditioned on faithful obedience to the will of God. (6) Can be forfeited through habitual disobedience to the will of God. (7) Two Types of inheritance (God and the possession of land in the Millennium) (Every believer receives God as their inheritance).

Although the believer's salvation *cannot* be merited but is received when a person expresses faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9), the believer's inheritance on the other hand is meritorious meaning they have to fulfill the condition of being faithfully obedient to the will of God till physical death or the rapture (i.e., resurrection of the church). Because the church age believer can forfeit their eternal inheritance through unfaithfulness to the Lord, there are many warnings regarding being unfaithful (Heb. 10:35-39). The believer is promised that if they fulfill the condition of being faithful, they will be given the privilege to reign with Christ (Rom. 8:16-18; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-1; Eph. 5:5-10; Heb. 12:12-17).

God's plan for blessing the believer may be compared to an escrow contract. An escrow is a deed, bond or other agreement by which one person conveys some form

of property to another person. Rather than being conveyed directly, however, the property is deposited with a third party, to be delivered when the intended recipient fulfills certain conditions set forth in the terms of the escrow agreement. Just as an escrow agreement has three parties, so also Ephesians 1:3 mentions three parties: (1) God the Father is the Grantor, He's the Giver. (2) Jesus Christ acts as a depository or escrow officer. (3) The believer is the grantee or the receiver. Every person who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is the grantee of blessings, which stagger the imagination.

However, God in His infinite wisdom requires that capacity must precede the conveyance of these greater blessings. God designed His plan of God to produce capacity, which makes the distribution of blessings meaningful, enjoyable, and glorifying God. The first thing that God ever did for believers is the means of glorifying Him. The first thing that God the Father ever did as the Grantor is deposit in escrow greater blessings both time and eternity for every believer without exception. These greater blessings are based upon God's grace policy, which says that God does all the work. God gave the believer a system so that the deposit could be conveyed without compromising His integrity.

The believer who fulfills the condition of the escrow by faithfully executing God's plan for their life in time will receive the conveyance of their escrow blessings for time and in eternity. The believer who does *not* fulfill the conditions of the escrow in time and does not reach spiritual maturity will *not* receive the conveyance of their escrow blessings for both time and eternity. The believer who does not fulfill the conditions of the escrow will have these greater blessings remain on deposit in heaven as a memorial to the justice of God. The only reason a believer's escrow blessings are not delivered to them is that they fail to fulfill the conditions of the escrow agreement. The only condition is that the believer execute God's plan for their life to become like Christ. The unfaithful believer's escrow blessings belong to them irrevocably, but they will remain undistributed, on deposit forever as a memorial to lost opportunity and as a monument to the eternal bounty of God's grace.

So while the believer cannot lose their salvation, they can lose the conveyance of escrow blessings for time and eternity. A treasury of blessings has the believer's name on it and they are irrevocable, "**imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away**" (1 Pet. 1:4). The location of the deposit is "**in the heavenlies**" and the date of the deposit is "**before the foundation of the world**" (Eph. 1:3-6).

The term escrow blessings is an analogy based upon a bible doctrine. It describes what God the Father in eternity past did as the grantor when He deposited greater blessings for both time and eternity for every believer with the Lord Jesus Christ, the depository and escrow officer. The release of these blessings takes place when the believer fulfills the conditions of the escrow contract by being faithfully obedient

to the will of God to death. God the Father as the grantor has placed Himself under the legal obligation by an act of His sovereign will to provide fantastic blessings both temporal and eternal for the believer who fulfills the conditions of the escrow.

These escrow blessings or in other words our eternal inheritance is mentioned in other places in the Scriptures (Col. 1:9-12; 3:23-25; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:3-5).

So, the inheritance mentioned in Colossians 1:12 and 3:24 is a reference to the rewards that will be given to a believer at the Bema Seat for being a faithful steward with the time, talent, treasure and truth that God bestowed upon them as trusts.

The apostle Paul not only mentions the church age believer's inheritance in Ephesians 1:14 but also in Ephesians 1:18 when he presents the first of two intercessory prayers on behalf of the Gentile Christian community in the Roman province of Asia.

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, after I myself heard about the faith among each and every one of you in the one and only Lord Jesus as well as you are practicing divine-love, which is on behalf of each and every one of the saints, 16 I never permit myself to cease regularly expressing thanks to the one and only God because of each and every one of you. I do this while disciplining myself to make it my practice of remembering each and every one of you during my prayers. 17 I make it a habit of occupying myself with praying that God, that is, the glorious Father of the one and only Lord ruling over each and every one of us as a corporate unit, who is Jesus Christ, would cause each and every one of you to receive divine wisdom, specifically, divine revelatory wisdom provided by the one and only Spirit with respect to an experiential knowledge of Himself. 18 Namely, that the eyes of your heart are enlightened in order that each and every one of you would possess the conviction of what constitutes being the confident expectation of blessing produced by His effectual call, what constitutes His glorious, rich inheritance residing in the person of the saints. (Author's translation)

The noun *ploutos* (πλοῦτος), "**wealth**" appeared in Ephesians 1:7 where it referred to God the Father's "infinite" grace, which is directed to the church age believer through faith in Jesus Christ. The word is thus referring to the infinite or unmeasurable unmerited spiritual benefits that were received by the church age believer as a result of their justification and union and identification with Jesus Christ.

Now, here in Ephesians 1:18, the word is used in a figurative sense to refer to a spiritual and material abundance of material and spiritual possessions and spiritual resources possessed by God the Father. In other words, it is used figuratively of the spiritual and material prosperity of the Father. Two of these spiritual blessings, which flow from the Father's wealth are being alluded to here with this word. Namely, the church age believer being in the presence of the Lord Jesus at physical

death or being perfected in a resurrection body at the rapture of the church as well as receiving rewards for faithful service from the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church.

The noun *doxa* (δόξα), "**glorious**" functions as an attributive genitive and is expressing the idea that the Father's wealth is glorious in the sense that it is marked by great beauty and splendor, which is also notably or brilliantly outstanding because of His great dignity and achievements or actions. Therefore, this word is describing the church age believer being in the presence of the Lord Jesus at physical death or being perfected in a resurrection body at the rapture of the church as well as receiving rewards for faithful service from the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church as being glorious.

The noun *klēronomia* (κληρονομία), "**inheritance**" is two-fold: (1) The church age believer being in the presence of the Lord at physical death or in a resurrection body at the rapture of the church (2) The church age believer receiving rewards for faithful service at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church, which immediately follows the resurrection or rapture of the church.

The adjective *hagios* (ἅγιος), "**the saints**" functions as a substantive and describes all the members of the body of Christ who have been set apart through the baptism of the Spirit at the moment of justification in order to order serve God exclusively. The articular construction is monadic indicating that Christians are a "unique" people on the earth. They are unique because of their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of God the Father. They are also unique because they are members of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12) and are members of the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33).

The substantive use of the adjective *hagios* functions as the object of the preposition *en* (ἐν), which we noted functions here as a marker of location expressing the idea that the glorious wealth of the Father's inheritance is "located in" the saints. In other words, this inheritance resides in the saints themselves as the children of the Father.

So therefore, notice that this inheritance is "the Father's" and not the church age believer's inheritance. This is the case because Paul asserts that the Father's inheritance is located in the saints, i.e. church age believers who are in union with and identified with His Son, Jesus Christ. This clearly indicates that the church age believer being in the presence of the Lord at physical death or in a resurrection body at the rapture of the church and receiving rewards for faithful service at the Bema Seat Evaluation of the church is the Father's inheritance. In other words, the Father benefits from the blessing the church age believer with a resurrection body and rewards for faithful service. The church age believer in a resurrection body is perfected and will never sin again because they no longer possess a sin nature, which

resided in the genetic structure of their human body before their death or the rapture. Therefore, we can see why Paul asserts that the church age believer is the Father's inheritance. We can also see that the Father's inheritance is tied to the church age believer's inheritance since the Father's inheritance is the church age believer in a resurrection body minus a sin nature and decorated with rewards for faithful service to Him, which constitutes the church age believer's inheritance.

The Father also benefits or is glorified by bestowing these blessings on the believer because it manifests His holy character such as His love, omnipotence, omniscience, sovereignty righteous and justice. He is glorified or benefits from bestowing these blessings on the believer because it was through the believer's union and identification with His Son, Jesus Christ that they will receive these blessings. They were guaranteed a resurrection body at the moment of their justification since the latter provided them a guarantee of a resurrection body. This justifying faith appropriated the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit. They will receive rewards for faithful service as a result of appropriating by faith after their justification their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the Father's right hand. This post-justification faith appropriated the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit and which omnipotence enabled the believer to merit rewards at the Bema Seat for faithful service. Therefore, the Father is glorified because His omnipotence was manifested through the Spirit empowering the believer to execute His will. Interestingly, therefore, the Father is glorified and benefitted by giving the church age believer their inheritance, which is the resurrection body and rewards for faithful service.

This interpretation that Paul is speaking in Ephesians 1:18 of the church age believer being the Father's inheritance rather than the church age believer's inheritance is supported by the assertions Paul makes in both Ephesians 1:5 and 11. In the former, Paul asserts that the Father elected the church age believer in eternity past by predestinating them for the purpose of adoption as His sons because of His love through Jesus Christ for Himself. In the latter, he asserts that the church age believer is the Father's possession.

Ephesians 1:3 The God, namely the Father of the Lord ruling over us, who is Jesus Christ, is worthy of praise. Namely, because He is the one who has blessed each and every one of us by means of each and every kind of Spirit appropriated blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. 4 For He chose each and every one of us for His own purpose because of Him alone before creation in order that each and every one of us would be holy as well as uncensurable in His judgment. 5 He did this by predestinating each and every one of us for the purpose of adoption as sons because of His love through Jesus Christ for Himself according to the pleasure of His will. (Author's translation)

Peter O'Brien writes "The object of the verb, *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, is rather unusual. Often the verb 'to announce the gospel' is employed specifically with the 'gospel,' or some element of it, as its direct object (1 Cor. 15:1; 2 Cor. 11:7; Gal. 1:11, 23; cf. Rom. 10:15). In other instances where no object is expressly mentioned it is clear from the context that the preaching of the gospel is in view (Rom. 1:15; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17, etc.).[49] Here in Ephesians 3:8, however, Paul uses rhetorical language to show that his proclamation is about the wealth of divine grace and glory which Christ possesses in himself and which he lavishly gives to others.[50] The adjective qualifying riches, which means 'unfathomable, impossible to comprehend',[51] has already been employed by the apostle in Romans of the deep mysteries in God's plan of salvation by which his purpose is to have mercy on all, both Jew and Gentile: 'how *unsearchable* are his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out' (Rom. 11:33). In the book of Job (LXX 5:9; 9:10; cf. 34:24, 28) the wonders of God's creation and providence are 'unfathomable'. The riches of Christ are similar. They are too vast to explore completely and too deep to fathom.[52]

If these *unsearchable riches of Christ* are that wealth which he possesses in himself and which he bestows on those who are 'in him,' then something of their content has already been mentioned in Paul's exposition of Ephesians 1 and 2, particularly in the introductory eulogy of 1:3–14, where significant elements in God's plan of salvation which includes Gentiles within the sphere of blessing are enunciated. Because these amazing riches of God in Christ are true *wealth*, then the gospel Paul proclaims will enrich his hearers immeasurably as they respond. Here the wealth of God has been lavished in a wonderful way. Paul is so convinced of this that he is almost overwhelmed at the great privilege given to him as a missionary of proclaiming God's great kindness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Somewhat paradoxically the apostle has written, on the one hand, of the mystery of the gospel being *revealed* to him (v.3) and, on the other, of that message focusing on *the riches of Christ*, which are unfathomable! Christ Jesus had made himself known to Paul on the Damascus road; but the apostle had not *fully comprehended* 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in him' (Col. 2:2–3). He had come to know Christ at his conversion in an intensely personal way and could speak

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[49] Cf. Best, 318. For further details see J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 39, and P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission*, 62–65, where it is also shown that the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι ('proclaim the gospel') can cover a broad range of activities, from the initial announcement of the gospel to the building up of believers and grounding them firmly in the faith.

[50] Although the genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ ('of Christ') could be objective, signifying that 'Christ himself constitutes the content of the riches of the gospel' (so Lincoln, 183, 184), it is preferable to regard it as possessive, signifying 'the riches *of Christ*', i.e., those which he has or possesses. At the same time these riches are for others since they are the subject of the apostolic announcement. The genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ ('of Christ') at 3:8 functions differently from the other instances in Ephesians where πλοῦτος is followed by an objective genitive of the particular quality, i.e., χάριτος ('grace') or δόξης ('glory'); cf. 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:16.

[51] So Louw and Nida §32.23. ἀνεξιχνίαστος (from ἴχνος, 'footprint, track') does not appear in the New Testament apart from here and in Rom. 11:33.

LXX Septuagint

[52] Best, 318: 'Implied in [this word] are both the wonder of God's activity and the inability of the human mind, even after revelation, to deduce and plumb the depths of God'.

of ‘the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord’ (Phil. 3:8); but the great ambition and goal of his life was to know Christ more and more (Phil. 3:9–10). In the gospel of Christ that *came by revelation* there were vast treasure houses of his riches which had *not* been *explored* and depths which had not been plumbed, either by the apostle himself or any other Christian. His riches were ‘infinite.’ So in revealing himself God had graciously given himself to men and women, but he is not comprehended by them, nor does he submit himself to humankind’s intellectual or technical control. ‘Revelation creates rather than annihilates wonder, awe and respect.’[53]”[54]

Clinton Arnold writes “The contrast between the two halves of Paul’s life—from one who violently opposed Christ to one who extolled Christ—is remarkable. This zealous, Pharisaic Jew is awestruck as he reflects on the fact that Jesus was with the Father before the creation of the world, that Jesus was the divinely preordained center point of God’s plan of redemption, that Jesus was the promised and beloved Son of God, that God sacrificed Jesus to provide redemption, that God has brought the redeemed into a close relationship to himself through Jesus, that the redeemed now include the Gentiles who come near to God on the same basis as the Jews, that this new people of God has been incorporated into a body of believers through which they experience a dynamic relationship with the risen Christ, that Jesus is God’s agent to restore all things at the end of time, and many other marvels.”[55]

[53] Barth, 341. Citing E. Gaugler, Barth adds: ‘The god who has been comprehended … is always an idol’.
[54] O’Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (pp. 241–242). W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
[55] Arnold, C. E. (2010). *Ephesians* (pp. 194–195). Zondervan.