

# THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

## Lesson 11

### Chapter 3:6-13, The Study

#### ***"The Definition of the Revealed Secret"***

J. Deering, [AncientPath.net](http://AncientPath.net)

---

### REVIEW

In the first verse of our last study (lesson 10, Ch 3:1-5) Paul described his relationship to Jesus Christ: "I, Paul, am the prisoner of Christ Jesus." We learned there that the word "prisoner" in the original language was specifically a "prisoner" who was chained. This leads to the conclusion that, as far as Paul was concerned, he was chained to Christ Jesus – and was His bond servant.

But he didn't stop there, he explained that the reason he was chained... was "for the benefit of you Gentiles." The word Gentiles means everyone in the world who is not a "Jew," a member of "the nations." His mission was to be chained to Jesus in the work of the ministry now presented to the world, not just to the nation of Israel. Their "covenanted" nation was to be dissolved and no longer "covenanted," but would be reformed as a righteous covenanted nation in the Kingdom age (future).

Paul also reminded his readers that they had already heard how Jesus had made him an apostle – one "sent" to bring the Gospel, the good news of the salvation offered by God the Father through Christ Jesus. And in this knowledge, they should understand Paul's "insight into the mystery of Christ, His special secret – the development of a new body of "set-apart" people through this salvation to eventually be known as "The Church."

I found it interesting in verse 4 that Paul said to the Ephesians, basically, "If you don't understand all this... go back and re-read my letter.

His final thought in verse 5 tells us that this "secret was not made known to the sons of men in other generations" – the prophets. This secret was something completely new!

**I. Chapter 1 – The Church as the Body of Christ**

**II. Chapter 2 – The Church as the Temple of Christ**

**III. Chapter 3 – The Church as God's Top Secret**

A. 3:1-5, The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret

**B. 3:6-13, The Definition of the Revealed Secret**

**1. 3:6 The is the Promise in Christ through the Good News.**

## THE STUDY

### 3:6 [Mac]

The **secret** is this —

the **Gentiles** are to be

fellow **heirs**,

fellow **members**

of the Body, and

fellow **partakers**

of the promise

**in Christ Jesus through the good news.**

### 3:6 [NASB]

***to be specific,***

that

the **Gentiles** are

fellow **heirs** and

fellow **members** of the body, and  
 fellow **partakers** of the promise  
**in Christ Jesus**  
through the gospel,

### COMMENTARY

For some time we have been exploring this new arrangement whereby God now, through Jesus Christ, has established this "Non-Jewish" assembly of people - from those who are of Jewish heritage and from those who are not of Jewish heritage - for the specific purpose of having a "People for Himself." You name the country or people of the world... and they are included.

Up until the age of the church the Scriptures have been basically all about the Nation of Israel. With the rejection of the Christ by the Jewish leadership (and the Jewish people, and the Romans, etc.) God temporarily closes the book concerning them. He moves onto a "new" plan, that is new to us but formed before the foundations of the world. This plan calls out a group of people from the whole world to be His own. In this new group there is neither Jew nor Gentile, just people who Love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts - who have believed in and on Him.

It should be known and remembered that Christ's death on the cross offered freedom from the penalty of sin and sins. It offered absolute redemption and justification before almighty God – IF... and IF is the big moment. IF each individual agrees to the terms of the offer. Jesus had a discussion with a man named Nicodemus who was having trouble understanding Jesus' offer of salvation. He said to Nicodemus,

*"No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:13-15). Israel was behaving very badly and "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people... so many of the people died" (Numbers 21:6-7). Then, "And Moses*

*made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard (a wooden pole); and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived" (Numbers 21:9).*

Some 1500 years later the nation of Israel was again behaving very badly – rejecting their Savior – and He was placed upon that wooden post (the Cross) and all who looked upon Him, and believed in Him, would be given "Life Eternal." "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). That leaves us with the deciding factor being the "IF" question. The offer was made to all, but only those who believed in who and what was being offered... The Son of God, and salvation and eternal life... would attain it. These people would constitute this new body of believers.

Paul states that this new body of believers are now "fellow members of the body." Each one who believes has full citizenship in this new body of believers. No one is better because he is, or is not, a Jew. All are now considered "One."

He also states that each one who believes is now a "fellow partaker of the promise." That promise began with Abram and has followed down the family line all the way to Jesus (The Last King of Israel). The central core of the promise concerns "freedom from the effects and penalty of Sin." All who come to Christ in this age are included in the "Heirs," "Fellow Members," and "Fellow Partakers" of this great promise.

Becoming a part of this Great Promise is the very work of the Gospel, that Jesus, the very Son of God, died upon the cross at Calvary in order to satisfy the just demands of God upon a sinful people for their sin and sins. What He did there, willingly, places each and every believer into the "forgiven Fellow Partakers" of this great promise and "Fellow Heirs" of all things heavenly through Christ. It is now up to us, as members of this new body of Christ to love, provide, and accept each other – and to do what we can do in order to win all those around us to our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

## Gods Special Secret:

**I. Chapter 1 – The Church as the Body of Christ**

**II. Chapter 2 – The Church as the Temple of Christ**

**III. Chapter 3 – The Church as God’s Top Secret**

A. 3:1-5, The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret

**B. 3:6-13, The Definition of the Revealed Secret**

1. 3:6 The is the Promise in Christ through the Good News.

2. **3:7-8 The Secret is an Operation of Grace and Power that Includes the Gentiles.**

### THE STUDY

**3:7 [MAC]**

**I**

was made

an **administrator**

of this **good news**

in accord with the **gift**

springing from **God's grace.**

This **gift**

was **given** to me

**to correspond**

**with the internal operation of His power.**

**3:7 [NASB]**

**I**

became a **servant**

of this **gospel**

by the **gift**

**of God’s grace** given me

through **the working**

**of his power.**

### THE COMMENTARY

Paul's story is not new to us, a great persecutor of the Christians of his time. He was saved by the Grace of God for this specific ministry of gathering the Church from among the Gentiles.

Paul tells us that his salvation had specific purposes that God would accomplish using His grace.

History is full of myths about gods who accomplish mighty deeds, but among them there are no stories of a god who would sacrifice himself in order to provide for the needs of man because he loved them. Only the God of the Scriptures reaches down to love men and women of the earth. Only the God of the Scriptures has a plan and program whereby mankind may be released from the effects and penalty of sin. Like the hymn says, "Only a God like You!"<sup>1</sup>

He wants us to know that this act of pulling the world together under His Son's grace - through belief - took GREAT POWER to accomplish. God worked through some of that great power in bringing Paul to Christ. God also worked through His great power to establish a body of men and women who would freely choose to love Him and then to establish a man named Paul for the role of Teacher and Organizer of the new "Body of Christ." We should remember that the power of God – for the building up of the Body of Christ, and for bringing more men, women, and children into that body – is available to each one of us who has already experienced salvation in Christ. Take His power and run with it!!

---

<sup>1</sup> Walker, Tommy, Only a God Like You, Tommy Walker Ministries, Los Angeles, CA

## THE STUDY

### **3:8 [MAC]**

This special grace  
     was given to me,  
         the very least  
             of all the set apart ones.

It

    was given:  
         first,  
             to proclaim to the Gentiles  
                 the good news about  
                     the un-trackable wealth of Christ.

### **3:8 [NASB]**

Although  
     I am less than  
         the least of all the Lord's people,  
 this grace  
     was given me:  
         to preach  
             to the Gentiles  
                 the boundless riches of Christ,

## COMMENTARY

Paul's humility is not an act. If you met him on the street, you might think so, but through the Scriptures we learn that His life was completely changed – from persecutor to protector – through the power of Christ. Only a man who has known such grace can look upon himself and see that he was indeed a great sinner.

However, it does not stop there, Paul goes on to see his mission of preaching the gospel to those who don't know any truth about Jesus Christ and this body of believers.

He was preaching the Unfathomable Riches of Christ. We who have been educated in the Scriptures know much of the revelation of God's grace. Think of what Paul learned and understood from Jesus

and the Holy Spirit. Then think of the fact that Paul spoke of the Grace of God and of the depth of it that was unfathomable – too deep to see to the bottom of it – beyond our comprehension. Indeed, the richness of His kindness toward us is unfathomable.

---

## Gods Special Secret:

### I. Chapter 1 – The Church as the Body of Christ

### II. Chapter 2 – The Church as the Temple of Christ

### III. Chapter 3 – The Church as God’s Top Secret

A. 3:1-5, The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret

#### B. 3:6-13, The Definition of the Revealed Secret

1. 3:6 The is the Promise in Christ through the Good News.
2. 3:7-8 The Secret is an Operation of Grae and Power that Includes the Gentiles.
3. **3:9-12, The Secret is an Operation of Grace and Power that includes the Gentiles.**

### THE STUDY

3:9-12 The Church Through Grace and Power

#### 3:9 [MAC]

Second,

to inform all men

as to what the dispensation of this secret is,  
which stood hidden

from the people of the ages in God  
Who created all things.

#### 3:9 [NASB]

and

to make plain to everyone

the administration

of this mystery,

which for ages past

was kept hidden in God,

who created all things.

### COMMENTARY

Right from the beginning of this verse does Paul make it clear that God's plan – spoken and taught by Paul – was for "everyone." His mission was to inform all of mankind – men, women, and children, of this completely life changing opportunity. Mid-sentence Paul brings the revelation from God the Father, concerning God the Son, that educates us concerning God's government (administration) for this age (the Church age) and the one to come (The Kingdom Age). The "administration of the mystery" that was hidden for ages. God choose not to reveal this new age of grace throughout the Old Testament. Why?

## THE STUDY

3:9-12 The Church Through Grace and Power

### 3:10 [MAC]

God's ultimate purpose in this is that

**the colorful spectrum of God's wisdom**

**might be made known to**

the governments and

the authorities

**in the heavenly places**

**through the agency of the Church.**

### 3:10 [NASB]

His intent

was that now,

through the church,

the manifold wisdom of God

should be made known to

the rulers and

authorities

in the heavenly realms,

## COMMENTARY

Manifold is a wonderful word, having its root in knowledge that is bound up into a garment which is folded upon itself so that it is "many folded." Wonderful things revealed as each fold is opened. Heating and Air Conditioning systems, automobile engines, and many other items use manifolds to channel the output of a single source into many outputs. That's one picture of the manifold wisdom of God. Its source is one, the channels of delivery are manifold. Paul's thought takes us to the knowledge that you can only understand the whole of the grace of God as you add together every channel of its delivery. Just as you can only begin to understand how powerful your home heating or air conditioning system is by understanding its effects in the sum of your rooms.

Who are the measurers of God's grace to man? Angels, creatures, demons, and Satan himself. The Unfathomable Riches of Christ - made known to the heavens through US. How manifold is the grace of God - when you see it work through the sum of each and every individual believer. How rich and awesome is that manifold knowledge.

## THE STUDY

### 3:9-12 The Church Through Grace and Power

#### **3:11 [MAC]**

This is compatible with  
the purpose for the ages  
which He designed and  
(He) has carried out  
in Christ Jesus  
our Lord.

#### **3:11 [NASB]**

according to  
his eternal purpose  
that he accomplished  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## COMMENTARY

We believers could look upon ourselves and see the greatness of God's grace, but we would be missing the most important feature of that Grace, for it is IN-HIM, the living and dying Christ, that the eternal purposes of God are made complete. He is what the kingdoms and powers of this world and of the heavens see. He is the object of their inquiry, not us. Those which are holy will praise His wonderful Name because of His unfathomable grace. Those who are unholy will curse His name but know of His unfathomable grace and their hate will consume them. Their punishment will be eternal, wise and just.

## THE STUDY

### 3:9-12 The Church Through Grace and Power

#### **3:12 [MAC]**

We are enjoying  
    freedom of speech and  
    confident access to God  
    in Him  
        through His faithfulness.

#### **3:12 [NASB]**

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

## COMMENTARY

On our side of this story, what Christ has done - has made it possible (because we have been made righteous - the very righteousness of God) for us to literally walk into the presence of Almighty God with both boldness and confidence in our access to Him, through our simple faith in God's precious, one of a kind, Son. That is the outcome of God's unfathomable grace towards us. This should lead us into absolute humility - we could do nothing, yet He did it all - for us - that He might get the glory forever.

## Gods Special Secret:

### I. Chapter 1 – The Church as the Body of Christ

### II. Chapter 2 – The Church as the Temple of Christ

### III. Chapter 3 – The Church as God’s Top Secret

A. 3:1-5, The Description of the Original Gift of the Secret

#### B. 3:6-13, The Definition of the Revealed Secret

1. 3:6 The is the Promise in Christ through the Good News.
2. 3:7-8 The Secret is an Operation of Grace and Power that Includes the Gentiles.
3. 3:9-12, The Secret is an Operation of Grace and Power that includes the Gentiles.
4. **3:13 The Secret is on Trial that its Benefits may Display its Brilliance**

## THE STUDY

### 3:13 [MAC]

This is the reason

I am asking you

not to lose heart

over my trials

on your behalf,

seeing they are in your honor.

### 3:13 [NASB]

I ask you, therefore,

not to be discouraged

because of my sufferings for you,

which are your glory.

## COMMENTARY

Paul concludes this part of his letter (3:7-12) with one of his famous "Therefore" statements. "Therefore," Paul asks, and we need to look back at the message of 3:7-12 to see the point he will make in this

verse. In the earlier verses of Chapter 3 Paul was addressing the revelation of "The Church age." What it was, and why it had come. God's plan had been revealed and it included the temporary setting aside of Israel for the establishment of a Royal Priesthood who would belong to Jesus the Christ forever. This priesthood would be the administrators of the program of God for this age - and enjoy a similar relationship, always in His presence, for eternity. It is in other books where Paul expounds upon the close of this age and the transition into the next; the terrible tribulation and remarkable blessings of "The Day of the Lord."

Paul's concern for the Body of Christ is that they (we) might "lose heart" because of Paul's tribulations. Everywhere Paul went the evil one stirred up trouble - both for Paul and the Body of Christ. Paul would spend a good portion of his life in jail or in prison as a result. He was tormented, whipped, beaten, starved - for the cause of the Gospel to the Gentiles. I can almost hear the evil one telling his minions, "First it was with the Jews, now the Gentiles... this is quickly getting out of my control... 'therefore,' go and persecute this man, Paul."

Paul was much loved by believers. His worry was that they would stop evangelizing and teaching in an effort to bring an end of persecution to Paul.

But Paul corrects their incorrect attitude. He says, "my tribulations (are) on your behalf, for they are your glory." We poor humans, with our tiny little self-centered brains, always seem to try to correct the plan of God when it does not meet our expectations. Paul wants his readers to recognize, and appreciate, the bigger picture of God's plans. God is glorifying Himself, in Jesus Christ, through the tribulations of Paul - thereby building up the Body of Christ. Paul says that His tribulations are not only necessary - but are the very source of great glory to God and them.

We know well the principle that persecution builds faith. Anyone who has ever ministered to those who are under persecution or deprivation know the blessing of seeing the vitality of their faith. Anyone who has ever been under persecution knows the blessing of

an ever-growing vitality of faith in their own lives as they live for Christ. Paul's tribulations brought forth vitality of faith in that new Body of Christ. In turn, the suffering of persecution by the early church also brought forth a vitality of faith - and so on, and so forth. Persecution brings forth vital faith. The outworking of the persecution in each generation produces an exponential growth of the faith of the succeeding generation of those who believe. Praise God for those who have gone before - often through great persecution - that has resulted in the growth of our faith - may we be the ones who the next generation sees for the growth and vitality of their faith!

---

**HOMEWORK:  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – 3:6-13**

**Look at the question and ignore the answer. Then study the answer!**

**3:6-13 “The Definition of the Revealed Secret”**

**3:6 The Secret is the Promise in Christ Through the Good News.**

**3:6 [Mac]**

**6** The **secret** is this —  
 the **Gentiles** are to be  
     fellow **heirs**,  
     fellow **members**  
         of the Body, and  
     fellow **partakers**  
         of the promise  
**in Christ Jesus through the good news.**

**1. What’s the deal with the differences between the Jews and the Gentiles?**

Some lessons ago we discussed God’s breaking up of the ages into administrations, or dispensations. Periods of time where God could institute different periods of testing in order to find human beings who willingly and voluntarily (under any circumstances) choose the Almighty God of the Bible as their God, to love Him with all their heart, soul, and mind.

God found a man named Abram (later named Abraham) and told him to go back to his home, pack his things, get a good night’s sleep, and be ready in the morning for God to tell him to go on a great journey. Abram went back to his home, packed his things, got a good night’s sleep, and was ready in the morning to go where God would tell him to go. God told

him to travel (a very long way to go) to a place called Haran. Abram loaded his thing onto his mule and went to Haran. God counted Abram's actions as righteousness. Later, God told Abraham to bring his son to a mountain top and slay him, offering him to God. Abraham brought his son (who went willingly, by the way) to the mountaintop and placed him on a rock altar, raised his knife... and God stopped Him. For Abraham was about to willingly sacrifice his willing son – and it so touched God's heart... for that was what God was going to do many centuries later with His own Son. Thus, Abraham was selected to be the grandfather of a nation of descendants known as the Hebrew people which became the nation of Israel – a covenanted nation, a nation under contract with God. The Old Testament is the story basically of that covenanted people – who were supposed to lead the world into belief in the One Almighty God of the Bible. Instead, they turned their love inside out and lived for themselves casting away the nations around themselves. When God introduced His Son as a baby human child into the world – things turned very bad and when the child became a man and began doing His Father's work, the leaders of that covenanted nation put Him to death – with one result being God's setting aside of the covenanted nation and opening His program of salvation for men, women, and children to the world at large. In order to accomplish this God, through Jesus His Son, with the power of His Holy Spirit established a new body of **believers** – what we now know as **The Church**.

---

### **3:7-8, The Secret is an Operation of Grace and Power that Includes the Gentiles.**

#### **3:7 [MAC]**

**I**

was made  
 an **administrator**  
 of this **good news**  
 in accord with the **gift**  
 springing from **God's grace.**

This **gift**

was **given** to me  
**to correspond**  
**with the internal operation of His power.**

#### **3:8 [MAC]**

This special grace  
 was given to me,  
 the very least  
 of all the set apart ones.

It

was given:  
 first,  
 to proclaim to the Gentiles  
 the good news about  
 the un-trackable wealth of Christ.

#### **1. What does it mean to be an "administrator?"**

As we look at the word "administration" we also need to see that an administrator is someone who is in charge of an administration. MacCorkle uses this word to get the picture across that this new idea of The Church brings with it that this is a new operation in time. It will take time, that has been set aside by God, to bring about the completion of The Church. Paul was chosen, because of his qualifications, to pursue the spreading of the Gospel across Asia, the middle east, and eastern Europe.

**2. Why does Paul refer to himself as “the very least of all the set apart ones?”**

Paul’s very strong background as a persecutor of Christians, placing them in prison and even having them put to death. When He met Jesus, person-to-person, his life was completely changed through belief by faith. He felt very unworthy of his new position before God, and his calling to the ministry.

**3. What was Paul given “first” to proclaim to the Gentiles?**

Top of the list... **God’s Grace.** That Grace came through the death and resurrection of The Son of God, Jesus. That Grace, enough in quantity and quality to save the whole world – if it would believe. MacCorkle uses the expression un-trackable because it would become impossible to track the progress of that grace moving across the whole world, bringing salvation to person after person, through those same persons.

---

### **3:9-12, The Secret is to be Dispensed Now that it has been Revealed.**

#### **3:9 [MAC]**

Second,  
 to inform all men  
     as to what the dispensation of this secret is,  
     which stood hidden  
         from the people of the ages in God  
             Who created all things.

#### **3:10 [MAC]**

God's ultimate purpose in this is that  
     the colorful spectrum of God's wisdom  
         might be made known to  
             the governments and  
             the authorities  
                 in the heavenly places  
                     through the agency of the Church.

#### **3:11 [MAC]**

This is compatible with  
     the purpose for the ages  
         which He designed and  
         (He) has carried out  
             in Christ Jesus  
                 our Lord.

#### **3:12 [MAC]**

We are enjoying  
     freedom of speech and  
     confident access to God  
         in Him  
             through His faithfulness.

### **1. (3:9) Why is this "dispensation" so very different from the grace of God dispensed before Jesus Christ's death on the cross?**

All through the previous ages mankind largely refused the love

and grace of God (the God of the Bible). From creation to just before the flood only 8 persons still believed. The nation of Israel was established based on the Faith of Abraham, and by the time Jesus was 33 years old and had preached across Israel of the love of His father and the eternal salvation offered... and they rejected their God and put their God's Son to death on the Cross.

This new "dispensation" would encompass the whole world. Every person would either have enough personal revelation knowledge or direct contact with believers, missionaries, churches, etc. that the Holy Spirit would contact, and try to convince of the truth in Christ of the Grace of God Almighty in the offer of personal salvation.

**2. (3:10) Where does Paul say this grace needs to be witnessed?**

That it *"might be made known to the governments and the authorities in the heavenly places"*

**3. (3:11-12) What does Paul indicate that the ministry of the church and its representatives have received in order to make preaching effective?**

"Freedom of speech (in the presence of Almighty God) and Confident Access to Him. We are now absolutely able to walk into the presence of Almighty God and have full access to Him because we are In-Christ Redeemed – we are now His children.

---

### **3:13, The Secret is on Trial that its Benefits may Display its Brilliance.**

#### **3:13 [MAC]**

This is the reason

I am asking you

not to lose heart

over my trials

on your behalf,

seeing they are in your honor.

No question here – I just want you to see that Paul, in all his trials and tribulations wanted all those who knew him and loved him for his work amongst them... was to enable them to be strong in their Gospel ministries as well as their individual lives, for His suffering was for them and they should see that as his honoring of them! And thus you should see that your pastors, leaders, teachers, elders, deacons all labor as **it is an honor for them to serve you! And this is the brilliance of God's plan!**

---

**The Book of Ephesians** Bible Study materials on this website are a ministry of AncientPath.net and are made available here free and may be copied for use in Bible study groups, in limited numbers, providing that no charge is made for them. Items that appear as copyrighted materials that are not of our authorship are not to be copied without the express permission of the original copyright holders. Every effort has been made to give proper footnote credit for items that are quoted. No further distribution or use of these materials is allowable under U.S. or International Copyright Law without the express permission of AncientPath.net.

#### **The Writings of Douglas B. MacCorkle**

Dr. MacCorkle's Books and Study materials on this website are made available here free, through the generosity of Judith and Ray Naugle, and may be copied for use in Bible study groups, in limited numbers, providing that no charge is made for them. No further distribution or use of these materials is allowable under U.S. or International Copyright Law without express permission.

*The Outline and Expanded Translation Text presented in this study is from Dr. MacCorkle's God's Special Secret - The Case Paul Argues in the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Copyright 1993 by Douglas B. MacCorkle. Printed and bound in the United States of America. Published by the not-for-profit MacCorkle bible Ministries, Inc. Books, P.O. Box 320909, Cocoa Beach, Fl. 32932-0909.

J. Deering - AncientPath.net © 2008-2025 All rights reserved.

Jeremiah 18:15

**"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path."**

---

2025-01-10 update