

*the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge* (vv. 18-19). Note that Paul relates the Christian life to the work of the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This life is rightly described as Christ living within you – by the eternal plan of the Father and the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.

Having spoken of *the riches of his glory, the width and length and height and depth and the love... which surpasses knowledge*, he bursts into a song of praise to this extravagant God who can *do far more than all that we ask or imagine* (vv. 20-21).

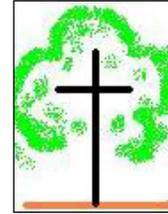
**Reflect:**

- What has the Lord done for us?
- What is he doing within us?
- What more might he want to do with us?

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**4. The Active Body.** Bible Reading: Ephesians 4.

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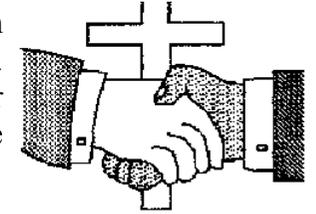
## Alive in Christ!

Six Studies in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians  
by Peter J. Blackburn

### 3. Good News for Everyone

Reading: Ephesians 3

There are many different ways in which people diagnose the basic problem of the world. Paul sees one basic problem – disobedience or sin. And he sees it as affecting Jew and Gentile alike.



Notice his words in chapter 2 – *Now you were dead because of your transgressions and sins, in which you were once following the ways of this present age and the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit now working among the sons of disobedience. Among them all of us also once lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath just like the rest.*

So there is not one gospel for Jews and a different one for Gentiles. All are saved *by grace received through faith*. Paul now goes on to write about his specific ministry to the Gentiles and to pray that they may know the love of Christ.

#### Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>*This is why I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles -* <sup>2</sup>*(You have surely heard of the task I was given to share the grace of God with you.*  <sup>3</sup>*God's secret was revealed to me, as I briefly mentioned earlier.*  <sup>4</sup>*In the light of this you can appreciate, as you read, my insight into the secret of Christ.*  <sup>5</sup>*In other generations it was not made known to the children of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.*  <sup>6</sup>*The secret is that the Gentiles are co-heirs, part of the one body and sharing equally through the gospel in the promise in Christ Jesus.*  <sup>7</sup>*I was made a minister of this gospel by the free gift of God's grace given to me through the working of his power.*  <sup>8</sup>*To me, the least of all God's holy people, was given this grace: to announce good news to the Gentiles, the fathomless riches of Christ,*  <sup>9</sup>*and to make clear to all the task of*

sharing the secret hidden for ages past in God the Creator of all things. <sup>10</sup>His purpose was that there might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God, <sup>11</sup>according to the eternal purpose which he brought about in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup>In him and through faith in him we have complete assurance and confidence to approach God. <sup>13</sup>Therefore I beg you not to lose heart because of my sufferings for you - they are your glory.)

<sup>14</sup>This is why I bend my knees to the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every father-led group on earth is named, <sup>16</sup>to the end that he may grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts, when you have been rooted and founded in love, <sup>18</sup>to the end that you may be strong enough to grasp with all the holy ones the width and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, to the end that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Now to the one who is able, according to the power at work in us, to do far more than all that we ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup>to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation for evermore Amen.

## Good News for the Gentiles

Paul begins to write “*This is why I bend my knees to the Father...*”, but he breaks off to comment on his specific ministry to the Gentiles in vv. 2-13.

In chapter 1 Paul wrote about *God’s secret*. In particular, we noticed there *his glorious grace freely bestowed on us in the Beloved one, redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, the gospel of your salvation* and the “more to come” when God is going to sum up *all things in Christ as head* at the end of history, and the Holy Spirit as God’s *seal* and pledge. All of this has general application to all believers.

Now he speaks about God’s secret again (he uses the word four times). But here he wants to emphasise that *the secret is that the Gentiles*

*are co-heirs, part of the one body and sharing equally through the gospel in the promise in Christ Jesus* (v. 6).

It has been his privilege *to announce good news to the Gentiles, the fathomless riches of Christ, and to make clear to all the task of sharing the secret hidden for ages past in God the Creator of all things* (vv. 8,9). Because of what God has done in Christ, it is now possible for all people who put their faith in him, both Jews and Gentiles, to *have complete assurance and confidence to approach God* (v. 12).

So Paul *the prisoner of Christ on behalf of you Gentiles* (v. 1) is saying to them, “Don’t *lose heart because of my sufferings for you*” (v. 13). These very sufferings are an indication that the gospel is for them too!

### Reflect:

- What people are there today who are in the position of the Gentiles of Paul's time?
- What can we do to help all people to know that the gospel is for them and to respond to it?

## Christ Within You

In vv 14-19 Paul continues the prayer he was about to offer in v. 1. *For this reason* refers us back to the last part of chapter 2 where he emphasised that the Gentiles are equally part of God’s people – this has also been the subject of the parenthesis concerning his own mission. Notice that the word for “family” (v. 15) comes from the word for “father”.

In v. 6 Paul described these Gentiles as *co-heirs, part of the one body and sharing equally through the gospel in the promise in Christ Jesus*. Now he is praying *that you may be filled with all the fulness of God* (v. 19b). This will happen as they are *strengthened through his spirit in the inner man* (v. 16b), so that *Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts* (v. 17) and that they will have an understanding and experience of