

Lesson 2: Letter to the Ephesians 3 and 4

Paul's Ministry to Gentiles, Unity in the Body of Christ, Rules for the New Life

Paul was arrested several times for his teaching and preaching. In Acts 28 we read that Paul was imprisoned in Rome with a Roman guard, for two years. Some scholars believe this letter was written during that imprisonment. See Acts 28:16-30 to read about this time in his career.

1. **Read Ephesians 3:1-6 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group. Translating ancient Greek into contemporary English is often difficult. *Compare the translations of these verses in your bible with others in your group and to the NRSV translation below.* Note how the punctuation and word order affect our understanding of the verses.**

Ephesians 3:1-6 (NRSV) This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— ²for surely you have already heard of the **commission of God's grace that was given me for you,** ³and how **the mystery was made known to me by revelation,** as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of **which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ.** ⁵In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as **it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:** ⁶that is, the **Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**

2. a. In 3:1-6 *how* does Paul say the “mystery” of Jesus Christ has been revealed to him, the apostles and prophets?

b. How had the Gentiles been affected by this revelation?

3. **Read Ephesians 3:7-14 and footnotes. Share any footnotes on 3:10.**

(The phrase “*Powers or authorities of heaven*” refers to those angels who have power over evil forces.)

a. *Why* does Paul say he was given Divine Grace? (See 3:8 and 3:11.)

4. **Read Ephesians 3:15-21 and Catechism # 2702 and 2703 below.**

Why does Paul *kneel* before God? (See Catechism)

List the things Paul is praying for here.

CCC 2702 The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication.

CCC 2703 This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. **He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due.**

5. **Read Ephesians 4:1-6 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group.**

Read also the Catechism of the Catholic Church #815, and 866, below.

a. What *virtues* does Paul recommend in these verses? (See 4:2)

b. The four “marks of the Church” are that the Church is one, holy, catholic (or universal) and Apostolic. Which of these “marks” is Paul discussing in these verses?

c. What makes the Church “one”? (See Catechism)

CCC 866 The Church is one: she acknowledges one Lord, confesses one faith, is born of one Baptism, forms only one Body, is given life by the one Spirit, for the sake of one hope (cf. Eph 4:3-5), at whose fulfillment all divisions will be overcome.

CCC 815 What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony." But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion: - profession of one faith received from the Apostles; - common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;

6. Read Ephesians 4:7-10 and footnotes.

a. Where would *Paul* have learned these teachings?

b. Which of these teachings had been incorporated into *The Apostle’s Creed*?

7. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 and footnotes. Share any helpful footnotes with your group.

a. Paul continues here with his teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ.

Is every member of the Church given the same graces and gifts?

b. How do the variety of gifts contribute to the whole body?

See 4:16 for the metaphor that helps to explain this.

8. Read Ephesians 4:17-32 and footnotes. A change of heart and of lifestyle is called for here. *What practices are the believers called to put behind them in the following verses?*

4:17

4:26-27

4:29 and 4:31

9. Is ignorance of God’s will an excuse for the people who have heard the words and teachings of Jesus? (See 4:20-22)

What changes and practices *should replace the former practices* in the following?

4:22- 23

4:28

4: 31