

PAUL'S DETOUR, PT. 1; EPH. 3:1-3a (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ BEGIN NEXT SECTION OF EPH., ~ 3:1-13, ~ WHICH WE CAN CALL Paul's Detour.

BUT, ~ BEFORE WE DO THAT, ~ IT IS IMPORTANT, ~ IN ORDER TO KEEP THE BIG picture of Ephesians in mind, ~ to once again briefly set the overall context of the letter.

▶▶ As said, ~ Ephesians can be divided into three consecutive overarching themes.

▷▷ The first central theme is brought out in [chapters 1-3](#). ~ In short, ~ Paul explains the doctrine of salvation and its accompanying blessings.

▷▷ The second overarching theme is brought out in ~ [4:1 - 6:9](#), ~ in which Paul highlights and describes ~ *how we, ~ who have been given this salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ are to live as a result.*

▷▷ The third central theme of Ephesians is brought out in [6:10-20](#), ~ and deals with the spiritual warfare of the Christian. ~ *Ok overall context. ~ Continue read*

OK, ~ NOW LET'S BEGIN THE NEXT SECTION OF EPHESIANS, ~ 3:1-13, ~ WHICH WE CAN call Paul's Detour.

▶▶ In [3:1](#), ~ Paul begins to pray for Ephesian believers, ~ then abruptly digresses, ~ or takes a detour ~ *and focuses on "the mystery of Christ" in verses 1-6, ~ ¶¶*

▷▷ and then in [verses 7-13](#), ~ Paul focuses on the gospel and his role in preaching it. ~

↪↪ So, ~ his detour consists of two parts.

▶▶ He then resumes his prayer in [verse 14](#).

▷▷ The fact that the beginning of [verse 1](#) and of [verse 14](#) are identical, ~ "For this reason," ~ shows us that this is the case: ~ Paul begins, ~ digresses, ~ resumes.

▶▶ And it is this digression, ~ [3:1-13](#), ~ which we will look at next in our study of Ephesians.

NOW, ~ IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS IS A DETOUR, ~ we should not look at this section as unimportant.

▶▶ Everything the biblical authors wrote, ~ digression or otherwise, ~ is important, ~ is supposed to be there, ~ and is exactly what God wants us to know. ¶¶ 1/9

▷▷As Paul says in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, ~ "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, ~ for reproof, ~ for correction, ~ and for training in righteousness, ~ ¶¶

↳↳that the man of God ~ [i.e., ~ the believer in and follower of Christ] ~ may be complete, ~ equipped for every good work."

▷▷And as Peter says in 2 Pet. 1:21, ~ "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, ~ but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

↳↳What we have pictured here is the cooperation between the authors of Scripture and God the Holy Spirit.

→→Through the authors' own unique personalities, ~ styles of writing, ~ and vocabulary, ~ God the Holy Spirit moved each of them to communicate God's truth.

▶▶Considering that Paul was under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, ~ ¶¶

▷▷we can be 100% assured that what Paul wrote in this detour in Ephesians ~ is important, ~ supposed to be there, ~ and is exactly what God wants us to know.

↳↳We could say for certain ~ that Paul's detour in Eph. 3:1-13 ~ "is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, ~ for reproof, ~ for correction, ~ and for training in righteousness, ~ that the person dedicated to God may be complete, ~ equipped for every good work."

→→Simply put, ~ we could say that Eph. 3:1-13 ~ is a divinely-inspired detour.

AS WE NOTED, ~ PAUL'S DETOUR CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS.

▶▶In verses 1-6, ~ he focuses on describing "the mystery of Christ."

▷▷Now, ~ Paul will define it for us in verse 6. ~ Suffice it to say at this time ~ that "the mystery of Christ" has to do with a plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation.

▶▶And in verses 7-13 of his detour, ~ Paul focuses on the gospel & his role in preaching it.

THIS A.M., ~ WE WILL BEGIN LOOKING AT THE FIRST PART OF PAUL'S DETOUR, ~ verses 1-6, ~ BY zeroing in on verses 1-3a.

VERSE 1, ~ NASB ~ "FOR THIS REASON I, ~ PAUL, ~ THE PRISONER OF CHRIST Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles."

VERSE 1, ~ OF COURSE, ~ IS THE ORIGINAL BEGINNING TO PAUL'S PRAYER. ¶¶ 2/9

▶▶If we combine the beginning of 3:1 with 3:14, ~ we can pretty much piece together what Paul would have said had he not digressed.

▷▷And we can read it this way: ~~ "For this reason I, ~ Paul, ~ the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, ~ bow my knees before the Father."

PAUL SAYS, ~ "FOR THIS REASON" HE'S GOING TO PRAY.

▶▶Most likely "for this reason" points back to what he taught in 2:11-22, ~ and that forms the reason he was going to pray. ~~ We'll come back to this when we get to verse 14.

PAUL SAYS, ~ "I, ~ PAUL, ~ THE PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS."

▶▶Paul was probably writing during his two-year imprisonment in Rome.

▶▶But whereas we might expect Paul to say that he is a prisoner of Caesar, ~ he clarifies that he is "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." ~~ Paul considered himself Christ's prisoner ~ not Caesar's.

▶▶From a strictly human level, ~ Paul was in Rome, ~ a prisoner of Caesar, ~ awaiting trial before Nero.

▷▷But Paul refused to look at things on a human level. ~~ He looked at everything totally from a spiritual level, ~ which is evidenced by what he said in 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

↪↪"So we do not lose heart. ~~ Though our outer self is wasting away, ~ our inner self is being renewed day by day. ~~ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ~ ¶¶

→→as we look not to the things that are seen ~ but to the things that are unseen. ~~ For the things that are seen are transient, ~ but the things that are unseen are eternal."

▷▷And this is the correct perspective for all believers. ~~ We've talked about this before, ~ earlier in Ephesians.

↪↪And that is: ~~ believers need to begin, ~ and I fail miserably at this at times, ~ believers need to begin to think more on a spiritual level ~ rather than on a physical, ~ only what we see level.

→→As Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:7, ~ "for we walk by faith, ~ not by sight."

↪↪So, ~ like Paul, ~ refuse to look @ things on human level ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶ "I, ~ Paul, ~ the prisoner of Christ Jesus." ~ Paul knew and understood that Jesus is in control of history ~ and all of life ~ not Caesar. ~ It only looked like Nero was in charge.

▷▷ The point is seen in Jesus' response to Pilate before Jesus' crucifixion, ~ recorded in Jn. 19:10-11a.

↳↳ "So Pilate said to him, ~ 'You will not speak to me? ~ Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?' ~ ~ ¶¶

→→ Jesus answered him, ~ 'You would have no authority over me at all ~ unless it had been given you from above.'"

▷▷ It is also seen in the believers' prayer recorded in Acts 4:23-31. ~ They address God as, ~ and rightly so, ~ "Sovereign Lord" and say in verses 27-28, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, ~ whom you anointed, ~ both Herod and Pontius Pilate, ~ along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ~ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." ~ Crucifixion

→→ Judas not in control ~ Jews not ~ Romans not ~ Satan not ~ It only looked that way.

↳↳ God in control, ~ & everything proceeded according to His sovereign plan.

▷▷ Likewise, ~ Paul knew and understood that it only looked like Nero was in control.

↳↳ In reality, ~ by saying "I, ~ Paul, ~ the prisoner of Christ Jesus," ~ Paul was declaring the absolute sovereignty of Jesus over history and all of life.

→→ Pharaoh

→→ Nebuchadnezzar ~ **Esther **

▷▷ Jesus is sovereign over all of history ~ and all of life.

↳↳ And recall once again what we said in the past about Heb. 1:3, ~ where it says that Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power." ~ The Greek word for "upholds" means "holding ~ and carrying ~ from one place to another."

→→ What we are saying is that Jesus sustains the universe in its existence and operation, ~ and is carrying it forward, ~ or guiding it, ~ to its divinely appointed end. ¶¶ 4/9

▷▷ This is a tremendous lesson for us, ~ who sometimes become worried and anxious about what's happening in our lives ~ and what the political powers-that-be are doing in the world today.

↳↳ Contrary to appearances, ~ Jesus is in control ~ not anything or anyone else.

AND SINCE PAUL KNEW JESUS WAS IN CONTROL, ~ HE MOST LIKELY ALSO KNEW that the only reason he was in prison ~ was that Jesus allowed it ~ and had a purpose for it.

▶▶ There are two important lessons for all believers to learn here.

▶▶ 1st, ~ nothing can happen to us ~ and no one can touch us ~ without Jesus' permission. ~ Scripture makes this abundantly clear.

▷▷ E.g., ~ in Lk. 22:31, ~ on the night of His arrest, ~ Jesus said, ~ NASB ~ "Simon, ~ Simon, ~ behold, ~ Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat."

↳↳ "you" in the Greek is plural, ~ so Jesus was referring to all the apostles, ~ not just Peter. ~ Para., ~ "Simon, ~ Simon, ~ Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat."

→→ The point: ~ Satan could not touch them without God's permission.

▷▷ Job

▶▶ The 2nd important lesson to learn is that whenever we go through trials, ~ Jesus has a purpose for it.

▷▷ In 1 Pet. 1:6, ~ Peter writes, ~ "In this you rejoice, ~ though now for a little while, ~ if ~ [or, ~ could be translated as since it is] ~ necessary, ~ you have been grieved by various trials."

▷▷ Peter says that the trials we go through are necessary. ~ This means that the trials in a believer's life are no accident. ~ They are part of God's sovereign plan for us.

↳↳ This shows us that there is always a purpose, ~ more specifically a divine purpose, ~ for our suffering. ~ God always has a purpose for allowing trials to come into our lives.

→→ It should be reassuring to us to know that God's people are never needlessly afflicted. ~

↳↳ Paul 11 5/9

CONTINUING IN VERSE 1, ~ PAUL SAYS THAT HE IS "THE PRISONER OF CHRIST JESUS for the sake of you Gentiles."

▶▶ The primary meaning for the Greek word translated as "for the sake of" is that Paul was imprisoned because of his ministry on behalf of the Gentiles.

▷▷ Recall, ~ Paul's special mission was to the Gentiles. ~~ Because of this, ~ the Jews claimed that he was distorting God's revelation.

↪↪ And thus they were instrumental in obtaining his imprisonment in Jerusalem, ~ from where he was taken to Caesarea, ~ tried, ~ and appealed to Caesar.

→→ He was then taken to Rome and imprisoned while waiting for his accusers to arrive.

▷▷ Therefore, ~ because of his mission to the Gentiles, ~ Paul suffered incarceration.

▶▶ In addition to the primary meaning, ~ the word "for the sake of" implies that Paul's imprisonment benefited the Gentiles.

▷▷ So there was a definite purpose for Paul's imprisonment, ~ and he knew it. ~~ As we said earlier, ~ God always has a purpose for allowing trials to come into our lives.

↪↪ And Paul serves as a perfect example. ~~ In this case, ~ it was to benefit the Gentiles.

▶▶ Now, ~ Paul does not say how his imprisonment was benefitting the Gentiles. ~~ But we do know the greater principle here. ~~ *And that is that God's people are never needlessly afflicted.*

▶▶ And in the much larger context of suffering, ~ we must always keep [Rom. 8:28](#) in mind.

▷▷ Paul says, ~ [NASB](#) ~ "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, ~ to those who are called according to His purpose."

↪↪ Suffering will still bring pain, ~ loss, ~ and sorrow. ~~ But under God's control, ~ the eventual outcome will be for our good. ~~ Joseph

IN VERSE 2, ~ PAUL BEGINS HIS DIVINELY-INSPIRED DETOUR.

HE SAYS, ~ "ASSUMING THAT YOU HAVE HEARD ~ [SOME, ~ "IF INDEED YOU HAVE heard] ~ of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you." ↯↯ 6/9

JUST A QUICK TRANSLATION NOTE ABOUT "ASSUMING" OR "IF INDEED."

▶▶ Although this phrase is constructed as conditional ~ and translated that way in many EV, ~ it is one of those expressions in Greek ~ where it is clear that Paul has no doubt about its truth.

▷▷ The phrase means that the Ephesians had heard this, ~ and it is said that this grammatical construction is Paul's delicate or polite way of reminding them of it.

↪↪ As I understand it, ~ it could be paraphrased, ~ "you have, ~ of course, ~ heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you."

PAUL IS REFERRING HERE TO HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO PREACH TO THE GENTILES.

▶▶ Although Paul preached to Jews, ~ his primary ministry was to the Gentiles.

▶▶ Simply put, ~ Paul's saying, ~ "you have, ~ of course, ~ heard about my responsibility to bring the message of God's grace to you Gentiles."

▶▶ Difficult If you recall, ~ Scripture defines "grace" a number of ways.

▷▷ Free and undeserved favor ~ Also divine enablement, ~ empowering us to live the Christian life and to serve God. ~ And Peter defined as teaching of God

▶▶ Of course, ~ as we know, ~ context always determines meaning.

▷▷ And in the immediate context of verses 1-6, ~ "grace" appears to refer to "the mystery of Christ," ~ which is the key phrase and focus of these verses.

↪↪ Especially noteworthy is verse 3's mention of "the mystery," ~ which grammatically seems to refer back to the word "grace" in verse 2. ~ Context = Equivalent

▶▶ That this is how Paul is using the word "grace" here is seen in the parallel passage in Col. 1:24-27, ~ in which Paul also talks about "the mystery of Christ." ~ Albeit a diff. aspect

▷▷ In verse 25, ~ Paul writes, ~ "of which ~ [speaking of the church] ~ I became a minister according to the stewardship ~ [or, ~ responsibility] ~ from God that was given to me for you, ~ to make the word of God fully known."

↪↪ In the context of verses 24-27, ~ "the word of God" refers to "the mystery."

→→ Paul says that he was given the responsibility from God to make "the mystery of Christ" fully known. ↵↵ 7/9

▶▶ So, ~ even though he is using the word "grace" to refer to "the mystery of Christ" in Eph. 3:2, ~ Paul is basically saying the same thing as he did in Col. 1:25.

▷▷ And we can paraphrase Eph. 3:2 this way: ~ "you have, ~ of course, ~ heard about my responsibility to make the mystery of Christ fully known to you Gentiles."

▶▶ Now, ~ we should mention here that ~ since "grace" normally means free and undeserved favor, ~ Paul may have used it to refer to "the mystery of Christ" ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to emphasize that this plan that has to do with the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation, ~ like every other aspect of salvation, ~ is an act of God's free and undeserved favor, ~ God's grace.

IN VERSE 3a, ~ PAUL INTRODUCES A SECOND THING THAT THE CHRISTIANS IN Ephesus have of course heard about.

AND THAT IS ~ HOW PAUL RECEIVED "THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST."

▶▶ We could paraphrase and for context read it from verse 2 this way, ~ ["² you have, ~ of course, ~ heard about my responsibility to make the mystery of Christ fully known to you Gentiles; ~ and] ~ ¶¶

▷▷^{3a} how the mystery of Christ was made known to me by revelation."

▶▶ Simply put, ~ in verse 3a, ~ Paul is saying "you have, ~ of course, ~ heard how God let me know the mystery of Christ."

▷▷ And Paul says that God gave him the knowledge of "the mystery of Christ" by direct revelation.

▶▶ Paul points this out in Gal. 1:11-12.

▷▷ "For I would have you know, ~ brothers, ~ that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel ~ [i.e., ~ it's not of human origin]. ~ ¶¶

↳↳ For I did not receive it from any man ~ [i.e., ~ he did not receive it from any human source], ~ nor was I taught it, ~ ¶¶

→→ but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ ~ ["of" means "from." ~ I.e., ~ Paul received the gospel that he preached from Jesus]."

→→ And "the mystery of Christ" would have been part of that revelation since it comes through the gospel as we'll see. ¶¶ 8/9

SO "THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST" IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HUMAN BEINGS, ~ including Paul, ~ dreamt up.

▶▶ This plan that has to do with the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation comes directly from God.

▶▶ Since this is so, ~ it means that what Paul writes here is God's word and not man's.

▶▶ And that means that what Paul wrote is 100% absolute truth and 100% without question trustworthy. ~ The psalmists testify to this about God's word.

▷▷ In Ps. 119:142. ~ "Your righteousness is righteous forever, ~ and your law is true."

▷▷ In Ps. 119:151, ~ "But you are near, ~ O Lord, ~ and all your commandments are true."

▷▷ And in Ps. 111:7-8, ~ speaking of the Lord, ~ declares, ~ "The works of his hands are faithful and just; ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ all his precepts are trustworthy; ~ they are established forever and ever, ~ to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness."

▶▶ And since what Paul writes is God's word, ~ it is incumbent upon Christ's followers ~ to study it, ~ to try to understand it as best we can, ~ and to obey it and apply it in our lives.

CONCLUSION.

I THINK PERHAPS WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THAT EVEN THOUGH PAUL TOOK A detour, ~ it was definitely a Holy Spirit-inspired detour.

▶▶ And that what we are learning here is important and exactly what God wants us to know in order to grow in our faith ~ and in the knowledge and understanding of His word ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and that we "may be complete, ~ equipped for every good work."

↳↳ "Now to the King eternal, ~ immortal, ~ invisible, ~ the only God, ~ be honor and glory forever and ever." (1 Tim. 1:17a)

LET'S PRAY 9/9