

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXXIX : DIGRESSION #2 - PAUL AS MINISTER OF THE MYSTERY TO THE GENTILES (3:1-13)

## Paul as Minister of the Mystery to the Gentiles (3:1-13)

*For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 KJV)*

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 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, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 NIV)*

*For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the nations, if, indeed, ye did hear of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me in regard to you, that by revelation He made known to me the secret, according as I wrote before in few [words] — in regard to which ye are able, reading [it], to understand my knowledge in the secret of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit — that the nations be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in the Christ, through the good news, of which I became a ministrant, according to the gift of the grace of God that was given to me, according to the working of His power; to me — the less than the least of all the saints — was given this grace, among the nations to proclaim good news — the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what [is] the fellowship of the secret that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly [places], through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to a purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him, wherefore, I ask [you] not to faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 Young's Literal Translation)*

## Paul as Minister of the Mystery to the Gentiles (3:1-13)

*Paul begins introduction to intercessory prayer ...*

<sup>1</sup> *For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles, —*

*... but his mention of his ministry to the Gentiles leads him to expound upon his position, forming a digression about the mystery entrusted to him.*

<sup>2</sup> *if, indeed, ye did hear of the stewardship [administration] of the grace of God which was given to me towards you,*

*Paul further describes this stewardship he was given as being a 'mystery' (a thing hidden until revealed by God)*

<sup>3</sup> *namely, that He made known the mystery*

***This mystery Paul is about to describe is something he has just mentioned and by reading it, the Gentiles should be able to perceive Paul's insight and understanding into the mystery***

*by revelation to me (as I wrote before briefly [lit., 'in a little, in a few'], <sup>4</sup> by which ye are able, when you read it, to understand my insight in the mystery of the Christ,*

***Paul explains this mystery has only now been revealed in the providence of God***

<sup>5</sup> *which was not made known in other generations to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit),*

***Paul now explains the contents of the mystery***

<sup>6</sup> *that the Gentiles should be*

*joint – heirs*

*and joint – body*

*and joint – partakers of His promise in Jesus the Messiah through the gospel,*

***Paul explains he was a servant to declare the mystery***

<sup>7</sup> *of which I became a servant*

*according to the gift of the grace of God given to me,*

*according to the working of His power;*

***Paul explains he was given two tasks in this grace of the mystery***

<sup>8</sup> *this grace was given to me,*

*the less than the least of all the saints,*

***Paul uses two infinitives to describe the 'grace' God has given him:***

*to preach the unsearchable riches of the Christ among the Gentiles*

<sup>9</sup> *and to enlighten all as to what is the plan of the mystery*

*which was hidden from the beginning of the ages in God,*

*who created all things through Jesus Christ,*

<p>an <b>infinitive</b> is a verbal noun and therefore has features of both; it almost always begins with the word 'to'</p>
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***Why did the Lord give this grace of administering the mystery to Paul? The answer follows in what is called a 'hina' clause (ὅτι) which shows the purpose or result of something.***

<sup>10</sup> [hina] *in order that the untraceable wisdom of God might now be made known*

***To whom?***

*to the principalities*

*and to the authorities*

***Where are these principalities and authorities located?***

*in the heavenlies*

***What did the Lord use to make His wisdom known?***

*through the ecclesia*

***This was all done according to God's eternal plan:***

<sup>11</sup> *according to the eternal purpose*

*which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*

<sup>12</sup> *in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him,*

***Paul now gives the reason for his digression. Although he was a prisoner because of his actions on behalf of the Gentiles, Paul showed it was in the outworking of the larger, eternal plan of our Sovereign God to manifest His glory, and it was Paul's honor and privilege to be a part of this ministry of grace. His Gentile readers should therefore not be discouraged with his (and their) trials.***

<sup>13</sup> *therefore I ask you not to lose heart in my tribulations on behalf of you which is your glory.*

**MOST PERSONAL SECTION OF EPHESIANS** — *“This is the most personal section of Ephesians.... [I]t contains some extreme statements in respect of Paul which accord him a very high, if not unique, place.... The presence of the Gentiles in the church is indissolubly linked to Paul’s position in God’s economy.”* [Best, 293] “The passage is thoughtfully articulated. Not only does its end correspond to its beginning and provide a smooth transition to the next long sentence, but it also skillfully picks up the language of the previous section. The three συν – [sun, ‘together with’] words in 3:6 echo the three συν – [sun, ‘together with’] words of 2:19-22, and the critical term οἰκονομία [oikonomia, ‘stewardship, dispensation’] in 3:2 picks up the six – οἰκ – [- oik –, ‘belonging to a house or family’] words of 2:19-22. *Still, the passage bears signs of extemporaneity. The false start in 3:1, the pathos of Paul’s first-person reference to his imprisonment in that same verse (‘I, Paul, the prisoner’), the lack of an object for the three prefixed prepositions in 3:6 (heirs together and one body together and sharers in the promise together with’ ... whom?), and the sheer length of the sentence itself (105 words) — these all look like a communication that was actually dictated with some emotion.*” [Thielman, 190] Note the three συν – [sun, ‘together with’] and the six – οἰκ – [- oik –, ‘belonging to a house or family’] words to which Frank Thielman refers from chapter two are as follows:

συμπολίται [sumpolitai, ‘fellow citizen’] — Eph 2:19

συναρμολογουμένη [sunarmologoumenē, ‘to fit or join together’] — Eph 2:21

συνοικοδομησθε [sunoi kodomeisthe, ‘to build up together’] — Eph 2:22

πάροικοι [paroi koi, ‘non-resident, alien, stranger’] — Eph 2:19

οἰκεῖοι [oikeioi, ‘members of household’] — Eph 2:19

ἐποικοδομηθέντες [epoi kodomēthentes, ‘to build upon, adding to the foundation of a building’] — Eph 2:20

οἰκοδομη [oi kodomē, ‘a building’] — Eph 2:21

συνοικοδομησθε [sunoi kodomeisthe, ‘to build up together’] — Eph 2:22

κατοικητήριον [katoikētērion, ‘dwelling place’] — Eph 2:22

**RELATING PAUL’S DIGRESSION WITH THE FLOW OF HIS EPISTLE** — *“How does the material in this digression on the apostolic ministry relate to other parts of the first half of the letter? It is the immediately preceding section, 2:11-22, which feeds most directly into its depiction of Paul as the minister of the mystery of Gentiles having become part of the one body of the Church. Paul’s ministry was only possible because of Christ’s work of reconciliation had first created that one body or one new person (2:15, 16).”* [Lincoln, 170] Andrew Lincoln goes on to list some of the similarities between the first and third chapters.

Aspects of the blessings of salvation mentioned in the opening eulogy are found again in the digression; e.g., the inheritance and promise:

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (1:13,14)* *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel (3:6)*

The ‘mystery’ as a description of the salvation provided in Christ. Note: this is not to equate the mystery mentioned in chapter one with the mystery mentioned in chapter three; while both are things hidden in God until revealed, Paul is speaking of two different things in these chapters. The point of this is to show that while different, there are many similarities in these passages:

*having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. (1:9, 10)* *how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (3:3,4)*

The first mystery (the ‘summing up of all things in Christ’) can be seen to be anticipated in the one body of Jews / Gentiles:

*having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. (1:9, 10)* *by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel (3:4,6)*

Both contexts speak of their respective mysteries as relating to God's eternal purpose in Christ:

*having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. (1:9, 10)*

In the opening thanksgiving / prayer Paul requests the Spirit of wisdom and revelation for his readers in the knowledge of God and the working of God's mighty strength, while in our digression God is shown to give Paul this insight and revelation and such working of God's power for the Gentiles. In essence, Paul was part of the response to his own prayer for the Gentiles.

*(I pray) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (1:17,19)*

*how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets ... of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ (3:3-5, 7-9)*

**v 1 — BACKWARD REFERENCE PROBABLY TO 2:11-22 — for this reason, for this cause — Τούτου χάριν [toutou charin]** Ernest Best notes there is little reason to see what follows in vv. 2ff for Paul to be making a forward reference. It could possibly be merely transitional but the repetition of the phrase in 3.14 renders it unlikely. **Most likely Paul is making a backward reference to 2.11-22 (there is nothing in 2.1-10 which is relevant to what follows) with a special emphasis upon 2.19-22.** [Best, 294; see also Hoehner, 418] Kenneth Wuest agrees, saying Paul is referring back to 2:20-22 [Wuest, 80] **“[A]s Theodoret says, ‘Knowing well both what ye were and how ye were called and on what conditions, I pray God to establish you in the faith.’”** [Abbott, 76] **“[‘For this cause’] is best referred ... to the purport of the whole statement just brought to its conclusion; the fact that they are now what God’s grace has made them and are meant by Him to form a spiritual habitation for Himself, being His reason for what He urges on them and what He does for them.”** [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 302] **“In this case, the original τούτου χάριν, [toutou charin, ‘for this reason’] of 3:1 provides a link with the thrust of the preceding pericope, 2:11-22, and particularly the last part, vv 18-22. If his Gentile Christian readers are no longer outside the scope of the history of salvation, but have been privileged to be part of God’s new temple, then [Paul] sees them as in need of being empowered to fulfill their role in God’s purposes, of being enabled to become what they are, and gives an account of his prayer to that effect.** Since this intention begins in v 1 but is not taken up again until v 14, it is in fact, strictly speaking, vv 2-13 which form the digression on Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles within the introduction to an intercessory prayer.” [Lincoln, 167]

**PERSONALLY EMPHATIC — I, Paul — ἐγὼ Παῦλος [egō Paulos]** **“‘I Paul,’ a solemn and emphatic designation of the writer by himself, expressive rather of his personal interest in them than the consciousness of his authority.”** [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 302] **“Here Paul explains that he, as the author of this letter (1:1), is personally suffering in their behalf. There is no sense of egotism but rather the sense of personal involvement. He had received and revealed to them the revelation that believing Jews and Gentiles are one body and now is suffering the consequences of declaring that revelation.”** [Hoehner, 419] **“The double ἐγὼ Παῦλος [egō Paulos, ‘I, Paul’] stresses the identity of Paul. Paul uses it when he wishes to emphasize either an argument or his own position (2 Cor 10.1; Gal 5.2; 1 Th 2.18; Philem 19; cf Col 1.23). Only here and in Col 1.23 is it tied to his mission to the Gentiles.... On other occasions when Paul introduces his own name he does so usually because he, his position as apostle, or his teaching have been attacked.** Ephesians however contains no trace of any attack on him or his teaching; he is never on the defensive. He ... introduces himself with the intention of being shown as the one who prays for the Gentiles; 3.14ff gives the prayer. Paul’s name is introduced then with pastoral intent, but once introduced the discussion is given a new direction beginning from the reference to him as a prisoner on behalf of others.” [Best, 295] **“Paul uses this expression elsewhere when he wants to defend or emphasize his apostleship to the Gentiles (Gal. 5:2; 2 Cor. 10:1; Col. 1:23) or when he wants to express his deep concern for those who have believed the gospel through his preaching (1 Thess. 2:18).”** [Thielman, 191]

**PAUL THE AUTHOR OF EPHESIANS —** We have on several occasions pointed to the places in these studies where those who deny the Pauline authorship of Ephesians make their argument. But it strikes me as a paradox that this, the most personal and pro-Pauline portion of Ephesians, would be the very center of their attack upon his authorship. We will discuss the focus of their attack when we get to v. 2 but it is worth mentioning here. Ernest Best makes note here that “While the greater part of the letter will yield the same theological meaning whether Paul is regarded as author or not, that cannot be said of 3.2-13. If AE [Author of Ephesians] specifically mentions Paul as author he will be reminding his readers that Paul sealed his mission with a martyr’s death

in prison; in this way he will deepen the appeal of what he writes in setting out Paul as the architect of the church of Jews and Gentiles. When he wrote in Paul's name, AE played on his readers' knowledge that he was a prisoner; the very introduction of his name reminds them of everything they know about him. AE makes use of Paul's name in this way because his readers venerate Paul." [Best, 295] Note Best does not deny the Pauline authorship of Ephesians per se, rather he (like Lincoln) admits he does not know if Paul was the author and therefore makes reference to the author throughout his commentary as 'AE' (author of Ephesians). In this portion Best gives both possibilities: what this means if Paul was the author and what this means if Paul was not the author.

**PAUL THE PRISONER — a prisoner of Christ Jesus, the prisoner of Christ Jesus — ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ [ho desmios tou Christou Iēsou]** Paul endured several imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23). Throughout his epistles he often refers to himself as 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ' (Eph 3:1; Philem 1, 9), 'the prisoner of the Lord' (Eph 4:1), or 'His prisoner' (2 Tim 1:8). He calls himself 'an ambassador in chains' (Eph 6:20) and frequently speaks of 'my chains' or 'to the point of chains' (Phil 1:7, 13, 14, 16; Philem 10, 13; 2 Tim 2:9). Paul once refers to 'Aristarchus my fellow prisoner' (Col 4:10). "Our epistle thus stands grouped with Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy, as an Epistle written from prison." [Moule, 87] ***"In the literal sense he is a prisoner of Caesar, or of someone holding authority under Caesar. Yet he is kept a prisoner, not by physical restraint, but by his relation to Christ and his love for the Gentiles, on whose behalf he is a prisoner. He is Caesar's prisoner because he is first of all Christ's prisoner, not just a Christian who through some misfortune happens to find himself in prison; neither is he simply a prisoner of conscience, as are many because of their unwillingness to give up a cause to which their lives have been dedicated. His life is dedicated to a person.... Paul's imprisonment is not then a sign of God's displeasure; whatever happens to him will be for the good of the gospel (Phil 1.12-26)."*** [Best, 295f] ***"The genitives (τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, tou Christou Iēsou, 'of Christ Jesus') denote not only possession, depicting Paul as Christ's prisoner, but also denote cause, for it was the cause of Christ that made him a prisoner."*** [Hoehner, 420] "As he was Christ's servant, apostle, and minister, so he was Christ's prisoner. ***In all his relations he belonged to Christ.***" [Hodge, 158] "Paul describes himself not as an apostle, however, but as ὁ δέσμιος [ho desmios, 'prisoner']. The article places special emphasis on his imprisonment, and ***the mention of his imprisonment was probably intended to add pathos and conviction to his prayer: those who go to prison for what they believe are worth hearing.***" [Thielman, 191]

**pathos** – the power of a life experience, literature, music, speech or other forms of expression, of evoking a feeling of pity or compassion.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSPECTIVE —** ***"Although arrested on Jewish charges, Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of the Jews. Although imprisoned by Roman authority, he did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome. Although he had appealed to Caesar, he did not consider himself Caesar's prisoner. He was a minister of Jesus Christ, bought with a price, and given the special mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. He was therefore 'the prisoner of Christ Jesus.' Whatever he did and wherever he went were under Christ's control. Without his Lord's consent, he was not subject to the plans, power, punishment, or imprisonment of any man or government.... Perspective is all-important. How we view and react to circumstances is more important than the circumstances themselves. If all we can see is our immediate situation, then our circumstances control us. We feel good when our circumstances are good but miserable when they are not. Had Paul been able to see only his circumstances, he would quickly have given up his ministry. Had he thought that his life was ultimately in the hands of his persecutors, his jailers, his guards, or the Roman government, he would long since have given up in despair. But Paul's perspective was a divine perspective, and he lived with total trust in God's purposes. It was not that he himself knew his future or fully understood the divine purposes behind his afflictions, but that he knew his future, his afflictions, and every other aspect of his life were totally in His Lord's hands."*** [MacArthur, 87] "To strengthen his authority still more, he speaks in lofty terms of his prison. In the presence of the world and of wicked men, this might have appeared to be foolish boasting; but, in addressing godly persons, it was a dignified and faithful manner. The glory of Christ not only overcomes the ignominy of the chains, but converts what was in itself a reproach into the highest honor. If he had merely said, 'I am a prisoner,' this would not have conveyed the idea of his being an ambassador. Imprisonment alone has no claim to this honor, being usually the mark of wickedness and crime. But the crowns and sceptres of kings, to say nothing of the imposing splendor of an ambassador, are less honorable than the chains of a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Men might think otherwise, but it is our duty to judge of the reasons. ***So highly ought the name of Christ to be revered by us, that what men consider to be the greatest reproach, ought to be viewed by us as the greatest honour.***" [Calvin, 246f]

**PRISONER OF ROME —** Which imprisonment? **There are three possibilities: Caesarea, Ephesus, Rome.** For more detail see the introduction (lesson 3) but allow this to serve as a summation: ***"The traditional view assigns the captivity Epistles to Rome. This view remained unchallenged for eighteen centuries.*** We know from the narrative of Acts that Paul was in fact placed under house arrest in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30). The conditions of his free confinement allowed him scope to proclaim the gospel (Acts 28:16, 17, 23, 31; Eph 6:18-20; Philippians 1:12-18; Col 4:2-4)." [Wood, *Ephesians on CD*] "A prisoner in the service of the Lord Jesus; or made a prisoner in his cause. Not a prisoner for crime or debt, or as a captive in war, but a captive in the service of the Redeemer. This proves that at the time of writing this, Paul was in bonds, and there can be no question that he was in Rome." [Barnes, *Ephesians on CD*] A review of the circumstances placing Paul in the Roman prison; from lesson three in our Ephesians series:

**ARRESTED IN JERUSALEM**

Paul is imprisoned in Jerusalem by the Roman authorities under suspicion of fomenting a riot in the temple (Acts 21:27-36). After learning of a plot to kill Paul, the Roman Tribune Claudius Lysias had Paul transferred to Caesarea under protective guard.

**CAESAREA  
IMPRISONMENT**

**AD 57-59**

Paul defends himself in Caesarea before Felix who finds him to have done nothing worthy of prison yet keeps Paul hoping for a bribe. Festus replaces Felix after two years and as a favor to the Jews recommends Paul be sent back to Jerusalem. Paul refuses and appeals to have his case heard in Caesar's court. Festus agrees to send him to Rome. During this time Paul also testifies before King Agrippa who wanted to see Paul out of curiosity (Acts 25:13-26:32).

**VOYAGE TO  
ROME**

**AD 59-60**

Paul is transferred to Rome on a sea-voyage which began in the fall (the "Fast" in Acts 27:9 is almost certainly the Day of Atonement) and ended in the spring, having spent three months shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 28:11).

**FIRST ROMAN  
IMPRISONMENT**

**AD 60-62**

Acts closes with Paul under house arrest in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30-31). Some believe Paul was killed during this imprisonment but most in our circles do not accept that because first, reliable early church accounts associates Paul's death with Nero's persecution in AD 64-65 and it is unlikely Paul remained in house arrest in Rome for that long a period. Secondly evidence in the Pastoral Epistles points to further ministry in the eastern Mediterranean after Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment.

Philippians from Ephesus or Corinth ~ late 50's / early 60's AD  
Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon from prison ~ early 60's AD

**MINISTRY IN THE  
EAST**

**AD 62-64**

Some believe Paul ministered to Spain as he expressed his desire in Rom 15:28. Others believe his ministry in east Mediterranean does not allow time for a Spain visit.

1 Timothy, Titus ~ early 60's

**SECOND ROMAN  
IMPRISONMENT  
AND  
MARTYRDOM**

**AD 64-65**

Historically it is understood Paul was captured during the Nero Persecution of Christians and executed shortly thereafter. Being a Roman citizen exempted Paul from a tortuous death; the most accepted tradition states he was beheaded.

2 Timothy from Roman prison just before martyrdom

**for you Gentiles, for the sake of you Gentiles, on behalf of you Gentiles** — ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν [huper humōn tōn ethnōn] William Tyndale gives an interesting translation: *for your sakes which are heathen*. The word used for 'Gentiles' literally means 'a nation, a people' and was used by the Jews to refer to all the other nations, 'the Gentiles.' It is where we get our modern word 'ethnic' meaning 'pertaining to or characteristic of a people, especially a group.' **"This is the only time in his writings that Paul mentions that his imprisonment was in behalf of the Gentiles.** Certainly, Paul's special mission was to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18; Gal 1:16; 2:7-9; Rom 1:5; 11:13; 1 Tim 2:7). Because of this, the Jews claimed that he was distorting God's revelation and thus were instrumental in obtaining his imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-36) from where he was taken to Caesarea, tried, and appealed to Caesar (Acts 24:23-25:12). He was then taken to Rome and imprisoned while waiting for his accusers to arrive (Acts 27-28). Altogether he spent four years in prison: two years in Caesarea and another two years in Rome. While in Rome he wrote to the Ephesians about his imprisonment. **Therefore, because of his mission to the Gentiles he suffered incarceration. This is why he states that he was a prisoner in their behalf. He did not want pity, for it was their glory, as expressed in verse 13.** [Hoehner, 420] **"The only reason why Paul was in prison was because he thought Gentiles had the same access to God that Jews did. If he had been content to be a Jewish Christian with a mission to Jews or if he had been willing to keep Gentiles on a lower plane, he would not have been in jail. But the purpose of Paul's call was to bring about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1-2), and if faith was the key to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles were on the same plane."** [Snodgrass, 159] **"And because Paul was a faithful steward, he was now a prisoner in Rome. Like Joseph in the Old Testament, his faithful stewardship resulted in false arrest and imprisonment. But, in the end, it brought great glory to God and salvation to Jews and Gentiles."** [Wiersbe, 27]

**THE PROVIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION OF PAUL** — **"The orthodox Jews in Paul's day considered the Gentiles 'dogs,' but some of the Christian Jews did not have a much better attitude toward the Gentiles. Paul was a leader in Jewish orthodoxy when Christ saved him (Gal. 1:11-24; Phil. 3:1-11), yet in the providence of God, he began his early ministry in a local church in Antioch that was composed of both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:19-26)."** [Wiersbe, 27]

**PAUL DOES NOT DEVELOP HIS CIRCUMSTANCES** — **"While the reason for Paul's imprisonment 'on behalf of you Gentiles' is not actually stated, this passing allusion seems to assume a certain awareness of it... [T]his is Paul's own allusion to his present circumstances which he here leaves undeveloped because Tychicus has been charged with the task of filling in the details (cf. Eph 6:21,22) when he delivers the letter."** [Muddiman, 148f] **"But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts."** (Eph 6:21,22 NKJV)