I. Paul was given a job/duty – 3:1-2 “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you,” (ESV)

- Prisoner for Christ Jesus = Paul suffered for the Gospel and for people
- Are we willing to endure suffering in order for people to be saved?
- Stewardship = Manager. Did not own anything but he managed the house

A manager of what? = God’s grace or God’s riches at Christ’s expense.

1. God’s grace, for a Christian goes far beyond simply the food we eat and the air we breathe. Matthew 5:45b says, “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (KJV).

2. God’s grace is not merely a personal issue
   - “The Garden” – is without reference
   - If God’s gifts to us were for our personal benefit without us ever using them for the glory of God it would be like using company property for yourself. Imagine you enlist in the Army and are trained to drive a tank. The skills you are taught are for the purpose of carrying out the will of your supreme commander, not to take a joyride!

3. Rather, God’s grace is the ability He gives us to help people come to know God. Notice 3:2b, “that was given to me FOR YOU.” This is the ability to turn the other cheek, to bless when you are cursed.
   - Given v.2,7,8 = uses the verb “give.” Thus, grace is a gift.
   - For you – God gives us gifts to use in the body of Christ

4. God’s grace involves Suffering on behalf of others – 3:1 “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—” (NASB)

II. Paul was given a Vision – 3:3-6

1) A mystery was explained-3:3-6 “that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief: By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 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,”

Refers to 2:11-22 where Christ broke down the wall of separation between us and God that whoever will repent of their sin and place their faith in Christ will be saved.

Louw & Nida, “μυστήριον, ου: the content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency—‘secret, mystery.’ ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν ‘the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you’ Mt 13.11. There is a serious
problem involved in translating μυστήριον by a word which is equivalent to the English expression ‘mystery,’ for this term in English refers to a secret which people have tried to uncover but which they have failed to understand. In many instances μυστήριον is translated by a phrase meaning ‘that which was not known before,’ with the implication of its being revealed at least to some persons.”

Q# So what is the Mystery? =
   A. Not the saving of the Gentiles
   B. Not the kingdom of God
   C. Not the unexplained mysteries – Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law” (ESV)

“The Church is known as ‘The Mystery form of the Kingdom’” (John MacArthur)

W.A. Criswell:
“In short, the mystery is that God originally established the Hebrew nation to be representatives to the world of God’s absolute & total holiness and to show through the Law of God that NO ONE can keep the Law, thus, leading the way for the Messiah who would be Perfect and who, God would send the Messiah to redeem the world THROUGH the nation of Israel.”

OT prophets did not understand, as well as John the Baptist, how the Messiah could come and suffer and die and yet still be King of the Universe.
Some of the disciples seem to have honed in more on the Conqueror part of the Messiah’s work. They thought Jesus was going to free them from Rome.
= Resurrection and Regeneration!

They DID understand that Gentiles were going to be saved but they did NOT understand how Jew and Gentile would be ONE in Christ.

“It was the law-free gospel which Paul proclaimed, and because it was law-free it was applicable to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Gentiles, formerly kept apart from Jews by the barrier of the law, were not able to benefit from God’s saving act in Christ and to be incorporated in him along with Jews. Ephesians 3 emphasizes this aspect of the “secret” that has been revealed.”

“The mystery or open secret of Christ is ‘the complete union of Jews and Gentiles with each other through the union of both with Christ. It is this double union, with Christ and with each other, which is the substance of the “mystery”’ (John Stott)
= Thus, you didn’t have to adopt Jewish culture to be saved.

2 http://www.wacriswell.org/PrintTranscript.cfm/SID/2707.cfm
4 Ibid, 236, John Stott, 117
IF God’s will is for us to be “One” then how must we appear to him when we divide ourselves into different groups against one another?

Acts 15:5-11 Peter claims that Salvation does not depend upon you adopting a certain culture.
Acts 15:19-20 James
“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.”

But Israel did not want to listen:
a. Killed the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah
b. Allowed John the Baptist to be killed, the ground-layer for the Messiah
c. Killed the Messiah

What is explanation of the Mystery? = Warren Wiersbe writes:
You cannot detect the mystery of the one body in the OT Scriptures; it was a mystery hidden in Christ. In vv. 9-10 we see a dual ministry: Paul was to make known the dispensation (“fellowship,” same word as v.2) of the mystery to people in general; the church was to reveal the wisdom of God to angelic beings (“principalities and powers,” see 6:12). Angels are learning about God’s grace through the church! (See 1 Peter 1:10-12.) Satan knows the Scriptures; by keeping His program for the church hidden, God prevented Satan from hindering the plan. Satan took Christ to the cross, and by so doing sealed his own doom.”

So God, knowing this would happen, created and formed the Church: a collection of every kind of person around the planet, unified in faith in Christ Jesus.

Talk about de-centralization! Satan’s plan to destroy God’s plan was seem as impossible because of the de-centralized nature of the church; its not a building, it’s a collection of people.

Galatians 1:15-16a “But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,”

Romans 16:25-26 “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has

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been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith” (ESV)

Colossians 1:26-27 “the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

III. Application

1) Embrace/Accept the Mystery of the Gospel—3:7
Praise to God that the human race not only can be united to God through faith in the Lord Jesus *BUT ALSO UNITED TO ONE ANOTHER*!

Dylan Reid Faircloth the First, “I’ve figured God out…I’ve figured that you can’t figure God out.”

2) Manage the Mystery
Who do you know? – God has placed them in your life so that you be a witness to them.

3) Focus on God’s Grace vs. Your own Weakness – 3:8
Paul saw himself as the worst of all sinners *but he didn’t stay there*! Why not? Why didn’t Paul stay in the past? Because he was an apostle? No. Because he wrote much of the NT? No. Not because of anything that he was or had done but because of the greatness of God.

4) Pray for God’s Strength – 3:1,14
Parable of the Talents – there WILL be a day when we will all give an account to the boss for how we managed what He gave us. “*Well done, good and faithful servant.*”