

Ephesians 3:14-21

The Mystery Embraced

Main idea: God loves you and all people more than you can imagine. All generations will glorify His name.

Jesus once told a wonderful story about a lost sheep.¹

- But I want you to personalize it this morning. Imagine yourself as the sheep.
- Now I want you to personalize it in another way. Imagine someone you love as the sheep.
- Now I want you to imagine it one more way. Imagine your enemy as the sheep.²
- Does God love each of these people the same? And if so, what will God do in order to seek and to save the lost?³

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

During World War II, a Catholic Priest named Maximilian Kolbe died in place of another man.⁴ [\[photo\]](#)

- This is a great example of what Jesus has done for us.⁵
- Because Jesus is God, His death could not only be in place of a few lives, but could atone for all sin.⁶

This is the third and last sermon in this series that I've been calling The Mystery of Christ from Ephesians 3.

- In the first sermon, we talked about how God revealed the mystery of His will to us.⁷
- In the second, we talked about how God has given us the blessing of sharing Jesus with others.⁸
- Today, we will talk about how God is able to accomplish all of His will. [\[Psalm 115:3\]](#)
- We're going to talk about that this morning by looking at three points from Paul's prayer.

First, notice that Paul prayed for everyone to receive Jesus (v. 14-17a).

- It's interesting how the Bible does not often tell us that we should pray for unbelievers.⁹
- And the few times that it does, it's most often by example rather than by command. [\[Romans 10:1\]](#)
[\[Acts 26:28-29\]](#) [\[Luke 23:34\]](#)
 - One of the few times I found it as a command was when Jesus said this: [\[Matthew 5:44\]](#)
 - Interestingly, this prayer seems to say more about us than our enemies. [\[1 Timothy 2:4\]](#)
 - Another story from World War II about this comes from Corrie Ten Boom.¹⁰ [\[photo\]](#)
 - God calls us to love and forgive even those who are most difficult to forgive.¹¹
- So when we pray for the salvation of others, we're always in line with God's desires for them.¹²
 - We should pray that they would be strengthened in the Spirit (v. 16).
 - We should pray that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith (v. 17a).

The second thing I want you to notice is that Paul prayed for everyone's continual growth in Jesus (v. 17b-19).

- Being rooted in Jesus is only the beginning of our relationship with God.¹³
- As we walk with Jesus, we begin to see just how great God's love is.¹⁴
 - We begin to realize that we really were the lost sheep.¹⁵
 - We realize that we really were the prodigal son, another story that Jesus told.¹⁶
- I don't think we'll ever fully be able to comprehend God's love, and yet Paul prayed that we would.¹⁷
- The more we see God's love and praise Him for it, the more we're filled with the fullness of God.¹⁸

The third thing I want you to see from Paul's prayer is that God can do anything He desires (v. 20-21).

- The life of George Müller is a great example of believing in the power of God through prayer.¹⁹ [\[photo\]](#)
[\[wiki 1\]](#) [\[wiki 2\]](#)
- I once had a similar experience when trying to get a car part at a junkyard.

- If God cares about our needs when it comes to water heaters, drains, and car parts, then certainly He cares when we pray for people.²⁰
- I think some Christians think God will not answer their prayers for their loved ones.²¹
 - But God loves you and all people more than you can possibly imagine.²²
 - I guarantee you that God loves your kids more than you love your kids.²³
 - And He's patient enough to allow them wander away for a time.²⁴
 - And He's powerful enough to bring them back and save them in His time. [2 Peter 3:9]
- All generations will glorify His name.

So, to be abundantly clear, I believe the Bible here and as a whole makes these points:

- God is love, and desires to save everyone.²⁵
- God is omnipotent, and can do all that He desires.²⁶
- God is Jesus, so He eventually does save all by grace through faith in Him.²⁷

Endnotes

1. Luke 15:3-7
2. Matthew 5:43-48
3. Luke 19:10
4. "At the end of July 1941, a prisoner escaped from the camp, prompting the deputy camp commander...to pick ten men to be starved to death in an underground bunker to deter further escape attempts. When one of the selected men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out, "My wife! My children!" Kolbe volunteered to take his place...In his prison cell Kolbe led the prisoners in prayer...After they had been starved and deprived of water for two weeks, only Kolbe and three others remained alive. The guards wanted the bunker emptied, so they gave the four remaining prisoners lethal injections of carbolic acid...He died on 14 August 1941." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximilian_Kolbe)
5. 2 Corinthians 5:14
6. 1 Peter 3:18
7. Ephesians 3:1-7
8. Ephesians 3:8-13
9. It's sometimes implied, and it's certainly something that we should want to do, but it rarely clearly says, "You should pray for the unbelievers that you know to come to know Jesus."
10. She experienced the horrors of the concentration camps during World War II. She lost her dad, and her sister, and so many others that she knew in those camps. Years later, after she spoke about those things at a conference, a man approached her and asked for her forgiveness, because he was one of the Nazi guards at one of those camps. It took everything in her, but she forgave him and even embraced him as a brother in Christ.
11. Matthew 18:21-22
12. 1 Timothy 2:4
13. Colossians 2:6-7
14. 2 Peter 3:18
15. Luke 15:3-7
16. Luke 15:11-32
17. Romans 11:33, 1 Corinthians 13:12
18. Psalm 16:11, John 15:9-11
19. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_M%C3%BCller
20. Matthew 6:25-26
21. 1 Timothy 2:3-4
22. John 3:16
23. Romans 5:8
24. 2 Peter 3:9
25. John 3:16-17, 1 Timothy 2:4
26. Psalm 115:3, Job 42:2, Isaiah 46:9-10
27. Philippians 2:9-11, Revelation 22:21