

**Palmetto Baptist Church:** May 17, 2020  
**Comfortable in Your Own Skin:** Ephesians 3:1-3

A Super Bowl ad starring Jason Mom-oa has left viewers shocked and “unsettled”. The clip, unveiled on Sunday night during the game, sees the *Aquaman* star advertise Rocket Mortgage, a popular online lender in the US.

In the video, Mom-oa riffs off the idea that home is where he can “kick back and be totally comfortable in [his] own skin”.

As he talks to the camera, Mom-oa indeed gets comfortable – shedding the muscles and the impressive stature that have become a key part of his image over the years.

- The Messenger of the Gospel (1-3)
- The Mystery of the Gospel (4-6)
- The Message of the Gospel (7-13)

## I. The Messenger of the Gospel (The Apostle Paul) (1-3)

### ● Student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)

<sup>3</sup>“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel<sup>[a]</sup> according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

**Question:** “Who was Gamaliel in the Bible?”<sup>1</sup>

**Answer:** Gamaliel was a first-century Jewish rabbi and a leader in the Jewish Sanhedrin. Gamaliel is mentioned a couple of times in Scripture as a famous and well-respected teacher. Indirectly, Gamaliel had a profound effect on the early church.

Gamaliel was a Pharisee and a grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel. Like his grandfather, Gamaliel was known for taking a rather lenient view of the Old Testament law in contrast to his contemporary, Rabbi Shammai, who held to a more stringent understanding of Jewish traditions.

The first biblical reference to Rabbi Gamaliel is found in Acts 5. The scene is a meeting of the Sanhedrin, where John and Peter are standing trial. After having warned the apostles to cease preaching in the name of Jesus, the Jewish council becomes infuriated when Simon Peter defiantly replies, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29). Peter had no intention of ceasing to proclaim the gospel, regardless of the possible repercussions. Peter’s defiance enrages the council, who begin to seek the death of the apostles. Into the fray steps Gamaliel. The rabbi, “who was honored by all the people” (Acts 5:34), first orders the apostles to be removed from the room. Gamaliel then encourages the council to be cautious in dealing with Jesus’ followers: “In the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gamaliel-in-the-Bible.html>

them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God” ([Acts 5:38-39](#)). The Sanhedrin is persuaded by Gamaliel’s words (verse 40). That the council acquiesced to his advice speaks to the influence that Gamaliel possessed.

Later rabbis lauded Gamaliel for his knowledge, but he may be better known for his most famous pupil—another Pharisee named [Saul of Tarsus \(Acts 22:3\)](#), who later became the apostle Paul. It was under the tutelage of Rabbi Gamaliel that Paul developed an expert knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul’s educational and professional credentials allowed him to preach in the synagogues wherever he traveled (see [Acts 17:2](#)), and his grasp of Old Testament history and law aided his presentation of Jesus Christ as the One who had fulfilled the Law ([Matthew 5:17](#)).

Gamaliel is also mentioned by the [historian Josephus](#), who wrote of the nobility of Gamaliel’s son, Simon (*Vita*, 38). Josephus’ description of Gamaliel’s family is consistent with the picture we see of him in the [book of Acts](#). The [Talmud](#) also mentions Gamaliel, but there is still much that we do not know about him. As with many figures from ancient history, our knowledge of Gamaliel is limited. From the sources that we do possess, it is clear that Gamaliel and his family were revered as men of wisdom and prudential judgment. In God’s sovereign plan, this Jewish rabbi preserved the lives of the apostles in the early church and helped equip the greatest Christian missionary.

- **Student of Jesus (Gal. 2:10-18)**
- **Servant of Jesus (Romans 1:1)**
- **Apostle of Jesus (Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1)**

### **Children’s Story:**

1 Acts 7:58 A key person involved in the death of Stephen was a young man called Saul. Those stoning Stephen took off their coats and left them at the feet of Saul.

2 Acts 8v1 After the death of Stephen, Christians in Jerusalem suffered so much that many left to find new places to live. Some travelled north to the city of Damascus.

3 Acts 9. Saul went to the High Priest and asked for papers giving him permission to go to Damascus and arrest any belonging to ‘The Way’ (as Christians were known).

4 The papers were handed to Saul and he set off to Damascus, making murderous threats about those who believed Jesus was ‘The Way’ to God.

5 As he got near to the city, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

6 ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the voice replied. ‘Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless. They heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing.

8 So they led Saul by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

9 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, ‘Ananias!’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered.

10 ‘Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man named Saul. He is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.’

11 ‘Lord,’ Ananias answered, ‘This man has harmed your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’

12 But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! I have chosen Saul to proclaim my Name not only to Jews but Gentiles (nonJews) and their kings. I will also show him how much he must suffer for me.’

13 Ananias went to the house and placed his hands on Saul. ‘Brother Saul, Jesus-- who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see.

14 Saul got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

15 Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus – the very people he had come to arrest.

16 Immediately Saul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

17 Those listening were astonished and asked, ‘Isn’t he the man who caused so much trouble for Christians in Jerusalem and came here to arrest them?’

18 Saul powerfully explained to them that Jesus is the Messiah.

The Apostle Paul knew the challenges of taking a NEW/CONCEALED MESSAGE to a NEW/UNWELCOMED GROUP OF PEOPLE would involve. He defended his actions by

recalling his conversion and calling. Paul later repeats this pattern in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 when encouraging prospective elders to reflect on their conversion, calling, and character.

- When was the last time you reflected on your conversion?
- When was the last time you reflected on your calling?

### **Read Ephesians 3:1-13**

**3** For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup> assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. <sup>4</sup> When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is<sup>[a]</sup> that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in<sup>[b]</sup> God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. <sup>13</sup> So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

### **I. The Messenger of the Gospel (The Apostle Paul) (1-3)**

A. Paul was colorful in his communication.

1. He utilized super sentences.

- Paul interrupts his statement regarding his credentials with a long sentence (a parenthetical thought that establishes a basis for what he has said and will say...).
- This is one of 8 long sentences in the book of Ephesians:

These super sentences are called cumulative sentences. Cumulative sentences (also known as loose sentences) begin with a subject and a predicate and then add a series of phrases and or subordinate clauses that amplify or explain the idea in the independent or main clause. This construction puts the main idea first and supports it with phrases containing details. The cumulative sentences we will explore will be Ephesians 1:3-14, 15-23; 2:1-9, 11-15, 19-22; 3:1-13, 14-21 and 4:1-6, 7-16.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.teleiosministries.com/ephesians.html>

2. He tackled deep theological concepts.

## 2 Peter 3:14-16

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. <sup>15</sup>And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

- a. The revelation of God's truth to man (credentials, conversion & calling)
  - b. The mystery of Christ (previously concealed but now revealed)
    - a. Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (verse 6)
    - b. To proclaim this mystery to the church and beyond (10 – to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places) as a part of God's plan from eternity past (11).
    - c. To exercise boldness and receive direct access to God through Christ (12)
- B. Paul dependent upon divine intervention.
1. Divine intervention to experience unity in the church.
    - For this reason... (1)
      - Connects chapter 3 with chapter 2 demonstrating an awareness of the need for unity in the church of Ephesus.
  2. Divine intervention to grasp the mysteries of Christ.
    - For this reason... (14)
      - Connection phrase in verse 14 picking up from verse 1 about the ability of God to do exceeding and abundantly above all that we ask or think.

### **Why was Paul prone to “interrupt his thoughts” with theological truths?**

John MacArthur Study Bible suggests: “He [Paul] realized that spiritual knowledge must precede practical application. What is not properly understood cannot be properly applied.”

**Application:** How much effort do you make to know the truth intimately and communicate the truth clearly? We must spend time reading the Bible and praying but we

must help people see the WHY behind the WHAT. It is not simply like the song: “Read your Bible, pray every day and you’ll grow, grow, grow. Neglect your Bible forget to pray (2x)... and you’ll shrink (3x).” We must learn to embrace the truth of a Christian Hedonist: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”<sup>3</sup> According to the “super sentence” found in verses 2-13, Paul helps his readers understand the amazing depth of God’s love for the Gentiles. In essence, Paul is saying... “if you could only grasp the MYSTERY OF GOD’S AMAZING GRACE, you would be willing to do WHATEVER HE CALLS YOU TO DO.

## ***I. The Messenger of the Gospel (The Apostle Paul) (1-3)***

- A. *Paul was colorful in his communication.*
- B. *Paul dependent upon divine intervention.*

C. Paul was clear about his mission. (1a)

1. He was secure in his status. – a prisoner of Christ Jesus

John MacArthur Study Bible: Although Paul had been a prisoner for about two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome, he did not consider himself to be a prisoner of any government or person. Rather, he knew he was under Christ’s control, and every aspect of his life was in the Lord’s hands. He suffered imprisonment for preaching to the Gentiles.

### **2 Corinthians 4:8-15**

<sup>8</sup>We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup>always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. <sup>11</sup>For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2. He was selfless in his sacrifice. – a prisoner on behalf of you Gentiles (1b; 13)

<sup>13</sup>So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- He cared about their emotional state – “*I ask you not to lose heart...*” (13a)
- He cared about their eternal state – “*which is for your glory.*” (13b)
- He cared about their spiritual state – the mystery revealed (6; Gal. 3:28)

<sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave<sup>[a]</sup> nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Application:** How much do you care (or what level do you demonstrate care) to those around you? Paul cared for a group of people that were traditionally rejected by his own

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-hedonism.html>

people. (2:11-16: segregated (11), separated (12a), alienated (12b), without God and without hope (12c), once far off (13), on the other side of the wall (14), on the other side of Jewish law (15), and experiencing hostility (16).

3. He was serious about his service. (2-3)
  - a. He understood the meaning of stewardship.
    - Stewardship (*oikonomia*): responsibility of management of a household
      - *Oikonomia* of God's gospel: I Cor. 9:15-18
      - *Oikonomia* of God's mystery: Col. 1:24-28
      - *Oikonomia* of God's grace: Eph. 1:2
  - b. He employed different means of stewardship.
    - Paul administered the grace he received through writing. (3b)
      - Paul authored 13 books of the NT (14 if you count Hebrews)

**The following is a breakdown of the letters Paul wrote and the possible timeframes in which he wrote them:**

Galatians (AD 47)

1 and 2 Thessalonians (AD 49—51)

1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans (AD 52—56)

Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians, and Philippians (AD 60—62, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment)

1 Timothy and Titus (AD 62)

2 Timothy (AD 63—64, during Paul's second Roman imprisonment)

- Paul administered the grace he received through preaching. (I Corinthians 2:1-5)

And I, when I came to you, brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> did not come proclaiming to you the testimony<sup>[b]</sup> of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup>For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup>And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup>and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men<sup>[c]</sup> but in the power of God.

- c. He understood the motivation necessary behind the stewardship. (2a-3)

*assuming that you heard of the stewardship of God's grace*

the "super sentence" is conditional

In essence, Paul was saying that you will only be willing to suffer for Jesus and the Gentiles (include them into the church regardless of the persecution you will receive from your fellow Jews), if you have experienced divine intervention like me. (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21; 26:12-29)

### **Apply the Text:**

- **He was colorful in his communication.**
  - Are you investing the time to explain the WHY behind the WHAT of your actions?
- **He was dependent upon divine intervention.**
  - Are you dependent upon God's power to accomplish the impossible?
  - How do you measure your dependence? Through the amount of time you spend in prayer
- **He was clear about his mission.**
  - Are you secure in who you are in Christ?
  - Are you sacrificing anything for Christ?
  - Are you serious about your service for Christ?