

Ephesians 3:1-13

Verse 1:

--**For this reason.** . . . That God was now interacting with Jews and Gentiles on a totally new principle in the Church of Jesus Christ. Paul is now going to explain his authority to teach this mystery now revealed.

--**I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles.** . . . Paul saw himself as the prisoner *of Christ* and *for Christ*. All the circumstances of his life—easy or hard—were under Jesus' eternal administration of the Father's will.

--Due to some of his other epistles and references it seems that Paul's enemies would use his imprisonments and persecutions as a mark against him: *False ministry. . . Out of God's favor. . . Not spiritual. . . etc.* *Will for us too!*

--Paul wasn't moved by any of these accusations. He knew suffering was a part of following Christ as was denying self, taking up his cross, and committing his soul to God as a Faithful Creator.

--Paul's addition of **for you Gentiles** was also important. Here was the up-and-coming Rabbi who used to teach the traditions of his fathers who is now teaching the mystery of Christ and the reality of Jew and Gentile in one body known as the Church.

--And, as a Jew, he was imprisoned because of preaching a message that religious Jews hated! ***Acts 22:21-22: Then He said to me, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles." And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"***

Verse 2:

--Paul is now going to speak about his personal calling from the Lord to teach this message. He describes it as **the dispensation of the grace of God.**

--The word **dispensation** is really a *stewardship* or *administration*. All that we have from God, the very breath in our lungs, is a stewardship.

--Paul's particular call from Jesus Christ was to go to the Gentiles with the gospel and suffer for the sake of Christ. This is mentioned in numerous passages: **(Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:16-18; Gal. 1:7-9).**

--**Of the grace of God.** . . . For a former blasphemer and persecutor to be called by God to preach the Gospel as a messenger of Christ was an act of God's gracious kindness toward him. Paul always speaks of his calling with gratitude and humility **(Rom. 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9).**

--It is an act of God's grace not only that any of us can be saved, but that we can share the message of that incredible salvation we have in Christ Jesus. Paul's ministry was an act of God's grace to him and to the world he was sharing it with—**for you.**

Verses 3-4:

--(3) How did Paul come to receive and understand this message he was preaching? Was it because of his expansive intellect or hard work studying? No. He makes it clear that it was a matter of *revelation*.

Galatians 1:12: For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

--The *mystery* is the hidden reality of Jesus Christ as the center of God's plans in making a new creation of Jews and Gentiles in one body—united with Christ as fellow-citizens of heaven and sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

Colossians 1:27: To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

--(4) In this verse Paul makes an interesting parenthetical reference. He had written to them just a little of this truth already in this epistle, which if they simply read, they would come to understand the revelation given to Paul by God.

--What is written in the Bible is meant to be read and understood by the normal Christian. Yes, things may be hard to understand at times, but that does not mean that it is incomprehensible!

2 Peter 3:15-16: And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

--The danger in reading the Scriptures is not our inability but our intentions. God intends that normal believers read and understand His Word. The Bible is a closed system written for common people!

Verses 5-6:

--(5) Here Paul is going to expound on the content of this revelation. In *other ages* or in the OT times they knew about a Messiah and His coming kingdom on earth but they didn't know about Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Son of Man and the new work that He would accomplish during this intermediate stage after His rejection by Israel.

--Now there was clarity to so much of what was said in the OT as Paul taught in **Romans 9-11** and particularly such verses as **9:25-33**.

--This plan of God was now divinely revealed by the Holy Spirit to *His holy apostles and prophets*—the NT revelation of God's present plan and purpose. **To holy men!**

--(6) What was the content of this mystery? The Gentiles becoming *fellow heirs*, one *body*, and *partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*.

--It is important to note what Paul does not say. The Gentiles do not become Israel. The Gentiles now *share* with Israel in Christ as full-fledged heirs, members, and partakers. The family of God will be equal but still keep its unique functional roles in God's promises and plans. *As we still believe of: Men/Women; Parents/Children; Elders/Deacons; etc.*

Verse 7:

--Again, notice Paul exalting his ministry—his life as a servant—by calling it ***the gift of the grace of God given to me***. This is constantly stressed in his writings: **(Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1+17; 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1, etc.)**.

--Second, we see that Paul knows whatever good came from his service to God came through the power of God. The Lord was the true Worker in Paul's life and ministry. Every sincere servant of God should claim the same—and no doubt will. *Beware of those who do not!*

Verse 8:

--Paul is still joyfully dumbfounded by the privilege he has in being a preacher of Christ. He considers himself ***less than the least of all the saints***.

1 Timothy 1:16: However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

--Paul lived glorying and boasting in the cross more than hiding and stinging under the shame of the sins of his past life. He gladly referenced how bad he was to exalt how good God is.

--Again, Paul references ***this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!***

--Every preacher should have something worthwhile to say about Jesus Christ and the things of Christ. The more people walk away from preaching talking about the preacher or something other than Christ—to that proportion we have failed in our ministry. *Any man or woman talking more about themselves or topics other than Christ or the things of Christ, does not deserve to be in a pulpit, and will help the church most by leaving it to someone else.*

--If preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ seems too difficult, than that minister doesn't know Christ or just isn't faithfully laboring in the Word of God. Why, because Paul makes it clear that the riches of Christ are ***unsearchable!***

--The Greek word for ***unsearchable*** is used only here and in **Rom. 11:33** where it is translated: ***past finding out***.

--Unsearchable is not unfindable. The idea is that there will always be more to be found!

There is a famous story about the gold rush and a man named R.U. Darby who bought a gold mine in Colorado. He and his uncle followed the first vein of gold and made a quick earning, but after a few fruitless months digging, gave up and sold all their machinery to a "junker". That man hired some engineers to survey the mine and they told him to dig three feet farther. The "junker" hit gold and became a millionaire.

--Christ has eternal riches of glory, love, and personality. **2:7: *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*** What we find in Him should drive us to seek Him more.

*Tozer (The Pursuit of God): *"To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too easily satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart."**

--Have we lost the wonder of asking, seeking, and knocking after Christ? There are always more riches of grace, love, power, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, purity, and life to be found in Him.

Verse 9:

--Paul's central theme was Christ crucified but he was also blessed **to make all see**—which means *to shine* or *to illuminate*—how we **fellowship** with Christ in His eternal work. The saved and redeemed have been invited into the plan of the ages which had been hidden for so long.

--The very plan that God made all things through Jesus Christ for (**Jn. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2**).

Verses 10-11:

--**(10)** Not only that, but here Paul tells us that the **manifold** (or *multi-colored* as the Greek word is used only here in the NT) **wisdom of God might be made known by the church to principalities and powers in heavenly places.**

--The Scriptures are clear that even the heavenly beings wonder at the works of God as seen in the earth and humanity. (**Lk. 15:10; 1 Cor. 11:10; Rev. 5:11; 15:3; Job; etc.**)

1 Peter 1:12: *To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which the angels desire to look into.*

--If the highest beings in creation learn about Christ through the Church what does this tell us about her destiny? The church is truly worthy of the name the Bride of Christ as from her we learn more about Him than from any other created thing.

*Austin-Sparks (Service): *"The Church here is represented as seated together with Christ in the heavenlies, not in the realm of the evil powers, but above them, amongst the angelic hosts. There, intelligences having absolute confidence in the wisdom and ability of God are nevertheless capable of being instructed and learning. They are aware of the unspeakably great and immense problems that have arisen through Satan's interference and man's complicity with him—the problem's of man's disrupted and twisted nature; of the resultant power of Satan over him and man's own utter helplessness; the problem of sin, enmity, hatred, pride, selfishness, warfare, death, etc. It is like a mountainous argument built up for God to answer. They are sure that He can do it, but there is breathless suspense as to how He will do it. They behold the Church as the vessel in which He will give the answer."**

--(11) And so we find ourselves afloat in the river of God's eternal purpose in creation and in Christ Jesus. Jesus isn't going to let His creation go wild like a garden left untended. He knows what He is doing and where He is taking everything. ***Acts 15:18***

****1:11: In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.****

Verses 12-13:

--(12) Our boldness and confidence toward God in this life will be directly related to our faith in Him and His Word. He is ours and we are His!

****Song of Songs 6:3: I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.****

--(13) Now, Paul returns to the reality of his imprisonment but sees his sufferings as a passing and small part of God's eternally huge purpose. In that, there is no reason for discouragement or losing heart!

--We live and suffer and die in the eternal purpose of the world being accomplished in Christ Jesus—we will also rise in resurrection and power and rule and reign and live in that eternal purpose as well.