

The Mystery of Christ Revealed - Part 1

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AM Service

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Text:

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2: If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: 3: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4: Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5: 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; 6: That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7: 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. 8: 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; 9: 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: 10: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11: According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13: Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. 14: For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Paul opens this chapter with the intention of praying for the Ephesian church. He is about to pray, but before he gets into his prayer, he stops and digresses starting at [verse 2 through verse 13](#). Then in [verse 14](#), Paul begins again in the same way he did in verse 1 and gets back to his prayer. [For this cause](#) (v1 and v14). [For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ](#). For this reason, I pray.

So, for the next twelve verses **Paul delays his prayer as he starts to talk about a divine mystery**. He stops and reveals the greatest mystery of all time. That's what we are going to look at this morning and next Sunday—**The Revelation of the Mystery** ([vv. 1-6](#)), **The Proclamation of the Mystery** ([vv. 7-9](#)), **The Intention of the Mystery** ([vv. 10-13](#)).

But before we look at this mystery, I want to direct your attention to how the apostle Paul identifies himself in this chapter—I, [Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles](#). Paul was literally in prison when he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. He was accused of taking a Gentile (Trochimus) to the Jewish temple, which is forbidden, There is a wall of separation in the temple of Jerusalem that kept the Jews and the Gentiles apart. But Paul was falsely accused. Still, he

faced the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin, the Roman governors Felix, and Festus, and finally King Agrippa. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, for two years until he appeals to Caesar and so Agrippa shipped him from Caesarea to Rome where Paul spent another three years there ([Acts 21-28](#)).

In this opening verse, Paul describes himself as “[a prisoner of Jesus Christ](#).” Paul was imprisoned in Rome, yet he describes himself not as a prisoner of Rome or of Nero but of Jesus Christ. Here, we see **Paul’s attitude and perspective in life**. He understood his imprisonment as God’s good and acceptable and perfect will. He wrote in [Philippians 1:12](#) *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13: So that **my bonds in Christ** are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14: And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Paul looks at his imprisonment as the will of God, for the glory of God, and for the good of the church. And he knew that his imprisonment was for the sake of the Gentiles ([v1](#)).

Phil Jones writes, *“The perspective from which we view our circumstances makes all the difference in how we deal with the trials and disappointments of life. When our perspective is always from seeing every circumstance in light of the sovereignty of God, we can obey passages like [James 1:2-4](#) “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” When you believe that God is in total control (the basic meaning of “sovereign”) you can trust Him to only do or allow that which is going to bring Him glory—which is what we desire because that is the purpose for which we exist. That doesn’t mean that we don’t suffer pain and struggle with disappointment, but it means that we can rise beyond those natural reactions and with a supernatural joy continue praising and serving our sovereign Lord.”* To which, I say, AMEN!

Now let’s look at the mystery that Paul speaks about in [verses 2-13](#).

I - The Revelation of the Mystery

In this section, the apostle Paul speaks about a mystery.

[Ephesians 3:2](#) *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: 3: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4: Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5: 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; 6: That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

And what is this mystery? But first of all, **it is important to have a correct understanding of what mystery means**, because the word ‘mystery’ can be used in various ways. One of these uses refers to the truth about God’s dealing with sinners which cannot be completely understood or comprehended. Who can comprehend the love of God for sinners?

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

The depth of God's love is a great mystery. While we know some things about the love of God, we certainly do not and cannot fully comprehend and appreciate everything about great love for us.

Listen to how Paul describes the love of Christ in ...

Ephesians 3:19 And to know **the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

The love of God is truly a mystery. It is beyond our ability to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of God's love.

How about the peace of God? Who can fully understand the peace that God allows us believers to experience when by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make our request known unto God?

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

As the love of Christ is so far beyond our capacity to fully comprehend, it is the same with the peace of God. The peace of God exceeds anything we can fully understand and explain. As someone has said, *"It is very felt, than telt."*

Another use of this word 'mystery' refers to truths about God that we humans cannot completely understand or comprehend. A great example of this type of mystery would be the **Trinity**. Who can comprehend the Trinity? God is both three and one at the same time. This type of mystery is something that we cannot logically understand. We accept it by faith because it is revealed in the Scripture. How about the doctrine of **hypostatic union**? The term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time. Who can comprehend this a great mystery that Jesus Christ is both God and man at the same time.

Another use of this word 'mystery' refers to something revealed that was previously hidden. It is something that had at one time been hidden but is now revealed to God's people. This is how the apostle Paul uses this term 'mystery' in this section.

Ephesians 3:5 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;

A mystery is that which was not made known to people in other generations, but now has been revealed by His Holy Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. So, a Biblical mystery is something that was previously hidden, but now revealed. **It is something that was unknown but now made known.**

And what is this mystery? Paul describes it in ...

Ephesians 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

It is the mystery of the Church! Paul wrote about this mystery in several places ...

Ephesians 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13: In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14: Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Colossians 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26: Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

The mystery is that the Gentiles, or non-Jews, becoming part of the Church. **The mystery is that Jew and Gentile would be one in Christ in the church, the body of Christ.** The church is the mystery that is revealed in the New Testament. Bible expositors, Dr. W. A. Criswell puts it this way: *“What is the mystery that was kept in the secret heart of God until the day He revealed it to His Apostles? The secret was this: that between the suffering of our Lord and the Kingdom appearance of our Lord there was to be a long period of time, an age of grace, a dispensation of mercy, and that in that period of time God was going to form another entity. It would be made up of Jews and Gentiles alike and they would be of the same body belonging to the same household of faith. That was the mystery. Even the angels did not know it... The prophets also did not know it. It was a misterion that was revealed to the later apostles like a hidden valley between two great mountain peaks... They saw the coming of Christ in suffering. They saw the coming of Christ in His glory. But they never saw the wide valley between, and in that valley God says He is going to create something new: the Jew and the Gentile alike should belong to the household of faith. Is not that a remarkable thing!”* [Dr. W. A. Criswell, Page 102-193].

This is God’s plan, *“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”* (Eph 3:6). The mystery revealed is that Gentiles and Jews trusting Jesus Christ as their Saviour are fellow heirs and members of one body. Gentiles and Jews are equally partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Both Gentiles and Jews enjoy the riches in Christ and the promise of blessings because they belong to Jesus Christ. By the way, this idea would have been **comforting for Gentile Christians, and challenging for Jewish Christians**. So much so that even Peter and many of the Jewish Christian in the early church had difficulty accepting it. But the Bible clearly declares in *Galatians 3:28-29* *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

The wall of separation between the Jew and the Gentile has been broken down through the person and work of Jesus Christ. All those who believe, Jew or Gentile are now members of the same body—the Church. AMEN!

Before we close, let me just say a couple of things about this mystery. Please turn to verse 3.

[Ephesians 3:3](#) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words. 4: Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).

What Paul is saying is that he had not learned the mystery from anyone else, nor had he discovered it through his own intelligence, nor had he discovered it through study or research or human deduction or reason. No, it was “**made known**” to him by **direct revelation from God**. So, the first thing to note about this mystery is that Paul received this knowledge of the mystery by a supernatural revelation from God Himself.

The second thing I want us to note is that **this mystery was not revealed to Paul only**.

[Ephesians 3:5](#) 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;

As the apostle Paul continues to describe the mystery, he reminds his readers that our Lord revealed it not only to Paul but also to His apostles and prophets.

Now turn to ...

[Ephesians 3:7](#) 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. 8: 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; 9: 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:

So, here we read that the mystery was made known not only to Paul, not only to the apostles and prophets, but also to all men, to all people (v. 9), and to all “[principalities and powers in heavenly places](#)” (v. 10).

[Ephesians 3:10](#) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Wayne Barber has a practical application of the fact that the mystery was revealed to Paul writing “*God revealed something to him, not just for him, but for others to eternally benefit. God wants to do the same thing in your life. What He reveals in our hearts is never for just ourselves. It is always to be shared with someone else.*” (Ephesians 3:1-3 God's Divine Mystery - 1)

Oh, what a privilege and honor God had given to Paul. Imagine, God Himself revealed His mysterious plan to Paul. Why? Was it because Paul was so good that he had this privilege and honor? I like what someone has said about this. “*It was not that Paul was so good, but that God was so kind and so gracious as to reveal this glorious truth to him.*” This reminds me of what Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 15:10](#), “[But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which](#)

was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

What is true of Paul is also true of us who are saved by the grace of God. We are what we are, by the grace of God. Have you thanked Him for His grace today?

Closing Exhortations

John Stott in his commentary on Ephesians has some practical and convicting words for all of us, *“The major lesson taught by this first half of Ephesians 3 is **the centrality of the church**. Some people construct a Christianity that consists entirely of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and has virtually nothing to do with the church. Others make a grudging concession to the need for church membership but add that they have given up the ecclesiastical institution as hopeless. Every church in every place at every time is in need of reform and renewal. But we need to beware lest we despise the church of God and are blind to His work in history.”*

What is your attitude toward the church of Jesus Christ, and how might your attitude need to change? Ask God to open your eyes to His grace in your life. Ask Him to make clear to you His call to serve. Praise God for His church, the body of Christ. Ask Him to help you to grow in your appreciation of the church.

So, Christian, you who have trusted Christ, you have a great privilege, you have been given a privilege to be partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. You have been given the privilege to enjoy the riches in Christ and the promise of blessings because you belong to Jesus. **grist. Take advantage of your privileges and boldly approach the throne of grace,** confident that God will hear and answer our prayers. And when was the last time you thank Him for the church? This is a good to time to do it.

To the unbelievers among us, let me tell you that the riches, the wealth, the privileges that we believers have in Christ are overwhelming. The unsearchable riches we have in Christ are beyond our understanding are staggering. Let me name a few—forgiveness of sin, cursed removed, no longer condemned, reconciled with God, justified, redeemed, adopted, regenerated, sanctified, obtained eternal life, joint heir with Christ, a child of God, a citizen of Heaven, a new creature in Christ, servant of God, indwelt by Christ by the Holy Spirit, a member of the body of Christ, access to God, peace with God, peace of God, joy, freedom, hope, purpose, and so much more. There are so many blessings that believers have been given at salvation and there is so much more that awaits us. No wonder Paul could say in [Ephesians 1:3](#), *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* As believers in Christ we are blessed beyond measure! But the best is yet to come!

Don’t you want to have these riches too? I know you do. You too could have these, but not without trusting Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. Paul declares this earlier in this letter, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of*

his grace” (Eph 1:7). There is forgiveness with God, there is redemption and salvation but it’s only through Christ and the blood He shed on the cross for sinners. I pray that you would come to Christ today confessing your sins and sinfulness and trusting Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and Lord.

AMEN!