

The Mystery of Christ Revealed - Part 2

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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

As I have pointed out last time, 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 continue look at this morning—**The Revelation of the Mystery (vv. 1-6), The Proclamation of the Mystery (vv. 7-9), The Intention of the Mystery (vv. 10-13)**.

Last time we look at the ...

I - The Revelation of the Mystery

In [verses 2-6](#), the apostle Paul speaks about the revelation of the mystery. 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! 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 Christ Jesus. By the way, this idea would have been **comforting for Gentile** Christians, and **challenging for Jewish** Christians. 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 Jews and the Gentiles 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!

II - The Proclamation of the Mystery

Not only was the mystery revealed to the apostle Paul, but he was also given the privilege to proclaim it. Here in this section Paul has been examining his life and the ministry that God has given him. In this section I invite you to consider Paul's **Identity**, Paul's **Humility**, and Paul's **Responsibility**.

1. Paul's Identity

If you recall Paul begins this chapter by underscoring his identity with the words, “[I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.](#)” He identifies and describes himself as a **prisoner of Jesus Christ**. It is true that Paul was imprisoned in Rome, yet he considers himself not as a prisoner of Rome nor of Nero but of Jesus Christ. 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).

And as Paul continues to identify himself, he describes himself not only a prisoner of Jesus Christ but also a **minister**.

[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.

By this word “whereof,” Paul is referring to the gospel. See [Ephesians 3:6c](#), “... and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” In other words, Paul is saying, “*Of this gospel, I was made a minister.*” So, the apostle Paul identifies himself not only a prisoner of Jesus Christ but also a minister. Paul was called as a minister to the Gentiles, though he preached to anyone who would listen.

The word “**minister**” in this is *diakonos*, from which we get the word “**deacon**.” It literally means a **servant of others**. By taking the title *diakonos*, Paul does not consider himself superior to others. Paul approaches his work as that of **service, rather than that of status**. A servant by definition is one who does what he is told. He is one who obeys the commands of his master.

In [1 Corinthians 3:5](#), Paul writes, “[Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers \[diakonos, servants\] by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?](#)” Then

in the 1 Corinthians 4:1, he writes, “Let a man so account of us [whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas or any of the apostles], as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Paul is consciously aware that they: Paul, Apollos, Cephas and any of the apostles are mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries. They are ministers, they are stewards, they are servants. And as servants, their primary concern was to faithfully do what they are told to do. Then he goes on to say in verse 2, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” And what are they told to do? Paul and the other disciples were told, and we are told to in Mark 16:15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Romans 10:14 and 15 “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Paul was faithful to his calling. He performed his servanthood, his stewardship faithfully. He considered his calling **not a mere duty but a privilege**. In fact, at the end of verse 7 and the next verse, Paul expresses his astonishment that God would even use him! This brings us to the next heading ...

2. Paul’s Humility

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;

As Paul examines his life and the ministry that God has given him—to be a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles, to be God’s instrument in revealing the mystery of the gospel, he realizes that it’s only **because of the pure grace of God**. In Paul’s word, he was made a minister “according to the **gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual working of his power.” Before his conversion to Christ, Paul hated and persecuted the Christians for spreading a message that he thought was a lie. In Acts 8:1-3, Paul was so committed to his Judaism that we read Paul consenting or approving the murder of Stephen, a disciple of Jesus Christ, and then went on to “make havoc of the church.” He went house to house dragging believers and put them in prison. He really thought by persecuting the church and by seeking to stop the gospel proclamation, he was serving God.

But while he was on the road to Damascus, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” persecuting God’s children, a miracle took place! God intervened and everything changed for Paul. A radical transformation took place in the life of Paul.

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16: To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Here Paul tells us how the Lord graciously saved him. This is sheer grace! After all what Paul has done, God set him apart, called him and saved him. God graciously saved Paul and even commissioned him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. God saved the man who sought to destroy the church and sought to destroy the gospel. What grace is this! And Paul is the first one to acknowledge that. Listen to his testimony in ...

1 Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13: Who was **before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious**: but **I obtained mercy**, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14: And **the grace of our Lord** was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

It was the gift of God's grace which had transformed him **from Saul**, the proud Pharisee who persecuted the church, **to Paul**, the apostle who was now a prisoner for Jesus Christ. He had been taken out of one group and put into another. He is now a member of the body of Christ. All that had been accomplished was through the working of the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul had both the gift and the power of an apostle. In 1 Corinthians 15:9a, Paul refers to himself as "**least of the apostles**" not worthy to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the church of God. While in 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul calls himself, "**the chief [or the worst] of sinners.**" And here in Ephesians 3:8, the apostle Paul calls himself "**less than the least of all saints.**" Paul knew himself. **He did not feel entitled to the position of apostle.** Despite his call, his privileges, and God's abundant blessings upon his life—he knows himself to be an unworthy recipient of God's grace and of God's trust in him.

3. Paul's Responsibility

We looked at Paul's identity and Paul's humility, now let's look at Paul's responsibility. What is his primary responsibility? Paul's primary responsibility is to preach to the Gentiles.

Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles ...

In Romans 11:13, Paul calls himself "**the apostle to the Gentiles.**" God specifically chose Paul to minister to the Gentiles. He was chosen by God for the huge responsibility of taking the gospel to Gentiles. The Lord Jesus declared that He had a specific mission for Paul: "**for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel**" (Acts 9:15).

Paul writes in Galatians 2:7, "**that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.**" Paul was given the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter was given the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. So, the apostle Peter preached mainly to the Jews, but Paul preached mainly to the Gentiles.

And what is Paul to preach to the Gentiles?

Ephesians 3:8 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;

Here is what Paul is to preach to the Gentiles—**the unsearchable riches of Christ!** The apostle Paul's primary responsibility is not simply to preach to the Gentiles but to preach to the Gentiles a specific message and that message is—the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The word “**unsearchable**” occurs only twice in the NT. It can mean “**inscrutable**” or “**incomprehensible**” and was used by Paul in [Romans 11:33](#), where he writes, “[O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!](#)” The ways of God in His dealings with Jews and Gentiles are inscrutable. It's beyond our ability to fathom. It's beyond our ability to comprehend.

The second time Paul used this word is in our text.

[Ephesians 3:8](#) [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;](#)

The Greek word translated “**unsearchable**” describes something that cannot be fully comprehended or explored. It means boundless, endless, or immeasurable. In other words, there is no limit to the riches of Christ; they are past finding out.

These unsearchable riches are the riches of His person and His work. The unsearchable riches of Christ center on the person of Jesus Christ. The person of Christ is unfathomable, in that we can never completely get to the bottom of who He is and what He did for us on the cross. **Jesus Christ is much more than the gifts.** The “[unsearchable riches of Christ](#)” are not simply the blessings and benefits that we have obtained because we are in Him. No, **the “unsearchable riches of Christ” is Christ Himself!** He is our “boundless, endless, immeasurable, and unfathomable” riches.

But having said that, we want to make sure we thank Him and praise Him for the riches of His gifts. Paul describes some of these riches in [chapter 1](#) in this epistle: chosen in Christ, adoption, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of the mystery of His will, the message of truth, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the guarantee of our inheritance. These are and many more are spiritual riches with eternal benefits, that surpass our understanding.

Before I close let me point out that this great and glorious message of the unsearchable riches of Christ is to be preached not only to the Jews or Gentiles of old, but to all men, to mankind. Paul declares this in [Ephesians 3:9](#), “[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.](#)” This is God's plan—to give out the Gospel light to “**all men.**” Before He ascended into heaven, our Lord gave this parting words to His disciples in [Mark 16:15](#), “[And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.](#)” The gospel must be preached to all the world, to all men because God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. **This has been God's plan from the beginning**—that all men may know the fellowship of the mystery that has been hidden but now revealed and the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Closing Exhortations

Paul never stopped to be amazed that God would save him and would even give him the ministry of making known the mystery and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. What an honor to be a steward of this glorious ministry and message! Now, **the truth of the matter is that as believers, we are all stewards** of this ministry and message. Understand that when God saves a person, He also enlists the person. Klyne Snodgrass puts it this way, *“The revelation that comes in the gospel is not only so that people will understand, but that they may be **enlisted in the service** of the Revealer. Paul had been made a servant because of “the gift of God’s grace.” **The gift obligates.** “Grace” in this verse does not relate to Paul’s salvation, but to his ministry. Through grace he became a servant of the gospel. Grace not only connects us to God and Christ and to each other, but it also enlists and empowers us.”* Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have been given a glorious ministry and a glorious message. What are you doing with these blessings? Oh, may we not squander these blessings and privileges that God has been given us. May we faithfully carry out the ministry of revealing the mystery and the unsearchable riches of Christ to the world.

Now let me speak to those who still lost and groping in spiritual darkness. Christ offers Himself freely to every sinner, and that includes you. He has immeasurable riches He offers you. You may be the worst of sinners, yet Jesus Christ offers you this gift of forgiveness and salvation. As someone has said, *“It is the gift that truly keeps on giving!”* Come to Jesus Christ! Come to Him in humility and faith! Believe in your heart that He is rich in mercy and grace and forgiveness. Believe on the One who **“though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”** Believe on the One who impoverished Himself that you and I might become rich—rich in the gospel, rich with eternal life, and rich towards God. He became poor and laid down His life so that people like you and me could have our sins forgiven, receive His righteousness, adopted into His family, become heirs of God with Him, and right and a privilege to enter and dwell in Heaven. Come to Jesus Christ! Come to Jesus now!

AMEN!