

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 30TH, 2022 // BOOK OF EPHESIANS

FOR YOUR BENEFIT (EPHESIANS 3:1-13) BONDSERVANT OF CHRIST

It is important to remember that Paul is a prisoner in Rome at the time he is writing this letter. However, he does not identify as a prisoner of Rome. Instead, he identifies as a **"prisoner of Christ Jesus."**

- It was his choice to preach Christ crucified, which placed him in a Roman prison. **He was a servant of Christ and not Rome.**

WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL

Paul points out that the sacrifices he made were on **"behalf of you Gentiles"** for the glory of God. Regardless of the cost, Paul was willing to **"minister"** to the people God had entrusted him with.

- We should be willing to endure hardships to be able to **meet the needs of the people God has made us responsible for.**

A PLAN AND A PURPOSE

Whether free or in prison, accepted or rejected, Paul knew and trusted that God had a purpose in every situation.

- "This is what the past is for! **Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives, is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see.**" — Corrie Ten Boom, "The Hiding Place"

"THE MYSTERY MADE KNOWN"

The "mystery" Paul is speaking of is not meant to be understood in the modern sense. Instead of something mysterious or puzzling, it is something that was not previously known.

- **God's plan to unite both Jew and Gentile in the promises and family of God is revealed through Jesus.**

GOD'S UNSEARCHABLE GRACE

Paul wants the Ephesians to know the "good news" he proclaimed was revealed to him. It was received by grace from God.

- God had taken a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, and persecutor of the early Church, and **made him into the main communicator of His grace in bringing both Jew and Gentile together into one new body.**

THE MYSTERY DESCRIBED

Through Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles are no longer separated before God and are invited to join together into one body, the Church.

- As "coheirs" and "partners in the promise," **the redemptive work of Christ on the cross opens the door to everyone to receive the blessings of God** once reserved for the Jewish people.

"I WAS MADE A MINISTER" (KJV)

The title of "minister" was given as a gift of grace. Some translations use the word "minister" in verse 7, but the appropriate word used is "servant."

- The Greek word used to describe this title of service is *diakonos*, meaning **"one who serves."** Classic Greek literature would use this term to describe **a waiter who is always at the bidding of their customers.**

"THE LEAST OF ALL THE SAINTS"

Paul did not claim to be the least of saints in self-degradation, and he was not attempting to get sympathy and be coddled by the church.

- Paul knew **he had no qualifications for the task** God had given him and that **he could not succeed without God**, so his success humbled him. God does not use the standards of the world in calling people to a task.

"THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MYSTERY"

Paul reveals his calling to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles and shed light on how to apply it to daily living.

- This same verse says the mystery was "hidden for all ages in God." This means God is not making it up on the fly. **God's plan has always been to invite all people to Him.**

THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY

Through the revealing of the mystery, God makes His grace known to everyone and everything on earth and in Heaven through the Church.

- God displays His grace through us, and **"the rulers and authorities in the heavens"** notice His display of grace and wisdom, and they glorify Him.

IT IS FINISHED

In verse 11, Paul doesn't say that God's eternal purpose *is being accomplished*. Instead, he says *it is accomplished*. Because it is completed, we have bold and confident access to Christ through faith.

- Paul tells the Ephesians not to be discouraged by his afflictions. He knew his purpose was being accomplished through them, and that he would still be used in the current situation.

THE FULLNESS OF GOD (EPHESIANS 3:14-21)

"FOR THIS REASON"

This section of the text is Paul praying based on his knowledge of God's purpose. With insight into God's plan, He can pray confidently and effectively in God's will.

- Our prayers are effective when we pray **in alignment with His will** (Luke 22:42), **with the proper motives** (James 4:3), and **with humility** (2 Chronicles 7:14).

HUMBLY WE APPROACH THE THRONE

Notice Paul's posture in prayer. When he considered God's great eternal plan, all he could do was kneel in prayer, a position of utmost humility.

- Though there are several accounts for kneeling in prayer, we cannot ritualistically say it is necessary because **we can kneel and lack humility, which is necessary.**

PRAYING TO THE FATHER

Paul directed his prayer toward **"the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."**

- This speaks to God's ability, as the powerful creator of all, to hear and answer Paul's prayer as well as His desire for unity within the Body of Christ. **God is the Father of both Jew and Gentile.**

"STRENGTHENED WITH POWER"

Paul prays that the Ephesians would be "strengthened in [their] inner being through His Spirit."

- Paul's prayer is not for them to think positively, seek self-help, or self-discipline, but for them to **experience a fundamental work of God from His Spirit to theirs.**

"THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS"

Paul prays that the Ephesians would experience deep faith when Jesus lives in them as promised in John 14:23.

- Ancient Greek has two words to communicate the idea of **"dwelling in."** One gives the impression of **residing as a stranger**, and the other gives the impression of a **permanent home.**

"BEING ROOTED AND FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN LOVE"

"Two expressions are used: '**rooted**,' like a living tree which lays hold upon the soil, twists itself round the rocks, and **cannot be upturned**; '**grounded**,' like a building which has been settled, as a whole, and **will never show any cracks or flaws in the future through failures in the foundation.**"
—Charles Spurgeon

"FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF GOD"

When we know God's love and love others, we are in a position to experience the fullness of God the way He designed.

- We are invited into a relationship with Jesus Christ, who brings us into the Body, where we can know and experience the fullness of God.

THEOLOGY LEADS TO DOXOLOGY

Paul ends this chapter by praising God. In talking about the depths of God's love, Paul is moved to worship and praise.

- Paul says that God is able to do above what we can think or ask. This is because He is above what we can think or ask. His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).

DIVISIONS IN THE BODY

- Through Christ, the work of unifying the body has been completed.
- Separation by minor differences.
- Separation of responsibilities to the gospel. **Clergy versus laity. Evangelism is not just for those employed by the church. The Great Commission is for everyone who claims to follow Christ.**