

031 - In Christ Through the Gospel - Ephesians 3:3-6 - 2015-02-15

Call to Worship: 1 Peter 2:9

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 56:1-7

Sermon: "In Christ Through the Gospel" Ephesians 3:3-6

Benediction: 1 Peter 2:10

**The apostle Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus for our sake, was made a steward of the grace of God, to give it to us in the form of knowledge of a mystery. As he explains this, let's see what the Lord would teach us about the revelation of this mystery of Christ.**

Read the text: Ephesians 3:3-6

Ephesians 3:3-6 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, (4) by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), (5) which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: (6) that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

**The apostle Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus for our sake, was made a steward of the grace of God, to give it to us in the form of knowledge of a mystery. As he explains this, let's see what the Lord would teach us about the revelation of this mystery of Christ.**

- I. Some things about the nature of the scriptures (verses 3-5)
  - A. The scriptures are to be read and understood (verse 4)
    1. when you read, you may understand
    2. Mark 13:14 "So when you see the 'ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
    3. Daniel 9:2-3 in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. (3) Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.
  - B. The New Testament scriptures reveal things that the Old Testament scriptures leave concealed
  - C. The scriptures have come to us by a certain method
    1. the Holy Spirit reveals to the man

- a) “God-breathed”
      - b) “carried along”
      - c) term is “inspiration”
    - 2. the man writes
  - D. The scriptures are all about Christ (end of verse 4)
    - 1. “the mystery of Christ”
    - 2. when we read to understand the scriptures, we must be reading with a view toward the Lord Jesus Christ; it’s all about Him
- II. Something about apostles and prophets
- A. We want to know what apostles and prophets are because they are mentioned in the scriptures numerous times
  - B. We need to know what apostles and prophets *really* are because so many people around us today say that *they* are apostles or prophets; most commonly they say that they prophesy; some of them say that all of us Christians should prophesy, and that there is something lacking in our religion if we do not
  - C. We won’t turn this sermon into a lesson about apostles and prophets; we’ll just take the one concept about them that Paul mentions here: Part of what it means to be a prophet is that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ has revealed things to a person directly
    - 1. the prophecy that the Lord Jesus has for us He already has graciously given
    - 2. don’t say of yourself, “God told me” and then quote God’s words unless you are ready to defend the position that you are a prophet
- III. Some things about being in Christ (verse 6)
- A. I read this as a short list of things, all “in Christ through the gospel”
  - B. here three things are mentioned as benefits of being in Christ
    - 1. those formerly thought of as Gentiles are now fellow heirs with believing Jews
      - a) Galatians 4:4-6 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (6) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"
      - b) Galatians 4: 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and **if a son, then an heir** of God through Christ.
    - 2. those formerly thought of as Gentiles are now members of the same body with believing Jews
      - a) Romans 12:4-5 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.
      - b) hence church “membership”

- (1) I thought to have here an excursus on church membership, but I reconsidered
- (2) I think next week, before going on from here, I'll have a sermon on church membership; reviewing my notes, I realized it has been two years since the last
- 3. those formerly thought of as Gentiles are now together partakers of God's promise with believing Jews
  - a) what is the promise?
    - (1) There are many facets to the promise
    - (2) But here is the main point of it: Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee**, and to thy seed after thee. NIV: "to be your God" ESV, NKJV: "to be God to you"
  - b) in Christ we are partakers of His promise

#### IV. Something about coming to be in Christ

- A. you come to be in Christ through the gospel (verse 6)
  - 1. here I rely on Charles Hodge
  - 2. The Jews had the mistaken impression that the Gentiles were to partake of the blessings of the Messiah's reign by becoming Jews, by being as proselytes merged into the old theocracy, the old nation of Israel, which was to remain
  - 3. But through the apostles and prophets the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ revealed that it was not by birth nor by any outward rite, nor by union with any external body, but by the Gospel that we are united to Christ
- B. not through the preaching of it only,
  - 1. not through merely sitting in a building where the gospel is being preached
  - 2. not through merely reading the gospel in the bible or in a gospel tract
- C. but through believing the gospel
  - 1. Romans 10:14 how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?
- D. The Lord Jesus Christ has lived a perfect life on behalf of sinners. He has died for the sins of sinners, and been buried, and has been raised to life. Now there is forgiveness of sins for all who will repent of sins and trust in Him.
- E. APPLICATION
  - 1. Let us renew our love for the gospel
  - 2. Let us strengthen our confidence in the gospel

### **by revelation**

Bayne:

the taking away the veil wherewith anything is covered

### **the mystery**

Poole:

of calling the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, without the works of the law

### **as I have briefly written already**

Bengel, as Clarke:

He refers to Eph 1:9-10 and he repeats the words from that passage here.

Gill:

in the first two chapters of this epistle

Hawker:

alludes to the first chapter particularly in this epistle

### **by which, when you read, you may understand**

Gill:

the above chapters, and seriously consider what is contained in them

JRY:

compare with "let the reader understand"

these letters, along with the old testament scriptures, are to be read, studied, and understood

### **was not made known to the sons of men**

Calvin:

With unquestionable propriety, therefore, does Paul call this a mystery, and say, that it had been hidden; for the repeal of the ceremonial law, which admitted them within the vail, was not understood.

Trapp:

so clearly and particularly. Peter himself could hardly be persuaded to it.

Bayne:

not that it was altogether concealed, but it was not so revealed as now it is to the holy apostles and prophets

Poole:

as to the time and manner of it, and the means whereby it should be effected

Gill:

this may have respect particularly to the calling of the Gentiles . . . the time, mode, and circumstances of it were but little understood, and comparatively speaking, it was not known

Clarke:

that the Gentiles should find salvation without coming under the yoke of the Mosaic law, and that the Jews themselves should be freed from that yoke of bondage; there were discoveries totally new, and now revealed for the first time by the Spirit of God

### **revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets**

Poole:

New Testament prophets

by the Spirit instructing the apostles and prophets, and immediately acquainting them with this mystery

Bengel:

of the New Testament

Gill:

to these a revelation was made of the mystery of the Gospel in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular,

JRY:

We have help here in understanding what the apostle means by "apostle" and "prophet"

### **that the Gentiles should be**

1. fellow heirs;
2. of the same body;
3. partakers of His promise

Ellicott:

"in Christ through the gospel" These words should be joined with all the three preceding

### **fellow heirs**

JRY:

remember that the inheritance consists of "all"!

### **of the same body**

### **partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel**

Hodge:

The form in which the calling of the Gentiles was predicted in the Old Testament led to the general impression that they were to partake of the blessings of the Messiah's reign by becoming Jews, by being as proselytes merged into the old theocracy, which was to remain in all its peculiarities.

The promise is the promise of redemption; the promise made to our first parents, repeated to Abraham, and which forms the burden of all the Old Testament predictions. Gen\_3:14, Gen\_19:22, Gen\_19:29.

not by birth nor by any outward rite, nor by union with any external body, but by the Gospel, received and appropriated by faith, that we are united to Christ, and thus made heirs of God

Hence the apostle enlarges on the dignity and importance of preaching the Gospel.

Poole:

the great promise of the covenant, which comprehends all the rest under it

Bayne:

that you, who were without covenants of promise, should by faith partake in the promises of christ; and all this not by circumcision or the law, but by the ministry of the gospel

We must, that are hearers, never be weary of it, never give over attending on it. The second use is to us ministers, that we must never give over to preach the gospel, whatsoever discouragement we have, nor must never be ashamed of it, seeing the Lord by it bringeth men to salvation.