

033 - The Wisdom of God Made Known - Ephesians 3:9-11 - 2015-03-01

Call to Worship: Daniel 2:20

Scripture Reading: Psalm 104:24-35

Sermon: "The Wisdom of God Made Known" Ephesians 3:9-11

Benediction: Jude 25

Ephesians 3:9-11 and to ~~make all see~~ illuminate all as to ~~what is the fellowship~~ administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things ~~through Jesus Christ~~; (10) to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, (11) according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

## INTRODUCTION

Paul, the least deserving of honor from Christ, by God's grace has been made a minister of the gospel, a steward or administrator to dispense the grace of God to us Gentiles in the form of knowledge of a mystery.

The mystery is: that no longer would there be Jews and Gentiles, but that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews, of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ not by circumcision or keeping the law of Moses, but through faith in Jesus Christ, believing in Him as He is preached in the gospel,

This stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul so that he would preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ

(That's a summary of what we studied last week in verses 7-9)

Today we see that there is more to what this stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul for:

**The stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul so that he would shine a light by which all can see how the mystery worked out in God's church shows the great wisdom of God.**

## TEXT

Ephesians 3:9-11 and to ~~make all see~~ illuminate all as to ~~what is the fellowship~~ administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things ~~through Jesus Christ~~; (10) to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, (11) according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

## BODY

**The stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul so that he would shine a light by which all can see how the mystery worked out in God's church shows the great wisdom of God.**

- I. By God's grace, Paul shined a light so all could see something long hidden in darkness 9
  - A. this mystery, that Jew and Gentile would become one new man through faith in Jesus Christ, was in God's mind always
  - B. how the mystery would be worked out, how it would be shared, how it would be administered, what the plan was for how it would be realized; this also, of course, was in God's mind always, but hidden from every creature; no one else knew but God; not even the patriarchs like Abraham, not even the old testament prophets like Isaiah; not even the heavenly beings
    1. not the many angels, the messengers, the host of heaven
    2. not even the chief messengers, like Gabriel, who stands by God's throne
    3. not even the seraphim and cherubim who attend God, worshiping around His throne
    4. certainly not the devil and his demons
  - C. But God gave Paul a stewardship to dispense grace in the form of knowledge of this mystery. The bible says here that it was given to Paul to shine light so all could see.
    1. the verb is *photizo* as in photograph or photosynthesis or photovoltaic; it means to shine light
      - a) we learn elsewhere in the bible that even when knowledge is disseminated, sinful people will not believe it without the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the heart
      - b) but here Paul is not talking about that, but about something that no creature had ever even seen
      - c) there is something that long has been hidden in darkness, and God has charged Paul with lighting lamps so the mysterious thing finally can be seen
      - d) ILLUS: In theater, the set is made ready and the actors take their places, all with the lights down. The audience can tell something is going on, but they can't see what. Then the person manning the lights turns them on. The audience then can see what was previously hidden in darkness.
    2. with the verb *photizo* is the word *pas*, which means "all"

- D. This gives us some help understanding why Paul's ministry, including his letters, dealt so much with the controversy over whether or not the Gentiles who came to Christ should be told to be circumcised and to obey the law of Moses on matters such as what food to eat and what holidays to observe
1. he charitably allowed that Jews would have a hard time getting used to the new covenant ways; and so their continued practice of circumcision, abstinence from certain foods, and observance of certain holidays was to be tolerated
  2. but he adamantly opposed anyone who told the Gentiles that they needed to do these things to be saved or to be obedient to God, or who treated the Gentiles as somehow inferior to the Jews if they did not do these things
  3. You see, God has given Paul a stewardship to dispense His grace by shining a light on the mystery, which was that in God's new covenant church there is no longer any such difference as Jew and Gentile; by God's grace, both are one new man in Jesus Christ!

So, by God's grace, Paul shined a light so all could see something long hidden in darkness

- II. God's intent in this is that the mystery worked out in the church will make known His great wisdom to the heavenly creatures (10)
- A. ILLUSTRATION: Back to the theater. The heavenly creatures are in the audience, and as the lights come on they see the new covenant church on the stage. They see all that God has done for the church in Jesus Christ, and they are amazed at the wonderful wisdom of God that has done this!
  - B. They have known, of course, that God is wise. They have known the principle that God is all-wise, that His wisdom is infinite. But, them being finite creatures, and Him being infinite divinity, they can know His wisdom only to the degree that He reveals it to them. To be sure, He has revealed it greatly in creation! But there is something God has done to reveal more of His great wisdom.
  - C. God has made His church out of those who were Jews and those who were Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ. And a look at that church on display shows the angels the manifold wisdom of God in ways they have never seen before.
  - D. The English word in our translations is "manifold." This means, basically, some one thing with numerous parts. We know this from any industrial, mechanical application with pipes. For example the intake manifold and exhaust manifold on car engines.
  - E. The Greek word is *polupoikilos*
    1. the word *poikilos* already means "many different kinds"
    2. it is used to mean "variegated" as in "variegated ivy" or "variegated euonymus" or lantana

3. Paul, not content to speak of God's wisdom with that common word, adds the prefix "poly," creating the word *polupoikilos* meaning "much-variegated"
- F. We are meant to understand that when the heavenly creatures look at the church, consisting of sinners from all nations, they see God's wisdom on display in many aspects
1. God is so wise that He knows how to be abundant in mercy and perfect in justice simultaneously
  2. God is so wise that He knows how to save sinners from His wrath while not letting any sin go unpunished
  3. God is so wise that He knows how to justify the ungodly
  4. God is so wise that He knows how to provide a Redeemer who must be God but must also be man
    - a) he cannot be a substitute for man unless he is a man
    - b) he cannot do what must be done unless he is divine
  5. God is so wise that He knows how to make sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, come to life repentant, believing in Jesus Christ, by the means of humble, sinful people preaching the Gospel and living lives of good works
  6. God is so wise that He knows how to make men, who, since Cain and Abel, the first brothers, have been hatefully contending for prominence in religion, to worship together in love without striving; the angels look on and glorify God for His wisdom
  7. God is so wise that He knows how to make women, who, since Eve, have longed to overrule their husbands, humbling themselves willingly, worshiping quietly, in submission, dressing modestly, honoring their husbands as head over them; the angels look on and glorify God for His wisdom
  8. God is so wise that He knows how to make men, who, since Adam, have cared more for what they would like to do than what God commands them to do, stand before the congregation and preach not their own opinions, but the word of God; the angels look on and glorify God for His wisdom

-So, by God's grace, Paul shined a light so all could see something long hidden in darkness

-God's intent in this is that the mystery worked out in the church will make known His great wisdom to the heavenly creatures

- III. All this was done according to His eternal purpose (11)
- A. Paul is preaching something that is new to the knowledge of creatures; but he would have us know that it is not actually something new; and it certainly has not come to pass by the will of creatures
  - B. Remember how we studied this when we were at chapter one verse 11

*Ephesians 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,*

1. all things that happen are God's will to happen, His purpose
2. God counsels only with Himself as to what will be done in all things
  - a) more about what I said last week
  - b) we reject entirely this idea: that in determining whom He would predestine to salvation, God looked through time . . .
3. so he works all things according to the counsel of His will

#### C. APPLICATION

1. Let us not start all considerations of man's will with "man has free will." Instead, let us start with "God does all things by His own will."
2. Grasp that grace is tied to things being done by the will of God
  - a) grace being *unmerited* favor
  - b) being saved by grace is not compatible with being saved because you made a good choice
3. Grasp that worship is tied to things being done by the will of God
4. Take comfort in all troubles that everything happens by the will of God

#### CONCLUSION

**The stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul so that he would shine a light by which all can see how the mystery worked out in God's church shows the great wisdom of God.**

- By God's grace, Paul shined a light so all could see something long hidden in darkness
- God's intent in this is that the mystery worked out in the church will make known His great wisdom to the heavenly creatures
- All this was done according to His eternal purpose

In the preaching of the gospel to you, something grand was being done: a light was being lit

Paul now goes on to tell more about this preaching of the gospel. In it we see the answer to some “why?” questions.

Why are things like they are?

Why did God do it that way?

Why has the gospel been preached to you? (9)

-because to be fair, God needs to give everyone a chance to choose?

-to make all see the fellowship of the mystery

Why has God caused the mystery to be seen? (10)

-so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church

Why has He done all of this just the way He has? (11)

-because it always has been His purpose to do so

### **make all see**

the verb is the idea of shining a light for people to see by

Gill:

men are naturally in the dark about these things, and the ministry of the word is the means of enlightening them, and is indeed the grand design of it

ministers of the Gospel do *instrumentally* enlighten persons, though it is god only that does it *efficiently* [JRY: or effectually]

### **what is the fellowship [or administration] of the mystery**

Hodge:

The common text in this clause reads "fellowship," but all the corrected editions of the NT, on the authority of the ancient MSS, read "plan" or "economy."

### **mystery, which from the beginning of the age has been hidden in God**

Rom 16:25

1 Cor 2:7

Col 1:26

Bayne:

and so these things could not be known unless and until God revealed them  
this is different from what can be known naturally

-that there is a God

-that He must be worshiped

-that it is wrong to murder

we have cause to acknowledge God's goodness in revealing these hidden mysteries of grace and salvation to us

## **who created all things [through Jesus Christ]**

Bayne:

Here is a testimony of the divinity of the Father and the Son  
it was meet, as we were made by Christ, that so we also should be redeemed by Him

Hodge:

“by Jesus Christ” being wanting in the great majority of oldest MSS, are generally regarded as spurious

## **to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known**

*polupoikilos* much-variegated, with many colors

from *poly* and *poikilos* variegated

Gill:

the gospel, which is the pure produce of the wisdom of God  
wisdom

- seen in the person of the Redeemer, who is both god and man
- seen in the manner in which it is effected, being both for the glory of God's grace and mercy, and for the honour of his justice and holiness
- seen in justification, whereby sinful men become just with God; god is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes
- by price, and yet of free grace

Bayne:

- great as God's work of creation was, the work of repairing something broken to be better than new is greater
- we must not, when we hear of predestination and such like, or of his dealing any ways in his church, open our mouths against these, like the dog barking at the moon, but lay our hands on our mouths, knowing that all are full of wisdom, though we cannot behold the reason of them

Hodge:

manifold:

- reconciling justice and mercy
- exalting the unworthy while it effectually humbles them
- the person of the Redeemer
- the work of the Redeemer
- the operations of the Holy Spirit
- the varied dispensations of the old and new economy

It is by the church redeemed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, that to all orders of intelligent beings is to be made, through all coming ages, the brightest display of the divine perfections.

## **made known by the church**



## **to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places***

Gill:

not civil magistrates, much less evil angels, but the good angels, the angels in heaven

Bayne:

let women consider their appearance and conduct 1 Cor 10

let minister of the gospel consider their message 1 Tim 5:21

## **according to the eternal purpose**

Psalm 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

Acts 4:27-28 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

Gill:

this purpose is eternal, or was in the mind of God from all eternity; for no new will can arise in him; no purpose, resolution, or decree can be made by him in time, which was not in his breast from everlasting; and his purpose concerning the salvation of men must be eternal, since a council

Bayne:

The ground which we marked before of all this, is here set down to be God's purpose

This we must hold for a certain and sound conclusion, that everything in the world hath and shall so come to pass as God hath purposed and decreed it, in that time, place, manner, and end, and by that means as God hath appointed.

it will force us to acknowledge his most fatherly care

If this wise God hath purposed all things, then fear not, nor be utterly dejected under any cross, or at the rage and fury of wicked persecutors

Did our good depend upon our own wills, as things exempted from subjection to his power, all our comfort were at an end.

## **which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord**

Fortner:

No one would have dreamed this up; if he had, how would he have accomplished it?

JRY:

Do we expect that an expert workman has a plan before he starts?

Do we expect that he will do whatever he can do to make his work go according to plan?