



Ephesians

(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

...of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. Ephesians 3:7

The words “of which” are referring to “the gospel” of the previous verse. Paul acknowledges that he “became a minister” of this gospel “according to the gift of the grace of God.” He was a persecutor of the church. His rightful due was to be punished for his actions. He in no way merited God’s favor, and yet the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus and called him to his apostleship. This is grace; undeserved favor. It was the “grace of God” alone and without it, he would have continued down his wayward path.

However, a different end came about in him because this marvelous grace which was given “to him by the effective working of His power.” The words here should rather be translated as “according to the effective working of His power.” This is because, “The gift was bestowed in accordance with that efficiency which could transform Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle to the Gentiles” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

It was an active, not a latent power which transformed him. Grace was bestowed, and that grace actively and sufficiently transformed him from who he was, to the person he came to be. The entire verse speaks completely and solely of the power of God and the grace of God to effect His purposes in Paul, and thus to carry through with His redemptive purposes in the stream of time.

Life application: In our salvation, and in our continued walk with Christ, it is the power of God which changes us, and it is the power of God which works in us for His sovereign purposes. Let

us allow God to use us without striving against Him. Rather, let each of us be an open and receptive vehicle for His workings in the circumstances in which He has placed us.

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Ephesians 3:8

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul called himself “the least of the apostles.” Here he takes the thought further and says that “the gift of the grace of God” of the previous verse was given to him who is “less than the least of all the saints.” Here he uses a word found nowhere else in Scripture, *elachistoteros*. It is a “comparative formed from a superlative.’ The comparative refers to himself, “less.” The superlative is the one who even stands above him, “the least.”

Paul looked into himself and saw the depth of the consciousness of sin that dwelt in him and he reasoned that what he saw was certainly less worthy of God’s favor than any other saint. To him, the makeup of who he was demonstrated the highest grace that could be given.

But he notes that “this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” In these words, he contrasts the “saints” with the “Gentiles.” This is evident from his words of the previous chapter –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...” (2:19)

The “saints” refer to those in Christ. Until the Gentiles came to Christ, they were not saints. Therefore, he is making a contrast between them. The idea of “Gentiles” being brought into the household of God would have been unheard of, and thus the term is almost used in a derogatory sense. Because of this, it shows the level of grace that was bestowed upon Paul once again. Despite being the least of the saints, he was given the great honor of taking this once “unclean” group of people and preaching the message of Christ to them.

But more than just a simple message of their acceptance, he was given the honor of conveying to them “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” The word he uses for “unsearchable,” *anexichniastos*, is found only here and in Romans 11:33. It conveys the idea of the inability to comprehend. The riches are beyond finding out. It is an implicit note of the deity of Christ which will be expanded on in the verses ahead. As only God is unsearchable, then the unsearchable riches of Christ demonstrate the divine nature of Christ.

It is these marvelous wonders which Paul, the least of all the saints, was given the grace to share with the Gentiles. He was chosen to bring them from their lowly state to a position on the same level as the saints of God who were drawn out of the chosen nation of Israel.

Life application: Those who understand the depth of sin which dwells in their soul will more fully appreciate the magnificence of the grace which is bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ.

...and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; Ephesians 3:9

In this verse are a few words which differ in ancient manuscripts. The first notable one is “fellowship.” In Greek, it is the word *koinonia*. However, other manuscripts say, “dispensation.” The word is very similar, *oikonomia*. The mistake in translation would be easy to make. The second major difference is that the words “through Jesus Christ” are not in some manuscripts. Neither of these changes the doctrine of Scripture. For the sake of consistency in analysis, the evaluation will assume that the NKJV is correct. However, this doesn’t mean it is. It is simply the NKJV which is being used for the study.

Paul says first, “... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery.” The word “see” properly means “to illuminate” or “to enlighten.” He is saying that the grace bestowed upon him was that he would be used as the means of making all see this fellowship of the mystery of the Gentiles being brought into the New Covenant through the work of Christ. This word “all” is used, as it often is, in the superlative sense. Not all in his time, nor all in the ages since his time, have had this mystery illuminated to them. Further, for those who have had it explained, it doesn’t mean that they believe it. The word of Christ tells of what He has done, but that word is often misunderstood or rejected. Therefore, even those who have had the truths of Christ illuminated to them, don’t really see them as they truly are.

However, it was Paul’s task to share this mystery in both his life and actions and in his writings. They open up to the world this “mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God.” As previously explained, a mystery is something which was hidden and has now been revealed. It could not otherwise have been known without God directly revealing it to the world. From the beginning of the ages, it was hidden. Only a select line of people were considered “the sons of God.” The rest of the world were considered in the broader sense of being “sons of men.” One line was destined for God’s favor; the other was destined for destruction. It is through Paul that the mystery is made known that the Gentile people of the world would now have access to, and be participants in, the workings of God concerning their redemption and salvation.

He finishes up with the note that it is God “who created all things through Jesus Christ.” Jesus, the Word of God, created all things. This is reflected in John 1:1-3 –

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

What Paul is doing with the addition of these words, is showing that the same member of the Godhead, Christ Jesus, is also the one who is the Establisher of this new outcropping of His redemptive plans. Everything dealing with the creation is done through Jesus Christ, including the creation of one new man out of the two – both Jew and Gentile. This is the mystery of the fellowship which had been hidden for so very long. This is what Paul now reveals to the world through His writings.

Life application: If you want to understand the church age and the doctrine by which it is governed, you need to understand Paul's letters. To reject Paul is to reject the church of this dispensation. To reject the church during this dispensation is to reject what Jesus Christ is doing in the world for humanity. Stay away from anyone who would twist or diminish the words of Paul as given by the Holy Spirit through him.