

## Thursday, June 18, 2020 ▫ Read Ephesians 3:7–9

*Questions from the Scripture text: Who had become a minister of the gospel (v7)? According to what (cf. v2)? By what? What does the apostle call himself in v8? For what duty was this grace given him? How does he summarize the content of what he preaches among the nations? What stewardship (lit.) does this make all the elect to see (v9)? Where was this mystery hidden, from when? Through Whom had God created all things in the first place?*

Ministry in the gospel is an assignment by grace to show bottomless depths of an eternal goodness.

First, ministry in the gospel is an assignment by grace. The apostle, who calls himself literally “the lesser least of all the saints,” says that he became a minister “according to the gift of the grace of God” (v7), when “grace was given” (v8) him.

Believers often think that if they tell others about Jesus, it will fall flat because of how unimpressive they are in the history of their character and conduct so far. They are correct about themselves, but that is part of the point. Ministry, as with Christ’s own righteousness which is our only standing before God, is *a gift of the grace of God*.

Believers also often think that they are “not up to” showing Jesus to others. But even the apostle could only proclaim Christ to others “by the effective working of [God’s] power” (v7). We are not all called to be ministers of the gospel in the official (office) sense, but surely it is true that in all of your living for Christ in whatever part you do have, your part also is only by the gracious and “effective working of His power.”

Second, ministry in the gospel is an assignment to show bottomless depths. One wonders if we sometimes tune the apostle, because he always seems to be engaging in hyperbole. Our fault in that is that this apostle, even by the Holy Spirit, finds it quite impossible to exaggerate the riches of Christ to us.

Other things that have been described to us in glowing terms have always fallen short and disappointed. But here, it is the terms that must fall short. The apostle summarizes his job as to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” It is something that we may dive into, and explore—one unfolding world of wonder after another—but never reach (or even see!) the bottom. On the receiving end of such a ministry, we repeatedly and continually find ourselves saying, “Amazing! Wonderful! Our God, and His gospel of His Son is still more glorious than I had ever imagined!”

Finally, ministry in the gospel proclaims an eternal goodness. As the apostle shows to all “the stewardship of the mystery” (v9), he traces back the chain of custody of this glorious news. Previously, he had said that “in other ages it was not made known to the sons of men” (v5). Now, he goes back beyond “the beginning of the ages” and finds that this plan of salvation goes back into God Himself.

The picture is a glorious one, and we strain to consider it. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, sharing divine delight in a plan to save unto the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit—which will come of necessity through one people, but will be out of generosity unto all the people.

And it was this eternal plan to glorify God by grace that initiated creation itself, in which God “created all things through Jesus Christ” (v9). Everything that happens (including the full) from creation until now is so that redeemed sinners may see the glory of God in the unsearchable riches of the glory of Christ!

What gives meaning to our life, and significance to every role in which we find ourselves, is its participation in the plan and purpose of God in all of creation and history!

When do you ordinarily experience wonder at the riches of Christ? By what means has God appointed for you to experience that wonder, and to grow in your wonder at Christ? How will you be availing yourself of these opportunities to do so?

Suggested songs: ARP45A “My Heart Is Greatly Stirred” or TPH377 “Join All the Glorious Names”