

"The Mystery of Christ, Part Two"

Ephesians 3:7-12

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Ephesians 3:1-12

*1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."*

Eph 3:7-12:

In this chapter, the apostle is drawing out the giving further explanation for the great things that he had stated in the first two chapters. He had prayed for the church in chapter one:

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when

he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, (Eph 1:17-20)

He is explaining his prayer: He speaks of the hope of the calling of the child of God in that exalted passage at the end of chapter one; He speaks of the working of His mighty power in the child of God in chapter two and the fellows achieved by the cross of Christ in breaking down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, making peace, and creating a new a spiritual temple to the Lord in which true worship and praise can be offered to God. Now, in chapter three, he explains his own part in these great things: that he has been called of God to take this mission to the Gentiles and establish the church among them, for this has now been revealed in a way that it had never been even imagined before, that the great fellowship in Christ would be known through the church unto all the universe, including the principalities and powers of all the angelic beings in heavenly places, an eternal purpose which always existed in God, but now is fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

No wonder that he prayed as he did in chapter one: these are such stupendous things that only the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart can reveal them to us. But let us look at the words before us:

Ephesians 3:7,8:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

1. Paul remembers what he was as a persecutor of the church, and the remorse of those days never left him. He called himself the “chief of sinners,” and this was not false modesty, for his sin was very great. It is a very great sin to oppose and afflict those who preach the gospel of Christ.
2. Because it is the Lord who fits us for service, we must never think that our unworthiness makes us unusable in the kingdom of God. Moses was rebuked for this shrinking. There are two sins connected with this idea: one is thinking that God has chosen us because of our worthiness; the other is failing to serve the Lord because of a sense of unworthiness. Both are a discredit to the Lord and come short of the glory of God.
3. What a wonderful trophy of the grace of God is the apostle Paul. “Effectual working”: There is an effectual working in every one of the servants of the Lord. This is one of the things that Paul is praying for in chapter one, that our eyes might be opened to the “working of the mighty power of Christ.” This mighty power was seen in the quickening you and me when we were dead in sin; it is seen in the union of Jew and Gentile in the true temple of the Lord, and it is seen in the effectiveness of the work of every believer in the place God has placed him in the temple. You will be successful in the mission that God has for you.

4. Paul was not a failure, even though he was writing to the Ephesians from prison. Contrary to the philosophy of the world, the church is strong when it is weak; when it dies it lives; when it suffers it is glorified; when it is condemned, then it receives praise from God. As Paul would write to the Corinthians: “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” (2Co 1:5)

Ephesians 3:9:

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

1. There is a fellowship of the mystery of Christ:

a. “Mystery” means something that was hidden but is now revealed. It doesn’t mean that it is absolutely hidden, but hidden to natural reason or the understanding of the flesh.

b. This is the reason that Paul prays for the eyes of our understanding might be opened.

c. 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2Co 4:3-4)

d. God was pouring out His Spirit, so those things that were concealed and dark before the coming of Christ would be seen. Christ is the light of the world, and those without Christ will never understand the light of the Gospel.

2. The things that are brought to light in Christ were not seen until His coming, but were hidden in God. They were implicit in the creation of the world, for all things were made by the Lord Jesus, as John tells us in John 1: *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (Joh 1:9)* In this sense, Christ lights everyman, but he cannot see until he is made alive by the Gospel.

3. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2Co 4:6)

4. The fellowship: John also speaks of this: *1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1Jo 1:1-3)*

- a. The church is built upon the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, as Paul said in Eph. 2
- b. This doctrine is manifest unto the apostles and they were and are witnesses.
- c. The purpose is for us to fellowship in the apostles doctrine and in so doing have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:10:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

1. This is staggering. The church is on display before the angels. This is what he said in chapter two: *6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* (Eph 2:6-7)

2. The manifold wisdom of God: Paul's meaning is this. "The church, composed both of Jews and Gentiles, is a mirror, in which angels behold the astonishing wisdom of God displayed in a manner unknown to them before. They see a work which is new to them, and the reason of which was hid in God. In this manner, and not by learning anything from the lips of men, do they make progress." –Calvin. God's wisdom is "manifold" and you must never think that you have captured it in you little basket. The thought that you know and do not need to learn will shut off the water of life to you and make you dry and barren in the things of Christ.

Ephesians 3:11,12:

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

1. There should be no faintheartedness because of the trials that we endure. Trials are not evidence that we are forsaken of God, for assurance that we belong to Christ and that His sufferings are manifest in us. The test of your faith is not how you do when everything is going well, but how you do when things are not going well.

2. There is an eternal purpose in Christ for your life. The purpose will be revealed in eternity.

From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. (Ps 17:14)

The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. (Ps 16:5)

My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. (Ps 73:26)

Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. (Ps 119:57)

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? [Rom. 8:28-31]

What is our inheritance?

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (Joh 14:1-3)

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1Jo 3:1-3)

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Re 21:1-7)

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.