



Sermon Notes: August 23, 2015

The Mystery

12 of 14 from the teaching series "The Messiah's Community"
Ephesians 3:1-13 • Pastor Paul Bradford

Ephesians 3:1-13

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

The Mystery revealed by the Spirit

- In the Bible, a mystery is something that was hidden but that has now been revealed; in this passage, that is the overarching mystery of what God intended from the beginning to accomplish through Christ.
- Part of the mystery - that God planned to save the Gentiles - was revealed in the Old Testament law, prophets, and writings (*Genesis 12:2-3, Isaiah 49:6, Psalms 2:8*); but these passages speak of the Jews as a separate people from the Gentiles.
- Paul, a Pharisee, understood that salvation was through the Jews and that it came by strictly by keeping God's law. But Christians were teaching salvation through Jesus. Paul saw them as a threat and tried to stamp out Christianity.
- But then came the revelation to Paul on the road to Damascus (*Acts 9:1-6*). Paul was blinded for three days, and we believe that during this encounter with Jesus, God revealed to Paul what had been kept hidden for generations - the manner in which Gentiles would receive salvation: that through Christ's death, resurrection, and the Holy Spirit living in us - joining both Jews and Gentiles into one people in Christ. In Christ, we are now:
 - **Heirs together** - not just blessed through Abraham and his decedents (*Genesis 12:2-3*), but included as heirs with them.
 - **Members together of one body** - all in Christ have become one.
 - **Sharers together in the promise** - the promised Holy Spirit. We, too, are empowered by the Spirit and have received the first fruits, the deposit.
 - **in Christ Jesus through the Gospel** - all this is possible only in Christ Jesus and only through the Gospel. The 5 Solas of the Reformation: Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone, to the glory of God alone.

Proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ

- *Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ* - Paul never forgot that he had put Christians to death and thrown them in prison.
- *boundless riches* - unfathomable wonders
- *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known* - when you see beauty, you want to share it; when you find truth, you want others to know. "Once we are sure that the gospel is both truth from God and riches for mankind, nobody will be able to silence us." - John Stott

Approaching God confidently

- *in him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence* - we can enter God's very presence in the heavens in Christ Jesus; whatever our need, grace is available, and we can confidently draw near and ask God (*Hebrews 4:16*)

Our Response

God's hidden plan from the beginning of time was to reconcile us to himself through Christ alone, therefore...

- Confidently approach God through Christ.
- Confidently proclaim Christ to others through the Spirit.