

## Ephesians 3:1-13

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 8-12-15

### The Prisoner of Christ

3:1 - "the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles" (cf. 3:13, 4:1, 6:20)

- Earthly vs. spiritual meaning
- "on behalf of you Gentiles" - traced via Acts 21-25
  - Fanatical Jewish opposition to Paul's mission to the Gentiles is what landed him in prison

**Application:** The salvation of each person requires the \_\_\_\_\_ of another. (cf. John 12:24)

### Paul's Dual Privileges

Paul received:

- a revelation - vv. 2-6 - mystery \_\_\_\_\_ to him (by grace, v. 2)
- a commission - vv. 7-8 - mystery \_\_\_\_\_ to him (by grace, v. 7)

Revelation...

"mystery..." (vv. 3, 4, & 9)

- English def - "something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain"
- For Paul = truth hidden from human knowledge/understanding until \_\_\_\_\_ by God.

"...of Christ" (v. 4)

- Hidden from previous generations
  - OT caveat: God did reveal plans for the Gentiles (Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 2:8; Isa. 2:2-4, 42:6, 49:6)
  - What was hidden was the \_\_\_\_\_ of this plan
- V. 6 - "that the Gentiles are **fellow heirs** and **fellow members of the body**, and **fellow partakers of the promise** in Christ Jesus through the gospel"
  - Gk. prefix *syn* = "together with"
    - "co-heirs" - fellow heirs of the same blessing - of which the HS is a foretaste
    - "concorporate" - fellow members of the same body
    - "co-sharers" - fellow partakers of the same promise
  - Made possible "in Christ" and "through the Gospel"
    - Only in \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ, by faith, that we become "co" anything
    - Only by the \_\_\_\_\_ of this Gospel that this reality becomes available (cf. Rom. 10:14)
- This mystery - of double union (with Christ and each other) - was \_\_\_\_\_ to Paul (v. 3), made \_\_\_\_\_ to the apostles and prophets (v. 5), and \_\_\_\_\_ them to the saints (Col. 1:26).
  - We are the caretakers of this mystery.
  - We not only have to preach it, but embody it.

**Aside:** Paul combines personal humility (v. 8 - "smallest") with apostolic authority (3:1, 4:1)

Commission... (vv. 7-14) - 3 aspects

- V. 8 - to preach to the Gentiles
  - Cf. ch. 1 and 2
  - “unfathomable” - Gk. = “not to be tracked out” [cf. Job 5:9, 9:10 (LXX); Rom. 11:33]
    - GNT - “\_\_\_\_\_”
  - Revelation and commission go together - a matter of \_\_\_\_\_
  
- V. 9 - to make known this mystery to all men
  - V. 8 - emphasis is on the proclamation. V. 9 - emphasis is on enlightenment
    - “make known” = “to illuminate” or “bring to light”
    - Cf. Jesus’ commission to Paul in Acts 26:17b-18
  - Remember the “prince of the power of the air”!
  - Paul’s duty, as well as our own, is to proclaim the gospel, for it is the means by which God has ordained to bring light to those in darkness (cf. Eph. 5:14 & Wesley, Sermon 3)
  
- Vv. 10-12 - make God’s wisdom known through the church to the cosmic powers
  - Through this new, multi-racial humanity God’s wisdom would be displayed
    - “manifold” wisdom - “many-colored”
      - Used to describe flowers, robes, or hems
      - “robe of many colors” - Jacob/Joseph in Gen. 37 (LXX)
    - The church is a like a beautiful \_\_\_\_\_
  - The cosmic intelligences are its \_\_\_\_\_
    - “The history of the Christian church becomes a graduate school for angels.”
    - I Pet. 1:12 - matters pertaining to our salvation are “things into which angels long to look” (or gain a clear glimpse)
    - God has not revealed to them directly his “eternal purpose” (v. 11) for creation, but rather has chosen to reveal it through the church.
    - Just as God revealed his glory to mankind through his old creation (the universe, Ps. 19:1), it is through the new creation (his church) that he reveals his wisdom to the angels.
  - They observe our “boldness” and “access” to the Father.
    - The seraphim cover their faces in the presence of the Father.
    - We get to stare at him face to face.

God **directly reveals** the mystery to Paul.

Paul **verbally proclaimed** the good news of this mystery to others.

The church now **visually models** the mystery before the presence of its unseen audience.

### The Centrality of the Church

- Central to \_\_\_\_\_, which is God’s story, with Christ and his church at the center
- Central to the \_\_\_\_\_, the good news of **BOTH** new life **AND** a new society
- Central to Christian \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 13 - “my sufferings...are your glory”)
  - Cf. Heb. 2:9-10

“The local church is not a building where saved individuals come worship each week. The local church is a visible manifestation - a local expression - of the invisible reality of what God desires to do in the world. It is central to his eternal plans and purposes for all creation.” - Pastor Sean