

The Marvelous Mystery

Introduction

1. Ephesians – First half tells us who we are in Christ (our identity), second half tells us how we are to live as a result of who we are. Why this order? → We always live out our identity.
2. Last few weeks – Christ has brought peace between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, and has made us one people.
3. This week – Paul starts a thought in verse 1, gets distracted, and doesn't return to his original thought until verse 14. So what is God saying through this divine distraction?

A Prisoner of Christ Jesus (verse 1)

1. Paul, in verse 1, calls himself a "*prisoner of Christ Jesus*". Wasn't he actually a prisoner of Rome?
 - a. Paul had a deep faith in the sovereignty of God. God was in control of his circumstances. Rome could go no farther than God permitted. God had put Paul here for a purpose (see also Acts 9:15-16; 19:22-24).
 - b. Paul was also a prisoner of Christ Jesus in the sense that Christ was the one thing that controlled him. 2 Corinthians 5:14, "*for the love of Christ controls us...*". Paul was bound to and by His Lord.
2. Paul was a prisoner of Christ Jesus with a focus... "*for the sake of you Gentiles*". See also Philippians 1:23-25.

Application: What are you a prisoner to? What controls and compels you? What is your life focus?

A Steward of God's Grace (verse 2)

1. What is a steward? The administrative responsibility given to a servant over a household.
2. What is grace? Undeserved favor, getting what you don't deserve; "*To show grace is to extend favor or kindness to one who doesn't deserve it and can never earn it.*" (Swindoll); "*Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace.*" (Barnhouse).
3. Example of Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9:1-13). See also Psalm 103:8-12.
4. To be a steward of God's grace is to be a possessor and a professor. We possess it and we profess it (with our lips and our lives).

Application: Are you a steward of God's grace? Do you possess it and profess it? Do you drink deeply and regularly at the well of His grace? Will you point others to those soul-satisfying springs?

A Messenger of the Mystery (verses 3-6)

1. “*Mystery*” is not how we think about it: something dark, obscure, puzzling, inexplicable, or incomprehensible. Rather, it was a truth that while beyond human discovery was revealed by God and made open to the whole church. (Stott)
2. So what was this mystery? See verse 6.
 - a. The Gentiles are heirs together with the Jews. They have been adopted into the family.
 - b. The Gentiles are members together of the body of Christ.
 - c. The Gentiles are partakers together of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

* No one saw this coming. This was radical! See Ephesians 2:13-16 again.
3. Example of learning to sign.

Application: Where have you left dividing walls up? Race? Economic class? Personality? Grudge/bitterness? Anger with God? To leave these walls intact is to deny the power and purpose of grace.

Conclusion

1. Consider the visual of coming forward for communion:
 - a. We come together as a needy people; the ground is level at the Cross.
 - b. We come together to drink deeply of His grace through His body broken and His blood shed.
 - c. We come together to Jesus and in Him we find mercy and grace.
2. Pray – examine your heart and come to Jesus.