

## **“God’s Gracious Plan”** **Ephesians 3:7-13**

### **God’s gracious plan to show His glory**

- Grace always has a relational context
  - The motion of God’s grace – received and given
  - This makes the plan seem messy from our perspective

### **God’s gracious plan to use a former persecutor of His church to show His glory (vv. 7-9)**

- Paul received grace
  - Paul was a minister. That was his responsibility, but how did he become a minister? How was that responsibility given to him?
    - By the sovereignty of God
      - “according to the gift of God’s grace”
      - “which was given to [Paul]”
      - “according to the working of His power”
  - Paul could have easily lorded it over everyone that God was using him to do amazing things, but he didn’t.
    - “Least of the all saints” – Even though the Gentiles were sometimes made to believe that they were second class citizens, Paul places himself, a Pharisee of Pharisees, even below them, pointing out the fact that the ground is level at the cross.
    - 1 Timothy 1:12-16
    - Grace is received only by those who know that they are not deserving of it – otherwise it’s just wages
      - *Application:* Receive His grace
    - Paul speaks from a position of grace not power.
    - He has received grace and now he is a giver of grace.
- Paul gives grace
  - *Application:* The flow of grace in discipleship – Worship, Disciple, Reach and Serve
  - “to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ”
    - “Unfathomable” – later Paul prays that we might know the expanse of God’s love
      - It’s too big to understand or imagine. Even Paul who preaches the message cannot fathom it entirely.
    - “Riches” – “according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us” (Eph. 1:7-8)
    - *Application:* Are you going to let His grace show His glory in your life?
      - Will you let other people see God’s grace, His work in progress, in your life?
  - “to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things”
    - **οικονομι, α** (*oi-ko-no-mia*) – “Administration” – means the “plan” or actually the carrying out of a plan
      - Ephesians 1:10 “a view to [a plan] suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”
      - Ephesians 3:2-3 “if indeed you have heard of the [plan] of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery”
        - The mystery is “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6)
      - “to bring to light what is the [plan] of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things”

### **God's gracious plan to use the church to show His glory (vv. 10-12)**

- The church is the means for God to make known His manifold wisdom
  - “many-splendored” wisdom
  - The great church in final glory
    - Multi-lingual, multi-generational, multi-national
    - *Application:* Embrace the cross-cultural life of our church
  - We are God's pilot scheme for a reconciled universe
- Not even angels have this wisdom. It is communicated to them through the church.
  - We often ascribe God's power to angels, demons and Satan, but they are all finite. They do not have the fullness of the plan.
  - 1 Peter 1:10-12
- “Eternal purpose” – This was God's plan from the beginning. The church was God's Plan A and there was no Plan B.
- *Illustration:* The gem of the Gospel drawn out of the messed up mud of the church
  - God draws out the beauty of the Gospel so that people look at what God is doing, see what He has done, and are amazed at God's work!
- When God looked for the outlet to make known His many splendored wisdom...
  - He was not taken by the specificity of a single individual.
  - He was not wooed by the efficiency of a corporation.
  - He was not won over by the strength of a man-made empire.
  - He was not drawn to ethereal nature and swift obedience of angels.
  - He did find that a nation served His purposes for a time, but it was the church – the church in all of her mess and brokenness, in all of her confusion and community, in all of her weakness and inefficiency – that He chose, before the foundations of the world were laid, to communicate His glorious wisdom.
  - 1 Corinthians 1:25 “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

### **God's gracious plan to use persecution of His church to show His glory (v.13)**

- Paul was in jail for this message – that Gentiles are fellow heirs with Jews.
  - Paul, a former persecutor of the church, now suffers under persecution for the sake of the church!
    - *Application:* God's gracious plan for your life and the life of this church will most likely not be directly from Point A to Point B
      - Our plans are great, but we often worship our own wisdom and our own plans
      - We, your elders, do not want you to go directly from Point A to Point B in your life if God has some other beautifully awful, horrendously wonderful route for you to take.
  - Because Paul proclaimed that they were together, that there was true unity between Jews and Gentiles he was imprisoned.
  - He lived in a very divided society
    - *Application:* Are you willing to risk it all for unity in Christ?
      - Are you willing to risk your social status?
- Much of the U.S. church has lost this message.
  - For many of us, our desire for our comfort leads us to set up clubs instead of churches.
  - We recover this message by being a body and/or a family.
- This message is valuable enough that my life could be on the line.
- Will you continue the motion of God's grace?