

MARVELING AT GOD'S GRACE

Thursday, April 18

Reading: Ephesians 3:8-13

Ephesians 3:10 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, **11** according to His eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. **12** In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Paul expresses his wonder at God's plan in uniting Jews and Gentiles into one church. First, there is amazement in GOD'S CHOICE OF PAUL (3:9). He considered himself the least worthy because of his former persecution of the church (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:13-15). He had been raised a Pharisee who viewed the Gentiles with disdain. But now he was chosen to preach Christ to the Gentile world. To Paul, this was an amazing display of God's rich grace.

Paul next was amazed at GOD'S CHOICE OF TIME (3:8). God had this plan in mind since before time began but chose not to reveal it until the time was right. The Creator knew the perfect time to reveal His wonderful plan to bring Jews and Gentiles together in Christ.

Lastly, Paul was amazed at GOD'S CHOICE OF PURPOSE (3:10-12). The purpose of God uniting all in Christ was to reveal His wisdom. "Manifold" refers to great variety and beauty. The beauty of God's plan is seen by the heavenly realms when they see the salvation and unity of Christ's church. It also allows believers freedom and confidence as we approach the throne of God.

LESSON ONE: "Made Known...in the Heavenly Realms." God's wisdom is on display in the church and the angels (both good and bad) are watching (Ephesians 6:12). They learn more about God from our actions in His name. How does this fact affect how you live for and serve the Lord? What are these angels learning from the way you follow Jesus? From the way your church follows Jesus?

LESSON TWO: "Approach God with Freedom and Confidence." This is how we can approach God because of Jesus Christ. 'Freedom' means plain speech, frankness, and boldness. We can speak freely and plainly talk to God, sharing all our fears, desires, and failings. He already knows all things and is there to listen and help. 'Confidence' comes from the word meaning 'to persuade.' It is in the perfect participial form which refers to a past process with the present result of being confirmed or settled. Our confidence comes from the fact that God has settled the matter and we are sure that He will hear us. This does not mean that we rush into God's presence with a list of demands. It means that we can be sure that God will answer according to His will and plan. In the next verses, Paul will give us another sample of what prayer looks like. Are you confident that God hears your prayers even when His answer may not be what you expect? Maybe keeping a prayer journal where you write down your prayers and also write down when God answers them will help to bolster your prayer life.