

EPHESIANS
REVEALING THE MYSTERY

Wednesday, September 16

Reading: Ephesians 3:1-7

Ephesians 3:6 *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. 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power.*

Ephesians 3:2-13 are a side note in Paul's letter. The main flow of thought will pick up in verse 14. As Paul thought about his call as the apostle to the Gentiles, he takes a moment to describe what he has been called to preach.

A "mystery" in the New Testament is not something that needs to be solved. It refers to something that was not known in the past but is now being revealed. The mystery Paul was chosen to help reveal was that Jews and Gentiles are "heirs together" in one body (the church) and share equally in the promises of Christ. This would have been a great shock to "pious Jews" who considered themselves better than Gentiles. It was a hard pill to swallow and it took a while before the Jerusalem Church would accept and understand this truth (read Acts 10-11 & 15).

Paul's call was not from some human person or institution nor was it his own choice. It was by a direct revelation of God Himself. He was a servant who by God's grace and power preached this gospel even though now he was a prisoner. Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

LESSON ONE: "Prisoner of Christ Jesus." Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest, awaiting trial before the Roman authorities. But Paul refused to view his situation in a negative way. He was a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Not even being in chains would stop Paul from fulfilling his mission for his true Master. In fact, he urges the believers not to get discouraged because of his suffering and informs them that it is actually for their glory (3:13). Too often we view our service for Christ in terms of our situation. If it is convenient or not too difficult, then we will consider serving the Lord. Paul's whole life was neither easy nor convenient! Even in prison, he dedicated himself to serving the Lord. Do we let our situation or busy schedule dictate our service for God? What steps might you need to take to put God's work first on your schedule?

LESSON TWO: "Servant of This Gospel." We get our word deacon from this Greek word for servant (*diakonos*). It denotes someone who serves. Paul served the cause of the gospel. It was the gift of God's grace that transformed Saul the Persecutor of the church into Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. Only the power of God could make such a change. How do you view yourself in the church? Today, the title of deacon has come to describe one who has authority in the church. But the original "deacons" were men who were called to serve the body (see Acts 6). Even the Apostle Paul often called himself a servant. A servant's heart is required to be a true leader. Do you ever think you are more important than other believers around you? What would Paul (or Jesus) say about such an attitude? READ Philippians 2:1-18 and mark down the attitudes we should have about ourselves and others.