

God's Care Expressed
Caring As Calling
Ephesians 3:1-13

Intro: The Apostle Paul was absolutely certain about his calling in life. Often he describes with great emotion his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and the subsequent call to carry the good news to the Gentiles. God expressed his love and care for Paul both through his conversion and through his calling.

The Jew, Paul of Tarsus, is called to care for the pagan Gentiles. He leads the new movement by reaching out to Gentiles and receiving them into the church of Jesus Christ. This care for those who are outside of the covenant of promise and without God in the world expresses the heart of God, the great spiritual mystery in the world. Gentiles are heirs together with Israel of the promises of God.

I. Captured to Care: *You are a Prisoner of Christ Jesus* v1-6

***The feeling of entering a cell block, being left in there with the prisoners with the door slamming closed behind you. Paul knew what it meant to be a prisoner. In this case, however, his capture and imprisonment is not against his will but in accordance with his will and with the will of God.

A. Prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles v1. Paul's difficult lifestyle and frequent sufferings were all for the sake of others—these Gentiles that were so far away from the promises of God.

He urges them in v13 “not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.” His sufferings are their glory in that they give glory to God for his grace and love demonstrated in the coming of Paul and his faithfulness in sharing with them the Good News.

B. God's grace “give to me for you” v2. God's grace is always given to us to forward to others. Think of all the ways in which God's grace has been given to you—family, friends, mental and physical capabilities, profession, education, and native abilities. All these are given to you for the sake of others.

C. The mystery of Christ v4 revealed in a special time to special people.

D. Togetherness with the Gentiles: Gentiles are brought into the covenant with God in the fullest extent possible with no provisos or exceptions. This mystery is described with three “with” words, “together” words.

1. Heirs together with Israel: Fellow heirs, joint heirs, joint participants. The prefix “with” and the noun klaros, “lot” or “portion.” It refers to the allotment process when they divided up the land in Israel. They were receiving their inheritance in the Promised Land by lot. As in Psalm 16:6: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.
2. Members together of one body: syssomos, a compound of “with” and “body.”
3. Sharers together is summetoxis, a compound of “with” and “partakers”, “partners.”

II. Gifted to Care: *You are a Servant of this Gospel* v7-13

A. Gifted in God's grace:

1. Every good gift is a gift of God's grace
2. Every gift comes through “the working of his power”
3. Every gift is given without regard to our former sins or our perceived “rank” in the assembly of believers

B. Administered in God's grace:

1. This word, oikonomia, refers to the management of a household. It is used twice, once in verse 2, “administration of God's grace” and again in v9, “the administration of this mystery.”
2. We are “members of God's household,” according to Ephesians 2:19. This household is administered or managed by the Spirit of God. This management involves administration of grace and the gospel. The Spirit of God is managing the resources of the household of God so that people who are outside of God's grace may get into God's grace.
3. You are God's workmanship, managed by his Spirit within the household of faith, to accomplish God's purposes in the world.

C. Intended to make known the “manifold wisdom of God” v10

1. God's wisdom is “manifold:” “much variegated; marked with a great variety of colors, manifold”
2. The variety among the people of God is astonishing. The giftedness of grace is also astonishing. And the administration of God's grace is likewise astonishing in its variety and complexity.
3. God's activity in this world is beyond your ability to comprehend. You cannot appreciate it because you are created, not the creator.
4. The mystery of the gospel was hidden in God who created all things. Now this mystery—that Gentiles are joint heirs with Jews of God's grace—has been revealed through Christ in his church.

5. This wisdom is to be made known to "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms", archais and exousias in the "heavenly realms" (v10). These are the same powers mentioned in Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"
6. God is declaring his purpose, wisdom, and intent to the dark spiritual principalities and powers that have a death grip on our world. Through Christ and his church, the Creator God is invading the darkness to shine the light of the good news.
7. This INTENT IS ETERNAL. It is God's forever intention. He is sending his care to you, and through you to all people on Planet Earth, putting the evil powers on alert that the Creator God is on the move.
8. Through Christ Jesus God has accomplished what the devil thought was impossible and what his slaves still think is impossible--our liberation, rescue, salvation, and reconciliation. He has done this for us through his death upon the cross.
9. I AM DECLARING TODAY THE INTERVENTION OF GOD IN THE EVIL OF THIS WORLD. I am announcing the GOOD NEWS that God has acted to bring the enslavement, blindness, and poverty of sin to an end. He has done this through his Son, whom he loves, Jesus the Savior.
10. SATAN IS THE ACCUSER. He will always tell you that you are not worthy, you are not good enough, you cannot be rescued, it is too late for you, and you have gone too far. Satan will tell you that you are a fraud and a deceiver if you pretend that your condition is anything else. He holds you down, keeps your head under the water, and keeps you down.
11. His hold on you has been broken through the love of God, through the death of Christ upon the cross. You have now gained access to the throne room.
12. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence (v12). Freedom" means that you have been liberated from the bondage of sin and guilt. You are free to come to God without hanging your head in shame and fear. "confidence" means that you do not have to fear the reaction of God to your presence in his throne room. This is exactly what the Creator God has been working toward for you. He wants you to come into his presence with singing, with thanksgiving, to know him and love him as he loves you.
13. Do not be discouraged because of sufferings, yours or someone else's. Sufferings are not a cause for discouragement. They are cause for giving God glory. And they are your glory in that they reveal the purpose of God in your life. Suffering reminds you of the suffering of Christ on your behalf, and it prepares you for the price that you will pay when you pass on God's care in your world.