

EPHESIANS 3:1-6 THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST REVEALED

Paul used three illustrations to help us realize the great benefits we have as we are in the church. One was the kingdom, then a household, and thirdly, the temple. This is what we looked at last week as we observed that Jews and Gentiles are now joined together as equals. The Gentiles had been outside, excluded from all the benefits that Judaism had. Now, both are put together in one body.

Paul wants the Ephesians to glory in this staggering truth he has to share. He wants them to understand a mystery. It is something to be excited about. Everybody likes a mystery, so we have one to look at tonight.

1. PRISONER OF THE MYSTERY

3:1

A. WHY, THE DIGRESSION?

Paul continues his context of the Jew and Gentile together in the church. He starts out like he is moving right on with that thought in a prayer for these Ephesians and then all of a sudden he starts a regression all the way through verse 13. He picks it back up in verse 14. So this is a quite lengthy regression. Most people in literature would criticize Paul for this because they say this is bad literary form. But Paul writes something that is on his mind so that they would know what his ministry is about, his calling, his office, and its great object and purpose. Paul wants to lead them to higher heights, and deeper depths of their salvation. People who criticize Paul for his style of writing are scholarly and they think that their philosophical, intellectual style should focus only on literary form. The Catholic Church just before the Reformation had a method of preaching that was so philosophical in its arguments, it was only intellectual and dry and barren. The Reformation brought back life to the Word as Luther and Calvin and others brought in an entirely new method of preaching that was based on an expository method. In the 17th century Anglican preaching had become mainly literary in form. This did not produce spiritual life. The 18th century raised up men to counteract that style. One of those preachers was Jonathan Edwards. This was the time of the Great Awakening. The Spirit of God and the Word preached brought great revival. So that proper literary style can be lifeless. Paul, being inspired by the Word knew what he was doing as he wrote this.

B. NO GRUMBLING

People would be troubled that he was in a prison in Rome. They would be anxious about his health and welfare.

Why would God allow His servant to suffer like he was? This is a perplexing issue, this suffering stuff. It is always a question unbelievers ask. Why does God allow suffering?

Paul was not complaining and writing to them saying this was an unfortunate situation that he was in. He has the perfect attitude. He urges them to look at the problem the way he does. He actually rejoiced in the midst of his trials.

Right perspective Phil 1:29, Col 1:24

We feel good when the circumstances are favorable but miserable when they are not. Paul lived with total trust in God's purposes.

C. PRISONER OF CHRIST

Why was Paul in prison? Because of what happened at Damascus Road
He is not an ordinary prisoner. He is not Rome's prisoner, or Nero's or because he broke a Roman law. He is a prisoner of Christ. This is staggering. Everything is in the terms of Christ for Paul such as servant of Christ, minister of Christ, bond servant of Christ. He always writes "in Christ".

Paul is there because of what happened on the Road to Damascus. That is what took him to Rome. It is all the part of God's plan. Once you forget all the prison bars and cells and discomforts, you think the way Paul thought. He sees God's grace and he is sitting in heavenly places.

Acts 9:15, Acts 21:28

Phil 1:12-14,

Paul was suffering for Christ's sake. It was a great privilege of his life.

D. FOR THE SAKE OF THE GENTILES

What really put Paul into prison was that he went everywhere preaching That the Gospel of Christ was as much for the Gentiles as it was for the Jews. Paul was not out to be popular, he just wanted to preach the Gospel. When one does that, they can get into all sorts of trouble. He did not withhold anything. He did what he did for the Ephesians as he served them.

Acts 9:15, 15:7, 20:20-24, 22:21, Rom 11:13

This infuriated the Jews. Why was he in prison? He preached that there was saving grace and good news for the gentiles, who the Jews hated so much. Why do we read Foxe's Book of Martyrs? Why read about the Scottish Covenanters? They laid down their lives for the Christian faith.

2. MYSTERY OF CHRIST

3:2-6

A. ASSUMPTION THEY KNEW

They must have been aware of the fact. Assuming that you know, I am still going to remind you anyway.

B. STEWARD (Oikonomia) management of a household or business for someone else 1 Cor 4:1, 9:16-17, 1 Pet 4:10

The apostles were guardians, custodians of the mystery of the faith.

C. GOD'S GRACE Rom 15:15-16, 1 Tim 1:12-13, Gal 2:9

What an amazing grace had been given to Paul to be a steward. God had given him His Spirit to understand and he preached it and he saw people added to the church. Many of them were common slaves. Paul went to quite the trouble so they could be redeemed and rescued.

What a purpose of God as Paul does not want any sympathy from them.

He is suffering for Christ's sake.

D. MYSTERY

Revelation (Apokalupsis) There was an uncovering

Mystery (Mysterion) Something that was a mystery, now made clear
Something the human mind can't attain by itself

There were mystery religions that existed in Paul's days. The mystery was to be only known by the initiates. It was only known to those who it was revealed. Paul uses this analogy that is similar to these cult religions but he is describing something that was unknown before Christ but is now revealed fully. It is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Made known to Paul Gal 1:11-12, direct revelation

Insight (Sunesis) bring together, comprehension and understanding

Paul was to explain it and clarify it. Paul was so filled with understanding of the mystery that he sacrificed his health, freedom and his very life.

E. THE TWO MYSTERIES

1. General Mystery v 4 the mystery of Christ (the whole truth concerning **Christ**)

This is the whole message of the Gospel or the whole truth about Christ.

Paul was consumed with the thought of Christ.

Phil 1:21, Col 2:3, 1 Tim 3:16

The way that Christ has done it is quite the mystery. Think of how He has done it.

Incarnation, two natures, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension

We should be absorbed by these doctrines. We should be marveling in amazement.

2. Particular Mystery

The church is the final form of God's purpose until it is finished.

Jews and Gentiles are both included in one entity.

Not known before---embryo stage in OT It is now in full bloom and development.

It was there in shadow, and now fully revealed in the NT.

3. PLAN OF THE MYSTERY

3:5-6

A. OT passages only clearly understood by NT Heb 11:39-40, 1 Pet 1:10-12

Isa 49:6/ Acts 13:46-47, Gen 12:3, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14

They just had a glimpse of the truth that Paul now reveals.

B. REVEALED TO HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

Eph 2:20, 4:11

This was revolutionary truth.

C. THE SPIRIT

2 Pet 1:20-21

D. TOGETHER, TOGETHER, TOGETHER---Three parallel, composite expressions

Compacted together, jointed together

These uses of the words embrace all that a person receives or will receive in salvation. It's the whole of God's blessings possessed jointly by all believers.

There is no inner circle or outer circle of the saved. All inherit God's blessings.

1. FELLOW HEIRS (Sunkleronomoi_ Gal 3:29, Rom 8:17

They have the same benefits, same promises.

2. FELLOW MEMBERS (Sunsoma) 1 Cor 12:12-13, Eph 2:22-23

We are more than servants in the household. We weren't just added in loosely but compacted together as joints in a body. There were no second class citizens.

3. FELLOW PARTAKERS (Sunmetocha) Col 1:27, Gal 3:14, 19, 22,29

Promises of the resurrection and the glorious kingdom---new heavens and the new earth

We shall wonder and be in amazement in all eternity at the grace of God that made it all possible to bring us in to the kingdom.