

Ephesians 3: 1-13

Author: Paul

Recipients: Church in Ephesus

Location: Western shore of modern day Turkey; Aegean Sea

Key Theme: "The Body of Christ is Blessed"

v. 1-5

For this reason...

- This is very similar to a "therefore". In order to understand what Paul is talking about we must look back.
- In Chapter 2 he tells us that Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ.
- For this reason he was called to apostleship.
- He is called to make plain the mystery of God to the Gentiles.
- Paul wrote this letter while on house arrest in Rome.

A Prisoner

- Paul tells us here that he is a prisoner of Christ.
- This seems to be an oxymoron.
- Christ is supposed to bring freedom, right?
- Well, He does.
- By saving us He sets us free from sin but also places us under His Lordship.
- In Scripture we are always known as slaves. Either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness.
- When we are placed under the Lordship of Christ we are now set free from every other bond and only under Him.
- You are free from whatever it is that you used to be.

Stewardship

- The word stewardship implies that we do not own something but are rather managers of it.
- Paul was a steward of the Gospel message.
- He didn't own it, it didn't originate with him, but he was entrusted with it by Christ to spread the message to the Gentiles.
- As believers we have been made stewards of the same message.
- Part of being prisoners or slaves to Christ means that we have a duty to serve Him.
- We do that by being faithful with the Gospel.
- We take on the Gospel for our own lives but also share it with whoever will hear it.
- We do not own it but we have been entrusted with it in order to make disciples of all nations.
- Are we doing that?

Revelation

- The mystery that Paul is about to reveal to the Ephesians was revealed to Him by Jesus.
- This mystery was not revealed to those who lived during the Old Testament days and now the apostles and prophets have been granted this through the working of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is coeternal with the Father and the Son. He has been working and moving for all of eternity past and will be for all of eternity future.
- The Holy Spirit wasn't poured out onto men until the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

v. 6-9

Mystery

- The mystery of God throughout the ages is that His people would come from Jews and Gentiles.
- This shakes everything that was once believed and understood.
- Not only did God have a people in Israel, He had a Gentile remnant even in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 19:19-25

- Isaiah prophesied an event at which Egypt, Assyria, and Israel would all worship God together and great awakening would break out.
- Some say this was already fulfilled when certain Jews fled to Egypt and took their faith with them. Others believe it will be fulfilled in the New Heaven/New Earth.

Paul the unworthy

- Paul was made a steward of this good news.
- His appointment was to evangelize the Gentile nations with the message that they too are in God's family through the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Paul, possibly the greatest missionary in history, says of himself that he is unworthy, the least of all the saints.
- 1 Corinthians 15:9; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15-16
- His goal was to bring light to the darkened Gentile nations.
- They were pagans and outside of the covenant of God with Israel and Paul sought to bring them the Good News even in the midst of their idolatry.

v. 10-13

The Church

- The mystery of God's plan from eternity past is that Gentile believers were also part of True Israel.
- This manifestation would be made complete through the New Testament church.
- True Israel has always been the focus of God and that is made up of believing Jews and Gentiles but that didn't start at the death and resurrection of Christ.
- His payment paid for all of the Old Testament Gentile believers as well.

The Eternal Purpose

- This was God's plan from eternity past and it was realized in Christ Jesus. The plan came to fruition through Him.
- Through Him we have access but not as those who are afraid.
- We have boldness and access with confidence through faith.
- We are made children of God despite nationality and that was always the plan.

Notable Examples of Old Testament Gentile Believers:

- Melchizedek (Genesis 14)
- Jethro (Exodus 18): The Midianite father-in-law of Moses
- Caleb (Num 32:12) Canaanite
- Rahab (Joshua 2): The Canaanite prostitute
- Othniel (Judges 3:9): Othniel was Caleb's brother and also a Canaanite
- Shamgar (Judges 3:31): Not much is known of this judge, but his non-Semitic name and the description of him as a "son of Anath" marks him as a non-Israelite
- Jael (Judges 4-5): The killer of Sisera was a Kenite, a tribe of Canaanites (Gen 15:19)
- Ruth the Moabite
- Obed-Edom (2 Samuel 6): The Ark of the Covenant was stored in his backyard of a man from Philistine Gath
- Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12): Uriah is called a Hittite, which most likely refers to the Neo-Hittites living in Syria
- Widow of Zaraphath (1 Kings 17): The poor widow who was supplied with food by Elijah
- Naaman (2 Kings 5): The Aramean commander who came to Elisha for healing
- Samaritans (2 Kings 17): the transplantees settled in Samaria by Assyria were taught to fear God, but continued to worship other gods as well
- Job: The nationality of Job and his friends is not known, but they hailed from the location of Edom
- Sailors (Jonah 1:16): The sailors who threw Jonah into the sea feared God
- People of Nineveh (Jonah 3): The people of Nineveh believed God at the preaching of Jonah
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Small Group Questions

- 1) What was the main reason that Paul was called into apostleship?
 - He was entrusted with revealing the mystery of God that both Jewish and Gentile believers were the people of God. This mystery had been hidden from everyone except for the prophets and apostles.
- 2) Why is the mystery of God such a big deal to the Jews? The Gentiles?
 - The Jews had assumed that they were the only people of God. They wrongly leaned on their physical lineage and heritage from Abraham when they should've been more concerned with the spiritual condition of their heart. For the Gentiles this is good news because for so long they were told that they were not the people of God and now the mystery has been unveiled that believing Gentiles were part of True Israel all along.
- 3) Which three nations did Isaiah prophesy that God would bring awakening to and they would worship Him together?
 - Egypt, Assyria, and Israel. Egypt and Assyria both played prominent roles as antagonists in the history of Israel but God was going to change them and make them His people for a time.
- 4) What did Paul say about himself in reference to him being an apostle? Follow up question: How should we view ourselves in light of this?
 - He said that he was unworthy. The least of all the saints. The chief of sinners.
 - We should view ourselves as lowly wretches that are only anything because of the work of Christ in us and on our behalf.
- 5) Go over the list of Old Testament Gentile believers and talk about their stories.;