

SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

REVEALED

Ephesians 3:1-13

INTRODUCTION

I like mysteries because they challenge my mind. I like the thrill of seeking to figure out how it all ends and how the tension in the plot is resolved. Sometimes a guess it but more often than not I have to wait until the end. Paul's words in this section describe the mystery of God that has now been made known to the apostles and prophets. Unlike mystery movies there is no need to try to figure out how the tension between humanity is resolved or how the story ends. The mystery is not outside of us; the mystery of God's resolution is us – the church – united together in Christ alone. The world is seeking to figure out the tensions of their lives and of this world. Paul reminds us that the church triumphant is the revealed mind of God to the world, proving that Christ alone has already settled the tensions between mankind and the tension between God and man.

THE MYSTERY (Ephesians 3:1-6)

That Gentiles are included in the covenant promise of God is a direct result of Christ's work through Paul. He is now in prison in Rome but Paul understands his chains to be for Christ and *on behalf of the Gentiles* (Ephesians 3:1). He was called to something that not only caused him to view his suffering in eternal ways and but it produced a joy that transcended the chains. He was given the administration (stewardship) of the revelation of the mystery of God. By *mystery* Paul is not referring to our modern understanding of mystery – hidden things which men must seek and grope about discover. Rather, he is referring to the longstanding mystery of God which, though hidden from saints of old, has now been revealed to Paul as well as the other apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5). This mystery is the redeeming work of Christ (Ephesians 3:4) and His redeeming work of creating one body, the church, made up of groups previously hostile to one another - Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 3:6).

THE PROCLAMATION (Ephesians 3:7-9)

Paul was not only the recipient of God's mystery but his entire message and ministry was devoted to proclaiming this extraordinary and powerful gospel of God's uniting grace. Paul's calling was not his doing but was *the working of his (God's) power* (Ephesians 3:7). Christ had met Paul on the road to Damascus and, by sovereign grace, destroyed this once persecutor of the faith and, by the same grace qualified him to be a proclaimer of that same faith (Ephesians 3:7). He did not call himself nor did he qualify himself. It was all laid upon him as a gift of grace, He is merely a *servant of the gospel* (Ephesians 3:7). To make the case stronger Paul says he is *the least of all the saints* (Ephesians 3:8). None are deserving of grace but to Paul he, above all, is most underserving. How is it that God could love such a perpetrator with the *incalculable riches of Christ* (Ephesians 3:8)? How is it that He would call Paul to proclaim the mystery of this glory to the unsaved world - the same glory he once tried to suppress and destroy (Ephesians 3:8-9)? The answer is found in one word: GRACE. By the Spirit of God this is the grace laid upon each of us – to proclaim the gospel to the lost in the nations. This is our stewardship. None of us are worthy and some of us feel as Paul did – below even the least of the most unworthy of the saints. Yet, the grace that destroyed what we used to be has qualified us to proclaim the gospel.

THE PURPOSE (Ephesians 3:10-13)

The church is God's trophy in the world! We are reconciled to God and then to one another to display to the world – the rules and powers – what the power of God's grace can do and what it looks like

(Ephesians 3:10). Paul uses a the following phrase to show God's purpose – "So that God's *multi-faceted wisdom may now be known* ... (Ephesians 3:10). God chose to display his wisdom in and by way of the reconciled Jew and Gentile to show the power of the gospel to destroy divisions. The phrase *multi-faceted* (Ephesians 3:11) is to be literally understood as the *multi-colored* wisdom of God. The eternal wisdom of God revealed that men not only have bold access to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 3:12) but, also, that His wisdom is intimately connected to the racial unity of the church. The wisdom of God is not *one* color. It is multi-colored and this means that our churches must understand our mission to include the nations – around the world and in our neighborhoods. Our commitment to Christ above culture is the means by which we can reflect to a watching world what God's grace and glory looks like in those who have received it.