

Pastor Dave – Sunday Sun 5th May - 2024

A study in Ephesians – Chapter 3

Where The Rubber Meets the Road.

God's Mystery

Ephesians 3:1-6

Beginning in...

Acts 22:1-21 Christian Standard Bible

22 “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you.” **2** When they heard that he was addressing them in Aramaic,^[a] they became even quieter. **3** He continued, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of our ancestral law. I was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. **4** I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail, **5** as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. After I received letters from them to the brothers, I traveled to Damascus to arrest those who were there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul's Testimony

6 “As I was traveling and approaching Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. **7** I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

8 “I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are persecuting.’ **9** Now those who were with me saw the light,^[b] but they did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

10 “I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’

“The Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that you have been assigned to do.’

¹¹ “Since I couldn’t see because of the brightness of the light,^[a] I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and went into Damascus. ¹² Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, who had a good reputation with all the Jews living there, ¹³ came and stood by me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And in that very hour I looked up and saw him. ¹⁴ And he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the words from his mouth, ¹⁵ since you will be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now, why are you delaying? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

¹⁷ “After I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw him telling me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ “But I said, ‘Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in you imprisoned and beaten. ²⁰ And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I stood there giving approval^[a] and guarding the clothes of those who killed him.’

²¹ “He said to me, ‘Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Acts being a testimony of Paul in relation to the significance of what he writes to the Ephesian Church.

- Mission to the gentiles.
- Now being fellow heirs to the throne of God – with the Jews.

In Ephesians 3 – Paul reiterates this.

Mystery – this word comes up several times within the first few verses.

- Mystery – not a problem to investigate or a problem to solve.

- Also not like the Ephesian mystery cults that the people of Ephesus would have been exposed to.
- Like Gnostic teaching – a select few get a certain grasp of this knowledge and then they impart it to everybody else – that sense of the large majority of people are not going to get it – only the select few. There is a flavour of this today in some churches.
- This isn't what Paul is talking about – none of this is right.

5 Points to cover.

Paul at the beginning starts a thought and then doesn't complete it straight away.

- **V3 For this reason,**

Question – What are these believers think?

“You are in prison for us” – because of the ministry you have with us?

- A heavy thought for them.

This is an important passage, and it is important that we apply it. It is important that we understand what Paul is talking about – so that when we get to some of the on the ground day in and day out application of these things, we really have a full understanding of what Paul is teaching here. This is not just for the Ephesian church it is for us.

Ephesians 3:1-6 Christian Standard Bible

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

3 For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ² assuming you have heard about the administration of God's grace that he gave me for you. ³ The mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have briefly written above. ⁴ By reading this you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. ⁵ This was not made known to people^[a] in other generations as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 3:7 - to finish the passage.

⁷ I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.

We need to understand that Eph 3:1 where Paul begins a statement and then doesn't complete it, is connected Eph 3:14 – not knowing this we could find ourselves a little lost.

He says... **Ch 3** For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— (Okay what now? As Paul then starts a new thought) – the thought then finished in verse 14...

Ephesians 3:14 Christian Standard Bible

Prayer for Spiritual Power

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father^[a]

- He is letting us know that he is in prison because of the proclamation of the gospel.
- Letting the Ephesian people know he was in prison – suffering for them for the cause of Christ – not to make them feel guilty – he is keen to encourage them because he knows that they will be discouraged about it.
- Paul is saying “I am okay with that, and you need to be okay with that”.

Ephesians 3:2

² assuming you have heard about the administration of God's grace that he gave me for you.

- Paul had the administration of God's grace – the privilege of communicating the grace of God to the Ephesian church.
- Though we are not like Paul – we have the privilege of sharing with people the grace of God – as followers of Jesus Christ – to go to people that need to hear the gospel message.

Ephesians 3:3 Christian Standard Bible

³ The mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have briefly written above.

Question – What is the mystery – what does he mean?

Paul puts it this way – as described by John Piper – Quote.

“God’s mystery is a truth that has been concealed that has now been revealed by the Holy Spirit”.

God revealed this mystery to Paul that he taught and communicated to the gentiles.

No longer are Jews and Gentiles 2 classes of people.

- Not that gentiles have to become proselytes.
- They are now a part of the same body – the church.

Point # 1 – He Reveals It.

Galatians 1:11-12 Christian Standard Bible

The Origin of Paul’s Gospel

¹¹ For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. ¹² For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The mystery revealed by the Holy Spirit – Paul noted it down.

- Connecting two things – Gentiles and Co-heirs – verse 6

⁶ The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Revealed.

Ephesians 3:3 Christian Standard Bible

³ The mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have briefly written above.

Question – Was Paul the only one that knew about this? – No!

Ephesians 3:5 Christian Standard Bible

⁵ This was not made known to people^[a] in other generations as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:

- This was made known back in the Old Testament

Genesis 12:1-3 Christian Standard Bible

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD said to Abram:

Go from your land,
your relatives,
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.

² I will make you into a great nation,
I will bless you,
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt,
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed^[a] through you.^[b]

- The beginning of the promise of the gospel for the gentiles.

Encouragement given to read through the book of Galatians to read about this.

Isaiah 49:6 Christian Standard Bible

⁶ he says,
"It is not enough for you to be my servant
raising up the tribes of Jacob
and restoring the protected ones of Israel.

I will also make you a light for the nations,
to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

- The Old Testament concealed this to some degree.
- The message of the gospel was conveyed in the Old Testament though.

The mystery was made known – but not with the clarity and precision.

- Co-heirs – partners.
- In the provision of Jesus Christ.

A beautiful truth.

- For all nations.
- To the ends of the earth.

Ethne – every tribe and every tongue.

As followers of Jesus Christ, it is our job to share with everyone – everybody.

- Paul called himself an ambassador of the grace of God.
- So are we!

Verse 3 – referring to the previous passages we looked at in Ch 2

Ephesians 2:16 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁶ He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.^[a]

Verse 4 –

Ephesians 3:4 Christian Standard Bible

⁴ By reading this you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.

- The importance of reading and understanding the scriptures.

In order to understand when we are hearing a lie, we need to understand the truth.

Paul’s desire for believers is to be...

- Feed by the Word.

- Grown in the Word.
- And be clear on the Word.

It is important that we know and understand the gospel in order that we can share it.

- It is important that we know what we believe.
- And why we believe it.

These are conversations being had in our church.

We are being bombarded with untruth.

The younger generation are being exposed to 2-minute-long videos with all sorts of content.

- Arguments against God.
- Arguments against Christ.

This content having no meat to it!

- But youth are taking these things at face value.

It is so important that we are all in the Word of God to know the lies when they come our way.

Reference made to Jehovah Witness.

- Mapped out the whole of the US, so that every household is visited at least twice a year – A startling reality!

Question – Do we know the Word of God well enough to notice the counterfeits and untruths.

- Studying it.
- Learning it.

The Holy Spirit disclosing to us the truth of scripture.

- The Holy Spirit to guide us.

2 Peter – records the patience of the Lord.

2 Peter 3:15 Christian Standard Bible

¹⁵ Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him.

- There are some things that are hard to understand.

b – Young people being taught that they can't fully know what the Word of God says!

Questions that come to mind when people read the Word of God and don't understand.

- Are they saved?
- Do they have the Holy Spirit in their lives?

Point # 4 – The Holy Spirit Discloses it.

Question – Do we ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand it and apply it?

Alistair Begg Quote...

“Truth is arrived at not by speculation or investigation but by revelation”.

Point # 5 – We Live It

Ephesians 3:6-7 Christian Standard Bible

⁶ The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.

We are called to be servants of the gospel.

- Like Paul.
- We are called to go and make disciples.

Ephesians Ch 4 - calling believers to live out their faith – vibrantly – faithfully.

Question asked at the Evangelism Conference.

Question – Who is the one person you pray for daily – build into weekly and invite out to the next best thing?

- With a primary focus of winning them to Christ.

“Think about the dedication of false faith groups”.

- They are on top of things!

But we are constantly encouraged as Christians to get across the street – across the world – to reach the nations with the truth of the gospel.

We are co-heirs – partners in the gospel.

Question – Is the Holy Spirit challenging you in these things.

We serve a risen saviour who others need to come to know and have a relationship with.

Titus 2:11-15 Christian Standard Bible

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation^[a] for all people, ¹² instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

¹⁵ Proclaim these things; encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard^[b] you.

Question – Are we eager to do the good works that God has commanded us?

- We are called to be disciple makers.
- We are called to be missionaries.

Across the street and across the globe.

Question – Are we zealous enough to go anywhere that God sends us – to share the truth of the gospel.

Question – Who is the one person that we will ...

- Pray for daily?
- Disciple weekly?
- And invite to the next best thing?

Christian – Are we living out our faith through the gospel of Jesus Christ to reach those who need to hear it and be changed by it?