

Revealing the Mystery

Ephesians 3: 1-7

Our text follows up on that which Paul had spoken of in the previous chapter. There he had discussed the marvelous transformation of those who were dead in trespasses and sin, being made alive in Christ. We are saved by grace through faith, not of our works, leaving us nothing to boast in except the grace of God. The saved are then placed within the body of Christ, as it has pleased the Lord, as a habitation for God through the Holy Spirit.

It is evident that Paul, having experienced salvation by grace through faith, is moved by such grace and is compelled to share this grace at every opportunity. The gospel transformed his life and had become the basis and focal point of his ministry. He is committed to sharing this great mystery with those who have yet to hear and respond to the gospel.

As believers, we share this same opportunity and obligation. There can be no doubt that the transformation received by grace through faith in Christ is the single-most important event in our lives. Like Paul, we ought to be moved by our salvation experience and committed to sharing the Good News with those who have yet to respond to the gospel. As we examine the [assurances](#) within the text, I want to consider the thought: [Revealing the Mystery](#).

I. A Testimony of Grace (1-2) – Here Paul shares a testimony of his commitment to the gospel, being motivated to proclaim the Good News. Notice:

A. Paul's Contentment (1) – [For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles...](#)He offers a reminder that he is imprisoned for the faith, and yet there is no hint of despair or regret in his voice. It seems apparent that Paul is reminded of his call to serve as an apostle to the Gentiles, being called to proclaim the gospel to them. One who once enjoyed great status among the Jewish elite is now writing to Gentiles within the church in Ephesus and he is content with life as it is. [2 Tim.2:10 – Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.](#)

- We live in a world that is becoming less tolerant of our faith and yet, like Paul, we need to remain content in Christ. He has called the church to proclaim the Good News to those who have yet to respond. While situations in life may be less than desirable, the Lord offers contentment that is not available in the world. Regardless of the struggles we endure in life for the faith, we can rest in the grace and provision of Christ.

B. Paul's Engagement (1b) – *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles...* Paul reminds the church at Ephesus of his commitment to them. Clearly, life would have been much simpler and more prosperous had he continued the path he was on prior to meeting the Lord on the Damascus Road. However, his life had been transformed at that moment. The old man of sin had died and he had been resurrected a new creature in Christ. His life was no longer his to live as he pleased; Paul had been saved with purpose and he was committed to fulfilling the call he had received. There were no other options; he was committed to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

- While this may appear a subtle detail within the text, it offers a great challenge to us. Paul had been imprisoned for his commitment to the gospel, and yet he refused to abandon the call regardless of personal cost. The Lord will likely ask us to move beyond our comfort zone as we serve Him, and like Paul, we must be willing to embrace the task and serve the Lord faithfully regardless of the difficulties and perceived personal cost.

C. Paul's Management (2) – *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.* Paul speaks of the “dispensation of grace” he had received so that he might share it with the Gentiles. Dispensation has the idea of “*stewardship, management, administration, ownership.*”ⁱ The Lord had revealed the mystery of the gospel to Paul and he had been entrusted with sharing the gospel with the world. He had not received such grace to hold merely as a personal possession, but as a steward to faithfully administer this grace to others. Paul realized the significance of grace and he was aware of his responsibility to be a faithful steward.

- That is very compelling and convicting. I realize that we have not received the specific call that Paul received, but every believer is called to be a steward of the grace of God. We have not received such abundant grace to keep it solely for ourselves. With the reception of grace comes the responsibility to faithfully steward grace. If we are to be faithful to the Lord and the grace we have received, we must learn to be good stewards of His grace. *Matt.25:20 – And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.*

II. The Mystery of the Gospel (3-6) – After offering a brief testimony of his commitment to the gospel, Paul speaks of the mystery of the gospel. Consider:

A. The Revelation (3a) – *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.* Paul speaks of how the Lord revealed the mystery of the gospel unto him. Bear in mind, Paul was an educated man, having sat under the greatest scholars of the age. He also had become a scholar of the Word. However, the Word they had at that time was limited to the Old Testament. Paul and the other

apostles were actively writing the New Testament. The great mystery of the gospel is that it would be offered unto the Gentiles as well as the Jews. There would be no difference in the redeemed; all of the saved are one in Christ.

- As Gentiles, we rejoice in the mystery of the gospel. I am thankful the Lord has provided grace through which all can be saved by believing the gospel. This serves as a challenge for us today, just as it did in Paul's day. Many of the Jews rejected the idea that God would show favor to the Gentiles. We must remember that the gospel is available to all people and we have been called to reach the uttermost parts of the earth with the gospel.

B. The Proclamation (3b-4) – (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.) Paul had been faithful to proclaim the mystery of the gospel and the Gentiles had received letters written by Paul through which the mystery of the gospel could be read and understood.

- Again, we are reminded of the emphasis and great need to share the gospel with those who have yet to believe. We cannot expect one to receive that which they have not been exposed to or rightly understand. The gospel is simple enough for a child to receive, but it must be shared.

C. The Confirmation (5) – Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Referring back to the time of the Old Testament, the gospel had been hidden in a mystery. Following Pentecost and the indwelling of the Spirit, the gospel had been revealed to the apostles, through the Holy Spirit. The age of grace had come into the world and the Lord was preparing the apostles to share the Good News with the world. These men were divinely equipped to share the gospel with the world. Christ had come, redemption had been provided, salvation was available, and the Good News was being shared.

D. The Inclusion (6) – That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Paul proclaims the universal nature and provision of the gospel. Christ had not died to redeem Israel alone; He had died to redeem fallen humanity – Jew and Gentile alike. The Gentile believers were fellow-heirs, being included in the same body, and partakers of the promise of Christ through the gospel. The remedy for mankind's sinful condition had been provided in Christ. He is the hope of the world, offering salvation for all who respond by faith. (Look back at Ephesians 2:19-22).

III. The Sovereignty of God (7) – Paul affirms the sovereignty of God in the midst of his life, salvation, and calling. We too can rejoice in His sovereignty in our lives. Consider:

A. His Gracious Calling (7a) – [Whereof I was made a minister](#). Following his becoming a partaker of the promise of Christ through the gospel, Paul was called to minister unto the Gentiles. As one reads the writings of Paul, it is evident that he never got over the grace he had received. The Lord had shown grace to one who was undeserving, placing him within the body of Christ, and calling him to serve as an apostle to the Gentiles.

- Like Paul, our lives, salvation, and service unto the Lord, in any capacity, are all of His grace. I too was undeserving and yet the Lord chose to save me by His grace and call me into gospel ministry. What a privilege believers have to serve the Lord and rest in His grace. We have received far more than we deserved and much more than we can comprehend.

B. His Effectual Working (7b) – [Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power](#). Paul realized he had not chosen the ministry, but God had graciously chosen him for ministry. He did not serve under his own power or through his own ability; it was the effectual power of God working through him that allowed Paul to engage in ministry and enjoy the fruit his ministry had produced. [1 Cor.2:2-4 – For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.](#) ³[And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.](#) ⁴[And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.](#)

- We need to be continually reminded of our dependence upon the Lord. Anything that is accomplished through our lives of eternal value rests in the power and provision of the Lord. Apart from His grace and power, we would accomplish nothing of lasting value. Everything that is accomplished in your life or mine, and all that is accomplished corporately within the church is a gift of God's grace as He effectually works through His people. We have nothing to boast in but Christ and His grace!

Conclusion: What a beautiful reminder of the grace of God in our lives. It is by grace that we have been saved; we are kept and equipped through His grace. I pray that we will recognize our responsibility to be good stewards of the grace we have received. Have you responded to the gospel and received His grace? If not, I urge you to respond today!

ⁱ Leadership Ministries Worldwide, [Galatians–Colossians](#), The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1996), 159.