

Ephesians 3:1-13

Revelation of God's Wisdom Through the Church

1. In this passage Paul appears to get side tracked: the sentence in verse 1 is incomplete and left hanging. When does Paul get back to the main point?
2. Why does Paul say that it is “for the sake of you Gentiles” that he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus?
3. What exactly is “the administration of God’s grace” that was specifically given to Paul?
4. In verse 3 Paul speaks of “the mystery made known to me by revelation.”
 - a. What exactly is “the mystery” (cf. v. 6)?
 - b. What is “revelation”? What did the Bible consist of at that time?
 - c. Why is it important for us today, so many years later, to know about this “mystery”?
5. Can you think of an example from the book of Acts where the Spirit expressly made known to one of the apostles the truth that the Gentiles are heirs with Israel, members of one body?
6. Is it true that the mystery of Gentile inclusion was unknown in the Old Testament time? (cf. Psalm 87; Isaiah 19:18-25; Isaiah 49:6; etc.)

What exactly does Paul mean when he says that this mystery “was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets”? (v.5)
7. Why does Paul consider himself the “least of all God’s people”? (v.8; cf. 1 Timothy 1:15-16)
8. Paul’s special calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles would bring him much suffering and would ultimately cost him his life. Yet he sees his receiving of this special calling as a matter of receiving God’s grace. (v.8)
 - a. Why?
 - b. How do/should we view our calling today to testify to others around us of the hope that we have? (cf. 1 Peter 3:15)
 - c. What view of the content of the gospel do we need to feel our calling is receiving God’s grace?

Do we have that view? Why or why not?

How should we seek to foster such a view?

9. In verse 10, Paul says that God's intent was to use the Church to make known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, the manifold wisdom of God. (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

a. What is wisdom?

b. What exactly is meant by God's "manifold wisdom"?

Is God's wisdom made known through the Church only by the preaching? (Note the context here, where Paul highlights a peculiar aspect of the New Testament Church.)

Is God's wisdom make known through the Church today where the uniting of Jews and Gentiles is not as prominent? What calling should it impress upon us? (cf. Belgic Confession 2)

c. Who are "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms"? (cf. Ephesians 2:2)

When these rulers see Jews and Gentiles uniting together in church, of what would that be a sign to them?

10. What does it mean to approach God with freedom and confidence? (v. 12)

Do we truly do that?

11. Verse 13 suggests that the Ephesians are losing confidence because of Paul's sufferings. Why would Paul's suffering cause them to be discouraged?

12. In light of how Paul encourages the Ephesians, why should we take courage today as we see the Church marginalized?

13. In verse 13 Paul says to the Ephesians that his sufferings "are your glory." What does he mean by that?

For further discussion:

14. Someone explained verse 10 in this way: "now the congregation has the elevated calling to be a mirror in which the manifold wisdom of God is reflected back on high to the heavens." Do you agree with this statement? Do we often think of the church's role in this way? Should we?

15. Is there any connection here to what God said to Satan about Job when he said, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." (Job 1:8) Does God today say to angels, and even to evil forces, "consider my Church..."