

## **Ephesians 3:1-13 The Mystery – God’ Free Grace**

### **Verse 1**

*For this reason* – Paul is about to begin a prayer for the Ephesians, based on the truths he has just shared. However, an important truth comes to his mind that he interjects in verses 2-13. He picks up on the prayer in verse 14.

*Paul the prisoner of Christ for the sake of you Gentiles* – Paul was in prison because of the message he preached. Specifically that Jew and Gentile were now one in the body of Christ (2:11-22).

### **Verses 2-3**

*If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace* – *Stewardship* = *oikonomia* a compound of two Greek words: *oikos* – house and *nomos* – law. The idea is house rule, or administration. It is from this word that the teaching of Dispensationalism is developed. *Oikonomia* occurs nine times in the NT. Luke 16:2-4 (three times), 1 Cor. 9:17, Col. 1:25, 1 Tim. 1:4, Eph. 1:10, 3:2, 3:9

*The oikonomia of God’s grace* – *By revelation there was made known to me the mystery* – Galatians 1:11-12

### **Verses 4 - 5**

By understanding Paul’s revelation from God and his earlier reference to Jew and Gentile together in Christ they can now more fully understand the mystery.

*As it has now been revealed* – There is a theological debate over the meaning of “as.” If it is a comparative of degree, then the church was revealed in the Old Testament to a lesser degree. If it is a comparative of kind, then the church was not revealed in the Old Testament but is now revealed in the New Testament for the first time. This is the better interpretation for several reasons. It is supported by the context (verses 9-11). It is supported by the parallel passage in Col. 1:26. The Greek word for *revealed* means “to disclose what before was unknown.”

*To his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit* – Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles but all the apostles and New Testament prophets understood the revelation of the mystery, the church.

*In the Spirit* – The Spirit revealed the truth to all the apostles but Paul was the one to write about it and make it clear to the church.

### **Verse 6**

*To be specific, that the Gentiles are... Fellow heirs. Fellow members of the body. Fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.*

*Through the gospel* – The good news that Christ died for the sin of the world and that all who believe in Him receive eternal life and the power to live that life.

### **Verses 7 – 8**

*Of which I was made a minister* – Minister = *diakonos*

*According to the gift of God’s grace* – Paul considered it God’s gracious gift that he would be called to serve the Gentiles with the gospel.

*According to the working of His power* – Paul also knew that he had no power in himself to serve God but that his power came from the Holy Spirit.

*To me the very least of all saints* – Paul was deeply humbled in view of God’s amazing grace. See 1 Timothy 1:15

*This grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ* – *Unfathomable* = “Past finding out,” “unsearchable.” This word is used only here and in Romans 11:33. Already in 1:7 Paul has mentioned the riches of Christ’s grace which he lavished upon us!

### **Verses 9 - 10**

The *oikonomia* of the mystery of Jew and Gentile becoming one in the church was hidden in darkness but is now brought to light.

It was *hidden in God* in the past ages.

*In order that the manifold wisdom of God might be now made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places* - The word *manifold* is only used here in the New Testament and has the meaning of “much varied,” or “many colors.” This manifold wisdom is now made known, through the church, to the angelic host who are *in the heavenly places*.

“As the angelic hosts witness the church, they must admit that having Jews and Gentiles in one body is evidence of God’s wisdom.”

The church is also something that Satan knew nothing about! Satan knew the Old Testament prophecies about Christ, but not the mystery!

### **Verse 11**

*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord* – God in his wisdom and omniscience had the perfect plan in His mind. This plan was carried out through *Christ Jesus our Lord*.

### **Verse 12**

*In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him* – The work of Christ on the cross, His resurrection power, and His intercessory ministry for us gives us boldness and confidence to approach God.

*Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find help in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:16

### **Verse 13**

*Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.* If the Ephesians could truly understand the administration of God’s grace given to Paul then they would not be discouraged. They would understand he suffered because of his message, which led to their gain and glory.

**Principle – With revelation goes responsibility!** Paul had been entrusted with the stewardship of the gospel, which He faithfully proclaimed.

We have been entrusted with a stewardship. God made us for a purpose and has gifted us so that we can fulfill our purpose.

*It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.* 1 Cor. 4:2