

THE REVELATION OF A MYSTERY (Part 1)
Ephesians 3:1-13

REVIEW ;

Ephesians 1 – the numerous blessings we have in Christ

Ephesians 2 – the new birth we have in Christ.

Read Ephesians 3:1-6

Pray

BACKGROUND :

- The Prison epistles – Eph, Phil, Col, Philemon – written during Paul’s imprisonment

Note : In all of these letters, you will never read or even get a hint that Paul was complaining about his situation .

- Ephesians talks about what we have in Christ
- Philippians talks about joy in Christ
- Colossians talks about the glory in Christ
- Philemon talks about love for others in Christ

What was the secret?

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome or of circumstances but a prisoner of Christ.

Philippians 1:13 “...I am in chains for Christ.” Yet encouraging his fellow saints

Colossians 4:18 “Remember my chains.” Yet exalting Christ

Philemon 1:9 “yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul – an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus” Yet still exhorting others to love

Application : Sometimes, the situation you are in right now is not according to what you have planned or it doesn’t have the best circumstance but God has allowed you to be there, instead of complaining, instead of sulking we find ways to encourage others, to exalt Christ or to exhort others to do the right thing.

Illustration : In the office, I have this Jamaican lady who was manning the cafeteria. I know she’s a Christian because she’s not a secret agent Christian. She’s very vocal about her love and praises for Jesus. But just this week, I saw her dancing and singing praise songs while she was serving and cooking but she has an ear plug. I asked her why? It’s because there was a machine in the cafeteria that was just buzzing the whole day and the doctor said it’s bad for her ear. But instead of complaining, she put an ear plug and still sang and praised the Lord. We even sang

a song “Lord You Are good and your mercies endureth forever..” and then she sang this worship song and tears of joy fell from her eyes and said “Oh Jesus is awesome!!!” Wow!!!

Explain : Verses 2 to 13 is what you call a parenthesis. Verse 1 doesn’t have a verb, it means it’s not a sentence, it was cut short because he was about to launch a prayer which showed in verse 14 but then wanted to emphasize again what God has done for the Gentiles.

Look again at verse 1: *For this reason...* so this refers to the preceding verses about the Gentiles now being fellow citizens, members of God’s households and is now a dwelling place... He just wanted to emphasize this.

Lesson : We know that if a subject is very important, we tend to repeat it to make sure the hearer would understand. Give an example.

Question : What is the word that stands out from verse 2 to 14 that you haven’t seen in the Chapters 1 and 2? Answer : “Mystery”

Etymology : mystery - mysterion - it doesn’t mean something that cannot be known. It means something that wasn’t known before and is now revealed.

I. THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY v. 2-9

1. The stewardship of the revelation v.2-4

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

a.) Paul knows it must be handled properly.

²Surely you have heard about the administration (dispensation KJV) of God's grace...

Etymology : administration – oikonomia - household management “oikos” house “nemein” to manage - this is where our word economics came from

Example : Why is there a recession? Because the economy was not handled well.

Explanation : Paul knows that the revelation given to him must be handled well – explained properly and delivered properly so that people will live an abundant life in Christ. That’s the reason why, Ephesians 1 to 3 talks about what we have in Christ and Ephesians 4 to 6 teaches us what to do with it.

Question : Why does Paul need to handle it properly?

...administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation

Answer : Because he knows it's a gift (God's grace) and it was only given to him (revelation)

Application : The secret of handling everything well, your finances, your job, your office, your family, your studies and etc is to realize that it is God's gift and it was just given to you.

b.) Paul knows it must be understood properly.

...as I have already written briefly.⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight (knowledge KJV) into the mystery of Christ...

Etymology : insight - "synesis" - a running together, flowing together - to be one in knowledge...in mind.

Explanation : Paul wants to make sure that we understand this mystery. As emphasized, we act according to what we know...we believe in.

Sample situation : If you believe that God is in control of everything...you will understand why Paul told the Philippians "Do not be anxious about anything." (Phil 4:6) A person who worries a lot doesn't show that God is in control.

Example : My wife rebuked me recently saying "You man of little faith..."

2. The source of the revelation v.5

...which was not made known to men in other generations as it now has been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets."

Interpretation :

...which was not made known to men in other generations as it now has been revealed...

The OT people doesn't know about this...they have an idea simply because God has said to Abraham that he will be "a father to many nations" Gen 17:4

...as it now has been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets."

Revealed by God - this idea did not come from man. This is God's idea.

Encouragement : You are part of God's idea because you are part of the church.

Holy – separated, sanctified "hagias"

Apostles - apostolos – one who is sent. The criteria of being an apostle is one who has seen Christ and has walked with Christ.

Prophets – prophetes - it means one who reveals the mind of God.

Note : About apostles...there is no apostles with a capital A today but there is an apostolic office because revelation has already been done...in the Bible. Regarding prophets, before when revelation hasn't been finished yet, it was an office which directly comes from God. Sometimes, the modern church has abused it.

Example : In a so-called prophetic church, there was a disagreement regarding an issue about the pastor. So when the time came when the pastor says to the congregation, "Does anyone have a word from the Lord." One person stands up saying that the Lord is in total disagreement with the issue and another person stands up saying that the Lord is in total agreement with the issue.

What I believe personally is that the gift of prophecy has been given to preachers when they exegete God's Word in the Bible and by the power of the Spirit exposes it to the congregation and so the mind of Christ is known to those who are listening. No chaos...No disorder....

Important : But as I said, if you are part of the church it means, you are in God's mind even before the foundation of the world... Ephesians 1:4

3. The sum of the revelation v.6

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

a.) One nation

*...the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel...
"fellow citizens" Ephesians 2:19*

Application : We have one government. God is the one governing us. Before we get nervous, when we hear of recessions, lay-offs and simply because we are not sure if the government will do its job. But whatever happens, Christ is the one governing us... "and the government will be on his shoulders" Isaiah 9:6

b.) One body

"... members together of one body..."

Interpretation : There's no more division between us Christians. No color, no race, no social status and etc. etc... we are one...

Application : The unity of the church...

John 17:20 "...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."

John 17:23 "...May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

The unity of the church is very critical because it shows our relationship with God and our testimony with the world.

VERY IMPORTANT : In one of the churches we planted since it was a long way from Manila, there was a pastor the church "hired" in order to take care of the church. Since I visit every two weeks, I found out from him that he has let a Mormon preacher, preach in that church. I told him that this is totally unacceptable. His reasoning to me is that what we say in Filipino "pareho lang naman pastor e." They believe in Jesus, we believe in Jesus. But I had to explain to him the important "doctrinal" differences.

When the Bible says, "unity", it's **not** "unity" at all cost even if it sacrifices the truth. That's why the Holy Spirit says, *"The mystery is through the gospel..."*

Tell the story about the Galatians (Paul became angry with the exclusivity being perpetuated by the Judaizers)

Now back to unity

How can we bring unity?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:25

- 1.) **You must know your part.** 14-20 - Explain
- 2.) **You must do your part.**

Problem with many churches :

a.) They think that the pastor is the head of the church and they are thinking that everything must emanate from the pastor. We have One Spirit and Christ is the Head of the Church.

Illustrate what happens when a member of the body is not doing her part or wants to be a hand instead of a feet.

- 3.) **You must honor the other parts** vv. 21-25
 - acknowledging that we need them
 - acknowledging that they need us.

This will take humility on our part.

c.) One destiny

through the gospel... sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

What is the destiny?

Luke 23:43 "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Illustration : The Three Wonders in Heaven

*My command is this: **Love each other** as I have loved you. (John 5:12)*

*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should **wash another's feet**. (John 13:14)*

*A new command I give you: **Love one another**. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you **love one another**. (John 13:34-35)*

***Be devoted to one another** in brotherly love. **Honor one another** above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)*

***Accept one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)*

*You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love**. (Galatians 5:13)*

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another in love**. (Ephesians 4:2)*

***Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another**, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

Therefore **encourage one another** and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (I Thessalonians 5:11)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit; but in humility **regard one another as more important than himself.** (Philippians 2:3)

Above all, **love one another deeply**, because love covers over a multitude of sins. **Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.** Each one should use whatever gift he has received to **serve one another**, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (I Peter 4:8-9)

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another.** No one has ever seen God; but if we **love one another**, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us. (I John 4:11-12)

Therefore **confess your sins to one another and pray for each other** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Finally, all of you, **live in harmony with one another**; be sympathetic, love as brothers and sisters, be compassionate and humble. (I Peter 3:8)