

Ephesians 3:1-13

1/The mystery of God

Four times, Paul uses the word *mysterion* = mystery (3,4,6,9)

Mystery = 'divine secret' (cf 1 Cor 14:2)

Hidden for generations (5)

Now revealed to apostles and prophets by the Spirit (6; 1 Cor 14:29-32)

What is this secret?

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 (6, NIV)

Note three great truths—

- Heirs together
We share an inheritance--Eph 1:18
- Members together of the same body
Like parts of a human body
- Sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus
Like joint owners of a house

All this is 'through the gospel'

By grace...Through faith

Importance of small groups where we give particular expression to our oneness in Christ

Here *agape* (love) and *koinonia* (fellowship) find their best expression

2/The unsearchable riches of Christ

- Unsearchable = untraceable (as by tracks being left behind); unfathomable; impossible to comprehend, 'past finding out.' See Romans 11:33.
- Riches = wealth; abundance, plenty, more than enough
- Of Christ = every blessing is always in Christ. There is nothing outside of Him

3/Through the Church

- Through the Church: God's agent on earth is always the Church. It is through the Church that He works out His purposes
- Manifold: many-sided, variegated, very varied as of rich variety of colours in flowers, paintings and cloths (cf 1 Peter 4:10)
- Wisdom: *sophia* = wisdom, insight, the fear of God (Prov 1:7; 4:7). God's wisdom is described in James 3:13-17.
- Rulers and authorities: In the NT these usually refer to demonic or godless powers (Eph 1:21; Rom 8:38)
- Heavenly places: the spiritual realm

How does God make his manifold wisdom known through the Church?
Primarily through proclaiming the gospel (6,7). This gospel is of reconciliation and love
It is through our love (*agape*) and fellowship (*koinonia*) that we declare God's great secret in the
heavenlies

4/God's eternal purpose

God's eternal purpose was realised in Christ

All of history, all of time and all of eternity find their fulfilment in Him

5/Approaching God

Through Jesus we have—

- Boldness: the knowledge we can speak freely
- Access: freedom of entrance
- Confidence: lit = 'having been convinced'

It is because we can approach God freely that we can come to His table.

- A table of remembrance: We eat and drink confidently in remembrance of Him
- A table of celebration: We celebrate the unsearchable riches of Christ

So as we gather around His table, as His guests, let us celebrate the unity we have in Christ and the unsearchable riches of His grace!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

1. What do you think Paul means by the phrase 'prisoner of the Lord?' (3:1, 4:1)
2. Four times, Paul uses the word *mysterion*. Obviously, the English word 'mystery' derives from this. But the term really means 'secret'. What secret is Paul talking about? (2-6)
3. How was this secret made known to Paul? (3)
4. What do you think the phrase 'by revelation' means? (3) See also 1:17-18; 3:5.
5. In verse six, Paul defines the 'mystery'. *In your own words*, how would you describe these three aspects? Which one of the three is the most meaningful to you? Why?
6. What is it in the context of this verse that causes Paul to note that he was 'the very least of all saints?' (8)
7. What connection do you see with this passage and 1 Corinthians 2:6-10?
8. How does the church make God's truth known to 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly places?' (10) You could discover some interesting suggestions here.
9. *How* was God's eternal purpose realized in Christ? (11)
10. What is the end result of the revealing of this mystery? (12) Why?

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