



NEWS BULLETIN

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Paul the Preacher to the Gentiles - Ephesians 2 v 19 > 3 v 13

Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church was written while he was in the confines of a Roman prison as we can tell from verses 1 and 13 of our reading. It was also written as one whole epistle, yes, divided by paragraph breaks, but intended to be read in total by the church. The chapter and verse annotations were added for our "convenience". Hence today we have gone back into chapter 2 to pick up the flow.



The triune God broke into Paul's life on his forced march to Damascus to bring any he found of "The Way" back to Jerusalem as prisoners. As a result, he received among other gifts, the gift of God's grace. Now, as a minister to God's church for the Gentiles, Paul is passing onto them and us his deep understanding of the message of salvation for **All** people, not just the Jews.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who reveals God's truth to His people through His apostles and prophets. This revelation is written down as Scripture, which also is a work of the Spirit. The distinctive revelatory work of the Spirit is to remind the Church of Jesus Christ. The content of the revelation in the present passage is the great purpose of God.

The Spirit discloses to the church what God's purpose is. God wants His people to know what He is doing: creating for himself a community of persons, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, who will be his people and whose God He will be. The Spirit revealed this truth to Paul and to Christian apostles and prophets.

Unlike the startling and amazing revelation on the road to Damascus, we are not told of the way the spirit conveyed God's will to Paul in this instance. Through Scripture different methods have been used, Joseph's dream interpretations, oracles such as the Old Testament prophets had given are just a couple of possibilities.

Paul received this revelation of the divine purpose from being led by the spirit as he reflected upon the meaning of the crucified and risen Lord. This explains the phrase "the mystery of Christ" and connects this revelatory activity to Jesus' statement that when the Spirit came, he would speak of Christ.

Paul claimed personal revelation from God concerning God's eternal purpose of grace. Such revelation had not always been available. God made it known through the Spirit at the proper time. Christ accomplished what God intended all along - incorporation of non-Israelites into God's people. Paul did not claim a monopoly on such revelation. Apostles and other preachers also received it. Revelation came at God's time to people God chose to accomplish God's eternal purposes.

Knowledge of God did not come all at once. God worked through history to reveal His will as people were prepared to accept it. Before Christ's birth, God worked in many ways to prepare His people to know and follow Christ. He gave the apostles special understanding of His history with his people so they could understand Christ's work in the light of all God's history of salvation.

Prophets are closely associated with apostles as seen in Chapter 2 verse 20 and Chapter 4 verse 11. Prophets and apostles received and made known the mysteries of God, that is the gospel of Christ which made salvation available to all people, not just Jews.

The authority of the Prophet resides in the revelation received through the Spirit. The gift of prophecy belongs to the church as a whole (Acts chapter 2) but manifests itself in certain individuals. Potentially, then, every Christian can be a prophet; but, like apostles, prophets are not selected by the church. They are selected by the Spirit who inspires them with a message for His people.

The church unites all believers from all races and locations in a common ministry in Christ and a common hope for Christ's return. The inclusion of Gentiles in God's purposes remained mysteriously unclear under the old covenant. It became clear in Christ.

Please read Romans chapter 12 verses 4-8 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 12 - 31 to see this message repeated and extended. Also look back in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 22 and 23 to see how important this message was to Paul in his day, and is even more relevant to us today with our planet "shrinking" due to ease and frequency of travel and communication that we have available to us to use to get God's word out across the globe.

In a lyric manner Ephesians speaks in cosmic terms -Christ as Lord of the whole universe. Equally, the letter speaks to God's purpose for the world, of his love plan, and of his selecting persons to be channels of his grace to the world (as we saw in chapter 1 verses 4 -11). This wonderful cosmic work of God is a mystery. "Mystery" does not mean a continuing puzzle. It means that which was hidden but has now been revealed.

The curtain has been drawn back and the wonderful treasure exposed. The mystery is that God receives persons from every race, colour, and language who come to Him through Christ Jesus. Those who trust Christ become heirs together with Israel of the promises of God. Both the Jews and the nations must come to God not through the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (chapter 2 verse 16)

The impact of this doctrine is incalculable because it means that for all eternity God has loved the peoples of the world and has planned to send His Son that, believing, they might become his people. This building of the family of God out of former enemies shows Christ's ability to bring his peace and reconciliation(chapter 2 verse 14).

Paul always revelled in his call to reach the lost for Christ. In principle, that call comes to every believer. We thus should revel in the fact that we can share the gospel and help others to our Lord. We are not worthy, it all comes through grace.

Ephesians is a missionary letter to Christians in Ephesus and surrounding regions, Paul gloried in the fact that he was an apostle to the Gentiles. His message to the Gentiles or the nations was to be the "unsearchable riches of Christ". Paul's mission was to reveal to all people that the way to God was open to all people in Christ Jesus. Once Paul knew that the gospel was meant for all peoples, he was driven to share it. Since as Christians today we understand both that the gospel is for all peoples and two thirds of our world does not even claim to follow Jesus, we find a tremendous impetus to reach from our home community to the ends of the earth with the good news of Jesus.

God's power is clearly demonstrated in what He does in saving and transforming sinners. The same mighty power which created the universe and brought Jesus back from the dead, also operates in us who are believers, making us witnesses to His gospel.

God accomplished His eternal purposes in and through Jesus Christ. God's continuing intention is that the church should unveil to the world His manifold wisdom and matchless love.

This is to be done through the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. Election **IN** Christ makes it possible for us to enter God's presence in confidence. He will accept us. How can we be sure of that? Because He has promised to, and that is another promise that He will not and cannot break.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church home group on Tuesday 22nd October 2024. All scripture is from both the ESV and NIV Translations