

Ephesians 3:1-13

Stewards of the Mystery of Christ

Ever have someone ask you to house sit?

A) First time – I was excited and nervous at the same time – I wanted everything to be perfect

B) Ever ask – someone to house sit – came back and the place was trashed –

1) Mail sticking out the mail box – LOUSY JOB

C) NEVER ASK THEM AGAIN.

D) What you were doing was asking them to be a steward a keeper of your home for you.

In every wedding that I have ever done - there comes a point where I ask for the RINGS

A) Usually there is one person who has been given the responsibility to hold the rings

B) Not the little boy with the pillows – Ring bearer

1) Fake rings – Not giving a 5 year old the responsibility to Keep – 2K rings

C) Usually – the best man – Best guy for the Job

1) Seen some funny things – lost on the floor –

D) Pocket of someone in the Audience –

1) Steward of the rings

As we come to Chapter Paul was made a steward of an incredible Mystery- Caused him a lot of trouble

A) Here in Chapter 3 Paul is going to sum up this first section – our identity in Christ – Prayer

B) that they would fully grasp and apply the significance of who they are in Christ

C) But we are not going to look at the prayer until next week –

1) because – before Paul prays – he takes a little detour that starts with this Phrase- For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles

D) Then in V.13 – He gives the reason for the detour - .¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

In other words – Paul is saying – I know that you know I am in Prison –

A) But I want to tell you why I am here – what it is accomplishing – how it also involves you - because

B) I don't want you to be discouraged by my situation

C) Interesting insight: Paul knew what he was by the will of God –

1) but he also knew that WHERE he was – was also by the will of God.

D) And Because of that – he was able to make the most of the situation –

1) Wrote: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon

E) These Rich books blessings to the body of Christ for 1,000's of yrs

F) Plus – Learned in our study of Philippians the gospel went throughout the whole Palace guard – even the house of Caesar

Your prison: Job, Marriage – by the will of God

A) Seeking him yielded to him – accept it and make the most of it or complain about it –

B) But if you are going to be productive and fruitful in it – you have to embrace – I am hear by the grace of God.

C) Also interesting to note that Paul was in Prison for telling people about Jesus

1) WHO WE ARE in Jesus does not exempt us from suffering in a broken world.

D) Insight we learn By way of this divinely inspired detour is this:

1) when our lives are consistent with the Gospel we proclaim, the more likely we to suffer for Christ.

With that in mind lets read the passage.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it

has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. **Pause right there**

There are two main ideas in this section the idea of Stewardship and the idea of Mystery

A) Lets start with the Stewardship –

For this reason I, Paul, **the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles**—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

B) Notice the word *dispensation* comes from two Greek words: *oikos*, meaning “house” and *nomos*, meaning “law.”

C) We actually get our English word “economy” from the Greek *oikonomia*, which means “the law of the house,” or “a stewardship, a management”.

D) At the time of writing this letter the STEWARD was the man entrusted with the wealth and assets of the master of the house.

The Steward was given the privilege and responsibility of dispensing and dispersing the wealth and assets of the master of the house.

A) Paul says I was made a Steward of something - ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel

Paul tells us he was made a steward of the mystery of God

A) This is exactly in line with what he had written to the Corinthians much earlier. 1 Corinthians 4 says,

This is how one should regard us [apostles], as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

{1 Corinthians 4:1 RSV}

B) I love a good murder Mystery – Law and order types – who done it

1) But that is not the idea of this word mystery.

C) In the Bible — a *mystery* is not something to be figured out.

1) In Scripture, the word “mystery” refers to something that was previously unknown or hidden but is now revealed because the timing is right.

Now Paul says: V.3 I briefly wrote to you about this already – what is He talking about

A) Chapter 1:9

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ **that in the dispensation** of the fullness of the times He might gather together **in one all things** in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

B) Gather together in one all things in Christ – what things?

C) Paul is going to elaborate on that here in Chapter 3 – Read V.4:6 in NLT

⁴As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. ⁵God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets. ⁶**And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God’s children.**

D) This is a big part of the Mystery – God was going to bring Jews and Gentiles together in Christ

We talked about this two weeks ago – Chapter 2

A) God started a new group of people – from this man Abraham –

B) Special calling – his own special mark –

1) Through this group of people all the nations would be blessed

C) Here in lied the Mystery – How was God going to do that?

D) Paul in Chapter 1 tells us this is how the Hidden Mystery would be revealed

1) God was going bring it all together in Christ

E) That was the secret Plan

1) Here in Chapter 3 he builds on the details of that secret plan

**Consider the Details of this Mystery V.6-12
4 Parts to this secret plan**

1st through the work of Christ on the Cross Jews and Gentiles are Co-inheritors in the riches of God. V.6

⁶And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children.

A) Jews and Gentiles together in Christ – have an equal share in the blessings of God.

B) Given us all things that pertain to life and Godliness – how – through the Knowledge of Him

1) Comes through Knowing Jesus

C) Given to us a Divine Nature

1) Equal blessings – Riches of his grace for living day to day - Same Power – same Privileges

2nd Jews and Gentiles are Co- members of the same body in the Lord V.6

A) Paul actually makes this word up. Co-members

B) We've seen Paul in the previous chapter use three metaphors to describe the church:

1) fellow-citizens, members of the household of God,

2) and a building being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

C) Now he uses the metaphor of the body, bringing out the unity of Gentiles with Jews as the members/parts of the body are in union.

Now don't miss this – Paul is building on the fact that this is the Mystery –

A) Jesus was going to create from these two groups one NEW HUMANITY

B) CHRISTIAN – CHRIST FOLLOWER –

C) BODY – FUNCTIONS – LIKE One

1) Many members but different functions different parts

D) Paul is going to build on that idea in Chapter 4

3rd Jews and Gentiles are partakers of the same promise V.6

A) What does a promise create in us – I promise to Call you – visit you – give to you

B) Creates an Expectation and a Hope

C) Paul further spoke of this in Colossians 1:24-27

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

D) Promise: Glory – Christ in our hearts

1) Both have the same Hope of Heaven -

From the moment Paul surrendered his life to Jesus on the road to Damascus

A) God had made it clear to Paul that he was to bring the Good News concerning Jesus to the Gentiles

B) He was a faithful steward of the message of the Gospel and of **this SACRED SECRET** that God had made known to him.

C) For his faithful stewardship in that SACRED SECRET

D) Paul was constantly under attack by unbelieving Jews and even believing Jews.

1) Pattern in the book of Acts – Déjà vu – City – synagogue – rejected – Gentiles – accepted –

2) RESULT RIOT beating – jailed driven out of town

E) It wasn't easy but – he was faithful

Paul says in V.7 concerning his stewardship - ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

V.7 Paul shares an important principle in any of us being faithful to the calling of God upon our lives - It is according to the effective working of His power.

A)The word “*working*” here is *energeia* from which we get our word “energy.”

B)The word “*power*” is *dunamis* which gives us our words “dynamic” and “dynamite.”

C)God’s commandments are God’s Enablements:

1)Whatever God calls you to – he will supply you with the power to do it.

D)Working power is available for every calling – ever task –

We see a great picture of this in Mark chapter 3

A)Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath – a man with a withered hand

B)Religious leaders are watching – know Jesus – he always drawn toward the person biggest need

1)Will he heal on the Sabbath

C)Jesus said to a man with a withered Hand – crippled and paralyzed – Stretch forth....

1)Can’t – Or he could believe – God’s commandments are God’s enablements

D)God’s word moves from being theory to reality

1)Promise learned to a promise – discovered

E)Like the difference between *swimming up stream vs down stream* –

1)Down stream – the water is propelling you – but you have to get in the water.

F)The very energy of God that comes through the Spirit of God is ever working in our lives

1)To empower us to be and to do whatever is the calling that God places upon our lives

4th Detail of this secret plan – Jews and Gentiles are Co-witnesses in the power of the gospel V.8-12 in the NLT

⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, (*least deserving*) -this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches of Christ**,

Such an AWESOME Phrase – the unsearchable riches of Christ

Perhaps you have heard the saying: **If it is too good to be true it probably isn’t true!**

A)Eddie – deal – skeptical - : If it is too good to be true it probably isn’t true!

B)Every single time he was right! – It was too good to be true.

C)Well there is one thing that doesn’t apply to and that is the beauty and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ

Not only is it NOT too good to be true – It is absolutely true and the beauty and power and wonder of the gospel – gets bigger and bigger

A)The more we come to understand it.

B)I think – our view of the gospel is so small – Saved from our sins – saved from hell

C)That is AWESOME – AND IF THAT IS ALL – IT WOULD BE ENOUGH

Unsearchable riches of Christ

A)Endless treasures – bottomless ocean

B)Treasure chest – one Jewel after another –

1)There is more....

C)Treasures for now about who we are in Christ –

I AM CHOSEN — I AM HOLY —

➤ I AM WITHOUT BLAME

I AM LOVED — I AM ADOPTED —

➤ I AM ACCEPTED

I AM REDEEMED — I AM FORGIVEN —

➤ I AM SAFE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

I AM SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT —

➤ I AM ALIVE TO GOD

I AM HIS WORKMANSHIP —

SHARE IN HIS WORK- HIS MISSION

A) God doesn't need us but he invites us to partner with Him –

B) Treasures for the Future – Our Hope in Christ of heaven –

1) Part of his Millennial reign

C) We are so incredibly BLESSED!!

1) SO MUCH TO Experience now –

2) So much to look forward to later

Paul says that is what I get to preach about – the unsearchable riches of Christ

NLT endless treasures available to them in Christ

⁹ and to make all see what *is* the fellowship (Sharing in common) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him

Paul said: He was a steward of the Gospel – and we as the Church are as well

¹⁰ God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Principalities and powers – rulers and authorities in the heavenly places – reference to Angels

A) Incredible thought our lives are on display for the Angels to watch

B) Peter 1:12 These are things that the Angels desire to look into

According to 1 Peter 1:12, the angels are studying us, intrigued that God would reside in people like us.

The Phrase – angels desire to look into is literally – they stoop to see

A) Pictures Angels – bent over intently observing the teachings and actions of God's People.

{ Angels – are WATCHING

B) Angels tripping – This motely crew?

1) They get permanent access to your throne?

C) There the ones that you chose to work through

D) Answer is a Resounding YES –

V.11-12 NLT

¹¹ This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence

Full Access Pass – Padre Game Faith night

A) Being on a Major league field is awesome - But that Pass was not permanent

B) Guys we have a full Access Pass – anytime – come boldly into God's presence

C) Come boldly – find grace and mercy to help in our time of need.

Here is why that is so important – Our lives are not just on Display for Heaven – Also earth

A) Let your lights so shine before men.... See your good works and glorify.... Heaven

B) We get to display – the incredible blessings of the richness of the grace of God.

1) Living testimony – living breathing expressions of who God is – his incredible grace

C) People learn of God's grace by watching us be gracious – loving – kind –

Now think about how radical the display would have been that to that culture –

➤ These two Hostile groups – Made One

A) 1,000's of yrs of Hostility – GONE.

B) Today it is news worthy – Politically groups put aside their differences come together over

1) A COMMON CAUSE

C) But the next day they are at odds again over everything else.

You can go to a football game and complete strangers are suddenly friends – love for their team

A) First Charger game – Dude Hugged me

B) High Fives and Hugs – Those same people are

yelling at each other from their cars 30 min later.... Parking lot

Don't miss this: What Paul is describing here is not Unity over a Cause or a team.

A)We have been made One – Blood related – the blood of Jesus

B)We are one – Sinners – saved

1)Family of God

C)Hope of Heaven –

D)Our Unity doesn't need to be created – **It needs to be embraced and celebrated!**

What is supposed to be the defining mark – Know you are my disciples by what?

A)Bible Knowledge –Jesus sticker car– cool hat – great building

B)By Your love – We are to live in Such a way that **DISPLAYS – Unity – Love –**

C)This is the thing that God has entrusted to us – We get to be Stewards of great Mystery

1)**The Body of Christ** – Jews and Gentiles made one in JESUS

D)AND **WE ARE STEWARDS** of a great message

1)The Gospel – GOOD NEWS

Our message is a great message –

A)We get to tell people about **the endless treasures available to them in Christ –**

B)No one likes to be the bearer of bad news right – never eager to tell someone that **they are fired**

1))Never eager tell someone **of a bad diagnosis –**

C)But isn't it awesome – when you get to share good news – Your getting a raise

1)You made the team – you got accepted to that college

D)Guys we have been entrusted with the best NEWS ON THE PLANET

1)THE BEST NEWS IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

E)ETERNAL -Life – Forgiveness – Freedom - Hope All available in Jesus

F)Only one thing that is required for a Steward – He would be found faithful

In Jesus we have everything we need to be found faithful –

A) working power – to live for Him – His spirit

B)Access to the throne – Help

C)Go for it – Easter.....