

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes October 3, 2007

Ephesians 3: 1-21 (Part 1)

Ephesians, chapter 3

1: For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles --

2: assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,

3: how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

4: When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

5: which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6: that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7: Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power.

8: To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

9: and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;

10: that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

11: This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

12: in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.

13: So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

14: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

15: from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

16: that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man,

17: and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18: may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19: and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

20: Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,

21: to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction:

- Most of us, especially here in America, have been aware of the basic Christian message all our lives. Most of us were brought up in churches, received some form of Christian education, maybe even heard all the stories of the Bible and the life of Christ through movies and books. Most of us may feel we have a firm handle on the great Mystery of our Faith, the Mystery of Christ, and what this requires of us on a day by day basis. But is it also possible that, even in spite of all these influences or possibly as a result of them, we've taken a large part of our faith for granted? This is part of what we will discuss today on **Deep In Scripture**.

Discussion:

- Welcome....website ... Phone numbers ... special: "The Resilient Church," by Mike Aquilina
- In our study of Ephesians, we have been approaching this epistle from the assumption that it was very likely written to be read as a homily in the weekly liturgy, written by St. Paul while in prison in chains, to the newly baptized Gentile believers in Ephesus.
- Chapter 1 consists of a greeting and then two long sentences of praise to God for what He has done by grace in the lives of these newly baptized Gentile believers—Note: verses 15-23 are essentially a digression / sidetrack for St. Paul into prayer.
- Chapter 2 is a continuation of St. Paul's thoughts, jumping back to before his digression to 1:13-14

“In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

- In Chapter 2, St. Paul details the changes that have truly happened in their lives as a result of their having heard, believed, and been sealed in the Holy Spirit [baptism].
 - Regardless of whether they “feel” any different, or even whether they are fully acting upon these changes, they are different now “in Christ.”
- Changed in two dimensions: vertical and horizontal:
- 2:1-10 ⇨ the healing of our vertical separation from God due to sin,
 1. Before “hearing...believing...and being anointed” (baptized): dead in sin (2:1-3);
 2. After, they were “made alive” (2:1, 4-7);
 3. How did this happen? Grace (2:8-10).
- 2:11-22 ⇨ the healing of our horizontal relationships “in the flesh”
 1. Before “hearing...believing...and being anointed” (baptized): “strangers” (2:11-13)
 2. Afterward, they were “reconciled” ... “one new man in place of two” (2:13-18);
 3. How did this happen? “In Christ” (2:13-22)
 4. So what are they [we] now? (2:19-22)
 - They are citizens in the household of God
 - They are stones in the building of the Church
 - They are living stones in the Temple of God.
- In Chapter 3, St. Paul, beginning basically as he did back in 1:15 (“For this reason”), intends to offer a prayer that they receive the necessary spiritual assistance to carry-out, to live-out, to grow in these changes. But this time, he gets sidetracked once again, in verses 2-13:
 - Why do we consider this a digression?
 - Verse 1 is a fragment...
 - Verse 14 picks up where verse 1 left off.

1: For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles ...

14: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father ...

Today we will begin discussing St. Paul’s digression in verses 3:2-13.

- **Let’s begin with our own digression:**
 - Is there a problem with the idea that St. Paul, writing inspired Scripture, “sidetracked” or “digressed”?
 - Other “digressions”: Rom 1:11-15; 2 Cor 1:8-14; Phil 1:12-26; Col 1:24-29; 1 Thess 2:1-12.
 - What do we mean by “Deep in Scripture”?
 - The “digressions” of some biblical scholars (i.e., meaning of the word “as”).
 - Assumptions lead to assumptions lead to assumptions, etc., etc. (i.e., earth centered universe)
- **Jesus warned his disciples that following him would not be easy:**
 - Mark 13:9-13

9: “But take heed to yourselves; for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them.

10: And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

11: And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

12: And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;

13: and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.
 - John 15:18-20

18: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

19: If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

20: Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.
 - Ephesians 6:10-12

10: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

11: Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12: For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
 - 1 Peter 5:6-10

6: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you.*

7: *Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you.*

8: *Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour.*

9: *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world.*

10: *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.*

▪ **This was certainly true for St. Paul: 2 Cor 11:24-30**

24: *Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.*

25: *Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea;*

26: *on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren;*

27: *in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*

28: *And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.*

29: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?*

30: *If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*

▪ **So why might St. Paul digress from the main thrust of the homily he is dictating?**

(1) He has become aware that they are concerned about his imprisonment: Verse 3:13

13: *So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*

(2) He might be concerned whether they truly appreciate the implications of what they have received;

(3) He himself may be having spiritual struggles: (i.e, like Mother Teresa)

▪ **St. Paul's digressions in verses 3:2-13 contain several layers of information:**

a. 3:4-13, the mysterious truth that St. Paul is concerned that they fully appreciate;

b. 3:1-13, St. Paul's relationship to this mysterious truth.

The Mystery of Christ (3:4-13)

4: *When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,*

5: *which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*

6: *that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

9: *...to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;*

10: *that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.*

11: *This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

12: *in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.*

▪ **What is meant by "mystery"?** (Not a hidden secret only the intelligent can understand, but a revelation from God)

▪ **What is new about this mystery? Two things:**

(1) **The People or Household of God (the Church) is open equally to all people:**

"...the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" "that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel."

(2) **The Church is the channel through which all, on heaven and earth, will hear of this Mystery:**

"...the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him."

Conclusion:

- To what extent have we failed to appreciate the significance of the Mystery of Christ in our own lives?
- To what extent have we failed to appreciate the necessity of the Church?