

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes October 10, 2007

Ephesians 3: 1-21 (Part 2)

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.

- **Jesus warned his disciples that following him would not be easy:**
 - Mark 13:9-13; John 15:18-20; Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 Peter 5:6-10
- ***This was certainly true for St. Paul: 2 Cor 11:24-30***
- **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)
 - “Christian mystery is a truth communicated to us by Christian revelation, a truth to which we cannot attain by our unaided reason, and which, even after we have attained to it by faith, we cannot adequately represent with our rational concepts.” “The Mysteries of Christianity,” Matthias Joseph Scheeben, (1946), pg. 13.
- **What has become of this mystery?**

- If asked, what would people today identify as “the mystery of Christ”?
- Why isn't this mystery mentioned in the Creeds
- **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.”

1 Tim 1: 2-7

“To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.”

1 Timothy 3:14-16

“I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”

Dominus Iesus:

16. The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (cf. Jn 15:1ff.; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:15-16; Acts 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. Col 1:24-27),⁴⁷ which is his body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27; Col 1:18). And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single “whole Christ”. This same inseparability is also expressed in the New Testament by the analogy of the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-29; Rev 21:2,9).

18. The mission of the Church is “to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom”.

Conclusion:

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

St. Paul himself and his relationship to this Mystery (3:1-13)

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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;

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

- **I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles --**
 - *assuming that you have heard*
 - *of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,*
 - *how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.*
 - *When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,*
- **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.*
 - **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,*
 - *and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery*
- **So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.**

Conclusion:

- How did you come to know this Mystery?
- Do you lose heart when you hear of God's people undergoing trials?
- How do you handle your own trials?