

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"The Apostle Paul: His Ministry"
Ephesians 3:7-8

Introduction

1. God has done a miraculous work to bring Jews and Gentiles together through the Gospel. The Gentiles were once far off. But "in Christ" these two ethnic groups have been brought nigh (2:11-13).
2. This has been effected by Christ who is "our peace" (2:14) "made peace" (2:15) and "preached peace" (2:17). Both Jew and Gentile now have access to the Father (2:18).
3. Moreover, Jews and Gentiles now form a new nation (2:19), family (2:19), building (2:20-22). Together they form a temple and a place of worship for God (2:21, 22).
4. Information about this Jew/Gentile relationship was a top secret with God. It was kept quiet from the beginning but revealed to Paul (3:2-5). This is a brand new "dispensation," a way to regulate God's household. It is one of seven by which God manages. In this dispensation, Jews and Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers (3:6).
5. Now, how does Paul elaborate on his connection with this present dispensation? Having been entrusted with the mystery (3:3), his ministry is necessarily devoted to it. He describes his ministry in these ways:

1. ITS SOURCE v. 7.

The word for "minister" means servant or attendant. It is also the word from which we get our term "deacon." It denotes one who serves in the interest of and for the benefit of another. In the New Testament it is used of apostles and helpers (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Tim. 4:6), of Christ (Rom. 15:8), and Satan's servants (2 Cor. 11:5). The passive form of the verb indicates he was divinely appointed. He did not take this honor to himself. This appointment was looked at in two ways:

a. Expression of great favor

It was not in consideration of any worthiness or

merit within himself. Rather, it was according to (the standard) the gift due to God's grace. Paul never forgot God's grace to save him and put him into the ministry (1 Tim. 1:11-14).

b. Exercise of divine power

Here is the second use of the preposition meaning "in proportion to, according to a standard." Paul's apostleship was nothing less than the result of the working of the omnipotence of God. That apostleship was grounded in his conversion. To take a malignant opposer to Christ and convert him to an obedient servant--that is the limitless power of God alone.

2. ITS SPIRIT v. 3:8a.

God's favor and power toward Paul did not puff him up. He had utter humility. The pronoun "me" is emphatic. The phrase "less than the least" is only found here in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:15, 16). It is a superlative form to which a comparative ending is added: "leaster." Since there is no such word, the phrase is used to explain a place beneath the least. Paul's weight of sinfulness and his sin of persecuting Christ was too much for him. God give us such gratitude to God for ourselves and others. "Grace" refers to his apostleship. It was divinely given (v. 7).

3. ITS CONTENT v. 3:8b.

The first concern of Paul's ministry is missionary. Here is a deeply meaningful statement.

a. People involved

The word "Gentiles" is emphatic by its position. Paul's unique ministry in relation to them still occupied his mind and filled his heart with wonder (Gal. 2:8). The promised Messiah to Israel was also Savior to the Gentiles.

b. Preaching enjoined

To preach means "announce glad tidings." Our word "evangelize" is derived from this Greek verb. What is the good news? Paul detailed it (1 Cor. 15:1-5):

1. Christ's death. 2. Christ's burial. 3. Christ's resurrection. 4. Christ's appearance. Paul says this is the Gospel which saves (vv. 1, 2).

c. Portrayal provided

Here is something most suggestive. Paul describes the boundless resources of Christ for meeting man's sinful needs. They are:

1) Riches. Who can fathom this? He is rich in essential glory. Rich in his self abnegation. Rich in his moral glory. Rich in his death. Rich in his presence among his own. He has riches!

2) Unsearchable. To attempt to think in fullness of his riches will stagger the mind. Hence this word. It means "untrackable" or "inexplorable." His riches are too vast to be measured. They are like an immeasurable sea. The word is found in the New Testament. Elsewhere only once (Rom. 11:33).

Conclusion The glorious Gospel of Christ is all that we need. Christ satisfies the soul. Thank God for those who preach Christ's Gospel. Blessed are they who believe it (Psa. 2:10).