

Ephesians 3 – Revealing The Mystery

“... if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me you-ward, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when you read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:2-4).

Our opening citation describes how by revelation a particular thing was made known to the Apostle Paul. This is styled “the mystery” which is so called because it was formerly concealed, but is now revealed “unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit” (vs 5). The revealing of this mystery, or secret, is described as “the dispensation of the grace of God”. Accordingly, in the second chapter of this Epistle, Paul describes: “... by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ...” (Eph. 2:8-10). This is part of that which Paul dispensed, or administered to the believers at Ephesus.

The fact of salvation being obtained by grace, not works gives us grounds for confidence. So Paul wrote to the Romans: “therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise **might be sure** to all the seed ...” (Rom. 4:16). But Grace is not unconditional as some claim: Paul taught “by grace are ye saved **through faith**”, that is a belief and trust in the promises of God. So Jesus taught: “this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Jno. 6:29).

If salvation were by obedience to Law, then no man could be saved, for all have sinned and fallen short of Divine Glory. “therefore by the deeds of the law there **shall no flesh be justified** in his sight” (Rom. 3:20). And again, “a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ ...” (Gal. 2:16). The fact of the dispensation of Grace therefore, demonstrates the mercy of our Creator, that we can be saved at all. Rather than salvation being dependent on a law that we cannot keep, it is by faith which anyone who heeds the Gospel message can develop. Hence, just so long as we continue in the one faith (Eph. 4:5), our salvation is certain – as sure and steadfast as “an anchor” holding a boat in the right position (Heb. 6:19).

Returning back to Paul’s administration of the revealed Mystery, we have a definition to consider. He describes the Mystery thus:

*“... the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs**, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel ...” (Eph. 3:4-6).*

The fact of Salvation coming by Grace and not Law, provides for the Gentiles who are outside of the scope of the Mosaic system. They too have Grace extended to them, hence part of the mystery is the bringing in of the Gentiles. So the Apostle describes elsewhere: “... the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of

this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory” (Col. 1:26-27).

Here are encouraging words – not just to the Gentile ecclesia at Colosse, but to all who would believe: “Christ in you”, something we shall consider further in our remarks. The Gentiles also share “the hope of Glory” with Israel, and this is what was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets.

In Ephesians 3, the Apostle describes the importance of understanding: “... whereby when ye read, ***ye may understand my knowledge*** in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4). Again, this is the prayer of Paul to the Colossians:

“that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of ***the full assurance of understanding***, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col. 2:2).

Herein lies the importance of studying the Word – it is able to impart a “full assurance” to those who understand it, that they be given “all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9). Without having the power of God unto salvation within us, we will lack the full assurance that faith in the Gospel message can give. We must labour in the word and doctrine, seeking out it’s hidden treasures: and when we find the pearl of great price, we must be willing to give all that we have to obtain it (Mat. 13:46).

Continuing the theme of how that men cannot boast of works and save themselves by obedience, the Apostle describes his own low estate, as the messenger:

“... Unto me, ***who am less than the least of all saints***, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery ...” (Eph. 3:8-9).

There was no means given for any flesh to glory – even the preacher and apostle to the Gentiles had no occasion to boast of his Divine Calling: he regarded himself as being “less than the least of all saints”.

This expression of humility emerges again in his epistle to Timothy:

“this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; ***of whom I am chief***” (1 Tim. 1:15).

And to the Philippians he counselled:

“let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

And his own conduct was an example of this. Having chosen to follow Christ, he jettisoned those things that could hinder him in his walk:

“... but what thing were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge

of Christ Jesus my Lord; for who I have suffered the loss of all things, **and do count them but dung** that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8).

The mystery that Paul preached was “hid” to previous ages, “from the beginning of the world” (Eph. 3:9), but nevertheless, the faithful were chosen “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Paul told the Corinthians:

“we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even **the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained **before the world** unto our glory: which **none of the princes of this world knew**: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

Here is another aspect of how the flesh cannot glory: “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, **that no flesh should glory in his presence**” (1 Cor. 1:27). In the purpose of God, the Word was not revealed to the wise in this world, but the foolish. The princes of this world, despite their high standing in the eyes of men, were bypassed in the means by which the Gospel was made known. In all things, the humble are exalted, and their Maker is glorified thereby. The mystery that was kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25) is now revealed to the Apostles and New Testament Prophets (Eph. 3:5), and is therefore manifested for our scrutiny and salvation.

In our citation from Colossians 1:27 above, we looked at “... the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you**, the hope of glory”. This aspect emerges again in Ephesians, and in our chapter under consideration:

“... that Christ may dwell **in your hearts** by faith ...” (Eph. 3:17)

“... to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might **be filled with all the fulness of God**” (Eph. 3:19).

This aspect of being filled with all the fulness of God is very relevant, for it is the grand purpose of the Eternal Spirit to fill all the earth with the fulness of His Glory. We read of the end of Messiah’s Millennial reign upon the earth thus:

“then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power ... and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, **that God may be all in all**” (1 Cor. 15:28).

This expression is sometimes held to be “enigmatic” or “esoteric” and “obscure” – but it really ought not be so. The Divine purpose is for all of God to be in all of the earth – All in All. The faithful will be “filled with all the fulness of God” – and that is how His Purpose will be accomplished.

Here is a feature that the Trinitarians just cannot comprehend! The Scriptures teach of the Lord that: “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). “God was

in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). The Trinitarians confuse this, and say that this proves Christ to be God – but it is only so to the extent to which God was revealed in the attributes of the Master. He was not the same personage as Yahweh, the God of Israel, yet as he received the Holy Spirit without measure (Jno. 3:34), God was in him. He was able to say “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jno. 14:9), because he was the “express image” of his Father’s person (Heb. 1:3). To argue that Jesus existed as a part of a triune Godhead because that God was in him breaks down – the faithful down through the ages also will be so “filled with all the fulness of God”, in that day when God will be all in all.

This brings us to the great declaration of the Divine Purpose as expressed by the prophet Isaiah:

“Israel shall be saved in Yahweh with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded **world without end**. For thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh; and there is none else” (Isa. 45:17-18).

Notice that here, Israel will reside in an inhabited earth “world without end”. Whilst the nations and kingdoms of men will have an end (Jer. 30:11), the people of God will continue forever: “thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever” (Isa. 60:21) – and their salvation is “that glory may dwell in our land” (Psa. 85:9).

It logically follows therefore, that if Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation, and the nations are to ultimately end, the thing to do is to embrace and become joined to Israel. That is why the Apostle described his hope as “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

And this is a theme of the epistle to the Ephesians – Gentiles embracing Israel’s hope:

“that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus **ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh** by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12-13).

We then, have the opportunity to become part of that multitude who are “all righteous”, being filled with all the fulness of God, populating the earth with an immortal race who are completely restored to His Friendship. But notice that it is in this context that the Apostle lifts out the phrase from Isaiah 45: “unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, **world without end**” (Eph. 3:21). Though this remains hidden to those who are blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), it is revealed to the disciples of Christ who have their eyes open to the Word. Let us then diligently search out the gems of the Word, that we might have the “full assurance of understanding”, and become constituent parts of that immortal race, which will fill the earth with God’s Glory, even as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14, Psa. 72:19).

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