Ephesians 3:7-9

The Unfathomable Riches of Christ

[6]…that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

As we continue Paul’s discourse on the unification of the two main people groups of the Old Testament into one new group – the church – we see He’s linked it to the mystery of the Messiah. An administration that nobody anticipated. An unexpected group out of an unexpected savior through an unexpected identification.

# The Gospel, Of Which I was Made a Minister

Paul was made a minister or servant of the gospel. This ministry called him to a far more intense life than most of us expect to see as he outlined in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Stewardships come with a service to a purpose. They come with authority in some cases, but many also come with a submission to authority.

## According to the Gift of God’s Grace

*In our own lives do we view grace as a gift or a burden?*

Paul writes about grace over and over again, but in this verse, he’s repeated for us this idea of grace as a gift [c.f. Ephesians 2:8]. The book of Ephesians has specific nuances of grace called out that allow us to understand more fully the doctrine of the gift of grace:

* It brings God praise and glory each time it is expressed (1:6)
* Redemption (1:7)
* Forgiveness of sins (1:7)
* It is the means of our salvation (2:5)
* It is going to be shown to us for all eternity (2:7)
* It is to be taught explicitly (3:2,7)
* It is given to us in accordance to the measure of Christ’s gift [which was infinite] (4:7)
* Our words should express its impact on us (4:29)

So as Paul writes in a moment about being the least consider the power he’s writing about that liberates him to minister due to the gift of God’s grace.

*How does God use grace as a motivator instead of as a burden?*

## Which Was Given to Me According to the Working of His Power

Paul’s ministry was inaugurated through the powerful meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus. If that weren’t enough Ananias is told that Paul would be shown what he would suffer for Christ’s name [Acts 9:16]. This means that Paul’s ministry started with a supernatural event, continued with a known level of intensity as recorded in Acts, and Paul’s stewardship and ministry were destined for trials and suffering, but because God had chosen him, equipped him, and sent him, Paul went knowing it was in accordance with God’s power, which was eternal.

*How does knowing God’s eternal plan change our mindset on life events?*

## To Me this Grace was Given, the Least of All Saints

Paul, knowing by specific revelation what grace meant, was able to understand the richness of the gift – undeserved – and able to see that God’s love crossed the boundaries of sin fully and completely, poured out mercy, and poured out grace.

*Why was Paul the least of the saints?*

While technically all New Testament saints are in Christ by faith, Paul calls himself the least because he saw his own past as a persecutor of the church as a humble start, but on top of that he was given a position of service to the gospel (c.f. 1 Timothy 1:16). Paul’s writings are full of humbling circumstances, in places self-deprecation (like this), and yet they do not leave the attention on Paul, they focus the attention on Christ, just like in the next line.

*When we share our testimonies, do we do so for self-aggrandizement, or for other reasons?*

## To Preach to the Gentiles the Unfathomable Riches of Christ

Having already established the contrast between the Jews and Gentiles and the church Paul focuses on the calling of his ministry – of which we are benefactors – to preach the Unfathomable Riches of Christ.

*Do the Jews also need to understand the unfathomable riches of Christ?*

The Jewish recipients of the gospel were definitely divided (as recorded in Acts and throughout Paul’s letters). Clearly, as written in Hebrews, there were some who believed and wanted to understand more. Those who rejected the gospel only saw Christ as a man or false prophet and Paul and the other apostles as deceivers. Paul’s ministry was specifically to those who were gentiles.

*What are the unfathomable riches in Christ?*

By their very nature as unfathomable we should know that their application to our lives is beyond measure and cannot be simply numbered, memorized, and then moved beyond. Instead, the New Testament letters tell us about truths and principles that we grow in our understanding of like grace.

*Why does Paul need to share these truths with the gentiles?*

It’s important to recognize that the Jews had a history of exposure to God, His truth, and prophecies related to Jesus the Messiah, but the gentiles generally had a cursory understanding of these ideas, if they had it at all. So Paul came into their lives having to give them doctrines and a worldview that would explicitly cover:

* A God who was unchanging and moral (Acts 17:16-34)
* A need for salvation that was faith based (Acts 15; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:16-18)
* A rejection of secular thinking that rejected God and His truth (Colossians 2:8)
* Eternal life (Romans 5:21; Romans 6:23)

## To Bring to Light the Administration of the Mystery, Which for Ages has Been Hidden in God Who Created All Things

*What is a mystery in the New Testament?*

The New Testament has a handful of things that are called mysteries. These are truths that were not previously explicitly revealed (though in some cases we can infer them after the fact). Here is a list of mysteries.

1. The mystery of the Kingdom of God/Heaven (Matthew 13:11)
2. The partial hardening of the Jews hearts until the fulness of Gentiles believe (Romans 11:25)
3. The Mystery of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:13f)
4. The mystery of the church as a unified entity (Ephesians 3)
5. The mystery of the church as the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32)
6. Christ in us the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27)
7. The mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3:16)

While this list is worthy of a lengthy study – and is one we should do – it is key in understand that Paul was explicitly calling these truths out so that they were no longer mysteries!

God hid them not to deceive, but because His plan was to bring about a blessing that would fulfill a specific set of prophecies about His Son and ministry.

*What things did God reveal in the Old Testament about the upcoming Messiah?*

Israel expected a Messiah that was to be reigning – as we understand the second coming to be – and even today the Rabbis teach that they will ask the Messiah when He comes which return this is. Rather than investigate, find Christ’s fulfillment as scriptural, they have rejected it because of tradition and because the idea of a unified church of Jews and gentiles is against that tradition.

# Conclusion

The unfathomable mysteries of Christ are part of the rich New Testament doctrines that we get to be recipients of as well as stewards of. We minister to the world around us the sweet gift of the gospel as well as the worldview that carries truth, eternal life, and an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. We don’t hide the mysteries, we proclaim them boldly!