

# Ephesians 3:6-8

## *Gentiles as Fellow Heirs*

### Introduction

Carrying on with the text from earlier in this chapter Paul continues to argue for the fellowship that the gentiles have with Israel within the new entity of the church. Paul is building a logical argument to be able to continue to explain this new entity in Christ and the family that results from that entity in verses 3:14-21. Paul moves from fellowship in the first two-thirds of the chapter to family in the latter third of the chapter.

### Exposition

#### Ephesians 3:6-7

...that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 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.

#### **Fellow Heirs, Members of the Body, & Partakes of the Promise in Christ**

The English word 'Fellow' is translated multiple times in this passage so we would be best to take a look at the meaning of the word fellowship:

*Fellow heir* - συγκληρονόμος a joint heir or co-assignee of something. Used in Hebrews 11:9 to speak of Isaac & Jacob as co-heirs.

*Fellow members of the body* - σύσσωμος a belonging to the same body (aka the same church). Paul uses σῶμα everywhere else in his writing.

*Fellow partakers* - συμμετέτοχος a joint partaker or something. Paul uses this word twice, here and in 5:7, and the intimacy of the word carries specific application: here for good [the promised good of Christ's blessing], and in 5:7 for negative [don't be intimately partaking of those who embrace the darkness of the world].

All three words are compound words starting with the Greek preposition σύν- which is commonly translated "with" and carries the concept of accompaniment and fellowship. It is a fellowship which is generally more intimate than the Greek word μετά which principally carries the concept of adjacency.

The Hebrew believers were used to thinking and living in a separate manner to comply with the Law given to them through Moses (Exodus 34). Paul blows their expectations out of the water by stating that they are joint or fellow heirs of God's blessing. How was this possible? God creates an intimate heirship under a new federal head: Christ!

Paul wrote to the Colossians in chapter 3:10-11:

...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him a renewal in which

there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul emphasizes that the Hebrew believer consider that he's not only been made nearer to the gentile, but furthermore has been made intimately connected with the gentile within the new entity, the Church.

### ***Discussion***

Do we come together with anticipation of intimacy?

What keeps us from intimacy with one another?

What does the model of sanctification look like in the body?

### **Through the Gospel of Which I was Made a Minister**

The good news of Jesus Christ was critical for the creation of this new third entity, the Church. Paul's ministry to the gentiles was one that was not expected given his previously persecuting ways. The recording of his activities in Acts and throughout the epistles indicates the passion that he had for those who were not of Israel (but also his love for Israel as well).

### ***Discussion***

Given the simple message of the gospel that Paul uses (I Corinthians 15:3-4) how do we deal with the complexity that some have put into their gospel presentation?

### **According to the Gift of God's Grace... According to... the Working of His Power**

God's pleasure, or grace here, shows that God had given Paul a ministry to come in and stir up the hornets nest of separation that was easy for both groups to fit into and instead edify the body with commands to intimacy together. If a public reading of Paul's letters was to be had you would find that the Jewish references would need explanations at times where the gentiles would not fully grasp the contents and vice versa. God used Paul's pious Jewish upbringing and life to thwart nay-sayers. A man who was by Jewish standards utmost within his culture, would come to the gentiles and meet them where they were with the sole desire to see them come to know His Lord.

As for "the working of His power." we see the following two Greek words:

ἐνέργεια - active, effective power. Used only of Supernatural power, also in Ephesians 4:16 of God's power to grow the body up!

δύναμις - Almighty power.

The concept conveys a focused, active supernatural power being used to its fullest with a very specific and accurate outcome.

### ***Discussion***

How is this passage reflective of God's ability to wrought changes in our lives?

How does this passage call us to look at God's work and timing?

Do we find ourselves being impatient with God only to discover His plan is more excellent, more precise, and more powerful?

### **Ephesians 3:8**

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,...

### **To me, the Very least of All Saints**

Paul's humility is not unique to this context as he has outlined his own shortcomings in other passages. Paul's ministry brought him in contact with saints of amazingly simple faith who responded to the gospel immediately, were gracious, and did not meet the legalistic criteria he himself had grown up under (II Corinthians 11:5-33). Paul wrote to Timothy in I Timothy 1:11-15:

According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 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.

### ***Discussion***

Do we find our own testimonies bringing about a similar humility?

Do you feel ashamed to share your testimony?

If your life didn't have 'enough sin' before Christ do you find that has less of an impact when you share the work of Christ in your life?

### **This Grace was Given to Preach to the Gentiles**

Grace was the only sufficient method by which the Lord could operate with all of humanity, but Paul knew it as the system with which he was to operate in and it pleased the Lord to use a pious, focused Hebrew to reach the very people the Hebrew would have worked hard to keep separate from. God's heart was to save the nations and it was part of God's fulfillment of His promise to Abraham which included blessing the nations (Genesis 12:3).

### ***Discussion***

Paul saw the liberty of preaching the gospel to the gentiles as freeing, do we see the same opportunity to share the gospel with the world?

Do we need to be evangelists to see these opportunities?

What keeps you from being comfortable with sharing the gospel (if anything)?

### **The Unfathomable Riches of Christ...**

The very nature of our infinite God indicates to us that we have no chance in heaven of knowing everything about Him. Paul writes that they are unfathomable which carries

with it the idea that full comprehension is not possible, that the fullness of the riches cannot be outlined. Ephesians 2:7 tells us that God will spend eternity revealing Himself to us, if we can't fully comprehend Him in an eternal state we have far less chance of 'boxing God' on the earth. Each time we as believers attempt to outsmart, out-sin, or outdo God we come up short, but in that state of self-deceived confusion the riches of Christ still show themselves to us as God's unlimited, unmerited blessings come pouring out due to the work of Christ on the cross.

Imagine a Greek or other gentile human coming from the state of lostness that is around him and then being able to receive the a relationship with a pure, perfect and knowable God, but knowing that your knowledge will only get better over time. Instead of hopelessness of an unknowable, yet fathomable god, they had a hopeful relationship.

Paul also continues to develop the awesome theology of believers being made to get to know His infinite nature as part of His will. Later in this chapter in 18 & 19 Paul reminds the believer of this concept, but works in the concept of Love to help show the Ephesians that when we determine an attribute of God we become more aware of how we need to learn about it together. Togetherness that comes from having a  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$  kind of relationship with one another.

### ***Discussion***

How can you help me more fully understand God's unfathomable riches?

How can I help you more fully understand God's unfathomable riches?

How will that impact the amount of light that the body of Christ emits?