

Day 163, Ephesians 3

by David Servant

Paul emphasizes the theme of Gentile inclusion, highlighting God's eternal purpose and the display of His wisdom through the church.

Scripture: Romans 3:29, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 3:5-6, Ephesians 3:8, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 3:14, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 3:19

Topics: "Gentile Inclusion", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

David Servant preaches about Paul's emphasis on the Gentiles' inclusion into God's kingdom, revealing how the Holy Spirit unveiled this mystery to Paul and other apostles. Paul stresses that Gentiles are equal heirs, members, and partakers of God's promises through Christ, highlighting God's eternal purpose. He addresses the threat of Jewish legalists in Ephesus and clarifies his specific calling to serve the Gentiles, humbly acknowledging that his ministry is solely by God's grace. Paul marvels at God's wisdom displayed through the church to spiritual authorities, emphasizing the superiority of serving the one true God. He prays for the Gentiles to experience the fullness of Christ's love and blessings.

Transcript

Paul continues today with his previous theme of the Gentiles' inclusion into God's kingdom, first by making reference to the divine source of his revelation (3:3-4). The Gentile inclusion had previously been a mystery, but not because it was never foretold in the Old Testament, but because the Old Testament clues had not been sufficiently pieced together by anyone. But the Holy Spirit had assembled the puzzle quite sufficiently, not only to Paul, but to other "holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (3:5). It was not Paul's unique revelation. Remember that Peter, James and John had all endorsed Paul's gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9).

Paul was adamant about it: "Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (3:6). And this had been God's eternal purpose (3:11). Again, the only reason that Paul would be emphasizing this theme is because his old antagonists, the Jewish legalists, must have also been a threat in Ephesus.

I cannot resist mentioning at this point that we once again see that the epistles often addressed church issues of Paul's day that today are not issues at all. How many of us have ever found ourselves debating with a Jew who was trying to persuade us that we need to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved?

Paul reminded his readers that he possessed a specific calling to serve the Gentiles with his gospel (3:2-4, 7-8). He obviously had no hidden motive, as he was a literal prisoner due to pursuing his call (3:1, 13). And lest anyone think that he was boasting about his special calling, he made sure his readers understood that he knew that his ministry had been granted to him purely due to God's grace, bestowed upon "the least of all the saints" (3:8). All true ministers who understand their calling can identify with Paul. They know they are nothing special. Proud servants are deceived servants.

I must confess that it is a mystery to me why God would even care to display His manifold wisdom "through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (3:10), which can only be a reference to the hierarchy of evil spirits who rule the kingdom of darkness under Satan. Perhaps Paul was not saying that God had any such desire, but only that His wisdom being displayed before evil spirits was simply a consequence of His redemption accomplished through Christ. And perhaps Paul wrote about this primarily to assure his Gentile and formerly-pagan readership that they were now serving a very superior God compared to their old gods, who were nothing more than doomed demons.

Paul mentions that he bowed his knees "before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (3:14). This seems to be another shot in the arm for Gentiles. As God has created all the world's families and He is the ultimate Father, Paul bowed his knee to the God of all the Gentile families, and not just the God of the Jews. Paul similarly wrote in his letter to the Romans, "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?" (Rom. 3:29).

Thus Paul rightfully prays for Gentiles to enjoy every blessing that has been provided for them through Christ. It seems to me for two reasons that his prayer in 3:16-19 is not for Gentiles who had already received the Lord Jesus Christ, but for those who were still unregenerate. First, note that Paul requested that they would "be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ would dwell in your hearts through faith" (3:16-17). Christ is in all who believe (2 Cor. 13:5). Second, Paul also prayed that Gentiles would "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" that they might "be filled up to all the fullness of God" (3:19). Paul had already written in 1:23 that Jesus, in His body, the church, is "the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

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