

The Big Reveal

11.13.22

Ephesians Sermon 10

Ephesians 3:1–13 (CSB)

For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that he gave me for you. ³ The mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have briefly written above. ⁴ By reading this you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. ⁵ This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷ I was made a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the working of his power.

⁸ This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. ¹⁰ This is so that God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. ¹¹ This is according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him we have boldness and confident access through faith in him. ¹³ So, then, I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf, for they are your glory.

Introduction. [Is anyone here a fan of mysteries?](#)

A. Many people love mysteries.

1. A good mystery is fine to watch or read.
2. But what I hate those mysteries that you know in the first 5 minutes who the bad guy is or who done it, you know like the ones on Hallmark.

3. I also hate a mystery that tries to surprise you so bad that the result doesn't make sense.

4. But a well thought out mystery is pretty entertaining.

B. The Spiritual life contains real mysteries.

1. The Greek word for mystery means "a matter to the knowledge which initiation is necessary; a secret which would remain unless there is special revelation." (Mounce 3696).

2. Humanity is COMPLETELY dependent upon Special Revelation:

a. In other words, we can only know what God wants us to know and what He reveals.

b. Examples:

1. What did Jesus write in the dirt when confronted with the woman caught in adultery: We will never know because God did not reveal it.

2. What did John in Revelation see, but was told not to tell it? We can't know because it wasn't revealed.

3. When is Jesus returning? We will know just as soon as God wants us to know.

C. The Good News is, God reveals a LOT.

1. The even better news is that what God has revealed through Jesus is the best news of all.

2. Paul is talking about the Great Mystery of Christ:

3. The mystery is how "Gentiles are coheirs with the Jews to receive the promises we have in Jesus."

1. Why was this a mystery?

A. The fact that God included both Jews and Gentiles seems pretty obvious to us.

1. But we have the benefit of reading backwards.
2. When you read a mystery from the back forward, all of the pieces make much more sense.
3. When we read the Bible from this side, it is much easier to see how God always intended salvation and presence for all people.

B. But this was not clear then.

1. The Apostles struggled, wondering if this salvation was for people other than Jews.
2. When we are introduced to Paul in Acts, he is first completely against Gentiles and anyone who believed that Jesus was the Son of God.
3. It wasn't until He had an experience with Jesus Himself that the mystery was revealed to Him.
4. Education is helpful, but is no substitute for revelation.

C. English speakers like us are weird.

1. We believe that everyone can understand English if we speak SLOWLY.
2. But if someone does not know English, then speaking it slowly does not help.
3. We often think that the key to helping people know something is by educating them.
 - a. I'm all for education.
 - b. But without revelation, education leads to hollow understanding.

4. Paul had the best education in the world, but still could not understand this UNTIL it was revealed to him through Jesus.

a. I encourage all of you to read, study, and be diligent in growing in grace and understanding.

b. But sometimes what you need is not more information but Revelation.

c. The revelation that Paul had with Jesus radically transformed him.

2. Transformations are not wasted when others benefit.

A. Often we think of spirituality and religion as very personal.

1. That's true.

2. But experiences with Jesus were never meant to be kept to yourself.

3. Testimonies are meant to be shared.

a. Isn't it amazing how we rarely share great experiences, but have no problem sharing bad reviews?

b. We have tons of people sharing their bad experiences with religion, but not nearly as many sharing their great experiences with Jesus!

c. The Kingdom of God is expanded through our testimony!

1. When we share what Jesus has done for us, we are expanding the Kingdom.

2. When we point people to Jesus, through Scripture and experience, we are proclaiming the Gospel.

d. God will use dreams and visions in places where people do not have easy access, but He prefers to use people like you and I to share where sharing is possible.

B. The Apostle was thankful for his encounter with Jesus.

1. He had this great insight into a mystery that no one else had understood until this point.
2. So Paul does what He was supposed to: He shared the message and the experience.
3. And it wasn't only Paul who received this message, but the holy apostles and prophets were also being shown the same great message through the Holy Spirit.

C. Two components to transformation:

1. The first is the revelation or experience.
 - a. Maybe you experienced healing, or God's provision, or God has taught you or shown you something that is necessary for today.
 - b. This is not limited to Apostles or Preachers, but is for every believer who desires to be used by God.
2. The second component is grace.
 - a. Paul, in verse 8, says that "grace was given me-the least of all the saints-to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ...
 - b. Paul did not deserve this revelation or knowledge.
 - c. Paul, all too well, remembered the wrongs he had done before he met Jesus.
 - d. Yet God, who is rich in mercy and in grace, used Paul in a mighty way.
3. Every one of us is God's workmanship.
 - a. Every one of us is eligible to experience God for ourselves, and share Jesus with others.
 - b. **When God starts using you, here are a few things to remember:**

#1. I'm being used because of God's grace, not because of my merit.

#2. If I won't share with others, opportunities will be taken away.

#3. Jesus is the main character in this story: It's not about me.

a. This week I was at a powerful conference with 1st Responders.

b. These 1st responders told their stories of encountering suicide, PTSI and depression and coming out on the other side.

c. Amazing stories of survival and resilience:

1. What is different about their stories and ours?

2. When we tell of our suffering and survival, we point people past ourselves and to Jesus.

3. Paul bookends this section with the truth of affliction:

A. Paul is a prisoner, but do not be discouraged over affliction.

1. He starts this section with "I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus."

2. He ends with, "So, then, I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf, for they are your glory."

3. What does Paul have in mind here?

B. The Answer is found in Acts 21.

1. Paul arrives in Jerusalem.

2. Paul never travels alone, always bringing fellow workers with him.

3. The Jewish Apostles are playing some politics, and ask Paul to go and pay an offering at the Temple on behalf of some Jewish background believers.

Acts 21:26–35 (CSB)

THE RIOT IN THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

²⁶ So the next day, Paul took the men, having purified himself along with them, and entered the temple, announcing the completion of the purification days when the offering would be made for each of them. ²⁷ When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd, and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place. What’s more, he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” ²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

³⁰ The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul, dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.

³¹ As they were trying to kill him, word went up to the commander of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in chaos. ³² Taking along soldiers and centurions, he immediately ran down to them. Seeing the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the commander approached, took him into custody, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd were shouting one thing and some another. Since he was not able to get reliable information because of the uproar, he ordered him to be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When Paul got to the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd,

C. Paul is arrested, goes through years of court, and is presently waiting his day in court because he was falsely accused.

1. He was falsely accused for permitting an Ephesian into the section of the Temple reserved only for Jews.

2. The Ephesians are a large part of why Paul is under arrest.

3. BUT, Paul does not blame them, discourage them, or curse them.

4. Instead, he suffers so that they may fully appreciate the access they now have in Jesus.

D. Even if Paul had brought Trophimus the Ephesian into the inner realm of the Temple, that would have been ok with God.

1. The man-made barriers had been torn down, even though many did not realize that yet.

2. The mystery revealed to Paul was now being lived out through them.

a. With Jesus, there is access to platforms and places that we would never have had access to before.

b. Every believer is seated at the right hand with Jesus.

c. Every believer is a co-heir with Christ.

3. Now what Paul said makes sense:

a. ¹² In him we have boldness and confident access through faith in him.

b. Trophimus probably did not enter the court of the Jews.

1. If he did, he had to hide.

2. If he did, he had to read the sign that said "Gentiles die who cross and it's your own fault."

c. But Paul says: Forget that sign, and forget that Temple.

1. Jesus gives us bold and confident access, through faith in Jesus, to the Father.

2. And that, my friends, is far better.

4. We have bold and confident access to the Father because we belong there.

a. This is not arrogance, this is grace.

- b. This is not pride, this is love.
- c. This is Jesus, bringing people like us into the Kingdom saying "No One Belongs Here more than You."
- d. This is Paul, who can call himself the "least of all the saints" (vs 8), saying we all belong with Jesus.
 - 1. Jews, Greeks, Male, Female, Slave or Free.
 - 2. We all have one Person in common: That's Jesus.

4. It's time to make this Good News Known.

A. It's time for the Big Reveal.

- 1. How is this happening?
- 2. The answer is Verse 10:
- 3. 10 This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens.

B. **First, the inclusion of Gentiles is not a mistake, it's wisdom.**

- 1. The proper use of knowledge and information is wisdom.
- 2. Paul is reminding his readers: God did not make a mistake, and the inclusion of people like us is not a correction; it's part of the plan.
- 3. Not only is it wisdom, but it's multi-faceted.
 - a. Paul uses a Greek word that points to the beautiful, intricate detail of a flower or embroidered pattern.ⁱ
 - b. God's plan, and the wisdom involved, is not simple, but requires the creator to point out the intricate details so that the person admiring may appreciate the complexity.

C. **Second, this wisdom is being made known through the Church.**

- 1. Who is the Church?

2. It's Jesus' body of saints, joined with Him.

a. It's the gathering together of people like us.

b. **The Church is the assembling together of people who share a common story: I was lost, but Jesus found me.**

c. The Church are the people that is loved like Jesus' body, His Bride, and His Temple.

d. The Church is God's chosen instrument to reveal the message of the mystery!

D. Third, the rulers and authorities in the heavens are put on notice.ⁱⁱ

1. Remember, that Ephesus was a city full of magic and darkness.

a. Because of the centrality of magic in the Roman province of Asia (the result of the temple of Artemis and its influence), Paul places great emphasis in Colossians and Ephesians on the defeat of the cosmic powers.¹

b. Many of the believers in Ephesus would never go to the Temple in Jerusalem, look at the sign that forbid their entrance and say "That no longer has any power over me."

2. But every one of them would walk outside the door of the house, and walk along the streets, and see the temples of Artemis or the idols cast in her image and say "not today Satan."

3. There are real demonic forces.

a. Just as there is a positive hierarchy with angels, there is also a hierarchy in the demonic.

b. There are spiritual forces at work over nations, mindsets, and cultures.

¹ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*. Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- c. But the news the Church is to proclaim is “You are defeated!”
- d. They may still be at work, but they can’t win.
- e. They may still fight, but they are also doomed.
- f. We are the messengers of the message that Jesus wins, Satan loses.

Close: Today, I believe it to be appropriate that we reflect on the win.

A. I love time around the altars.

- 1. A time that we confess our need to Jesus and to each other.
- 2. They are usually times of surrender to Jesus, and prayers for healing, all of which is appropriate.

B. But today, I want us to take a few moments to profess the message that Jesus wins, and Satan has lost.

- 1. What would it look like for us to live within that power?
- 2. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, never forgot that He has already won.
- 3. We are not victims to circumstances, but we are more than conquerors.

C. Today, can we gather around the front for a few minutes and remind the enemy that he is defeated?

- 1. A few minutes to speak the name of Jesus over our lives and families and communities!
- 2. This week, Licking was on KY3 news for all the drug deaths in the prison, we need to remind the enemy that his days are finished.
- 3. Prayer.

ⁱ It is *polypoikilos* (the simple form *poikilos* is used in 1 Pet. 4:10), a word that means 'variegated', and that was used in classical Greek writers with reference to cloth or flowers, and so here it suggests 'the intricate beauty of an embroidered pattern' (Robinson) or the endless variety of colours in flowers. Such, the apostle says, is the *wisdom of God* that the church declares.ⁱ TNTC commentary on Ephesians 3:10

ⁱⁱ Because of the centrality of magic in the Roman province of Asia (the result of the temple of Artemis and its influence), Paul places great emphasis in Colossians and Ephesians on the defeat of the cosmic powers. The language of "making known" here does not mean that the church is to evangelize the demonic forces. They have made an eternal decision to oppose God (Rev 12:4, 7–9) and are beyond redemption. Rather, the church reiterates Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison (1 Pet 3:19) and tells the cosmic powers they have lost. It does so through its victorious ministry in the world. Though they have rejected God, the fallen angels are supremely aware of his wisdom, for [p 90](#) they know the Scriptures and see God's wisdom worked out every day in the lives of his victorious people.ⁱⁱ Osborne Commentary