"A MAN WITH A MISSION"

Ephesians 3:1-12
3-29-2023

INTRODUCTION:

***Paul was a man with a mission.**

As a missionary, Paul saw himself in three ways. If you asked Paul, "Who are you?" he would say, "I am . . .":

I. A PRISONER (v. 1)

II. A STEWARD (v. 2-6)

A steward is a "manager" - Paul was a manager of a vital message called "the mystery"

A. The Mystery Revealed (v. 3-5)

B. The Mystery Defined (v. 6)

III. A MINISTER (v. 7-12)

The testimony of a true minister:

A. I serve under God's Authority
"I was made a minister" (v. 7a)

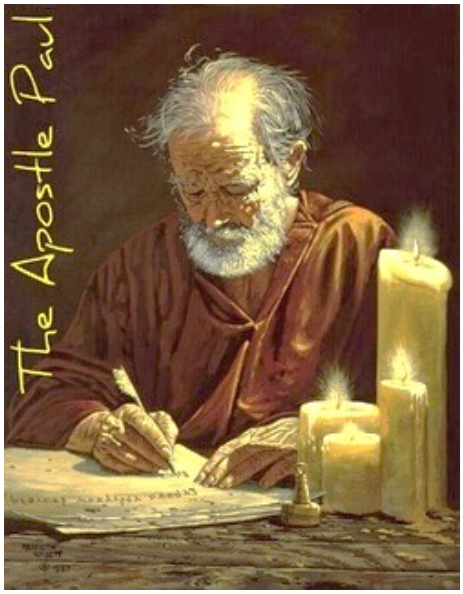
B. I serve by God's Strength
"By the effectual working of His power" (v. 7b)

C. I serve through God's Grace
"The gift of grace. . . unto me, who am less than the least" (v. 7, 8-9)

D. I serve for God's Honor (v. 10-12)

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"For this cause" - On account of God's plan and provision for the Gentiles

***Paul was a man with a mission.**

As a missionary, Paul saw himself in three ways. If you asked Paul, "Who are you?" he would say, "I am . . .":

I. A PRISONER (v. 1)

Three times in Ephesians, Paul calls himself a prisoner - 3:1, 4:1, and in 6:20 *"an ambassador in bonds"*

Though in jail for 5 years (2 in Caesarea and 3 in Rome), Paul did not view himself a prisoner of the Jews, Rome, or Caesar.

"The prisoner of Jesus Christ" - Paul could have referred to himself as the Great Apostle, preacher, representative, etc., but he calls himself the lowest of titles.

Christ saved Paul and "captured" him to be totally dedicated to reaching Gentiles with the Gospel.

What is the significance of the term "prisoner"?

"Prisoner" - implies an obligation to pay a debt (Rom. 1:14)

"Prisoner" - implies a no way out situation

Paul, being a prisoner was confined to the mission Christ had for him (*"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel"* - I Cor. 9:16)

"Prisoner" - implies a willingness to accept the hardships coming to you.

Paul was literally a prisoner of Rome. Why? Because of his faithful service to Jesus Christ.

Men like John Bunyan, John Hus, and John Chrysostrum were all prisoners for Christ.

II. A STEWARD (v. 2-6)

V. 2

Verses 2 - 12 are a parenthesis.

Paul was going to speak of how he suffered and prayed for the Gentile believers (v. 13ff), but he first interjects a message about his mission.

"Dispensation" - a stewardship, a management job.

As a steward, Paul knew he had to be faithful (I Cor. 4:2)

A steward is a "manager" - Paul was a manager of a vital message called "the mystery"

A. The Mystery Revealed (v. 3-5)

"Grace...given me to you ward" - God gives us grace so that we would in turn pass it on to others

"By revelation" - Paul did not learn about the mystery from Peter, James or John, but God revealed it directly to him (Gal. 1:11-12 - *"But I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."*)

"The mystery" - truth that was hidden (unknown) but now has been revealed, uncovered.

"As I wrote afore" - could refer to a previous uninspired, uncanonized letter, or a better view would be, as I have already stated briefly - i.e. in the beginning of this letter to the Ephesians (1:9-100

"Apostles and prophets" - plural; contrary to the teaching of ultradispensationalists, Paul was not the only apostle who understood the mystery.

V. 5

"By the Spirit" - only the Holy Spirit can teach us spiritual truth.

B. The Mystery Defined (v. 6)

V. 6

"Fellow heirs" - Jew and Gentile inherit the same eternal blessings. There will be no second rate inheritors in Heaven.

"Same body" - fellow body members. Christ has only one body of believers (I Cor. 12:13).

"Partakers" - fellow partners, co-sharers

"Of his promise" - this promise is: "blessing to all nations" (Gen. 12:1-3); that blessing is God's gift of eternal life and all that goes with it.

"In Christ" - God's blessing is only in one location - in Christ

By the gospel" - through, by means of the Gospel. The Gospel is the "passage way" to Christ where the promise is located.

III. A MINISTER (v. 7-12)

Whereas the title "prisoner" showed Paul's relationship to his master, "steward" showed his relationship to his task; now "minister" shows his relationship to people.

Paul received a task from his Master, to give to people.

Paul's testimony of his call to the ministry - I Tim. 1:12-16

The testimony of a true minister:

A. I serve under God's Authority

"I was made a minister" (v. 7a)

"Whereof - of which gospel, I have been made a minister. "Minister" = (diakaonos) - a house servant, a waiter, one who lives for the benefit of others

Paul did not appoint himself as a minister (he was "made" a minister).

This ministry was a gift by the grace of God.

The energy to perform that service also came from God.

B. I serve by God's Strength

"By the effectual working of His power" (v. 7b)

"Working" - energeia - "energy"

"Power" = dunamis - "dynamite"

That same power is available to us!

C. I serve through God's Grace

"The gift of grace. . . unto me, who am less than the least" (v. 7, 8-9)

"Unto me" - emphatic; as if to say, "Who am I? Unto little old me!"

Less than the least" - the smallest of even the small; the most insignificant of anyone with little significance. What humility!

Paul saw himself as unworthy of such a great task.

"Grace" is always undeserved.

The name "Paul" (Paulus) means "little" in Latin, and perhaps Paul bore this name because he realized how insignificant he really was (Acts 13:9). He calls himself "the least of the apostles" (I Cor. 15;9) and he later calls himself the "chief of sinners" (I Tim. 1:15) (Wiersbe, p. 73)

"Unsearchable" - untraceable; God's riches in Christ are so great, so incredible, so far above that which we could ever ask or think, that our finite minds are not able to track down these elusive riches.

1. Paul is saying: By God's grace, I have a great task (v. 8b)

   "I preach the unsearchable riches"

2. Paul is saying: By God's grace, I have a big task (v. 9)

   I live to make "all men see..."

   To make all men see" - to bring to light

   "The fellowship" - koinonia - join, sharing of Jew and Gentile. Critical text has oikonomia (stewardship)

   "Who created all things by Jesus Christ" - critical text omits "by Jesus Christ" -

   The Father is the Architect and the Son was the Builder

   The Father planned creation, the Son performed creation.

D. I serve for God's Honor (v. 10-12)

"To the intent" - God's goal in saving Jew and Gentile and uniting them in one body is to show to the angels (angelic beings - perhaps both fallen and unfallen) His manifold (many-faceted) wisdom.

He shows this wisdom "through the church." Through the amazing nature of the church (being Jew and Gentile)

"What are the evil angels learning from God's "mystery"? That their leader, Satan, does not have any wisdom! (Wiersbe, p. 74)

Satan tried to destroy the Jew, and thought that the crucifixion of Christ would cause God to be done with them. Yet the crucifixion was all part of God's plan, and He now saves Jews despite their past ignorance.

The mystery was totally God's predetermined plan.

The mystery was accomplished in Christ!

His finished work on Calvary paid the price for all men to be saved.

"In whom" - In Christ we have boldness (confidence of our part in the mystery)

"And access" - lit. entrance. Its one thing to have boldness; its another to have an actual entrance. Heaven is a certainty for the believers, a "know so" salvation.

"By the faith of him" - objective genitive, by our faith in Him.

Conclusion:

We too are people with a mission. Like Paul, we are…

- A PRISONER
- A STEWARD
- A MINISTER