

**Saint Pauls Cathedral, Melbourne**  
**Bible Study, Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**EPHESIANS 3:1-13**

**A Quick Recap (Ephesians 2:11-22, The Message)**

But don't take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God's ways had no idea of any of this, didn't know the first thing about the way God works, hadn't the faintest idea of Christ. You knew nothing of that rich history of God's covenants and promises in Israel, hadn't a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether are in on everything. The Messiah has made things up between us so that we're now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance. He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody. Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father. That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

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**Ephesians 3:1-13**

**THE MESSAGE**

<sup>1-3</sup> This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called. I take it that you're familiar with the part I was given in God's plan for including everybody. I got the inside story on this from God himself, as I just wrote you in brief.

<sup>4-6</sup> As you read over what I have written to you, you'll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ. None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God's Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order. The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those

who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board.

<sup>7-8</sup> This is my life work: helping people understand and respond to this Message. It came as a sheer gift to me, a real surprise, God handling all the details. When it came to presenting the Message to people who had no background in God's way, I was the least qualified of any of the available Christians. God saw to it that I was equipped, but you can be sure that it had nothing to do with my natural abilities.

<sup>8-10</sup> And so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!

<sup>11-13</sup> All this is proceeding along lines planned all along by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. When we trust in him, we're free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go. So don't let my present trouble on your behalf get you down. Be proud!

## **OUTLINE**

**I. Paul was given a revelation into what was a mystery (1-4)**

**II. Other generations did not have this knowledge (5)**

**III. The exact mystery was that Gentiles are fellow members of the body (6)**

**IV. Paul was a steward accomplishing this mission (7-10)**

**V. This was God's plan for eternity (11)**

**VI. Therefore we must lose heart (12-13)**

## **NRSV**

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup>for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, <sup>3</sup>and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup>a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup>In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup>that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

<sup>7</sup>Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>Although I am the very least of all the

saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ,<sup>9</sup> and to enlighten everyone to what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;<sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.<sup>11</sup> This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,<sup>12</sup> in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.<sup>13</sup> I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

N.B. Verses 2-13 is a parenthetical statement interrupting Paul's thought in verse one which he continues in verse 14.

*"This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles ... or this reason I bow my knees before the Father..." (v,1,14)*

- What and why was Paul in this situation? (1,13)
- How is this mystery known? (2,3,5,7,8,10) [clue: '*made known, given, revelation*']
- During what time was this mystery hidden? In what way did God choose to reveal it? (5)
- What is this mystery? (6)
- What is Paul's role in this mystery? (1-2,7-9)
- What does verse 10 mean?

*"so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."*

- What is the significance of verse 11-12?

*"<sup>11</sup> This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him."*

- How can we apply what we have learned today into our lives?