

The Mystery Revealed, Part 3

Scripture: Ephesians 3:7-13

Code: 1914

We come back this morning to our study of Ephesians. Wonderful letter of the apostle Paul describing the doctrine of the church. And we're looking at the third chapter of Ephesians, the section from Verses 1 through 13. We're going to finish our look at that section so that we can move on in our next study next time. We've entitled this portion the revealing of the mystery. For those of you who have not been with us, we have been seeing the unfolding mystery of the church.

And the term mystery doesn't mean something that isn't understood it means something that is. Something that is now revealed that has been hidden from ages past. And one of the great mysteries that God reveals in the New Testament is the mystery of the church. That this is the body of Christ. A new thing, the church. Jew and Gentile, one in Jesus Christ. And in the church there are either Jew or Greek, a Greek nor Barbarian, bond nor free, male or female. All are one in Christ. And this is one of the wonderful realities of the New Testament.

It teaches the oneness of all believers in Jesus Christ. A great new truth, a mystery through all the ages past and now revealed. Now the church today suffers a lot of abuse. The church is criticized, it is maligned, it is attacked, people are always bringing to bear upon the church their own opinions and ideas of what the church should be or shouldn't be. The church really takes a lot of abuse.

But I think we have to realize that in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church has an especially wonderful place. Whatever we may think about it, the true church, the church of Jesus Christ possesses a place in his heart that is absolutely unique. For example in Ephesians Chapter 5 if you look for a moment in Verse 25 you read this. "Husbands, love your wives. Even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Then Verse 29, "for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it even as the Lord the church." Now here we find that the Lord loves the church that he gave himself for the church, that he wishes to wash the church by his word to present the church to himself, glorious, that he nourishes, that he cherishes the church. Now all of these things remind us that the Lord has a special deep affection for the church. And by that I'm not talking about the structure or the organization or denomination or anything like that. I'm talking about the real church of Jesus Christ the body of blood bought, born again believers.

Christ loves his church. The church is very, very special. And that's why the New Testament goes to such great length to present to us the identity and the uniqueness and the whole theology of the church and then calls us to behave ourselves in a manner consistent with such a definition. Now backing up for a minute, look with me at the 16th Chapter of Matthew. The first time the Lord mentions the church we get a good idea of his feeling toward it.

Matthew 16 and Verse 16. And here we find Jesus mentioning the church for the first time and really opening up to us his heart for the church. And of course he's asking the disciples who they think he is and Simon Peter says in Verse 16, "thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." And Jesus answered, "said unto him" Verse 17, "blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my father who is in heaven and I say also unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Now just pulling out several things that remained as a thought that we want to give. First of all we notice the statement, I will build my church. The church is his church. And he himself is the builder of it. The church is not built by men, it is not built by committees, it is not built by great individuals, it is not built by denominations. It is not built by money. It is not built by programs or methods; it is built by the Lord Jesus Christ. I will build my church.

And we find there what really we see also in Acts 20:28, "the church which he has purchased with his own blood." It is his church. He bought it. He built it for himself. And so we will say then that the church is built by him. It is built by him. Second thing, you'll notice that it says in Verse 18 "upon this rock I will build my church." And I believe the reference there is back to Verse 16. "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." The great statement of the deity of Christ is the rock on which the church is built.

Paul put it this way. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ. Secondly then the church is not only built by him, but it is built on him. It is built on him. He will build it by himself, on himself. Thirdly. He says, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." He will build it by himself on himself mark this and for himself. In other words at no point will anyone take the church out of his control. It is for him that the church is built.

Not even the wise and crafty Satan shall be able to prevail against the church. It is invincible because he is invincible. It is unconquerable because he is unconquerable. So he will build it by himself on himself, for himself and no usurper will ever touch the church. And then I want you to look at Matthew 18, because I want to add something else. This is the second time the church is mentioned by our Lord. And he's talking here about discipline in the fellowship. He says in Verse 15, "if someone sins you go to them and two or three go to them and then take it to the church." And you know that whole area.

Then he comes to Verse 18 and this is what I want to emphasize. Matthew 18:18. "Truly I say to you whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound already in heaven. Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed already in heaven. Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my father who is in heaven. Here's the key for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

He built his church by himself on himself, for himself watch this of himself. In other words, Christ is here saying. That when the church comes together in an act of discipline, whatever the church does on earth he is doing in heaven. He is in agreement with his church. Where two or three are gathered there am I in the midst. Whatever you bind I bind, whatever you loose I loose. Whatever you ask, it is done. In other words, Christ is inseparable from his church.

It is therefore that Christ introduces the concept of the church by showing us how it is tied to him. He builds it by himself, on himself, for himself of himself. It is his church. And thus it is sacred, thus it is unique. Thus it is special. And that is one of the reasons that the spirit of God takes up so much time and space in the New Testament to define for us the theology of the church. Because it is such a unique and marvelous object of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you come to Ephesians.

And Paul writes a letter that gives us the theology of the church. The Book of Acts tells us the history of the church. The book of Ephesians, the theology of the church. And all of the rest of the books of the New Testament deal with the church as well. In Ephesians 1:22 and 23, the apostle Paul gives a statement which sums up Christ's relationship to his church. "Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come." That's Christ. "And to put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Listen to this.

"Which is his body, the fullness of him that fillith all in all." Christ is the head of the church. And he is expressing himself in the body since the body is the fullness of him. He is the head of the church and he expresses his very life through the church. The church is so unique. It is his church through which he expresses his life. It is to be Christ in the world. He is its head and through the body expresses himself.

And so beloved I simply say all of that to remind you that the church is so sacred. The church is the only institution Jesus ever left. That's it. The only one he built. And it's dear to his heart. And thus is incumbent on us to grasp what the Bible teaches about the church because it's him. It's the fullness of him that fillith all and all. We are that fullness, we are that church. We are joined to him inseparably and invincibly and eternally. We must understand and so for the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul is giving the theology of the church as the fullness of Christ.

That every believer is in Christ. That every believer because he's in Christ is filled with all the fullness of God. That every believer because he's in Christ should be the expression of Christ in the world. That every believer because he's in Christ has all that Christ is. Literally pulsing in his body. The incredible reality that we are one in him. And Paul goes on to talk about in these three Chapters, Jew and Gentile, the barrier that was there, it's broken, the middle wall is torn down, the veil is pulled apart and Jew and Gentile are one in Jesus Christ. This is the church. Everybody one. No bond or free, no male or female, no rich or poor, no Jew, no Gentile, we're all one in Christ.

That's the great mystery of the church. You see in the Old Testament God kept the distinction among the nation. Israel was a special people. Very distinct, distinct rules, distinct regulations, distinct commandments identifying marks, all that's not there anymore. The church is the new humanity. That's Paul's message. And we need to understand it. Because in the last three chapters, he's going to tell us how to act. And in order to know how to act, we got to know who we are, right?

If I know who I am, I know what's expected of me then I know how to behave. And so three chapters of identity, three chapters follow behavior. This is who you are, this is how you live. Now. Paul closes this opening chapter with a prayer. Or rather this opening section with a prayer, Chapter three. He wants to pray that God will give to the readers understanding of the church. But before he starts his prayer really in Verse 1 of Chapter 3, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentile." And then he stops.

And the continuation of that thought is in Verse 14. "For this cause I bow my knees." You see he's about to pray. And he's going to pray oh God, I want him to understand. Oh God, I want him to know what it is to be a part of the mystery. I want him to know what it is to be in this church that you purchased with your own blood. Your church built by you on you for you. I want them all to understand but then he stops before he begins his prayer even in Verse 1. He says, but wait a minute, they'll never understand it unless I really give them all the information. So he stops in a parenthesis in Verse 2 to 13 and reiterates the great truth that the church is one.

Jew and Gentile, one body in Christ. This is the mystery he wants us to understand. And so we're looking at Verses 2 to 13. The mystery revealed. That everyone in Christ is one with everyone else in Christ. Beautiful wonderful and comprehensible mystery of unity. Something the Old Testament people never understood. Now let's go back very quickly to our text and mention the first two points which we've already covered.

First of all he begins by presenting the prisoner of the mystery. And in talking about the mystery he introduces himself in Verse 1 as the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He says, Verse 2, "I'm the one with the dispensation of the grace of God. I'm the one" Verse 3 "receiving the revelation, I'm the one who's writing it down so you can read it" Verse 4 "I'm the prisoner of the mystery God has called me to

dispense this truth to you."

Now in the Book of Matthew, the whole church age is described as a mystery because it was hidden in the past. The Old Testament Saints never saw the church age, they saw Christ coming and setting up his kingdom. They didn't see this age in the middle. And so it's called a mystery. And in that mystery age of the church there are many other mysteries. The New Testament talks about the mystery of Inikili. The mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory. The mystery of the incarnation. And the mystery of Jew and Gentile, one in the church.

They mystery Babylon, the terrible evil system of the end time. There are many mysteries in the mystery age. The whole age was hidden so everything in it was hidden from the past. But it's all revealed and the guy who got really used beyond anybody else to unfold all this mystery was Paul. He is God's man, God's special agent, the prisoner of the mystery. And the one great element that he was preaching here is the mystery the Jew and Gentile who were so separated with such animosity and such hatred and such bitterness are now to be one in Jesus Christ. That was the mystery he's dealing with here.

He was the preacher of that mystery. And because he preached it, he became a prisoner. Remember we talked about that? When he was in Jerusalem, they captured him and put him in prison because he was preaching the Jew and Gentile were to be one in Christ. By the time he writes Ephesians he's been a prisoner for over five years for preaching that mystery. When the Jews were so angry with him.

They didn't want to accept the Gentiles anymore than the Gentiles wanted to accept them. So we saw the prisoner of the mystery. Secondly and we're just reviewing what we already studied, we saw the plan of the mystery. Verses 5 and 6. In Verse 6, specifically articulated the mystery. Look at it. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel. This incredible thing, Jew and Gentile, the same, equally saved. Equally partaking. Equal members of the body of Christ.

Fellow heirs, that was his message. That was the plan. And it was all possible by the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. God was making one new humanity. So the prisoner and the planning. Now thirdly let's come to the preaching of the mystery. The preaching of the mystery. We can't say everything that could be said here. In fact you're a better preacher if you don't say everything that could be said.

Now we're going to highlight some things. Let's look at the preaching of the mystery. Verses 7 to 9. "This thing which God planned needed a preacher and Paul says, 'I was the one.'" Verse 7. "Of which I was made a minister. This Gospel, this Gospel of the mystery of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of his power.

Unto me he said."

"When less than the least of all Saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ." Now I'll stop there for a second. Paul says look, I'm the preacher. Got to have a preacher. You know in Romans Chapter 10 Paul is presenting the fact that Israel is responsible. That they had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. That they were going about to establish their own righteousness and he always through Romans, Paul has sort of an imaginary Jew who argues with him.

In other words, he anticipates what the argument of the reader will be and so then he puts that argument in the text as if some imaginary Jew is arguing. So he is reasoning about the fact that Israel is really responsible and the imaginary Jew says, well how shall we hear? How shall we believe when we haven't heard? And how shall we hear unless somebody preaches and how shall there be a preacher unless somebody is sent.

In other words they're saying, you can't hold us responsible, we never heard. And we never heard because nobody ever preached and nobody ever preached because nobody was ever sent. Don't you know that the Old Testament says how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good tidings, the Gospel of peace, etc. And the imaginary Jew is saying, you can't hold us responsible, we didn't have any preachers.

And Paul comes back in the next Verse by saying this. "It isn't the fact that you never heard, it's the fact that not all have obeyed." Not all have obeyed. "For you did hear. Faith comes by hearing a message about Christ," he says. You've heard those messages. It's not a lack of preaching; it's a lack of faith and obedience. Now Paul is saying the same here in effect. He's saying God knows that responsibility is based on hearing. And so God made me a minister to preach the mystery.

I was made a minister for the purpose of preaching the mystery. So nobody could say it wasn't given to them. Now I want to talk about this for a minute. First of all look at this. The word minister is the word deaconus which means servant. It means servant. It means waiter, busboy, that's it. Not even a very classy servant. Common run of the mill servant. And I think when you see yourself you say, well the Apostle Paul my word he should have been thinking of himself higher than that, no?

No that was just about as high as he was allowed to go. As you see, a servant by definition, now watch this is one who acts on the commands of another. Okay? By definition, a servant is one who obeys the commands of his master. And a servant is somebody who always recognizes a higher authority. And Paul knew that he acted only on the command of God that he was to obey his master's will and that he was subject to a higher authority.

He was only a servant. In fact in 1 Corinthians, he said, "Paul and Apaulus, Esephus, all the rest of us, what are we but servants through whom God has brought you the truth." 1 Corinthians Chapter 4, he said, let a man so account of us as of servants who ___ third level galley slaves in the bottom of a boat rowing. Nothing higher than that at best stewards of the mysteries of Gods. Stewards, somebody who doesn't own anything but manages it for somebody else.

He was always a servant, always a servant. Always a servant. He was literally shocked by the fact that God even allowed him to minister. In 1 Timothy he said, "I was before a persecutor, blasphemous injurious but he counted me worthy, counted me faithful rather, putting me into the ministry. I am who am chief of" what? "sinners."

It was always a conscious man that he was sinful. Never lost that objectivity. And look what he says. I was made a minister. I was made a minister. I receive the action; this is passive. It was done to me. I didn't ask for this. I was divinely called, divinely appointed. In Colossians 1:23, he says, "I was made a minister." Colossians 1:25, he says it again, "I was made a minister." Here he says it again, "I was made a minister."

He had this tremendous sense of call by God. In the 26th Chapter of Acts, he's talking to a gripa, the king and he's giving his testimony. He says at midday, "oh King I stood in the way of course and saw a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining about me and those who journeyed with me on the Damascus Road. When we were fallen into the earth I heard a voice speaking to me saying in the Hebrew tongue, 'Saul, Saul, why persecute us thou me, it is hard for thee to kick against the godes and I said, 'who art thou Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus who though persecutest, but rise and stand upon my feet for I've appeared to thee for this purpose.'"

Listen. "To make thee a minister, to make thee a servant." A servant, nothing more than a servant. I was made a servant and again and again and again as he writes his letters, he says, "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ." What made Paul a minister? Not his training, not his personal dignity, not his areadition, not his vocabulary, not his ability to talk, not his education, his abilities, his grades, his degrees, his desire, his power, his denomination, his affiliation, what made him a minister was God.

And I'll tell you one thing it's tough enough being one when God made you one that you sure don't want to do it if you didn't. That's part of the problem in the church today around the world. We got people in the ministry who aren't there because God put them there. They're usurpers, they're Coradathan and Abihues who have stepped into the ministry apart from the call of God and they're trying to function as a priest without a priestly office and they're affect is nill.

Worse than that it's negative because they wear the mask of the call of God. Don't ever enter the ministry apart from the call of God. Paul had a dramatic experience on the Damascus Road in which he was made a ministry. I've had a similar situation. I was as you know thrown out of a car and

skidding along the highway and after all of that, the Lord said to me, I have chosen to make you a minister. Now not everybody gets the luxury of having a ride like that.

You may not get that clear kind of leading, but believe me, you don't want to enter the ministry unless it's clear enough so that you have absolutely not a shadow of doubt. And at best we're servants. Whenever you lose the objectivity of the fact that you are nothing but a servant, you're in trouble. And it's easy to get a sense of self-power, self-glory, you're the big shot, you're up there doing your thing and everybody's sitting at your feet. And boy Satan uses all that stuff to tell you how really super you are. And if somebody doesn't really appreciate you like he should, you know you start thinking my, don't they realize who I am?

All that I've given. See that's how Satan tempts. And then some other dear brother comes along and says, you're not so hot, there's a bunch of us who feel that way. And it just sort of settles you back down. We were servants from the very beginning. Paul and all those who minister for Christ. And we're in this because he called us. We have one task, obey orders, that's all. God doesn't want creativity; he just wants obedience.

Paul was made a servant. And when you lose that perspective in the ministry, you forfeit your power immediately. Look what he says there. He says, "According to the gift." It was a gift. A gift not only a gift, but a gift of the grace of God. It wasn't even earned; it was gracious. Graces unmerited favor. It was given to me. Then look at Verse 8. He says, "Is this grace given that I should preach?" Again he says a gift and then he says it was given twice, he says he's a servant.

You see there was nothing that he did, nothing that he could have done, nothing that he earned in any way, shape or form. He was a minister because God made him a minister. God had to have somebody to preach. And God chooses who his preachers are going to be. Now as long as he kept that mentality, look at the end of Verse 7. "There was the effectual working of divine power." Divine power works in the servant's heart. But as soon as the person who is the servant of God begins to think of himself as more than that, he forfeits the power.

You see God will release his power to flow through his servant as soon as I begin to exalt myself, glorify myself, lift up myself, do my own thing, I'm not serving God anymore. I'm competing with God. And I forfeit his power. And it's over. And that's the end of my ministry. Now with the crowds may still come and the people may still show up, but there's no power.

And as I told you last week, that's the thing I fear in my own heart. You see that I would know what I do so well that I would just do it without God. And forfeit his power. And so I've asked God to make me a servant, give me a servant's heart. So that I know that I am what I am by the grace of God. I can't ever lose the perspective that I'm a sinner. That I am a sinner who is unworthy of such a calling. If I ever lose that perspective, the power is gone. Because then I lose my dependence you see.

And so Paul says I'm a servant by grace, a gift of God. He made me a minister and as long as I see myself Verse 8 "less than the least of all saints, then I will know the effectual working of his power." You see what keeps the power flowing is the humility that is expressed in Verse 8. When you get to think you've arrived, you're in real trouble. You just lost your power. But Corinthians you know, that's what happened to them. Boy they had it all and lost it. They were impotent.

Humility is what maintains the servant's heart and that's what lets Christ rule my life and flow his power through me. And sometimes I'm not willing to pay that price. And sometimes you're not either. All we want to covet a reputation, we want to covet honor, personal charm. We want to use our forcefulness to sway people to our opinions. And we get ourselves in the way of the power of God. And as soon as the heart is filled with self ambition, as soon as its filled with self-glory, then I've lost a servant's heart, humility is gone and the power is cut off.

It's all over. Paul says, look, God has called me to preach. And as I see myself less than the least of all Saints, boy that's real humility. I know I'm a sinner; I haven't arrived. Always bothers me when somebody comes along and says, well I've had the second work of grace and I don't sin anymore. Boy you're going to have a tough time convincing Paul of that. He was less than the least. He was the chief of sinners. The mystery that God would ever let him preach. He never understood. And what did he preach? What was his message? What's my message? What's any message of any preacher? Let's look at it. The end of Verse 8. "That I should preach among the Gentiles the" what? "Unsearchable riches of Christ." Now listen beloved this is going to give you some insight into the ministry.

What are the unsearchable riches of Christ? They are all the truths about him. And all that he means to us. And a long time ago I committed myself that this is the priority of the ministry. To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. And what does it mean? It means to tell people how rich they are in Christ. And that's why I always talk about preaching the believers position. I'm not here just to browbeat you and make you feel bad and exhort you and club you and tell you to shape up and all that. I'm here to tell you how rich you are.

I believe I've been sent by God like Paul and every other man of God to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. Unsearchable means unfathomable, untraceable, can't be measured, there's no bottom. And so I can have the joy of just telling you how rich you are. If you're a Christian, you are rich. Believe me you are incredibly rich. That's my task as a minister a servant of Jesus Christ to tell you. In fact Paul says in 1 Colossians "that God had called him to preach and God wanted him to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles." He wants me to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery. The mystery is the church. You're in the church; there are riches. And you need to know how rich you are. And so great part of the preaching of the word of God must be declaring to people the riches of Christ.

And don't try to follow me; I'm just going to suggest some things just to make one point. You don't need to get all the verses down. But Ephesians 1:7 says, "His grace is rich." Romans 2:4 says, "His goodness and patience are rich." Romans 11:33 says, "God's wisdom and knowledge are rich." Ephesians 2:4 says, "His mercy is rich." Ephesians 3:16 "his person is rich." 1 Timothy 6:17, "his blessings are rich." Colossians 2:2 "his assurance is rich." Colossians 3:16 "his word is rich." Hebrews 11:26, "our suffering for him is rich." Ephesians 3:18, 19, "his love is rich."

And that's just a few. We got to preach the riches. Ephesians 1, Verse 7, "we've got to talk about the riches of his grace." And they're all ours. They're all ours. And Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:18 "that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened, that we would know the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints." And so Paul says, "I've been called to preach the riches."

I'm not just here to tell you what God wants you to do, I'm here to tell you what he's already done for you. I'm here to tell you that you've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. I'm here to tell you that you're complete in him. I'm here to tell you that you have all things that pertain to life and Godliness.

You're rich. And I'm here also to tell you something else. You say, well how come you get negative sometimes? How come sometimes you talk about sin and all that stuff? Well because I'm also here to tell you how you can lose your riches. You can forfeit them you know. The Corinthians did. And Paul said to them in 1 Corinthians 4:8, sarcastically he said, "Now you are full, now you are rich." And they were just the opposite. Pride ambition, self-will, self-glory, sin made them paupers.

That's like, they didn't lose their bank account; they just lost their checkbook. The resource was all there. They just couldn't draw it. I can tell you you're rich on the one hand, but on the other hand, I got to tell you also you can forfeit access to those riches, can't you? Remember the church in the Book of Revelation? "You forgotten with all that you possessed that you're really poor and naked and blind."

And so the ministry then is to preach the riches unsearchable and to warn that men not forfeit those riches. Why are there so many defeated and inept unhappy doubting, anemic, fearful non-productive Christians? One they don't know how rich they are or two they can't use their riches because of their sin. Now that is the minister's task in the vertical area. The riches we have from God. Let's go to the horizontal in Verse 9. Paul says, "The second part of my ministry is to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery. Which from the beginning of the ages, hath been hidden in God who created all things by Jesus Christ."

God the creator has hidden this mystery. He says that so many times just so you don't miss it. The whole mystery has been hidden and what is the mystery? It's the mystery of the church. It was hidden from the beginning of the ages, it's now revealed. And what does Paul want us to understand about the church? He wants everybody to see the fellowship it says here of the mystery. But the word is not *cononea*, it's not the Greek word fellowship, it is *oykinambia*, which means dispensation.

It is the word for stewardship or dispensation. And here's what Paul is saying. I am not only preaching to you the vertical, the unsearchable riches of Christ, but I want to teach you all about the dispensation of the mystery. Or the church age, so that you'll understand the ministry on a horizontal level that the church is required to bear. And so the ministry has those two things. We teach about the relationship to God and we teach about the ministry to each other and in the world.

Those are the two things that make up the preaching. You could take every sermon I ever preached and fit them into those categories. Everything I ever say is either talking about our relationship to God the unsearchable riches, what he's done for us and maintaining the flow of access to those riches or its about how we minister or how we are to live or what we are to be in the world in terms of the dispensation of the mystery of the church.

We are to preach the church. And we are to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. And I'll tell you that's those are two things that I committed myself to do when we first went through this book eight or nine years ago, that I would teach you your position in Christ who he is and all that he has to give and all that he is to us and how you can forfeit that through sin. And on the other hand, that we would teach you the function of the church, the churches history. We went through the Book of Acts, the churches future. We went through the Book of Revelation, how we are to live in the church.

We've gone through all the spiritual gifts and ministries. Because that's the preaching of the mystery. The mystery hidden in the past and so Paul says, the preaching of the ministry two things, the unsearchable riches of Christ and the dispensation of the church so that you understand what the church is. So we see the prisoner of the plan, the preaching of the mystery forth and this is really unbelievable. We see the purpose of the mystery. The purpose. What is it all for?

We'll look at this in Verse 10. "To the intent or for the purpose that now" present tense "right now under the principalities and powers and heavenly places." Who are they? Who are the principalities of power? Angels. Those are terms used of angels. They are used in Chapter 1, Verse 21 to describe angels. They are used in Colossians to describe angels. They are used in the sixth chapter of Ephesians to describe fallen angels. Principalities in powers the rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness in high places. All of those are terms for the ranks of angels.

Angels are ranked and categorized and catalogued. If you want to study that you can get our little tape series we did on angels. It will tell you all about it. And he is simply saying this. That the

purpose of all of this preaching, the purpose for which God made the church was so that the angels might know the manifold wisdom of God. You see it there? Verse 11. "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. What was God's eternal purpose? Why did he make the church? Why does he want Paul to preach this mystery? Why did he call out the prisoner of the mystery? Why did he give the plan of the mystery in order that the purpose might be fulfilled which was that the angels might see the wisdom of God by looking at the church.

Now listen to me. This is it folks. All things were made by him and what? For him. Everything that God has ever done has as its ultimate end to give him glory. Okay? The reason for the church is not just to save people. That's a means to an end. That's a nice benefit. But the reason is so that the angels will see this incredible miracle of the church and they will glorify the wisdom of God and God is worthy of glory, right?

We began our worship this morning when I read you 1 Chronicles 16, "Give glory unto the Lord your God." That is the theme of the entire universe. The church is not a purpose in itself. The church is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. And the end is that God will be glorified and God will be glorified in the unlimited praise of the angelic hosts. You say well how can a fallen angel praise him, they can't.

But God gets glory by the wisdom that is manifested in the church because the demons see how stupid they ever were to disbelieve God and turn their backs on him. And he's glorified in reverse. That God is glorified by the wisdom manifest in the church. Listen, the angels can see the power of God in creation. The angels can see the wrath of God at Mt. Sinai. The angels can see the love of God at Calvary, but God says they're going to see my wisdom in the church. That God could take diverse male, female, bond, free, Jew, Greek and he could melt down all the walls and blend them together in an indivisible oneness all one with himself. One with the father, one with the Son, one with the Spirit, one with every other believer that God could do that kind of miracle of salvation is a wonder beyond wonders of wisdom and causes the angelic host to give him glory.

And even the demons who would want to destroy the church can't destroy it. And their very frustration is a glory to God. Now people the angels are checking out the church. Did you know that? They're watching us. Because God told them to watch us. To see how wise he is. The more we fulfill God's plan, the more they praise God. Now if you think you're some puny little pusillitimus insignificant little dot down here, you're wrong. You by your life you by your ministry within the church, you by your relationship to other believers, can present a testimony to the very angels that will cause them to give God glory.

The angels are watching me and you. They have a very great influence. In fact 1 Peter 1:12 says, "This whole deal of salvation, the angles search into." You remember reading that. They're searching into it. In Luke 15:10 it says when one person is saved, the angels what? Rejoice. They're checking

it out. Do you know that they even watch this local church? In fact they're very concerned about the women in this church. They are very concerned. In 1 Corinthians 11, Verse 10, Paul says that "the woman ought to have authority on her head because of the angels." What are you saying there? Well you see in those days, a woman showed her submissiveness by her hair, remember that? He showed her submissiveness by her hair.

And he's saying the woman should have the kind of hair in that culture, our culture's a little different today but we have other ways of showing submissiveness, but "a woman should show her submissiveness in the church because of the angels." The angels are checking out the church to see if the women are submissive. Isn't just for the husband's benefit gals. The angels are checking it out. And when the angels see the beautiful harmony of leadership and submission, love in the church, unity in the church, men and women rightly related at a beautiful equality in Christ and yet distinct as God has designed them, they praise God for such wisdom.

When the angels look down and see a church where women are fighting for the same rights that men have, they have nothing for which to be thankful. There's no source of praise. So they are checking the church out. In 1 Timothy Chapter 5, Verse 21 he says, "when you discipline, discipline elderp before everybody, and rebuke them and I charge you to do this before the elect angels." The angels are watching the church discipline, the angels are watching the relationships in the church, the angels are watching to see who gets saved. The angels are looking at the whole operation. And they're even concerned for every individual. Hebrew 1:14 says that "Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be the heirs of salvation." For every believer, the angels are ministering and concerned and caring.

You say, well what are they going to find out looking at us? They're going to see the multi-colored, _____ the multi-colored wisdom of God. So God is the teacher, the universe is the classroom, the angels are the students, the church is the illustration and the lesson is wisdom. And when it's taught well by a church that is what it ought to be, the angels glorify God.

Beloved if you can't get your act together for your own sake, and you can't get your act together for somebody's else's sake in the church, could you at least get your act together for the angels sake so that they can glorify God? So we see the purpose, finally. The prisoner, the planning, the preaching, the purpose of the mystery and then at last the privileges of the mystery and we'll stop with this. The privileges of the mystery listen Paul came along preaching as the prisoner of the mystery. He told us about the plan of the mystery. Throughout the history of the church, men have been preaching this mystery. We know now the purpose of it.

And now Paul has a final word about the privilege. Do you know what it really means to be a part of this? Verse 12. "In whom Jesus Christ our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, the privilege of being in the

mystery is this. We can go walking right into the presence of the eternal God with boldness. Is that great? Can you imagine what this was to a Jew to hear this?

A Jew who believed that only once a year did anybody ever enter God's presence? The high priest would go in there, he'd hurry in and he'd hurry out. Nobody but nobody ever did that. And all of a sudden, Paul says, I want you to know it's a new day folks in the mystery it isn't like Israel of old; it isn't like the veil and the holy of holies, and the holy place and all of that stuff. It's now different. In the new mystery, the church, we all have instant access; we go with boldness and access with confidence into God's presence.

I don't know about you but it's great to know that God and I are on those terms, right? That's the privilege of the mystery. Full access, full confidence you won't be rejected. We have every right to go to him as a sympathetic high priest in a time of trouble and know that we shall find grace. Hebrews 4 says, "what privileges." And finally Paul closes this little last doctoral part in 13, he says, "wherefore." So listen, if the mystery is so wonderful and the privileges are so incredible, I desire that you faint not at my tribulations for you which is your glory. You see Paul was around preaching the mystery and being a prisoner of the mystery and unfolding the plan and trying to help fulfill the purpose and he was telling everybody the privileges and some of the Christians were sitting back saying, oh, poor Paul, he's always in jail.

And he says, look, when you understand this incredible truth, of what it is to be in the church and what privilege it is don't faint at my tribulation. It's worth it to get the message out. See? It's your glory I mean it's bringing glory to you, it's bringing you the very glory of God. Don't worry about me being a prisoner, don't faint because I'm going through all kinds of difficulty, it's worth it. It's worth it. And there we are right back at the servant's heart again, aren't we?

He always felt that way whatever it cost me to get you the message is a cheap price. Don't worry about me if I'm a prisoner, if I'm beaten, if I'm stoned, don't worry about me. Don't faint at my tribulation; just get the message. It's worth it. Do you feel that way? Are you willing to spend everything you have? Like he said to the Corinthians; are you willing to be spent to get somebody the message of the riches? Of the unsearchable riches? Are you willing at any price make sure everybody understands the fellowship, the dispensation, the stewardship of the church? Are you willing at any price to get him the word?

Are you willing to give, to pray, to go, to talk, to preach, to teach. Paul was. This mystery is good news people, good news. God calls on us to declare, now let's pray. What we really went over today, I don't know how we got full in so long. Father we thank you, for giving us the time to do that. For talking to us by your Spirit. We pray Lord that you would in a special way minister to our hearts personally in the application of the things we've studied and we'll praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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