

EPHESIANS: PRECISION THINKING FOR ACCURATE THEOLOGY

SESSION 12 | EPHESIANS 3:7-12

PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF THE MYSTERY | EPHESIANS 3:7-12

- Verses 7-8 –
 - Paul literally says he is a *deacon* of the Gospel. His service of the Gospel comes as a **gift of the grace of God**. While all people have the opportunity to believe, and all believers have the opportunity serve the Gospel, the wording here is unique to Paul and his calling as the apostle to the Gentiles.
 - Paul declares himself to be **least of all the saints** (Jewish believers) but nonetheless the one to **preach among the Gentiles**. This is not a false humility, but a true statement due to the fact that he was a persecutor of the saints long before becoming one.
 - When Paul speaks of the **unsearchable riches of Christ**, he is making reference to the mystery previously hidden (thus unsearchable).
 - The Greek is ἀνεξιχνίαστος [anexichniastos], the negated form of *ichnos*, which is a footprint or track. Ichology is the study of "traces" to determine information about animals or past situations.
 - If Paul says that this mystery is **unsearchable**, one wonders why so many Bible teachers find *traces* of it prior to Paul.
 - Why do so many make **unsearchable** mean *beyond ability to fully comprehend*? The word has a clear meaning AND it is clear in its context:
 - Paul uses the word **mystery** (something unsearchable) in vv. 3 and 9.
 - Paul says that this mystery **in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men** in v. 5.
 - Paul says that the mystery **from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God** in v. 9.
 - Yet still people want to remove the clear meaning of **unsearchable**.
 - Consider these translations:
 - NASB: *Unfathomable*
 - NLT: *endless treasures*
 - HCSB: *incalculable riches*
 - TEV: *infinite riches*
 - The Message: *things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches...*
- Verse 9 –
 - Paul's first role as the last Apostle to **preach among the Gentiles** the **riches of Christ** that could not previously have been preached (because they were **unsearchable**) (v. 8). His second role is to **make all...see what is the fellowship of the mystery**.
 - The word **fellowship** is κοινωμία [koinonia] which is koinos (to have things in common) with the suffix -ia, which is used to make an abstract noun out of an adjective (In English, often used with places, such as Columbia and with diseases such as malaria.)

- Paul's goal, therefore, is that we would **see** the *commonality* that is found in **the mystery**. Sadly, most Christians today are virtually ignorant of any kind of mystery having been given through Paul to our dispensation (and this ignorance filters through into their theology).
- Paul makes perfectly clear what he has previously said by saying this mystery had previously **been hid in God** and this hiding was **from the beginning of the world**, yet is now revealed in Paul.
- If there was a **mystery** that was **hid in God** but now has been revealed to Paul by revelation and Paul is preaching this mystery and wants us to have this mystery in common, then we should certainly recognize the newness of dispensation that happened with Paul and we should focus our Christian community and living around the mystery. If this is not true, then we should deny the truths of Ephesians 3 (and so many other writings of Paul).
- Verse 10 - Paul's work has a goal:
 - The goal *concerns* the **manifold wisdom of God**.
 - Literally, *many sided*.
 - Dispensationalism is the one theology that gives attention to the *many sided wisdom of God*. Other forms of theology focus solely on the unity of God's wisdom. While His wisdom has unity, that unity is only understood when the various *sides* of that wisdom are known.
 - The goal is *achieved* by **the church**.
 - Sadly (as noted in the previous verse), few in the church even see **the fellowship of the mystery**, let alone are they tools to make it known.
 - The goal *involves* the **principalities and power in heavenly places**.
 - If the church totally understood its role in today's world and the manner of God's wisdom expressed in this dispensation, it would be of value to the *rulers and authorities* of this world.
 - Since the church doesn't understand it, it has been as much of the problem (or more) than it has been of the solution to the world's problems.
- Verse 11 - The church age is in the **eternal purpose** of God, but not the previous revelation of God.
- Verse 12 –
 - In Christ we have both **boldness** and **access with confidence**.
 - **Boldness** is a speech word that is literally, "every word." That is, there is no need to hold back in what is said.
 - **Access** is from a word which means "to be led in front of." This access is *proven or tested*, which is the root word of the Greek word translated **confidence**.
 - Notice that these two advantages come **by the faith of him**. Notice that it is not *faith in Him*, but by *His faith*. The grammar is clear that the faith *belongs to* Jesus Christ.
 - ESV - *our faith in him* - adds *our faith* when the text says *the faith* and makes it *in him* rather than *of him*. Similar in NLT, TEV, *The Message*.
 - NIV - *through faith in him*. Similar in NKJV, HCSB,
 - NET - *because of Christ's faithfulness* - correct.