

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

Your life tells you that it's hopeless, that you're too weak, too scared, and if God does exist, He's not coming to help you. Jesus says, "Not only is your life far from hopeless, you're part of Me now. This means that everything I have is yours, including My right and privilege to walk into My Father's presence and ask for help. So even if you find yourself in prison, I can still give you a life of meaning and purpose. Look what I did with Paul."but do we believe Him?

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

God says, "There's no need to panic, no need to worry. You have a new life now. Walk with Me; follow My voice and I'll show you what I can do with you and your life."

Chapter 3

3:1-2, Paul started to pray for the Ephesians, but interrupted himself. We know this because he abruptly switches topics in the next verse and 3:14 begins the exact same way as 3:1. Thus, 3:14 represents what Paul was going to say but he stopped himself to explain what he meant by calling himself the "prisoner of Christ Jesus." The last thing Paul wanted was for the Ephesians to think that he's blaming them for his current Roman imprisonment (cf. 3:13). In fact, Paul wanted them to know how he saw his imprisonment: he may be imprisoned by Rome but he's not a Roman prisoner; he's a prisoner of Jesus Christ. That is, when Paul thought of himself, he didn't see a prisoner but someone God chose to gift with a very special position and mission (3:7-8).

That is, the reason Paul ended up in Rome, the thing that set all of this in motion was the position God gave him: apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9). From that moment on, Paul would have a life of suffering, including his current suffering, which was a nearly three-year ordeal that almost took his life twice (Acts 27:13-28:6). And how did Paul see this? As God's gift! (3:7).

3:3-7, then Paul started talking about a mystery God revealed to him, a mystery that had not been revealed ever before. It had only been revealed to His New Testament apostles and prophets. The Old Testament prophets weren't aware of this mystery which involved the Gentiles. From the Old Testament Scriptures we knew that Gentiles would be blessed somehow in Abraham (Genesis 12:3), that Israel's Messiah would also be their light (Isaiah 42:6), that Israel's Messiah would be their salvation too, but nothing else was known beyond this concerning the Gentiles. And Paul says that he's already written about this mystery in brief form. He's referring to 1:9-11, in fact, the entire first two chapters of Ephesians reveal just what role the Gentiles would play in Messiah's future Kingdom and how God brought it all about: Israel's Messiah will rule over the world and Gentiles would get to participate in His ruling-inheritance. Through Jesus' death, Jews and Gentiles are no longer separated by God's Law. Instead, Jesus united both of them to each other and more importantly to Himself; they are in Him and He is in them (2:4-10, 13, 15, 21-22).

This made all of them children of God with every privilege that this implies and more. That is, they get unlimited access to God, to His love, comfort and power. But they're also the house where God dwells. That is, they're being built *together-with* Jesus into the holy temple where God dwells; they are the permanent home where God resides!! This is the mystery: Gentiles would be *together-with* heirs, *together-with* members of Christ's Body, and *together-with* partakers of God's promise in Christ through the Gospel (however, this doesn't replace Israel or take away their Abrahamic Covenant promises, which belong to Israel alone).

This is the gift God gave Paul, to proclaim this remarkable Goodnews to the Gentiles. But knowing how incredibly difficult this mission was going to be for Paul, God also gave him the power to carry it out. When we read Acts 9-28, we see just how much God showered Paul with His love, comfort and power. He went through hell, but God was right there by His side not only empowering him to endure his suffering but enabling him to perform miracles.

3:8-13, Paul didn't believe in the slightest that he was worthy of God's gift; he knew just how horrible and broken he was before the Lord met him. Every time Paul gave his testimony he stated just how wicked he was (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-5; Galatians 1:13; 1 Timothy 1:13). This is why he makes up a word to describe himself in comparison to all other Christians: he calls himself the "leasterist." He couldn't believe that he got to preach the incomprehensible riches of Christ. Paul got to reveal to the world this mystery that God kept hidden from the beginning of time and from the entire universe. It was a mystery that was hidden in God, therefore, no one knew of it. Since He created the entire universe through Christ and wanted to hide something from us, He could and did.

And when God chose to reveal it, it astounded Satan and his demons. God's brilliance was revealed by His unveiling of this mystery. Why? Because Satan and his demons thought they had won when they united Jews and Gentiles against God's holy Son and crucified Him. Instead of winning, Satan and his demons became the instrument that God used to accomplish His eternal purpose in His Son. Instead of God condemning all of mankind to hell and losing reign over this world, God, through His Son Jesus Christ, brought everything under His control and blessed us in the process not only by permanently uniting Jews and Gentiles to His holy Son and allowing them to participate in His Son's inheritance and victory but by allowing wicked sinners like us the right and privilege of a son to come boldly and confidently to Him in prayer! This is why Paul closed this passage by telling the Ephesians not to feel bad about his imprisonment: God used it to their glory, i.e., to bless them tremendously in Christ.

Are these things actually true? Did God actually give us all this? Is His love, comfort, and power really available to us now? Yes.....how a woman helps her friend see the love, comfort and power of God during a moment when she actually thought God was cursing her!

III. Conclusion

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles -- if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery....., which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.