

A Study Of The Book Of Ephesians

4 – The Mystery Of Transformation

Ephesians 3

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— ²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men and women in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of God's power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰God's intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to God's eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

A Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the God, ¹⁵from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of God's glorious riches you may be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to the One who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God's power that is at work within us, ²¹to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What captured your attention
- What is the **mystery** Paul is writing about?
- How has God revealed God's love for us?
- How, and to whom, have you expressed the greatness of God's love?
- How will you act on this?

BACKGROUND

Paul writes of his commission to preach what he calls "*the mystery of Christ.*" To Paul, "*mystery*" is something that had been hidden, not yet made known, but now was revealed to him so that he would share it with everyone. And what was the mystery that Paul was to share? He alluded to in the 2nd chapter of his letter, where he stated that through the Gospel of Christ all people are invited to share in the blessings that God had earlier revealed only to the Jewish nation.

Paul had been accustomed to dividing the world into two categories: Jews and Gentiles. Jews, were circumcised – an outward symbol of their special chosen status. Gentiles were uncircumcised. The Jews were heirs of God's covenant promises, the Gentiles were not. But in chapter 2, Paul proclaimed that the blood of Christ destroyed that dividing wall and made everyone – Jew and Gentile one in Christ.

This was a radical concept. The Jewish leaders didn't appreciate this teaching as it challenged their privileged, superior status. It is no surprise that Jewish leaders reacted against this kind of teaching.

At the start of today's Scripture reading we find that Paul has been arrested and imprisoned because of the stand he took for the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the sight of God.