

EPHESIANS: LIVING IN ALIGNMENT WITH OUR HIGH CALLING

Part I: Our High Calling In Christ, Ephesians 1:1-3:21

H. God's Gracious Ministry Of Paul For Us In The Church (Ephesians 3:7-13)

I. Introduction

- A. Back in Ephesians 2:7, Paul had written that we believers in the Church "will be an eternal display of the grace of God," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ephesians 2:7.
- B. Viewing God's gracious calling of the Apostle Paul for our behalf as Gentile Christians in the Church era in Ephesians 3:7-13 provides a small glimpse of the vast extent of God's grace toward us Gentile believers, what we need to view to give added cause of our great thanksgiving and praise to the Lord (as follows):

II. God's Gracious Ministry Of Paul For Us In The Church, Ephesians 3:7-13.

- A. Paul explained to his Gentile Christian readers the great ministry God had given him, Ephesians 3:7-12:
 - 1. The Apostle Paul wrote that he was made a minister by God according to the gift of God's grace to make known the previously hidden truth that Gentile believers would be made fellow heirs and members of the same body of the Church as were Jewish believers in Christ, Ephesians 3:6-7a.
 - 2. This gift of ministry was given to Paul by the working of God's power (Ephesians 3:7b) though Paul viewed himself the very least of all the sanctified believers in Christ, Ephesians 3:8. Considering how God had converted and equipped Paul for such a ministry is itself a testimony of God's great grace:
 - a. Paul had been heavily involved in the movement of the Sanhedrin in the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church, as the official witnesses had laid their clothes down at his feet, Acts 7:58.
 - b. Not only had Paul consented to Stephen's death, but he had ravaged the Church, entering house after house of Christians and dragging off both men and women and committing them to prison, Acts 8:3 ESV.
 - c. Continuing to breath out threats and murder against Christians, Paul had then acquired official letters from the Jewish high priest in Jerusalem to synagogue officials in Damascus to go to find and bind Christians there and bring them back bound to Jerusalem, Acts 9:1-2 ESV.
 - d. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:13 ESV that he had then been a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent opponent to the believers in the Church.
 - e. Yet, Christ had appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, He had converted him, and given him the role of not only supporting the Church he had once tried to destroy, but revealing the previously hidden great truth that Gentile believers were now the people of God with saved Jews, Acts 9:3-16; Ephesians 3:6-7.
 - f. So great was this conversion of Paul from spiritual darkness to spiritual light that God had made him an example of God's perfect patience for others who would believe on Christ for eternal life, 1 Timothy 1:16.
 - 3. This very Paul was directed of God to make all men see what was the fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ in the previously hidden institution of the Church, which truth had been hidden in God from the beginning of the world by the One Who had created all things by Christ Jesus, Ephesians 3:9.
 - 4. As the result of this ministry by Paul of revealing this great but previously hidden truth, even angelic beings would learn of the manifold wisdom of God in His plan for the Church in accord with the eternal purpose which He had purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, Ephesians 3:10-11.
 - 5. Paul then asserted that all of us believers, Jews and even Gentiles alike with him now have boldness and access to God with confidence through our faith in Him, Ephesians 3:12.
- B. Therefore, Paul asked his believing Gentile readers in the Church not to lose heart over what he was suffering for them as a prisoner of Rome, for his ministry was for their glory in God's elevating them to be fellow heirs with Jewish believers in the same body, Ephesians 3:13. Paul had suffered great hatred from his countrymen for teaching that Gentile believers were now fellow heirs with Jewish believers in the Church, which hatred had led to his imprisonment (cf. Acts 22:21-25:12). However, so wonderful was the spiritual union of Jew and Gentile in Christ that Paul gladly bore such sufferings for the sake of fellow Gentile believers in Christ.

Lesson: *The abundant grace of God that took a Hebrew man in Paul to convert him from being the Church's greatest human foe to its greatest revealer of God's formerly hidden truth of the union in fellowship of Jew and Gentile in Christ, which truth was a revelation of the wisdom of God to both men and angels, was such great grace, it should cause us Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus to be forever thanking and praising God for His grace to us!*

Application: *May we glorify God for His great grace in converting and using Paul to reveal our blessings in Christ.*