

(1) For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles --- assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

(7) Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of His power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that though the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.

Think on these things:

- 1) Paul’s “title” was that he was known as the apostle to the **Gentiles** (v.1).
- 2) Let’s explore “how the mystery was made known to me by revelation.” Read Acts 9:1-6, 13-16; Romans 11:11-13; and Galatians 1:11-17 and 2:7-8. As a Jewish Pharisee, what was Paul’s initial activity in relationship to Christians? What caused him to change? After the revelation, how was Paul’s life different?

Paul zealously persecuted Christians violently as a Jewish Pharisee, trying to destroy God’s Church, and putting many in prison --- some to death. Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus and confronted him on his persecution ways. Later Jesus taught him the Gospel and appointed him as the Apostle to the Gentiles. From then on, Paul became the defender of Christians, preacher (evangelist) of Jesus’ Gospel, and served as a missionary.

- 3) Now let’s understand “mystery” in the context of God’s plan. According to v.5, did anyone else discern this mystery before Paul? Why or why not? V.6 actually explains what the mystery is. What is it?

Why or why not discerned? – **No, no one before Paul grasped this mystery (a new revelation) because God did not reveal it to previous generations.**

What is the mystery? – **Through the Gospel, Gentiles have become fellow-heirs with Jews, are included as members in the Church, and share in all God’s promises available through Jesus.**

- 4) God's "gift of grace" (v.7) to Paul was to make him a minister and an apostle. Skim 1 Corinthians 12:1, 8-11, 27-30. Do you know what your spiritual gift is? We will look at spiritual gifts more closely in chapter 4.

This is a teaser question for a future lesson, however it allows the teacher to understand how much the members understand how God has gifted them for service in the Church.

- 5) Why do you think Paul calls himself the "very least of all the saints" in v.8?

He was keenly aware that before he became a Christian, he had ferociously persecuted Christians in and around Jerusalem, including putting them to death. He felt undeserving of God's grace!

- 6) What two purposes does Paul identify in vs. 8-9 for God giving him his "gift of grace?"

- 1) To preach to the Gentiles the Gospel of Christ.**
- 2) To present God's mysterious plans to unite Gentile believers with Jewish believers.**

- 7) God's plan has an additional purpose beyond the salvation of mankind. In Christ Jesus an eternal purpose has been realized (v.11). Who is the audience for God showing his manifold wisdom through The Church (v.10)? See 1 Peter 1:8-12.

The audience is "rulers and authorities" in heavenly places. God's wisdom in Christ and His amazing plan of salvation, the Gospel, was to be entrusted to the Church for the salvation of mankind, an act of grace unknown to the authorities on high because God kept it hidden until this time (age) of revelation. It became known when Jesus was glorified as the risen Savior.

- 8) Besides our salvation, what is another important thing that Jesus has done for us (v.12, see also Hebrews 10:12-14, 19-23)?

Jesus opened the door for direct, full access to God without fear of reprisal or rebuke. We are allowed to enter the holy place in prayer, with confidence.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: