

PAUL'S DETOUR, PT. 2; EPH. 3:3b-6 (Ed O'Leary)

THIS A.M., ~ WE ARE CONTINUING OUR LOOK AT 3:1-13, ~ WHICH WE ARE calling "Paul's Detour." ~ Since 3-wk gap, ~ we'll do a little more in-depth rev. to bring up to speed.

AS NOTED, ~ IN 3:1, ~ PAUL BEGINS TO PRAY FOR THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS, ~ THEN abruptly digresses, ~ or takes a detour, ~ that lasts through vs. 13. ~ Then resumes in vs. 14.

▶▶ This detour, ~ as we discussed, ~ consists of two parts.

▷▷ In **verses 1-6**, ~ Paul takes a detour into a description of "the mystery of Christ."

↳↳ As we noted the last time, ~ Paul will define "the mystery" in **verse 6**, ~ and we'll get to that today. ~ Suffice it to say at this time ~ that "the mystery" has to do with a plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation.

▷▷ And then in **verses 7-13**, ~ Paul focuses on the gospel and his role in preaching it.

LAST TIME, ~ WE BEGAN LOOKING AT THE FIRST PART OF PAUL'S DETOUR BY ZEROING in on **verses 1-3a**.

▶▶ Paul started in **verse 1** by referring to himself as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus."

▷▷ From a strictly human level, ~ Paul was in Rome, ~ a prisoner of Caesar, ~ awaiting trial before Nero.

▷▷ But Paul refused to look at things on a human level. ~ He looked at everything totally from a spiritual level. ~ Correct perspective for all believers

▷▷ Paul knew and understood that Jesus is in control of history ~ and all of life ~ not Caesar. ~ It only looked like Nero was in charge.

↳↳ As noted, ~ this is a tremendous lesson for us, ~ who sometimes become worried and anxious about what the political powers-that-be are doing in the world today.

→→ Contrary to appearances, ~ Jesus is in control ~ not anything or anyone else.

▷▷ And since Paul knew Jesus was in control, ~ he most likely also knew and understood ~ that the only reason he was in prison ~ **was that Jesus allowed it ~ and had a purpose for it.**

↳↳ Here we said, ~ 2 imp. lessons ~ 1st, no one ~ 2nd, purpose

▷▷ Then in vs. 1b, ~ Paul noted that his imprisonment was "for the sake of you Gentiles."

↳↳ I.e., ~ as we said, ~ Paul was incarcerated because of his special ministry to the Gentiles ~ and also for the purpose of benefitting the Gentiles.

▶▶ After that ~ he unexpectedly begins his detour.

▷▷ He first, ~ in verse 2, ~ politely reminds his original readers that they had heard about his responsibility to make the "mystery of Christ," ~ i.e., ~ God's plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation, ~ fully known to the Gentiles. ~ As Col. 1:25.

↳↳ Notice, ~ "fully known." ~ It was not enough simply for Paul to win them to Christ and form them into local assemblies.

→→ He was also to teach them about their wonderful position in Christ as members of the body, ~ sharing God's grace equally with the Jews.

↳↳ Read and listen carefully to Jesus as He gives us the Great Commission, ~ Matt. 28:19-20a.

→→ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, ~ baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ~ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. ~ Too often

▷▷ Back to Eph. 3. ~ Subsequently, ~ in verse 3a, ~ Paul introduced a second thing that they had heard about. ~ And that is ~ God gave the knowledge of "the mystery of Christ" to Paul by direct revelation.

NOW, ~ AS WE REMARKED, ~ IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH this is a detour, ~ we should not look at this section as unimportant.

▶▶ Since "All Scripture is breathed out by God," ~ everything Paul wrote in this detour in Ephesians ~ is important, ~ is supposed to be there, ~ and is exactly what God wants us to know.

▷▷ And this means that it is incumbent upon believers, ~ those who claim Jesus as their Savior and Lord, ~ to study this detour ~ ¶¶

↳↳ and to try to understand it as best we can, ~ even though, ~ undeniably, ~ this section is heavy in theology ~ and extremely hard to comprehend.

▷▷ It is also incumbent upon us to apply the truth of Paul's detour to our lives. ¶¶ 2/9

AND THAT BRINGS US UP TO SPEED.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL FINISH UP THE 1ST PART OF PAUL'S DETOUR BY EXAMINING verses 3b-6.

IN VERSE 3b, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "AS I HAVE WRITTEN BRIEFLY."

PAUL IS REFERRING TO "THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST," ~ WHICH HE JUST MENTIONED IN verses 2-3a.

▶▶ Simply put, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "I have already written a little about the mystery of Christ earlier in this letter."

▷▷ Since, ~ as we noted, ~ "the mystery of Christ" has to do with a plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ most likely, ~ Paul is pointing back to 2:11-22, ~ in which the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation is the special topic.

IN VERSE 4, ~ PAUL WRITES, ~ "WHEN YOU READ THIS, ~ [I.E., ~ THE PREVIOUS paragraph, ~ 2:11-22], ~ you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ."

BASICALLY, ~ TO PARAPHRASE, ~ PAUL IS SAYING HERE, ~ "WHEN YOU READ THE previous paragraph, ~ you can see that I truly understand the mystery of Christ."

▶▶ Paul is not bragging here. ~ We have already seen that God gave Paul the knowledge of "the mystery of Christ" by direct revelation.

▷▷ Therefore, ~ the implication is that this understanding of "the mystery" that Paul possesses came from God.

▶▶ Later, ~ in verse 8, ~ Paul refers to himself as "the very least of all the saints."

▶▶ So I suspect that perhaps Paul expected us to recognize ~ that, ~ even though he doesn't spell it out, ~ this understanding he had ~ came from God, ~ when God revealed "the mystery" to him.

▶▶ The true servant of God would never take the credit that belongs to God

HERE IN VERSE 4 PAUL SAYS, ~ "WHEN YOU READ THE PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH, ~ YOU can see that I truly understand the mystery of Christ."

▶▶ God gave Paul the knowledge and understanding he needed to carry out his ministry to make the mystery of Christ fully know to the Gentiles. ¶¶ 3/9

▶▶ There is an application here for us regarding our spiritual gifts and ministries.

▷▷ As we noted in the past, ~ according to 1 Pet. 4:10, ~ each believer has been given at least one spiritual gift.

▷▷ In Eph. 2:10, ~ Paul said that God has works of ministry for us to accomplish.

▷▷ And now, ~ in Eph. 3:4, ~ we see, ~ by way of application, ~ that God will give us, ~ along with our spiritual gifts, ~ the knowledge and understanding to carry out those ministries that He has prepared for us to accomplish.

▷▷ This means that we cannot get out of the ministries that God has called us to by saying that we are not adequate for the task.

↪↪ Moses tried that. ~ Ex. 4:10-12. ~ "But Moses said to the Lord, ~ 'Oh, ~ my Lord, ~ I am not eloquent, ~ either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, ~ but I am slow of speech and of tongue.' ~ Then the Lord said to him, ~ 77

→→ 'Who has made man's mouth? ~ Who makes him mute, ~ or deaf, ~ or seeing, ~ or blind? ~ Is it not I, ~ the Lord? ~ Now therefore go, ~ and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'

▷▷ How encouraging. ~ God does not give us works of ministry and then leave us on our own. ~ Gifts, ~ knowledge, ~ and understanding

↪↪ Paul an example

BACK TO VERSE 4, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "WHEN YOU READ THE PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH, ~ YOU can see that I truly understand the mystery of Christ."

▶▶ The Greek word translated "of Christ" most likely refers to Jesus being the source of "the mystery."

▷▷ We see here that, ~ like every part of our salvation, ~ this "mystery" originates with God and not humanity.

▶▶ And as we noted before, ~ the phrase "the mystery of Christ" has to do with a plan for the inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation.

▶▶ So basically, ~ to para., ~ Paul saying, ~ "when you read the previous paragraph, ~ you can see that I truly understand the plan regarding the Gentiles, ~ of which Christ is the author."

WE HAVE COME ACROSS THIS WORD "MYSTERY" BEFORE, ~ IN EPH. 1:9. 77 4/9

▶▶ In Scripture, ~ the word does not refer to a secret that God is unwilling to tell ~ or to something so obscure that it could not be understood even if told.

▶▶ In Scripture, ~ "mystery" refers in a general sense to God's gracious disclosure to his people ~ of something hidden by Him for a time, ~ that we could not possibly know unless He makes it known.

▶▶ Now, ~ we should say that there may be hints about these things in the OT, ~ e.g., ~ the gospel . . . ~ there may be hints, ~ but we could not fully know these things unless God makes them fully known.

IN VERSE 5, ~ PAUL SHOWS US THAT THIS IS WHAT "MYSTERY" MEANS.

FOR CONTEXT & HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND, ~ WE'LL INCLUDE paraphrase of verse 4.

▶▶ "When you read the previous paragraph, ~ you can see that I truly understand 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."

▶▶ People in former generations didn't know this plan regarding the Gentiles. ~~ It was hidden by God in ages past. ~~ And it was not made known until God the Holy Spirit revealed it.

▷▷ The implication being that we could not possibly know it unless God made it known.

PAUL SAYS THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS NOW REVEALED THIS HIDDEN PLAN regarding the Gentiles to Jesus' "holy apostles and prophets." ~~ NT

▶▶ And they in turn, ~ have passed the revelation on to us, ~ through God's written word, ~ as, ~ e.g., ~ we see Paul doing here in Ephesians.

IN VERSE 6a, ~ PAUL DEFINES WHAT THIS PLAN FOR THE GENTILES IS THAT Jesus originated.

PAUL WRITES, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "This mystery [i.e., ~ this plan for the Gentiles of which Christ is the author] ~ is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, ~ members of the same body, ~ and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

AS WE CAN SEE, ~ "THE MYSTERY" CONTAINS THREE ELEMENTS. ¶¶ 5/9

1ST, ~ "THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST" MEANS THAT BELIEVING GENTILES ARE "FELLOW heirs" [i.e., ~ with our Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ].

THIS PLAN FOR THE GENTILES THAT JESUS ORIGINATED MEANS THAT ALL believers share equally ~ in the inheritance of the saints.

▶▶I.e., ~ All believers receive the inheritance that God has guaranteed to believers.

▶▶Recall, ~ that one of the blessings of our salvation is an inheritance. ~ In Eph. 1:11a, ~ Paul said that we have obtained an inheritance.

▷▷And in 1 Pet. 1:3-4, ~ Peter notes that obtaining an inheritance is one of the results of God causing us to be born again.

↳↳*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ~ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ~ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, ~ reserved in heaven for you." *NASB

▶▶And Paul says here in 3:6a, ~ all blood-bought believers share equally in this inheritance of the saints

▶▶And that my fellow believing Gentiles, ~ is exciting, ~ something to be emphasized, ~ something to be celebrated.

▷▷It is also something to be extremely grateful and to praise God for.

BACK TO VERSE 6a, ~ THE SECOND COMPONENT OF "THE MYSTERY" IS THAT believing Gentiles are "members of the same body."

I.E., ~ THE BODY OF CHRIST, ~ THE CHURCH.

▶▶Most, ~ if not all, ~ of us are familiar with this metaphor. ~ And we talked about it earlier in Eph. 1:23.

▷▷In Rom. 12:4-8 and 1 Cor. 12:12-31, ~ Paul goes into detail about the church being the body of Christ.

▶▶Here in verse 6a, ~ Paul says, ~ believing Gentiles, ~ along with believing Jews, ~ have the privilege of being members of the body of Christ, ~ the church, ~ the new class of humanity.

NOW, ~ THIS MAY NOT SOUND OVERLY REVOLUTIONARY TO US. ↴ 6/9

▶▶But if you'll recall, ~ when we began looking at 2:11-22, ~ we said that it's hard for us to understand what Paul is saying because, ~ **I think it's safe to say, ~ that the universal church is largely Gentile now.**

▶▶However, ~ when Paul wrote Ephesians, ~ what he said was ground-breaking, ~ especially since he was a Jew writing this.

▶▶Recall, ~ there was great hatred and a barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

▷▷Remember too, ~ Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope; ~ **and that they said the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of Hell.**

↳↳Furthermore, ~ Israel was God's chosen people.

▶▶To make Gentile believers fellow heirs, ~ and to make us part of the same body ~ and to make us fellow **"partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus,"** ~ was indeed ground-breaking.

▷▷And it would have sounded like heresy to many Jewish readers, ~ jolting their ethnic sensitivities.

▶▶But that's exactly what God has done. ~ God has opened the door of salvation to us, ~ Gentiles by birth.

▷▷As Paul said in Eph. 2:13, ~ **"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off ~ [i.e., ~ believing Gentiles] ~ have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

As we noted, ~ because of ~ and thanks to ~ what Christ Jesus has done, ~ believing Gentiles now have a relationship with the one true God.

▷▷And that my fellow believing Gentiles, ~ is exciting, ~ something to be emphasized, ~ something to be celebrated.

↳↳It is also something to be extremely grateful and to praise God for.

BACK ONE MORE TIME TO VERSE 6a, ~ THE THIRD COMPONENT OF "THE mystery" is that believing Gentiles are fellow "partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

SIMPLY PUT, ~ BELIEVING GENTILES ARE EQUAL SHARERS OF ALL OF THE BLESSINGS of salvation provided through Jesus.

▶▶All the blessings that we have been discussing, ~ so there's really no need to go into detail about the nature of these blessings since that's what we've been doing right along. **⇓⇓ 7/9**

▷▷ In fact, ~ this seems to be a good summary statement for all of [chapters 1-3](#), ~ in which, ~ as we noted when we began Ephesians, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Paul spells out for us ~ "the breadth and length and height and depth" ~ of our salvation and many of its accompanying blessings ~ ¶¶

→→ that God has brought about for us ~ and given us ~ through Jesus.

▶▶ And that my fellow believing Gentiles, ~ is exciting, ~ something to be emphasized, ~ something to be celebrated.

▷▷ It is also something to be extremely grateful and to praise God for.

IN VERSE 6b, ~ PAUL ADDS THE PHRASE "THROUGH THE GOSPEL."

GRAMMATICALLY, ~ THE PHRASE "THROUGH THE GOSPEL" MODIFIES ALL THREE components.

▶▶ So we could paraphrase all of [verse 6](#) like this: ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "This mystery is that, ~ through the gospel, ~ the Gentiles are fellow heirs, ~ members of the same body, ~ and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

▶▶ Also, ~ "through the gospel" is emphasized.

▷▷ Basically, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "through the gospel ~ and through the gospel alone, ~ [i.e., ~ only by hearing the gospel preached and believing it] ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Gentiles become "fellow heirs with all the saints, ~ fellow members of the body of Christ, ~ and fellow partakers of the blessings of salvation provided through Jesus."

▶▶ Of course, ~ the gospel refers to the good news that Christ Jesus has provided salvation for lost humanity.

▷▷ In [1 Cor. 15:3-4](#), ~ Paul summarizes the good news.

↳↳ "For I delivered to you as of first importance ~ [i.e., ~ as most important] ~ what I also received: ~ ~ ¶¶

→→ that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures ~ [or, ~ just as the Scriptures said], ~ that he was buried, ~ that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures ~ [or, ~ just as the Scriptures said]." ¶¶ 8/9

▷▷ And in [Acts 4:12](#), ~ using different words, ~ Peter also summarizes the gospel. ~~
Speaking of Jesus he says, ~ "And there is salvation in no one else, ~ for there is no other
name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

↪↪ God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

▶▶ It is through hearing and believing the gospel, ~ hearing and believing the good news that
Christ Jesus has provided salvation for lost humanity, ~ and through the gospel alone, ~
through this good news alone, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that a person becomes a fellow heir with all the saints, ~ a fellow member of the body
of Christ, ~ and a fellow partaker of the blessings of salvation provided through Jesus.

CONCLUSION.

MY FELLOW BELIEVING GENTILES, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ God has made us fellow heirs with all the saints, ~ fellow members of the body of Christ,
~ and fellow partakers of the blessings of salvation provided through Jesus.

▶▶ And that my fellow believing Gentiles, ~ is exciting, ~ something to be emphasized, ~
something to be celebrated.

▷▷ It is also something to be extremely grateful and to praise God for.

▶▶ "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb ~ be blessing and honor and glory and
might forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13b)

LET'S PRAY ~ 9/9