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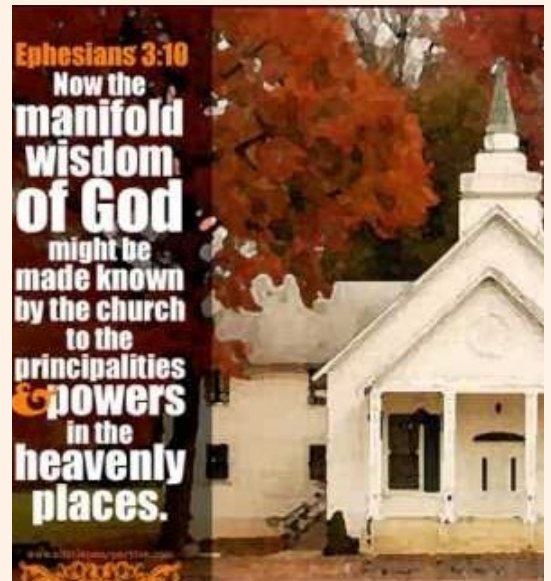
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Made Known by the Church

“To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heaven-

ly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Eph. 3:8-13



We will conclude chapter 3 of Ephesians in this study. We also will be concluding the doctrinal or philosophical foundation portion of the book that describes who we are in Christ. This first section of Ephesians deals with the “why” for the practical principles that Paul will address in the last three chapters. Why should we walk in unity? Why should we put off the old man and put on the new man? Why should husbands love their wives and wives submit to their husbands? It is because of who we are becoming in Christ Jesus. It is because we, as the church, are to make known the manifold wisdom of God even to principalities and powers in the heavenly places. It is because we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

The Humility of Paul

Paul describes himself as less than the least of all the saints. His former life in persecuting the church is forgiven but not completely forgotten. There were lessons to be learned from his mistakes. Being wrong, making mistakes should lead us to humility. Paul wrote to the Philippians (Phil. 3:3-7):

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

It is so tempting to have confidence in the flesh. The world’s standards are contrary to our spiritual worship to

God, and yet we find it very difficult to resist the great pressure to conform to the world. The world exults in a big house, a flashy car, a big salary and all the pride and prejudice that go along with these things. Jesus taught, "Let him who is the greatest among you be the servant of all." That is a hard lesson to learn.

Paul found the pearl of great price and he sold out to obtain it.

Paul catalogs all his reasons to have gloried in the flesh, in his worldly possessions and position, but he counted it all loss to gain Christ. Paul found the pearl of great price and he sold out to obtain it. If Paul had remained in his former position and power, he may have been able to use his influence to give people favor in the eyes of the established powers. He might have been able to give those who sought it, power, position, and wealth. But all of this is worthless in comparison to what Paul is now able to give people: the unsearchable riches of Christ, the salvation of the soul, eternal life!

Made Known by the Church

Who are the ones that are to see the fellowship of the mystery? We know that the mystery is the fact that Jew and Gentile are being reconciled to God in one body, the church. Therefore, this which had been hidden in God from the beginning of the ages is now to be made known by the church. The church embodies God's manifold wisdom.

What is meant by the principalities and powers in the heavenly places? Burton Coffman offers this commentary on these verses:

The fact of the gospel's promulgation upon earth being, in some manner, for the purpose of "making known" to "principalities and powers in the heavenly places" God's manifold wisdom has not been satisfactorily explained; at least, this student of the Scriptures has not seen any

satisfactory explanation of it. We shall take a look at some of the teachings people have allegedly found in this verse: John Locke: The governments and powers in the heavenly places are the Jewish religious leaders. MacKnight: They are the different orders of the angels in heaven. Calvin, Hodge, Grosheide and Lenski thought this refers to the good angels in heaven. A. T. Robertson understood the reference as to "evil powers or fallen angels, exclusively. Such variety of opinions suggests that the true interpretation might lie in a different direction altogether. In Ephesians 3:9, as already noted, Paul gave the purpose of gospel preaching to be that of making "all men see." Ephesians 3:10 could be nothing more than a dramatic, rhetorical burst of eloquent hyperbole, having much the same meaning as if he had written: We shall shout the gospel message to the highest heavens and extol the glory of the church as the demonstration of God's manifold wisdom to the highest beings in the universe! This view has one thing in common with those already cited - it may be wrong; but at least it makes as much sense as anything else at hand on the subject. Certainly, the whole subject of the impact of the gospel of Christ upon creations above and beyond our own human creation, of which so little is known, and concerning which God has not given us very much information, lies totally beyond the exploration projected for this series of commentaries.

The whole plan of God from the beginning in sending Jesus into the world to be crucified and then to rise from the dead results in the establishment of his church, which Jesus said the gates of hades would not prevail against. No doubt, what Jesus meant was that even his death would not thwart the establishment of his church in the world. There are some who believe that the church is just a substitute that God had to provide because he was not able to establish the kingdom during Christ's first advent into the world. But as we have

noticed in our study, the church, the kingdom, the family of God, the dwelling place or building of God, and the body of Christ are all one and the same thing. They are the same group of people, the redeemed, and they include both Jew and Gentile. It is through this body, the church, that the manifold wisdom of God is made known.

What is the meaning of “manifold” in this passage? *Strong’s Concordance*

4182 *polypoikilos* Phonetic Spelling: (pol-oo-poy'-kil-os) (an adjective, derived from 4183 / *polys*, "much in number, many" and 4164 / *poikilos*, "many diverse manifestations") – properly, *ultra-diverse*, with multitudinous expressions (facets).

Strong’s NT 4182: πολυποίκιλος πολυποίκιλος, πολυποικιλον (πολύς and ποικίλος); 1. much-variegated; marked with a great variety of colors: of cloth or a painting; φαρεα, Euripides, Iph. T.1149; στέφανον πολυποικιλον άνθεων, Eubulus ap Athen. 15, p. 679 d. 2. much varied, manifold: σοφία του Θεου, manifesting itself in a great variety of forms, Ephesians 3:10; Theophil. ad Autol. 1, 6; όργή, Sibylline Oracles 8, 411; λόγος, the Orphica, hymn. 61, 4, and by other writings with other nouns.

The manifold wisdom of God is seen in many things. We see it in creation. We see it in his word. We see it in the lives of faithful men and women. As Proverbs 9:10 proclaims, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” In this passage God’s manifold wisdom is made known by the church to all, even principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Do Not Lose Heart

Paul reminds us that God’s eternal purpose is being accomplished in Christ Jesus. Our faith in Christ gives us boldness and access and confi-

dence. Since all these things are so, Paul encourages the Ephesians not to lose heart at his tribulations. Again, Paul says this is his glory to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and to suffer for the sake of God’s eternal purpose in the church. We see what high esteem that Paul has for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can we afford to hold the church in any less esteem? Paul writes (Eph. 3:14-21):

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

We see what high esteem that Paul has for the church...

A Prayer for the Ephesians

Paul had begun to finish this prayer back in Eph. 1:1, but he interrupted it to talk about the great mystery of the gospel and the church’s role in making known God’s plan of redemption. He now returns to the words “for this reason.” The reason is all that Paul had been talking about. The middle wall of partition being broken down and now both Jew and Gentile were being built together upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with

Jesus Christ as the chief corner stone.

Paul bows before God from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named. This includes Jew and Gentile and even angels. In Christ both the earthly and heavenly realms are made one. We may not be together physically, but we are one spiritually. This is true even of believers here on earth who live in different parts of the world.

His prayer is that all believers may be:

Strengthened in the inner man – the Psalmist exhorts us: “Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!” (Psa. 27:14)

Paul admonishes Timothy: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1:7)

The Lord operates through his spirit that indwells us and by faith Christ dwells in our hearts. Christ dwelling in Christian hearts is one and the same thing as the Spirit's dwelling in them. The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:23); and here the great result of the "indwelling Christ" is that of the Christian's being "rooted and grounded in love." (Coffman)

What does the width and length and depth and height refer to? Beare thought it was "truth. Lipscomb believed it was the love of Christ; Adam Clarke considered it to be the "church of God"; MacKnight saw in this a comparison of the church with the dimensions of the temple of Diana; the early "church fathers referred these words to the cross. From all this, it is perfectly evident that "Since Paul purposely omitted all definition, leaving the phrase in absolute generality, no answer can be perfectly satisfactory." Perhaps if we were to cite all of these possible meanings and were privileged to ask the apostle which one is correct, he might very well answer, "Why all of them, of course!" Of all the things mentioned as the possi-

ble object of these words, people are unable to know the infinite dimensions of them; but Christ in our hearts can help us to understand how infinitely above people are the things of God. (Coffman)

Paul refers to God's power at work in us. He writes to the Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13) Paul is not just talking here about winning the Olympics and accomplishing some great earthly task. He is talking about the ability to persevere in doing God's will for our lives.

In Phil. 4:11-12 Paul had just said, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

God's main interest in those activities may be more about our attitudes

We often think of God helping us pass a test or win a ball game. Those things may be more dependent on our study and our athletic ability, and God's main interest in those activities may be more about our attitudes and being honest than straight A's and wins or losses. In the context Paul means that he can persevere in all circumstances through the strength that God provides in Christ.

Paul's prayer is that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. When we are filled with God's fullness we are in complete harmony with the teaching of Jesus about the greatest commandment: "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22:37-40) When we are

filled with all the fullness of God these two principles will be lived out in our lives.

This chapter ends with what is referred to as a doxology. A doxology is a short hymn of praise to God in various forms of Christian worship, often added to the end of canticles, psalms, and hymns. The tradition derives from a similar practice in the Jewish synagogue, where some version of the Kaddish serves to terminate each section of the service.

God is able to do above all that we could ever think or ask. Various authors have cautioned us about asking God to make us holy. When we ask this in earnest God will do it and the process may be painful. We should understand this because what must take place is a death. We must die to the old man and be born again of the water and the spirit.

This doxology ends with this resounding affirmation: To Him be glory in the church to all genera-

tions for ever and ever! Coffman observes:

This is perpetually God's will. There is no generation, however far in the future, which can be exempt from the imperative here. It is God's will that glory to himself shall be in the church and in Christ Jesus; and people who do not consent to this are not in harmony with God's will.

There are not two places in which to glorify God. "In the church" and "in Christ Jesus" designate the same theater of operations. Those "in Christ" are also in the church; and those not "in the church" are not "in Christ."

The manifold wisdom of God is to be made known by the church to principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This is an astonishing mission that God has given to the church. This is all a part of God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus the Lord of Glory. The church of Jesus Christ is important in every generation. We should recognize the importance of the church and make the church a priority in our lives.

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The Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

Jesus introduces His sermon with nine thoughts that seem to contradict each other. He says that if we live the way God wants us to live, we will be blessed. We will give when others take, and we will love when others hate. When we give up our "rights" and serve others, we will inherit eternal life.

God sent His only begotten Son to save us. Jesus is the Messiah, our Lord and Savior, yet He said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) The Simple English Bible reads, Jesus "came to find lost people and to

save them." Acts 4:12 tells us, "Jesus is the only one who can save people. For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (SEB)

The Beatitudes tell us how to receive God's blessings. Blessed means more than happiness. When we are happy, we are content. Being content implies the condition or state of those who are in God's kingdom. The Beatitudes do not promise us excitement and earthly pleasure.

There are four ways to understand the Beatitudes. 1) As a code of ethics for God's people to live by. 2) As a contrast between spiritual values and worldly values. 3) As a contrast between outward faith and real faith in Jesus. And 4) to show

how Old Testament expectations are to be lived out in the new kingdom or the church. The Beatitudes show us what we should be like as followers of Jesus.

The Beatitudes tell us how to receive God's blessings.

Each of the nine Beatitudes tell us how to be blessed. Blessed means more than happiness. Blessed means to experience hope and joy regardless of what our circumstances are on earth. To find hope and joy we must follow Jesus no matter what it may cost.

The Psalmist David said, "Evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11) When we trust God and focus on Him and His goodness, we will find happiness and peace.

Luke records the Beatitudes in Luke 6. In Luke 6:20 Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." The Beatitudes describe what it means to follow Jesus. They contrast spiritual values and worldly values and tell us what God will ultimately give us. Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, these, O God, You will not despise." God desires His people to have a humble, broken, and contrite heart. The sacrifices we offer God are "a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart."

Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable

and perfect will of God."

We read in Isaiah 57:15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

To be blessed spiritually we must be in God's family. Jesus said in Mark 8:34-38, "When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'"

Blessed means to experience hope and joy regardless of our circumstances.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Philippians 4:27, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

We are truly blessed when we are the poor in spirit, for then ours is the kingdom of heaven.

Ray White
Sand Springs, OK

Someone asked C.S. Lewis if he cared for the Beatitudes:

“As to caring for it, if “caring for,” means liking or enjoying, I suppose no one cares for it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledgehammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read it with tranquil pleasure.”



The Beatitudes - KJV

Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger &
thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted
for righteousness' sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



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