

The Church – Bound for Glory

I. God's cosmic glory and wisdom

A. Glorious plan – the church

1. Mystery

What was formerly concealed, is now revealed

v. 4 *"The Mystery of Christ."* His person and work prophesied but hidden and unexpected
Jesus' death killed enmity between Jew and Gentile and reconciled *both* to God. (Eph 2:16)

The cross says we are equally unworthy, Jesus had to die. Yet we're equally loved, Jesus was willing to die.

2. The Gentiles then

Gentiles were always part of God's unfolding plan.

Inclusion anticipated but veiled. *"Blessed is Egypt my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands."* (Is 1:25)

Israel was intended to be a light to the nations.

Jesus assumes this role – *"the true light to world."*

3. The Gentiles now, mystery revealed

v.6 *"This mystery is that the Gentiles are:"*

Together

Fellow heirs

Status of children - in the family

Together

Members of same body

Equal standing - part of elect

Together

Partakers of promises in Christ

All blessings of God - full salvation

4. The Church

Something new

v. 9 links creation language to the church. *"God, who created all things...the church."*

This is not Gentiles becoming Jews, or an alliance, or partnership

*"With the coming of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit the old theocracy would be completely abolished and in its place would arise a **new organism** in which the Gentiles and the Jews would be placed on footing of perfect equality...a 'new humanity.'*" (Baugh, 154)

5. Unsearchable riches in Christ

Applied to us!

"All peoples of the world will be included in the unsearchable riches of the Messiah. God will bring them to life. He will bring them to faith, forgive their sins, declare them righteous in His sight, give them His Spirit, make them holy, raise them from the dead, reign over them in righteousness, banish all evil and suffering from the world, and He will make them everlastingly happy with Him in the new heavens and the new earth." (Piper)

6. Inexhaustible supply

Unsearchable - limitless, unfathomable, untraceable

Marking out the parameters of a lake and finding it's actually an inlet of an immeasurable ocean.

B. Cosmic wisdom

1. On Display - cosmic drama

Spectators - the *"rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm."* v. 10

Angels – most theologians believe it's referring to good angels

May include evil angels, the *"rulers, authorities and spiritual forces of evil"* mentioned in Eph 6.

Jesus is Lord of the cosmos:

He has defeated Satan- fulfilled promise in Gen 3:15:

"The head of serpent has been bruised; the gates of Hades cannot prevail against the church building program of the Lord Jesus." (Ferguson, 85)

He is *the* agent of reconciliation

"For by Him all things were created, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities ...for it was the Father's good pleasure through Him to reconcile all things to Himself." (Col 1:16, 19-20)

2. Paradoxical

Not what you'd expect - God delights in reversals

On the cross, Jesus converts death to life, shame to glory, weakness to power and the curse into blessing.

3. Revealed through church – God's theatre

v. 10 *"...through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known..."*

Paradox - God has redeemed and gathered into the church "universally fallen" and "particularly different" people to reconcile what appears to be irreconcilable.

Angels' graduate school

They will never experience God's mercy

They can only *witness* God justifying the ungodly and bringing reconciliation through Jesus.

When you reconcile with someone who is difficult or has offended you, you're proving the power and wisdom of God to the heavenly realms. It has cosmic significance.

4. Manifold - Variegated, multi-colored, trans-cultural, displayed in global church ransomed from every nation.

"The church doesn't exist for itself. It exists for God and His glory."(Baugh, 158)

5. Iridescent – glorious, sparkling brilliance and intricate beauty

Stained glass -broken, stained, beautiful

Each intricate piece chosen, held together in Christ –forming a glorious window to shine forth His light
We've been drawn *"out of the darkness into God's marvelous light."* (1 Pet 2:9)

The witness of the church "is about seeing the glory of bringing many people together of different and distasteful and even antagonistic backgrounds and having them together come freely and confidently before the Father to glory in the grace of the Savior. By loving the unlovely, showing grace to the angry, being forgiving toward the hurtful, and being bold without bitterness in the face of attack we show the glory of the wisdom of God to men and angels." (Chapell, 147)

II. Up close access

"...to this mighty God, whose purpose embraces heaven and earth, time and eternity, we, in Christ, have boldness and confidence of access." (Foulkes, 107)

A. Paul

1. His identity – bound to Christ

v.1 *"I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus"*

Prisoner of Christ, not Rome. He belongs to his Lord.

His identity is found in Christ, he'd rather be bound to Christ than to all the security, comfort and freedom this world can offer. *"I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him."* (Phil 3:8-10)

You're bound, united to Christ. Your identity and circumstances in His grip, He won't let go of you.

2. Full of wonder - me?

v. 8 *"Less than least of all the saints"*

Persecutor of church. Negative balance, nothing to contribute but debt.

Progression - increasingly aware he's not qualified, and it makes God's grace all the more precious.

"Least of all the apostles, least of all the saints, foremost of sinners." (1 Cor 15:9, Eph 3:8, 1 Tim 1:15)

Paul never forgot that God chose him in spite his past. It made him zealous to preach the gospel.

Paul's name – (adj. form) means low, humble, small.

To love the unlovely, we must realize we are less than least, and at the same time, immeasurably loved.

3. His purpose

Unique call

v. 7 *"Made minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me by the working of His power."*

Given a particular work to preach to Gentiles.

Minister, diakonos – can refer to a specific office, or more generally to one who serves Christ.

Special revelation

v. 2 *".....the mystery was made known to me by revelation."*

A special knowledge of God's purpose for the Gentiles was entrusted to Paul.

"God continues to call believers first to Himself and then to His purpose for their lives. (Stott)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Eph 2:10

4. His perspective on suffering

v. 13 *"Don't lose heart over what I am suffering; it is for your glory."*

It's not random –

Jesus said Paul would suffer for His namesake. (Acts 9:15)

The reason - *your glory*

"Because these sufferings are the instrument by which Jews, Gentiles and angels see the grace of God that makes us one body in Christ." (Chapell, 168)

Paul is walking down the Jesus road – His suffering brought many sons (us) to glory. (Heb 2:10-11)

It produces glory

Suffering is working towards a goal

"We do not lose heart, though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed...for momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison." (1 Cor 4:17)"

"Suffering and glory go hand in hand for Paul. The relationship is never simply chronological (suffering now, glory then); it is causal – glory because of suffering." (Ferguson, 87)

God won't fail

v.11 *"...according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

"God's plan cannot fail because it doesn't rest on the sinking sand of merely human striving but on the impregnable rock of the sovereign and eternal will of the Almighty and centered in the Anointed Savior, who is Lord of the entire Church Glorious." (Baugh, 161)

B. God's people

1. We are written into the very title of Christ

v. 11 *"Christ Jesus, **our** Lord."*

Jesus is ours and we are his.

We are His treasured possession. (Deut 14:2)

2. Access

v. 11 *"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him."*

lit. "the courage of confident access"

Bold - lit. tell all

You can tell him everything: doubts, fears, failures, disappointments, sorrow

Confident - not based on our performance, but in believing in what Jesus has earned for us.

"For by grace you have been saved...not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph 2:8)

"All persons of faith are sinners, doubters, uneven performers. We are secure not because we are sure of ourselves but because we trust that God is sure of us." (Peterson)

Access – granted freedom of approach

"Let us come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in our time of need." (Heb 4:16)

"Since Christ Jesus is ours and we are his, bought with his blood and indwelt by his Spirit, we know that we have free and unrestricted access to the Father. We can and should approach Him without restriction, telling him all our trouble, asking him to help us in all our needs and know that he will welcome us most heartily." (Baugh, 161)

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