

Stewards of God's Grace

The second Sunday before Lent – February 7, 2021

Holy Trinity Church - Craig Anderson

(Slide 2) Ephesians 3:1-13: “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which 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. ⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Slide 3)

⁷Of 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. ⁸To 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, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” ¹

1. Introduction (Slide 4)

- a. Welcome back to the book of Ephesians...
- b. Short Recap of Eph. 1-2
 - i. Eulogy/Praise to God for His love, kindness, mercy and grace
 - ii. We received adoption, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit
 - iii. Prayer that they would know God better and know that God has one big global family, that is together going to inherit eternal life and they are part of it.
 - iv. A wonderful description of Jesus, who has been raised from the dead and seated far above all rule, authority, etc.
 - v. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead has also raised them from the dead, seated them with Christ and transformed them in to a new creation: a new Adam and Eve sent into the world to represent God.
 - vi. God has formed a new humanity (humanity 2.0) from Jew and Gentile and made them to be one body and the temple of the Holy Spirit with no division and every Christian from every culture having an equal share in it.
- c. The great tangent (Slide 5) (squirrel...)
 - i. For this reason (3:1 and 3:14)
 - ii. Everything in this section is a parenthesis.
 - iii. Paul stops to make sure everyone knows who He is, what authority He has and what the central thrust of his message is
 1. His Audience: the gentiles
 - a. Jesus – lost sheep of the house of Israel – Matt 15

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Eph 3:1–13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Stewards of God's Grace

2. His suffering: Fulfilling this calling requires suffering to see it accomplished
3. (Slide 6) His Message: Vs. 6 – This mystery is that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (This is the main point Paul has been wanting to make in the first part of the book).
 - a. The praise and the prayer of chapter 1, and the death to life and far to near of chapter 2 are all about God's merciful and loving plan to form a new humanity out of the old and to re-inherit us as His one eternal people through the reconciling work of the Son and the sealing and infilling of the Holy Spirit.
- d. (Slide 7) Paul refers to his calling as the stewardship of God's grace
 - i. Stewardship - Administration, management – Oikonomia (Household, economy)
 1. Home/household economics
 2. Stewardship related to God's household
 - ii. Grace (Charitos, Charis)–
 1. Like a grant or endowment – for example – Harvard's endowment fund – trustees must spend the money in accordance with the charter for the fund.
 2. Paul was responsible to distribute the endowment he had received from the Lord, in this case the Gospel and the Body of teaching surrounding the gospel.
 - iii. For you – for the Gentiles
 1. He is supposed to make sure the Gentiles get their portion. That is that the gentiles who were disinherited by God at the Tower of Babel get the invitation to come home, to come back into the family of God as full members.
 - iv. His perception is that God had given a deposit of grace that he was responsible to distribute to the Gentiles, especially the Gentiles that had not yet received.
 1. Paul basically perceived himself as a trustee. And he was determined to be a faithful one.
 2. Rom. 1:5, 1 Cor. 4:1-2
 - v. Now, let's look at what this means for us.
2. (Slide 8) - Stewards of God's grace (What it looks like for us)
 - a. 1 Pet 4:10-11 – 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. NIV
 - i. Stewards of God's grace in its various forms
 - ii. Each one of us has received an endowment; deposit from the Lord that we are responsible to distribute (Just like Paul) to those we are called to serve.
 1. Example of God giving each one a deposit...
 2. The deposits are not all equal. Different kinds of deposits, differing amounts, etc. The Body is diverse

Stewards of God's Grace

- a. Stewardship parables, 1 Cor 12, etc.
 - iii. Two broad categories
 1. Speaking – the word of God
 2. Serving – the works of God
 - b. So, just like Paul we each have a calling from the Lord and it has to do with Stewarding some kind of Grace deposit from God for the sake of others. Let's look a little more at what this might look like.
3. (Slide 9) Graces or endowments you may have received: Spiritual Gifts (2 Major categories – speaking and serving)
- a. Many lists – 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, Rom. 12
 - b. All of them are ad hoc, not attempt to get “all the gifts” organized in one list
 - c. Rom 12:3-8 - 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. NIV – (Slide 10)
 - i. Prophecy – a gift of being able to impart a divinely imparted message. (TDNTA)
 1. Doesn't say whether it is divinely inspired in the moment or comes through a time of study, reflection and examining circumstances. Probably understand it as a sense of a word that God has inspired in some way that is relevant to this moment or time.
 - ii. Serving (deacon) - Diakonia
 - iii. Teaching
 - iv. Encourage – parakaleo
 1. Some associate this with preaching as opposed to teaching.
 2. Others as more of a one to one relationship
 - a. Exhorter, counselor, coach, mentor, spiritual mother or father)
 3. A calling near or beside, summons (especially for help)
 4. NIV Study Bible (Rom 12:8) –Exhorting others with an uplifting, cheerful call to worthwhile accomplishment. In teaching, the believer is shown what he must do; in encouraging he is helped to do it.
 5. Often our struggle as Christians is not in the lack of knowledge (teaching), but in the struggle for application. This is where this gift/calling/grace can be a big help.
 - v. Giving – generously
 1. 2 Cor. 8:7
 2. God's financial help usually comes to us through others.
 - vi. Lead – diligence
 - vii. Mercy – cheerfully

Stewards of God's Grace

- d. What is the deposit of grace you have received that the Lord is asking you to distribute freely to others?
4. (Slide 11) Audience for your Grace
 - a. Personal Spheres - Church, neighborhood, workplace, school, etc.
 - b. People, Places and Passions
 - i. (Slide 12) People – Homeless, College students, retired people, children, a specific ethnicity – Hispanic, Black, Immigrants, Native Americans, Hmong, Prisoners, Learning disabilities, Fire victims, Business people, Farmers, Medical Community, Deaf Community, Government Workers, Law Enforcement or Fire
 - ii. (Slide 13) Places – Your neighborhood, Nord, One Mile, Downtown, Eastern Chico, Chapman Town, Paradise, The neighborhood around our church building, Other Nations
 - iii. (Slide 14) Passions – Golfers, Kids little league, Theatre people, Craft Brewers, Home and Garden, Farmer's Market, Education, Gamers, Local History, Bridge Club, Service Organization (Rotary)
 - iv. Sky – Water, Uganda
 - c. Which of these audiences is the Lord calling you do distribute grace to?
5. (Slide 15) Sacrifices on the journey
 - a. Paul's suffering (2x in ch. 3) 3:1 – the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles; 3:13 – I ask, you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory
 - b. Sometimes faithfully administering the grace of God will cause us some pain, sacrifice or even suffering to faithfully carry it out.
 - i. The devil doesn't want you to distribute God's grace and he sets up opposition.
 - ii. Your dream might be to kick the game winning field goal. But there are 11 people on the other side of the ball whose dream is to block the field goal. – Tony Stoltzfus
 - c. I don't say this to scare you, or to imply that if you volunteer to vacuum the church carpet all hell will break lose in your life. But it is good to be aware that we have an enemy that has set himself up against God and God's people and there are obstacles to face and mountains to climb as we represent God to each other and to this world.
6. Conclusion (Slide 16)
 - a. Paul's great tangent leads us into an exploration of his calling and message, as well as our own.
 - b. You have received a stewardship of grace and an audience to share it with. As well as some likely opposition to your attempts to distribute it.
 - i. What is your grace(s)?
 - ii. Who is your audience?
 - iii. Are you prepared to encounter opposition?
 - c. People are waiting. They are crying out to the Lord asking for His grace.
 - d. His answer to their prayers might just involve you.