

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 13)

Ephesians 3:7-13

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During my free time I tried to hang some things on the wall, but found that my laser level was broken. I didn't have the right tool for the job, so I wanted to go out and get one. God likewise desires to have the right tool for His job, which is the proclamation of the gospel. And the right tool is you. In today's passage Paul talks about his own commission to preach the gospel. But his points also apply to all of us, who are likewise commanded to proclaim this message.

Paul was called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and reveal the mystery that the Gentiles are now included with the Jews in the salvation that the King of Israel gives, because Jesus isn't only King of Israel, but also of the world. And regarding his calling, Paul makes 4 points. The first is that he is the servant of God and His gospel (Ephesians 3:7). He is bound to preach the gospel because it's his duty. As loyal citizens of God's kingdom we all have a duty to be messengers delivering the gospel, ambassadors for Jesus. The second point, in v. 7, is that Paul's commissioning is a "grace gift." It's a privilege and honor to serve. This seems incompatible with it being our duty. But when a king gives an important task to a servant, the servant is both obligated and privileged to carry it out. Third, Paul preaches according to the power of God (v. 7). Just like Moses did, many of us are hesitant to share the gospel because we think we aren't eloquent enough. Pastors and ministers hone their oratory skills, and it's tempting to think that without these skills we cannot preach the gospel. But Paul says it's not our eloquence that matters, but the power of God. He infuses our words with power, and only He can use them to change the hearts of listeners. The outcome isn't in our control. Let God take care of the results. Fourth, Paul says he is the least of God's people. We know that Paul was actually very important, but he says this with an attitude of humility, and because he once persecuted Christians. And for us this statement is an exhortation to follow his example. If even the least of God's people faithfully and humbly carries out his duty to proclaim the gospel, how much more should we gladly do the same?

In college I volunteered to help out at a Billy Graham crusade. I knew that at these events thousands would respond to his call to accept Jesus, and I looked forward to hearing firsthand the powerful words that could convince so many. But I was disappointed to hear not

some mind-blowing delivery of the gospel, but the simplest presentation, that we are sinners, God loves us, and He sent Jesus to die for our sins and rise again on the third day. Billy Graham did his part in delivering the gospel, not even with much eloquence. But God, through His power, used his faithful service to turn the hearts of many. We also can be certain that if we do go out and share the gospel, whether we are articulate or not, God can always use His power to turn hearts to Him through us.

In vv. 9-10 Paul once again talks about the mystery that was hidden before but now is revealed. In v. 5 he says that the mystery is now revealed to the apostles and prophets. In v. 10 he talks about revelation to authorities in heavenly realms, that is angelic beings. This mystery was hidden from everyone in heaven and earth, and when it was revealed all were awestruck at God's wisdom. And in v.11 we see that this plan was God's eternal purpose. God's plan from the beginning was to include the Gentiles. We saw last week that Gentiles weren't God's people in the past, and they were included only after Israel had rejected Jesus. However, this doesn't mean God's original intent was to exclude them. He always wanted to include them, but in His timing they would be included later on. In the story of the Prodigal Son, the elder son is Israel, and the younger son, who comes home at the end, is the Gentiles. Although he came home last, he was always a son. So God always loved the Gentiles as His own, but they would come home later. This is God's wisdom, which we proclaim.

Finally, in v. 12 we see that by accepting this gospel message we have access to God. In the Tabernacle only the high priest could access the Holy of Holies once a year. But through Jesus we have constant access to the Father. Like Xerxes in Esther 5:1-2, God extends His scepter to us so that we may be in His presence without fear of death. This is the message of the gospel. And there is no better time to share it than now. If we Christians struggle during these hard times, how much more do those, who have no eternal hope, struggle? The world needs the gospel, and we are God's tools to proclaim it. Let us gladly do so, trusting in God's power to turn their hearts so they may also have access to Him.