

Ephesians 3:7-13

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q18. *Q. What is sinful about man's sinful condition?*

A. The sinfulness of that sinful condition is twofold. First, in what is commonly called original sin, there is the guilt of Adam's first sin with its lack of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature. Second are all the specific acts of disobedience that come from original sin.

Review

Structure- Three chapters (1-3) are devoted to doctrine- the calling of the church. Three chapters (4-6) devoted to application- the conduct of the church.

Chapter 1- Begins with a doxology of praise in three sections (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) for spiritual blessings believers receive from their union with Christ (in Christ is repeated 11 times). These blessings are secure because they are from God and kept by Him. This great blessing leads to a great prayer boldly to continue to grow in grace of God.

Chapter 2- Begins with the human condition of being dead in sin and unable to come to God but follows with the great "withs" (alive with Christ, raised with Christ, seated with Christ) of God's grace. This leads to a new condition for all (Jew and Gentile) who are now part of a common body built on the common foundation of God's promise and people.

3:1-6- Part of what appears to be a parenthesis (vs 2-13) prior to Paul's actual prayer for the Ephesians as he reflects (again) on the ministry to the Gentiles and their inclusion into the people of God along with Jews. But that does not mean it is insignificant. The prayer continues in vs 14.

Through Christ, Gentiles are heirs with Israel, of the same body as Israel, and share the same promises as Israel.

Paul is also concerned about their being distraught regarding his situation. Even though he is under duress himself, he wants to give them encouragement that he is more than willing to suffer for them. Paul emphasizes that he is a prisoner of Christ- meaning he is not the victim of any world power but is in the hands of the Lord and fulfilling His purpose.

Ephesians 3:13 (ESV) So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Vs 7-13

Of this gospel I was made a minister- the word for minister is the same as deacon. It means to serve. The powerful and wonderful news of the gospel goes forth through those called as ministers.

according to the gift of God's grace- Paul was made a minister by God so it was a work of grace and even a gift. Just as the message he preached was full of grace, so too is the messenger an expression of grace. Jews in the past would daily say- I thank God I am not born a woman or a Gentile. The grace of the gospel has totally transformed Paul's understanding of himself.

which was given me by the working of his power- Again the calling and capacity to be a leader in bringing Gentiles into the people of God and the history of God's salvation is from God. It takes grace but also a mighty work of God's power. We can see that Paul is special but the outcome of what God has done in grafting the Gentiles into the Jewish foundations of faith is even more special.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints- "To me" is emphatic in its placement and grammar. Paul has elsewhere described himself as the least of the apostles.

1 Corinthians 15:9 (ESV) For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But now describes himself as the least of the saints. Saints is a reference to any and all believers, not just certain ones- all are made holy and have all sins forgiven (past and future as they receive the righteousness of Christ at conversion.

the unsearchable riches of Christ- Riches is literally much. Unsearchable is literally not able to be traced out. It can be immeasurable or inscrutable. But the unsearchable is meant to be searched; the immeasurable is meant to be measured. Our eternal delight is to explore the riches that are in Christ. See Eph 1:3-14.

Vs 9. and to bring to light for everyone- There will be a public manifestation of God's plan (mystery).

what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God- The mystery described in vs 1-6 is that Gentiles have been brought into the plan and people of God. It was hidden and not yet fully revealed. Hidden is the word for cryptic. Mystery is something profound that exists but is not fully manifest. A mystery is something to be uncovered. Both the content of the mystery as well as the plan for it are waiting for the right time to be revealed, which is the coming of Christ who makes the plan of God complete.

Vs 10. the manifold wisdom of God- manifold means varied and can imply colors. God's wisdom (the mystery of his gracious plan) is multifaceted, like a diamond.

might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places- not only to everyone on earth, but even all in the heavenly realm will witness the grace of God and His powerful works. This includes all spiritual powers. (1 Peter 1:12; Col 2:15; Eph 1:3)

so that through the church- The church is a witness to the earth and the heavenly realm of the goodness of God. Notice the value of the church in the plan of God. The unity of the church, the mission of the church, the worship of the church all testify to God's grace and glory.

Vs 11 This was according to the eternal purpose- Although God's work was a mystery yet to be fully understood, it was always part of His plan. The mystery of the coming Messiah who would bring salvation was part of God's eternal plan. The fulfillment of all the signs, offices, ceremonies, blessings the Jews were given to foreshadow the Messiah was all part of God's plan. The unity of one people (Jew and Gentile) united together through a common faith in the one Lord was always part of God's eternal plan.

that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord- The mystery was fully revealed when the plan was finished- namely, when Jesus had come and completed (realized = Accomplished) His ministry.

Vs 12. in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him- Because Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God and has been offered to all by grace there is boldness and confidence. Hope is never in works but always in faith.

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