

Ephesians - Lesson 5

Ephesians 3:1-21

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Review

- We went over Eph. 2:1-22
- Verses 1-10: This section has been called one of Paul's most succinct presentations of scripture.
 - v.8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- This section can be understood as contract between the former life as a pagan and the new life in Christ. The then and the now, which begins with the word at one time.
 - Examples:
 - In the flesh (v.11) → In the Lord/Spirit (v.21-22)
 - Alienated from (v.12) → Fellow citizens (v.19)
 - Far off (v.13,17) → Near (v.13, 17)
- The focus for Paul was to reveal the unity of all people within Christ's one body.
- All people, Jew and Gentile, have been reconciled to God through Christ's death on the cross.

Chapter 3

- Quick observation - Lutheran Confessions, as often as they reference the Book of Ephesians (66 times), doesn't reference chapter 3. At least according to the index in my book.

Verses 1-13: The Gospel of Christ for the Gentiles

- **READ VERSES 1-13**
- Connection to previous material:
 - Expansion of 1:9-10
 - Understanding of "making known," "mystery," and "stewardship" were introduced.
 - "Fellow heirs...of the promise" (3:6) follows up on the language of "inheritance" and "promise" (1:13-14)
 - "Together with/fellow" found in 3:6 repeat and sum up the argument and vocabulary of chapter 2
 - "Grace" in the pericope ties it together with 1:3-14 and chapter 2.
- Verse 1
 - This is the first of 3 references in the letter to Paul's imprisonment (3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
 - Part of Paul's reason for writing this letter was his concern for the Ephesians once they heard about his imprisonment.
 - Specifically, that they would fall away from the faith
 - What Paul does here is give a defense and explanation of his suffering.
 - Paul was imprisoned:
 - Jewish hostility over his Law-free Gospel. His proclamation of salvation by grace through faith to Gentiles such as the Ephesians.
 - Ultimate reason for the confinement, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

- He is imprisoned because the Lord wills it.
 - He is bound by Christ.
 - To suffer is part of Paul commission by Christ. Paul frequently reminds his readers of his suffering for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.
 - His suffering is not “because” of the gentile but “for the sake”
 - Indicates for their benefit
 - The preposition is often used to indicate Christ’s sacrificial death. Atonement language - on behalf of another
 - ***QUESTION: This understanding of suffering, in what ways do you see this applying today to Christians? What is the result of this suffering?***
- Verse 2
 - “Stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me”
 - “Stewardship” indicates that the steward holds authority of his master in administering the good of the household.
 - Faithful steward does only what he is told.
 - Paul is describing His apostolic office
 - By deferring to the One who sent him, Paul makes his message more certain
 - He doesn’t speak or act on his own, but is Christ’s servant for the Ephesians
 - Similar to pastor, who are stewards of the mysteries of Christ. They speak and act not on their own will but as Christ servants, they do His will.
 - “For you”
 - This stewardship is not intended to be kept to oneself.
 - It is for the benefit of others
 - Though the pastor is the steward of Christ
 - He is doing the will of Christ, it is for your benefit.
- Verses 3-7: The Mystery of Christ
 - Paul claims he has been given a unique insight into the “mystery” of Christ.
 - Paul received a special vision of Christ (v.3).
 - When you read this.
 - The public reading in the divine service
 - Revealed (v. 5)
 - Though all Christians are holy before God through Baptism, the prophets and the apostles were set apart for a unique office.
 - Verse 6 Paul reveals what the mystery is.
 - That the gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ.
 - The church isn’t just the people of Israel but all believers.
 - Here again we see an emphasis on our unity with all Christians.
 - “Fellow heirs”:
 - Promise that an inheritance is reserved for us with Christ until the Last day
 - You are sons of God through Holy Baptism
 - True heirs are no longer defined by the flesh.
 - “Same body”:
 - Oneness
 - We are one body on account of Christ’s death

- Galatians 3 - Neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female - you are all one in Christ.
 - “Fellow partakers”
 - Indicates that we share in the possession of something
 - It is the body and blood of Christ that we share.
- Verses 8-12
 - Here Paul explains how the mystery is manifested to his saints.
 - Saints again are holy ones - you who’ve been accounted righteous for Christ sake
 - On the one hand, as an office of stewardship, is commissioned faithfully to deliver the gifts given by God for the sake of his people.
 - Yet, he’s quite the least of all the saints - being a former persecutor of Christ
 - Christ’s still chooses him to proclaim the gospel, despite his past.
 - Gift of God’s grace
 - Given Paul’s past shows the extent of God’s grace.
 - This applies to us as well. In our sinful condition we are entirely undeserved.
 - Yet, God is gracious.
 - Ultimately, the mystery revealed to the apostles is not for them alone to possess, but is to be proclaimed.
 - All Christians receive knowledge of the mystery through the apostolic office
 - “Access with confidence...”
 - Through Christ we now have access to God.
 - What comfort this is that we can go to Him
 - On account of sin this wasn’t possible.
 - This is what Luther explains in the small catechism
 - “With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

Verses 14-22: The Revelation of the Mystery is for Their Strengthening and to God’s Glory

- **READ VERSES 14-22**
- Verse 14
 - “bend my knees”
 - We will simply see this as kneeling
 - An act of submission, respect, worship, or prayer.
 - But why do we do this?
 - To bend the knee before the true God is to acknowledge his sovereignty over the one who bends the knee.
 - Luther says “When the spirit of prayer is enkindled and burns within the heart, the body will responsively assume the proper attitude; involuntarily, eyes and hands will be upraised and knees bended.
 - bending the knees is a response to what God has done for us.
- Verse 15
 - Families derive their identity from their father.
 - You have been given His name.
 - What comfort this brings to us!
- Verse 16
 - “inner man”
 - This only occurs three times in the Bible, all by Paul

- The inner man is not the mind or spirit in contrast to the flesh.
- The inner man is the saint, the whole person viewed by God through the lens of Christ, but hidden from mortal eyes.
- Romans 7 - implies an identity between the New Adam (Christ) and the Christian's inner man.
- Christ comes to dwell in you through Holy Baptism.
- Verse 17
 - "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"
 - This isn't a mystical understanding of Christ dwelling in you. Do you feel Jesus in your heart?
 - This isn't a static concept, where he comes and hangs up curtains.
 - Dwelling is through faith - Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of God.
 - His dwelling is an ongoing thing, that through His Word and His sacraments He comes to you and continues to dwell within you through faith by His spirit.
 - We live because Christ lives in us; if he doesn't continue to live in us we die (Rom 8:10).
 - Again this indwelling is never separate from faith and the spirit.
- Verse 18
 - The goal of this indwelling is that they might be further enable to comprehend ...
 - You engineers will appreciate this part... talking about dimensions/special terms.
 - Breadth (side to side), length (ahead and behind), height (above), depth (beneath)
 - In modern terms this three dimensional, spatial.
 - Four terms are used to imitate the four points on a compass, four corners of the earth.
 - These points refer to the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.
 - Paul prays that we may know this love.
 - The depth of Christ love was shown through his death on the cross for you.
 - Some ancient commentators saw a cruciform image,
 - The four dimensions represented the four arms of the cross on which Christ' love was acted out.
 - While this is not what Paul's word's indicate, it is helpful for us to visibly see this love.

Questions?

Thoughts/Questions

Any other items you would like to discuss?

Closing Prayers

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have safely brought us to this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.