

# Sermon on Understand Your Call

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## Text:

**Ephesians 3:1-21** For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,<sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.<sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,<sup>5</sup> which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.<sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,<sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.<sup>10</sup> His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,<sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>12</sup> In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.<sup>13</sup> I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father,<sup>15</sup> from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.<sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,<sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

# **1 Introduction**

We continue with the epistle from Paul to the churches in Ephesus and Asia Minor. We look at Ephesians chapter 3. The major theme of this passage is, “Understanding the mission of your call and the revelation required to accomplish that mission.”

## **2 Paul’s Call and his Understanding of his Call**

Paul was called by the grace of God only and not because of anything about him. In fact, he should have been the last person to be called because of his murderous actions against believers. Paul is called to be a prisoner for Christ and to be a servant for Christ.

When he was called God gave him a mission: To proclaim the mystery of God to gentiles.

Acts 9:15-16 <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

In carrying out the mission of his call, Paul was arrested and eventually ended up in jail in Rome. Paul viewed his circumstances as part of the call and knew that God was in control. Paul understood his mission was clearly from God and therefore he will endure any suffering even if it meant dying to accomplish the mission as he says in 2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Paul viewed his suffering as a benefit to the ministry. In fact, his suffering is not a defeat as some people think but he believes they bring glory to the church in Ephesus.

## **3 The Mystery to be Proclaimed**

The mystery that Paul is to proclaim was hidden for ages and now revealed:

- The Gentiles are heirs together with Israel. (Eph. 3:6a)
- The Gentiles are members together of one body. (Eph. 3:6b)

- The Gentiles are sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 3:6c)
- “In Christ and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.” (Ephesians 3:12) This is because through Christ God has become our dad. Prior to this God was viewed as the ancients viewed a king or god; he cannot be approached without invitation failing which results in a death penalty. See even how difficult it is to get an audience with a president or a king.

## 4 Elements of the Call

From this passage, we learn two major elements of God’s call to the believer:

- You must receive a clear mission.
- You must receive a specific revelation as to how to carry out the mission. Charisma Magazine (Nov. 2004) reports on the call of **Dr. Mark Rutland**, now President of Southeastern College. He was a Methodist minister in despair and depression, which was removed when he received Holy Ghost baptism at a conference. As time went on he got a vision one night and God spoke to him saying, “In the years ahead, I will turn your life upside down. Things will come into your life from directions you do not even know exist tonight. I will use you, change you, tax you, break you and send you as you cannot imagine. But first you must go to Ghana.” About nine months later, Dr. Rutland went to Ghana without knowing anyone there. He only knew of a Methodist College he had written to in the past. The day after he arrived, God revealed it to the Methodist College professors that he was in the country and they sent someone to Accra to look for him and he found him!

To accept the call requires a number of things:

- You must undergo complete indoctrination to the beliefs espoused by the Bible. Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- You should be held captive by the call and unable to abandon the call even under extenuating circumstances.
- You must recognize and accept that the call involves risks that lead to suffering and possibly death.

- You must be prepared to commit your time, skills, and talents.
- You must be prepared to commit your resources – money (tithes and offering), use of car, computer, house, etc.

## **5 Results of Working faithfully on Mission**

You approach God with freedom and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12)

You receive the crown of righteousness. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

You shine like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

You will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward according to what you have done. (Colossians 3:23-24, Matthew 16:27)

## **6 The Call of Esther**

When Esther was called she was given a clear mission – work to save the Jews from destruction by Haman. (4:8) Esther assessed the risk of the call as deadly and refused the call. (4:11) Mordecai insisted that Esther had been providentially placed as Queen specifically to carry out this call to duty, but if she refused she will suffer the consequences of death anyway and God will call someone else. (4:14)

Esther accepted the call after becoming completely indoctrinated as to the validity and necessity of the call. She was completely captivated by the call and declared a three-day fast to prepare for her mission. (4:15) Then she used her major asset – her devastating beauty – to begin her work. (5:1-2) She organized a banquet for the king and Haman thus committing her time, talents and resources to the mission. When pressed by the king to state her motives for the banquet she exercised wisdom and deferred the answer to the next banquet. (5:4-8) For a second time she organized a banquet for the king and Haman thus committing once again her time, talents and resources to the mission. During this banquet she launched the thrust of her call as she exposed Haman’s scheme to kill all Jews. (7:1-6)

King Xerxes got angry at Haman and sentenced him to death. Esther's mission was now in full progress toward success. (7:7-10) Esther was rewarded by being given Haman's estate and Mordecai was appointed to replace Haman in the king's court. (8:1) But Esther did not stop there because the mission was not fully accomplished and so she made a request to King Xerxes to rescind Haman's edict to kill the Jews. The king agreed and granted the Jews permission to take revenge on their enemies. (8:3, 7-12)

## **7 Conclusion**

Are you just a churchgoer or do you have a call? If you don't have a call pray for God to give you a call so you can work for God.