

## “Stewards of Grace”

Ephesians 3:1-13

C.I.T.—Paul explains why he endured suffering for the sake of the gospel.

C.I.S.—The mission is worth the suffering.

Purpose—I want to encourage our church to continue faithfully in the mission despite suffering.

Introduction—Mission sending—how can these young families take their children/leave their parents and go across the world?

- Prayer formula **vs 1**
  - paused by an explanation of Paul’s situation
  - Prisoner of Christ Jesus—not Rome or Jews
  - On behalf of you—because of you
- Stewardship of God’s Grace **vs. 2**
  - Responsibility to manage someone else’s assets.
  - God’s grace was entrusted and appointed to Paul
  - This grace was to be used for the benefit of the Gentiles in general and the Ephesians in particular.
- I. ***The Stewardship of a Message. Vs. 3-7***
  - a. This stewardship was in accordance with mystery.
    - i. Revealed to Paul, but not to humanity before time.
    - ii. But now through the apostles and prophets, this mystery is made clear.
  - b. The mystery is that the Gentiles would become one with the Jews through faith in the message of Jesus.
    - i. **Genesis 12:3/Galatians 3:8**
    - ii. **Isaiah 49:6/Acts 13:46-47**
    - iii. Only through the lens of Jesus did these passages make sense.
  - c. Of which
    - i. Paul was made a servant of the gospel message
    - ii. This was an act of grace
    - iii. This giving of grace was accompanied by the power of God
  - d. Illus.—**2 Kings 7:9**—lepers sharing the spoils of war
  - e. Application
    - i. The gospel message is so great, that once we have heard it, we feel the responsibility to share.
    - ii. We are stewards of the gospel message, and if nothing else, must share with someone else.
    - iii. Paul was in prison, because he was being faithful to the message: sharing the gospel.
  - f. We can endure out of the excitement of the message.
- II. ***The Stewardship of a Mandate. Vs. 8-9***
  - a. Grace given
    - i. Grace refers to an unmerited favor or gift
    - ii. This one is from the Lord
    - iii. Assignment/appointment
  - b. 2 tasks
    - i. Proclaim the riches of Christ to the Gentiles—gospel message to the Gentiles
    - ii. Enlighten about the stewardship of the mystery—let them in on the fact that they were included
  - c. Illus.—**Acts 22:21**
  - d. Application
    - i. We have all been given a task.

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- ii. In general, we have been called to honor the Lord through sharing the gospel.
- iii. In particular, we have been called to a certain location to fulfill a certain job.
- e. We can endure out of obedience to the mandate.

**III. The Stewardship of a Mission. Vs 10-11**

- a. In order that—end result/purpose—the mission
- b. Make known the multifaceted wisdom of God.
  - i. This wisdom does not fit with the conventional wisdom of man or heavenly being.
  - ii. Refers to celestial beings—angels and demons, and to any other authority
  - iii. Instead, this wisdom can only be recognized and understood in the end result.
- c. This wisdom is according to the eternal plan and purposes of God that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- d. Notice that this wisdom will be revealed through the church.
  - i. Through the church's witness?
  - ii. Through the church's makeup.
  - iii. Jews and Gentiles united under Christ.
  - iv. This reality blows the minds of all who are interested.
  - v. No one saw it coming.
  - vi. The Lord gets the glory.
- e. Illus.—Keeping hands on the car
- f. Application
  - i. **Philippians 3:10-14**
  - ii. Our ultimate goal is to worship the Lord.
- g. We can endure out of focus on the mission.

Conclusion

- **Vs. 12-13**—The boldness and confidence we need to endure is found in our faith in Him.
- We should not be discouraged, because difficulties are all part of the bigger picture.
- We have a message, a mandate, and a mission.
- We have a stewardship, we are responsible.
- Let's be found faithful regardless of the chains we have placed on us.

**Genesis 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen. 12:3 CSB17)

**Galatians 3:8** Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you. (Gal. 3:8 CSB17)

**Isaiah 49:6** he says, "It is not enough for you to be my servant raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isa. 49:6 CSB17)

**Acts 13:46** Paul and Barnabas boldly replied, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation to the end of the earth." (Acts 13:46 CSB17)

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**2 Kings 7:9** Then they said to each other, "We're not doing what is right. Today is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until morning light, our punishment will catch up with us. So let's go tell the king's household." (2 Ki. 7:9 CSB17)

**Acts 22:21** "He said to me, 'Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 22:21 CSB17)

**Philippians 3:10** My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, <sup>11</sup> assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:10 CSB17)