

Mystery and Clarity//Ephesians 2:11–3:13//The Mystery & Mission of the Church

Introduction: Today is an important day... we're voting on an important step in the future of the Summit church... specifically to buy the 2 warehouses in the Brier Creek area as a permanent home for us. The elders of this church believe this is a strategic and very economic move forward... it is going to allow us to own a permanent facility (and in a much cheaper way than if we built it from the ground up, as our original plan had been)... we really think this is a God send.

This permanent home is going to allow us a hub from which to continue to plant campuses in RDU and churches around the world, and because it is much cheaper than if we built from the ground up, it's going to keep more of our resources free to do those things. So, it's kind of a no brainer... vote yes (was that too much pressure)?

It also makes what I'm going to talk about today that much more significant, I think.

Paul makes a turn in Ephesians 2:11 from talking about God's incredible plan to rescue us and He starts talking about the church. Now, the passage opens up the word ¹¹Therefore... and that is very significant, because "therefore" connects what he's about to say with all the other stuff he has just said. He's not just randomly bringing up the church. He's saying the incredible experience of salvation he described in Ephesians 1–2 will lead you to involvement in the church.

- Open Bible to Ephesians 2:11

This passage is very challenging for most Americans, because sociologists who study spirituality in America say a couple of things are true about us: a) there is enormous spiritual hunger in America; that's at an all time high; and b) at the same time, there is a move away from institutional religion.

- 81% of all Americans answered yes to this question: 'Do you believe you can be a very good Christian without attending a church?'

So here's the way I'd state the question: *Can God be powerfully at work in your life apart from being a part of Christ's body, the church?* The answer in the New Testament, consistently and without exception, is resoundingly *NO*.

- Now some of you say, "Well, why are you talking to us? We're here... We're the good guys." Yes, you are all here, but many of you are here but not *here*, if you know what I mean. You are still on the sidelines... checking it out. The joke I use in starting point is that the church is a lot like a professional football game...
 - Of the 4000 or so that come to church here on a weekend, only about ½ of you are connected in a small group—whether through the church or elsewhere; and only about 1/3 of you are involved in some kind of intentional ministry. (That's not all bad... we have a lot of new people here, and I want you to feel like you can take your time in checking things out before you get involved... I want you to feel like you can sit and soak... But some of you are getting water-logged. Some of you have been here so long you're starting to mold. If you consider yourself a Christian and you've been here for 6 months or more and you still don't know anybody and aren't involved in anything...we need to send you back to Toyota, because you are a factory defect. Something's stuck on you.

So, we are going to read this passage where Paul talks about the nature and the purpose of the church, and then we're going to answer 4 questions:

- *Why we should be involved in the church*
- *How involved we should be in the church*
- *What the mission of the church is*
- *What the implications are for you*

First, let's work through the passage:

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh...¹² separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

- You're like, "commonwealth..." What's Virginia got to do with this? My wife is from VA? Why can't you just be a state like everyone else? I digress...
- The thing to notice in **vs. 12** is that to be separated from Israel was to be separated from Christ: (see it? It says, "separated from Christ, alienated from Israel") God revealed Himself *first* to and through the nation of Israel. The other nations didn't know God, and if they wanted to know God, they had to become enter the nation of Israel and become Jews.

You Ephesians, Paul says (and you Americans) were part of those separated, alien nations; you were (v. 12) ...strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Now, this is crucial to everything Paul is about to tell them. Paul is reminding them that *they* were people who were outsiders with no hope... and this perspective is to form how they think about all their relationships... So, since it is so important, could we stop and reflect on that for a minute, also?

- When the Gospel was first preached and Ephesians was written, our people, our ancestors, were about the farthest people from God that you could imagine (unless you are Jewish, Greek or Italian here...). And sometimes we forget that. When Jesus and the Apostles talked about taking the

Gospel to "the uttermost parts of the earth," they were talking about *us*!

- The civilized Roman world had a name for us, "the barbarians." When Jesus gave the Great Commission our ancestors were swinging from trees with their faces painted blue and clubbing each other with wooden mallets.
 - (Our society was like one big Cameron Indoor Stadium... complete with crazy towel guy and cheering fans in their speedos...)
 - I found this website where you can type in your name and it tells you what it means in Barbarian—what you would have been called in England 2000 years ago. My name means "beastly drinker of blood." Veronica's name means "the dragon-whisperer." That was us. We were barbarians and outsiders.
- This has enormous implications for how we relate to each other which I'm going to get to...

But, before I get to that... one of the things I most desire for you is to embrace the global focus of the Gospel.

- A scholar named Philip Jenkins has coined the term "the new Global South" ... to refer to the new regions of the world where Christianity is most flourishing... specifically S. America, Africa, and parts of China and India.
- I just finished a book by Mark Noll called *The New Shape of World Christianity*. Noll says (listen very closely):
 - In 1900 over 80% of the world Christian population was Caucasian and over 70% resided in Europe; today, in 2009 (when he wrote the book) there are more practicing Christians in Africa than in all European countries combined.
 - On any given Sunday, more Christians attend church in Kenya than in Canada; and more believers worship together in Nagaland than in Norway

- Uganda has more Anglicans than Britain, Canada and the United States combined. The same is true for Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria.
- This past Sunday there were more Presbyterians at church in Ghana than in Scotland.
- Brazil now sends more overseas missionaries than does Britain or Canada.
- In 1970 there were no legally functioning churches in all of China. But it is estimated that today the number of practicing Christians in China is equal to the number in the United States.
- The largest church in Korea has more people present for a single worship service than are at Canada's ten largest churches combined.
- The looming explosion of Christians is in the Muslim world, where 2/3 of all the unreached peoples now live.
- People say, "Christianity is a Western thing Americans shouldn't try to impose on everyone." Be real. Christianity is not a Western thing; it never has been a Western thing. If anything it's a Middle Eastern thing that came to the West and is now headed around the world, and it won't stop until it's finished.
- I love how Bob Roberts says it: "*Christianity began as a Jewish movement to God; it will conclude as a Muslim movement to Jesus.*"
- The Gospel is a global thing: It's for all peoples of all times in all places in the world.

Let's keep reading...¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...

- These verses acknowledge something that we all know, and that is that our world is divided, and there's real hostility between various peoples. We're probably more aware of that

now than ever. Samuel Huntington wrote a book not long ago called *The Clash of Civilizations* in which he talks about this coming world crisis as civilizations are being forced together and hostilities are being pushed to the surface.

- Paul acknowledges that there are "dividing walls of hostility" between peoples. The Jews had a literal wall on the outside of the temple with a little sign on it that said "no Gentiles" and that the Gentiles would only have themselves to blame for their death if they passed beyond it into the inner courts. This wall separated, in the Jewish mind, the good from the bad, the clean from the unclean.
 - And don't think that is just a Jewish issue. All cultures have "walls." Every culture has a way of defining itself with walls, and those inside the walls are basically "good" and those on the outside are bad.
 - I have travelled a lot around the world (I've been in like 34 different countries) and even lived in Asia for a while and I have never been in a culture, including our own, that didn't see themselves as implicitly better in some ways, than everybody else.
 - **Why is that?** Psychologists tell us that there is something fundamental to human nature where we are always trying to lift ourselves up above others. It's this drive to self-justification and to prove that we are better than everyone else. It goes back to the insecurity we feel before God. If we think we're better than others, then that makes us valuable as people.
 - So, we find things about ourselves or our group that set us apart from others. *Our* race is better—we're smarter; we're better athletes; we show more courage in battle; we're more generous; we've built a better country or been more successful; we're just better people; our families are stronger; we treat our women better... and we place around our culture this

imaginary wall that distinguishes us and makes us feel like we're better than those on the outside.

- And don't just limit those walls to matters of race... we find things about ourselves individually that set us apart from everybody else;
 - you make a certain amount of money, and that makes you better than those who don't (that's a wall you've placed around yourself);
- You made a certain score on the SAT or got into a certain school, that means that you are part of an insider group and people outside that wall are inferior;
- in high school you rank yourself by how athletic or good looking you are (in the lunch room all the groups sit together... dorks, jocks, the hot girls, the dork jockish girls, and all have walls around themselves distinguishing their group from everyone else);
- For many, the most defining wall to you is your political persuasion: it's the people who agree with you that are good or educated people. If you don't believe that, just watch the View or listen to how Keith Olbermann or Sean Hannity talk about people on the other side.
- You get this? **Hostility...**

Christ, Paul says, tore down all those walls by giving us a whole new way of understanding "inside" and "outside."

¹⁴For he himself (Paul says) is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

- The walls of hostility got tore down between Christians because the work of Jesus shows us that humanity has a common problem, sin, and that there's nothing *any of us* can

do about it... remember, Ephesians 2, we are dead in our sin... and there's no degrees of dead.

- Yes, I've seen the Princess Bride... but there's no such thing as "nearly dead."
- There's one problem of man, and it supercedes race, religion, education and even political convictions, and that problem is sin, and the one solution to that problem is the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, who did for *all* of us what none of us could do for ourselves!
 - *None* of us were "on the inside"; we were *all* on the outside. Sin's curse on us means that there are no "good people and bad people"; there's no "winners and losers"; there's no "people who have it together" and "dysfunctional people"; there's only bad, dead, losers who desperately need the salvation of Jesus.
 - And Jesus' blood cleanses us all alike...
- And furthermore, when Jesus rose from the dead, He created in His resurrection (v. 15) a whole new race of humanity. (See how it says, he made "(create in Himself) one new man out of the two"?) Jesus was born as a Jew, but He wasn't raised as a Jew... or Gentile. He was raised as a completely new man. He started a "3rd race."
 - *This is radical*: That means, if you are in Christ, your identity is not primarily as a white man or black man; you are a new race of man in Christ.
 - Your identity is not primarily an American or an Asian or Hispanic. You are not even primarily a Tarhole or a Dukie. Those are all 2ndary distinctions (important, but 2ndary). You are a whole new 3rd race...
- And if you understood that, hostilities would die away.
 - Why? Because it shatters pride. There is nothing in your past that should make you feel better than others or nothing that should make you feel inferior to others.

- And it gives you something in common with other believers that is so fundamental to who you are that it supercedes everything else!
 - **Malaysia: Girl w/ Confucius**
- Now, the Gospel doesn't mean I cease to be white or you cease to be black, or that I somehow have to start acting like I'm from some other culture. That would be disastrous (think Eminem)
- It means that more important to me than being American or being white is the fact that I am bought and raised in Jesus, and that that reality factors larger in who I relate to and how than my socioeconomic or racial identity.
- Here's what I mean: we all like to be around people with our same culture. **Basketball: gym of white guys and black guys—who do you go to?** I used to play basketball with a bunch of black guys and they all had nicknames for each other... Money/Jam "No don't shoot." I don't need this... I need some old, balding, overweight white guys to play with...
- But in Christ we have something larger in common than our racial identities and cultural preferences, we have Jesus. And in light of our commonalities in Jesus, our differences in race, culture, education or income are actually quite insignificant to us. It's not that they are not there; they're just not that significant.
- So you and I can be close and be friends and love each other and want to be around each other even though we don't share a common culture... because our bond in Jesus is a larger reality to us than even our culture!
- What I believe: Racism can never be truly overcome without the Gospel... the propensity to self-justification, the desire to be better than others, is just too strong!
- And if you do get over the boundaries of race, you'll just find something else about yourself that makes you

better than others... I went to this school; I'm a Democrat

- Only the Gospel of Jesus tears those walls down.
- **The point Paul is making is this: How God has treated you effects fundamentally and forever how you relate to other people.**
 - I look at everyone differently. I see the prostitute and I think, all my righteousness was filthy rags. **(Every time I say this someone objects and you can keep right on objecting but I'm going to keep right on saying it...)** The word used in Hebrew could be translated "**bloody menstrual rags.**" God's valuation of my goodness is a bloody menstrual rag. Can I look at the prostitute and feel superior to her when God's verdict on me is *that*?
 - I see Tiger Woods, and I can't look down on him or talk about how pathetic he is... I want to sit down with him and explain how God redeems sinners.
 - I look at people who have less education than I do and I think, "But all my wisdom was *foolishness* before God" (1 Cor 1).
 - I look at people who have messed up their lives and I say, "I was dead in my sins."
 - We both had a common problem, and Christ died for you and me alike. Thus, there's no pride, no need for self-justification, and thus no hostility.
 - What made the early church so unique in the ancient world was that there was unity in the congregations!
 - **Rodney Stark.** The Romans built these huge cities and peoples from various cultures lived together and there was all kinds of ethnic strife
 - Jewish men, every morning, prayed, "God, I thank you I'm not a woman, a slave and a Gentile." When Paul goes into a new city to preach the Gospel in Acts 16, the 3 people who come to Christ are Lydia, a slave girl, and Roman jailor. Did you catch that? Paul's 1st

church had 4 people in it: a Jew, a woman, a slave, and a Gentile.

¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

We have one Spirit that runs through all of us like blood in the veins of one body ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints Paul uses 3 analogies for the church; he says you are citizens of only 1 Kingdom) and members of the household of God, (2ndly like brothers and sisters in one family and thirdly) ²⁰built on (you're like a building—btw, do you notice see how in each analogy believers are getting even more intimately connected to each other than the previous one? We're first citizens of one kingdom; then brothers and sisters in one family; now we're bricks stacked up on top of each other and cemented together.

Keep going, b/c Paul develops this last one. We are bricks in a building built on... the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

All Christians have 3 things in common. All Christians everywhere have...

- (a) ...a common source of righteousness: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of their acceptance before God.
- (b) ...a common foundation of truth: the apostles and prophets... this is a reference to the Bible. The one thing stays the same in all churches everywhere: the revealed message of the Bible. The truths of this book are true for all peoples in all places in all times. Each culture applies the truths differently, but those truths never change.
 - o Real quick: 2 ways you can get in trouble on this
 - Some people think their culture is the supreme Christian culture. Ex. Nothing sadder than going in a church overseas... OT/NT on music: no

Psalms. Cultures should have their own music and their own ways of showing reverence.

- Also think it's weird to go into a church where they think God only likes music popular in the 1950's ...
- Or versions of the Bible written in the 1600's are God's favorite?
 - James 1:6... "divers"
- o But other get in trouble because they feel free to change what the Apostles and prophets taught. They say, "Well, this book is out of date and now we should update it... to include homosexual marriage and open sex and people of other religions." But now you're changing the Apostles and prophets.
 - **Open hand/closed hand.** You get in big trouble not knowing what goes in what hands.

Finally, Christians have:

(c) ... a common purpose: we are built together as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

So, here are our 4 questions:

I. Why must we be a part of the church?

- Analogy: Church members are like a pile of bricks that, when put together is a temple where God's Spirit dwells. No brick by itself is the whole temple; all the bricks together are the temple.
- No brick is complete without all the others. It's just a brick. In the same way, none of us are complete in Christ without one another, and in one sense, the Spirit of Jesus doesn't dwell fully in any one of us, He dwells fully only in all of us! The Spirit inhabits the whole building! Thus, only by being a part of the body of Christ will I experience the fullness of Christ.
- *That means two things (which we're only going to cover really quickly, and come back to them in two weeks):*

- (a) if you want to *know* Christ, you must be intimately connected to His body
 - The Spirit dwells in the whole body, not in any one part. That means there is so much of Christ you're going to miss out on if you aren't connected to the body.
 - Check this out.... Paul says in **3:10**: ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...
 - Manifold. (Manifold: isn't that on your car? Commonwealth? A lot of weird words)
 - Many folds or multi-faceted. There's a part of God's wisdom and beauty revealed in you that is not revealed in me. That's a reference to the gifts we'll talk about next week.
 - But let me just say this here... the church is like a Mosaic: Each of us is revealing a part of Christ. What we see of Christ in us together is more complete than what we see alone. There are some things about Christ which I can only know by knowing you... There are some of you who have had Jesus reveal Himself in you and through you in a way that I haven't experienced (maybe he walked you through pain, maybe there's a part of his character revealed in you), and if I want to know Jesus more fully, I've got to know you. Jesus did not give Himself to any one person fully. You've got a role to play in me coming to know God.
- The fact that God's Spirit inhabits His church means... (b) if you want God to work in your life, you have to be a part of the church...
 - (Again, we'll talk about this more in a few weeks, but a lot of people pray to God to help them with something in their life and it's like they expect God to zap them from heaven. That's plan A. And, if He doesn't do it that way, well I guess you could go get some help From the church.
 - Example: couple struggling in their marriage, and they need God's help, so they pray and ask God to help. Now, God could zap them from heaven and they come home all cheery and loving and selfless... or, if God doesn't do that, I guess they could be in a small group where they learn godly relationship patters, where others are able to speak into their lives and support them. But that's plan B.
 - Or, a guy struggling with alcoholism or a lust addiction... so He prays for God to help. And He wants God to zap him with the Holy Ghost taser gun... and, if not, then maybe I'll get involved in some Christ-centered ministry at the church... where guys can support me and speak into my life.
 - So, Plan A is God zaps you. Plan B is that you use the church.
 - Here's the revolutionary truth: **the church is plan A; the church is the means by which God's Spirit does His work. It's where He dwells.**
 - Remember, Ephesians 2:10 said that for each us there were good works that God had predestined us to do. Some of the good works God has predestined me to do are in your life. Some of the good works God has predestined for you to do are in mine. I can only experience the good works God has predestined for you to do if you are here and involved in my life.

- **This might be offensive (I went back through this and tried to make it as offensive as possible), but... You have no right asking for the power of God if you have separated yourself from the means of that power.** If you've been at this church for a while and refuse to get involved, quit asking God for help, if you've separated yourself from the means of that power.

II. How involved should we be in the church?

- Based on what I've said to you, a better way to phrase that question is this:
 - *How involved do you want Christ to be in your life?*
 - *How well do you want to know Christ?*
- Those of you on the sidelines, you are only experiencing a fraction of what God wants you to know.

III. What the mission of the church is

In light of all that we've said, of how God is glorified by the salvation of a wide diversity of peoples, our mission has to be bring into one body people of vastly different backgrounds to worship Jesus.

That means our church has to reflect a widely diverse group of people. God is not glorified by a big audience of white people watching an entertaining how together... no matter how big it is. That's just a sporting event. God is glorified when people who otherwise have little in common come together as brothers and sisters in one body. That means we're going to do things that some of you aren't comfortable with, and that I'm not comfortable with.

- People assume I get to do church the way I want to, I'm the pastor... not true. The question is what it takes to bring in the lost community. Mass hysteria and bluegrass swept the Triangle... told our wp and I'm only half joking that he'd have 3 weeks to have a bluegrass band up here. It's not about us...
 - We use as a filter, what brings the lost. A lot of things I actually prefer to do differently. So don't come tell me

you don't like this or that... I'm not listening. I don't care. Unless you're a non-believer and there's something keeping you from listening, but if you're a believer, I don't care what you like or dislike.

- Someone complained to me that there weren't enough black people in our church... This same person said to me that they didn't like it when we do the songs where people put their hands in the air and stand up and clap. I asked them...Have you ever been in a mostly black church? So, you want black people to come into our church and like your music and enculturate to you?

It also means that many of us need to make as our personal mission in life bringing into the church people far from God.

Let me read to you a little bit from the next chapter: **3:1–13** ¹For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you ⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister ... ⁹ to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness... ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you...

And here's what I want you to notice (if you noticed nothing). **Paul arranged his life's mission according to God's eternal mission.**

- And even when things looked rough... like when Paul is writing this he is in prison, he has boldness, because He knows the mission of God and how committed God is to bringing it about. Paul arranged his life's mission according to God's eternal mission.

And we have to, like Paul, understand the eternal mission of God, and how committed God is to bringing it about... and then, like Paul, we arrange our lives around that mission.

- **For example:** I have a special place in my heart for those in our community far from God...(*hopud*) I know God wants to do it. 5 areas. It seems impossible. But, I have boldness, because Paul had boldness, because he knew and I know what God wants to do.
 - **Hudson Taylor:** there are 3 stages in every great work of God: **impossible; difficult; done.** God will give us help.
 - I want some of you to step out in boldness and share Christ with someone very far from God and who is extremely closed to Christianity, because you know that's just the kind of thing God does, brings people far from Himself into His church.
- And here's the other thing: I know there are still many people in other nations and other cultures that are very far from God. I know God's purpose is to bring them to know and worship him.
 - There are 16,349 people groups (groups that have one language and one culture: 16,349 people); 6,647 of them qualify as unreached (less than 2% Christian). Of the 6,647 unreached people groups, 1,662 are unengaged (not even one Christian is working in them to bring the Gospel to them).
 - I know it's God's purpose is to bring these people into the church. And I want many of you, especially you college students, to arrange your life's mission around that mission mission.
 - They make up about 1.8 billion people; if you put them end to end they would stretch around the equator 25 times!
 - Can you picture 25 lines as long as your eye could see... of Christless people, trampling endlessly toward hell? I want you to let that vision stay with you day and night.
 - Today, over 12,000 kids in Africa/India will die of malnutrition or a hunger-related disease.
- I want you burn to see God's love brought to them and go forward with confidence because you know that's what God wants and what His mission is.
- I want some of you girls to say, "Maybe I should go and start an orphanage."
- Engineer? Medical student? Use that to bring the Gospel to those groups... teacher...
- I want to get letters... (what I most look forward to) I took him to a place where nobody knew Him!
- Notice, Paul uses the word, "stewardship..."
 - That means a particular task given to him. Paul said, "In light of the eternal purposes of God, this is what I need to be doing."
 - I want you to find the stewardship given to you. In light of the eternal purposes of God, all of you have been given a job. And one day you will have to answer for how you personally furthered the mission of God.
 - We know this is God's will. We talk about finding God's will, it's not lost. This is what God is doing. What will you have to offer at the final day? How can you say you helped further the mission of God?
 - "I haven't heard a voice telling me to go." Jim Elliott, "You don't need a voice, you have a verse." Verses are better than voices.
 - Our challenge to students: Give the 2 years after you graduate... with us; with Campus Outreach; Campus Crusade.
 - I know God won't call you all... *but in light of what God's eternal purposes are, won't he call a number of you?*

IV. What I'm asking from you today: take away

- (1) *Be very active in the church*
 - Small group; ministry team. Get off the sidelines and get in the game.
- (2) *Be open to other styles not like you*

- *(3) Connect with others here who are not like you*
 - We used to have a youth pastor here who would say, “We never really leave high school. You go into a cafeteria. The athletes hang out with only other athletes. Hot girls; dorks; geeks; the teachers sit at their little table.” That’s how our small groups look.
 - Be involved with people not like you and that are different ages. If you are younger, consider being involved in a group with someone older.
- *(4) Reach out to others far from God: pray about those 5 areas*
- *(5) Consider going to the Unreached People Groups, or start giving your money so others can go*

If you are not a Christian... listen, we are often a bad representation, I know. But we are people who have experienced God, God’s loved us when we have blown it, God has forgiven us and saved us from a lot of different backgrounds and He can save you, too.

Lay down your pride and rebellion and come to Him.

Bullpen:

- Paul recognized that the plan of God gave him a mission, to bring those far from God to Him. And he said that it was according to an eternal purpose (v. 11), and that this gave him boldness (v. 12), and even when he was suffering and looked like he was staring at impossible odds and in the face of seemingly certain defeat, he could be confident God would make him successful.

The Clarity is the Mission of the Church

¹For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

⁷Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power... ⁹to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,

¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- “Stewardship”
- We have a stewardship.
- You don't need a voice; you have a verse.
- Other nations

- 16,349 ethno-linguistic peoples; 6,647 unreached people groups (less than 2% Christian). Of the 6,647 unreached people groups, 1,662 are unengaged.
- If you put them end to end it would stretch around the equator 25 times! Can you picture 25 lines as long as your eye could see... of Christless people, trampling endlessly toward hell? Let that vision stay with you day and night.”
- I want letters from you that talk about this vision that sent you the field
- Those far from God who live here

¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. ¹³So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- We have boldness; not only in our standing with God, but for our mission (vs. 13). So, go!

Research:

- Where does racism come from?

Quotes:

“And people who do not know the Lord ask why in the world we waste our lives as missionaries. They forget that they too are expending their lives... and when the bubble has burst they will have nothing of eternal significance to show for the years they have wasted.”

“We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.” John Stott

“His authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all the nations. His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And His presence with us leaves us no other choice.”

- John Stott

The church that does not evangelize will fossilize.”

-Oswald J. Smith

Why be involved in the church? Because that's the only way you'll know Christ and experience His power? Plus, you have a role to play...

- a. There is a part of Christ in you that I need to see, and if you don't engage in the body, I won't see it.
 - b. And Ephesians says... this is not just for us.¹⁰ **so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.** The angels and other beings in the universe (if there are any) see in us the beauty and the grace and power of God.
 - c. The church is God's demonstration community for all eternity.
 - d. The angels see God taking Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female – who together murdered the Messiah and were worthy only of Hell and who previously hated each other– and making them, by that very cross of murder, one spiritual body in Jesus Christ. They see him breaking down every barrier, every wall that divides and making all believers from every age and circumstance one in an indivisible, intimate, and eternal union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And it brings glory to God.
- (d)
- (e) Churches should be a picture of the new humanity in Jesus
- a. We should welcome diversity (Bill Hybels)
 - b. We should adapt to culture:
 - i. My discussion with a college student
- (f) One Spirit... When the Spirit breathes, He breathes in the body.

¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

When Christianity was born, Westerners were not insiders but outsiders, about as outside as you could get... and when a university professor presents Christianity as a Western-born thing that borders on intellectual dishonesty.

(In my research this week on barbarians I found a sight where you type in your name and it tells you the equivalent of your name in Barbarian. Veronica was "dragonrider"; James David meant 'bestly drinker of blood')

- People who know Christ have had that wall torn down because we realize we were all on the outside, and Jesus came and rescued us.
- Tall and short... David Thompson

- People on the inside of our wall are good; people on the outside are bad.
- We maintain the walls of our religion or our nationality or our academic achievement because that separates us from the rest of humanity.

- It also addresses a cultural myth that I hear repeated over and over, especially in academic circles, and that is that Christianity is a Western thing that we're imposing on the rest of the world.
- That claim, though often repeated, borders on intellectual dishonesty... The Gospel is not a Western thing; if anything, it was a Middle Eastern thing that was adopted by the West...

and even now the Gospel is thriving most in places outside of Western countries.

- Two analogies that are used for the church in this chapter:
 - The church is Christ's body;
 - A building where God's Spirit dwells.

Both of those analogies show you something significant. And that is that n

- Many of you treat the church like a Barnes and Noble... go in, get a cup of coffee, read the book... no need to buy it, it's here. and if you want more, you can come back again... no need to be out any money, except the cup of coffee, and we give you that for free here. The problem is the church is nothing like a store.

If you're on the left, you think people on the right are backwards and stupid, if you're on the right you think people on the left are depraved, dishonest, and illogical;