

EPHESIANS

LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

Sermon 4 - Ephesians 3:1-13 - Confident Freedom

1. Do you have a story to tell when you received something you definitely did not deserve?
2. In the skit we saw, why was Peter convinced that it would take the rest of his life to make up for what he had done in denying Jesus?
3. Define 'grace'.

Read again Ephesians 3:1-13

By grace Paul came to understand Jesus

Acts 9 tells the story when Peter first met Jesus and Acts 13:13ff, the story of when Paul first took the Gospel to Gentiles. So at some point, what was once a 'mystery' was clearly revealed to Paul, namely (v6), 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.*

4. Genesis 12:1-3, Psalm 96:3, 7, 10 and Isaiah 2:1-4 all talk about the nations - ie Gentiles, being blessed, hearing of the glory of God and flocking to Jerusalem. What then does Paul say here that it was a mystery 'not made known to people in other generations'?
5. What are the implications for our understanding of present day geographical Israel? (*Please don't spend too much time on and or allow it to keep you from the main points of this passage.*)
6. Why does Paul describe the fact that he received this revelation as the 'administration of God's grace'?
7. Would a couple of people in your group share the story of how they came know of Jesus, by God's grace?

By grace Paul came to tell others about Jesus

8. By God's grace he *received* the gospel, why does he also see it as a grace to *proclaim* the gospel?
9. How does he describe the gospel he preaches? Why does he describe it that way and what is there here for us to learn?
10. Sometimes we see it as a pain to share the gospel; or we think we are being a pain to the people we want to share it with. How does this help us to see this differently?

By grace we can now approach God in confident freedom

11. How would you respond if I told you, you can approach the Queen with freedom and confidence? How would Prince Charles respond to that news?
12. What does it mean that we can approach God with freedom and confidence? What is the basis on which we can approach him this way?
13. What keeps us from approaching God with freedom and confidence? What might it mean for our relationship with him if we embraced all that this means for us?

Pray that we might fully revel in God's grace to us - grace by which we came to know Jesus and grace by which we share in making Jesus known. Pray we'll revel in all that it means to approach God in freedom and confidence.

Date: 29th April 2018
Services: 730, 930 Peregrian
Series: Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel
Passage: Ephesians 3:1-13
Title: Confident Freedom
Outline:

1. By grace Paul came to understand Jesus
2. By grace Paul came to tell others about Jesus; and
3. By grace we can now approach God in freedom and confidence

- I wonder if you recall times in your life when you've received something you simply didn't deserve.
- May be as a **child** you were mucking up all day, but still, you were treated to a meal out and the movies
- Maybe in your **teens**, you hurt a friend quite significantly, but they forgave you and gave you a magnificent necklace for your birthday...
- Maybe when you were **first married**... you remember a day when you completely mucked something up at home and then made a total mess of trying to resolve the resultant conflict, but the next day your spouse came home with a magnificent bouquet of flowers and told you of plans for a holiday you'd only dared dream about!
- Perhaps in your **career**, you know those times when you've made a serious error of judgement which cost your company some money... and even through you approached the boss with fear and trepidation, you actually found kindness and understanding and the bonus you had been promised was still given...
- Receiving something you simply didn't deserve...
- We have a word for that... the Bible's word is "**grace**"...
- And we've seen a little of that these past few weeks in our work from Ephesians...
- ...because - do you recall from the beginning of ch 2 - we were in fact dead through our sin - but God made us alive in Christ... a work of his grace...
- ...Jesus was raised from the dead - and we **too** have been raised from the dead - and this not because we worked hard for it... but all of God's **grace**... *it is by grace you have been saved* wrote Paul...
- Here's something a little different this morning...
- I have a **video** to show you, which I think is a beautiful explanation of God's grace...
- The scene is Jesus and the Apostle Peter after the resurrection...
- I don't think it needs any further explanation...
- **RUN VIDEO** You can see the video in preview mode here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhoFEuw2GPA>

-
- "What I did in denying you Jesus, was unforgivable", said Peter.
 - "no Peter" - what I did on the cross was to make what was **unforgivable; forgivable**...
 - That's **grace** Peter... that's **grace**. //

- In our passage from Ephesians this morning, Paul wants us to see a little more of God's grace... because:
 1. **By grace** he came to understand Jesus
 2. **By grace** he came to tell others about Jesus; and
 3. **By grace** we can now approach God in confident freedom...
- First, let's see

1. BY GRACE HE CAME TO UNDERSTAND JESUS

- Have a look with me in v2... *surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by way of revelation....*
- Paul was on the road to Damascus... to arrest and kill off a few more Christians.
- Suddenly a light from the sky blinded him and a voice asked, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
- Instead of arresting Christians, God's glorious grace arrested **Saul**... Jesus revealed himself to Saul in a magnificent way... and he became not only a follower of Jesus but an apostle of Jesus – one sent out in Jesus' name.
- And then we discover in Acts 13, when in Pisidian Antioch, *because* the Jews had rejected the news of Jesus raised from the dead, Paul announced that he would take it to the **Gentiles**.
- It had been revealed to Paul – in the words of Ephesians 3:6, that *the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus*. This was the reality we explored in some detail last week.
- By **grace** Paul came to **understand** Jesus
- By **grace** he came to understand that the **gospel** of Jesus was for **Gentiles** as well as **Jews**.
- Brothers and sisters... I know we're covering similar ground to the last couple of weeks... but let it sink in **again** this morning... if you are a **Christian**... it is by God's grace.
- It's by **grace** YOU have come to understand who Jesus is
- It's by **grace** you repented of a life without him
- It's by **grace** you have put him first in your life
- It's by **grace** you seek to live your life entirely for his glory
- It's by **grace** – through the death and resurrection of Jesus – that you are forgiven and have eternal life...!
- You've **received** something you simply **didn't deserve**
- That's **grace** //
- What Jesus did on the cross, is make something that was **unforgivable; forgivable!**

2. BY GRACE, PAUL CAME TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT JESUS

- Have a look with me at v7 *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power...* he goes on: *Although I am the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ...*
- Not only does Paul see God's revelation to him as God's grace, he reckons the very fact that he gets to preach this gospel is a grace from God – especially as he now sees himself as 'the least of all God's people'.
- And how does he describe his role to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles? – he says he gets to

preach to the Gentiles, *the unsearchable riches of Christ!* //

- ...what an absolutely beautiful description! /
- Now friends – this is not the 1st century... we are not **apostles** and most of us are not **evangelists**...
- But I know many of us long for others to know Jesus...
- And when we share **anything** of our Christian lives with others..
- ...when we invite other people to **church**...
- When we say something **sensible** about Jesus...
- ... be clear on this...
- We are not **imposing** upon others some **weird** and wonderful **philosophy**...
- Nor are we wanting to **impose** our **beliefs** on **others**...
- No – we actually – like **Paul** – have the “**unsearchable riches of Christ**” to **share** with them...
- That’s why it’s called “good news...”
- We have Jesus’ **love**, his **kindness**, his **compassion**, to share
- We have his **grace and mercy** to share
- We have his invitation to receive **forgiveness** to share
- We have his **abundant life** to share... !!
- **Unsearchable riches**... yes in fact, *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms*... /
- And by God’s **grace**... he calls us to live such **distinctive** lives – such **radically different** lives – as disciples of Jesus that people see some of those ‘unsearchable riches of Christ’ in **us**!!
- Don’t ever apologise for wanting to share Jesus with others... don’t hold back... because what we are sharing is the most precious treasure in all the world!! Unsearchable riches!
- And I just want you to notice something amazing and astonishing here...
- Look with me at **v11**: *God’s 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*...
- can you get your head around this?
- We the church, are involved in making known the wisdom of God to the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms!!”
- Who are **they**?
- We don’t really **know**!! Angels and archangels? Cherubim and seraphim?
- How **wonderful**, that **supernatural beings** are **also** seeing the riches of God’s grace!
- And part of what we’re on about as church is to let the heavenly beings know the wisdom of God – the plan of God – the riches of Jesus!
- We are to think of them as spectators of the drama of salvation, as God fulfils his plan to bring everything under Christ! //
- All of God’s grace
- By **grace** Paul came to understand Jesus
- By **grace** he gets to proclaim Jesus
- And finally, by **grace**,

3. WE GET TO APPROACH GOD IN FREEDOM AND CONFIDENCE

- Approaching God with **freedom** and **confidence**!
- Can I ask you, is that the way you **approach** God? With **freedom** and **confidence**?
- We **can** – and we **should**.
- Let's explore this for a moment.
- If I told you that you could approach Queen Elizabeth with freedom and confidence... I wonder how you'd respond?
- if I assured you that you could turn up to Buckingham Palace, give your name to the men with the funny hats, and that they would admit you immediately into the presence of Her Majesty, how do you think you'd respond?
- Head down to Brisbane and hop on a plane?
- My guess is that you would be pretty hesitant.
- Even if you turned up at the palace, you'd be feeling pretty anxious... would she really see me? Freedom and confidence... are you sure?
- I actually find people are pretty hesitant to approach **me**... though I've assured people I'm available and would love to meet up with them....
- ...let alone approaching the Queen!!
- No – we would think ourselves as **undeserving** to see the Queen... that she's got better things to do with her time and way more important people to meet...
- ...and that we are only commoners... from the far country in any case...
- What happens when it comes to God, is we think... well, we think like Paul thought here – "I am the least of all people..."
- ...we think of our failures... our rebellion...
- ...we think of all those times when we've gone our own way and done our own thing...
- And we think of God in all his power and greatness and holiness...
- ...and ask – is it really possible to approach him with freedom and confidence?
- Fear and trepidation – yes
- But freedom and confidence?
- And what we fail to realise is that all we've explored over the last two weeks... all we saw back in January... HAS to mean we can approach God in this way...
- If we've been **chosen, adopted, redeemed, informed and sealed**...
- If we have the ability to know God **better**... if we have a **guaranteed inheritance** with God and a **glorious hope**... and if we have access to the **same power** which raised **Christ** from the **dead**...
- ...and if we **too** have been raised from the dead and seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly realms....
- And if it is all by **grace** and not by **works**...
- ...and if the law with its regulations has been removed by Jesus' death... so that we who were **far off** have been brought **near**...
- ...if we are now the temple of God in whom he dwells by his **Spirit**...
- ...then it stands to **reason** that **we can approach God with freedom and confidence!!**

- ...and we should revel in the amazing place of privilege we've been placed! ///
- Can you imagine Prince Charles being told that he can approach the Queen with freedom and confidence?
- He'd surely react by saying something like - of course I can - I'm the Queen's son and heir...!
- Brothers and sisters - because of what Jesus has done for us - we are sons and daughters of the King of Kings... and heirs of eternal life with him.... Of **course** we can approach him with freedom and confidence!!
- By **grace**... Paul came to understand Jesus
- By **grace**... Paul was given the mission to proclaim this news to the Gentiles
- By **grace** - in **Christ** - through **faith in him** - we can approach God with **freedom** and **confidence!!!**