

FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, HIS CHURCH & THE NATIONS

Part 2: Ephesians 3:3-6

In one of his sermons, Pastor and author John Piper said: *"The church of Jesus Christ is the most important institution in the world. The assembly of the redeemed, the company of the saints, the children of God are more significant in world history than any other group, organization, or nation. Lift up your eyes, O Christians! You belong to a society that will never cease, to the apple of God's eye, to the eternal church of our Lord, Jesus Christ."* This is the very sum and substance of Paul's message of encouragement to the believers in Ephesus in chapter 3:1-13. The focal lesson of this passage is this beautiful truth: *Since God's eternal purpose in Christ is to make known His glory through the church, we must live our lives for the sake of Jesus Christ, His church and the nations.* In his exhortation to the Ephesian church, we learn three compelling reasons why we should never lose heart in the midst of suffering and opposition. Ephesians 3:3-6 provides the first reason:

1. *God's salvation plan for His church is being fulfilled.*

Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that his imprisonment for Christ and his suffering for their sake would never thwart nor hinder God's salvation plan for His church (Eph. 3:1-2). Paul identifies two significant ways by which God's saving purpose is being fulfilled:

a. *Unveiling of the Mystery that*

One of the keywords that Paul repeatedly used as he encouraged his readers is the term mystery (Eph. 3:3-4,6). In its biblical sense, mystery refers to the secret plan or counsel of God which was previously hidden or unknown but is now revealed by God to His people. Paul made clear that he came to know this mystery by divine revelation (Eph. 3:3; 1:9). He called this mystery as the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4). The ultimate mystery behind God's plan of salvation is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and the Messiah. In his conversion testimony, Paul always emphasized that God's way and plan of salvation is through the incarnation, sinless life, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 26:9-23; Matt. 16:21-23; Luke 24:15-27). Since man's ultimate problem is rooted in sin, God's ultimate solution is salvation through His Son Jesus Christ alone.

b. *of Believing Jews and Gentiles as Christ's Church*

Paul further says that this mystery of Christ in its full meaning and extent was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, referring to those people living in Old Testament era prior to the coming of Jesus (Eph. 3:5; Gen. 12:3, 22:18; Isa. 11:10, 49:6). But by His Spirit, God has now clearly and fully revealed this mystery to the New Testament church. This revealed mystery is that in Christ and through the gospel, believing Jews and Gentiles are one and equal in God's sight, in His kingdom and in His family (Eph. 3:6). Because of what Jesus has accomplished through His death and resurrection, both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are united as the one church of Christ who are equal heirs of God, equal members of Christ's body and equal partakers of God's promise in Christ.
