

Eph 3:7-8: Ministry by Grace of God

Paul has finished explaining the mystery of the gospel of Christ, that we are saved and made New Creations in Christ, and that everyone, Jews and Gentiles in the church have the same Holy Spirit. That it was Paul's mission to explain this mystery that had been revealed to Him by God, So he can reveal it to the Church. Now, Paul will discuss his placement in the ministry.

of which I was made a minister The word diakonos is used to denote the relationship of a servant to his master, and emphasizes the activity of a servant on behalf of their master. On behalf of Christ, Paul is declaring the mystery that has been revealed to him, so that he can share this mystery with the church. He didn't take it upon himself.

Paul is saying that God made him a minister to serve in this way. Paul considers himself a servant of the gospel: "Of this gospel I was made a minister."

Paul approaches his work as service.

Paul doesn't use the Greek word for a pastor, which he could have, but rather diakonos, meaning a servant of others. Paul approaches his work as that of service, rather than that of status.

Paul knows that his ability to minister is God-given.

according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me.

Paul serves "according to the gift of God's grace." His ability to receive the revelation of the mystery of God, the gospel of Christ to both Jews and Gentiles is based on the his spiritual gifts, and the leading of the Holy Spirit in ministry. Paul's not going to take credit himself for this, because it's all God's work, he's just doing what he's been told, as any good servant would, and using the resources that his Master has given him to accomplish the task, as any good steward of what God has given him would.

God's Work, God's Way

His ministry is "in accordance with, in conformity with, corresponding to" the gift from God. In other words, he is doing God's Work, God's Way. Paul wanted to be the apostle to the Hebrews, his Brethren the Jews. He was taught from his youth at the feet of Gamaliel, the leading Rabbi-teacher of his day. He had every expectation of sitting on the Sanhedrin, the religious Congress, one day. But Jesus had sent Paul to preach salvation to the Gentiles, that is the ministry that he is going to carry out, to the best of his ability.

Paul had the right education, background, pedigree, but everything changed when Paul met Jesus.

When God called Paul, he became the Apostle to the Gentiles, even though He was nearly at the top of the Jewish religious world, being a Hebrew of Hebrews. Before he was converted Paul (Saul) **was**

"advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal 1:14), so God had to literally strike him down on the Damascus Road in Acts 9 because his zealousness of the Jewish law, which by his day had become amalgamated with man's laws and traditions which they had made equal to God's law, which Jesus rebuked them for (Matt 15:9). Paul is always careful that everyone knows where his doctrine is from—and his former Pharisee teachers get no credit. He tells the church at Galatia that he was an apostle, but Gal 1:1 **"not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead"** and Gal 1:11 so **"the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel"** Paul says (Gal 1:12 **"I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ"**).

Paul tells the Gentiles that he received his apostleship, and revelation of the Gospel directly from Jesus Christ. The lesson here is that we may learn a lot from other people about God, and may even be brought closer to the truth by them. But a relationship With God is only made possible by saving Faith in the work of salvation by Jesus on the Cross, and the understanding that God accepted the atoning sacrifice of Jesus through the evidence that God raised Him from the Dead. Our only infallible teacher is Jesus, the Word of God incarnate, and our only true Guide to Jesus who will never make mistakes, or take a wrong turn is the Holy Spirit whom He has sent to grow us in Christ, and get ever closer to Him!

According to the Grace

The standard of Paul's service corresponded to the gift of the grace of God that was given to him. Paul knows that he has been saved by the gracious gift of God. He knows that his salvation and his ministry is unearned and undeserved, a debt that he can never repay. He has received God's unmerited, undeserved favor, both in the provision of salvation for sinners through Christ's sacrificial death. In Phil 3:4-6, Paul lays out the case that he could make based on a lifetime of works, saying **4 although I myself could boast as having confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he is confident in the flesh, I have more reason: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.** According to the best righteousness to be found in the Law of Moses, as he understood it at the time, he was blameless. Yes, by God's grace, God has shown him a much better Way through a personal relationship with God through the Saving, Atoning Grace made possible by Jesus on the cross (see Phil 3:7-8).

according to the working of his power

The final phrase "given me by the working of his power" expresses the idea of ministry as empowered by and directed by spiritual gifts. His mission was to strengthen the Church, and in particular Gentile believers in Christ so that they too could fulfill their God-given calling and ministry for Christ. And, just like all of us, Paul was called to Phil 2:12b-13 **work out [his] your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.** It's God's desire and His Will in what He has Called you to do that is important. Find out from God what you are supposed to be doing, and do it! Paul credits his ability in ministry to the power, and ability to act on our behalf. Because of God's dynamic power and ability, Paul is able to accomplish the work that God has for him to do. And God gave him what he needed. Where God guides, God provides.

3:8a to me, who am less than the least of all the saints, was this grace given. As we look back in amazement at the life of the Apostle Paul, knowing that he wrote at least 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament, or about 28% of it. And knowing his unparalleled education in the scriptures from his youth and training under Gamaliel, we are amazed that Paul would call himself "less than the least of all the saints!". But we have the hindsight of seeing who God transformed Paul to be. Paul knew who he really was, and he wasn't shy about it. One of the wonderful things about Paul is that he didn't spend a lot of time trying to hid and cover his sin. Like King David before him, he wrote down his struggle with his fleshly, sinful nature, as it warred against the New Spiritual Nature that had been born in him in Christ (see Rom 7:14-25). His solution was not will-power, not more struggle on his part, but to allow the Holy Spirit to work in him to transform him into the image of Christ, instead of listening to his flesh trying to conform him to the world. He chose every moment of every day to do what was right in God's eyes, not his own, to walk as Jesus walked, not as he wanted to, and so slowly, day by day God was sculpting him into who God wanted him to be. Paul of all people knew that he wasn't perfect, but that he wanted to continue to strive for the perfection found In Christ as we imitate Him.

Paul was amazed that God would use him, giving him not only the responsibility but also the power to communicate this gospel to people. This is the attitude with which we all should conduct our lives in Christ.