March 19, 2016

Ephesians 3:1-13

Whether you are the athlete, professor, artist, or engineer, if you are identified with Christ, you are now united as a family - brother and sister - in one body, the Church. Within this new family, your previous heritage is now gone - biological heritage, national citizenship, race, or caste. There are no dividing walls but rather you are now one in Christ. As Paul once said, "We have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view…anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Cor. 5:16-17)

Questions

1. Read Ephesians 3:1-13.

2. Due to Paul's revelation, he feels a weight and responsibility to share with other people. If we have some form of revelation but refuse to give ourselves away it is a form of self-preservation. Paul said he could not preserve himself. He had to put his reputation and self-preservation at risk because he had a responsibility.
   a. In what ways do you go into self-preservation mode?
   b. In what ways do you put yourself at risk?

3. In verse 7, Paul talks about his privilege and responsibility to share the good news. Paul considers sharing the gospel as a privilege even though this responsibility is going to lead to suffering. Why would someone take on a responsibility that causes his or her life to get worse and say it is a *good* thing?

4. In verse 8, Paul says he is "the least deserving of all God's people," yet he doesn't use his history as an excuse to not participate in God's plan. What excuses are you tempted to use to not put yourself out there?

5. In verse 10, Paul says the church is on display and is a trophy case for the supernatural world to see God's handiwork of redemption. As you reflect on your life this past week, what are areas in your life God has on display for the unseen world to be amazed by?

6. Think about God's Kingdom – how does your life get worse so that other lives get better – both spiritual and practical? For whom do you suffer?