



# a passion for unity

Whether you agree with his tactics or not, you've got to agree that Nelson Mandela is a fanatic! Even now, every day he wakes at 4:30am and works a 12 hour day. He's been fanatical most of his life about getting rid of racial barriers which separate blacks and whites in South Africa. Because of his passion - and perhaps his tactics - he was sentenced to life in prison. Before going to prison he said this...

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Unity is a noble ideal. And perhaps some would think, "what a waste of a life." Is it all really worth it? What's the point of being stuck in Prison when things haven't changed? Doesn't it show what a hopeless cause he's fighting for?

It's these kinds of questions the Ephesians are asking about the Apostle Paul. As we saw last week, Paul has been gripped by the gospel - the message that Jesus has taken away the barriers for non-Jews to join Jews in God's family, "the church." Paul is so passionate about this message of the unity of the church that he's gone to jail for it. (Remember Acts? The Jews are so angry that Paul is mixing with Gentiles and not teaching them to obey the Jewish law that they have him arrested!)

Look ahead at Ephesians 3:13. Reading between the lines, how do the Ephesians feel about Paul being in Jail?

## A Message worth suffering for...

In 3:1 Paul starts expanding on the great news of chapters 1 and 2 (For this reason...) but gets side tracked. Some of the Ephesians seem to be discouraged about Paul being in jail. Maybe they're wondering what kind of a message gets people thrown into jail. So Paul takes a moment to let them know why the gospel message is worth serving time for.



### Read Ephesians 3:1-13

Write down what each of these sets of verses have to say about the message Paul is so fanatical about...

1. [vv2&3]\_\_\_\_\_.
2. [vv4&5]\_\_\_\_\_.
3. [v6]\_\_\_\_\_.
4. [v7-9]\_\_\_\_\_.
5. [v10]\_\_\_\_\_.
6. [v11]\_\_\_\_\_.

### A Great Message For Us

1. According to v2, all this was not meant for Paul alone. Who else is it meant for?
2. Looking over the list in the previous part, what things should make us excited about this message?
3. Reread v10. What amazing things in particular are contained in this verse?

In a divided, hate-filled world, how does the **Church** show God's wisdom?

4. How should the overall passage help us when we get ridiculed for our faith?
5. Is this worth us suffering for? Why then do we often shy away from such things?

### The Prayer of Response

Having explained why the Gospel is worth suffering for, he goes back to responding to chapters 1 and 2 (3:16... "For this reason...").

### Read Ephesians 3:16-21

1. How would you describe his mood in this section? (See for example, v14; and then look for other emotional words too).
2. When should we get emotional about God's truth? When do you?

Paul's prayer has three parts...

- 1) That they'd have the full experience of God;
- 2) That they'd know the unknowable;
- 3) That God would get all the glory.

Notice with the first of these how he mentions, Father, Spirit, Son.

What does each member of the Trinity do?

What is the goal of God's actions (v 17)?

What is the unknowable thing that Paul wants them to know (v17b-19)?

What happens when we come to know it (v19)? What exactly does this mean?

Reread vv20&21. Why does Paul say that God deserves all the glory?

Why is it stupid for you and I to seek personal glory?

### **Remembering Nelson Mandela...**

It's amazing isn't it when people like Nelson Mandela get a fire in their belly about something, and the fire just won't go out. Paul was like that too. All this was so important and so amazing that for him nothing was more important, not even prison and ultimately death.

### **Think it through**

What makes you fired up... and even fanatical?

God's intention is that all kinds of people are brought together **in love** within his remarkable church. This church, built together as a temple for God's Spirit, is to tower in the universe as a picture of what God's love is all about!

How passionate are you about the unity of your church?

