

Heirs together

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations... This mystery is 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... Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

Years ago, I was visiting a pastor and his family and I remember my surprise when he remarked at how much he enjoyed his church council meetings. His voice was filled with delight as he marvelled over the creative ways God was using his body of believers. Too often, however, this is not the case. You can probably recall acrimonious church meetings as clearly as I can, when words are used as weapons and the character of people is called into question or even maligned. How God must weep at such divisions and strife.

Paul preaches God's peace and grace in his letter. He has moved from speaking of Christ's work of individual salvation and reconciliation to God's formation of the Church, which is for all, whatever our race. Paul stresses this aspect of unity with his repetition of the word 'together' (v. 6): Gentiles are heirs together with Israel and together they are members of one body; together they share in the promise of Christ.

That the Gentiles were deemed equal with their fellow Jewish believers must have been a surprise, for the newcomers would not have expected this level of equality. Through Christ, however, all divisions cease—Paul points the way to a new order. He makes known what was once hidden, administering the grace of God to the least in his kingdom.

Today, join me in praying for peace and unity among believers, that we will be God's sweet fragrance, inviting the world back to its Creator.

Reflection

'Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:12).

ABP