

I. REVIEW OF THE BOOK OF EPHEISANS

- A. The epistle can be simply outlined like this: chapters 1–3 reveal the believer's wealth and identity in Christ; chapters 4–6:9 show how to walk it out practically corporately; and chapters 6:10–18 teach how to stand firm in it and engage in spiritual warfare against the forces that seek to oppose it.
- B. In today's reading we are still looking at the identity and wealth of the church and more specifically of it corporately.

II. REVIEW OF LAST WEEK'S TEACHING

- A. Last week we explored together one of the clearest passages in the New Testament showing that Christ's work on the cross accomplishes both a vertical reconciliation with God, and a horizontal reconciliation with one another.
- B. We learned that this reconciliation of man with one another (jew and gentile) birth and created a new humanity with divine privileges including, being citizens of God's Kingdom, children in His house, and a holy temple of His Presence.

III. EPHESIANS 3:1-13

1. ***3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in***

God who created all things through Jesus Christ; ¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

IV. (VRS 1)

1. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you gentiles

- B. "For this reason" refers to what Paul had said in the first two chapters about God's blessings and spiritual wealth that are now the possession of both Gentile and Jewish believers.
- C. Paul called himself a prisoner of Christ because he wrote this letter while he was in house arrest in Rome. This is a reminder of the great price that many have paid in history in order to have the truths we have today.
- D. It also reminds me that many times the richest and deepest spiritual insights come to us when we are in the deepest valleys and seasons of testing like Paul was in when he wrote Ephesians.
- E. While we naturally desire mountaintop experiences, God often does some of His greatest work in us and through us in the hidden places of suffering, weakness, testing, and difficulty.
 - 1. Examples: Joseph gained wisdom in prison, David learned dependence in the wilderness, Elijah encountered God's gentle voice after a season of despair, and Paul received revelations (wrote 32% of the NT) while enduring afflictions.

V. (VRS 2)

1. ² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you

- B. Another translation reads "the responsibility" that I have to preach to the gentiles. This is a reminder that God calls us to be stewards of the things entrusted to us.
- C. A steward is a servant entrusted by God to manage His resources, gifts, responsibilities, and kingdom assignments faithfully for His glory, knowing

that one day he will give an account to the Lord. Everything we have ultimately belongs to God.

1. According to the New Testament we are called to steward God's mysteries, the gospel, God's grace, our relationships, spiritual gifts and callings, authority, our time, money, and even our physical bodies and health.

VI. VRS 3-4

1. ***how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)***

- B. One of Paul's primary calling was to receive previous revelation that was not given to the Old Testament writers. In this context the mystery mentioned in our reading was specifically that Gentiles and Jews were equal partners in the church

VII. MYSTERIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. ***"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."-1 Cor 4:1***

- B. A mystery in the NT are truths that were previously concealed that have now been revealed to us by the Spirit.
- C. They include the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:11), Israel's national blindness (Rom 11:25), salvation through Jesus Christ (Rom 16), God's word, the rapture, Godliness, the incarnation (1 Tim 3:16), lawlessness, (2 Thess 2:7), Christ and the Church relationship (Eph 5:32), Christ in us the hope of Glory (Coloss 1:26), the seven stars (Rev 1:20) and the Harlot Babylon. (Rev 17)

VIII. (VRS 5)

1. ***⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:***

- B. Paul tells us that the revelation of mysteries were first given to and proclaimed by apostles and prophets.

C. This statement confirms that there were active apostles and prophets in Paul's day which I believe are still present today

1. APOSTLES

- a) An apostle (from Greek *apostolos*, meaning "one who is sent out") is a person commissioned and sent with authority to represent and act on behalf of another.
- b) The role has several dimensions including being a witness of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus through signs and wonders, laying the foundations of pioneering works of the church, and helping the church see the big picture of God's redemptive story.

2. PROPHETS

- a) The primary role is to communicate revelation from God (the word of the Lord) for the strengthening, guidance, equipping, and edification of God's people.

IX. (VRS 6)

- 1. ***⁶that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel***

B. Paul then highlights the primary mystery that he has been unpacking to his readers. The will of God to bring both Jew and Gentile into salvation creating one new redeemed humanity and what is now known as "the church"

X. (VRS 7)

- 1. ***⁷of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.***

B. Paul calls the grace of God a gift, but also how that gift is the source of power that effectively worked in him. Paul viewed grace as more than God's kindness that saves, but also God's power that enables us to be ministers (servants) of God's will, especially the mystery being spoken of.

- 1. ***But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.-1Cor 15:10***

XI. GRACE AND GIFTS

- A. The grace of God and the gifts of God are inseparably connected in the life of the believer. **Grace is the source; gifts are the expression.**
- B. Grace saves us, empowers us, sustains us, and flows through us to bless others. The gifts God gives each one of us are simply the various ways His grace is manifested through our lives for the glory of Christ and the building up of His Church and service to others.
- C. You can often identify your spiritual gifts by recognizing where God's grace is especially evident in your life. Where He has gifted you, there is usually effectiveness, fruitfulness, and divine enablement. *Likewise, we sometimes discover areas where we are not gifted by recognizing the absence of that same grace and empowerment.*

XII. (VRS 8-9)

1. ***⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things ¹through Jesus Christ;***

- B. We see the humility of Paul in this statement which explains why the grace of God was working so powerfully in him and through him.

XIII. GRACE WORKS THROUGH HUMILITY NOT PRIDE

1. ***⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." -James 4:6***

- a) The word "resists" (Greek: *antitassō*) is a military term meaning to set oneself in battle against or to oppose.
- b) This is a sobering truth. James does not merely say *God dislikes pride*, he says *God actively opposes it*.

XIV. HUMILITY ATTRACTS GRACE

- A. *Paul's deep revelation of grace flowed from his deep understanding of humility.* He knew that God's grace is attracted to those who humble themselves before Him.

B. Humility does not earn God's grace; grace is always a gift. Yet humility positions us to receive what God freely gives. The humble heart recognizes its need for God, and that is why Scripture says God gives grace to the humble. Humility attracts grace not because it deserves it, but because it creates the posture to receive it.

XV. FIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF HUMILITY

1. IT RECOGNIZES ITS NEED
2. IT RECOGNIZES ITS DEPENDENCE ON GOD'S STRENGTH
3. IT WELCOMES CORRECTION AND REBUKE
4. IT EXALTS GOD OVER SELF
5. IT IS THE PLACE WHERE REAL AUTHORITY IS ENTRUSTED

XVI. WHERE DO YOU NEED GRACE IN YOUR LIFE? HUMBLE YOURSELVES AND HE WILL GIVE IT TO YOU IN ABUNDANCE