

***“Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy —
The Great Transition, The Glorious Sweep of God’s Abundant Grace — Part 20
Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules - Part 4”***

Acts 20:20, 28-32

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house ...

- ***We saw in our last two meetings how Luke includes the main points of Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders in his Acts 20 account. They are important and fundamental and I list them again here:***
 - ***Verse 21: Repentance and faith***
 - ***Verse 24: The gospel of the grace of God***
 - ***Verse 27: The whole counsel of God***
 - ***Verse 28: The church purchased with Christ’s own blood***
 - ***Verse 32: The word of his grace as the instrument of building up the Body***
 - ***Such a great summary indeed is given here by Luke. But Paul was teaching and preaching for nearly 3 years in and around Ephesus. How much more he must also have taught. But how much more he was to receive from the ascended Christ which he revealed in his letter to the Ephesians.***

Review: “Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules — Part 3”

There were two themes we saw last time as we looked at chapter 1 of the Ephesians letter and they were interwoven:

- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 1 — The Fundamentals of our Salvation***
- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 1 — Its Dispensational Significance***
- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Through This Letter — The Fundamentals of our Salvation***
 - ***Last time we did a high level survey of this magnificent letter noting that there are no signs, wonders and miracles referenced in this letter except for the prophetic and apostolic gifts of revelation to his***

chosen servants. Rather, it is the Mystery that is revealed there! This is that sacred secret concerning God's work apart from Prophecy's promises of Israel's headship as Prophecy had taught for so long. Here in these letters the major theme therefore is the contrast between Prophecy and the Mystery!

As last time, our goal in our study today will be to compare the Doctrines taught in the letters written after Acts 28 by a number of years, with what Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. There in those letters written after Paul's setting aside of Israel's national position, we read of grace doctrines that at that point had already been fully set into place by Almighty God. In the reading of those passages from the Ephesians we saw such different teaching from from what Luke recorded in Acts 20. Specifically, in the Acts account we see listed only five doctrines.

But in Ephesians chapter 1 we saw so very much more!

Eph. 1:1-7

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of **our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:**

4 **According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself**, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein **he hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

7 **In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;**

Here, in only 7 verses Paul reveals so much it is mind expanding and spiritually so uplifting for all of us drawn by the word of grace:

- ***Our positional blessings in Christ Jesus: 1:3ff***
- ***Our election and calling: 1:4***
- ***Predestination: 1:5***

- ***Full acceptance in Christ: 1:6***
- ***Redemption through Christ's shed blood according to the riches of his grace: 1:7***
- ***This goes far beyond what Luke recorded in Acts chapter 20, doesn't it? There was much listed there but there is so much more here, and in 8 verses!***
- ***And all of this secured "in Christ Jesus"! It is our "positional" standing "in Christ Jesus" that has made all the difference for us believers under grace. But the apostle must continue further in this song of praise and will reach a crescendo of spiritual music as he writes these words as he describes the dispensational significance of God's work in our salvation:***

Eph. 1:8-11

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Then, in verses 8-11 he continues:

- ***The mystery of his will: 1:9***
- ***The dispensation of the fullness of times: 1:10***
- ***The granting of an inheritance to us Gentiles (independently of Israel's ministry): 1:11, 14 & 18***
- ***The goal of God's working grace in us, hearing and believing the gospel, with the sealing of the Holy Spirit: 1:12-14***

Eph. 1:12-14

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,
14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

In verses 12-14, he then adds:

- *“In whom” secures even more strongly due the details listed here. After hearing the word of truth the gospel of salvation, he adds more and more: to the praise of his glory (not ours) / first trusting in Christ / believing / then sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*
- *Then, the final securing truth upon which all rests ...*
- *Christ’s resurrection power, 1:17-23, & the revelation of the church which is his body, verses 22-23, wherein all is secured.*

Then as he concludes the chapter, there is this wonderful passage with incomparable language never, I hope, to be never forgotten:

[Re-read] Eph. 1:17-23

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

- *This crescendo of spiritual song as the chapter ends lifts our hearts into the heavenlies, doesn't it? FOR IT IS ALL SECURED, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE, ALL OF IT, BY CHRIST'S GLORIOUS RESURRECTION AND TRANSLATION INTO HEAVEN'S GLORY! AMEN.*

Our Outline for Today (the same really as last time): Two Themes Interwoven:

- ***Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 2 — The Body and Our Membership Therein***
- ***Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 3 — The Revelation of the Mystery***
 - *The post-Acts 28 or "prison" letters of Paul include all of that and so much more. For after the Great Transition had ended as Paul strongly stated there in Rome, as he was free to express the fullness of God's working towards the Gentiles under grace, writing freely concerning the doctrines of grace as he knew them some considerable time later than the Acts 20 account could reveal:*

But now the apostle will explain the depths of the truth of our redemption under grace:

I. Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 2 — The Body and Our Membership Therein:

- *First the context of our redemption and then its essence:*
 - *Satan is presented as the Prince of this world: 2:1*
 - *The depths of sin in our old nature and his pending wrath towards the unsaved: 2:3*
 - *The heavenly blessings of being in Christ Jesus: 2:5-7*
 - *Salvation by grace through faith not of works: 2:8-10*

Eph. 2:1-3

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of

the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

- *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins ...”: What a statement indeed, what a thought! This is the apostle of the Gentiles writing from prison in Rome, some years after he met with the Ephesian elders on the island on his way to Jerusalem and a certain imprisonment as had been prophesied. Yet he was determined to go nevertheless.*
- *He writes here that all were bound by satan, the prince of this world, and living on a course of destruction as “the children of wrath”. All were included, whether the Gentiles to whom he writes, as well as the Jews (“we also”, and “others”).*
- *That was the context, now the essence of our redemption under grace will be described in some details. Once knowing the context, the essence may be revealed with great clarity as the apostle writes here:*

[READ] Eph. 2:4-10

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

- *“But God”, verse 4, was not content with that outcome and satan’s even partial victory. So “even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved), verse 5. God’s plan of*

redemption was most wonderful indeed. His sovereign purpose under grace has accomplished our eternal redemption “through Christ Jesus”.

- *Our salvation by Grace and not by works: Verses 5 & 8-10. Salvation is of God and not ourselves. We are reminded of that here. He accomplished it “together with Christ” and with him “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”, verse 6, that he might fully prepare for our eternal inheritance, “that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”, verse 7.*
- *Access to God and blessing for Gentiles was provided through Christ’s shed blood: 2:13-17*
- *And, both Jew and Gentile are “one” in Christ in his Body: 2:18-19*

[READ] Eph. 2:13-18

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

- *“But God ... but now”: There are so many dispensational contrasts here, if we would see them clearly. I trust that we will.*
- *The Jewish and Gentile conflict, directly stemming from “the law of commandments contained in ordinances”, verse 15, has been “abolished in his flesh” ensuring “peace” and creating “of twain one new man”.*

- ***And more, verse 16, “reconciliation unto God in one body”! So not only union between the two but with the Lord God, “by the blood of Christ”. Such a song of praise and glory to God such a great salvation is. And that we are the recipients “by his sovereign grace!” Amen and amen.***

The Dispensational Teaching Here in chapter 2:

- ***Again, our purpose is to show the depth and breadth of the Pauling teaching. What Paul told to Ephesian elders was the overview and summary of the foundation he had laid in his ministry in Ephesus during those three years. But now (5 years later ???) He teaches so much more that he had received since setting aside the Jews and Israel as recorded in Acts 28. And there are many dispensational changes highlighted here. But chapter 3 will reveal even more ...***

II. Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 3 — The Revelation of the Mystery:

- ***Remember, Paul’s letter is a song of praise to Almighty God. Let’s sing along as surely the angels were as they first heard of these truths and as they continue we can be sure to do so today nearly 2000 years later. How many saints of God have joined them in this song? Have we? And now, chapter 3 with the revelation of the sacred secret given to Paul and called here “the mystery”:***
 - ***The dispensation of the grace of God: 3:1-2***
 - ***The dispensation of the mystery the Christ: 3:3-4***
 - ***The nature of this sacred secret and its essence for Gentiles in particular: 3:5-6***
 - ***Paul, administrator of grace and conveyor of grace truth to the Gentiles: 3:7***
 - ***The eternal purpose of God — to make all see the dispensation - 3:8-11***

[READ] Eph. 3:1-7

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;
 (as I wrote afore in few words,
 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in
 the mystery of Christ)
 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of
 men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets
 by the Spirit;
 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same
 body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the
 grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his
 power.

- *The dispensation of the grace of God, verses 1-2: The dispensation of the grace of God was granted or gifted to Paul, apostle of the Gentiles. He was therefore the administrator of it. There is much to be concluded from this one truth. This is stated here in two verses, 2 & 7. Note also that this truth was “for” them, that is, for their salvation, growth, and benefit eternally.*
- *The “mystery dispensation” of the Christ, verses 3-4: This dispensation was a mystery or “sacred secret” until revealed to (and then through) Paul. It could not have been known otherwise as verse 5 goes on to state:*
- *The nature of this sacred secret and its essence for Gentiles in particular, even “fellow heirs” of the same Body, verses 5-6: Here two parts of the truth of the mystery dispensation are revealed and there is much more beyond this. These two are Jew and Gentile as co-partakers or co-heirs of God and of Christ and as equal members of the joint-body, the Body of Christ.*
- *Paul, administrator of grace and conveyor of grace truth to the Gentiles, verse 7, repeated from verse 2. Such a great gift was given to Paul, with many trials and sufferings accompanying it as we have seen.*
- *Paul gets very practical here while teaching much heavenly truth. He explains here the reason for his exceedingly great boldness in ministry — verse 12. What is the essence of it, and what applications might there be for each of us? Perhaps some hard questions but answers are needed, aren’t they?*

[READ] Eph. 3:8-12

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

- *The eternal purpose of God — to make all see the dispensation - 3:8-11 - wherein untold even “unsearchable” riches for Gentiles are revealed*
- *On earth unknown and unknowable until now, he writes - since they were “hid in God” from the beginning (and foundation — see Eph. 1:9, “the mystery of his will”) of the world (or age). They were part of his eternal plan but unrevealed and kept secret until given to Paul as part of his divine deposit. And his great purpose was to reveal them to “all”, even “the principalities and powers in heavenly places”. So this truth is not hidden in the Bible to be discover by mankind in due course of time as so many think. It was hidden in God himself!*
- *Then, even those dwelling in the heavenlies could not know. The dispensational significance of this cannot be minimized. But once God had unveiled the dispensation of the mystery, it became the responsibility of the Church which is his Body to fulfill this part of the eternal plan! Indeed, we are the intended vehicle to bring this knowledge to even angels, principalities and powers.*

There is an interesting contrast here ... It was Israel that was intended to bring the truth to the Gentiles and they failed. It is the church which is intended to bring

the truth to the heavenly beings, and it is failing so thoroughly to do that. Most are not even aware of the dispensation of God, the one which is of faith (see 1 Tim. 1:4 where “godly edifying” = “the dispensation of God”)

- ***Knowing all of this, we surely should be always empowered with boldness to minister this grace unfailingly everywhere. It was Paul’s great purpose to make it known. Is it ours as well? It is not too late to begin.***

Conclusions and Application:

Eph. 3:16-21 (To be continued next time & Concluding Reading): The big question therefore is this: What is God doing today? That is a dispensational question. Paul answers it here so powerfully and we should be encouraged by his answers as those in Ephesus surely were so long ago.

- *Not only the Spirit but also Christ dwells in the hearts of believers today: 3:16-17*
- *The depths of Christ’s love for the saints: 3:17-19*
- *The fullness of God: 3:19-21*

[READ] Eph. 3:13-21

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

- ***Oh, what blessings are in store for all of us as we take to heart by faith what the apostle has written. To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, to be filled with all the fullness of God!***
- ***And far, far more for all eternity as these last two verses reveal.***
- ***Amen! Enjoy the Lord all, and the eternal riches of his grace already available now.***