

***“Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy —  
The Great Transition, The Glorious Sweep of God’s Abundant Grace — Part 21  
Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules - Part 5”***

***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. But how much more he probably also taught. But there was also more that he was to receive from the ascended Christ as the full revelation of God’s free and full gift of grace was yet to be revealed to and through Paul. We find that in his letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians as we have been seeing here in our studies in the Ephesians.***

***Review: “Blessings Untold for the Ephesians But As Always, Grace Rules — Part 4”***

***There were two themes we saw last time as we looked at the beginning chapters of the Ephesians letter and they were interwoven:***

- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — The Fundamentals of our Salvation***
- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Their Dispensational Significance***
- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — The Fundamentals of our Salvation***
  - ***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 so much more teaching from compared with what Luke recorded in Acts 20. Specifically, in the Acts account we see listed only five doctrines, the necessity of repentance and faith, the preaching and believing of the gospel of the grace of God, the revelation of the whole counsel of God, the church purchased with Christ’s own blood, the Body of Christ, and finally, the word of his grace as the instrument of building up the Body.***

***But in Ephesians chapters 2 & 3 we saw so very much more!***

- ***The post-Acts 28 or “prison” letters of Paul include all of that and much more. For after the Great Transition had ended as Paul strongly stated there in Rome, 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. You might though wonder why he was limited earlier in bring to the churches all that he knew. It is actually pretty simple. During the Transition there were many saved Jews with an earthly Kingdom hope who as you might expect clung to their hopes regarding that promised and coming Kingdom. That was their promised inheritance. So he became all things to all men that he might save some as we saw earlier. Once Israel had been set aside that condition would no longer be there.***
- ***Before we continue, it must not be missed 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 with the emphasis on the Mystery or Sacred Secret given to Paul for the Church which is his Body!***

***Here in the Ephesians the apostle explains the depths of the truth of our redemption under grace, the very heart of the Mystery or Sacred Secret of God, planned for us Gentiles from even before the foundation of the world.***

- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 2 — The Body and Our Membership Therein***
- ***First the context of our redemption and then its essence. If we do not know what we have been saved from, how can we know what we are saved for:***
  - ***Satan is presented as the Prince of this world: verse 1***
  - ***The depths of sin in our old nature and his pending wrath towards the unsaved: verse 3***

- *The heavenly blessings of being in Christ Jesus: verses 5-7*
- *Salvation by grace through faith not of works: verses 8-10*
  
- *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. 2:8-10**

**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.

- *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 were provided through Christ’s shed blood, verses 12-13:*

**[READ ] Eph. 2:12-13**

**12** That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

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

- ***And, both Jew and Gentile are “one” in Christ in his Body, verses 18-19:***

***Eph. 2:14-19***

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.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

- ***“But God ... but now”: There are so many dispensational contrasts here, if we would see 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 this is and we are the recipients “by his sovereign grace!” Amen and amen.***
- ***Paul’s Testimony to the Ephesians — Chapter 3 — The Revelation of the Mystery - Part 1***
  - ***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: verses 1-2*
- *The dispensation of the mystery the Christ: verses 3-4*
- *The nature of this sacred secret and its essence for Gentiles in particular: verses 5-6*
- *Paul, administrator of grace and conveyor of grace truth to the Gentiles: verse 7*
- *The eternal purpose of God — to make all see the dispensation - verses 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?*

**Our Outline for Today (the same really as last time): The Revelation of the Mystery and Its Consequence for Us Gentiles:**

- *Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians – The Eternal Purpose of God, Its Revelation*
- *Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians – The Eternal Purpose of God, Its Consequence*

**I. Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians – The Eternal Purpose of God, Its Revelation:**

**[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 unsearchable riches of Christ”: See Rom. 11:33 where this is translated “past finding out”. It signifies that it cannot be found in other scripture no matter how hard or carefully one might look.*

- ***“the fellowship of the mystery”:* The best manuscripts here have “dispensation” in place of “fellowship” although the essential meaning would be clear in any case.**
- ***“which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God”:* “hid in God” and not merely hidden in the word. This intensifies the meaning even of verse 8. It was therefore the express purpose of God that the mystery truth not be known previously to its revelation to Paul.**
- ***“The eternal purpose of God — to make all see the dispensation - 3:8-11 - wherein untold “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!***
- ***So before the Mystery was revealed to Paul, even those dwelling in the heavenlies could not know! The dispensational significance of this must not be minimized. However, 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 that all, even those in the heavenlies might know! 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, but they failed dramatically to do what was so essential. Now 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 bold 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.*
- *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.*

## **II. Paul's Testimony to the Ephesians — The Eternal Purpose of God, Its Consequence:**

### **[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.**

- *Not only the Spirit but also Christ dwells in the hearts of believers today, verses 16-17. It is for us to learn of him as he dwells in each of us saints day by day as we redeem the time. Enjoying him is our privilege under the full riches of his grace!*
- *The dimensions of Christ's love for the saints is beyond knowledge but still available, verses 17-19. And then there is the matter of his inexhaustible love for us Gentile sinners! That is no match for his grace and its sufficiency. Amen?*



- *The fullness of God is available today, verses 19-21. There are no words apart from these that can adequately express such riches. "The fullness of God"!*
- *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!*
- *Again, the whole focus here is on knowing the depths of the love of Christ, NOT on trying again and again to become more like Christ was in his earthly ministry. Paul is our example today as he followed the heavenly Christ. And far, far more of this growth and abundance awaits us as his plan and purpose for us all is manifested fully for all eternity as we see here:*

***Eph. 3:21*** Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

**Conclusions and Application:**

- ***Amen! Enjoy the Lord all, and the eternal riches of his grace already available now.***