

***“The Dispensational Contrasts between Law and Grace
Are So Precious for Us Today”***

Theme Verses:

Phil. 1:10 . . . That ye may approve **things that are excellent [that differ]**; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

2 Tim. 2:14-16

14 Of these things put [them] in remembrance, charging [them] before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, [but] to the subverting of the hearers.

15 **Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

16 But shun profane [and] vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Transition (the many dimensions of the mystery dispensation):

All of these revelations of truth for today by the pen of the apostle of the Gentiles are so blessed indeed, are they not? Today we will expand Paul’s reasons for using this word “excellent” here in our theme verse:

[READ] Phil. 1:10 . . . That ye may approve **things that are excellent**; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

We should point out that this word in the original means “different” in the sense of “better”. And what a blessing it is (I could give my testimony again here) to properly see and understand the differences -- and not only the similarities. Remember my illustrations regarding marriage?

The many, many contrasts (the “betters”) may be expanded upon and the revelation of that makes up the majority of Paul’s letters.

Some of these differences (many “excellencies” indeed) we have already considered recently, some in detail:

- ***Not works but faith -- so, Not law but grace***
- ***Not following Christ but Christ in us***
- ***Not gaining eternal life having endured until the end and having kept all the commandments, but possessing eternal life now***
- ***Not bondage to a legal system but liberty in Christ***
- ***No longer a focus on Israel but new on the Body of Christ containing both Jews and Gentiles alike***
- ***Not the second coming as our hope but the rapture, the catching up***

- ***Not entering the kingdom someday but being already in the kingdom of his dear Son***
- ***Possessing every spiritual blessing now as opposed to a promise for the future Kingdom***
- ***Not signs and wonders but the abundance of grace***
- ***Not rituals but abundant life (shall live in them)***
- ***Not the Holy Spirit upon us but the Holy Spirit in us***
- ***The glorious opportunity to suffer with Christ as his dear children (Paul writes of this in several places)***

Our Outline Today:

- ***The Ministry Given To Paul Was A Gift Of God's Grace***
- ***At The Heart Of Paul's Ministry Is The Sacred Secret Or Mystery, The Dispensation Of The Grace Of God***
- ***The Content Of This Revelation: That The Gentiles Are Co-heirs And Of The Same Body And Promise As Believing Jews***
- ***The Ministry Given to Paul was Energized by God's Grace***

I. The Ministry Given To Paul Was A Gift Of God's Grace:

[READ] Eph. 3:1-2 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward..."

- ***Verses 1-2 & 7 indicate that this authority was bestowed upon this man as a matter of the working of God's grace ALONE! There were no works of any kind that would have warranted that choice. Rather, apart from that grace, Saul would have earned God's curse and destruction, not blessing, salvation, and the gift of the administration of grace. But instead, Saul (to be renamed Paul) was chosen to be the administrator of an entirely new and unprophesied dispensation to be initiated since Israel and God's plan for Israel was in process of being set aside (see Rom. 11). This was called here the Dispensation of the Grace of God since in it the abundant and always free grace of God would be dispensed into the believer for God's glory.***
- ***Compare this with his statement in 1 Tim. 1:11-16***

[READ] 1 Tim. 1:11-16

11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemmer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I

obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. [comment on “first” and on the sufferings of Paul, Acts 9:16]

- ***This ministry was “given”, “committed” to Saul (later renamed Paul), or, “entrusted” to him. And what a difference this made to the elect of that time and for all the centuries since Paul took on that most amazing challenge provided by the Lord of Glory and Grace that day so long ago on that road to Damascus. That ministry was given according to the grace of God and in no way was it based on Saul’s works as he points out there in 1 Tim. 1:13-14.***
- ***Here is the essence of grace - that he was “counted faithful”. “Counted”, is a pivotal word in the message of grace. We are counted as saints, righteous, complete, in Christ Jesus. We possess already, therefore, “Every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” - Eph. 1:3. Amen and amen!***
- ***This grace given to Paul was thoroughly “consistent” with the dispensation and the gospel message and communicates so powerfully the message of grace, that God has now received us, even sinners of the Gentiles!. The proof is that his worst enemy, Saul (Paul) was saved and of this Paul writes often. How much in contrast this is to the requirement under the law for such blessings to be granted. For under law obedience to that law was always required. How different it is today!***
- ***Only Paul uses this word “dispensation”. The word means “administration”, or based on the Greek root words, “house rule”. The responsibility of the house ruler is to provide everything needed by the home dweller, food, safety, comfort, encouragement, everything. Spiritually, Paul is saying, the same is true of him regarding the church today! But how many today have received this truth?***
- ***Paul’s knowledge of the dispensation or administration of the grace of God may be easily seen if we compare scripture with scripture. Apparently those to whom he was writing here knew well of this and he is simply reminding them here of this spiritual reality.***

- ***So Paul is administrator of this household. It is no wonder, with grace poured out towards him and in him, that he is the example for each of us also and the archetype of God's abundant grace for sinners!!***

II. At The Heart Of Paul's Ministry Is The Sacred Secret Or Mystery, The Dispensation Of The Grace Of God:

[READ] Eph. 3:3-5 "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 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"

- ***This revelation, this "word of truth", this revelation, is called a "mystery" because it was not made known previously (and couldn't be)! Only when God had set Israel aside could this be revealed.***
- ***When we study the word of God, rightly divided, we distinguish the various dispensational dealing of God with man. There are a number of these "dispensations" according to Scripture. They are all different in many ways from one another although those from Promise on (starting with Abraham) are about Israel as a nation, except for the current dispensation of Grace. Conscience is not Human Government, nor is it Promise, nor Law, nor Pentecostal, nor Kingdom, nor Grace. They are all different and must be distinguished or the truth is replaced with total confusion. Yes, there are similarities. But the differences are often great, and for us today, most blessed indeed.***
- ***The largest division in Scripture is between PROPHECY and MYSTERY!! Let's explain this. The one revealed the plan of God for Israel and the nations. Of course this was centered ultimately on Israel's Messiah, the seed of the woman of Prophecy, Gen. 3:15. Most of the other dispensations apart from the current one of Grace focus on Israel and on this promise, while each emphasizes a different working of God in man. This dispensation alone is for the church which is his body.***
- ***The word "Mystery" signifies that which was previously kept secret but has now been revealed. The mystery is not "mysterious". Once it is revealed it may be well understood with the help of the Spirit's teaching. To understand this, we need to consider the other terms used in connection with this, such as "not made known"***

- ***“Not made known” before, pure and simply that. How could this be communicated any more directly and straightforwardly? Well, Paul a little later does explain it even further when he says that this dispensation was “Hidden in God” - verse 9. This means it was not partially known or progressively revealed throughout the ages as so many have been teaching down through time. No, it was kept “hidden in God”!! Consider the full meaning of this. He does not say “hidden in the Bible” but “hidden in God” or not even revealed yet.***
- ***Each dispensation has a test. This is a critical part of each dispensational working of God. Without a knowledge of this it is simply not possible to enjoy the Lord according to his working today which is according to the wealth or riches of his grace! Amen. The key test in each dispensation is whether man will take God at his word and receive the blessings he is pouring out at that time.***
- ***Not rightly dividing the word obscures the truth, therefore. This is most critical to understand and know. It affects everything including the very gospel itself. There are many gospels revealed in scripture but only one gospel of the grace of God. And that is Paul’s gospel.***

[Comments?]

III. The Content Of This Revelation: That The Gentiles Are Co-heirs And Of The Same Body And Promise As Believing Jews:

[READ] Eph. 3:6 “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”

- ***First, we shall read some additional relevant verses:***
 - ***Rom. 11:32-33***
32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.
33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!
 - ***Eph. 2:14-16***
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:

- ***Some of the components of this “mystery” revelation are given here but there are even more besides:***
 - ***“Co-heirs”*: lit. “joint-heirs”**
 - ***“Of the same Body”*: lit. “joint Body”**
 - ***“Partakers of his promise”*: lit. “joint partakers”**
 - ***Note that this all about Jews and Gentiles together. This is not for the Jews only! Both needed the “reconciliation”!***
 - ***This is a new creation indeed. Jews and Gentiles together, not because we Gentiles have accepted the Jewish, Mosaic rule for ourselves as had often been the case in ages past, but because “one new Body” had been created when the “partition” was removed.***
 - ***Israel had to be set aside by God for that to fully be manifested.***
- ***This is the spiritual food needed by each of us today. There is no spiritual health possible without it! Will we take God at his word or not?***

IV. The Ministry Given to Paul was Energized by God’s Grace:

[READ] Eph. 3:7-9

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.

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:

- ***Here we have nearly a repetition of what is in verse 1, except this is about the empowering and the purpose Almighty God had for the Apostle Paul. This underscores the teaching, that grace is empowering Paul and so he is our type in all that relates to God’s working today.***
- ***Apart from the signs and evident manifestations of God’s working in other dispensations, Paul has demonstrated the full power of God in his life and ministry. This is resurrection power. The signs, wonders and miracles were especially for Israel and also especially for the***

Pentecostal period though they were also found in the Body of Christ during the transitional period and are no longer present today.

- ***So, as Scofield noted in the Introduction to his Pauline chapters in his Reference Bible, In Paul's letters we find the content, the details of this revelation, namely, the sacred secret concerning God's working under grace.***

[Comments?]

Conclusions:

- ***Let's always keep in mind that each aspect of the truth mentioned here is repeated over and over in the Pauline letters because it is so critically important to know today. This is how God is working today according the riches of his grace. I have just singled out only one section of Ephesians today to illustrate these truths. What a blessed revelation this is for the hungry heart of a sinner saved by God's abundant grace. Amen.***
- ***Paul's revelation to us is truth for today and it is unique in the Bible, the scriptures. No other scripture author reveals these truths. SO IT IS THAT TODAY, we need the Pauline truth, the Pauline revelation for salvation, for growth, for our maturity as believers***
- ***Having received this, we must be bold to proclaim it, for without it, neither we nor others have the truth of God for today. Apart from Pauline teaching, the churches often promote mere religion and works salvation. Without spiritual food, what will our lives be like?***
- ***That today we are living in the dispensation of the grace of God and God is dispensing his grace to and through the Body of Christ is most blessed.***
- ***We can enjoy the Bible as God intended it by RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH, AND ONLY BY RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH! Have you considered properly the mystery, the sacred secret of the grace of God? This should be on our mind as much as anything in the Scriptures if not more.***

In summary, the dispensation of the grace of God is "better" [or literally, "different"] in all of these ways and more:

- ***The Administrator: Paul and not Moses, our Lord, the Twelve***
- ***The Scriptures: Paul's letters (Mystery) and not the rest of the Bible (Prophecy)***
- ***The Subjects: The Gentiles and not the nation of Israel***

- ***The Focus: Grace and not Law (of any sort)***
- ***The Life: The riches of grace with its eternal life and rest contrasted with the requirement of enduring to the end (Kingdom obedience)***
- ***The Empowering: Christ's indwelling and not a Holy Spirit overpowering***
- ***The Hope: Heaven and the Rapture and not the Second Coming and the Earthly Kingdom . . . AND SO MUCH MORE!***

2 Tim. 2:14-16

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15 **Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

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Phil. 1:10 . . . That ye may approve things that are excellent [that differ]; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

ENJOY! AND AMEN.

Perhaps for Next Time:

An outline of some of the special distinctive blessings of the dispensation of the grace of God:

1. ***A New Dispensation, Our Current Reality (Eph. 3:1-10)***
2. ***A Better Gospel, Given for the Faith of Sinners (1 Cor. 15:1-4)***
3. ***Every Benefit of Christ's Work on Calvary, Fully Provided (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:28-30)***
4. ***An Abundant Life, Offered Freely! (Rom. 5:17)***
5. ***The Church Which Is One Body, Given for Our Enjoyment (Eph. 4:4; 5:32)***
6. ***The Blessed Hope & Expectation. Assured by Almighty God (Tit 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:15-18; 5:9-11; 2:1-3; 2:13-17)***
7. ***A Heavenly Warfare, Demanding Our Constant Engagement (2 Thess. 2:6-12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4)***