

“The Knowledge of the Mystery Is Critical - An Abundant Life, Offered Freely”

Introduction:

- ***In our last fellowship we singled out only one section of Ephesians chapter 3 to illustrate the truth Paul dedicated his life to communicating as the apostle of the Gentiles. We are today again dedicating ourselves to these and other scriptures because each aspect of this distinctive truth as taught here is critically important for us to know today. For in these letters of Paul we learn how God is working today according the riches of his grace.***
- ***An analogy will illustrate the importance of this: driving ones car legally. That is something quite complex really and some considerable time is required before one is “legal”, let us say. But study, testing, both written and practical is needed to reach this point. But even more is needed as well, and it is for that reason that this analogy is a good one. We need to know and obey the details along the road as we drive. If we do not we shall be IL-LEGALLY DRIVING. Everyone knows this when they see or hear of the “blue light special” behind them. So Paul writes often therefore of the need for us to know these details for in the end they make a great difference. We shall continue to focus on those details today I hope and trust for our mutual benefit and encouragement.***

Our Outline (the Seven Dimensions of the Mystery):

Last Time:

- ***A New Dispensation, Our Current Reality (Eph. 3:1-9)***
- ***A Better Gospel, Given for the Faith of Sinners (1 Cor. 15:1-8)***
- ***The Church Which Is One Body, Given for Our Blessing (Eph. 4:4; 5:32)***

Today:

- ***An Abundant Life, Offered Freely! (Rom. 5:17)***

In Future Fellowships:

- ***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)***
- ***A Heavenly Warfare, Demanding Our Constant Engagement (2 Thess. 2:6-12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4)***
- ***Every Benefit of Christ’s Work on Calvary, Fully Provided (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:28-30)***

Review:

- ***We have now already considered that having been saved by grace through believing the good news of the grace of God, we are now blessed with living in the dispensation of the grace of God and not in another dispensation. Today God is dispensing his grace to and through the Body of Christ, a most blessed truth. Although we could spend much more time on this subject of the Body of Christ and it would be very encouraging, I am sure, but I would like to move ahead quickly after just making some additional points:***
- ***Firstly, it is helpful for our understanding to realize and be often reminded that no one in the entire Bible mentions the Church the Body of Christ EXCEPT the apostle Paul! It is not found anywhere in the New Testament either except in Paul's letters. It is not found in the gospels, in the Acts or in the writings of the other non-Pauline authors of the New Testament, Peter, James, John or Jude. Various churches are mentioned elsewhere (see, for example, Acts 7:38, "the church in the wilderness") but those others only are in reference to the Jews. "Church", of course, is the English translation of a Greek word that simply means "assembly" or "called out ones". Several times the word is used of Jewish churches that were surely not examples of the church the Body of Christ. Only Paul mentions the church the Body of Christ and this "church" is quite distinctive from those other churches. That is because the revelation regarding it was part of the sacred secret revealed to and through the apostle Paul.***
- ***Last time we considered The Church Which Is One Body as Given for Our Blessing for here and eternity. We looked at some key scriptures in Eph. 3:6 & 4:2-4 such as this:***

Eph. 4:2-4

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 [There is] one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; [See also Eph. 5:30-32 and many other scriptures]

- ***Take note of the references to the several "singularities". An equally good "paraphrase" of this might be by using the words "of unique magnitude and quality". And this is in reference to all of the following:***
 - ***"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 and Paul was saved to accomplish that as well as to be the administrator of the Dispensation of the Grace of God.***
- ***So this is all about an organism and not an organization. Take note of that for this is an area where there is so much confusion today among those that name the name of the Lord. We are talking about a spiritual building here and not a physical building at all. Most physical buildings dedicated to the glory of God build now through human history were not in fact built for God’s glory at all! Travel the world and that will become so clear.***
- ***This is the spiritual food needed by each of us today. But in so many evangelical churches today it is not the precious truth that is being taught. Rather it is the teaching of the Kingdom revealed in the scriptures for Israel and not the Gentiles. But there is no true spiritual health possible without it! Will we take God at his word or not?***
- ***But, in contrast, the gospel of the Kingdom which is all about a different set of distinctives in every case, for these distinctives for the Church which is His Body are unique for us under grace. They were never revealed until Paul and are distinctive for us today. But when we come to understand these distinctives most precious indeed does this teaching regarding the Body of Christ become for us who by his grace have come into the fellowship of his dear Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.***
- ***With this background you will not be surprised therefore when I tell you that the revelation concerning the Church which is His Body is a part of the sacred secret or mystery revealed only to and through Paul. That is made very clear in Ephesians 5:***

[READ] Eph. 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife [see] that she reverence [her] husband.

- *Such blessed truth this is! This is a good example of how “RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH” leads to an understanding of what the Lord is doing today under grace and as such is truth which as believers today we cannot do without. Amen.*
- *Under grace blessings were, on the other hand, given freely based on Christ’s finished work with personal fruitfulness the order of a new life “in the spirit”. The Holy Spirit is given to all believers today at the moment of saving faith. That was never the case under the law and according to the prophet Jeremiah the Spirit could not even become available until the Kingdom was finally established. Similarly, eternal life which is possessed now by every believer was never possessed by Israelites and they could not hope for it when the Kingdom was established (see Dan. 12:2; Mt. 19:29; 25:46; Lk. 18:30)*
- *But praise God, today under the grace dispensation the Spirit of God has been poured out into our hearts as the full manifestation of the love of Almighty God (Rom. 5:5):*

Rom. 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

And, furthermore,

[READ] 1 Cor. 3:16-17

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are. **[see also 6:19 & 2 Cor. 6:16]**

[READ] Eph. 2:19-22

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

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus

Christ himself being the chief corner [stone];

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit

- *If we looked into this further, we would learn that all three persons of the Trinity currently indwell each of us believers!! This is most precious truth for today that cannot be found in the scriptures anywhere except in Paul's letters. We are the Temple of God today. Cathedrals? Mega-church arenas / stadiums? Doesn't this teaching change so much of our ideas regarding what God is doing today under grace. It surely should. ... and we are only merely scratching the surface of Paul's teaching here in these fellowships. This is spiritual food indeed! To summarize, Israel had buildings, whether the tabernacle early on or the Temple later (always needing repairs and rebuilding).*
- *Perhaps it is needless to repeat it again here for we have already considered it in detail, but the most significant division in Scripture is the division between PROPHECY and the 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. So it is the Body Church that is at the very center of what God is doing today under grace in the Dispensation of the Grace of God.*

[Your questions / comments?]

Our Subject Today: An Abundant Life, Offered Freely by God's Abundant Grace!

I. Eternal Life Under the Old Covenant (or Israel's New Covenant):

- *The whole idea of life everlasting or eternal life is a most blessed one. It was always promised for the elect of God but was intimately related to the dispensational plan of God that was in effect. See for example Matt. 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." It was promised by our Lord under the preaching of the coming Kingdom to those that had kept the Law and it would be provided to those that had endured to the end. This would occur at judgment day:*

Mark 10:17-22, 28-30

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

...
28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

- *So eternal life was something entirely for the future and not for the present at that time. And the keeping of the law was a strict requirement for the receiving of that life in the future. Eternal Life is actually the “life of the age” or the life of the kingdom age yet to come. It looks forward to the establishing of the Millennial Kingdom when Christ returns.*

II. Eternal Life Under Grace - A Centerpiece of the Pauline Revelation:

- *But there is a great contrast to be found in the Word of God between this hope related to the kingdom and our current possession of eternal life under grace:*

[READ] Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

- *Paul refers to “life” nearly 50 times in his letters. A word study on*

“life” is most instructive and a great blessing for all those who do it. This life we now have is of course the very resurrection life of our Lord Jesus and the life that we all have through his complete sacrifice and glorious resurrection.

- ***Many of these references to life are to our physical lives and its transient nature under the restrictions imposed by our physical constitution as cursed by the fall of our father Adam. But many are about the new life that we have through our Lord Jesus, a gift of his free grace through Calvary. We will look at several of these scriptures in a moment, but as we do we need to have clearly in mind where this newness of life comes from:***

1 Cor. 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening [or life-giving] spirit.

- ***So consider this carefully. Christ has been raised from the dead as “a life-giving spirit”! And we as believers today are alive in Him! We share His life, in other words. Paul says that clearly in Romans 8 which if we understand it correctly is all about the Holy Spirit and the Son of God dwelling in us today as God’s Temple! Amen and amen.***
- ***There are many blessings for us that derive from this indwelling. The Holy Spirit and our possession of the Spirit as believers today (this was not the case previously, when the Spirit may have been given but would also be removed for good cause - consider David’s concern in Ps. 51:11 and Saul’s predicament) AND the Son of God Himself - dwelling within us. Most precious.***

III. Eternal Life Under Grace - A New and Heavenly Quality of Life:

- ***The term “life everlasting” relates to the quality of life which we have here and now. Its potential is eternal (rewards at the judgment seat of Christ?) but its present reality is a fact every believer today knows at least something about.***
- ***Paul often refers to this quality of life as “eternal” or “everlasting” and although the word “hope” is sometimes used with it in scripture (Tit. 1:2, 3:7), it is also very clear that we have it already today, at least a “down payment” on it as it were:***

Rom. 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, **and the end everlasting life.**

- ***So it is clear that this eternal life or everlasting life is a continuum***

into which we enter at the point of saving faith:

IV. Eternal Life Under Grace - Something to Be Grasped Onto Fully:

[READ] 1 Tim. 6:12, 19

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

...

19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Two more scriptures are most instructive but we will save them for a future time:

Rom. 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- ***So there is a present reality to this new quality of life (“newness of life” - Rom. 6:4) but the enduring and never ending essence of this life is quite clear in all of these scriptures. So this is a most sobering subject indeed. Life eternal: possessed now but with ongoing and also profoundly eternal ramifications. Considering the judgment seat of Christ and what Paul writes of that in (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10), we can understand how important it is to grasp fully onto this truth and this teaching because of the effect that will have on even our eternal inheritance in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ:***
- ***So fruit in this life as a believer is being produced, Of what sort it is is, that is the question. THAT WE POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE NOW ALREADY IS NOT THE QUESTION. BUT WHAT THAT LIFE WILL PRODUCE IN US IS THE QUESTION. AND DO NOT FORGET 1 Cor. 15:45: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit.” And this leads directly to what we shall consider in a future fellowship meeting, Lord willing, that of the new hope we have as believers today, the rapture of the Body of Christ into heaven’s glory.***

[Your questions / comments?]

Conclusions:

THROUGH THESE SCRIPTURES, THE APOSTLE PAUL IS ANSWERING THIS MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHAT IS GOD DOING TODAY? THE ANSWER: THROUGH THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY HE IS SAVING MANY BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE, ENTIRELY ON THE BASIS OF FAITH. WORKS ARE NOT PART OF THIS MESSAGE OF GRACE. FOR IF WE ARE SAVED TODAY, IT IS NOT IN ADDITION TO OUR WORKS THAT HAVE JUSTIFIED US (AS JAMES WRITES IN HIS LETTER), BUT ENTIRELY ON THE BASIS OF CHRIST'S CALVARY WORK FOR US ALONE. "TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT BUT BELIEVETH" IS PAUL'S CLEAR STATEMENT TO THAT EFFECT IN THE ROMANS LETTER.

GOD IS WORKING UNDER GRACE IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMPLE ASTOUNDING. THE BLESSING ARE UNIQUE AND WONDERFUL IN EVERY WAY. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SON OF GOD INDWELL US AND WE HAVE THE LIFE OF THE SON, THE RESURRECTED LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS AS OUR CONSTANT POSSESSION.... AND THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE IS AT WORK. THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

- **AMEN AND AMEN!**