

“The 7-FOLD Excellencies of the Mystery: The Dispensation of the Grace of God”

Theme Verses:

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

Eph 3:1-10

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 fellow heirs, 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.

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.

Review:

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

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? We considered also the meaning of this word “excellent” found 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 emphasized 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 find the differences, and not only the similarities. Remember my illustration from several months ago regarding marriage?

The many, many contrasts (the “betters” may be expanded upon and that is the content of Paul’s letters.

- **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**
- **Not Israel but the Body 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**
- **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 opportunity to suffer with Christ as his dear children.**

Our Scripture:

Eph 3:1-9

**[READ] 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,**

[READ] 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;

[READ] 6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, 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.

[READ] 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:

I. The ministry given to Paul was a gift of God's grace - vv. 1-2

- ***Verses 1-2 & 7 indicate that this authority was bestowed upon this man as a matter of the working of God's grace. Apart from this grace, Saul would have earned God's curse and destruction, not blessing, salvation, and the gift of the administration of grace.***
- ***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 blasphemer, 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 acceptance, 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.

- ***This ministry was "given", "committed" to Paul, or, "entrusted" to him.***
- ***Here is the essence of grace - that he was "counted faithful". "Counted", 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 his worst enemies, even the sinners of the Gentiles!***

II. At the heart of Paul's ministry is the sacred secret or mystery of "the dispensation of the grace of God" - vv. 3-4

- ***Only Paul uses this word "dispensation".***

- **The word means “administration”, or based on the Greek roots, “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!**
- **Paul’s knowledge of administration was to be noted or distinguished, comparing 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.**
- **Paul had written of this elsewhere, he says here. Is this a reference to chapter one (“the dispensation of the fulness of times”, verse 10), or perhaps, in the letter to the Colossians (remember: the mystery of Christ, of God, of the dispensation, and of Christ in us Gentiles)**
- **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!!**
- **When we study the word of God, rightly divided, we distinguish the various dispensational dealing of God with man. Conscience is not Human Government, nor is it Promise, nor Law, nor Kingdom, nor Grace. They are all different and must be distinguished or the truth is replaced with total confusion.**

[Comments?]

III. This revelation, this “word of truth”, this revelation, is called a “mystery” because it was not made known previously (and couldn’t be!) - v. 5

- **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. All 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 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.

- *Only when God had set Israel aside could this be revealed.*
- *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 can this be communicated any more directly and straightforwardly?*
- *"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.*
- *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 content of this revelation, that the Gentiles are co-heirs and of the same body and promise as believing Jews - v. 6

- *"Co-heirs": lit. "joint-heirs"*
- *"Of the same Body": lit. "joint Body"*
- *"Partakers of his promise": lit. "joint partakers"*
- *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.*

- **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:

V. The ministry given to Paul was Energized by God's grace - v. 7

- *Here we have nearly a repetition of what is in verse 1, except this is about the empowering*
- *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.*

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.

Now, please keep in mind that each aspect of the truth mentioned here is repeated over and over in the Pauline letters. I have just singled out this one section of Ephesians to illustrate these truths. What a blessed revelation this is for the hungry heart of a sinner saved by God's abundant grace.

[Comments?]

Conclusions:

- *Paul's revelation to us is truth for today*
- *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 it, we must be bold to proclaim it, for without it, neither we nor others have the truth of God for today*
- *This is the dispensation of the grace of God, God dispensing his grace to and through the Body of Christ. Without spiritual food, what will our lives be like?*
- *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! AMEN AND AMEN.*

HAVE YOU FULLY CONSIDERED "THE 7-FOLD EXCELLENCIES OF THE MYSTERY"? In particular, 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” 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***
- ***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***

ENJOY! AND AMEN.

