

Paul's Letter to the Ephesian Church
Lesson 2

The Mystery of the Gospel of God

Ephes. 3: ¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- ²if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; ³that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

Paul has already mentioned the "mystery" in this letter to the Ephesians. We find that note in Chapter 1:8. Paul is writing to the Gentiles in Ephesus and Paul desires for the Gentile Ephesians to know that they were part of the "mystery" of the Gospel of God. The "mystery" was for their sake! Paul is in prison in Rome where he is writing this letter and his imprisonment is partially based upon his understanding of the revelation of this mystery. Had it just been for the Jews alone, the Roman government would have probably left him alone. But this mystery was for the Gentiles too and for that he had roamed the country sides and spread the gospel in every part of the Gentile world, bringing great anger from many Gentile people who were set in the idolatrous – religious ways.

Ephes. 3: ⁴And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶*to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

What is the "mystery?" The answer is found in the insight that Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body of Christ. They are fellow partakers of the promise of Christ. In other words, they have all the privileges to enter into heaven and to address God just as the Jews do. In the past ages, if you wanted to address God and live by the instructions He delivered to the Jews in the wilderness, if you wanted to worship God in the Temple, you had to become Jew in every way. But not now! The mystery is that Christ died for all people, Jew and Gentile alike and they all had the ability to partake in the great offering from God. Before Christ came and offered Himself as a sacrifice, this was hidden to all. The mystery was spoken about in the Old Testament, but never revealed. With Christ's coming it was revealed. Christ did not limit His ministry to just Jews. Remember the Samaritan woman! The Gentiles had every right to the grace of God just as the Jews.

Ephes. 3: ⁸To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; ¹⁰in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*. ¹¹*This* was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our

Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.
¹³Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

So the mystery was the gift of grace to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, but how was this to be accomplished? What administration or organization would this mystery operate through? It would be the Church! Through the church the mystery would be made known to all the rulers and authorities in all the heavenly places. The church was part of God's eternal purpose and this was established by Christ Jesus just as it was planned before the foundation of the world was laid.

Paul asks the Ephesians not to worry about his imprisonment. He was there because of his preaching the gospel to the Gentile world. That was his purpose and mission given him by Christ and the result of his work was for the good of all Gentiles everywhere.

Ephes. 3: ¹⁴For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

In this prayer Paul is simply stating the emphasis of his prayers for the Gentiles in Ephesus. He wants them to know fully the "all in all" of Christ and he wants them to live in the richness of His grace.

With this "amen" Paul is concluding his introduction to the reason for his writing this letter. His purpose has been to assure the Gentiles of their place in God's plan. With the next stroke of the pen he will begin to tell the Gentile Ephesians how to live their lives as people who are walking in the richness of God's grace, purchased by Christ for all people who will come unto Him.

Ephes. 4: ¹I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, ³being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There are specific things that a person must do to walk worthy of the calling as a Christian. Let's list them again.

1. Humility – This means to cloth your self with modesty of mind. To keep yourself in a simple place and put the importance of others above that of yourself.

2. Gentleness – This means to carefully present yourself in a meek manner, not with roughness and demanding words and actions. You are to be seen like a “strong and powerful horse, guided by a small bridle and bit.”
3. Patience – This means that you have the fortitude to wait on the Lord. While you may desire to “make something happen” you are willing to wait until the Lord has arranged all things for you and then you will act.
4. Showing forbearance to one another in love – This means that you “put up with” and “endure” those around you, whether in the church or not, and you do this with love.
5. Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace – This means that you labor to keep the unanimity of the Spirit that holds the church together by the “bond” or guiding principles of “peace” or “oneness among each other.”

Ephes. 4:⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;* ⁵*one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* ⁶*one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.* ⁷*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ⁸*Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."*

There is to be a oneness among Christians because there is “one body and one Spirit” just as there is “one calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father.” This means that there is to be one Church – one body – that represents the Lord and all that He has accomplished for us. The division of different flavors of churches and different doctrines and teachings has arisen because of different interpretations of the Scripture.

Despite this problem in the church, the Lord is still faithful to bestow on each one of us “grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Just as he led all the Old Testament saints to heaven with Him when he ascended, He also gives gifts to men for the purpose of maintaining the unity of the body called the church. What are those gifts?

Ephes. 4:⁹ (Now this *expression*, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

These two verses are not in the oldest and most reliable texts. They were added by some well-meaning editor along the way. However, this editing has actually caused theological problems such as the teaching that “Jesus went to Hell to suffer for our sins.” In reality, the addition breaks the context of the passage which deals with the gifts given to men. For this purpose we skip these two verses.

Ephes. 4:¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to

the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Here are the gifts that were given to men for the purpose of building up the body of Christ in unity. The church was never to be separated into Baptist and Methodist, and Church of Christ! While there was to be a church in every location, they were to be united in their faith, belief, work, and service for the Lord. Leadership was needed for this purpose and the Lord gave leadership positions to men for this task. Down through the ages, not everyone filling these positions or offices has been given the gift from the Lord, however they have sought the positions and achieved the positions and then caused divisions within the body. With these divisions came the various splits and denominations with strange methods and teachings. King Henry VIII was not given any of these gifts yet he made himself the head of the church and changed its doctrines for his own purposes.

The five offices that are established by the Lord and gifted to men for the unity of the faith are:

1. Apostles – Was an official messenger of Christ, specifically and audibly called by Christ, with miraculous powers.
2. Prophets – A “foreteller” but not a “forth teller” in this list. A “forth teller” predicted the future and that is not the case here. This is a “foreteller” who eloquently retold the message of Christ to each new generation.
3. Evangelists – Preachers of the Gospel whose purpose is to bring people to a saving knowledge of the Lord. Evangelist also established churches and organized them before turning them over to a pastor to maintain.
4. Pastors – These are the shepherds of the flock who cared for the church after the evangelist moved on to establish another congregation.
5. Teachers – These are the instructors who carefully teach the doctrines of the faith.

[Ephes. 4:14](#) As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15](#) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ, [16](#) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

With these offices in place, the church is without excuse if it falls into wrong doctrine and teaching. These offices are to speak the truth in love, addressing the problems within the body and correcting them. Children waver in their thoughts and beliefs, but the mature church should never waver. There is no new teaching that is to be revealed that has never been brought to light before in the Word of God. The gospel is established and firmly rooted without need for change.

Ephes. 4:¹⁷This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Gentiles who have come into the church are not to continue their lives in the manner in which they lived before Christ changed their eternal destination. Before Christ their lives were filled with futility and sensuality, but in Christ and the church, these are not to be part of their lives. The old life is to be put away and mastered. The new life is one that is holy and acceptable.

Ephes. 4: ²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²²that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

The new life for a Gentile is to be one that imitates the likeness of God in both righteousness and holiness. The mind to be renewed in the “spirit” means that your attitude must change. No longer do you lust after the things that all unregenerate Gentiles lust for, but now you seek for truth and not that which only brings corruption. In the following verses Paul lays out a plan for how to do this as a Christian in a series of points.

Ephes. 4:²⁵Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE *of you*, WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another.

Point 1: Speak Truth with Your Neighbor – This should be a given but for the unregenerate, truth is not always important. Lies are said because in their warped mind the truth is not good enough. But for the Christian, truth is paramount.

Ephes. 4:²⁶BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Point 2: Be angry but do not sin – Anger is not an evil emotion if handled correctly. However, it is easy to strike back in anger and that is an evil emotion. But we should not let our anger get the best of us. When we do, this causes the devil to have an opportunity to tempt us into sins that are evil. Anger therefore needs to be mastered by the Christian in every point in our lives.

Ephes. 4:²⁸Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have *something* to share with him who has need.

Point 3: Steal not longer, rather labor to have something to share – This is a different attitude for most newly converted Christians. Prior to Christ in a person’s life, the world centers around

that person and they strive to gather all they can for themselves. But the Christian is to labor for the purpose of giving away, sharing with others, and providing for all who have need.

Ephes. 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Point 4: No unwholesome word from your mouth – Every word that comes from your mouth should be edifying and gracious. People need to hear gracious words.

Ephes. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Point 5: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit is grieved when we do anything that brings Him sadness, sorrow, or a heaviness of heart. In other words, when we do something that is against His revealed Word, He is grieved. When we sin in anger, when we clamor and slander, when we are bitter, He is grieved.

Ephes. 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Point 6: Put these evil things far away from your personhood – Never let these things invade your being, attitude, heart, soul, or mind. They are not the things that a Christian should do.

Ephes. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Point 7: Be Kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving – These are three important attributes that we must have in our lives. God is kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving of us; likewise we should be the same with all others.