

The Book of Ephesians – Part Four

June 7th, 2009

Adapted from John Herbert's notes; Read by Jeanne Alley

1). Ephesians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

- The letter to the Ephesians, written by Paul whilst imprisoned in Rome between 60 and 62AD, is addressed to the saints there and who are 'faithful in Christ Jesus'.
- All the spiritually redeemed in the Church in Ephesus were the recipients of this letter, but its content is specifically for those who would be faithful. The letter contains that which God required them all to know...and we can extend this epistle to be addressed to all who are spiritually redeemed throughout this dispensation (the Church), but again, specifically those who are faithful. By "faithful" he means those who take that which is written in this letter and put it into practice throughout the course of their pilgrim journey... they believe what God has said and they do what God has said. These are those who will be revealed as overcomers at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- It is because the Spirit of God, through the pen of Paul, has the faithful alone in view throughout the epistle that He writes verses 6 -7 of Chapter 2 without any distinction based on faithfulness –

Ephesians 2:6

...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

- At first glance, or if taken out of context, these two verses can appear all inclusive – addressed to all Christians based solely on the fact that they are Christians. But this can never be because only those 'faithful in Christ Jesus' will experience the reality of this placement during the 7th Day. Remember the 5 foolish virgins, the unfaithful servant, the wedding guest et al. If we compare scripture with scripture, this becomes abundantly clear.

2). The focus of the content of Chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians is the 7th Day - the coming Kingdom of the Christ - in which the purpose for Man's creation will be realized for those who are faithful –

Ephesians 1:10

...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...

- About this we read—

Hebrews 2:5

For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

- Chapter 1 deals with the 7th Day from the broad scope of God's purpose for the ages in order that we should keep ever before us that which God has repeated time and again in the scriptures, so that we should not drift away from it.
Hebrews 2:1
Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.
- Contextually, within the scope of the Book of Hebrews, 'the things we have heard' refer to seven O/T quotations that deal specifically with Christ in His coming glory which are detailed for us in the first Chapter of that Book –
Hebrews 1:8
But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.
- The very thing of course (Christ in His coming glory) that is the subject of our first chapter here in Ephesians, and the very substance of our calling –
Hebrews 3:1
Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,
- And that which has been guaranteed by the sealing of the Holy Spirit –
Ephesians 1:13
In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.
- Let's take a look at this word 'guarantee' = Greek – 'arrhabon' = a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest-- earnest.
- The overwhelming surety of God's purpose laid out in this Chapter is to encourage and engender faithfulness in those who receive it....those who would be 'faithful in Christ Jesus'.
- Then Chapter 2 deals with the same subject, Christ in His coming glory, for the same purpose, to encourage and engender faithfulness, only here from a more individual standpoint –
Ephesians 2:1
And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...
- Chapter 2 focuses on what God has done and made possible for us personally –
Ephesians 2:11-13
Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you 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 you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- The Chapter then ends with statements about our present position within the 'household of God' and allusion to the process of our spiritual maturation through the metaphor of building. Again, something that can only apply to the faithful –

Ephesians 2:19

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- In summary, we see the enormity and the surety of God's plan for redeemed Man detailed on a grand scale in Ephesians Chapter 1 and personalized through the detail surrounding the purpose for our salvation in Chapter 2...all within the scope of those who would be 'faithful in Christ Jesus'. A tremendous encouragement in and of itself to continue in faithful obedience.

3). Consider how incredible God's purpose is –

Romans 4:13

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

- And that we have the certainty and the trueness of God's promise guaranteed through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, it would seem of little wonder that our third Chapter begins with the words –

Ephesians 3:1

For this reason...

- In order to discover where Paul is going with this thought we actually have to move directly from verse 1 to verse 14, where the opening phrase is repeated, picking up the thought from the first verse, with additional information now added to it –

Ephesians 3:14

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- The Greek word for 'reason' is 'charin,' which comes from charis' = graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude)--acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace(-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank(-s, -worthy).
- Between the beginning of the thought in verse 1, 'For this reason' (literally, 'concerning this favor') and the conclusion of the thought beginning with, 'I bow my knees' in verse 14, comes a parenthetical discourse on Paul's ministry with regards to the 'mystery' that was revealed to him.
- In this parenthetical thought (or 'rabbit trail'), Paul sets out his credentials as an Apostle and makes clear God's purpose in calling him to that high office. For the rest of today we are going to be focusing on these 14 verses of 'rabbit trail.'

4).

Ephesians 3:1

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles- 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

- Paul, 'the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles,' is using the fact of his imprisonment in Rome to underscore his being bound to, or a bondservant of, Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles (the Gentiles being those non-Jews who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and become part of 'the one new man'). God's work through Paul, detailed here in Chapter 3, further demonstrates 'His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7) and brings us right back to the focus and the purpose that have been the subject of Chapters 1-2, which is the setting out of God's plan for 'the dispensation of the fullness of the times', with a view to our faithfulness with respect to it.
- Paul had been given, by God 'the dispensation' or the stewardship of the grace of God so that through his ministry, by faith, believing Gentiles would become the seed of Abraham and 'heirs according to the promise'.

Galatians 2:9

...and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

- The grace of God that was given to Paul is with regards to the revelation of 'the mystery' –

Ephesians 3:3

...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

- The revelation of 'the mystery of Christ' to Paul began upon the Damascus road –
Acts 9:17-20
And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. 20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.
- God then built upon this foundational experience and Paul's knowledge of the scriptures with 3 years of presumably face to face teaching by the Lord Himself while Paul was in Arabia –

Galatians 1:15-18

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

- The mystery which was revealed to Paul, which according to Ephesians 3:3 he had 'briefly written already' is referred to in verse 4 as 'the mystery of Christ' and would therefore reference that which had previously been stated in Chapters 1 and 2. This would be the things concerning God's plans and purposes for the ages by and for His Son with the grafting in of the Gentiles into one body, the 'one new man', as part of that plan. This is just as we see in –

Romans 11:17-21

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

- Here in Romans we see issues of faithfulness and unfaithfulness also. Firstly in respect to Israel--the branches that were broken off--and secondly with respect to ourselves if we follow their example of unbelief, 'He may not spare you either'.

4). Verse 5 of Ephesians 3 then continues –

Ephesians 3:5

... which in other ages [lit. generations] was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

- And here in verse 6 we see 'the mystery' in an nutshell – "6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel", It doesn't get much clearer than that, does it?
- 'The mystery' of course is not something that was unknown, but rather something that had remained hidden until the appropriate time for its revelation.
- Mystery = Greek – 'mysterion' = from a derivative of muo (to shut the mouth); a secret or "mystery" (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites)--mystery.

- That we should be, 'partakers of His promise in Christ', would take us again to the 'covenants of promise', spelled out, as we have already seen in –

Romans 4:13

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

And –

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- Of course, of necessity when dealing with the unsaved, the gospel of salvation by grace through faith would have to be presented first, but given the content of the gospel Paul writes about in verse 6 – 'fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel' – this would have to be referring to the gospel of the glories of Christ. It is through this gospel that the secret, the mystery, is revealed.
- And it is through faithful obedience to that which is revealed through the gospel of the glories of Christ that we may be 'partakers of His promise in Christ'—

James

1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

- It is of this gospel, the gospel of the glories of Christ, that Paul became a minister, literally a servant – not through his own choosing but, 'according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power'.

5). Paul is an apostle by the will of God –

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

- And this is according to the gift of the grace of God (Eph. 3:7). Paul then continues in verse 8 –

Ephesians 3:8

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

- Paul, in genuine humility, considers himself to be 'less than the least of all the saints' – presumably because of his previous persecution of the Church.
- And there are two things we should take heart from in this. Firstly, by considering the reality of that which Paul preached after his conversion on the Damascus road witnessed by a complete turnaround from his previous position -

Acts 9:21

Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

- And secondly, 'the effective working of His power' in Paul. If the one who persecuted the Church could be so radically changed by the power of God, then that same power is able to work in us to bring about radical changes in our lives. This is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead – The power of the Spirit – active in our lives through the Word –

Ephesians 1:19

...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

- This grace was given to Paul that he 'should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ', that all should see, 'what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God' (Eph 3:9).
- We can understand this by looking at a companion scripture in Colossians–

Colossians 1:25

...of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

- Here are the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' – it is 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Something described from another perspective in –

1Corinthians 2:9

But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

- This is unsearchable because it is given by revelation, 'through His Spirit'... it is born from above. And 'has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints'. And how this revelation to His saints has come to pass we have already seen in –

Ephesians 3:5

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

- And this has come at a specific time for a specifically stated purpose (continuing in Ephesians)–

Ephesians 3:10

...to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

- ‘The manifold wisdom of God’ – that concerning His plans and purposes by and for His Son with regards to redeemed Man (specifically with regards to the grafting in of the Gentiles into ‘the one new man’ for the purpose of replacing the incumbent heavenly rulers) has been contained in Scripture from the beginning –

Hebrews 1:1

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

- The very same thing spoken by the prophets has been spoken by the Son and then those appointed by the Son –

Hebrews 2:3

...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

- This is what the scripture records with regards to that spoken by the prophets in respect of the ‘mystery’ –

1Peter 1:10

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

6). That concerning ‘the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow’, recorded in the writings of the prophets, beginning with Moses, began to be revealed to those who would preach the gospel ‘by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven’ on the day of the Lord’s resurrection –

Luke 24:25

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.....
44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

- And whose understanding was opened 'that they might comprehend the scriptures'? His disciples, those who would be the foundation of His Church – And this would of necessity be the same revelation given to Paul following the Damascus road.
- So why was the 'mystery of Christ', the 'manifold wisdom of God' kept secret until after the Lord's resurrection? Quite simply because it is through the Lord's resurrection that 'the mystery', our hope, is realized –
1Peter 1:3
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- The death and shed blood of the Lord on the cross of Calvary assures eternal salvation for those who believe, who are 'begotten again... but issues related to a living hope, an inheritance and a future salvation all come 'through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'. And it is for this reason that the hope is only revealed following the resurrection...because without the resurrection there would be no hope, the 'mystery of Christ' could not be revealed, there could be no 7th Day –
1Corinthians 2:7
But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- This mystery was not revealed, could not be revealed, for if it had been then Christ would not have been crucified. And if He was not crucified, He would not be killed...and if He didn't die, then He couldn't be resurrected.
- That which had been hidden for generations from Man was also hidden for ages from angels – particularly the 'rulers of this age'.
- But following the Lord's resurrection and the inception of the Church, Ephesians 3:10 told us that the 'manifold wisdom of God' is being made known to the 'principalities and powers', the 'rulers of this age', in the heavenly places, by the very fact of the existence of those who are called out of this world to have an inheritance in another.

- But let us realize that this is not only a reference to the 'church' in a generic sense, (that is, all Christians)--although the creation of the 'one new man' for the purpose of rulership just as with Adam and Jacob is hugely significant – it is also, most particularly, those who will be 'the called out' at the Judgment Seat, those who have been 'faithful in Christ Jesus' who are looking to the 7th Day and the reward of the inheritance, rather than just eternity.
- From the moment that the first Christian, whoever that may have been, who suffered with Christ so as to be a joint heir with Him completed their race of faith successfully, waiting now to be approved, the message of the gospel of the glories of Christ has been resounding loudly in the heavenly places – the declaration of the manifold wisdom of God in its purpose, in its intent and in its completion is being made known with each redeemed individual who has fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith.
- If all of this does not move in our hearts to inspire us to faithfulness, then perhaps we are already dead.

7). And still with the manifold wisdom of God in view, verse 12 draws our attention to another facet of that wisdom –

Ephesians 3:12

...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

- This would be a reference to the present High Priestly ministry of Christ on behalf of the spiritually redeemed –

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Sin will always preclude us from rulership, and although spiritually redeemed and delivered from the bondage of sin, we still have a sin nature and continue to make poor choices. But God in His wisdom has provided a way for the sins of the redeemed to be dealt with through the present work of His Son on our behalf as we confess and repent –

1John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- And this we do by faith.

8). And here, with all we have just looked at in view, we return to the words that began the Chapter –

Ephesians 3:1
For this reason...

Ephesians 3:14

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from 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 through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- Here we see Paul bowing his knees 'to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ', firstly as an act of complete submission to the will and purpose of God both with regards to the 7th Day and also his appointment as an apostle...
- and secondly, in prayer for those to whom God had made him a minister.
- Within the context of God's plans and purpose for the ages, and within the context of what God has done and made possible for us individually, and within the context of the wrath of the enemy of our soul now that the manifold wisdom of God is being made known by the church, it is Paul's prayer and thereby God's desire that we would, 'be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man'. To the effect that we would be 'faithful in Christ Jesus'.
- And surely this should be our prayer for each other also as we continue our race of faith and engage in the spiritual warfare.
- We will continue with this prayer next time.