

Ephesians

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, I guess it was about eight years and a few months ago that an election was held, and the Republicans put forth John McCain and Sarah Palin, and the Democrats put forth Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

And the election results came in, and Barack Obama and Joe Biden won the presidency and the vice presidency. And just a few days afterwards, in fact, I think it was at his acceptance speech after the votes were tallied and came in, President-to-be Barack Obama made the statement, and in just a few days there is going to be an entirely different way of doing business here in the United States of America.

And no one would dispute that he made good on that. There were significant changes that were made when he came to office. Then he was reelected for another four years, and now we are facing a similar kind of situation.

And whether he says it or not, I am confident that it will be true. That President-elect Donald Trump is also going to bring some different ways of doing business in the United States by way of government, administration, et cetera, than what has been done over the past eight years.

Some are very happy to hear about that, and some are distressed to hear about that. So we'll just have to wait and see how it plays out. But I make that analogy because I want to draw your attention to a very careful distinction that is here in Ephesians.

[1 : 52] And I'm going to go back because that's where the illustration is. Even though we are in Chapter 5 and plan to continue that, I want to drop back for just a moment to Ephesians Chapter 3 because of the very thing I've been talking about regarding these administrations.

And I think I'm sure I've mentioned to you before how that some people are perplexed and kind of confused in connection with the term dispensation or dispensationalism.

It's a big 25-cent word, and it raises a lot of furrowed eyebrows in people's minds. And what is that anyway? And yet it is one of the most important concepts that we can share with you, and this is what Paul is talking about.

So I'm just going to read this passage in Ephesians 3, beginning with verse 1. The Apostle says, For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles.

And that's something that needs to be noted. For the sake of you Gentiles. Now here is a man who is a Jew talking about the benefit of the Gentiles.

[3 : 10] If indeed you have heard of the stewardship, and that really means the responsibility for management. That's what a steward does.

A steward manages the affairs of the owner of his master. And Paul's master, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he has appointed Paul to be a steward or a master to his master of God's grace, which was given to me, Paul, for you Gentiles, that, in order that, by revelation, there was made known to me the mystery.

And we told you that the word mystery is better understood and translated as secret. Secret. Made known unto me the secret of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men.

That's just another way of saying this is something nobody knew about before. This was unavailable truth. Now, Paul isn't saying that the truth didn't exist, but he's saying the truth had never been revealed.

So let's read on. What am I talking about?

[4 : 50] To be specific, in other words, to nail it down, here's what I mean. That the Gentiles, and that's just another way of saying non-Jews.

That the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, to which, or of which, I, Paul, was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me, according to the working of his power, to me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

That was a concept that was totally unheard of, unthought of, unimagined. Gentiles. Wow. And, and verse 9, that's what I want you to focus on.

And, to bring to light. What is the implication of something that needs to be brought to light? That is, it was previously enshrouded in darkness.

So, it was undetectable. So, you couldn't look at this thing and see it for what it was, because you couldn't see it at all. It was just as if it wasn't even there. That's when you bring something to light.

[6 : 29] You focus on it, and you emphasize it, so that, whereas before, nobody got it. Nobody understood it. Nobody even knew it existed.

And now, voila! There it is. Out in bold light. And it is a shocking revelation. To bring to light, what is the administration?

And that's a word I really prefer over dispensation. It's a good synonym for it. But the reason I prefer administration over dispensation, even though they're synonyms, is because just about everybody knows what an administration is.

But a dispensation tends to throw it. And most people think, and even a lot of Christians think, and even a lot of dispensationalists think, probably because of C.I. Schofield's Bible, Schofield Reference Bible, that a dispensation is a block of time.

No, it isn't. While it is true that all dispensations occur in time because they are involving humanity, it is not a block of time.

[7 : 46] A dispensation or an administration is a way or a method of ordering or dispensing information, laws, rules, regulations, etc.

And, of course, those things take place in time, whether it was 1,000 years ago or 500 years ago or 20 years ago. It involves time. But it is really incorrect to say a dispensation is a block of time.

No. An administration, a dispensation, is a way of ordering. And one of the words that's used in the Greek is oikonomos, and it means a household ordering.

The way you conduct the affairs of your home, your household. The way you pay your bills, set your priorities, decorate your home, have the rules and regulations for the home and for the children, etc. The way you conduct your life in that home. That's your administration. And what Paul is saying here is that a whole new administration is now in force.

[9 : 04] But what was the old one? The law. Moses. It was the law. To whom was it given? To the Jew. Particularly?

Absolutely. Particularly to the Jew. Exclusively for the Jew. For the Gentiles, Paul says in Romans 2. For the Gentiles who have not the law.

Law was never given to them. But there was an administration of the law. And who was the administrator? Moses.

God gave the law to Moses. And Moses passed it on. Moses was the dispenser. That's another word. A dispensation is related to a dispensary.

And what does a dispensary do? It dispenses. It dispenses bandages, drugs, aspirin, whatever is needed.

[10 : 03] When you go to the dispensary, they give you a prescription or they give you some medication. They are dispensing something. Well, Paul is called upon to be a new dispenser of a new message.

And fellas, this thing is a blockbuster. It is going to take two dispensary. It is going to take two disparate people that have always been disparate.

Jews and Gentiles. Separated by all kinds of stuff. And meld them together into one new person. It talks about the twain being made one. And this new one body is going to be so new and so different that the barrier between Jew and Gentile is broken down.

And the barrier between slave and free is broken down. And the barrier between male and female is broken down.

[11 : 13] And you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And this man, Saul of Tarsus, became Paul the Apostle, is charged with the responsibility of dispensing this message

called the grace of God.

Now, did the grace of God exist before? Of course it did. Of course it did. And Adam and Eve were recipients of God's grace through the slaying of that sacrificial animal and the clothing them with the animal skin.

And Noah. You know, Noah was a recipient of God's grace. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. But the principal thing that was in vogue for the Jew for hundreds and hundreds of years was the law of Moses.

And it was based upon the sacrificial system of innocent animals. And now, Paul is saying, that's all changed.

That's all done away with. That was a previous dispensation. God is now doing something different. And what this difference is, is what he is called upon to reveal.

[12 : 24] And he's going to reveal all kinds of things that are peculiar to this new administration that did not even exist in the previous dispensation.

And whereas, whereas the emphasis was upon the law previously. And John tells us that the law came by Moses.

But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And as a result, the apostle Paul is going to be given an abundance of special revelations involving this secret.

And by the way, the text goes on to tell us, guys, that this was hidden.

This information was hidden in the heart and mind of God from eternity past. So it isn't that God is bringing something that's new to him. In fact, there isn't anything new to God. But it was new to man.

[13 : 26] And he's saying that this truth had been hidden away in the heart of God. In other words, there's another way of saying this is what God had in mind all along. But he never let anybody in on it.

Until he raised up Paul and gave this information to him to dispense to others. And it's going to contain all kinds of things that were totally nonexistent before.

One of which is, behold, I show you a mystery. A secret. We shall not all sleep. But we shall all be changed.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. I said, this is the rapture. Where did that come from? Where do you find that prophesied in the Old Testament? The rapture of the church.

Where do you even find the church in the Old Testament? You don't. It's just not there. And it's not supposed to be there. Because it's something to be revealed later.

[14 : 23] And the Spirit of God indwelling believers. What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Spirit of God, which you have of God?

You're not your own. You're bought with a price? Hey, that's brand new. Under the dispensation of law with Moses, the Spirit of God never indwelt anybody like that permanently.

He came upon them for specific purposes and services. And David was right in praying, take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Because that was a definite possibility.

But it isn't for those who are in Christ. Because he is with us. And will never leave us nor forsake us. That's new. That was not true before.

This rapture. And this indwelling of the Spirit of God. And this making the two into one new body. This is all brand spanking new information.

[15 : 23] And you know what? It has always been true. People tend to have problems with new information.

Well, that's not what I've always believed. And there is a tendency to be very suspicious of it. And we should be. We should be. Something isn't true because it's new.

And something isn't true because it's old. If it is true, it is true because of its inherent truthfulness.

And its correspondence to reality. It isn't true whether it's old or new.

And it isn't true depending on how many people believe it. If it is true, it is true even if nobody believes it. If it's true, it's true. So, Paul has got this enormous responsibility of communicating brand spanking new information that in some circles will be well received.

You know, we will read later that the Gentiles heard it gladly. Why? Because for the first time in their life, they have heard information that deals with the actual forgiveness of their sins and connecting with the God who made them.

[16 : 46] And the Gentiles were elated because they had been steeped in paganism and idolatry and all of these multi-religions and all of the uncertainty and all of the unknowing.

And now, Paul the Apostle comes on the scene and he links all of this to the finished work of Jesus Christ because what happened on that cross changed everything.

It's a whole new ballgame. This is the dispensation, the administration, the doling out of the grace of God. And that means, whereas in the Old Testament, the focus and the emphasis was on the law. The law, the law, the law, the law of Moses. But now, in the new, since Christ paved the way on that cross and paid that ultimate price, now the focus is not on the law because we are not under law. We are under grace. So, the emphasis shifts from law to grace. And the grace of God says, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

[18 : 01] Incredible concept. As I've mentioned before, this truth has been around for 2,000 years now. And most of the world is still unaware of it. And sad to say, many who name the name of Christ are unaware of these things.

And you find so much emphasis being placed upon that which pertains to the law rather than that which pertains to grace. And I don't want to be repetitious here.

But you all know this to be true. So much of the preaching today, and in fact, for the last, God knows, the last couple of hundred years, has been from the Gospels.

The four Gospels. Why is there so much emphasis there? Because the thinking is, that's where Jesus is. He's in the four Gospels.

Fellas, he is in the four Gospels. But he's in the Pauline Epistles, too. And he's in the five books of Moses, too. And he's in all of the Old Testament prophets, too.

[19 : 11] There isn't any place in the Scriptures where Jesus Christ is not in one way or another. And people become emotionally attached to the red letters.

As far as they're concerned, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote their letters in red ink. Well, no, they didn't.

But that does tend to give a special nature to it. And, fellas, what we need to realize, and the plea from my heart is this. All of the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, is from Christ.

All of it is. And none of it is more the Word of God or less the Word of God than any other part of it. But there is, in Scripture, a progression of Revelation.

That, to me, is the key. When you come into the Old Testament and you begin in Genesis, we find so much of the content, virtually all of the content, having to do with materiality, physicality, face-to-face confrontations, miracles of a physical nature that God performed for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[20 : 39] And particularly, children of Israel coming out of Egypt. Twelve plagues. Crossing of the Red Sea. Manna from heaven. All of these were really, in your face, physical, literal miracles that caused the Jewish people to expect miracles from God on their behalf.

And little wonder, then, when Christ came on the scene and presented himself as the Messiah, the long-awaited one of whom Moses and the prophets spoke, Okay, if you are the Messiah, the Messiah is going to bring in the kingdom.

And the kingdom is going to make everything that is wrong in this world right. And if you, Jesus of Nazareth, if you are the Messiah, show us.

Save yourself. Yeah, save yourself. And what sign show us thou? Paul said, For the Jews require the sign.

They had been taught to require and expect the sign. And our Lord, He gave them signs. Good grief. He raised the dead. He stilled the storm.

[21 : 55] He created one miracle after another. And then He chided Chorazin and Bethsaida. And He lowered the boom on them and He said, Woe unto you! If the mighty miracles that had been done in you, that you saw, if they had been done in Tyre and Sidon, and those were Gentiles, they would have repented.

But it wasn't enough for you. So from here on out, no more miracles. I'm not going to give you any more miracles except the sign of the prophet Jonah. And as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

That was the only miracle that they were going to get. So this is also what I think Paul is talking about when he says, For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Well, who was accustomed to walking by sight? The Jews. And legitimately so. Because he had something to look at. Had all these physical miracles. And the watchword today is not physical miracles that some are expecting and they think because because God never changes, his methodology should never change.

But we know very well that God never changes in his character and his makeup and his nature. That's constant. But God changes his methodology in dealing with people because the needs become different.

[23 : 19] Scott? Quick question before you leave this section. Verse 5 has now been revealed as to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit. Yeah. Who would that be?

I think it means Paul principally and it also means those colleagues of his, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Barnabas, Silas, and others who were working with him and the apostles who were there.

Of course, he was an apostle and a prophet. And by the way, the word prophet is grossly misunderstood by most people because the word prophet is actually a synonym for preaching and it, most of the time, a prophet is referred to in the Bible.

It has nothing to do with predicting the future. Although they did do that. But when the Lord said, Son of man, go to the people of Israel and prophesy unto them.

He meant preach. Preach. And tell them and warn them, you know, of what's coming. So the preaching was often accompanied with prophecy and with exhortation and sometimes judgment and condemnation and sometimes it was information that was designed to be a blessing to them.

[24 : 36] So the whole concept of prophesying is just partly. Someone said that that prophesying is both foretelling and telling forth.

It's both. Other thoughts or comments? Anyone? Well, I just wanted to take advantage of this change in administration that's coming up in politics and it happens about every four years.

So if you can keep in mind that what Paul is talking about here is that he has been placed in charge of causing everybody to see the characteristics and the changes that are going to take place under a whole new administration administration or dispensation.

And my point and my burden is what we ought to be doing is focusing on the latest revelation not the oldest.

And by the way, Paul's revelation is itself going to be updated and you will find the update to his revelation in the book of the revelation because that is yet future and when that comes, when that time comes, Paul's information will be passe just like Moses' information is passe now.

[25 : 57] So, in the military there used to be a saying you always obey your latest order. and that's a good thing to keep in mind and we ought to do that with the scriptures too.

Joe? Take your analogy further there with the political situation. Obama's administration was for the Democrat people now Trump's administration is going to be for the Republican people.

Right. And both of them claimed it was for everybody. But we know that it doesn't always work out that way.