

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] We are continuing to explore the arrival on the scene of a brand new paradigm, a tremendous change that has taken place that was previously not predicted or prophesied in the Old Testament at all.

In other words, nobody knew that this thing was coming. And this thing I am referring to is a kind of like a full court press of the grace of God.

It is going to be introduced as the dispensation or the administration of the grace of God. This is a subject that has always been available to man.

That is God's grace because no one in any age in time past has ever been saved apart from the grace of God. And by the grace of God we of course mean that the salvation and the status that God requires is a gift.

And it only needs to be received. But what is going to happen with this new administration of the grace of God, it is going to become front and center and it is going to be the focus of this new administration.

[1 : 20] Now we are all familiar with kind of like what happens when a new administration is introduced politically. Whether it is on the national scene or whether it is in the state house.

When one political party has been in power for who knows how many years. Then you hold an election. And then a new political party is elected.

Everybody starts talking about there is going to be a new administration. Things are going to be done differently from what they were in the past.

Why? Well because there is a new administration and a new philosophy of governing is going to be brought to bear upon the public. Whether it is a state or the nation or whatever.

Folks this is exactly what is happening in the book of Acts. When the apostle Paul arrives on the scene, he is appointed by God to be the administrator of a whole new administration.

[2 : 24] Something that had never been in place like this in this magnitude before. And it is the administration or the dispensation of the grace of God.

And this grace of God is going to be displayed and proclaimed and magnified in a way it never has been before. And God's point man for doing that is the individual who would have been the least unlikely in the whole planet.

This was a man who was opposed to Jesus of Nazareth and everything he stood for. And set about to persecute the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

And he was the one whom this risen Christ encountered on the road to Damascus. And gloriously saved him. Called him to himself and appointed him to this new position.

The one who had been principally the point man before was the apostle Peter. And in Peter's position with the twelve apostles who were originally chosen by Christ.

[3 : 37] It was Peter who was given the responsibility of having charge of the keys of the kingdom. This is Matthew 16.

And unto Peter Christ said unto you I give the keys of the kingdom. Well the kingdom is that peculiar thing that was offered to the nation of Israel.

This is what John the Baptist preached. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He preached it to the Jewish people. And when Christ called the twelve. He selected three out of the twelve to be his inner circle.

They were Peter, James, and John. And those three are going to constitute the inner circle of the inner circle of the twelve. And Peter was the chief spokesperson.

He was the one whom God used to go to Cornelius back in chapter 10 of the book of Acts. Which we spent some time on. Cornelius was not a Jew. He was a Gentile.

[4 : 40] And Peter made the gospel clear to Cornelius as a result of Cornelius' prayer. And this is a fascinating passage. You can look at it at your leisure in Acts 10.

And Peter, I think, used that key to open the door to Cornelius. Because Cornelius was a Gentile. And this was primarily a Jewish message. Now, when you go on through the book of Acts, you will see in chapter 12 that the apostle Peter just kind of fades into the distance and passes off the scene.

And is no longer the point man. Because a new administration has arrived on the scene with a new point man. And this new man is Saul of Tarsus who is going to become Paul the apostle.

So, Peter and his influence, which was directed exclusively to the nation of Israel and the Jews, is passing off the scene. And the reason it is, is because Israel as a nation is now being set aside in judicial blindness for their rejection of the Messiah.

And a whole new thing has been introduced, which is called the body of Christ. This is totally new. Never imagined before.

[6 : 02] And he's going to have a difficult time selling it. And I can attest to that. Because I have a difficult time selling it today.

People do not understand that the Bible is a book of movement. It is in progression. All the way from Genesis to Revelation. It is additional truth of God unfolding as you move through the Bible. Things are changing. Doctrine is on the move. We are passing from one administration to another. And if you don't take that into account and try to make everything static and fixed, it's impossible. Because you'll have nothing but contradictions and things that won't fit. So, let's return if we may. Page 3b at the top. Paul is reminding them.

He said, which I wrote afore in a few words. That's in chapter 1. We'll not go back there. Wherein when you read, you may understand my knowledge. This is the Apostle Paul speaking.

[7 : 05] In the mystery of Christ. And this great mystery centers around the idea of a crucified Messiah. which also was unthinkable to the Jewish people.

And it is in the death, burial, and resurrection of this Messiah that God is actually going to be able to redeem, to reconcile the entirety of the human race.

The death of Christ is the key. It's the focal point. It is what enables God to reconcile the world due to the price that Jesus Christ paid when he died on that cross, satisfied the righteousness of God, and it made Jesus Christ not only the Messiah, it made him the Savior, Redeemer.

And to get a handle on this, keep this in mind, guys. When you read about Jesus Christ in the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, where we find the earthly life of Christ spelled out, before the cross, before the cross of Christ, He had not provided for the salvation of anybody.

You need to keep that in mind. Jesus Christ was not able to save anybody from their sin before the cross. He was able to forgive people's sin, but insofar as eternal life was concerned, it was not his to give, until he paid that ultimate price with his own death.

[8 : 54] on the cross. That payment that was made there satisfied the just demands of a holy God, and it enabled God to lift the curse that was imposed upon all of humanity and all of creation.

And what it did was it made every human being savable. And I make a careful distinction here.

We're not talking about universal salvation. We're talking about universal reconciliation, and those are different theological concepts.

When Christ died on the cross, He made salvation available to every human being. These were the same people who were affected by the sin and fall of our first parents that brought the entirety of the human race under condemnation.

And when Christ died as the last Adam and paid that price that was demanded by justice, He, in effect, reconciled the entire world and threw the way of access to God open.

And now, all can come to God through this finished work of this Redeemer, Jesus Christ. And this is why also, guys, why we preach without hesitation the exclusivity of salvation through Christ.

[10 : 23] Why is Jesus the only way to heaven? Because He's the only way that picked up the ticket. He's the only one who paid the price. He's the only one who secured our redemption.

No one else died on that cross but Jesus Christ. No church, no institution, only Christ. This is why He's going to say, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father but by Me. This is a great criticism that has leveled against Christianity. And it has been for a long time. Well, you Christians, you believe that Jesus Christ is the only way.

Well, we do. But it's not our idea. We didn't think that up. John Lennox put it so well when he said, Why should Christians be thought of as being narrow or bigoted for receiving from Jesus Christ the only thing that no one else ever offers?

That's an excellent way of putting it. And that is salvation through His finished work. So it is this message that is now going to become the focus of what the Apostle Paul is going to proclaim in this new paradigm.

[11 : 40] And it is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And this is what he's talking about when he says that you may, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

And look at this. Which, which mystery in other ages previously up to the time Paul arrived on the scene 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.

And here it is. That, or in order that, verse 6, that the Gentiles, these are non-Jews, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body.

What body is he talking about? This is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. And it is made up of all believers who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

they have been baptized by the Spirit of God into the spiritual body of Christ and are made to be in union with Him. So we are members of His body.

[13 : 02] This, fellas, this is the church that it is vital to belong to. This is the church that provides eternal life. It is the church which is the body of Christ.

And if you are a believer in Christ, you are a member of that church. It doesn't mean that your name is on a roll like on a local church on the corner. But this is the membership that counts.

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

The good news. Whereof or of which gospel I was made a minister according to the gift.

There's the giftedness of grace. Grace has got gift written all over it. That's what makes it good news. It's a gift.

[14 : 01] It's a gift you do not have to pay for because someone else did. and it is offered to you as a gift.

All you can do with the gift is receive it or reject it. if you do not receive it you have rejected it.

There's no middle ground here. The middle is excluded. This is logically speaking of the law of the excluded middle. There is no in between.

So we are in or we are out of Christ. Nobody is almost in or almost out. We are in or we are out.

And partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel 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.

And I think this effectual working of his power has to do with the fact that when Saul of Tarsus was confronted on that road to Damascus and realized who it was that was speaking to him.

[15 : 21] It was Jesus whom he was persecuting. He was led by the hand because he was blind led by the hand into the city of Damascus and he spent three days and three nights in the house of I can't think of his name but he lived in the street called Straight.

The Lord sent Ananias there to lay hands on him so he could receive his sight. And during these three days and three nights I think that is where and when Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle. He became a regenerated man. And you've got to remember something about the history of this man. He was a persecutor. He was a murderer.

He arrested Christians and hauled them off and persecuted. He was an original Gestapo type. Think of it if you will. The first Gestapo troops were not German soldiers.

They were Jews. And they plied their efforts against other Jews arresting them. And now he is confronted by this one and I've told you before I can see him sitting in the house of this man who lived in the street called Straight.

[16 : 37] He's got his head in his hands like this and his elbows on the table. And he's trying to process this encounter that he had on the road to Damascus.

And he's shaking his head and saying, I can't believe it. Did that really happen? Or was I dreaming? Was that real? No, I heard the voice. No, there was this blinding light.

And I can't see as a result of it. And somebody would put food in front of him and he had no appetite. He didn't want to eat. And all he's doing is trying to think. Trying to put this together.

But this is the one that I saw as a cancer on Judaism. He had to stamp these people out. And now he appears to me and he tells me that he is the Messiah after all.

How could I have missed it? How could I have been so wrong? And he has to relive. He has to relive the event just a little bit earlier when he was present at the stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7.

[17 : 42] And he held Saul of Tarsus held the garments of those who took off their heavy outer garments and gave them to Saul of Tarsus and said, Here, hold my coat.

So they had the tunic on under that. And that would give them freedom of movement instead of those heavy bulky robes they were wearing. because after all, they're going to pick up these large stones and throw them at Stephen and crush his body with those stones until he's dead.

And Saul of Tarsus is going to be saying, Yeah, hit him again, hit him again. He's still moving.

Somebody else hit him. And Stephen was martyred there outside the city of Jerusalem.

and Saul of Tarsus held their coats and cheered them on. And now, he's looking back on that and reliving it and saying, how could I have been so blind?

How is it that I didn't see it? How didn't I understand? And now, sometime in between there, he came to faith in Jesus Christ. And what happened? When he became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and he put his trust in him, the Spirit of God, reached down into the heart and life and spirit of Saul of Tarsus, and remodeled him.

[19 : 11] Reworked him. The Bible says, regenerated him. You know, when we are born, we are a product of genetics, contribution from our parents.

We talk about genes. Genes that are passed on from our parents, and they are used for the construction of this new body called a baby.

And we say, it is genetic. Well, when you are re-gened, you are regenerated, reborn.

This is what the Bible calls the new birth. It is starting all over again. You look the same, but you are really different on the inside because something happened. Now, the life of God is in you.

That is what regeneration is. And none of us understand how God does that. We just know that He does it. And this is what Paul meant when he said, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

[20 : 23] Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new. This is a whole new life. This is what Saul of Tarsus experienced when he said that the gift of grace was given unto me by the effectual working of His power.

The songwriter says, talks about, it took a miracle. It took a miracle of love and grace. It took a miracle of God to hang the stars in space.

But when He saved my soul, cleansed and made me whole, that took a miracle of love and grace.

And that's exactly what happened. And every child of God has experienced that on the inside. You can't explain it. You just know that something is different.

You are not the same. That's what he's talking about. Unto me, verse 8, who am less than the least of all saints. It just perturbs me to no end to hear some people say, and yes, some of them are well-meaning Christians, that Paul was arrogant, prideful, and a boaster.

[21 : 38] Fellas, if you just read his letters and pay attention to what you're reading, you have to come to the conclusion, this is one of the most grateful, humble individuals that ever walked the earth.

This man, this man had an element of humility about him that most of us could only hope for. And he addresses himself as the less than the least of all saints.

It doesn't sound like a proud man talking, does it? And by the way, anybody who is really proud, anybody who is overcome by pride, they just don't understand their true estate.

Because if they did, they'd know they have no grounds for boasting at all. Got nothing to brag about. And this is why we say God deserves all the credit, the praise, the glory.

We certainly don't. To 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.

[22 : 49] Now what does this mean that is so different and radical before? Just this. Before. There was no preaching among the Gentiles.

There was preaching among the Jews, by the Jews, for the Jews. But there was nothing for the Gentiles. And when Paul addresses the Ephesians in chapter 1 and 2, he reminds them of what their true estate was before the gospel of Christ came to them.

And he said, remember that you Gentiles were previously without God and without hope in this present world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you have been brought near.

That's in Ephesians 2 when he reminds them of their true estate. The Gentiles had absolutely nothing going for them until Jesus Christ died and the death of Christ incorporated all the world, Jew and Gentile, and is now going to offer salvation to those who before, at least by Jews, were considered as dogs, the uncircumcised, the offscouring of the earth.

And let's face it, the vast majority of these Gentiles were pagans, idolaters, worshipped many gods, heathen, into all kinds of practices.

[24 : 19] And now, this gospel of the grace of God is coming to a people who had nothing to do with it before, people for whom nothing like this was ever intended, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, exhaustless wealth of Christ, the fathomless wealth of Christ, the incalculable riches of Christ, the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

What is this all talking about? It's talking about eternal life. How can you put a number on that? It is exhaustless. It is without parallel.

There is absolutely nothing like it. And, to make all men see, or understand, or comprehend, what is the fellowship, or what is the dispensation, or what is the administration, of the mystery, and to bring to life, some translations say, what is the administration of the sacred secret?

Sacred secret. Secret kept by whom? Kept by God. In his own heart. Never before revealed until Paul came on the scene. And it is as if this new truth was just sprung on humanity.

Just like out of nowhere. Whoa! Where did this come from? It came from God. Why didn't he say anything about it before? Because it was hid in the mind and heart of God and kept there ready to be revealed at just the right time.

[26 : 02] And this is the right time with Saul of Tarsus become Paul the Apostle. This is groundbreaking stuff and it is so radically different from all that had gone before.

these different translations. I want to look at these because it's critical that we grasp this. 20th century translation says, I'm talking about the top right hand corner now, down about three paragraphs.

And to make clear what is God's way of working out that hidden purpose. Weymouth says, and to show all men in a clear light what my stewardship is.

Stewardship, a steward was one who was put in charge of the affairs of his master or his owner. He was like a manager.

And that's the idea of a stewardship here. Paul, the Apostle Paul, is the manager of the grace of God. And as he proclaims this, others are going to hear the message, pick up on it, and they're going to start preaching the same thing.

[27 : 13] Who is that? Well, how about Barnabas? How about Silas? How about Epaphroditus? And others, that Paul is going to succeed in winning to Christ, they are all going to take that message and start spreading out with it.

And eventually, the entire Roman Empire is going to be impacted because people who have been told tell other people.

And this thing is multiplying exponentially. And by the time you get to the third century with Emperor Constantine, he sees the writing on the wall and says, we're not going to be able to stamp these people out called Christians, even though we've been trying to do it for 200 years.

Maybe the time has come to join them. That's exactly what happened. And in some negative way, some said Christianity has never recovered from that to this point.

Because you don't join Christianity that way, by way of making a political decision and considering in a smart move, this is something of the heart. And if the heart isn't in it, it's not going to fly.

[28 : 24] Roger? I think a lot of them understood what they were saying.

And here's the thing, guys, that I want you to consider, because this is really important. This is pretty plain language. I mean, he's spelling it out.

And as you read, as Roger said, as you read these alternate translations, each one puts a little different wrinkle on it, but they say essentially the same thing. And they're saying the same thing over and over, but in a little bit different words.

So the idea of the 26th translation is if one of them doesn't grab you or get through, maybe another one will. Put just a little different way. And I'm sure that a lot of people read this and they kind of understand what it's saying on the surface.

I'm talking about me now. This is what I did for the first 15 years that I was a believer. I don't know how many times I read Ephesians as a new Christian. And yeah, I saw the words and I got the meaning kind of.

[29 : 30] But I really didn't get it. By that I mean I didn't get the implications. You can read the words and you can understand the message, but when it comes to asking the question, so what?

That's where we often fail to get it. You just don't get it. And I know there are people who have heard who have heard me talk about this difference, this distinction, this message, this administration, this dispensation of the grace of God.

And I can just, I can almost read their minds. They're saying, yeah, yeah, Marv, we get it. We get it. Go on. But I'm not so sure you do. Because I'll tell you something, fellas. If you get it, it will get you. If it hasn't gotten you, you don't get it yet. Now, don't give up. Hang in there. Because, in many respects, it's almost like salvation.

Don't get me wrong. It isn't salvation. And it isn't getting saved again. But it is the breakthrough of light that, have you ever, after you came to, after you came to faith in Christ, have you ever looked back on the time before you came to know the Lord?

[31 : 03] I've done this many times. And say to yourself, I don't know why I didn't make that decision earlier. I don't know why I didn't see it earlier. I don't know why I didn't come to Christ earlier.

Well, I'll tell you why you didn't. Because, there was a very good likelihood that you didn't really connect the dots. You really didn't get it. But when you get it, the gospel, salvation, a gift, grace, new life, when you get it, and you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, it gets you.

Or, He gets you. And you get Him. And there is a kind of parallel there with this message of the gospel of the grace of God. Just like the gospel of salvation, there are people who have heard the gospel of salvation, they've heard it, they've heard it, they've watched Billy Graham, they've heard their preacher give it, they've heard the invitation, salvation, and they never connected, never connected the dots.

But one day, one day, wow, the light came on, and they got it. And that's, Joe? Could you get it by being around people that have got it?

Oh yeah. Yeah, that's how I got it, I think. Absolutely. By being around people that had it.

Absolutely. They're so different than the people that didn't have it. You're right. You're right.

Absolutely. It works that way.

[32 : 28] It works that way with the gospel of salvation, the grace of God, if you as an unbeliever are in the frequent company of those who are believers, you will, before long, pick up, there's something different about these people.

I'm not sure I can put my finger on it. But there's something, they've got something that I don't have, and I don't know what it is. I don't know what makes them tick.

And continued exposure to that, and a loving communication of the gospel to someone in a setting like that can be, and very often is, the basis of their, that's what I need.

That's what I need. Dan? Before the crucifixion, they feared God. They were really fearing death because there was no way to be trying to lie.

Is that correct? I mean, there was no assurance and there was no basis for assurance. Everybody was just kind of spiritually dangling.

[33 : 37] You know? There was no real confidence, no real assurance, no real stability. And when you are in Christ, and Christ is in you, and you are a member of His body, your destiny is His destiny.

You are wrapped up in Him, and He is wrapped up in you, and you are co-laborers together with Him and with other believers in Christ. And that provides the basis for assurance, for stability, for growth, for enjoyment, for appreciation.

Many Christians have never discovered the fact that one of the principal things God wants you to do with your salvation is to enjoy it. to enjoy the freedom of being set free from the law of sin and death.

That is exhilarating. That really lets you sleep at night. Even if you don't have the right pillow, you can sleep at night knowing these things.

There is absolutely nothing like it. This is why Paul calls it the unsearchable riches of Christ. This gospel of the grace of God has no bottom in it. It is amazing.

[34 : 48] It fell as quick. When God the Father provided God the Son, He gave all He had.

He gave the very best He had. He gave the only thing that really meant anything to Him in the person of His Son. God gave the greatest thing He could give so that He could require from us the very least that we could give.

which is our trust, our faith, our reliance upon Him. This is amazing. Hey, they didn't have this before Paul came on the scene and God gave him this message.

It did not exist like this. Not at all. We are a blessed people, I tell you. God gave it to you. And, He says, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

Nobody knew it. Only God knew it. And He wasn't revealing it until now. and let me tell you, when a whole new thing comes on the scene like this, and presents itself, you can be sure people are automatically suspect.

[36 : 24] If it's new, it can't be true. That's the way some people feel. And you're going to hear things like, that's not what I've always believed. Yeah, well, welcome to the club.

We're introduced to a lot of truth that is different from what we've always believed. And this is the basis that a lot of people use for rejecting new truth.

It's because I never heard that before, or I never believed that before. Therefore, it can't be true.

And I'm going to dismiss it. And you know, that's the very thing, guys, that the Apostle Paul had to struggle against.

Because he was preaching this gospel in a new message, in a new form, in a new format, with a new emphasis, that had never been proclaimed before.

And it is not going to be an easy sell. He's going to get a lot of opposition. In fact, he's going to get so much opposition, it's going to cost him his life for proclaiming that message.

[37 : 27] That is the gospel of the grace of God. Nothing like it in the world. Hey, breakfast is here. Enjoy your meal. Is there a comment or question before we conclude?

Anybody? Yeah, Roger. I always had an issue, not knowing anything about Paul's message, but the church, as I saw it, before my salvation, all I knew was, you were supposed to sacrifice animals, you were supposed to give exactly so much money to the church, and I said, these people ain't gone at their interest.

Why would I want anything to do with them? Yeah, well, I hear you, and I'm sure your story could be repeated in the lives of a whole lot of people.

Phil? You said a while ago that as long as Paul tried to settle this, you had gone through the same things the way along.

Yeah, yeah. Back in 1980, before I became a believer, the secretary of Donald Bill Kuhl developed the plantation of this fellow, and it was called Christianity is for Christians and other sinners.

[38 : 55] Uh-huh. Okay. And the more we listen to that, the more I want to hear more from this fellow that made that. He made a statement on there about people that called him a nut.

Yeah. He said I might be a nut, but I'm screwed on the right bolt. Yeah. Right. Yeah. Maybe a nut, but I'm screwed on the right bolt. Yeah.

Any other thoughts? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody? Anybody?