

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 6/22/16

Letter To The Ephesians

Truths Of The Church

Scripture Portion: Ephesians 3: 1-12

God's Marvelous Plan for the Gentiles

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

In these verses we are told seven truths about the Church, and it is very important for us to understand these.

1. The MYSTERY of the Church.

The word "mystery" occurs in verses 3, 4 and 9. It does not mean that which is obscure or unintelligible, but it means a divine secret which is known only to those to whom it is revealed - note verse 3, and compare 1 Corinthians 2: 7-12. The special revelation of the truth of the Church was first made to Paul, but he would not have understood the dispensational significance of the "mystery" of the Church apart from the revelation given to him by God; and likewise we cannot understand the significance of the "mystery" without the help and illumination of the Holy Spirit. For further study look up Romans 11: 25; 1 Corinthians 15: 51; Ephesians 3: 3-4 and 6: 19; 1 Timothy 3:16.

2. The MEANING of the Church.

What do we mean when we speak of the Church? What does God mean? We are not thinking about a church, that is, a building; we are thinking about the Church - verse 10, and in verse 6 we are told what the Church is and how it is composed. The key word here is the word "Body". The Church, then, is the Body of Christ - compare Ephesians 4: 12, 15 and 16 and Colossians 1: 18. If the Church is the Body of Christ and He is the Head of the Body, who are the members of the Church and how do they become members?

3. The MEMBERSHIP of the Church.

Verse 6 tells us that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, is composed of Jews and Gentiles. This is the "mystery" - that Jew and Gentile were to be united in one body was an entirely new thing. But how is the "Body", the Church, formed? It is formed "through the gospel" (verse 6); that is, by the preaching of the gospel. When the gospel is preached the Holy Spirit convicts and converts, souls are born again - Jews and Gentiles - and are baptised into the Body of Christ - 1 Corinthians 12: 13. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing today (Acts 15: 13-14), and only those who have been born again and washed in the precious blood of Christ are true members of the Church, which is His Body.

4. The MISSION of the Church.

What is the function of the Church in the world? It is a two-fold function, as verses 8 and 10 make clear. The purpose and ministry of the Church in the world is that men may hear the gospel, and that to the *angels and unseen hosts* may be made known "the manifold wisdom of God." Note the Church's message - "the unsearchable riches of Christ", and "the manifold wisdom of God" - not merely ethics, morality, philosophy or politics! The mission of the Church is not just to gather people together for "religious" purposes; it is not to compete with the world in worldly things, nor is it to convert the world. The mission of the Church is to evangelize the world - look up Matthew 28: 19.

5. The MINISTERS of the Church.

Verse 7 tells us that Paul was a minister, or servant, of the Church, and therefore of the gospel, but the word here is not used in any official sense. All true members of the Church are ministers of the Church and are responsible to take their share in proclaiming the gospel. Notice how we become ministers or servants. Paul writes, "I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace" (verse 7). If the question is asked, "How are ministers made?", the answer is that God makes them! - compare Ephesians 4: 11.

6. The MARKS of the Church.

This portion of scripture tells us also some of the characteristics of those men and women, Jews and Gentiles, who are members of the Church. What are they like, or what should they be like? Notice the following five marks which should characterize every member of the Body of Christ: (1) Captivity. Are we bond-slaves of the Lord Jesus? (verse 1); (2) Fellowship. The words "heirs" and "sharers together" remind us of that which we share in Christ (verse 6); (3) Humility. (verse 8); (4) Testimony. (verse 8); (5) Acceptance. (verses 11 - 12). Underline the words "approach", "freedom", "confidence" and "in Him".

But who is sufficient for these things? Can we fulfil this high calling in our own strength? No!

7. The MIGHT of the Church.

This is indicated in verse 7 in the words, "the gift of God's grace given me"; and also in the words, "through the working of His power."

There are those who think that because the witness of the Church today is often weak and ineffective, and many Christians are half-hearted, the Church will decline until she fades away altogether! - but the Church will never fail, because the Lord Jesus Christ is her Founder, her Foundation, her Builder, and He has guaranteed that no power on earth or in Hell will prevail against His Church - look up Matthew 16: 13-18 and 1 Corinthians 3: 11.