The Mystery Revealed, Part 2
Scripture: Ephesians 3:5-6
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We're having a great time going through the book of Ephesians and letting the Spirit of God teach us the wondrous truths contained in this letter from the apostle Paul to the churches that were in Asia Minor. And we have learned that the heart of this whole epistle was the concept of being in Christ; that the believer is indivisibly fused with Jesus Christ by faith; that we are one with Christ. And commensurate with that is the fact that we are also then one with every other believer in Christ. If we are one with Christ, we are one with everybody else who is one with Christ. And the great message of the book of Ephesians is the position of the believer in Christ; that's his God-ward unity and the position of the believer with all the other believers, that's his manward or churchward unity. Now in our study, we have been covering many aspects of the mystery of the church...that God has made one body of Jew and Gentile, this great truth and the message of Ephesians is unity. That's the heart of this thing: we are one in Christ; with Christ we are one in Christ with all those who are in Christ so that Jew, Gentile, bond and free, male and female, Greek and barbarian are all one in Jesus Christ. There are no national distinctions, racial distinctions or anything like that. There is a fusion of life in Christ. We are mutual...the same flow of eternal life surges all of our hearts, all of our spirits because of the same indwelling life of God in our souls. There is no difference, there is no distinction. There is to be the abolishing of all the walls between us. There is to be the closing of all the gaps between us. There is to be an ending of all the bitternesses and arguments and quarrels and struggles and there is to be as 2:15 of Ephesians says, one new humanity, one new man of Jew and Gentile, one in Christ.

Now this tremendous concept, this wonderful reality of the church was as we saw in chapter 1 in the mind of God before the world began. In fact, God has had an eternal love affair with the church from before the creation. He loved the church before it actually unfolded in history and in chapter one, we read this tremendous eternal plan for the church. Then in chapter 2, we see how it will unfold in history; how it really came to pass and now in chapter 3, Paul gives us a definition of it so that we see the church in the mind of God in chapter 1. We see the church unfolding in redemption in chapter 2 and then in chapter 3, generally speaking now, we see the details of this wondrous thing, the church, where Jew and Gentile are one in Christ. And of course, that's a wonderful new thing because for centuries the Jew has been distinct from the Gentile; distinct in every way; distinct by virtue of circumcision; distinct by virtue of relationship to the covenants and the promises; distinct by virtue of diet; distinct in terms of clothing; distinct in terms of land; distinct in terms of religion and distinct even

in terms of food and cooking and things such as that. So the distinction has been there and now God comes in and sets aside the old theocracy, sets aside the national entity as a witness for Him and fuses Jew and Gentile into one new humanity that is to be His new source of testimony. Christ in the world, the church, the body of Christ. A mystery never before understood, never before seen.

Now it is true that in the Old Testament, God sort of gave little hints about this secret. For example, in Genesis 12 and Genesis 22 and in Genesis 26 and in Genesis 28, that sort of dropped the thought that Gentiles would be blessed. And then in Psalm 72, again God dropped the thought that Gentiles would in turn would bless God, the God of Israel. And then in Isaiah chapter 11, chapter 49, chapter 54, chapter 60, came the word from the prophet of God that the Messiah would come to the Gentiles. And then in Hosea 1:10 and in Amos 9:11 and following came the word that the Gentiles would be saved through the Messiah. And then in Joel 2:28 came the message that God would pour out His Spirit not just on Israel but on all flesh. And so God was hinting much as you perhaps when you have a great secret that you want to keep from your children, just give them enough to tantalize them and excite them about what's coming but never revealing the secret. So God had dropped those little seeds, thoughts of reality about the church, but never had it crystallized; never had it been seen until the New Testament era and the apostle of the mystery. Paul himself began to unfold the fullness of what it means that Jew and Gentile, that all believers bond and free, male and female, Greek and barbarian are one in Jesus Christ. That's the wondrous truth of chapter 3. That's what Paul wants his reader to understand.

The thing for which God planned from eternity past, the thing for which Jesus prayed in the garden. In John 17 when He agonized and said in verse 21: "I pray that they may be one even as thou and I art one."...in other words, the same fusion, the same indivisibility as the Trinity. We are to be so fused as the Trinity is that they are distinct and yet you don't know where one stops and other starts. There is to be a loss of identity on the part of the believer so that each man, Philippians 2, looks on the things of others and not on his own things; so that we love each other the same and not in differences. This is the kind of fusion, the kind of oneness that the Lord prayed for, that God planned for, that Paul becomes the apostle of...the one who teaches this wondrous mystery. It isn't that God wanted an alliance with Jew and Gentile. It isn't that God wanted a friendly agreement or a peace treaty or a combination or a partnership, He wanted a fusion. This is an amazing truth, fulfilling the deep desire of God and the deep desire of Christ. And so the message we've been giving to you in these weeks past is a message of unity, that the church is one, that we are one body and we saw in chapter 4, didn't we, what we're going to learn later on, that there's one Lord and one faith and one baptism and one God and Father and one body and one Spirit and one hope of a calling and that we're to endeavor to keep that oneness in the bond of peace.

So the believers are called upon for real unity. Now beloved let just hasten to add that that's the only way we can manifest Christ in the world. The only way the world is going to see a clear picture of Christ is to see unity because we are His body and where there is discord, then the body is

disconnected and separated and maimed and crippled and the world doesn't really see what they should see of Christ. So it behooves us to be aware that God calls us to unity. The end of all disparity, the end of all bitterness, the end of all prejudice, the end of all those things that separate us, the end of all pride, primarily, to be replaced with humility. Paul really wants us to understand this truth. If this is God's eternal plan and if this was Christ's passionate prayer in John 17 and if it was for this very truth that Paul wound up in prison, at least five years by the time he writes Ephesians, and remember I told you last week he was a prisoner directly because he was preaching this message. It was his message that Jew and Gentile were one that messed up the minds of the people that were in Jerusalem that ultimately made them take him and put him in jail. He was actually a prisoner because of this. Listen, if God cared so much, if Christ cared so much, if Paul cared so much, we ought to care, too, this is important, that we be one. Now the apostle Paul has this burden on his heart.

So in chapter 2:11, he began to talk about it, that we're one. That the Gentiles who used to be separated in verse 13 are now brought near. Christ has become our peace in verse 14 and broken down the middle wall of partition. Verse 15: he abolished the ceremonial law. He removed the ceremonial law which was the separator and it grieves my heart greatly today, that there are even Jewish Christians, who want to put the wall of ceremony back up again...the very wall that the Lord Jesus Christ in His death abolished. Who want to stick the ceremonial law up again, the very enmity which Christ wants removed. And He came to make, it says at the end of 15, one new humanity, making peace, reconciling both into one body, He slew that enmity, that ceremonial thing that kept Jew and Gentile apart and gave us both access to the Father by the Spirit. He made of us fellow citizens, verse 19, of the household of God. He made of us a holy temple, 21, in which we have become the habitation of the Spirit. So here, Paul gets into this Jew and Gentile one, this great new humanity. No longer is God reaching the world through the channel of a nation. Now, it's a new humanity made up of Jew and Gentile. No national distinction, no theocracy.

The old theocracy is set aside. By the way, I believe that God in the end times is going to bring back that nation again to a place of being His theocracy and again, Christ will establish His kingdom on earth and Israel will be the key through whom He rules. But for now, it's set aside and there's a new humanity. Now, Paul wants us to understand that. And so having articulated in chapter 2, he proceeds to do what all good and faithful teachers of the Word of God would do. He wants to pray for his people. Having given him the information, he then seeks to pray that they'll grasp it. And beloved, I just remind you of a principle here. There are two things that make up the composite of the ministry in terms of basic issues. One is teaching and other is prayer. In fact, in Acts 6, it says the apostles didn't want to get involved in other things because they wanted to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Those are the two salient elements of ministry.

When Paul begins the epistles that he writes, he begins so very frequently by reminding people that he's praying for them. Philippians 1:3: "I thank my God on every remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you." In Colossians 1:3: "We give thanks to God, the father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, praying always for you." At the end of Colossians 4:12: "Epaphrus, one of you, a servant of Christ greets you." Listen, "always laboring fervently for you in prayer that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Now, listen. Paul taught and the Word of God makes us complete. 2 Timothy 3:16; it says there, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable," et cetera, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished." So it's the Word that completes us. But Epaphrus adds, "always laboring fervently for you in prayer so that you may stand perfect and complete." Two things necessary: the Word and prayer. Paul writing to the Thessalonians, same thing, chapter 1: "We give thanks to God always, for you all making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing. We pray for you ceaselessly." And you see, those are the two parts of the ministry. Those are the things that I must be committed to, to come out here and to teach you and then to go before God and pray for you like the priest of old who first of all went into the holy of holies on the day of atonement and faced God and talked to God and then came out and faced the people, so was the minister. He must face God for people before he faces the people for God. They both have to be there. And so the apostle Paul knows that you've got to teach and pray.

And so as we come to chapter 3, that's the key for us to remember. As we come to chapter 3, he starts to pray. He figures, well, I've taught them these things in chapter 2. I've given them chapter 2:11-22 on the unity of the body and now I'm going to pray. And so he starts to pray in verse 1: "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" and he stops. There's no verb there. For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles what? What do you do for this cause? What? Well, to get the answer, you have to go to verse 14, because that's where he picks it up. All the stuff in the middle is in parentheses and verse 14 says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, he starts to pray for them...what...that they will understand what he is teaching. But he stops before he gets into his prayer. He just gets started and then he stops and says, wait a minute! I can't start praying until I know you understand this because there's no sense praying that you will apply something you don't understand. Beloved, you've got to have both...you see...teaching is for comprehension and prayer is for the power for application. He says, look, I've got to pray that you'll understand these things but before I pray, I've got to go over them again. There must be understanding before there will be an application and the power of God can't be used to apply the truth you don't understand. You understand that? And so we teach you, and so we teach you. And then we go back when you're not here and we pray for you that the power of application would be freed in your life by your obedience to the Spirit. So Paul knew the kind of passion that was necessary in prayer. He also knew the kind of passion that was necessary in preaching and the bottom line in any effective ministry is those two things. Beloved, if somebody just teaches the Word of God and prays for the people he teaches, then those are the two things God has called him to do, or her. That's true in your family, fathers, those are the things you ought to be doing with your children. That's true for you, mom, too. That's true for you who are teaching in schools. That's true for you who teach a class or a Bible study. That's true for any of us. We must impart truth and then we must pray that God would grant by His Spirit the power to see that applied. Well, we already saw Paul do that in chapter 1, a perfect illustration. Verse 14, first, he gives us some

information; from 15-23, he prays they'll understand it; he prays they'll get a grip on it; he prays it'll make a difference in their life.

And so he starts to pray but then he stops and says, I've got to go over it again. And from 2 to 13, he reiterates the significance of the mystery of the church, Jew and Gentile, one in Christ. This tremendous mystery: and so we call this section verses 1 to 13 the revealing of the mystery. And here Paul gives us the greatest statement in the New Testament on the details of the mystery of the church; the oneness of the church; the unity of the church. Now, I told you last time...and let's go right to the text...I told you last time, that as this passage unfolds, there are five major thrusts: the prisoner of the mystery, the planning of the mystery, the preaching of the mystery, the purposes of the mystery, and the privileges of the mystery. Now last time, we saw the prisoner of the mystery, point one. This time we're going to see point two, that's all.

So many of my messages started out to be one message, real homiletical, great introduction, great conclusion, nice points in between...it always ends up being hacked up into five messages. And I never know where I'm starting and where I'm finishing but that's the adventure of preaching, so stay with me folks and we'll all find out what I say.

First of all, the prisoner of the mystery. Last time we met Paul who introduces himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. And we talked about the fact that the apostle Paul said that this isn't something that I'm just deciding to teach. This is what God gave me. And he even says in verse 4, when you hear it, you'll know it came from Christ. You'll know it! This is a divine reality. And he introduced himself as the prisoner of the mystery. We saw something of his dedication; something of his commitment. He was so committed to this truth of unity that he preached it even though it cost him his life. It cost him his freedom. It cost him his reputation. It cost him dearly. But he preached it because it was true and he was committed to that truth. It was his passion because it was Christ's passion, because it was God's passion, and he wanted to transfer it to us so that it would become our passion. So we met the prisoner of the mystery in verses one to four. "The one who was given," verse 2 says, "the dispensation of the grace of God." Verse 3 says: "In order that he might take this revelation and make it known." In order that his readers in hearing it might say, he does speak of God, verse 4. He was the prisoner of the mystery; he was the man God used. God always uses men and women to carry out his work.

Secondly, we've come to our study this morning of the planning of the mystery. These two verses are the most complete definition of the mystery there is...particularly verse 6. Verse 5 defines what a mystery, verse 6, what this mystery is. Let's look at verses 5 and 6. Paul has been talking about the mystery of Christ in verse 4 and that's the antecedent for verse 5: which, that is, the mystery of Christ that the church is one. That's the mystery, keep it in mind, that's the secret revealed. The church is one, Jew and Gentile, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of man. It just wasn't. There were little hints, but it wasn't ever made known. Those Old Testament saints, they never really

did see this. They never really did comprehend this. In fact, it wasn't until the New Testament time that the Old Testament truths were really understood. When God said, "In ye shall all the nations be blessed," they didn't really understand what that meant until it was in Galatians 3:8 where God unfolded the meaning of that and the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through Abraham preached before the Gospel to Abraham saying, "In ye shall all the nations be blessed." In other words, when it was said to Abraham, they didn't know what it meant. But now in the New Testament, Paul says we can look back, and we now see what God meant when He said He justified the Gentiles. "In ye shall all the nations be blessed." We didn't know what Isaiah meant until Acts 13 and we began to see the Gospel taken to the Gentiles. Isaiah 49:6 hinted at it but we didn't understand it until Acts 13. And so it was that the mystery of the old was never understood until the time of the new. The Old Testament saints didn't know what was happening. They didn't know what was coming. They couldn't see the church; they couldn't see this amazing future. They couldn't see the death of the old theocracy. That's why even in the early church it was hard for them to understand it. Even the leaders of the early church had a hard time. But here we see the apostle Paul say, this mystery in other ages was not made known to the sons of man. It was hidden. It was a secret. I said this to you before: it's kind of exciting, people, you and I are part of the eternal secret...the sacred secret. We are that great thing God planned and kept secret from history all before us and has unfolded since Jesus Christ. We are it. We are that secret: the fusion of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female, Greek and barbarian into one beautiful, harmonious unity. This is the passion of God for his church: to be fulfilled by the energy of the Spirit as we walk in obedience.

So, let's look further at verse 5, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of man, this means to humanity. Now watch! As it is now revealed unto its holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Now note this, people. All divine revelation comes through the agency of the Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 says this: For the promise he came not at any time by the will of man but holy men of God were carried along as it were by the Spirit. The Spirit is the agency of revelation. The Spirit is the one who reveals. He is the one who inspires. He is the breath of God. And so, that which was hidden is now revealed by the Spirit who is ever the agent of revelation. Now I want you to notice something. The phrase: "He is now revealed" because it's a very important phrase and because it gives us a glimpse at a truth we must emphasize. It is an eres, it is what we would say in the Greek, it is nun with the eres, N-U-N, not twelve o'clock. Nun means now. It is now with the eres, which means, now, not before, not after, now and only now. Now in the eres tense is the immediacy, the present. Here, now, not then, not later. Now note this, people. The revelation of the mystery occurred at a point in time. Not before it and not after it. This is what I think of...those wonderful little subtleties in the text that the Spirit of God places there to remind us that the Bible was written when it was written. Not before and not after. So the revelation is an accomplished, closed fact. It is now revealed. Not in the process of being revealed, now revealed...so that the Word of God, beloved, was revealed when God said at that time and it was a closed case. And it is now incarnate and embodied in the pages of your Holy Bible. People come along today and say, "well, I had a revelation from God." Ask them what they ate before they went to bed. Just question them. Since the revelation of God is closed. It is an eres verse,

not a linear one. God isn't constantly revealing. God revealed it now, here, not before, not after. And in fact, that is solidified by those to whom He gave the revelation. It says in verse 5 that He revealed it to His holy apostles and prophets. And there aren't any of those around today to receive revelation. You say, "how do you know that?" Because chapter 2:20 says the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. They are the foundation, you see? They were there at the beginning and the foundation was laid and we go from there. We don't repeat the foundation. We have taught you again and again, particularly in recent years, from our series of 1 Corinthians 12 that the apostles and the prophets were for a special period of time in the history of the church. And they were given revelatory gifts. God spoke revelation through them. Through the apostles' doctrine and through the prophets a more practical word for the life of the church as illustrated by Agabus, the daughters of Philip. In 1 Corinthians 14, the prophets at the church in Corinth. So these were unique people who received revelatory gifts for the time when the mystery was unfolded by the Holy Spirit, but it was a point action of time, it was an eres time, it was a now time, not before, not after. Special people.

Let me just say a word, we don't want to go into detail about the apostles and the prophets, but I'll just give you a little bit of a hint of what we've already learned in our study of 1 Corinthians. If you want, you can get that full study on tape, but we want you to know that briefly, we need to take a glance at it. The apostles and the prophets were unique people, okay? There's the gift of preaching or prophesy that's existed a long time, throughout the history of God's dealing with men. And there have been messengers and that's all the word apostilos means, messenger. There have been messengers for a long time: messengers in the Old Testament, messengers in the New Testament, messengers in the Lord's Day, the verb means, 'to send.' There have been people sent in the name of the Lord, so in an unofficial sense, we've had preachers, and we've had missionaries and we've had sent ones all through God's dealings. So, in an unofficial way, there have always been apostilos and prophekas, you know, preachers and missionaries, if you want a very simple, non-technical definition. But on the other hand, in an official sense, they are very unique. Very unique. Let me show you why I say that. There were really only officially thirteen, if we include Matthias, apostles. The twelve; Judas was removed; Matthias was added in Acts 1 and the thirteenth was whom? The apostle Paul. They were an official Aposilate, capital A. By the way, there was one even higher than them. The APOSTLE, all caps, was Jesus himself. The Bible calls him that. So, the apostles were an official group of thirteen people to whom was given the responsibility of writing for all intents and purposes the New Testament; receiving the revelation of God. And when the church came together in Acts 2, they studied whose doctrine? The apostles' doctrine. They were those who gave doctrine. The requirement for being an apostle: you had to be commissioned by Jesus Christ personally, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:1, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Christ?" And that was the principle. You had to see the resurrected Christ, be personally commissioned by Him and put in the Aposilate...only 13 such people.

Now again, they reiterate that requirement in Acts 1 when choosing a successor. The function of an apostle? Very clear. 1 John 1 tells us what it was. As John reiterates what it was, he uses the plural

"we" because he's talking about all the group of apostles. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of Life. Now the Word of Life is Christ. And he's saying, we, who saw Jesus, who talked to Jesus, who walked with Jesus, who heard Jesus, who touched Jesus, day to day, we take this information of the Word of Life, the life which was manifested, which we have seen, to which we bear witness, we take that and we, verse 3, declare it to you. Now that is the function of an apostle: to take all of that which was personally and experientially theirs by virtue of living with the risen, as well as Christ before he died. They take that firsthand information and declare...that was the apostle. They were the primary ones, and by the way, they were given unique gifts. 2 Corinthians 12 says that the gifts of an apostle were signs and wonders and mighty deeds. They were able to do miracles and wonders and signs. So they were a unique group. They cannot be repeated. The resurrected Christ is not here in a physical, resurrected form to appoint more. They have finished their work.

By the way, you can see the phasing out of them even in the book of Acts. In fact, after Acts 1, they are hardly ever mentioned. All you ever hear about are Peter, John and Paul. The rest of them are just gone. Just gone. And by the time you get to Acts 15, you have the last time the apostles ever met together and to show you how things were changing, the person who headed up the entire meeting was not even an apostle, it was James, the brother of our Lord, who headed up the Jerusalem Council. He wasn't even an apostle. And later on, as you read in the New Testament, they even stop calling themselves that. As you hear from Peter, for example, and he writes in 1 Peter, he calls himself not an apostle later in the book, but calls himself a fellow elder. And if you read 2 John and 3 John, John refers to himself not as an apostle but as an elder. You see, as the church grew, the apostles faded away. They were the foundation. They gave all the doctrine. They gave the New Testament. They laid it all out. They then faded away and the new leadership in the church would be the elders. And as that phasing began to take place, even the apostles began to call themselves in those terms so that people would make that transition. So they were very unique. You say, "Well, weren't there more than just those 13? There were other people in the New Testament called apostles." You're right, Barnabas and others. That's apostles with a small ‘a.’ Those were unofficial messengers. In fact, the Bible makes a distinction. In 2 Corinthians 8:23, very important distinction. He's talking about Titus and his fellow workers. He says, they are the apostles (Greek says apostles) of the churches. Now notice this. There were apostles of Christ, and there were only 13 of them, and there were apostles of the churches and there were many of them. It was one thing to be directly commissioned by the risen Christ. It was another thing to be sent out by the church and that's the difference between the capital A, official Apostle, and the small a, unofficial apostle, those who were sent as messengers in the church. So, these unique individuals were given the revelatory word of God. Put it down in the New Testament. They're the ones that expanded the glorious gospel of the mystery, the mysteries of the kingdom; the new age, the New Testament. And so he says in this very text, Ephesians 3:5, that it was revealed to his holy apostles, holy meaning 'set apart,' unique, separate; and also prophets.

Prophets fit into the New Testament era. They were speakers for God. I believe there is still a gift of prophesy or preaching in its non-revelatory sense today. But I don't think there's any prophets of God who open their mouth and utter divine revelation. The prophets also, Ephesians 2:20, were before the foundation of the church, and they go with the apostles, passing from the scene. It's interesting to study this. I've studied this for years now in the New Testament, but apostles, when they spoke were kept from error. Jesus said, "I'll lead you into all truth" and so forth. They were kept from error; they spoke the revelation of God. The prophets didn't have that promise. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14, he says, "Let the spirit of the prophets be subject to the prophets." In other words, all you prophets better check on each other to make sure you get your message straight. Additionally, as you study the New Testament, you find that the prophets spoke about practical things. Like, Agabus talking about the famine and then he talked about what was going to happen to Paul when he got to Jerusalem; he'd get bound and tied up and things; so they seem to be for the practical life; the application; the implementation. Whereas, the apostles gave the theology. But both had special revelation from God for those years of establishing God's great truth of the church. But it was done then. It is now revealed: point action, past time, then and only then. So the special group of apostles and prophets God gave this wondrous message that had been hidden from all eternity. This incredible message that we're all one in Christ. He goes on to explain it in verse 6.

What is the message? That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ, the Gospel. Now you and I may not really see how revolutionary this is, but it's just incredible. You know, I don't know how to express it other than to say, to us, it might be like saying, I just want you know that the people with terminal leprosy have every right to enter into your fellowship and throw their arms around you. And you might say, "Oh, wait a minute!" You see, that's the way they thought of each other. We're the most vile, rotten, wretched, stinking gutter rat; has every right to sleep in your bed and eat at your table. That's essential to what was going on because they had such animosity toward each other. It's just inconceivable that they could possibly harmonize. The Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body, partakers in the promise of Christ by the Gospel. Three things are said here: they're fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers. This is news because they used to be outside the covenant, chapter 2:12. Without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope without God in the world. They used to be separated but now in Jesus Christ they are fellow heirs. Do you know what that means? They have the same legal status. The same legal status. They will receive the same inheritance. Chapter 1:11: we have an inheritance. Chapter 1:14: we have the earnest of our inheritance, the Holy Spirit. Chapter 1:18: the riches of the glory of his inheritance. So you see, three times in chapter 1 he talks about inheritance and you can just hear the Jewish people as they heard Paul say, "Oh yes, we have the inheritance; oh yes, we have the Holy Spirit; the promise of the inheritance, oh yes, the riches of the glory of the inheritance" and then he comes zeroing in and says, "by the way, the Gentiles are fellow heirs in that inheritance." They'd say, "wait a minute." But that's the way it is. Doesn't matter who they are...they're fellow heirs. They have every right to the same

inheritance. Same legal status. They share the same spiritual blessings and riches that are promised to Israel and the covenant of Abraham because in Galatians 3:29, the Gentiles enter into that covenant by faith. You know, you look back in history and you say, boy, God did so many things for the Jewish people and he promised them so many things and then Paul comes along and says, by the way, you Gentiles, I just want you to know that every single thing you promised them is your's, too. You enter the covenant of Abraham by faith, not by race.

Second, fellow members. He says you're of the same body. You share the same body. Now what's so beautiful about this is the common life principle. You actually share the same body. Fully through you the same spiritual genes, if you will. It's the same! You're just the same! There's oneness there. I received a letter a couple of weeks ago, about 10 days ago, from a man who wrote and said he came to Grace Church and he said he was Jewish and he said he heard what I said about the fact that Judaism, as a religion, was set aside. The old theocracy set aside and he said, "I'm never coming back there again because you have equalized the situation to a place where it's offensive to Jewish people." And I thought to myself, "that is just the whole point, see?" That's exactly why they put Paul in jail. That's the whole point. You know what to say to that person is, "you got the message. You got it! You just reacted wrong. You got it; that's it!" Fellow members, same body. We aren't distant cousins; we are in the same body. Great thought. 1 Corinthians 12, Paul goes over that wonderful, wonderful term. "Let me remind you: for as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body so also is Christ; for by one Spirit were we all baptized in the one body whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, we've all been made to drink one Spirit, for the body is not one member, but many." We're all in there together. So we have the same legal status and secondly, I'd say we have the same life status. The principle of existence is the same.

And then he says, "Thirdly, you are not only fellow heirs and fellow members but fellow partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel." Fellow partakers: I don't know how to say it other than that we have the same blessing status. We just get it all. We partake of the promise. It's our's in Christ. You know, it's a great thing, people. You can take this concept of Jew and Gentile; you can put it into any culture with any people where there's any division or any animosity and you can eliminate all of it on the same basis: we're all one in Jesus Christ. You say, "how could this happen? We've got that all over the world today." We've got them fighting everywhere. Constantly. Fightings and warrings in homes and schools. Talking to a man the other day who told me about some of the violence in the schools...it's incredible. There was an article in the paper about it. It's just incredible. One out of every 20 students in the public schools in America is assaulted each year. A fellow told me this week that the bill for replacing windows in the schools in this area is $95,000 a year. And the budget for the glass department of the L.A....that's for this area...no, 95,000 windows, I think. One of the two. Great statistic. Anyway, the point I want to make is the budget for the replacement glass department of the schools is $3.5 million a year. Boy, our tax money goes to putting the windows back in and the kids keep knocking them out. Violence everywhere, discord, disunity. The only hope for it is Jesus Christ, I

think. Beloved, here's what's so sad about it. If we all know Jesus Christ and we don't have it...to the world that doesn't work either. See? Shot that one down. We must commit ourselves to what verse 3 in chapter 4 says. We must endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit of the bond of peace. And we've got to do that by humbling ourselves before God. We've got to do that, that's the only way to do that. We've got to do that by being humble. And you get humbled by studying Jesus Christ and the more you study Christ the more you spend time in the presence of God, the hungrier you see yourself; and then you can come out. When you're humble, you can love somebody else and not look for your own things. And so, we are fellow heirs and fellow members and fellow partakers and it's all made possible and only possible...look at the end of verse 6. This is a great statement.

And here it is again...the heart of the whole epistle: Because we are in Christ through the Gospel, there will never be unity apart from that; but because of that there is unity. We are positionally fellow heirs, we are of the same body, we are partakers of the same promise. Christ made it so and now we must live it out but it could never happen except by the Gospel as we all meet at the foot of the cross; as we're all washed in the blood of Jesus Christ; as we all receive the same eternal life; as we're all given the same Holy Spirit; as we all possess the same life of God and the soul of man; as we're all redeemed by the same Lord Jesus; as we all have the same inheritance; as we all go to the same heaven; as we all belong to the same church, we are one. And it's only in Christ. Apart from Him it couldn't happen. The only thing that puts a man in the place of being blessed and the place of receiving the promise of God is because he is in Christ. How'd he get in Christ? Simply by receiving Him as your Savior; you put your faith in Jesus Christ, He enters you, you enter into Him, in a fusion, become one with Him and with every other believer in the world. There's that beautiful, basic, organic, positional oneness and then the challenge comes to live it out.

God was so concerned about this He planned it before the world began. Jesus was so concerned about it He prayed in agony in the garden. Paul was so concerned about it he became a prisoner over it and preachers and teachers and Christians throughout the centuries have been concerned enough about it to preach it and pray for it. And I'm so concerned about it that I'm going so slow through this chapter it's driving me nuts. First time I taught Ephesians, I went through 1 to 13 in one message. I'm concerned about this. I've seen our church grow...so many people. One of the things that burdens my heart is that we would lose this sense of responsibility to love each other, to minister to each other, to care for each other, to in humility, look up to each other and esteem others better than ourselves, to have the same love for one another and that if ever that was lost, the whole purpose of this thing would be lost. The thing which God planned and Jesus prayed for and Paul preached...the thing that's so on my heart and the hearts of the elders at Grace is this concept of unity. Beloved, you are the key to this thing. Wherever there's bitterness, get rid of it. Wherever there's animosity, wherever there's an attitude of prejudice, wherever there's any of that stuff, get rid of it, wherever there's an opportunity of love, you in humility, minister to the needs of another brother or sister in Christ, let's bind this thing together, so that we can honor the Father and the Son; and the Spirit, who desires us to be one; so that we can honor the life of the dear apostle who gave his life to preach these truths.

Let's pray. Father, it's sometimes discouraging to have your sights set on accomplishing a certain thing in this study together and then being short of it. Lord, I hadn't intended to just stop at this point. Other things beyond were on my heart and yet I trust you. I sense somewhat of a frustration in my own heart, wanting to cover other things and seemingly being stuck here, but I trust your Spirit. I trust that you are leading and guiding and directing my heart and mind; that you know what's needful for these dear, precious people. So Father I stand as your servant, not willing to run ahead and yet with a sense of anticipation and excitement for things that we've yet untouched. Oh God in the days to come I pray that you'll open our understanding even greater and then as we come to Paul's prayer that we'll begin to see the fruit of it as we pray for each other; to see these things applied in life. Bless every life here, every person, everyone who knows you and loves you. Reaffirm that commitment today. Bind that relationship tighter than ever. May the oneness they have with you and each other be richer and deeper because of today. And for those, Lord, who do not know you as Savior, we pray Lord, that this might be a day where they enter into that relationship; when they come into the mystery, when they become a part of the sacred secret hidden from all the ages past and now revealed; that they can be one with the living God and the Lord Jesus Christ. To this end we pray Father, all for your glory, in Christ's name. Amen.

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