

Our Calling: Week 6

Ephesians 3:1-13

March 19, 2023

Review of the last five weeks:

Called, elected, predestined, justified, sealed with the Holy Spirit, But God, saved by grace, aliens and strangers, and Jesus as the Cornerstone!

All, For His Glory.

Paul ends Chapter 2 with “because we are aliens and strangers and because Christ is our Cornerstone...therefore”.

Mystery was not the Gospel itself, but as verse 6 says “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through His promise.” That is that Gentiles and Jews would make up God’s Church.

We (believers) are all stewards of the Gospel, individually and as God’s Church.

Define dispensation – stewardship – *oikos* = “house” and *nomos* = “law” so it is “the law of the house” known as a stewardship or management of.

Stewardship - The biblical doctrine of stewardship defines a man’s relationship to God. It identifies God as owner and man as manager. God makes man His co-worker in administering all aspects of our life. The apostle Paul explains it best by saying, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Starting with this concept, we are then able to accurately view and correctly value not only our possessions, but, more importantly, human life itself. In essence, stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God Himself. It is our divinely given opportunity to join with God in His worldwide and eternal redemptive movement (Matthew 28:19-20). Stewardship is not God taking something from us; it is His method of bestowing His richest gifts upon His people.

In the New Testament, two Greek words embody the meaning of our English word “stewardship.” The first word is *epitropos* which means "manager, foreman, or steward." From the standpoint of government, it means “governor or procurator.” At times it was used in the New Testament to mean “guardian,” as in Galatians 4:1-2: “What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.” The second word is *oikonomos*. It also means "steward, manager, or administrator" and occurs more frequently in the New Testament. Depending on the context, it is often translated “dispensation, stewardship, management, arrangement, administration, order, plan, or training.” It refers mostly to the law or management of a household or of household affairs.

Notably, in the writings of Paul, the word *oikonomos* is given its fullest significance in that Paul sees his responsibility for preaching the gospel as a divine trust (1 Corinthians 9:17). Paul refers to his call from God as the administration (stewardship) of the grace of God for a ministry of the divine mystery revealed in Christ (Ephesians 3:2). In this context, Paul is portraying God as the master of a great household, wisely administering it through Paul himself as the obedient servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Also significant in what Paul is saying is that once we’re called and placed into the body of Jesus Christ, the stewardship that is required of us is not a result of our own power or abilities. The strength, inspiration and growth in the management of our lives must come from God through the Holy Spirit in us; otherwise, our labor is in vain and the growth in stewardship is self-righteous, human growth. Accordingly, we must always remember the sole source of our strength in pleasing God: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NJKV). Paul also said, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Stewardship defines our practical obedience in the administration of everything under our control, everything entrusted to us. It is the consecration of one’s self and possessions to God’s service. Stewardship acknowledges in practice that we do not have the right of control over ourselves or our property—God has that control. It means as stewards of God we are managers of that which belongs to God, and we are under His constant authority as we administer His affairs.

Faithful stewardship means that we fully acknowledge we are not our own but belong to Christ, the Lord, who gave Himself for us.¹

What kind of steward am I of God's economy?

Have I trusted in the Gospel of Jesus?

Am I living my life in light of the Gospel?

Am I sharing the Gospel?

If everyone stewarded the Gospel like me, what would God's economy look like?

As stewards we will face adversity. Sometimes from the world and sometimes within God's Church (vs. 1-13)

Paul spent much of his time in prison because he was seeking to get the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 15, Galatians 2, Acts 9, Acts 22 and 26)

Paul was in jail for being a faithful steward of the Gospel and it wasn't the "world" who put him in jail, but it was the very own of God's chosen people! The Jews put one of their own in jail for taking the Gospel to someone other than someone like them.

Just because we find ourselves obeying the Lord doesn't mean we won't face struggles or things will be great.

In addition, we must be ever so mindful and careful as to who we put our trust in. Even in God's Church we can be hurt, but we must always remember where our trust and hope are to be in!

As we steward God's grace we need to do as Paul and ask, "Who am I to carry God's grace (v. 8)?" We are grace and truth carriers.

We must remember, outside of God's grace and love we are NOTHING.

We have nothing to offer the Lord, HE alone has saved us.

May we realize the privilege it is to carry the Gospel to those around us.

We can be good stewards of God's love with boldness and confidence (vs. 10-12).

Angels – the angelic beings created by God, both good and evil.

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

1 Peter 1:10-12

They learn the manifold wisdom of God (v. 10).

Too much has been given, much will be required!

Prayer Focus:

- **How am I stewarding the Gospel?**
- **As I face struggles, am I putting my hope in the right place?**
- **Who am I that God would use me?**
- **May I be reminded that God has given me boldness and confidence!**

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-stewardship.html>