

1Tim 24-04-10b

We're ready to resume our study here. We're looking at the second of seven unique truths that are revealed, explained, and emphasized. They are from God the Father, chain of custody, going through the Lord Jesus Christ, to the apostle Paul, to us.

They are anticipated other places. They are affirmed and reviewed in other places, but the revelation of these previously undisclosed truths is uniquely the stewardship function of the apostle Paul. The first one was the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which comprehends His birth, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, His ongoing ministry of intercession at the right hand of the Father. We could spend a year on that truth, looking at the Lord Jesus.

But we have seen that in our travels through the four Gospels and other studies, and so we are focusing on the things that Paul says are related to that truth. The second one is the hope of God's glory, the indwelling of Jesus Christ, and with the presence of Christ comes the presence of the Father. It is conditional, and the means by which we enter into that privilege has been explained.

It is revealed by Paul. It has been revealed by the Lord Jesus, but fully fleshed out by Paul. Christ in you, the hope of glory, having His words and keeping them, treasuring them, and becoming the temple of God.

Know ye not that your body is the temple? Know ye not that ye as a group are the temple? There's both the individual opportunity to be filled with the fullness of the presence of God, all three persons as an individual, and as a fellowship, as a brotherhood, as the family of God. So that is the second point, and we have seen that tonight in Colossians 1:24 and 25. We have seen it all the way 25 through 28, really. We've seen it in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 13 through 15.

We've seen it in Galatians 4, verse 19. Paul says, "In labor pains until Christ is formed in you." That's the purpose of the new birth, is to not just be born, but to achieve that level of intimacy with God Himself.

And then John chapter 14, verses 23 through 24, and verse 26. And then 1 John chapter 2, verse 23; chapter 3, verse 24; and chapter 4, verses 12 through 16. If you missed those references, they are them.

"If anyone loves me, he will keep, guard, watch over my word. My Father will love him. We will come to him, make our home with him." What an opportunity. And if you add to that John 14, verse 26, "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I have told you," to have His words and keep them. We need the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

And that's verse 26. It's one thing to say, "This is the condition." What is the means by which—how does the rubber meet the road? What is the mechanism by which I can get this to happen in my own life? Got to cultivate the presence and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So once again, John 14:26 to add there: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name." There are so many allusions to the Trinity. This is one verse that has all three members of the Trinity in it: the Holy Spirit, the Father will send in my name—sent by the Father in the name of the Son. It's the power of the Spirit.

This is like prayer that is offered to God the Father in the name of the Son, by means of the Holy Spirit—all three members actively involved. How effective do you think our prayer life is when the Father and the Son are abiding and dwelling in us along with the Holy Spirit? How far does that Holy Spirit language have to travel? If the Father and the Son are present with us, you want to talk about fellowship.

You think of Abraham, when God came with two angelic, uh, accompanying presences and visited him and told him that Isaac was going to be born, and Sarah laughed and so on. And God says, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" And He goes on to talk about Lot and Sodom. But Abraham makes a meal for God and the two angels who are going to go to Sodom and rescue Lot and his family. Uh, the presence of God—the Lord Jesus: "I stand at the door and knock. If you hear that sound, if you hear my voice and you open the door, I will come in and we will share a fellowship meal."

You watch, uh, preparations take place for visits from out of town and special events. There's a wedding reception, there's a birthday, there's holiday gatherings, and a lot of work goes into the preparation and wanting the table to look just so, and to be comfortable, and the food to be exceptional and memorable, and all the rest of it. Can you imagine if you got a note like Zacchaeus did? "I'm coming to your house today. I'm planning on eating a meal." If I had to grill for the Lord Jesus Christ, the pressure would explode my head.

The Lord Jesus Christ is going to come. And yet, why doesn't that impress us every single day? Because we have that opportunity. "I will come into him and sup with him and he with me," Revelation 3:20. That's our privilege.

How much work do we put into physical, uh, banquets and so on? How much work should we put into making sure the table is set and prepared for the presence of the Lord Jesus? We know exactly how to do it because of what Paul says and what the Lord Jesus says to His disciples in the upper room.

So the presence of Jesus Christ, and with Him and through Him—this is why Jesus says in 14:6 of John, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. You come to the Father only through me." Jesus is not the destination. You don't latch on to King Jesus and you're done. Jesus doesn't say, "I am the way, the truth, the life, and the King." You enter the kingdom by me. I'm the way, the truth, and the life. You come to the Father by me.

And that's the goal: fellowship with the Father. We are not sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. We're brothers and sisters because we have been adopted by the Father. It is the Father's love that sent the Lord Jesus and that entered us into union with Christ so that God could bless us and love us the way He blesses and loves His own Son. In Him, we have these privileges.

But it's almost a bit short-sighted to call our faith Christianity. It ought to be patrianism, or father worship, because the goal, the Spirit, and the Lord Jesus Himself, both in they to bring us to the Father. We have the privilege not of coming before Jesus Christ with our requests, but through a new and living way, which is the torn veil of His flesh, we enter into the Father's throne room and we find mercy and grace to help in time of need from the Father.

And sometimes it's appreciating the Lord Jesus. You can hardly go wrong, but you can go wrong if you stop there and fail to appreciate the Father who sent Him, who Jesus constantly talks about. You don't know me because you don't know the Father. You don't hear my words because you haven't paid attention to the Father's words. And if you knew the Father and if you loved the Father, you would know me and love me because they are together. They reflect and represent each other, and so important.

And you see it in this second point of the mystery, that the indwelling of Christ is also the indwelling of the Father. They both come because Jesus only exists in a sense to bring us to the Father. He's not an end in Himself.

Such an important truth brings us to the third point, the third aspect uniquely revealed by the apostle Paul that he calls his gospel. This is the mystery of the church, and the church is going to come up again in the seventh point. But this is the church as the new people of God, the church as a uniquely set-apart reflection of God's glory in and through Christ.

So our central passage here is Ephesians chapter 3, Ephesians chapter 3. And after the wonderful doxology and emphasis on the Lord Jesus that you have in chapter 1, in chapter 3 Paul says, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for you ethnoi, you Gentiles, you masses of people not uniquely related to God as Old Testament covenant people, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you."

Paul is specially, uniquely ordained, appointed, and commissioned the apostle to the Gentiles. Doesn't mean he can't talk to Jews. Every time he goes to a new town, he goes to the synagogue first, reasons with the Jews. Remember, he was reasoning for a while and the Jews got all up in arms and wouldn't let him in the synagogue. And so he went to the school of Tyrannus and spent two years preaching and teaching. But he went to the synagogue first.

His practice was to always go. Why would he go to the synagogue? People who are seeking are not necessarily going to be out and about doing their business. Active seekers, the only place they would find God would be the God of Israel, the God of the Jews, the God that is preached and taught in the synagogue. So Gentiles who were

interested would be found in and around the synagogue. So Paul would go there first, even though he was the apostle to the Gentiles, and he would try to bring the Jews along as well. He didn't say, "I can't talk to you; you're a Jew." But his emphasis and his focus was the ethnoi, the Gentiles.

"If you've heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you Gentiles, you ethnoi, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, as I have briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power."

Paul receives it. Peter gets the vision of the sheet let down: "Arise, Peter, kill and eat. What God has sanctified, let no man call common. Let no man call unclean." Three times. Peter has to see that same vision three times. And when Paul comes and says that the gospel has come to the Gentiles and they're receiving God's Spirit just as the Jews did in Pentecost and in the early days of the Jerusalem church, Peter says, "Hey, I've got to tell you, I saw a vision, and I am a second witness that this is God's work."

"Separate to me Paul and Barnabas for the work of revealing this mystery to the Gentiles. To me, who am less than the least of all saints"—this is Ephesians 3:8—"less than the least of all the sanctified ones, this grace was given to me." He doesn't say to us. He doesn't say to the 12 or to the 11. "To me, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery."

What is fellowship? What is koinonia? What is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ, to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

Angels are watching. Women in church are to pray with their heads covered, have a sign of authority on their head because of the angels. And the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the church to angels. We are a demonstration. Angels looking at us find something out about God that they didn't learn in the heavenly realms. It is revealed to them, the wisdom of God—God's wisdom in condemning Satan and the rebellious angels, God's wisdom in blessing and using the unfallen angels, His role, His assignment of roles and functions to the angelic beings, and His separation and distancing from the fallen angels and from their leader, Satan.

God makes a distinction. God did not try to love Satan and the fallen angels back into heaven. When they expressed that rebellion, God cast them out and down and limited where they could function and what they can do. But He has given Satan godship over this world. "The god of this world blinds the minds of the faithless so that the light of the glorious gospel"—the gospel is glorious. This mystery gospel centers on the glory of God and its revelation to the principalities and powers as well as to us.

"If our gospel be hid," Paul says, "it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not." The blindness doesn't result in unbelief. The unbelief results in blindness. The god of this world blinds the minds of those who have chosen to be faithless. Otherwise, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine unto them. There is a shining light. They can look at it, but if they don't respond in faith, the god of this world will shut down the vision and they no longer see the light.

And you are casting what is holy to the dogs and pearls before swine. If we do not discern those who, by their choice to reject Christ and to be faithless, they are now in the kingdom of darkness. Those who respond in faith are transferred out of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. There is a kingdom of darkness and there's a kingdom of light, but it is spiritual, and it is entered—or one is excluded from it—on the basis of faith or the lack thereof.

So this is a mystery, and it is uniquely revealed and explained. Not that it's never mentioned elsewhere, but Paul is the one who is commissioned to be the steward and to communicate it to the ethnoi, to the Gentiles. "To me, less than the least of all saints, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

We're back in Ephesians 3:8: "And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery from the beginning of the ages." It was hidden in God. God did not reveal it. He unfolded His plan in and through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the descendants of Jacob, Israel, worked in the northern and southern kingdoms after the monarchy

split, the period between the fall of Adam and Eve and the birth of Abraham and the life of Abraham. God did many things in terms of revealing. He revealed Himself at Sinai. Moses wrote the five books of the law, and there's a wonderful revelation of God.

But this is something that was heretofore unrevealed. The fact that it is now revealed and God has commissioned an apostle to specifically preach it to you and to me, we should pay attention to this content because you can't get this at your local five and dime. You can't get it from the 39 books of the Old Testament. You have got to get it from the epistles of Paul.

And the attack on Paul's writings in the modern day is satanic. To undermine the authority of Pauline Scripture is to undermine the authority of the message of Jesus Christ, who is the one who gave the words. This is why Jesus says to the Pharisees, "When you reject me, you're rejecting the Father. You claim to know Him and you don't, because if you're rejecting my word, you're rejecting His word, and if you're rejecting me, you're rejecting Him." The same goes for the writings of Paul. It's not about Paul. It's about the truth that Paul communicates, and it is from God Himself.

And to say, "Well, these are pseudepigraphical and somebody writing in the name of Paul, and they had an agenda"—I may make many mistakes in my life, but that's not going to be one of them. All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable. That's Old Testament Scripture. It's all profitable. And in the same way that we don't dismiss and say, "Well, I'm church. I don't need all that Old Testament stuff. I don't need to know the Bible stories and all the content of the law," New Testament Scripture says Old Testament Scripture is profitable and it's all inspired by God. Well, so is the writing of Paul. And the authority is God's authority, not Paul's authority. Nevertheless, we recognize that here's where to go to get it.

So this is our third point, the mystery of the church. Ephesians 3:1 through 10: "To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies." Verse 11: "According to the eternal purpose, which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him," not the kind of access or boldness that was expressed in Old Testament days. There was a different approach to God, a different priesthood, a different place of worship, the place where God chose to place His name, His presence.

"Therefore," Paul says, "I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Paul's birth pangs, Paul's tribulation, Paul's suffering, Paul's oppression, Paul's persecution—the things that Paul had to overcome in order to present this message—is for our glory. What is our hope of glory? It's the previous point: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So then there is the wonderful prayer. The last part of chapter 3 is very similar to the last part of chapter 1, when Paul says, "This is what I pray. I bow my knee to the Father, and I pray that God may grant to you a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge, the epignosis, of Him." That's chapter 1. He does the same thing here in chapter 3.

"For this reason," Paul says, "I bow my knees"—to whom? To whom does Paul pray? I just saw the thing today where somebody was—there was a presentation of gospel truth, and they said, "You know, if this makes sense to you, pray this prayer: Dear Lord Jesus." And, you know, God bless them. I'm sure people get saved even though they don't realize all prayer is addressed to the Father in the name of the Son, by means of the Spirit. You find no variation from that anywhere in Scripture. Every prayer of Paul—and there are many in the New Testament Scriptures in his writings—"I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is to whom Paul prays. "I give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for you." Always praying to the Father. You come to the Father by Christ. You don't stop at Christ. You don't start talking to Christ.

This is like the Catholic saying, "Well, I'll get to Christ through Mary. I'll pray to Mary and that'll get me to Christ." Well, they're two steps away. They're supposed to be praying to the Father through Christ and leave Mary out of it. She's done her work. She, she's, she's accomplished her purpose.

"I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The family is defined by the Father: brotherly love, the one anothers. It's defined by the Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father has expressed that we should be called His children," that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might. How? Through the Holy Spirit.

How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? How many times have we reviewed it? It's through the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man. That's the starting place. God spots us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at spiritual birth. We want to progress. We want to mature. We want to be sanctified—sanctified through the Holy Spirit and belief in the truth—so that, what? Verse 17. You start by strengthening through the Spirit in the inner man with the goal, for the purpose, the objective, that verse 17: Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. That Christ may dwell.

Paul doesn't say, because you're saved and I'm writing to believers, and this is already chapter 3, Christ is in your heart. You need to be strengthened by the Spirit so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love—how many ways and, and phrases does John use in 1 John to talk about the interrelationship between the presence of God, the presence of Christ, and love? Love for God and love for one another.

We love because He first loved us. “By this shall all men know you are my disciples,” Jesus said, “that you love one another.” He that doesn't love his brother isn't abiding in the, in God. God doesn't abide in him. The presence is characterized by love. It's an intelligent love. It's a wise love. It's a limited love.

The love of God is limited. The love of God is conditional in most of its expressions. God doesn't give the love that He expresses toward faithful believers who treasure the words of Christ and live in their light. That's a different quality, extent, and, and fullness of love than the love God has for the world in sending His Son and creating that first door through which people can walk by faith.

And then eventually, you think about the temple. You come to Jerusalem first, then you come to the Temple Mount, then you come to the outer court, then you come to the court of the women, and then you come to the inner court. And then if you're going to get all the way to the presence of God, you've got the door to the holy place, and then there is the veil, and then there is the holy of holies. But there are progressive steps of “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet. The place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” and it's, it's a process.

And isn't it interesting that, that when Paul is writing Hebrews, he says there is a new priesthood. Jesus Christ is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and we are priests, which qualifies us to enter the court and to enter the area of the altar and the laver and to enter the holy place with its table of showbread and its golden candlestick and its altar of incense, and then to move right through because we are uniquely related to the high priest who alone is allowed into the holy of holies.

But Hebrews chapter 10: a new and living way through the veil granted to us by Jesus Christ. And what is on the other side of that veil? The Father, God the Father. I think one of the most underemphasized and underappreciated things in the Christian faith today is not getting to the Father. Jesus says, “That's the only reason I'm here. I'm the way, the truth, and the life so that you can come to the Father by me.” And we just, we stop short. It's about—and we intermix and intermingle and confuse means with purpose and result.

So Paul says this: “I pray, I bow my knee to the Father that He, the Father, would grant you according to the riches of His glory”—the glory of Jesus Christ, the hope of glory, Christ in you—that glory is sourced in God the Father. According to the riches of His glory, strengthened with might through His Spirit, the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the sanctified ones what is the width and length and depth and height.

If you've got one tape measure, how many of those can you do at once? It's a process, right? I'll measure the length, then I'll measure the breadth, then I'll measure the depth, then I'll measure the height. It's a process. I do them sequentially. Comprehend with all the saints, to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Who is the fullness of God? Who is the fullness of deity in bodily form? Jesus Christ. What is Paul talking about here? The indwelling Christ and with Him the abiding presence of the Father. Do you want to be filled with the fullness of God?

We have to focus primarily on our walk, our obedience, our lining up with the teachings of Christ, the revelation of truth in the New Testament that is foreshadowed and illustrated and fleshed out as we look at its anticipations in the Old Testament. But the emphasis in Scripture over and over again is not, let's get busy and fix the other guy. It is concentrate on letting God fix you. Get the lumber out of your own eye. Lumber is a lot more work and takes a lot more time than a mote. So where should the bulk of our time be spent? Lumber removal.

Then you will see clearly. If God's going to use you to be a blessing to someone else, you first have to have gotten all of that lumber out of your eyesight so that you can see clearly. That's what this is talking about: that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

You, being rooted and grounded, may be able to comprehend, and hopefully all the saints will come to this comprehension: the width and length and depth and height. These are visible attributes. These are the dimensions. This is what the thing actually is. To perceive it and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. It goes beyond an academic understanding. It goes beyond an intellectual grasp. Why? The Holy Spirit is impelling. The Holy Spirit is enabling and enlightening.

We do things, and if somebody said, "Why are you doing that?" we might not be able to explain it, but it is the conditioning. It becomes spiritual muscle memory for us, and it transcends knowledge. It's not a calculation. It's not a geometric proof that, well, because this and this and this, and Scripture says this and Scripture says that, this is what I'm going to do. It transcends knowledge. It goes beyond mere knowledge, passes knowledge, to be filled with the fullness of God.

God is at work in you to will and to do for His good purpose. For Him to do that, He has to be there. For God to be at work, He's not telecommuting. He doesn't remote-control from heaven. God is present. If He's at work in us, He has to be present in us. And so you start with the indwelling of the Spirit, and the Spirit's work is to enable us to grow in grace and knowledge, to comprehend with all the saints, so that God Himself, the Father and the Son, can come and abide in us.

Such a powerful truth, and this is the mystery of the church, oddly enough, through sanctification. If you turn over to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, we're going to focus on verse 13. You have just above this the revelation of the lawless one when that which hinders is taken out of the way. Mystery is already at work and so on, but you start at verse 10.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with power, signs, and lying wonders. That's verse 9, and it's already at work, but it's going to come to full expression with the revelation of the man of sin. That's when it's all out on the table. But the mystery is already at work, he says in verse 7.

So the coming is according to the working of Satan. What is the working of Satan? There is power, there are signs, and there are lying wonders with all unrighteous deception among those who perish. Why do they perish? Because they did not receive the love of the truth. It was on offer. It was available, and they wouldn't take it. They are susceptible and they are deluded and they are carried off by the working of Satan, these power, signs, and lying wonders, all unrighteous deceptions among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth in order that they might be delivered.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie. Same thing you find in Romans, last half of chapter 1. God will give them over to what they choose. God will send them a delusion. God will harden Pharaoh's heart when Pharaoh has already decided to harden his heart. God says, "Well, you want a hard heart? I'll help you. You want to be deluded? I'll help you." God will send a strong delusion to those who love darkness rather than light.

In order that they all may be condemned who—and you go back to the first condition—they did not believe the truth. The truth was offered to them. They could have loved it, but they rejected it. So God sends His Son, and God sends His salvation, and God sends eternal life. If you reject it, God will send strong delusion, and God will send darkness, and God will send judgment. It's all ultimately sourced from God. That they may be condemned who did not believe the truth. That's the reason. But they had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Now verse 13: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for deliverance through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast."

And we covered this in detail in the first session, but this revelation of the mystery—and you don't have to turn there—but Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God with a view toward salvation, into, unto, with a view toward—it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." The power of God is available to those who choose to believe. The power of God doesn't make you believe, and lack

of the power of God does not create failure to believe. We are given the ability to believe at physical birth, and we exercise it independently and freely, and God holds us accountable for that choice.

So the power of God for salvation is available and is active for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it, verse 17, Romans 1:17, in it, the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The righteousness of God is revealed to faith from faith. Those who have faith come to understand the righteousness of God can reveal it to faith.

But it's like the parables of the Lord Jesus. To those who are outside, everything is in parables. Seeing they see and don't perceive; hearing they hear and don't understand. Faith has to be present. Faith unlocks the door that lets in the righteousness of God. And God uses the faithful to reveal those truths to the faithful, to speak the truth in love. It's revealed from faith to faith, and that's why Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. I'm not hesitant about it. I'm not embarrassed by it. It is the power of God for deliverance to everyone," presented to the Jew first but also to the ethnai, to the Gentiles, to the Greeks.

Romans chapter 2, verse 16, talking about circumcision of the heart. It's no longer a physical sign that enters you into covenant relationship under the Abrahamic covenant as in the Old Testament. Paul says in Romans 2 that there is a day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. God will judge the secret things according to my gospel. There is judgment coming on whether or not in this age the gospel is accepted in faith or if you choose darkness and strong delusion instead.

These are church-age truths. Do you see the Old Testament law and prophets talking about the necessity for faith? Very little said about faith. The Old Testament is all about obedience. Why? It is addressed to the nominal people of God in name and by heritage and by birth. They are assumed to be the sheep that belong to God, but in the days of disobedience are lost.

But you don't see the Old Testament prophets saying, "I'm out to find goats and turn them into sheep. I am here to preach, 'Return to me so that I can return to you,' says the Lord. 'All day long I've held out my hands to a faithless and unbelieving people. All day long I've held out my hands to a disobedient and stubborn people.'" Disobedient. They are covenant. They are in relationship with God, and they do not hold up their end. They are disobedient.

This is a revelation of a new basis for relationship with God. It is not Israel, coming to Israel as a proselyte or being born in Israel and affirming what circumcision signifies, which is only the males are circumcised, but everybody in Israel is supposed to be a believer—the ladies as well as the men. The Passover was primarily concerned with preservation of the firstborn, and yet the firstborn are representative of the entire nation. And Israel is representative of all of those who are related to God by covenant, by entering into covenant with God.

And there's certainly an element of faith there. "You believe that He is and that He rewards those who seek Him," according to 11:6. But this relationship with God through faith is uniquely explained and described by the Apostle Paul.

And when you get to Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3 through 5, "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partaker of His promise in Christ through the gospel." Same body. There is now a new people related to God in a new way. They are not the people of God in the Old Testament covenant sense. They are the body of Christ in a New Testament entrance by faith, sealed into the body by God's Holy Spirit. Nothing is said in the Old Testament that you became an Israelite and God the Holy Spirit sealed you into Israel. It's entirely new and different.

"That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ." The promise in Christ, not the promise to the fathers, not the Davidic covenant, not the Palestinian covenant, not the Abrahamic covenant. This is a new covenant in the blood of Christ, as He says after Judas leaves in the upper room. So it's now revealed that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and that's Ephesians 3:3 through 6.

Romans 16:25 through 27, and with this we will close. Romans 16. I always think of Romans 16 as the recommended fellowship. Paul gives a list of people who are worthy of cultivation for fellowship. Greet these people.

Then in verse 17 he says, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." Make a distinction. Create a separation. If there are those who

cause divisions and offenses, their fellowship is not edifying. It isn't upbuilding. It isn't sharpening the iron. Contrary to the doctrine which you learned, avoid them. Those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own desires, their own belly. By smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Smooth words. "We're Jesus followers. We're anti-empire disciples. We live by the Sermon on the Mount." Smooth words, flattering words. Look at what a good person you are because you're waving a flag for this cause and this area of social justice.

"Your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf. I want you to be wise in what is good and naive concerning evil." Don't have to spend a whole lot of time studying evil. Be wise about what is good. "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

And then you come down to verses 25 through 27. "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel." Paul says, Him, the Father, who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now made manifest and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations according to the commandment of the everlasting God for obedience to the faith. To God alone wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

There is a unique, previously unrevealed aspect, unique to the church, unique to the body, the new people composed of Jews and Gentiles. There's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. It is unique. And that is an area of the expression of love to which we need to be extremely sensitive and wise and avoid those who are not susceptible to one another reciprocity in the Spirit. If it isn't reciprocal, avoid them. If it's causing offense and division, contrary to doctrine, separate. Move them out to the neighbor category at a minimum.

Practice the one another's in the area where it is mutually edifying, where it reflects the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace: unity, not division; peace, not offense. So important for us to cultivate healthy Christian fellowship and separate from that which detracts and divides and dissents and causes problems. You can't love those people into spiritual health. They need to be at the hog trough and let God work through the Holy Spirit for conviction and repentance and return. It's not our job.

Well, much more to see here. We'll pick up our study next time, this coming Sunday, but we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we're so grateful, as the Lord Jesus said, we have not been left as orphans. The words of the Lord Jesus, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and through Him our understanding of Your Word is essential for our life and our health. We're grateful for it. We thank You, and we pray that we can truly represent the Lord Jesus Christ as His incarnation on this earth and be and do as He was and did in His absence, until that time when You sent Him to call us to Himself and present us before Your throne. We're grateful, and we thank You for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.