



Every Spiritual
Blessing

EPHESIANS - WEEK 7
The Blessing of Stewardship

Opening prayer

Prayer for the millennial generation:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Erick Cobb and Covenant Grace Church.

Closing prayer

INTRODUCTION

This morning we're going to focus on the stewardship given to the church, to us. Responsibilities are stewardships — family, jobs, talents, etc.

Big Idea: “This generation of Christians is

responsible for this generation of souls.” (Leonard Ravenhill)

Ephesians 3

3 For this reason

Because God is building this people together, making them into a group where God’s Spirit dwells, which is the church. The church was God’s plan, is God’s plan, prophesied by the prophets, taught by the apostles. You can find the church throughout the Old Testament. All the

promises to God's people there are ultimately promises to the church. It's for this reason, the purpose of the church as a body of believers joined together finally, made one finally by Christ breaking down the walls of hostility... for this reason...

I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,

Paul speaks about his particular stewardship, his ministry in taking the gospel to the Gentiles. That's his particular stewardship, but the church has been given a general stewardship to take the gospel to all of creation. In that sense, God gives you a stewardship for the gospel when he calls you to Christ. Again, a stewardship is something you look after. It's a responsibility.

So, our stewardship of the gospel is two-fold. On the one hand we have to look after the gospel. That is one of the primary responsibilities of

church elders, to make sure the ideas of the gospel are accurately preached.

That Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity, God who took on human flesh, so he is 100% God and 100% human. This means he has two natures, one human and one divine. That he lived a sinless life. That he died on the cross in your place to pay for your sins, because you have not lived a sinless life. You have lived a sinful life. We all like sheep have gone astray, which is why God sent his Son into the world, to die in your

place. Then he rose again from the dead to prove that he alone can forgive your sins. He ascended physically into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to work through the church. When God draws you and you place your faith (which is simply trust) in Christ, you are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you.

All those gospel truths have to be guarded.

The second-prong is that we're responsible to take the gospel (this message that I just

summarized) to the world, starting with where we live and then moving out from there. So, we begin in the home, then our neighbors, our community, city, the nation, the world, etc.

Now, we're in the realm of human free choice here. You can take what God gives you and multiple it or bury it and keep it safe, like a collector who buys toys but never opens them. "These G.I. Joes aren't for use. Don't take them out of their original packaging, because they'll lose value." But as we all learned from *Toy Story*,

the value in the stewardship God gives us is in how it is used. The true value of a toy is in the joy it brings the child who plays with it. A toy that has not been opened is to a child a useless toy.

So, God has given you a stewardship. Paul speaks of this stewardship in verse 3.

3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

What is this mystery? Well, the mystery is the

gospel. And by mystery Paul doesn't mean something that's unknown, unclear or cloudy. By mystery he means that you cannot come to an understanding of the gospel without the Holy Spirit revealing it to you. That's the mystery of the gospel.

Matthew 16:17

¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And when you go back to chapter one, you see what a mystery it is. It's such a mystery that two camps have formed within the church regarding Ephesians chapter one — the philosophical camp and the theological camp. The philosophical camp wants everything to make sense logically and the theological camp wants everything to agree with Scripture. There are good people in both camps, but just so you know where we land as a church leadership, we're in the theological camp. Even if it offends your sensibilities, what Scripture says is going to

surpass everything else, including nice, neat philosophical reasoning.

1 Point #1 - You are a steward of the gospel.

And as we present the gospel to interested parties, God the Holy Spirit gives revelation. He opens eyes. He brings life. Sometimes this happens gradually and sometimes this happens instantaneously.

4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

Again, the mystery of Christ is the revelation the Holy Spirit brings to our understanding of the gospel and of what Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

Again, the revelation of who Christ is comes by the Spirit. Christ was made known to the world in God's timing, according to God's plan. And how was God's plan revealed to the world? Through the holy apostles and prophets. In other words, the mystery of Christ is revealed to the world in the Old and New Testaments. Even when God had singled out a people for himself, the nation of Israel, it was still for the sake of the whole world.

Micah 1:2

**² Hear, you peoples, all of you;
pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it,
and let the Lord God be a witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple.**

This shows us it's a message for all the world, always has been a message for all the world. But what's the temple now? The church. So this still applies to the world.

2 Point #2 - You are a steward of the Word.

Because the Word is the source of the gospel. The stewardship of the gospel is based on the teachings of his holy apostles and prophets. When we lose the word, we lose the gospel. Any part of it. When we lose the Old Testament, we lose the gospel. When we lose the Old Testament, we lose the New Testament. Seeing the gospel preached from the Old Testament is always powerful, because it confirms the

message of the New Testament hundreds of years before Christ lived. So, you are a steward of the Word of God.

This is why it's important that you become familiar with the Bible.

- Reading plans

Another reason you want to become familiar with the Bible is because...

3 Point #3 - You are a steward to everyone.

This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls. The gospel message is for everyone.

- The Millennials

6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body (the church),

and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

This was a mystery to the apostles until the Spirit gave them revelation to see God promised this very thing in the Old Testament, that the Messiah was given to the world to make one new man from both the Jews and the Gentiles and everyone in between, called the church. And the message that creates the church is the gospel. That's how people are made partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus — through hearing the gospel.

The only place anyone can access the blessings of God is through the gospel. In other words, through a relationship with the living Christ.

7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

4 Point #4 - The power of your stewardship is only made effective through the Holy Spirit in you.

All God's gifts come through the Holy Spirit. It's always his power through us, so if we're not walking with him then we're cutting ourselves off from his ministry. It's always his ministry through us. Everything about being a blessing to others is relational, beginning with our relationship with the Holy Spirit. So, the power of your stewardship is only made effective through the Holy Spirit working through you.

Do you know you're filled with the Spirit?

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Paul was always conscious of his former state, a persecutor of the church. This is why it's not false humility when he refers to himself as the very least of all the saints. In Paul's mind no one

is more undeserving of the grace found in the gospel than he. This is why he refers to the gospel as “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

The greatness of the gospel’s benefits to us are limitless, because Christ is limitless. And the blessing of the gospel is him. He’s the unsearchable One, the One we can never come to the end of. It’s a frustrating reality, that we have the treasure of the gospel and do not realize what we possess — Christ himself. When we

have even the simplest understanding of the gospel, joy should define us. When we understand the treasure we hold, we should be motivated to take it to others. And that's where we often find the frustration. It's like we hold the simple serum to make zombies alive again, to make them human, but they don't even want to hear about the serum. And we can't make them listen. So, we keep searching for that one zombie who wants to live again. Zombies of peace, who are open to the serum. But that is our

stewardship, to find Zombies who want to hear.
We should be motivated to find the Zombies.

**9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the
plan of the mystery hidden for ages
in God, who created all things, 10 so that
through the church the manifold wisdom of
God might now be made known to the rulers
and authorities in the heavenly places.**

5 Point #5 - You live out your stewardship through the church.

Two amazing things about this verse. First, it shows that the secular thinking person focuses on the history of presidents and generals and countries at war and civilizations that will all come to an end, but they are not the true focus of history. It is one of the truths of history, every nation, even the greatest of them, eventually comes to an end. That's why God refers to the nations as a drop in a bucket. But what most fail

to realize is that the church will outlast all of these other things. The church outlasted the Roman empire and it will outlast every empire and every nation. Whether in peacetime or wartime, the church goes on. Whether through dictators or democracies, the church goes on. The church outlasts all things because it is God's wisdom. All these small, insignificant, unknown people that make up the church will be the central stories of history one day. We'll find out how some unknown elderly Christian woman on

her knees was the turning point of World War Two.

The second amazing thing is that your Christian life isn't just a witness to the world around you, it's a witness to "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Paul is referring to angels and demons here. This is how glorious the church is in the world. It's the one witness to the manifold wisdom of God in the gospel. But notice the context of where your Christian life is made a

witness — in the church... **so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known**

When it comes to this common idea in our day where people say, “I can be a Christian and not be part of a church,” Paul wouldn’t know what they were talking about. He wouldn’t recognize that concept, because it’s foreign to Scripture. And when it’s not foreign to us it just shows you how far away we’ve gotten from the Scriptures

defining our lives.

11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The gospel is God's eternal plan. It was God's plan from before he created the universe itself. The gospel has always been the plan. The inclusion of the Gentiles has always been the plan. The creation of the church out of Jews and Gentiles and Greeks and Romans and everyone

in between has always been the plan. This is another biblical reason as to why no other religion will do, because this eternal purpose is only realized through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. The God of the universe has a plan to make all things new and he is fulfilling that plan in Christ and Christ alone.

11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

6 Point #6 - Your stewardship should make you bold.

The gospel should make us bold. Bold in our relationship with God. Bold in our requests. Bold in our actions. Bold in our lives. This is why Paul says...

13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Paul is not the source of their strength. Even though he writes these churches from prison, he doesn't moan about his circumstances, because he's not a prisoner of Rome or a prisoner Israel or a prisoner anyone else. He's a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Paul saw all the circumstances of his life as being completely from the Lord. That's why he speaks the way he does.

You shouldn't lose heart because you are part of God's plan. Now, where we often lose heart is when life's circumstances turn on us. When things aren't moving toward our definition of success. Say for instance, like being thrown into prison. Paul has a view of suffering that is foreign to the church today. If our lives aren't moving toward success we stumble and say, "It can't be of God. He's about blessing." This again is how the false teaching of the prosperity gospel has

infiltrated the entire church. Paul saw every circumstance, every *single* circumstance as from the Lord. In Paul's theology God is in control of all things. Even as you're free to choose, he still controls the course of your life. Nothing is outside of his control — that's what sovereignty means. God is not passive and he doesn't expect you to be passive either. He expects you to take your stewardship and boldly move forward with it.

Application

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

What is it you need? Do you need to know God personally? The moment you believe in Christ you have access to the unsearchable riches of Christ. Do you know Christ in this way? Do you need wisdom? He promises to give wisdom to

those who ask. Do you need joy? He promises joy in the Holy Spirit. Do you need grace to be the husband God has called you to be or the wife God has called you to be? He gives more grace. Do you need strength and wisdom in parenting? What is it you need? If you have Christ, you have his unsearchable riches. Do you feel rich spiritually? God has made you part of his family. You have an equal share in everything as much as any other Christian. You are part of God's plan. He expects you to take your stewardship

and boldly move forward with it.