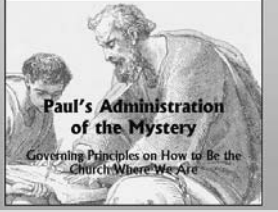



PAUL'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE MYSTERY

Peter Briggs
November 29, 2009

INTRODUCTION – SLIDE 1	This is the <i>second</i> of a trilogy of messages that I am presenting this year...	
TRILOGY ON HOW TO BE THE CHURCH – SLIDE 2	<p>The subjects of which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ <u>Gospel of the Kingdom</u> – in which I addressed the significance of our being citizens of the kingdom of God.◆ <u>Paul's Administration of the Mystery</u> – in which I address the question as to why we should look to the epistles of the Apostle Paul for the governing principles for <i>how to be the church where we are</i>.◆ <u>Becoming an Antiochian Community</u> – which will be an exposition of the <i>normative pattern</i> for <i>how to become the church where it is not</i> according to Luke's narrative in the Book of Acts. <p>In combination, these three messages lay the foundation from the Christian Scriptures for both our <i>global outreach</i> and our <i>local missional living outreach</i>. The overarching paradigm is that we are participating in the <i>expansion of the kingdom of God</i> by making disciples, gathering those disciples into church communities, and establishing and ordering those church communities according to Scripture.</p>	<div data-bbox="1170 842 1455 1052">A Trilogy on How to Be the Church<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Gospel of the Kingdom<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The meaning of being citizens of the kingdom of God• Paul's Administration of the Mystery<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Why we should look to the Apostle Paul for the governing principles for how to be the church where we are• Becoming an Antiochian Community<ul style="list-style-type: none">– How to become the church where it is not</div>

<p>Objectives for this Message</p> <p>Instruction</p> <p>Motivation</p>	<p>My objectives for this message are both instructional and motivational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>First</i>, I will endeavor to convince you intellectually that Jesus Christ did, in fact, <i>specifically and uniquely commission the Apostle Paul</i> to deliver to us the governing principles for how to be the church where we are. ◆ <i>Second</i>, I will endeavor to convince you at the level of will and emotion that each of us should represent our vocation and ministry as <i>subsumed</i> beneath that of the Apostle Paul. <p>In other words, speaking for myself, I see my ministry as supporting that of the Apostle Paul in <i>making the Gentiles an acceptable offering unto God.</i></p>
<p>My Title</p>	<p>When I gave Rosemarie the title for this message for use in the bulletin, her response was, "My, that's not a very catchy title!" She's certainly right; it sounds arcane and... mysterious. And so I have asked Marcie Kinzer to share the epiphany we experienced as we came to grips with Paul's administration of the mystery in the Pauline Epistles class several years ago.</p>
<p>SEGUE TO REVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM – SLIDE 3</p>	<p>Allow me now to briefly review the first message of the trilogy, which was entitled Gospel of the Kingdom.</p> <div data-bbox="1166 1423 1455 1635" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">  <p>Review of Gospel of the Kingdom How to Be People of the Kingdom of God</p> </div>

Review: The Great Commission – Slide 4

We saw that in the preamble to the Great Commission, Jesus announced the fact that he was the **king of the universe**, which authority was conferred upon him by God the Father in conjunction with his resurrection.

Review: The Great Commission

- Jesus Christ is king of the universe.
- The Great Commission is a command to expand the in-breaking of the kingdom of God through disciple-making.
- The divinely mandated method of implementing the Great Commission is that modeled by the apostles in the 1st century.
 - God commissioned Paul to impart system, structure, order, and reproducibility to the process.

Thus, the Great Commission is a command to the disciples of Jesus Christ to **expand his kingdom** through disciple-making.

However, we are not left to our own devices to develop a method for fulfilling Christ's Great Commission. Instead, we are to follow the pattern which was **pioneered** for us by the apostles as recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts. In particular, **Jesus Christ specifically commissioned the Apostle Paul** to organize and systematize that pattern so that it could be reproduced down through the centuries by successive generations of disciples.

Review: The Essence of Human Sin and of a Faith Response to the Gospel – Slide 5

Next, I asserted and showed you from Scripture that the nub of human sin is **prideful rebellion**. Accordingly, the essence of a faith response to the gospel is **submission** to Jesus Christ as king. God graciously responds to such faith by bestowing the gift of righteousness and eternal life.

Review: The Essence of Human Sin and of a Faith Response to the Gospel

- The nub of human sin is prideful rebellion.
 - All manner of sinful behaviors spring from this center.
- The essence of a faith response to the gospel of the kingdom of God is submission to Christ's authority as king.
 - God graciously responds to such faith by bestowing the gift of righteousness and eternal life.

Review: Paul's Method for Planting and Establishing Churches – Slide 6

The Book of Acts is Luke's narrative of *how* the apostles went about proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and thereby *fulfilling the Great Commission*. The *repeated pattern* that is evident in the missionary expeditions of the apostle Paul includes these five steps:

1. **Evangelization** of a strategic metropolitan center by the apostolic team,
2. **Gathering** of the disciples into a local church community,
3. **Establishing** the disciples in the way of Christ and the apostles,
4. **Ordering** the assembly by appointment of qualified leaders, and
5. **Charging** those leaders to reproduce like-established and like-ordered church communities in the surrounding area.

Review: Paul's Method for Planting & Establishing Churches

- The five-step process consisted of...
 - Evangelization of a strategic metropolitan center by the apostolic team,
 - Gathering of the disciples into a local assembly,
 - Establishing the disciples in the way of Christ and the apostles,
 - Ordering the assembly by appointment of qualified leaders, and
 - Charging those leaders to reproduce like-established and like-ordered assemblies in the surrounding area.

SEGUE TO PAUL'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE MYSTERY – SLIDE 7

We turn now to Paul's administration of the mystery, and why we should look to his teachings for the governing principles for being the church where we are.



Paul's Administration of the Mystery

Why We Should Look to the Apostle Paul for How to be the Church Where We Are

Focal Scripture Passage:
Ephesians 3:1-11
 – Slide 8

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

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

Unfolding of Focal Passage – Slide 9

As noted in the previous slide, the Greek word which is translated 'administration' is *oikonomia*, which literally means the "law of the household." The Greek word translated 'mystery' is *mysterion*, which means something previously hidden but now revealed. And what is this mystery? The answer is found in the 6th verse of the passage. The mystery is that God is bringing into being **a single, integrated worshiping community that includes both Jews and Gentiles.**

Paul's Administration of the Mystery According to Ephesians 3:1-11

- Administration = *oikonomia* = law of the household.
- Mystery = *mysterion* = that which was previously hidden, but now revealed. – Namely, that there would be a single, integrated worshiping community comprised of both Jews and Gentiles in accordance with Ephesians 3:6 and Romans 11:25.

The Olive Tree Metaphor
– Slide 10

In the 11th chapter of Romans, Paul employs the *olive tree metaphor* to explain how this mystery works. The olive tree represents Israel – the Jewish people, Paul's own countrymen. According to Paul, some of the natural branches have been broken out to make room for Gentile branches, that have been grafted in.

The Olive Tree Metaphor



Unfolding the Administration of the Mystery
– Slide 11

And so we can now unfold Paul's administration of the mystery as follows:

It is the set of governing principles whereby Gentiles along with Jews would be integrated into a single worshipping community and established in the way of Christ and the apostles.

Paul's Administration of the Mystery – Cont.:


- Administration of the mystery = the set of governing principles whereby Gentiles along with Jews would be integrated into a single worshipping community and established in the way of Christ and the apostles.
 - Established with the full, kingly authority of Jesus Christ
 - Therefore normative and non-negotiable

According to Paul, this administration of the mystery was *specifically and uniquely* revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore it is delivered to us with the backing of the full, kingly authority of Christ himself. Hence, it is *normative and non-negotiable* – that is, it is applicable to all peoples, periods, and places. Thus, the *governing principles* for how we, as a church community composed of Gentile disciples, are to *be the church where we are* derives from the teachings of the Apostle Paul. In other words, *to be the church where we are, it is necessary that we do church specifically as prescribed by the Apostle Paul.*

Unfolding of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles – Slide 12

But wait, there's more! In the 15th chapter of Romans, verses 15 and 16, Paul imparts the significance of his apostleship to the Gentiles as follows:

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles




Romans 15:15-16 – ¹⁵ But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, *so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 15:15-16 – ¹⁵ But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, *so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Unfolding of Paul's Offering of the Gentiles as an Acceptable Sacrifice Unto God – Slide 13

Paul's language in this passage alludes to the whole burnt offering set forth in the 1st chapter of Leviticus. *Try to wrap your mind around the rich imagery of this passage.* The entire Gentile population of Christian disciples is like the animal being offered on the altar of burnt offering, and Paul is serving as officiating priest.

An Acceptable Sacrifice



- The purpose of Paul's apostleship is...
 - That the Gentiles might make up an acceptable offering unto God.
 - A new covenant embodiment of the whole burnt offering of Leviticus 1.
- Paul serves as officiating priest.

And so let me ask what must be true of us in order that we, as Gentile disciples and as a church community in the Gentile world, might constitute an acceptable offering unto God? We can *approach* an answer to this question by first asking ourselves what was required of the whole burnt offering for it to be acceptable to God. It was necessary for it to be *unblemished*. What then is required of us that we would be an unblemished offering? In what follows, we will progressively answer this question.

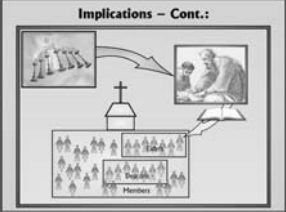
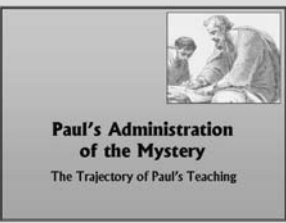
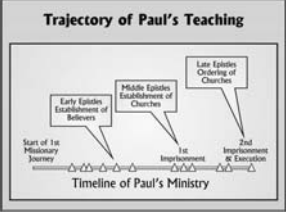
Implications – Slide 14

And so what are the implications of what we have covered thus far? They are as follows:

Implications of Paul's Administration of the Mystery

- Principles set forth in the Pauline Epistles govern how we are to be the church where we are.
 - Backed up by Christ's kingly authority
 - Therefore normative and non-negotiable
- We should represent our ministry as subsumed beneath that of Paul.
 - We are supporting the fulfillment of his commission from Christ.

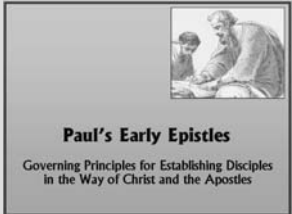
1. The principles set forth in Paul's epistles *must govern* our being the church where we are. Because they are backed up by the full, kingly authority of Jesus Christ, they are *normative and non-negotiable*.
2. Each of us *should represent our own vocation and ministry* as subsumed beneath that of the Apostle Paul. In other words, we should see ourselves as *supporting him* in the fulfillment of his commission from Christ.

<p>Implications – Cont.: – Slide 15</p>	<p>This slide delineates the flowdown of authority from Christ, through the Apostle Paul, through the deposit of teaching in Paul's epistles, to us as a church in the Gentile world. I hope you will join me in embracing the truth that all our ministries are subsumed beneath that of Paul, and we are, in fact, supporting him in fulfilling his commission from Jesus Christ, that his offering up of the Gentiles might constitute an acceptable sacrifice unto God.</p>	
<p>SEGUE TO THE TRAJECTORY OF PAUL'S TEACHING – SLIDE 16</p>	<p>We turn next to the <i>trajectory</i> of Paul's teaching in his early, middle, and late epistles.</p>	
<p>Delineation of the Trajectory of Paul's Teaching – Slide 17</p>	<p>This slide illustrates the three clusters of Paul's epistles according to their early, middle, and late groupings as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Early epistles. These consisted of Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Romans. They focus upon the <i>required teaching</i> for establishing <i>individual disciples</i> in the way of Christ and the apostles. ◆ Middle epistles. These are otherwise known as the <i>prison epistles</i> and include Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. They focus upon the <i>required teaching</i> for establishing <i>church communities</i> in the way of Christ and the apostles. ◆ Late epistles. These are otherwise known as the <i>pastoral epistles</i> and include 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. They focus upon how church communities are to be ordered with qualified leaders. <p>What would happen if we were to take seriously, not only the <i>content</i> of Paul's epistles, but also the <i>order</i> in which the Holy Spirit <i>chose to reveal</i> that content? Let me suggest that the result would be a theological curriculum for the disciple of Christ – that is,</p>	

Delineation of the Trajectory of Paul's Teaching – Cont.: those spiritual and moral concepts that he or she would be **required to learn and practice** in order to walk in the way of Christ and the apostles.

SEGUE TO THE PAUL'S EARLY EPISTLES – SLIDE 18

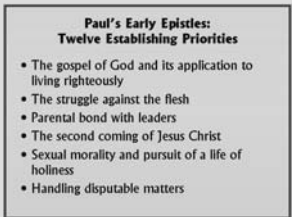
We shall now overview Paul's teaching priorities in his early, middle, and late epistles. We do this to peel back one layer of the onion and get a sense for the **content** of his administration of the mystery. By this means, we will derive a **fuller understanding** of what is required of us, as Gentile disciples, to make up an acceptable offering unto God.



Twelve Establishing Priorities in Paul's Early Epistles – Slide 19

This slide lists the first six of the twelve establishing priorities set forth in the early epistles of Paul. They are as follows:

1. **The gospel of God and its application to living righteously.** Paul **introduces** this teaching in Galatians and then develops it at length in Romans.
2. **The struggle against the flesh.** As in the previous subject, Paul **introduces** this teaching in Galatians and then develops it more fully in Romans.
3. **Parental bond with leaders.** Paul addresses this teaching primarily in 1 & 2 Thessalonians and 1 & 2 Corinthians. He took pains to develop and maintain a strong bond with the churches – like that of a father with his children. Following Paul's example, we, as leaders of Foothills Fellowship, must take pains to develop and maintain a strong parental bond with you as members.
4. **The second coming of Jesus Christ.** Paul considered teaching on the return of Jesus Christ as being **essential** to the establishing of disciples in the way of Christ and the apostles. He addresses this subject in 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
5. **Sexual morality and pursuit of a life of holiness.** Paul addresses this subject briefly in 1 & 2 Thessalonians and more fully in 1 & 2 Corinthians.
6. **Handling of disputable matters.** Paul addresses this teaching in 1 Corinthians and Romans.



**Twelve
Establishing
Priorities in Paul's
Early Epistles –
Cont.: – Slide 20**

And here are the last six of the Paul's establishing priorities set forth in his early epistles:

7. **Financial stewardship**. Paul addresses this teaching in 1 & 2 Corinthians.
8. **Drawing lessons for living from the Hebrew Scriptures**. While all of Paul's epistles are permeated by citations from and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, the 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians is one of the cardinal teaching passages on this subject.
9. **Principle of headship**. Paul addresses this subject substantially in 1 Corinthians.
10. **Ministry identity**. This teaching has to do with our recognizing and utilizing the spiritual gifts that God has graciously conferred upon each of us. Paul address this subject in 1 Corinthians and Romans.
11. **The way of love**. The cardinal passage which conveys Paul's teaching on this subject is the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians.
12. **Glory through self-emptying and affliction**. While the cardinal passage on this subject is Philippians 2:5-11, Paul addresses it in 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans.

These twelve priorities represent ***the Apostle Paul's first principles*** for the Christian life. In other words, these twelve priorities constitute ***Discipleship 101*** according to the Apostle Paul. In her course on Paul's early epistles, Marcie Kinzer is addressing these twelve establishing priorities.

Are we developing a fuller understanding of what is required of us, as Gentile disciples, in order for us to make up an acceptable offering unto God?

**Paul's Early Epistles:
Twelve Establishing Priorities – Cont.:**

- Financial stewardship
- Drawing lessons for living from the Hebrew Scriptures
- The principle of headship
- Ministry identity
- The way of love
- Glory through self-emptying and affliction

**SEGUE TO PAUL'S
MIDDLE EPISTLES
– SLIDE 21**

We turn next to a brief overview of Paul's teaching priorities in his middle epistles, which are essential for establishing ***church communities*** in the way of Christ and the apostles.



Paul's Middle Epistles
Governing Principles for Establishing
Churches in the Way of Christ
and the Apostles

The Household Texts – Slide 22

There are three so-called household texts in Paul's middle epistles and a fourth in the 1st epistle of the Apostle Peter. They are as follows:

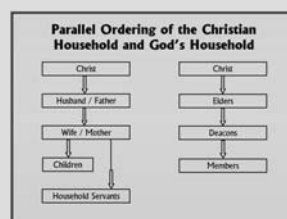
- ◆ Ephesians 2:19-22
- ◆ Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9
- ◆ Colossians 3:18 – 4:1
- ◆ 1 Peter 3:1-7

Four Household Texts

- Ephesians 2:19-22
- Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9
- Colossians 3:18 – 4:1
- 1 Peter 3:1-7


The Parallel Ordering of the Christian Household and the Church – Slide 23

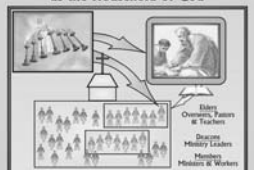
In combination, the household texts instruct us that the Christian church community is to function very much like the *normal Christian household* is supposed to function. In other words, the way we function as Christian households *actually has cosmic significance*.





- ◆ Both the Christian household and the church as the household of God are subject to the kingly rule of Christ.
- ◆ The function of the **Elders** in the church corresponds to that of the husband and father in the Christian household. The Elders oversee and govern the affairs of the church, including its **external interfaces** with other churches and the surrounding community. And they are to be responsible for teaching, protecting, and shepherding the household, including the exercise of discipline.
- ◆ The function of the **Deacons** in the church corresponds to that of the wife and mother in the Christian household. The Deacons are to administer the **internal affairs** of the church as the household of God, including **caring** for the members and **leadership of specific ministry areas** under the oversight of the Elders.
- ◆ The function of the **members** in the church corresponds to that of the children and household servants in the 1st century AD Christian household known and described by the Apostle Paul. The members do the work of the ministry under the leadership of the Deacons and oversight of the Elders in accordance with Paul's teaching in the 4th chapter of Ephesians.

<p>The Church as Family – Slide 24</p>	<p>In summary, Paul describes the ordering of the church as the household of God as corresponding to the <i>proper ordering</i> of the individual Christian household. In other words, we must learn to represent Foothills Fellowship as a <i>family of families</i> instead of a business or other kind of organization. And we must learn to relate to one another and order our affairs in accordance with the family model as opposed to a business model.</p> <p>Do you see how we are progressively adding to our understanding of what is required of us, as Gentile disciples, to make up an acceptable offering unto God?</p>	<div data-bbox="1169 220 1453 441"> <p>The Church as Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul defines the ordering of the household of God according to the model of the individual Christian household or family unit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to the Pauline model, the church is not an organization or a business, but a family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In fact, a family of families. - In obedience to the way of Christ and the apostles, it is mandatory that church members relate to one another as family. </div>
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<p>SEGUE TO PAUL'S LATE EPISTLES – SLIDE 25</p>	<p>We turn now to Paul's late epistles, which set forth the requirements for <i>ordering church communities</i> according to the way of Christ and the apostles.</p>	<div data-bbox="1169 819 1453 1029">  <p>Paul's Late Epistles Governing Principles for Ordering Churches</p> </div>
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<p>The Ordering of the Church as the Household of God – Slide 26</p>	<p>This slide delineates Paul's direction for ordering the church as the household of God. We are subject to the kingly authority of Jesus Christ as mediated to us through the apostles – especially the Apostle Paul. The governing principles for how we are to function as a church community are set forth in the documents of the Christian Scriptures, especially the epistles of the Apostle Paul. In sum, we are to be a church community that is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Subject to the kingly rule of Jesus Christ, ◆ Governed by spiritually and morally qualified Elders, ◆ Served by spiritually and morally qualified Deacons, and ◆ Characterized by members who are actively engaged in the work of the ministry. 	<div data-bbox="1169 1071 1453 1281"> <p>Ordering of the Church as the Household of God</p>  </div>
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<p>SEGUE TO PAUL'S THREE COSMIC OBJECTIVES – SLIDE 27</p>	<p>In conclusion, we turn finally to the three cosmic objectives of Paul's life and ministry. The vision I want to cast before you this morning is that the significance of our lives as individuals and as a church go far beyond the warp and woof of our experiences in this life, whether they be pleasant or difficult.</p>	 <p>The Three Cosmic Objectives of Paul's Life and Ministry Conclusions</p>
<p>That Paul's Offering of the Gentiles Might be Acceptable – Slide 28</p>	<p>The first of the cosmic objectives of Paul's life and ministry is that his offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit in accordance with Romans 15:15-16.</p>	 <p>That Paul's Offering of the Gentiles May Be Acceptable to God</p> <p>Romans 15:15-16 – ¹⁵ But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>That God's Manifold Wisdom Would be Manifested – Slide 29</p>	<p>The second of the cosmic objectives of Paul's life and ministry is that the manifold wisdom of God would be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms in accordance with Ephesians 3:10-11. As we learn from the 6th chapter of Ephesians, the rulers and authorities to which Paul refers in this passage are the minions of Satan – the demonic overlords that govern the affairs of the ungodly world order. How do we participate in manifesting the manifold wisdom of God to these demonic rulers and authorities? The answer is found in the story of Job. We participate in manifesting the manifold wisdom of God through our godly response to affliction and suffering.</p>	<p>That God's Manifold Wisdom Would be Manifested to the Rulers and Authorities in Heavenly Realms</p> <p>Ephesians 3:10-11 – ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p>
<p>That the Glorious Grace of God Would be Showcased – Slide 30</p>	<p>The third of the cosmic objectives of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul is that the glorious grace of God would be showcased in accordance with Ephesians 2:4-7 – a passage which Jesse taught from back in October.</p>	<p>That in the Ages to Come God's Glorious Grace would be Showcased</p> <p>Ephesians 2:4-7 – ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.</p>

Conclusions – Slide 31

We, as Gentile disciples of Christ and as a church community in the Gentile world, participate in the fulfillment of the three cosmic objectives of Paul's life and ministry if, and only if, we are doing church in accordance with Paul's administration of the mystery. This means that...

- ◆ We are training disciples according to the twelve establishing priorities in Paul's early epistles,
- ◆ That we are functioning as a family of families in accordance with Paul's middle epistles,
- ◆ And we are ordering our church with qualified leaders in accordance with Paul's late epistles.

Conclusions



- If, and only if, we are doing church in accordance with Paul's administration of the mystery are we being the church where we are.
 - Training disciples according to the twelve establishing priorities in Paul's early epistles.
 - Functioning as a family of families according to Paul's middle epistles.
 - Ordering our church with qualified leaders according to Paul's late epistles.

Conclusions – Cont.: – Slide 32

I am convinced that the way this applies to me and to each of you is as follows:

- ◆ Each of us must represent our individual vocations and ministries as being **subsumed beneath** and as **supporting** Paul's three cosmic objectives. This means that each of us must **seek to understand** and **endeavor to fulfill** our **individual calling** before God.
- ◆ Each of our vocations and ministries must be **aligned with and governed by** Paul's administration of the mystery – that is, the governing principles he set forth for bringing into being a single, integrated worshiping community consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.
- ◆ We must be confident that as we discharge our vocations and ministries wholeheartedly as unto Christ, that he will reward us in that day when he comes to judge both the living and the dead.

Conclusions – Cont.:

- Each of our vocations and ministries must be subsumed beneath and support Paul's three cosmic objectives.
- Each of our vocations and ministries must be aligned with and governed by Paul's administration of the mystery.
- Christ will reward each such vocation and ministry if done with excellence that he might be glorified.

To conclude, I would like to quote a passage from the Book of Hebrews as follows:

Hebrews 11:39 –
12:2

And all these, having gained approval on account of their faith, **died without receiving that which was promised**, God having prepared something better for us, so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Therefore, **since we are surrounded by such a great a cloud of witnesses**, let us also lay aside every encumbrance that would slow us down and that besetting sin which so readily entangles our feet to trip us up, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is marked out for us, looking off and away unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The scene which is set before us by this passage of Scripture is that of a **cosmic relay race**. All the saints of the old covenant have carried the baton for their laps, and they are now seated in the heavenly coliseum. And they have been joined by Paul and the other apostles, and all the saints of the new covenant era down to the present. Each of them was commended on account of their faith, but they died without receiving their promised reward, **God having prepared something better for us, that only together with us would they be made perfect**.

Their reward – Paul's reward – **dangles on the thread of our faithfulness**. Therefore, let us run with patient endurance the course marked out for us...

Amen!