

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD – BY ERIC D. SMITH

CHAPTER 5 - THE MYSTERY OF GENTILES BECOMING FELLOW-HEIRS

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”

Ephesians 3:3-6

With this chapter, several of the “mysteries” mentioned in the New Testament come together to show that God had originally worked through the Jewish people, but His intent was always to bring the Gentile people into the promise of salvation. As we live in the twenty-first century, it might be hard for us to comprehend that the very first Christians never thought of the Gentiles as being capable of God’s promise of salvation. Today, the Christian Church is predominantly made up of Gentile believers. However, in the tenth chapter of the book of Acts, God had to do some strong persuading in order to get Peter (a Jew) to go to Cornelius (a Gentile) and preach to him and his household about Jesus Christ. Peter stated the following comment while inside Cornelius’ home, *“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean”* (Acts 10:28).

Several other places in the New Testament it mentions a mystery that points right back to the inclusion not only of the Gentiles, but of all of mankind. In a few of these scriptures, it refers to the *“mystery of His Will”*. We need to realize that it is God’s Will that all of mankind be saved and come to the understanding of the grace and mercy that is being offered to all nationalities.

In the beginning years of the Church, it was difficult for a Jew to accept the fact that God could save a non-Jew (a Gentile). Two thousand years later, the predominately Gentile Church may say that they totally agree with Peter, when he said that *“God is no respecter of persons”*, yet we still struggle with understanding whom God is willing to save. We may be actually shocked at whom God is trying to save in our communities.

Questions, Discussions and Notes

1. To which nationality did God originally take the Gospel to?
2. Ephesians chapter 3 tells us that this mystery in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men. Explain the event that made Peter finally realize that God wanted the message of salvation taken to the Gentiles.
3. Do you feel that there are some races of people, or even someone’s current beliefs or lifestyles that could prevent them from receiving salvation? Explain your answer.
4. On page 44 of the book, the author mentions different groups of people God may be trying to save that we may be shocked at. List some of these groups.
5. Could the church you attend be able to welcome all people that God is trying to reach?

As Paul was speaking to the people in the Corinth Church, he reminds them that they were once sinners. But also notice that Paul not only reminded them of what they used to be, but also what God has changed them into.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

People are not always happy in their sin and are often what God calls the “broken-hearted”. The broken-hearted may put on a happy face in front of other people, but when they face themselves in the mirror at home, they know their own brokenness, and many are desiring to give up their lifestyle for something that can heal their heart. They may be the ones praying today that God sends you to tomorrow. God is no respecter of persons!

The Lord had given Saul a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands upon him for the healing of his eyes. God was also working upon Saul’s heart to be converted, but all of that was happening ever before Ananias agreed to obey God and go preach to a man that had a reputation of being a terrorist to the Christian Church. There may be someone trying to get out of their misery of sin who is praying right now, and God may be trying to move on a believer’s heart to speak a word of hope to that person.

6. Would there some type of sin that a person once committed that you would be uncomfortable with if that person would become a member of your church?
7. Paul did not mention “murderers” in his list. Do you think that the list he presented here is all inclusion?
8. Have you ever passed someone in a public setting, like a grocery store, where God impressed upon you to witness to them or to pray for them? Did you follow God’s urging, and if not, why? Have a discussion if in a group setting.
9. If God is asking you to go and witness to someone, could God also be working on that person’s heart to receive your witness?
10. List 5 people that you could start praying for that God would move upon their hearts to be saved through your testimony.