

LIVING AND SERVING IN THE DIVINE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

Message Two

The Stewardship of God for the Carrying Out of the Divine Economy through the Divine Dispensing of the Divine Trinity

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25

1 Cor. 4:1-2 A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. **2** Here, furthermore, it is sought in stewards that one be found faithful.

1 Cor. 9:17 If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

I. The central point of the whole Bible is the desire of God's heart to dispense Himself into His chosen and redeemed people for His corporate expression—Phil. 2:13; Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:17-21.

Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for *His* good pleasure.

Eph. 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 3:17-21 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are **19** And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **20** But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, **21** To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

II. God's intention in His economy is to dispense Christ with all His riches into His believers for the constitution of the Body of Christ, the church, to express the processed and consummated Triune God; this is the central line of the divine revelation —1:3-23.

Rev. 1:3-23 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it, for the time is near. **4** John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, **5** And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood **6** And made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen. **7** Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen. **8** I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, He who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty. **9** I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **10** I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, **11** Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. **12** And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** And in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. **14** And His head and hair were as white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; **15** And His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace; and His voice was like the sound of many waters. **16** And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His face *shone* as the sun shines in its power. **17** And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; and He placed His right hand on me, saying, Do not fear; I am the First and the Last **18** And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades. **19** Write therefore the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which are about to take place after these things. **20** The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

III. The economy of God has become the stewardship of God given to the apostles and to all the believers—3:2, 9; Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:17:

Rev. 3:2 Become watchful and establish the things which remain, which were about to die; for I have found none of your works completed before My God.

Rev. 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who call themselves Jews and are not, but lie — behold, I will cause them to come and fall prostrate before your feet and to know that I have loved you.

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

1 Cor. 9:17 If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

A. In Ephesians 3 Paul uses the Greek word *oikonomia* with two denotations:

Eph. 3:1-21 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles — **2** If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you, **3** That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, **4** By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, **5** Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit, **6** That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel, **7** Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the operation of His power. **8** To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel **9** And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, **10** In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, **11** According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him. **13** Therefore I ask *you* not to faint at my afflictions for your sake, since they are your glory. **14** For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, **15** Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, **16** That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, **17** That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are **19** And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **20** But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, **21** To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

1. In relation to God, *oikonomia* denotes God's economy — v. 9.

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

2. In relation to us, *oikonomia* denotes the stewardship — v. 2.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

B. When the economy of God came to the apostles, it became the stewardship of God — 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25:

1 Cor. 9:17 If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

1. The stewardship of God is according to the economy of God; with God there is the economy, and with the apostles there is the stewardship — Eph. 3:2.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

2. The stewardship is a particular service arranged by God to carry out His eternal economy — 1 Cor. 9:17.

1 Cor. 9:17 If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

3. In Ephesians 3:2 and Colossians 1:25 the word stewardship conveys the sense of dispensing.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

4. The stewardship of God is the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God in Christ into His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people so that He may be their life, their life supply, and their everything for the building up of the church as the unique Body of Christ to be His corporate expression—Eph. 3:14-21; Col. 1:25; 3:4, 10-11.

Eph. 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, **15** Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, **16** That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, **17** That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are **19** And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **20** But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, **21** To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

Col. 1:25 Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

Col. 3:10-11 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, **11** Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

- C. The Greek word for steward (oikonomos) means "a dispensing steward," "a household administrator, who dispenses the household supply to its members"—1 Cor. 4:1-2:

1 Cor. 4:1-2 A man should account us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. **2** Here, furthermore, it is sought in stewards that one be found faithful.

1. God's desire is to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into the members of His family through a sweet and intimate stewardship—2 Cor. 13:14.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2. In the New Testament a steward is one who takes care of the dispensing of God to His family; thus, a steward is a dispenser, one who dispenses the divine life supply to God's children—Luke 12:42; 16:1; 1 Pet. 4:10.

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful *and* prudent steward, whom the master will set over his service to give *them* their portion of food at the proper time?

Luke 16:1 And He said also to the disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this one was accused to him of squandering his possessions.

1 Pet. 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

3. The apostles were appointed by the Lord to be such stewards, dispensing God's mysteries, which are Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.

Col. 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,

Eph. 3:4 By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

4. The faithful steward is one who gives food to the believers in the church by ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply—Matt. 24:45.

Matt. 24:45 Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?

- D. The economy of God and the stewardship of God are actually one; this means that we should be doing what God is doing—carrying out the economy of God through the stewardship of God with the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9.

Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

IV. The stewardship of God is the stewardship of the grace of God—the dispensing of the grace of God into God's chosen people for the building up of the church—vv. 2, 14-21:

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, **15** Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, **16** That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, **17** That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are **19** And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **20** But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, **21** To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

- A. According to the context of Ephesians 3, the stewardship of the grace of God is the dispensing of the unsearchable riches of Christ to others as grace—vv. 2, 8.

Eph. 3:1-21 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles — **2** If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you, **3** That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, **4** By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, **5** Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit, **6** That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel, **7** Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the operation of His power. **8** To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel **9** And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, **10** In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, **11** According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him. **13** Therefore I ask *you* not to faint at my afflictions for your sake, since they are your glory. **14** For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, **15** Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, **16** That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, **17** That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are **19** And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. **20** But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, **21** To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

- B. Grace is God Himself as our enjoyment; in Christ and through Christ we receive God, and God becomes our enjoyment—John 1:14, 16-17:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.

John 1:16-17 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and reality came through Jesus Christ.

1. The stewardship of grace is the dispensing of God into others to be their enjoyment—2 Cor. 13:14.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2. Because we partake of God as our enjoyment, we can dispense Him as grace into others; this is the stewardship of the grace

of God—Eph. 3:2.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

V. The stewardship of God is the ministry in God's New Testament economy—2 Cor. 4:1:

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;

- A. Out of the stewardship comes the New Testament ministry, and this ministry corresponds with God's economy; that is, it corresponds with God's dispensing of Himself into His chosen people for the building up of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:16.

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

- B. The New Testament ministry is the dispensing of the unsearchable riches of Christ into the members of God's family—3:8.

Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

- C. The one, unique ministry in the New Testament is to dispense Christ as God's grace into His chosen people for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ to be the organism of the processed Triune God for His full and eternal expression—4:12, 16.

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

- D. The real, genuine, adequate ministry in the New Testament is the divine stewardship, which ministers the Triune God in Christ to others as their life and life supply—2 Cor. 4:1; 13:14.

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

VI. For the church to exist and stand properly in a living way, there is the need for the stewardship of God—Eph. 3:1-12:

Eph. 3:1-12 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles — **2** If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you, **3** That by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have written previously in brief, **4** By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, **5** Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit, **6** That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel, **7** Of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God which was given to me according to the operation of His power. **8** To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel **9** And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, **10** In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, **11** According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Him.

- A. All those who take the lead in the Lord's recovery and have responsibility for the care of the churches should share in this stewardship by dispensing the riches of Christ into others—Titus 1:7, 9.

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be unprovable as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a striker, not greedy for base gain;

Titus 1:9 Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching *of the apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

- B. Every member of the Body has the privilege of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ into both believers and unbelievers—Eph. 4:12:

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

1. In every aspect of the practical church life, we need to fulfill our stewardship, being filled with Christ and ministering the riches of Christ—3:2, 8-9.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:8-9 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel **9** And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

2. We all should be good stewards of the varied grace of God, distributing the riches of Christ to nourish all the saints in the church—1 Pet. 4:10.

1 Pet. 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

3. With God the riches of Christ are His economy, with us they are the stewardship, and when they are dispensed by us into others, they become God's dispensing; hence, we have the divine economy, the divine stewardship, and the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity—Eph. 3:2, 9; 2 Cor. 13:14.

Eph. 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:9 And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.