



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 9



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

THE MYSTERY REVEALED

“ 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” ^{KJV} (Colossians 1:26-29)

INTRODUCTION

Colossians is a message delivered to all of the saints: the elder and the novice, men and women, bond and free, young and old. No segment or individual member of the body of Christ is excluded. Further, the focus is singular.

JESUS CHRIST

From the standpoint of a person, that focus is Jesus Christ. Thus far in this Epistle, this has been powerfully stated.

- ✦ We have been “translated” by God the Father into Christ’s kingdom (1:13).
- ✦ We have “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (1:14).
- ✦ He is the “Image of the invisible God” (1:15a).

- ✦ Jesus is “the Firstborn of every creature” – the Federal Head over everything that was created (1:15b).
- ✦ Everything was created by Him and for Him (1:16).
- ✦ He is before all things, both by existence and by authority (1:17a).
- ✦ In Him all things “consist,” or are held together (1:17b).
- ✦ He is “the Head of the body, the church,” and the one from whom all spiritual nourishment and direction are received (1:18a).
- ✦ He is “the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence” (1:18b).

- ✦ It has pleased the Father that “all fulness” dwell in Him (1:19).
- ✦ Jesus made peace through “the blood of His cross” (1:20a).
- ✦ God reconciled “all things unto Himself” through Jesus Christ (1:20b).
- ✦ We who were “alienated” in our “mind by wicked works,” have now been reconciled to God through Christ (1:21).
- ✦ Our reconciliation was accomplished in the body of Christ’s flesh, and through His death (1:22).

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

From the standpoint of a message, word, or declaration, the Gospel of Christ

OUTLINE

- ▶ THE HIDDEN MYSTERY (1:26a)
- ▶ NOW MADE MANIFEST (1:26b)
- ▶ TO HIS SAINTS (1:26c)
- ▶ GOD DESIRES TO MAKE IT KNOWN (1:27a)
- ▶ THE MYSTERY'S RICH GLORY (1:27b)
- ▶ CHRIST IN YOU (1:27c)
- ▶ WHOM WE PREACH (1:28a)
- ▶ WARNING EVERY MAN (1:28b)
- ▶ TEACHING EVERY MAN IN WISDOM (1:28c)
- ▶ PERFECT IN CHRIST (1:28d)
- ▶ FOCUSED LABOR (1:29a)
- ▶ HIS WORKING (1:29b)
- ▶ MIGHTY WORKING WITHIN (1:29c)

is the focus.

- ✚ The “*hope*” from which faith in Christ and love for all saints sprang, was declared in “*the truth of the Gospel*” (1:5).
- ✚ The “*Gospel*” was brought to the Colossians, as it was “*in all the world*” (1:6a).
- ✚ The “*grace of God in truth*” was communicated through the Gospel (1:6b).
- ✚ Our presentation in God’s sight as “*holy and unblameable and unreprouvable*” is contingent upon not being moved away from “*the hope of the Gospel*” (1:23a).
- ✚ In accord with the purpose of God, and through His power and wisdom, it was the Gospel that “*was preached to every creature under heaven*” (1:23b).
- ✚ Paul was primarily “*made a minister*” of the Gospel (1:23c).

PERCEPTION REQUIRED

It is imperative that believers perceive the intent of Christ’s words to the churches, and what the Spirit is saying to them. The thrust of the heavenly message does not concern the church itself or what it is to be doing. **The message is, in a sense, separate from**

the church itself. Every word revolves around the Person of Christ as declared in the word of the Gospel.

The truth of the matter is this: **there is no valid ministry that does not have Christ’s person at its center, and the message of the Gospel as its primary word.** Whatever makes Jesus appear secondary is in no way related to the truth of God. A message that does not have the Gospel of Christ at its center point, has no power unto salvation. In fact, such a message becomes an obstacle to the salvation of men, for the power of God is not in it.

For some, this is too difficult to receive. They had rather have a core message of family values, organizational success, political independence, or problem resolution. A word of promised health and wealth is more acceptable to some, and thus they even dare to call such a word “Gospel” – but it is not. **The Gospel has to do with Christ’s Person and work, not man’s temporal betterment.**

THE COLOSSIAN DILEMMA

The brethren at Colossae were being subjected to “*another gospel*” – similar to the experience of “*the churches of Galatia*” (Gal 1:2). The spotlight was being turned away from Christ – the One whom God has exalted above all – to meats, drinks, holy days, new moons, and sabbaths (2:16-17). Instead of pursuing the knowledge of Christ, they were being called to consider “*voluntary humility, and the worshiping of angels.*” Teachers to whom they were being subjected were actually intruding into things they had not seen, and were “*vainly puffed up*” by their “*fleshly mind*” (2:18). However, these pretentious teachers were “*not holding the Head,*” Jesus Christ, from

the religious schools of our country. But God had no use for them, and thus denounces them through the Apostle whom He had made a valid minister.

I do not believe the average American church has a satisfactory grasp of either the indispensability of Jesus, or the essentiality of the Gospel. There are too many religious specialists lacking acquaintance with Christ and the Gospel. There are too many purported “ministries” that do not rely upon Christ and the Gospel. We have, in fact, precisely the same condition in our day that the brethren of Colossae were facing. The Lord Jesus is being upstaged, and the Gospel is exchanged for powerless words.

To those caught in the wake of this tidal wave of religious nonsense, the words that follow will have no importance. Those who have been deluded by the variant messages of this day will write this text off as too deep, or intended only for more astute Biblical scholars. It just does not fit in with what they are accustomed to hearing.

However, this message is not addressed to the scholars, or the leaders, or some other religious professionals. It is delivered to “*the saints and faithful brethren*” (1:2), to those who have “*faith in Christ Jesus,*” and love “*for all the saints*” (1:4). This is a word to those who have received “*the hope of the Gospel,*” and “*know the grace of God in truth*” (1:5-6). It is for those who have “*love in the Spirit*” (1:7). It is for those who have been “*delivered,*” “*translated,*” “*have redemption*” and “*forgiveness,*” and have been “*reconciled*” to God (1:13-21).

It is not possible for a word to be more relevant, more central, more applicable to all who are in Christ Jesus!

The Gospel has to do with Christ’s Person and work, not man’s temporal betterment.

whom all valid edification and strengthening proceed (2:19).

These teachers were no doubt scholars, and would readily be accepted in

This word must not be brushed aside, or treated as though it was in any sense of secondary importance. This is a word that has to do with being prepared to stand before the Lord Himself!

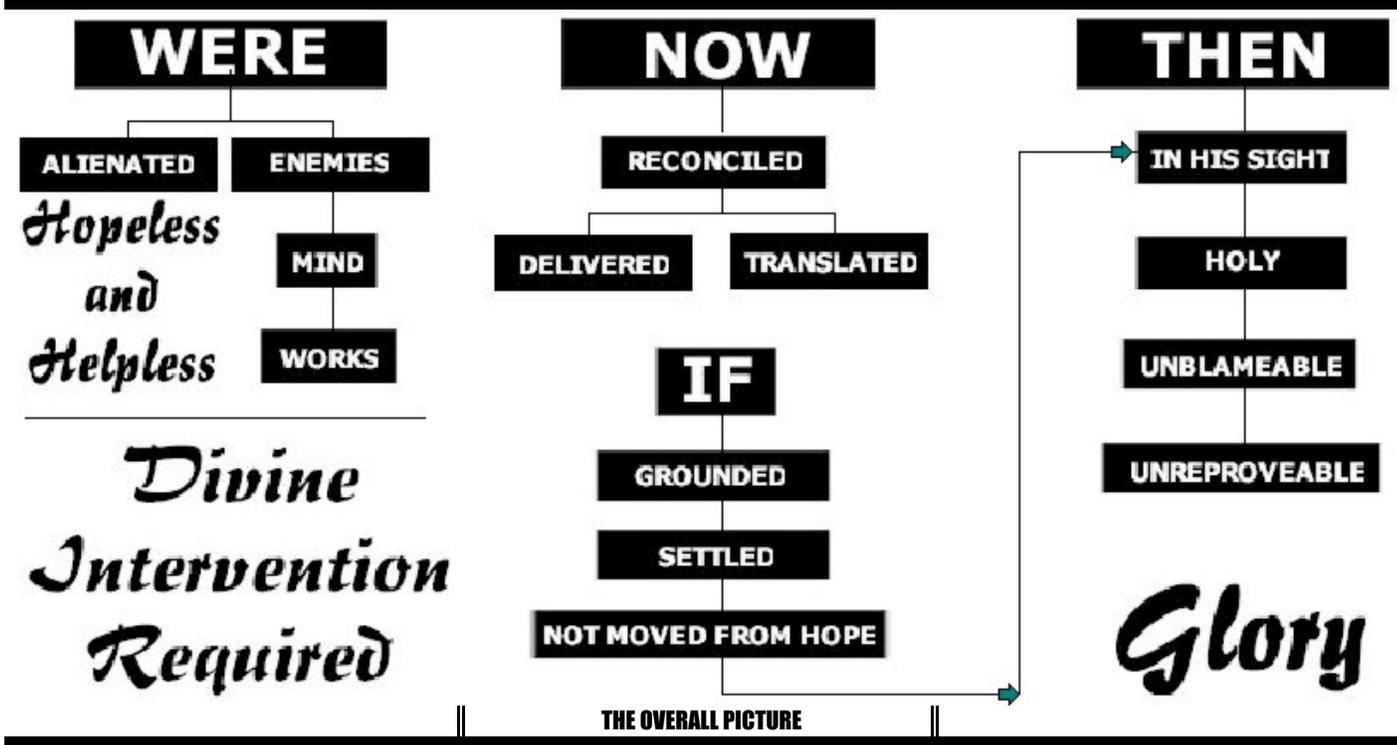
THE HIDDEN MYSTERY

“1:26a Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations . . . ”

who has reconciled us to Himself through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, thereby making us suitable to receive His

salvation.”

His words will reveal something of



This is a continuation of a lengthy and involved thought beginning in verse twenty-one. The KJV presents a single sentence that includes verses twenty-one through twenty-nine. The NASB and NIV represents verse twenty-four as a single sentence.

With a broad stroke, the Spirit tells us of our past, our present, and the future God has determined in Christ Jesus.

Our past was sordid, and thrust us into a hopeless and helpless situation. There was nothing we could do about it.

In Christ Jesus, our present condition is wholly owing to the work of the Lord. He has delivered us from the power of darkness, and placed us in the kingdom of His Son, giving us every required advantage and resource. It is He

inheritance.

The message of all of this comes to us through the Gospel – a word that will be relevant and essential to us in every phase of spiritual life. The Gospel is to spiritual life what blood is to the body. It is the sole means described as “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16).

EVEN

“Even . . . ” Other versions read, “that is,”^{NASB} “which is,”^{GENEVA} and “the message which was a mystery,”^{NJB} and “the message was kept secret.”^{NLT}

Paul now elaborates on the Gospel itself, of which he has been “made a minister.” The word “even” refers to the Gospel, of which Paul has been “made a minister.” Moved along by the Spirit of God, the Apostle will now refer to the Gospel in a different manner, confirming its centrality in God’s “great

the majesty of the Gospel, as well as its universality and goodness. This is a message conceived and delivered by God Himself. It is “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). The words that follow should assist to deliver us from juvenile views of the Gospel – something that has long plagued the American church.

THE MYSTERY

“ . . . the mystery . . . ” This is the first time Paul uses the word “mystery” in this letter. He will use it three more times (1:27; 2:2; 4:3).

Coming from the Greek word *μυστήριον* (mus-ta-ri-on), the word “mystery” means “a hidden thing, secret, not obvious to the understanding, a hidden purpose or counsel.” It refers to a message “that is confided only to the initiated.”^{STRONG’S} A Scriptural “mystery” is “what can be known only through revelation mediated by God.”^{THAYER}

What Gods calls a “mystery” cannot be discovered by any form of human wisdom or religious discipline. **It is hidden within the framework of Divine counsel, and can only be known if God reveals it.** The fact that it is a “mystery” puts the matter beyond every form of human wisdom.

This word is used twenty-seven times in the New Covenant Scriptures. In the KJV and NKJV versions of Scripture, the English words “mystery” and “mysteries” are not used in Genesis through Malachi.

The NASB, NIV, and NRSV

concealed the truth to those who were not granted the privilege of knowing the mysteries.

- ✚ Through Paul, the Spirit spoke of the present condition of Israel, together with its future, as a “mystery” that was beyond human understanding (Rom 11:25).
- ✚ The “mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” is now made known through the preaching of the Gospel (Rom 16:25).
- ✚ Now, the “wisdom of God” is spoken “in a mystery” – that is, in a manner

- ✚ Pointedly, Paul refers to “the mystery of the Gospel” (Eph 6:19).
- ✚ There is such a thing as “the mystery of the faith” that can be contained “in a pure conscience” (1 Tim 3:9). That is, there are unknowable things that can be known and appreciated by those with pure hearts.
- ✚ The Spirit refers to various facets of the Lord Jesus’ person and accomplishments as “the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim 3:16).

Ever keep before you that Paul is now referring to the Gospel, of which he has been made a minister, as “the mystery.” **It is not, then a simplistic message that is easily discerned.** This very Gospel, so precious to those who believe, is “a stumblingblock” to the Jews, and “foolishness” to the Greeks (1 Cor 1:23). The “cross,” through which we have been reconciled to God (Col 1:20), is immeasurably precious to those who are being saved. However, to those who are perishing, it is utter foolishness. As it is written, “For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:18).

Those who have a disinterest in the Gospel are, in fact, “perishing.” Whatever they may boast about their identity with God is only a lie, and is not the truth. **There is no such thing as a person who is “being saved” that has no interest in the Gospel of Christ.** The fact that men do not want the Gospel is an acknowledgment that it is hidden to them. That condition betrays that they are actually “perishing,” and are in a state of alienation from God.

HID FROM AGES AND GENERATIONS

“ . . . which hath been hid from ages and from generations . . . ” Other versions read, “hidden from past ages and generations,”^{NASB} “hidden throughout the ages and generations,”^{RSV} “kept from all times and generations,”^{BBE} “hid since the world began, and from all ages,”^{GENEVA} and “kept secret for centuries and generations past.”^{NLT}

Hid

Although this Gospel involved an

It is hidden within the framework of Divine counsel, and can only be known if God reveals it. The fact that it is a “mystery” puts the matter beyond every form of human wisdom.

versions do employ these words. These versions use “mystery” six times in the book of Daniel (Dan 2:18,19,27,30,47; 4:9). The KJV uses the word “secret” in these passages. The NASB uses “mysteries” once in Job (Job 12:22), and three times in Daniel (Dan 2:28,29,47). The KJV uses “deep things” in the Job text, and “secrets” in the others. The NIV employs “mysteries” in Job 11:7, and Daniel 2:28,29,47). The NIV translates the Job text “Can you fathom the mysteries of God,” while the KJV reads, “Canst thou by searching find out God.”

The Use of the Word

The various uses of this word will confirm both the nature and necessity of revelation.

- ✚ Jesus spoke of the “mysteries of the kingdom,” declaring only certain people were “given” to know them (Matt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10). This was His response to His disciples when they asked Him to explain why He spoke in parables to the multitudes. Contrary to the idea that parables simplified the truth, making it understandable, Jesus said they

that cannot be discerned by those who are limited to the wisdom of this world (1 Cor 2:7).

- ✚ There are appointed servants who have been made “stewards of the mysteries of God” – not to conceal them, but to declare them (1 Cor 4:1).
- ✚ The Gospel is a revelation of “the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He has purposed in Himself” (Eph 1:9).
- ✚ Paul affirmed God had, by revelation, made known to him “the mystery” (Eph 3:3).
- ✚ This “mystery” is an exposition of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is therefore called “the mystery of Christ.” Paul said he had knowledge in this “mystery” (Eph 3:4).
- ✚ Now that God has unfolded this “mystery,” He desires that His people have a working acquaintance with it, and participation in it. This is referred to as “the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph 3:9).

intelligent purpose, intelligent creatures could not discern it – it was “*hid*” from them. It was hidden by Divine intent. God did not intend for it to be known, and therefore neither man nor angel was privy to it.

Something that is hidden is concealed – placed where it cannot be found, regardless how ardent the search for it may be. There are three classes of personalities from whom this Gospel was hidden.

✚ **THE PRINCES OF THIS WORLD.**

When making known this marvelous Gospel, the Spirit draws our attention to the “*princes of this world,*” and their total ignorance of it. “*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Cor 2:6-8).

✚ **THE HOLY PROPHETS.**

God made known certain aspects of this Gospel to the holy prophets. However, it was not enough for them to draw any satisfactory conclusions. It is written, “*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*” (1 Pet 1:11).

✚ **THE HOLY ANGELS.**

It is also written that holy angels desire to know something of this Gospel AFTER it has been revealed to men. It is written, “*Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you . . . unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have*

preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12).

Observation

The world’s most astute wise men did not see the truth of the Gospel, and therefore “*crucified the Lord of glory.*” The most learned of a race cultured by Divine tutelage, including the Scribes, Pharisees, Lawyers, Sadducees, and the High Priest, could not see the wisdom of God. It was hidden to them. The most

during this period. Although there were allusions to the coming Gospel, and some introductions to certain aspects of it, it remained hidden in its fulness. Those patriarchs never did see what those in Christ Jesus now see.

The Age of Law

There was also the “*age,*” or period during which a **people** became most prominent. The people was Israel, and the means through which they gained their prominence was the Law, or First Covenant. During this time, there were

At every level, therefore, the mystery of the Gospel was hidden: hidden to men, hidden to holy angels, and hidden to inimical principalities and powers.

expert of the political realm, Pilate and Herod, themselves with some expertise on Jewish affairs, could not decipher this wisdom, and therefore consented to the death of Jesus Christ.

If one desires to consider Satanic powers among “*the princes of this world,*” they too failed to see the purpose of God, and thus moved men to crucify the Lord of glory.

At every level, therefore, the mystery of the Gospel was hidden: hidden to men, hidden to holy angels, and hidden to inimical principalities and powers.

Ages

“*Ages*” have to do with periods of time. These are epochs during which the revelation of God was held at a rudimentary level – long periods of time that were not marked by a significant increase in revelation.

Patriarchal Age

Prior to Christ, there was an “*age*” during which little revelation was received from God – and when it was, it was on a personal, not collective, level. Some have called this the “*patriarchal age.*” It was a period in which individuals were most prominent: i.e., Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What is now revealed through the Gospel was hidden

prominent individuals within this prominent nation: i.e., Moses, Aaron, David, and the holy prophets. Although this age was filled with types and shadows of the coming redemption, yet what is now perceived by the saints was hidden to those living under the Law.

Generations

Generations views the past from the standpoint of persons, or people, rather than time. The descendants of Noah – Ham, Shem, Japheth – were “*generations*” through whom the world was populated (Gen 10:1-5). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were “*generations*” through whom the Messiah came. There were also other generations of Abraham through Keturah. “*And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah* (sons of Abraham, Gen 25:2), and Ishmael, and Esau, through whom many other Gentile nations sprang (Gen 25:13-15; 36:5-43).

The things now revealed through the Gospel of Christ were hidden to all of those generations. No wise man among the Jews or Gentiles was able to decipher the grand purpose of God. In fact, only those to whom God had particularly revealed Himself even knew there was such a thing as Divine purpose or intent. It could not be seen in nature or in Law. Generations of kings could not see it.

Generations of teachers and wise men could not see it. Even generations of prophets were unable to perceive it. High priests could not comprehend it. It was "hidden" from them all – all ages and all generations.

Prior to this day of salvation, God did not reveal His purpose as it has now been revealed in the Gospel. Thus, it could not be known. No natural ability could uncover it. No human discipline, however astute, could discover it.

As long as it was unrevealed, it remained locked in the unknown. Men were utterly helpless to open it, or even to know it existed. Four thousand years of accumulated wisdom could not discover this mystery.

NOW MADE MANIFEST

“^{26b} . . . but now is made manifest . . .”

NOW

“ . . . but now is . . . ” Other versions read, “but now has been,”^{NKJV} “But is now,”^{NIV} and “but now.”^{NRSV}

The Spirit now moves Paul to declare the advantage of this present age

was known in past ages and generations.

The truth of the matter is that an understanding of the Gospel could not be given to men until sin had been removed, and men could be justly delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His Son. **Where sin is not forgiven, and men are not**

The “truth of the Gospel” must not be approached as though it was unknowable. This can be done in at least two ways.

First, by approaching the Gospel in an overly simplistic manner, as though it was appropriate to have a childish understanding of it. The admonition of First Corinthians 14:20 is never more appropriate than in the matter of understanding the Gospel: “*in understanding be men.*” **Surface views of the Gospel bring blessing to no one, for there is more to the Gospel than meets the eye.** Men ought to reason that things “made manifest” by God Almighty cannot be basically simplistic.

Second, the depth of the Gospel can so stagger the human spirit that it is actually neglected – placed to the side as though it is beyond our reach. This view can be driven by the misconception that only more disciplined thinkers can really understand the Gospel. However, this is not a proper view of something that has been “manifested” by the God of heaven.

There is a certain class of people to whom this mystery is being manifested. Their distinction, however, is not found in the flesh. Worldly achievements and natural aptitude are not the requirements for having this mystery revealed. The Spirit is very specific concerning those who are graciously granted insight into this otherwise hidden “mystery.”

The truth of the matter is that this understanding is clearly within the reach of everyone who has taken advantage of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! This is done through faith.

If these things had not been accomplished, no more could be known of God’s purpose now than was known in past ages and generations. . . Where sin is not forgiven, and men are not reconciled unto God, the truth of the Gospel cannot be seen.

– the “day of salvation” and “the accepted time” (2 Cor 6:2). What is taking place “now” is not merely something that has been appointed – although this is an appointed time. Rather, what is now made known is one of the results of Christ’s declared accomplishments. What is “now” done is based upon the “redemption” wrought by Christ (1:14). It is founded upon the peace that He made “through the blood of His cross” (1:20), and the reconciliation of those who were formerly alienated from God, and enemies in their minds through wicked works (1:20-21).

If these things had not been accomplished, no more could be known of God’s purpose now than

reconciled unto God, the truth of the Gospel cannot be seen. However, these things have “now” been accomplished because of Christ Jesus, and thus God is “now” making known this glorious Gospel.

MANIFEST

“ . . . made manifest . . . ” Other versions read, “revealed,”^{NKJV} “manifested,”^{NASB} “disclosed,”^{NIV} and “made clear.”^{BBE}

The word “manifest” means to make known what was formerly hidden or unknown. It means to make the matter understandable, discernible, and perceptible. What could not previously be known can now be comprehended.

TO HIS SAINTS

“^{26b} . . . to His saints.”

The manifestation of the Gospel had **not** been to mankind in general. **Our text does not mean that the Gospel had been simply written down, and can therefore be deciphered by the human intellect.** If this was the case, the holy angels could surely understand the Gospel of Christ. Yet, we are categorically told that they continue to “*desire*” to “*look into*” this Gospel (1 Pet 1:12).

Certain professed believers have taken the position that “we have the Bible and a brain,” and that is sufficient to gain an understanding of the Gospel of Christ. This is a very foolish view. It is not only contradictory of Scripture, but is also confirmed to be untrue by the ignorance of the Gospel that prevails among those holding to this view. The Word of God is clear on this point, and there is no justifiable reason for remaining in such ignorance.

This revelation of “*the mystery of the Gospel*” (Eph 6:19) is confined to “*His saints*.” Only **they** are “*given*” to know these things.

The word “*His*” refers to God Himself. He is the One who “*delivered*” us from the power of darkness. He is the One who “*translated*” us into the kingdom of His dear Son. He is the One who “*made peace*” through the blood of Christ’s cross. He is the One who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus.

“*His saints*” are the people God has delivered from the power of darkness and translated into His Son’s kingdom. They are the ones who have been reconciled to Him, and are at peace with Him. “*His saints*” are not an institutional identity. Rather, this is a term that applies to all who are in Christ Jesus, and are appropriately described by what has been declared of such people.

The word “*saints*” means “*holy ones*,” or *sacred and dedicated ones*. These are people who belong to God by personal choice and commitment, as well

as by redemption and reconciliation. They are people whom the Father Himself has “*qualified . . . to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light*”^{NIV} (1:12). They are “*holy*” by virtue of being “*washed*” from their sins (Rev 1:5). They are also “*holy*” because they are living by faith (Gal 3:11), living in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), and walking in the light (1 John 1:7).

Unholy people cannot comprehend the Gospel, for God will not make it known to them. The Lord will not unveil the glory and effectiveness of the Gospel to those who have not experienced deliverance from the power of darkness, or fellowship with His Son.

HIS SAINTS

Those to whom this “*mystery*” is being revealed are not merely people who live separated lives from the world. They

Collectively, the saints are “*the church of God*” (1 Cor 1:2), “*the house of God*” (1 Tim 3:15), “*the temple of God*” (1 Cor 3:16), and “*the children of God*” (Rom 8:21).

Saints Are Partakers

Those in Christ are not “*saints*” by name only, or by institutional identity. They have been made “*partakers of Christ*” (Heb 3:14), “*partakers of the Divine nature*,” and “*partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel*” (Eph 3:6). They have partaken, or participated in, the “*heavenly calling*” (Heb 3:1), and have been “*made partakers of the Holy Spirit*” (Heb 6:4).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Why is it necessary to say such things? Is not the text very apparent? What was once a mystery is now being made known “*unto the saints*.” However,

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live “*unto God*” (Gal 2:19) because they have been “*joined to the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17), and have been made a “*peculiar people*” – that is they are peculiarly the Lord’s, belonging exclusively to Him. The Lord has purified His people for Himself. As it is written, “*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Tit 2:14).

Saints Are Related to God

In Christ, we are made “*alive unto God*” (Rom 6:11), are being brought “*to God*” (1 Pet 3:18), and are intended to “*bring forth fruit unto God*” (Rom 7:4).

there remains among professed believers the notion that the Gospel is understood academically, and by the employment of natural aptitude. Those embracing this view, whether unwittingly or deliberately, have removed God from the immediate picture. To them, the manifestation is historical, not contemporary. It has been embalmed, so to speak, in print, and is thus available to all men. All they need is a good mind and, perhaps, a few study helps. They will be able to figure out the mystery – at least that is what some are inclined to think.

The condition of the American church should confirm to our hearts that

something more than mere human discipline and effort is required to decipher the “*mystery of the Gospel*.” Let it be clear, I am not speaking of being able to rehearse the essential elements of the Gospel – the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-3). It is what was accomplished through these realities, together with their implications, that is the subject of the manifestation of reference.

These things will only be effectively made known to those who are

in right relation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ – “*His saints*.” Only those who have separated from the condemned order and are pressing toward the mark will be shown the mystery – “*His saints*.” Only those who are holy, do not quench the Spirit, and are walking by faith will receive this blessing – “*His saints*.” To everyone else, the message of the Gospel remains a “*mystery*.”

This is confirmed in the lack of relevance that non-saints see in the Gospel of Christ. This is pointedly

declared in the Apostles’ doctrine. There is no valid reason for any professing believer to remain in ignorance of it. “*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” (2 Cor 4:3-4).

Admittedly, this has some alarming implications. Yet, it is the truth, and is worthy of our hearty embrace. Let every person take heed to these words.

GOD DESIRES TO MAKE IT KNOWN

“*27th To whom God would make known . . .*”

If there is a single mortal on the face of the earth who does not comprehend “*with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ,*

34:15). He “*upholdeth the righteous*” (Psa 37:17), sustains them, and “*shall never suffer the righteous to be moved*” (Psa 55:22). Those who “*are upright in their way*” are described as “*His delight*” (Prov 11:20). How marvelously the Lord has revealed His attitude toward those who have availed themselves of His goodness

“*His saints*.” He is pleased to do this, and has deliberately chosen to do so. He does not want this mystery to be concealed from “*His saints*.” Likewise, He has determined no others will be granted this knowledge.

This is one of the privileges that is vouchsafed to those who cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. It is a blessing that those who come out from among defiling people and elements, refusing to touch the unclean thing, will be given to know these things. God will show them His secret.

How marvelously this is spoken by the “*sweet psalmist of Israel*.” “*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant*” (Psa 25:14). The Lord “*confides in those who fear Him,*”^{NIV} divulging secrets to them that remain a “*mystery*” to all others. This was involved in our Lord’s tender words to His disciples. They were spoken on the eve of His betrayal. “*Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*” (John 15:15).

This is God’s nature: to unfold His purposes to those who are “His saints.” Such souls have a strong desire to know what God has purposed, and to understand His Word. That is why the Psalmist prayed, “*Show me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths*” (Psa 25:4),

What is set before us is not a Divine reaction, but a deliberate purpose. This is something that God has determined, and there is no possible way for it to be countermanded.

which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18-19), it is NOT because there is any reluctance on God’s part to make these things known.

TO WHOM

“*To whom God . . .*” This refers to “*His saints*” – the holy ones. The eyes of the Lord are upon these people, and His ear is open to their cry. As it is written, “*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry*” (Psa 34:15). Peter also affirmed, “*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers*” (1 Pet 3:12).

With holy intent, the “*eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him*” (Psa

and “*plenteous redemption*” (Psa 130:7).

WOULD MAKE KNOWN

“*. . . would make known . . .*”

Other versions read, “*willed to make known,*”^{NKJV} “*has chosen to make known,*”^{NIV} “*pleased to make known,*”^{ASV} “*was pleased to give knowledge,*”^{BBE} and “*God’s purpose to reveal.*”^{NJB}

What is set before us is not a Divine reaction, but a deliberate purpose. This is something that God has determined, and there is no possible way for it to be countermanded.

Not only has the message of the Gospel been determined by God, and concealed from all ages and generations, He has determined to make it known to

and “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psa 119:18). **No soul driven by such strong desires will be disappointed.** To them the word of Jesus will be fulfilled: “These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father” (John 16:25).

Closing Remarks

Wherever there is a soul that is not satisfied to remain ignorant of

God, His purpose, and His Gospel, a candidate for the knowledge of the mystery has been found. Such a soul can be trusted with an understanding of the “*the mystery of the Gospel.*” It will be a source of nourishment to that person.

This verse accounts for much of the ignorance of the Gospel that prevails within the professed church. **Those who cannot be appropriately called “His saints” are, because of NOT being holy ones, confined to a state of ignorance concerning this Gospel.**

There is no such thing as an unholly person who possesses an understanding of the Gospel. When a person chooses to “*live after the flesh*” that person dies towards God (Rom 8:13). They may boast of having a love for God and an understanding of the Gospel, but they do not, and have not told the truth of the matter. **God will now allow this wonderful knowledge to abide in fundamentally corrupt and wayward hearts.** This is an unavoidable aspect of not being able to serve two masters, and it is strictly honored in heaven.

THE MYSTERY'S RICH GLORY

“^{27b} . . . what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles . . .”

The Spirit now opens something of the magnitude of the “*mystery*” God is revealing to “*His saints.*” This is not something that will appeal to “*the natural man,*” which has no capacity to receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14). This is what is opened up to “*His saints.*”

WHAT

“ . . . what is . . . ” This is a word of definition. There are wondrous things inherent in the Gospel of Christ – “*the mystery of the Gospel.*” These are the things “*contained*” in the Gospel, much like a sweet morsel is contained in within the shell of a walnut.

RICHES OF THE GLORY OF THE MYSTERY

“ . . . the riches of the glory of this mystery . . . ” Other versions read, “*the glorious riches of this mystery,*”^{NIV} “*the wealth of the glory of this secret,*”^{BBE} and “*how rich is the glory of this mystery.*”^{NJB}

Anything that possesses “riches of the glory” has the evidence of God upon it. “*The riches of the glory*” speaks of abundant provisions supplied by God for the sons of men. **It speaks of Divine adequacy that is the result of Divine purpose and intention.** These riches are the means by which life in Christ is sustained.

It is imperative that we take note of the way in which the Apostle speaks of the Gospel. His language is lofty, and His teaching profound. There is an element of joy as well as profundity – two things that are not often joined. There is simplicity for faith, and depths for understanding – all in the same message. Here the novice and the mature can meet to be challenged, comforted, and to learn. **Nowhere does the Spirit ever associate the Gospel of Christ with intellectual simplicity, spiritual rudiments, or mere beginnings.** This remains as the staple diet for spiritual nutrition.

The “*mystery*” itself – which is the

declare the Gospel to the church have, in fact, robbed them of Divine provisions. They have taken from them “*the riches of the glory of the mystery.*” When these riches are not declared, the church becomes anemic and malnourished, for it cannot subsist without “*the riches of the glory*” that are declared in the Gospel of Christ.

There is an abundance in the Kingdom of God that is often the subject of proclamation. We read of “*the riches of His goodness*” (Rom 2:4), the “*riches of wisdom and knowledge*” (Rom 11:33), and “*the riches of His grace*” (Eph 1:7). There are “*the riches of the glory of His*

Although the Gospel is preached “to every creature,” its richness is manifested only to “His saints.”

Gospel – possesses this repository of Divine plentitude. This is not something intended for sinners, but for “*His saints.*” It is not for those who are unreconciled, but for those who have been reconciled to the God from whom they were once alienated.

Although the Gospel is preached “to every creature,” its richness is manifested only to “His saints.” Those, therefore, who do not

inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18), the “*exceeding riches of His grace*” (Eph 2:7), and “*the riches of Christ*” (Eph 3:8). There are also “*the riches of the full assurance of understanding*” (Col 2:2). **The salvation of God is an economy of unspeakable richness and abundance.**

In this text, the Spirit uses the phrase “*the riches of the glory*” – an expression that is used elsewhere in

Scripture: *“the riches of His glory”* (Rom 9:23; Eph 3:16), *“the riches of the glory”* (Eph 1:18); and *“His riches in glory”* (Phil 4:19). **This is a unique phrase denoting abundant provision that is inherent in things pertaining to life and godliness.** It also describes the very fabric of those things, which exude the very nature of God. **That is, something that is “rich in glory” reveals Divine qualities and supplies Divine provisions.**

The *“glory”* of a thing is what

distorted emphases is that Jesus Himself is no longer the Object of fervent quest (Phil 3:7-12), and, consequently, God is not known and understood (Jer 9:24-25).

When it comes to the revelation of God Himself, the Gospel of Christ outranks all other revelations. It supercedes the revelation of nature, and is greater than the revelation of the Law. **More of God is seen in the Gospel. More of His purpose is seen in the Gospel. More of His wisdom is made known in the**

There is a revelation of God in the Gospel that nourishes and sustains the human spirit. Much of God’s nature and will is comprehended in the Gospel, and an abundance of what salvation brings is obtained through it.

reveals it. It is also what brings benefit. **Take, for example, the sun, which has a glory of its own** (1 Cor 15:54). The earth is lightened and sustained by the glory of the sun – its rays and other things projected from it to the earth. The glory of the sun enables us to perceive something of it, and obtain resources necessary for our survival.

The expression *“the glory of the riches of the mystery”* makes known that the Gospel itself brings Divine resources within our reach. **There is a revelation of God in the Gospel that nourishes and sustains the human spirit.** Much of God’s nature and will is comprehended in the Gospel, and an abundance of what salvation brings is obtained through it. The Gospel is, in this sense, *“the power of God unto salvation”* (Rom 1:16).

I cannot understate the seriousness of failing to declare and expound the Gospel of Christ. This is one of the great sins of the modern church. It has allowed itself to be pulled unto areas of lesser importance. The result of such

Gospel. This is the premier message from heaven. What possible reason can be adduced for failing to major on the Gospel of Christ? Those who do so are like those who close up a gold mine in order to play in a sand pile.

THE GENTILES

“ . . . among the Gentiles . . . ”

Several decades after Pentecost (A.D. 58-62), the grandeur of the Gospel being presented to the Gentiles still challenged the Apostle. **Even from a jail cell, he was driven by the desire to make this Gospel known – particularly to the Gentiles.**

Actually, the Gentiles constituted the vast majority of the human race. Until the era of the Gospel, everything from God pertained to the Israelites. As it is written, *“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for*

ever. Amen” (Rom 9:4-5). Jesus said, *“salvation is of the Jews,”* or *“from the Jews”*^{NASB} (John 4:22). However, it is not confined to them – which is the point Paul is making.

The word *“Gentiles”* means *“heathen,”* or *“nations.”* From the religious perspective, they are *“heathen,”* because they *“know not God”* (1 Thess 4:5). From the political viewpoint, they were *“nations,”* or bodies of people, grouped by language, geography, or government.

Using the present population of the world to gain a perspective of the Jew-Gentile ratio, the following may be seen. Presently there are around six billion people in the world, with something over fifteen million of them being Jews. The percentage of Jews is approximately .025 of one percent. I do not know how similar this ratio is to the that of the first century. It no doubt does provide a proper perspective, for God refers to Israel as *“the fewest of all people”* (Deut 7:7).

The salvation announced in the Gospel is too large to be confined to a small nation, like Israel. Isaiah spoke of this condition when foretelling the coming of the Messiah. *“And He said, It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth”* (Isa 49:6). The New American Standard Bible reads, *“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

A “great salvation” is made for a lot of recipients, and an extensive proclamation.

Now Paul provides a marvelous summation of the rich glory of the mystery of the Gospel. His words are few, but they are weighty. **They have seeds of thought in them that are capable of producing a rich harvest of understanding and spiritual perspective.** Here is a focused statement of truth in seed form.

CHRIST IN YOU

^{27c} . . . *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*"

How can the profound richness of the Gospel be summarized? Is it possible to compress into a single sentence what the Gospel announces and empowers to be accomplished? If you were to ask uninspired men to provide such a summation, you would no doubt receive a variety of answers. Some would view deliverance from the power of sin as the whole of the matter. Others would see thorough adequacy in the flesh as the bottom line. Still others would consider receiving the Holy Spirit, or doing things in the power of the Spirit, as the grand total of salvation.

Every thoughtful person can see that articulating a single sentence that conveys the nature and effect of salvation is a challenging assignment, indeed. Further, this is not the only summation of the "mystery" of the Gospel. John sums up the whole of the matter by saying, "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25). Elsewhere Paul speaks of the bottom line as being "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29). Jesus once stated it in these words, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU

" . . . which is Christ in you . . . "
Most versions read precisely the same: "which is Christ in you" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NJV, NRSV, RSV, BBE, DARBY, DOUAY, NAU, NIB, RWB, WEB, YLT). Some versions read differently: "which riches is Christ in you,"^{GENEVA} "it is Christ in you,"^{NAB} "it is Christ among you,"^{NJB} and "Christ lives in you."^{NLT}

What a glorious affirmation: "Christ IN you!" Never before has such a thing taken place. Enoch "walked with God," yet could not dwell within those of his own generation. As great a leader as Moses was, faithful in all of God's house (Heb 3:2,5), he was never "in" the people. They never partook of his mind, his spirit, or his desires. His perception of God never

was found in the people he led. Even though David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14), yet he was not able to dwell in those over whom he ruled. They did not have his love for the Lord and His word, and the driving desire that he had to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. John the Baptist, unexcelled prior to Jesus, and who was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15), could not dwell in those of his generation. They did not partake of his insight, purity, or commitment to God.

But now, in this "day of salvation," a new thing has taken place. **The supreme Man, in whom God is pleased to have "all fulness dwell," is found within those who have experienced reconciliation to God.**

The supreme Man, in whom God is pleased to have "all fulness dwell," is found within those who have experienced reconciliation to God.

While yet with His disciples in the body, Jesus told them of this spiritual phenomenon – Himself residing in them. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and **make Our abode with him**" (John 14:23). He also spoke to the multitudes about the one in whom He would personally dwell: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in me, and **I in him**" (John 6:56). Paul spoke of the indwelling Christ to the Romans: "And if **Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness**" (Rom 8:10). He also confessed to the Galatians, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal 2:20). Later Paul says of those who are in Christ that Christ Himself is "in all" of them (Col 3:11).

There can be no question about what is being said. It is perfectly

consistent with the rest of Scripture. In Christ the promise of Isaiah is fulfilled: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, **with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones**" (Isa 57:15).

Certain religious bodies have made much of how we get into Christ – and rightly so. We are, after all, "baptized into Christ" (Gal 3:27), by virtue of being "baptized into His death" (Rom 6:3). This is of critical importance, and the Spirit makes no provision for denying this reality or balking at its affirmation. **However, getting into Christ is not the end of the matter, and ought to be treated as though it was.**

"Christ in you" refers to our post-baptism life, and not to baptism itself. It is part of the spiritual "now" perspective. **Furthermore, Christ being "in" us is never associated with our baptism, or any other response associated with our induction into Christ Jesus.**

A Remarkable Prayer

In a most salient statement of the case, the Apostle to the Gentiles speaks of Christ dwelling in believers. He is very specific about how this is accomplished, and the purpose that is achieved by it. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; **that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ,**

which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:16-19).

Here is something that cannot be accomplished by a mere procedure, or any single act of obedience. God Himself must come into the picture. Our “inner man,” where Christ is intended to reside, must be made strong, so that we are blessed and benefitted by Christ within. This inner strength cannot be accomplished by means of a routine or discipline. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen and fortify our inner man so Christ “*may*,” or “*can*,” reside within us. We must not assume that an indwelling Christ is a simplistic matter – it is not. Christ does not take up residence in weak and emaciated believers. They must be made strong by the Spirit for this to occur.

The objective to be accomplished

and much has been implied. Further, this is something to be realized by those who are already in Christ – who already have faith, and already love all the saints.

What Does This Involve?

There are several things involved Christ being in us. Some of them include having “*the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor 2:16), receiving ministrations from the Head, (Col 2:19), and maintaining fellowship with Jesus (1 Cor 1:9). There is also the matter of being “*joint heirs with Christ*” (Rom 8:17), and walking in the light “*as He is in the light*” (1 John 1:7). There is even the process of being “*taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21).

Now, behold the Spirit’s revealed objective in Christ being “*in you*.”

THE HOPE OF GLORY

“ . . . *the hope of glory*.” Most versions read the same. One exception is

called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:30). Presently, we are in the “*justified*” state. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we are progressing to the “*glorified*” state.

Glorification is the culmination of our salvation, when “*we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2). This is the “*glory*” to which we have been “*called*” (1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Pet 5:10). It involves our bodies as well as our spirits and souls. In our totality, we will be “*glorified together*” with Jesus (Rom 8:17).

David sensed this objective and put into these words: “*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple*” (Psa 27:4). Paul, speaking from an even more illuminated point of view, said: “*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 3:11,14).

Remove “the hope of glory,” and there is no purpose for being a Christian. That is precisely why it is written, “*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*” (1 Cor 15:19). This is none other than the “*hope*” by which we are saved (Rom 8:24-25).

What keeps this indispensable hope alive? It is not some creedal profession. It is not something sealed, or finalized, when you come into Christ. **The “hope of glory” is maintained by Christ dwelling within – productively and consciously.** Where there is no fellowship with Christ there can be no hope – no confident expectation of being forever with the Lord. Any claim to such a hope when Christ is not dwelling within is a mere delusion.

This has some rather alarming implications, for much of what we see in the professed church accents neither Christ nor hope. Notwithstanding, our hearts must be able take hold of the truth, else it will not make us free (John 8:32).

Remove “the hope of glory,” and there is no purpose for being a Christian. That is precisely why it is written, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”

by Christ dwelling within is also stated. It is in order to our spiritual stability: being “*rooted and grounded in love*.” And that is not the end of the matter. The Divine intention is that we may be able to perceive the marvelous extent of this salvation, and have productive knowledge concerning the love of Christ: “*May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*.” Still, the Divine objective does not end there. The ultimate intention is that we might be “*filled with all the fulness of God*.”

When, therefore, our text says “Christ in you,” a lot has been said,

the New Living Translation which reads, “*this is your assurance that you will share His glory*.” The sense of the text is not violated by this translation.

The “*hope of glory*” is the same “*hope*” Paul formerly said “*is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel*” (1:5). It is the “*hope of the Gospel*,” from which we are not to be moved (1:23).

Here, the “*hope*” is viewed from the standpoint of **what** we will be rather than **where** we will be. God has already revealed His ultimate objective for us is glorification. As it is written, “*Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also*

WHOM WE PREACH

“^{28a} *Whom we preach . . .*”

WHOM

“*Whom . . .*” Other versions read “*Him,*” ^{NKJV} and “*it is He.*” ^{NRSV} **The subject of reference is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.** It is the “*Christ*” who is “*in you.*” He is the heart of the Gospel, the Administrator of salvation, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the appointed “*Heir of all things,*” through whom God has spoken to us in these last days (Heb 1:2).

The Significance of “Christ”

“*Christ*” is a designation of great significance in Scripture, being used some **555 times** in the New Covenant writings: sixty times in the Gospels, thirty-one times in the book of Acts, four hundred and fifty-three times in the Epistles, and eleven times in the Revelation.

The word “*Christ*” means “*the Anointed,*” or “*the Messiah.*” To be more particular, it means “the One who has been anointed” – anointed by God. This anointing has exclusively to do with the salvation of God – with bringing men to Himself (1 Pet 3:18) by removing their sin and conducting them through the straits of this world to glory (Heb 2:10).

Throughout the Prophets, God revealed that the rescue of men was going to hinge upon a single Man. Various descriptions of this single individual were given – all of them pertaining to a person who would be raised up among men. It would not be an angel, or some other form of spirit. It would be a man. A brief rehearsal of some of these terms is necessary to the exposition of this text.

- ✚ The “*Seed*” of the woman (Gen 3:15).
- ✚ A “*Prophet*” like unto Moses, to whom the people would hearken (Deut 18:15,18).
- ✚ “*Shiloh,*” a person to whom the people would gather (Gen 49:10).
- ✚ God’s “*King*” (Psa 2:6).
- ✚ God’s “*Firstborn*” (Psa 89:27).

- ✚ A “*Son*” called Immanuel (Isa 7:14).
- ✚ A Person who would be for a sanctuary and a stone of stumbling (Isa 8:14).
- ✚ One upon whose shoulders the government would be placed, whose name would be “*Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Isa 9:6).
- ✚ A “*Rod*” out of the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1).
- ✚ A “*Branch*” upon whom the spirit and wisdom would rest (Isa 11:1-2).
- ✚ A person of “*quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*” (Isa 11:3).
- ✚ A Person to whom the Gentiles would seek (Isa 11:10).
- ✚ A “*Man*” who would be for “*a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a mighty rock in a weary land*” (Isa 32:2).
- ✚ God’s “*Servant,*” His Elect, in whom He would put His Spirit (Isa 42:1).

53:4).

- ✚ One who would be “*wounded for our transgressions,*” “*bruised for our iniquities,*” who would bear “*the chastisement of our peace*” 53:5).
- ✚ A Man upon whom the Lord would lay “*the iniquities of us all*” (Isa 53:6).
- ✚ A Man who would be removed from the earth at a relatively young age, “*cut off from the land of the living,*” and without any fleshly offspring (Isa 53:8).
- ✚ A Person who would be buried with the wicked, and with the rich in His death (Isa 53:9).
- ✚ A Man who would be “*numbered with the transgressors,*” “*bare the sin of many,*” and “*make intercession for the transgressors*” (Isa 53:12).
- ✚ A “*King, who would reign and prosper,*” in whose days Judah would be saved, whose name would be called “*The Lord our Righteousness*” (Jer 23:5).
- ✚ One “*like unto the Son of man,*” who would be given “*dominion, and glory, and a kingdom*” that would “*never be*

Throughout the Prophets, God revealed that the rescue of men was going to hinge upon a single Man. Various descriptions of this single individual were given – all of them pertaining to a person who would be raised up among men.

- ✚ A Person whom God would give as a “*covenant of the people, and a light of the Gentiles*” (Isa 42:6).
- ✚ A Person who would bear our griefs and sorrows, and be “*stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*” (Isa

destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14).

- ✚ “*Messiah the Prince*” (Dan 9:24-25).
- ✚ God’s Servant, “*the Branch*” (Zech 3:8).
- ✚ The “*Messenger of the covenant,*”

who would purify the people *“that they may be unto the Lord an offering in righteousness”* (Mal 3:1-3).

SALVATION THROUGH A MAN

Over and over the Prophets emphasized that salvation would come through a Man – a Man sent from God. Peter accents how this stirred the hearts of the prophets. *“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know WHAT PERSON or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow”*^{NASB} (1 Pet 1:11).

The salvation of man would

“the Christ.” You will remember that Jesus asked His disciples how the people perceived Him. After they had answered, He asked them, *“But whom say ye that I am?”* In the glow of a sudden burst of insight, Peter replied, *“Thou art THE CHRIST, the Son of the living God”* (Matt 16:16). At that moment, Peter saw Jesus as the promised Man – the One through whom God would fulfill all of the Messianic promises.

This is the indwelling *“Christ”* who is *“the hope of glory”* – the Pledge of eventually being glorified – made to be *“like Him”* in all of the components of our person. **There is no system that compensate for a lack of Christ within. There is no institutional identity that can make up for a lack**

versions read, *“Him we preach,”*^{NKJV} *“And we proclaim Him,”*^{NASB} *“whom we announce,”*^{DARBY} and *“we tell everyone about Christ.”*^{NLT}

The subject of proclamation is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the at the heart of the message. In a sense, He Himself is the message. Philip *“preached Christ”* (Acts 8:5). As soon as Saul of Tarsus was converted, he *“preached Christ”* (Acts 9:20). Paul told the Corinthians, *“But we preach Christ crucified”* (1 Cor 1:23). In Thessalonica, Paul confirmed it was Christ that He was preaching (Acts 17:3). He said that he had *“fully preached the gospel of Christ”* (Rom 15:19). The establishment of the saints is according to *“the preaching of Jesus Christ”* (Rom 16:25). Paul said he did not preach himself, *“but Christ Jesus the Lord”* (2 Cor 4:5). Among the Gentiles Paul preached *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph 3:8).

As already mentioned, *“Christ”* is mentioned in the Epistles and the Revelation (all written to those who are in Christ), four hundred and sixty-four times. **It is exceedingly difficult for me to imagine what would prompt any person to imagine Christ is not to be preached, or proclaimed, to the church.** This is especially true when we consider that all of the letters written to the churches are filled with proclamations of Christ. Believers are told it is *“by”* Christ that we *“believe in God”* (1 Pet 1:21). Grace and peace are coming to us from Him (Rom 1:7), as well as *“love with faith”* (Eph 6:23).

Christ is associated with the appropriation of righteousness (Rom 3:22), justification and redemption (Rom 3:24), and having peace with God (Rom 5:1). He is necessary for receiving the atonement (Rom 5:11), the *“gift by grace”* (Rom 5:15), reigning in life (Rom 5:17), and grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life (Rom 5:21). He is the one who loves and nourishes the church (Eph 5:29), intercedes for us (Heb 7:25), and from whom the whole body is built up (Col 2:19). Christ destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:15, and is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). His present relevancy is consistently proclaimed as well as the effectuality of His death and resurrection.

There is no system that compensate for a lack of Christ within. There is no institutional identity that can make up for a lack of Christ. There is no amount of religious work that can counterbalance a deficiency of the Person of Christ dwelling within.

not come through a religious system – even a God-ordained system, like the Levitical order and the tabernacle service. **It would not come through a body of people,** even a people who had been chosen by God, cultured by His prophets, and led and cared for by Him. The deliverance of men would come by a Man – a single individual.

Salvation would not come through a code, or set of laws – even ones that were written with God’s own finger in tables of stone. **It would not come through an institution** – even one that had been ordained by God, like Jewry. The rescue of the human race would come through a Man – one solitary Man!

It is no wonder that the revelation of the Savior to Peter included Him being

of Christ. There is no amount of religious work that can counterbalance a deficiency of the Person of Christ dwelling within.

When Christ is *“in you,”* everything that He brings is accessible to you! When He is not dwelling with you, nothing that He brings can be possessed. Further, the presence of Christ is not to be assumed. If He is within you, earnest self examination will confirm that to be the truth. Here is how the Scripture states the case. *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* (2 Cor 13:5). Nothing is more important than this discovery.

PREACH

“ . . . we preach . . . ” Other

WARNING EVERY MAN

“^{28b} . . . *warning every man.*”

Paul now elaborates on the preaching of Christ, confirming he is not speaking of only introducing men to the salvation of God. It will at once become apparent to you that the things described are not at all common in the nominal church.

WARNING

“ . . . *warning . . .* ” Other versions read “*admonishing every man,*”^{NASB} and “*guiding.*”^{BEBE} It is important to emphasize that this is a sort of breakdown preaching Christ: “*This is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing . . .*”^{NJB} That is, the preaching involves the warning, or admonition. It is incorporated in the message.

Here, the word “*warning*” does not mean warning of impending danger. As used in this verse, the word “warn” means to put one in mind of what has been declared, moving the people to believe it and act upon it. Warning would include the recollection of the inadequacy of nature, the weakness of the flesh, and the futility of worldly wisdom. Paul pressed the message, confirming its centrality. Nothing must be allowed to subvert its effect upon the soul. No place can be made for competing influences. The heart must be carefully guarded, lest an “*evil heart of unbelief*” overtake us (Heb 3:12). All of that is involved in warning.

The modern church is not doing well in the areas of preaching, warning, and teaching. There is too much entertainment, commitment to eternally inconsequential things, and things and relationships that will pass away.

This is a message that requires a response. It is not like the daily newspaper that one can read and lay aside. It is imperative that men respond to this Gospel by believing and embracing it, whether initially or in spiritual growth and advancement. If men do not believe and embrace this Gospel, they have responded by rejecting or spurning it, and

it will be laid to their account – whether they are presently in Christ or not.

The word “*warning*” comes from a word meaning “to admonish, warn, instruct, as giving instructions in regard to belief or behavior.”

^{THAYER} There is a note or urgency in the word. The admonition refers more to preparation than to procedures related to mundane relationships. This should be apparent to us from our exposure to the Epistles . While there are a number of issues addressed in the letters to churches and individual believers, the burden of their content does not relate to such things. Instructions concerning family relationships, master and servant

the appointed Vehicle of all blessing. **Furthermore, those who are not in fellowship with Christ, living by faith and walking in the Spirit, are incapable of receiving from Christ.**

Therefore, as long as we are in this world, we must hear of Christ and be stirred to avail ourselves of His ministry. As long as we are faced with competing interests, we must hear of Christ. As long as our adversary walks about, seeking whom he may devour, we must hear of Christ. As long as we are tempted, we must hear of Christ. That is why anyone who heard Paul, whether an Athenian philosopher, a member of a Jewish

Some preach a plan. Some preach a movement. Some preach a church. Paul preached Christ, warning and admonishing his hearers in view of the Christ that he preached. No preacher or teacher who fails to major on Christ will escape the judgment of God!

relationships, and conducting ourselves toward political leaders are surely contained in Scripture. However, the percentage of Scripture dealing with such matters is nowhere near 10%.

The warnings and admonitions of Scripture are generally addressed to all of the saints, with a few references to certain groups like children wives, husbands, masters, servants, etc. This should be apparent enough to confirm this point is not to be labored.

The “*warning*” of reference is emphasizing the call to take the way of escape that God has provided in Christ Jesus. **It relates to keeping ourselves in the love of God and not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel.** The reason for such warning should be obvious. God has nothing to give us that does not come from Christ,

counsel, a Roman ruler, or a leading Christian – they all heard of Christ. That is the Person Paul preached.

Some preach a plan. Some preach a movement. Some preach a church. Paul preached Christ, warning and admonishing his hearers in view of the Christ that he preached. **No preacher or teacher who fails to major on Christ will escape the judgment of God!**

EVERY MAN

“ . . . *every man . . .* ” Sin has leveled the field in which preaching occurs. There is no special Gospel for the young or the old, for male or female, or the slave or the master. There is not a special Gospel for the Gentiles, and another for the Jews. **The dreadful innovation of specialized ministries has introduced more liabilities than advantages.** At some point the salvation

of God must be seen as a “common salvation” (Jude 1:3), and its message as a singular one. There is not a syllable of Scripture that justifies any other approach.

The same application of the

Gospel is made to “every man.” This is because the thrust of the Gospel is singular. **There is something common that is to be found in the response of every person subjected to the Gospel.** They are to believe on the Son. They are to perfect holiness in the fear of

the Lord. They are to put on the whole armor of God and resist the devil. They are to watch for the coming of the Lord, and be ready to meet Him. These are warnings that are common to “every man.” No one is excluded. They are for all who are in the Son!

TEACHING EVERY MAN IN WISDOM

“^{28c} . . . and teaching every man in all wisdom . . .”

The “teaching” of reference is like branches on the tree of preaching. **Teaching is nothing less than the elaboration of the Gospel.** It is the opening up of the Gospel, like Joseph opening the storehouses of Egypt. Teaching is not a separate activity, unrelated to preaching. It is not that one person preaches and another teaches. In our text the same individuals did the preaching and the teaching. Preaching and teaching are the two sides of the coin of spiritual communication.

TEACHING

“ . . . and teaching . . . ”

The word “teaching” means “to hold discourse with others, impart instruction,, instill doctrine, and expound a thing.” ^{THAYER}

Preaching emphasizes our responsibility to God, as stewards of the mysteries of God. Teaching emphasizes the responsibility of men, who are to respond to the preaching. They are the ones who are “taught.”

When the Apostles first went throughout Jerusalem preaching Christ, their enemies commanded them “not to speak at all nor **teach** in the name of

Jesus” (Acts 4:18; 5:28). In summing up the activities of the disciples the Spirit said “they ceased not to **teach** and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). When the Apostles stood and spoke the words of life in the Temple to unconverted Jesus, their activity was described as “**teaching the people**” (Acts 5:25). When Paul preached from a rented house while a prisoner of Rome he was described as “*Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him*” (Acts 28:31).

The “teaching” of which Paul speaks is the extended exposition of the Gospel. It parallels the ministry of the priests of Nehemiah’s day who, after the book of the Law was read distinctly, “gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh 8:8).

Here is an example of “teaching.” “And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15). The “preaching” is, “He died for all,” and “rose again.” The teaching is, “they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him.”

EVERY MAN IN ALL WISDOM

“ . . . every man in all wisdom . . . ”

Other versions read, “with all wisdom,” ^{NASB} and “with all the wisdom God has given us.” ^{NLT}

The person communicating the Word of God has the responsibility of doing so wisely – that is, “*handling accurately the Word of truth*” ^{NASB} (2 Tim 2:15). **The people must be left with spiritual advantages.** A considerable amount of contemporary preaching actually produces more questions than answers.

The wisdom in which teaching is done is not a carnal wisdom, designed to manipulate and exploit people for personal advantage. Elsewhere Paul spoke of those who “*serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Rom 16:18). Other false teachers are described as “*Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*” (1 Tim 1:7). These are descriptions of those who do NOT teach “in all wisdom.”

Teaching “in all wisdom” is teaching through which the Holy Spirit works. It is teaching that is in harmony with God’s objectives, and lends itself to making “*ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Luke 1:17).

PERFECT IN CHRIST

“^{28d} . . . that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

Now we get at the heart of why Paul both preached and taught. It did

seek to reach the lost, but that was not his ultimate objective. As noble as the statement, “*The objective is to reach the lost*” sounds, it is not a spiritually well phrased expression. Jesus said He came to

“*seek and to save the lost*” (Lk 19:10). That salvation, however, extends beyond the gate of entrance. He presently “*is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever*

liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). Our salvation is still in its introductory, or firstfruits, stage (Rom 8:23). As long as this is the case, there is still a salvation *"ready to be revealed"* (1 Pet 1:5). It is this aspect of salvation that Paul now addresses, stating that this is the determined objective of his preaching and teaching.

THAT WE MAY

" . . . that we may present every man . . . " Other versions read, *"so that we may present,"*^{NIV} *"to the end that we may."*^{DARBY}

There is a sense in which the

God would *"present us with you in His presence"*^{NIV} (2 Cor 4:14).

There is a sense in which each laborer for Christ will *"present"* their work to the Lord for inspection and approval. Jesus Himself will say, *"Behold I and the children which God hath given me"* (Heb 2:13). The same kind of presentation will be made by the various laborers in the kingdom. Spiritual, leaders, for example, will give an account of the flocks that have been placed in their charge. As it is written, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that*

provisions of God's *"great salvation."* **If any one fell short of what they could have been, he did not want it to be because of deficient preaching and teaching on his part.**

Salvation is designed to bring the people of God to a state where they are *"no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Eph 4:14-15). **If this does not occur, it is not owing to any deficiency in the salvation of God.** Either the people were not taught in *"all wisdom,"* or they refused the message, choosing a form of godliness that denied the power thereof.

Paul expressed this same desire to the Corinthians, explaining why he labored so tirelessly among them. *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (2 Cor 11:2).

No person, however learned and capable in communication, should endeavor to preach to, or teach, the people of God who does not have this objective: to present the people perfect in Christ. Wherever this is not the aim of preaching and teaching, selfish ambitions will tend to dominate. Perhaps the preaching and teaching will be tailored to please the people, or to avoid any unfavorable response from them. A person so motivated should immediately leave the ministry, for he is an obstacle to the progress of the people.

Jesus ever lives to perfect the people. The Holy Spirit is laboring to this end. The holy angels are ministering spirits contributing to this cause. All of the spiritual gifts placed within the church are intended to serve this purpose: to make people *"perfect in Christ."* **How could any other objective possibly be defended?** The beginning of the process is justification, and its conclusion is glorification (Rom 8:29). **Anything or anyone that is not harmonious with that purpose has no place among God's people.** This is particularly true of purported preachers and teachers.

No person, however learned and capable in communication, should endeavor to preach to, or teach, the people of God who does not have this objective: to present the people perfect in Christ.

teacher and the taught stand together. In fact, Paul said this of his labors: *"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"* (1 Thess 2:19). He also referred to the Philippians as *"my joy and crown"* (Phil 4:1). John urged those he taught to *"abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, WE may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"* (1 John 2:28). He knew that if those on whom the preacher and teacher has expended labor do not pass the test of Divine judgment, the preacher and teacher will endure some loss. That is the precise point being made in the third chapter of First Corinthians. *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"* (1 Cor 3:15). The *"work"* of reference are those who were taught. Paul said of the Corinthians to whom the above words were spoken, *"are not ye my work in the Lord?"* (1 Cor 9:1). Paul further told the Corinthians that he knew

they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb 13:17). The aim is for every one who is made an overseer by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), to present those in his care *"perfect in Christ."*

No administrative or organizational duties must be allowed to supercede or minimize this objective. In the day of judgment, God will not quiz leaders about their institutional involvement, or how well the organization functioned.

PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS

" . . . perfect in Christ Jesus."

Other versions read, *"every man complete in Christ,"*^{NASB} *"mature in Christ,"*^{NRSV} and *"perfect in their relationship to Christ."*^{NLT}

The idea is that Paul desired for every person he taught to **not** come up short on the day of judgment. He wanted them to have availed themselves of the

FOCUSED LABOR

“^{29a} *Whereunto I also labor...*”

Although he journeyed through a wide variety of debilitating and discouraging circumstances, Paul never lost sight of his focus. Whether on a boat about to be shipwrecked, in a dungeon, a synagogue, a marketplace, or the school of higher learning, his was focused on the purpose of God. The manner in which he expressed this focus is most edifying. It reveals the nature of kingdom efforts.

WHEREUNTO

“*Whereunto . . .*” Other versions read, “*To this end,*”^{NKJV} “*And for this purpose,*”^{NASB} “*For this,*”^{NRSV} and “*And it is for this reason.*”^{NJB}

Paul, is referring to the objective of presenting every person “*perfect in Christ*” – every person, whether young or old, male or female, bond or free!

This was the target, the aim, the goal – to “*present every man perfect in Christ.*” **He would not allow this objective to be dwarfed by lesser intentions.** If he was speaking to an uninformed Philippian jailer, he kept this in mind. If he was preaching to contentious Jews in a Thessalonian synagogue, he maintained this perspective. If he was on a barbarous island, with sick people being brought to him, he did not forget this aim. If he was coming to the established church in Rome, or a spiritually meandering church in Corinth, this was his objective: **to present every man perfect in Christ.** Everything he said and did was pointed in this direction.

LABOR

“*I also labor . . .*” Other versions read, “*toil,*”^{NRSV} “*am working,*”^{BEB} and “*I*

work very hard at this.”^{NLT}

The word “*labor*” is not a casual word. The meaning of the word is “to grow weary, tired, exhausted; to labor with wearisome effort.”^{THAYER} It speaks of “strong exertions: work hard, strive, struggle.” This is the word Peter used when Jesus asked him to “*Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.*” Peter responded, “*Master,*

The work of the Lord demands this kind of effort. There is no place in the harvest fields or among the flock of God for casual and half-hearted laborers. They all should be purged from the ministry.

we have TOILED all the night, and have taken nothing” (Luke 5:5). The word is translated “*wearied*” in John 4:6: “*Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being WEARIED with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour*” (John 4:6). A saint named Mary is said to have “*bestowed much LABOR*” on Paul (Rom 16:6), and one Persis is declared to have “*LABORED much in the Lord*” (Rom 16:12).

Elsewhere Paul acknowledged “*I labored more abundantly than they all*” (1 Cor 15:10). He classed his “*labors*” along with “*stripes,*” *imprisonments,*” “*tumults,*” “*watchings,*” and “*fastings*” (2 Cor 6:5). He said his “*labors*” were “*more abundant*” than other ministers (2 Cor 11:23). Of his practical activities he wrote to the Thessalonians, “*For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God*” (1 Thess 2:9).

The words “*I also labor*” do not refer to a convenient occupation or line of work. Like David, Paul had been lifted from a horrible pit, and his feet set upon a solid rock (Psa 40:2). His efforts were the only appropriate response to such marvelous grace. **The work of the Lord demands this kind of effort. There is no place in the harvest fields or among the flock of God for casual**

and half-hearted laborers. They all should be purged from the ministry.

Today the church is inundated with religious professionals and casual leaders with too much time on their hands. If they engage in a lot of activity, it seems to be the wrong kind of activity, and for the wrong reasons. **The church has been buried under an avalanche of bureaucracy and administration.** O that there were more men who were willing to “*very gladly spend and be spent*” for the people of God – to present them “*perfect in Christ.*”

May there be a spiritual ingathering of laborers in the Lord’s harvest who are willing to be “*poured out as a drink offering*” in behalf of the saints^{NKJV} (Phil 2:17). **The work of the Lord demands this kind of effort. There is no place in the harvest fields or among the flock of God for casual and half-hearted laborers.** They must be purged from the ministry.

HIS WORKING

“^{29b} *. . . striving according to His working . . .*”

The ambitious undertaking of the Apostle cannot be accomplished by a

casual effort. He therefore speaks further of it, giving an account for his prodigious

labors. In this he offers great encouragement to everyone who has obtained a fervent interest in presenting the people of God *“perfect in Christ.”*

STRIVING

“... striving...” Other versions read, *“struggling,”* ^{NIV} *“using all my strength,”* ^{BBE} and *“combating.”* ^{DARBY}

As if the word *“labor”* was not strong enough, the Apostle extends himself in speaking of his endeavors to present the saints *“perfect in Christ.”* The word *“striving”* means *“to contend with adversaries, fight, struggle with difficulties and dangers, to endeavor with strenuous zeal.”* ^{THAYER}

In this we see that Paul’s ambition

perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor 11:23-27).

Again he testifies, *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed”* (2 Cor 4:9). Another time he spoke of being *“pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life”* (2 Cor 1:8).

Mark it well, in order for the people of God to be presented *“perfect in Christ,”* someone must labor exceedingly

^{NIV} *“all the energy which He mightily inspires within me,”* ^{NRSV} and *“by the help of His power which is working in me strongly.”* ^{BBE}

The prodigious labors of Paul were not the result of his self-discipline, but of his faith. That was the means through which God’s mighty power worked in him. Actually, it was God who was working in him, *“both to will and to do of His good pleasure”* (Phil 2:12). To put it another way, God was *“working in”* him *“that which is well pleasing in His sight”* (Heb 13:21).

We know from Scripture that *“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him”* (2 Chron 16:9). Here, in Paul, such a man was found, and the Lord did, in fact, *“show Himself strong”* in him. Elsewhere Paul accounts for his labors by saying, *“yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me”* (1 Cor 15:10).

Here was a man who had perceived what he now prayed for others: that they might see *“what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places”* (Eph 1:19-20). God is truly *“able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* (Eph 3:20). Paul confesses that this is actually happening in him.

For those who may feel inadequate for the ministry of preparing the saints to be presented *“perfect in Christ,”* consider this. **Does not the contemplation of God’s mighty power working within you lift such a noble work into the domain of possibility?** Let every kingdom laborer take heart!

Mark it well, in order for the people of God to be presented “perfect in Christ,” someone must labor exceedingly and strive against numerous foes and adversaries.

to present the saints *“perfect in Christ”* was met with certain Satanic aggression. It may have come in the form of human opposition, storms, or other adverse and hindering circumstances. Whatever form they took, Paul had to battle through them in order to meet his objective of presenting the saints *“perfect in Christ.”*

Something of the magnitude and quantity of these adversarial influences are provided in Second Corinthians: *“... in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in*

and strive against numerous foes and adversaries. These are the kind of ministers God *“gave to every man”* (12 Cor 3:5). This is one of the reasons it is so serious to *“neglect so great salvation”* (Heb 2:3).

Those who are looking for religious careers will find no comfort in such words. However, those who have a heart for believers to be presented *“perfect in Christ”* find a sweet elixir in these words. They help to interpret some of the struggles associated with bringing benefits to the people of God.

ACCORDING TO HIS WORKING

“... according to His working.” Other versions read, *“His power, which works mightily in me,”* ^{NASB} *“all His energy, which so powerfully works in me,”*

MIGHTY WORKING WITHIN

^{29c} *“... which worketh in me mightily.”*

It is as though the Apostle cannot glide over such lofty statements. He must

linger upon them, bringing greater clarity, and putting them within reach of the

people of God. This is one of the key factors that will contribute to presenting every man *“perfect in Christ.”* **The same power that enabled Paul to fulfill his ministry is designed to make them *“perfect in Christ.”***

WHICH WORKETH IN ME MIGHTILY

“ . . . which worketh in me mightily ” Other versions read, *“which so powerfully works in me,”*^{NIV} and *“which is working in me strongly.”*^{BBE}

This is the explanation for the effectiveness of Paul’s ministry. In another place he states that he ministered *“according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction”* (2 Cor 13:10). Again he wrote, *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed”* (2 Cor 10:8).

The power of God, which was working mightily in Paul, made him equal to the challenge of presenting *“every man perfect in Christ.”* Every person who has taken his teaching to heart is a testimony to the truth of that statement. **The power of God, in other words, is designed to bring those in Christ to maturity, or perfection, where they can stand *“faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”*** (Jude 1:24). That is what it is designed to do, and that is what it **will** do when received.

This effectiveness can be traced back to the spiritual mind-set Paul

possessed. He shared this most fully to the Philippians. *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after,*

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Therein is the secret to the remarkable power that was working in Paul the Apostle. **The Lord had a lot of Paul, and thus gave Paul a lot of Himself.** He lost his life for Jesus sake, and thus gained a life that transcended anything nature could offer (Matt 10:39). He forsook all, took up his cross, and followed Christ – regardless of the cost, inconvenience, or hardship. He saw what Jesus had done for Him, and what was being offered to Him – and he responded

Therein is the secret to the remarkable power that was working in Paul the Apostle. The Lord had a lot of Paul, and thus gave Paul a lot of Himself. He lost his life for Jesus sake, and thus gained a life that transcended anything nature could offer

if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:7-14).

He stated it briefly to the Galatians in these words: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of*

in faith. The result was that he was used mightily and effectively for the perfecting of the saints.

This is the heritage of every person who chooses to abandon all competing interests in order to serve the Lord of glory. **Every person who has a focused and consistent interest in the people of God – in seeing them presented *“perfect in Christ,”* will be given power to contribute to that Divine objective.**G

CONCLUSION

The burden for the welfare and perfection of the church is central in the Divine economy. Every recorded laborer of God has carried a burden for God’s people. Moses was noted for his care for the people, as well as all of the holy prophets. The Lord Jesus strengthened faith wherever He found it, as He walked among us. In His remarkable prayer on the eve of His betrayal, He sought the protection and welfare of His disciples,

praying for noone but those who believed, or would believe, on Him. The Holy Spirit has also been called into the work of perfecting the saints. He assists them in crucifying the flesh, brings forth fruit within them, and even intercedes for them when the infirmity of ignorance dominates them. All of the Apostolic writings, together with those of Luke, James, and Jude, are addressed to the people of God, and are designed to

contribute to their perfection. There is not the slightest room for any doubt on this matter.

It is time for the attention of religious leaders to be turned to the people upon whom God’s eye rests, and those to whom His ear is opened. There is no acceptable excuse for the people of God being spiritually starved in preference of religious froth. Such conditions contradict

both the nature and content of the Gospel. **A weak church will not be used by God, for it a contradiction to the whole economy of salvation.**

However, wherever there is a sensitive soul, the eyes of the Lord will find that person, and employ him in His great work. I encourage you to be one of

those people. Be willing to lose you life for Jesus' sake, and the Gospel's, and you will enjoy eternal gain, as well as the blessing of your present life in Christ Jesus.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/28/2003. In this session, we will be covering verses 1-3 of the second chapter. The title of our lesson is, **"GREAT CONFLICT FOR THE CHURCH."** Having the mind of Christ, the Apostle Paul had a great concern for His church. Knowing that Jesus ever lives to intercede for His people, and that the Divine objective is to present them unreprieveable in the sight of God Himself, Paul labored tirelessly to open the centrality of Christ to the saints of God. He now shares this objective with the Colossians. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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