

THE MYSTERY THAT IS MADE MANIFEST

Take your Bibles and turn once again to Colossians 1. Last week I began the sermon by pointing out that Paul goes from talking about the **Colossians** themselves...to talking about **God the Father**...to talking about the **greatness of Christ**...to talking about the Colossians' **responsibility** in light of what Christ did, to talking about **himself** at the end of vs 23.

But it wasn't just **Paul** talking about Paul, was it? We need to remember that it is **God** talking about Paul—**through Paul**—because God wanted the Colossians to know certain things **about** Paul!

But **why**? Because most of the Colossians had **never met Paul** and God wanted **them** to know that Paul was **commissioned** by God...and had a **mission** from God...and that Paul's **instructions** to them were **from God**!

So what does that have to do **with us**? **Why** does God **want us** to know these things about Paul? **How** do they apply to us? I'm sure there are more, but here are **four** reasons.

1) First, **so that we**—here and now in the year 2025—**are persuaded** that what Paul wrote **is from God** and applies **to us today** just as much as it applied to the original recipients! These are not merely **Paul's words to them**—or **my words to you**—they are **God's Words** to all of us!

2) A second reason is this: it helps me as a Pastor to **know what being a Pastor** should look like! Back when I was in the military, the **motto of leadership** at that time revolved around three words: **Be, Know, Do!**

A military leader needs to **be** a certain kind of person; they need to **know** certain things; and they need to take action and **do** certain things. So when **God** describes what Paul was like, and what **he taught**, and what **he did**, it seems to me that God is telling **all pastors** what they should **be, know, and do!**

3) Third—and along the same lines—is this: so **you can know** if your pastor is **being** what he is supposed to be...and **knows** what he is supposed to know...and **does** what he is supposed to be doing!

So when you "critique" your pastor—I know you do...and **you should**—be sure to **use the criteria God** gives you and not make up your own! In other words, if you're going to have "fried (or roasted) Pastor for Sunday dinner," make sure you are using the right "cook book" 😊!

4) Fourth, remember this: Paul told the Corinthian believers—**all of them**, not just the pastors—in 1 Corinthians 11:1 "Be ye followers of me, **even as I also am of Christ**." So God had Paul write about Paul, so we had a **human example** of how to follow Christ!

Last week, we learned from vs 23 and 25 that God had commissioned Paul by **making him** a minister. Paul did not **call himself** into the ministry—**God called him** into the ministry! **Spurgeon** rightly declared "This is a wonderful expression, **"made a minister."** The true minister is of **God's** making; a **man-made** minister must be a poor creature, but a **God-made** minister will prove his calling:" (https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_121-23#1:23).

So Paul was **commissioned by God** to be a steward of God's Word. We also learned last Sunday that his mission required that he be **a servant**—that is what the word "minister" means—and it involved **suffering**. But Paul didn't just "grin and bear" his suffering—vs 24 tells us that he **rejoiced** in it!

A third component of Paul's mission—which is actually **the main one** and the one we are going to focus on this morning—is found in him **sharing** the Word of God. Paul's mission wasn't just to **live out** God's Word—it was also to **give out** God's Word! We see that in vs 25 where Paul writes that he was made a minister "to **fulfill** the Word of God."

1. The responsibility to fulfill God's Word

First, let's consider the word "fulfill." I mentioned just before I prayed that Paul's mission wasn't just to live out God's Word—it was also to **give out** God's Word—and that that thought was contained in the phrase "to fulfill the Word of God."

But when we consider the word “fulfill,” we usually have a **different definition** in mind. We think of it as “bringing something to pass” or “making something happen.” **Example:** Roughly a month from now, my wife and I will be **fulfilling** our desire to take our two grandsons to the Badlands and Mount Rushmore. Lord willing, we will be “making it happen;” we will “bring it to pass.”

Looking back at the end of vs 25, that definition **doesn’t make sense**, though, does it? **Why?** Because **Paul** can’t “bring to pass” God’s Word—**only God** can “bring to pass” God’s Word!

But the Greek word that “fulfill” comes from has **more than one** meaning. It also means “to make full or fill up.” But “**filling up**” people with the word of God isn’t quite the idea either. A **third definition**—and the one that fits here—is “to cause to be everywhere known.”

We see that meaning in **Romans 15:19** where the same Greek word is translated “fully preached” – “Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have **fully preached** the gospel of Christ.”

Fully preaching—spreading God’s word everywhere—was the mission God had given Paul to do. We see the world-wide emphasis of God’s Word being shared in vs 6 “Which is come unto you, as it is in **all the world...**” And we see it again in the second half of vs 23 “which ye have heard, and which was **preached to every creature** which is under heaven...”

So Paul was made a minister—by God—to fulfill God’s mission of sharing God’s Word throughout the known world. But...it wasn’t just the Word of God in **general** that Paul was to share. There was a **specific** aspect—one truth **in particular**—that God wanted him to share. He refers to it in verses 26 and 27 as a **mystery**. We’ll talk about what mystery **means**—and what the **mystery is**—in a little bit.

But before that, let’s consider... **2. The recipients of the mystery**

Who was Paul to make known this mystery to? Was it for **everyone**—or was there a “target audience” that God wanted this message to be shared with? We have the answer at the end of vs 26. Notice what it says: “...but now is made manifest to His [God’s]...**saints!**”

So there was a **mystery**—a particular truth from God that had been **made known** to Paul—that Paul was to share with God’s **saints! Who** are the saints?

We’ve come across the word “saints” 3 times already in this chapter. In vs 2, saints are the same as “faithful brethren.” Maybe you remember me saying that Paul was not writing **to two different** groups—saints and faithful brethren—rather, the saints **were** the faithful brethren.

--In vs 4, we see that the believers in Colossae had a **love to all saints**—meaning all of God’s people. And in vs 12 we see that those who Christ saves are “made meet”—qualified—“to be partakers of the inheritance of **the saints** in light.”

So saints are God’s “set apart ones”—those who belong to God—because they have come to Christ and been accepted in God’s family. According to vs 13, they have been **delivered from** the power of darkness—Satan’s kingdom—and have been **transferred into** the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

The recipients, then, of the mystery that Paul reveals is not **all people**—it is only for **God’s** people! But it is for **all** of God’s people—**not just some!** One of the errors Paul argues against in this letter is the false teaching that **certain** people received special revelations that applied **only** to them.

Next, let’s consider... **3. The revelation of the mystery**

Revelation isn’t just the name of the **last book** of the Bible—it also means when something is **revealed**. **What** was being revealed? **What** is it that was “**made manifest** to His saints?” We have the answer in the first part of vs 26: “**Even the mystery** which hath been hid from ages and generations...”

But what is a mystery? Even though we've looked at this in the past, I want to remind us of...

A. The meaning of mystery

We often use the word to indicate something that we **don't understand** or something that we **can't explain**. It's a **mystery** why the floor in the one corner of the fellowship hall **keeps getting wet**—and why our **old piano** stopped working!

In the Bible, the word “mystery” carries a **different** idea, though. It refers to **a truth** that was **unknown** in the past—and can **only be known** if God chose to reveal it. We see that thought in the verse itself – “even the mystery which **hath been hid** from ages and generations...”

You're in Colossians; turn toward the front of your Bible a couple of pages to the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 3; notice what it says in verses 3-5.

Pretty hard to miss the fact that the mystery Paul speaks of was not known in the past, but has now been revealed. In verse 9 we see the same idea.

And even though **Deuteronomy 29:29** is in the OT—and does not contain the word “mystery”—it still sums up the concept quite well: “**The secret things** belong unto the LORD our God: but those things **which are revealed belong unto us** and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Back to Colossians 1. Here's a recap of what we've looked at so far.

--God made Paul a minister—and commissioned him—to fully proclaim the Word of God (v 25)

--The specific truth that Paul was to proclaim was one that had been hidden—but was now revealed to Paul so that he would share it with a specific group—God's saints, meaning His children (vs 26)

And that brings us to the mystery itself. B. The mystery that was made manifest

What was the mystery that is now made manifest? Notice again what it says in vs 26. After reading that, you would expect Paul to **immediately reveal** what the mystery was.

But he doesn't! It is almost as if he **adds to the suspense** in the beginning of vs 27 by writing: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery...”

Imagine people saying—or thinking—'What's the mystery, Paul? Hurry up and tell us!' But instead of spelling it out, he writes, “This mystery is wonderful—it is rich in glory!”

And then he finally comes out with it. The mystery is... “**Christ in you**, the hope of glory:”

That's it? “Christ in you” is the mystery? But what does **that mean?**

Commentators suggest two different views. I don't want to get too deep—or technical—but if you dig into this yourself, you will come across both of these views.

1) First, because of the **parallels between** Ephesians and Colossians, some suggest that Paul is referring to the fact that the Gentiles and Jews are now **one in Christ**. We're not going to go back to Ephesians 3 where we were earlier, but notice on your outline...

Ephesians 3:4-6 “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the **mystery of Christ**)
⁵ Which in other ages **was not made known** unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶**That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body**, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel:”

“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body” with the Jews was certainly a new—and important—revelation to the early church. Paul could be referring to that—especially in light of Colossians 3:11 “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”

2) A second view—and the one I hold to—is this: Christ—through the person of the Holy Spirit—**dwells in us!** Jesus told His disciples that He would dwell in them. **John 14:23** “Jesus answered and said unto him, 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.**” (See also John 17:23)

Rom 8:10 “And if **Christ be in you**, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Ephesians 3:17 “That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,”

So the mystery is not us **dwelling in Christ** along with the Jews; it is **Christ dwelling** in us! And since Jesus is in heaven—dwelling at the right hand of the Father—He dwells in us through the person of the Holy Spirit!

Lastly, let’s consider... **4. The riches of the glory of Christ in you**

What are the riches of the glory of Christ dwelling in us? Where do we start, right? It is such a **deep well** that I can’t possibly “do justice” in the little time we have left. But hopefully I’ll give you enough of a “taste” that you’ll want to come back to the well and “draw out water” for yourselves! Here are 5 “riches”—in the form of promises—that belong to us because **Christ dwells in us** through the person of the Holy Spirit.

A. The promise of His presence

Mt 28:20b “...and, lo, I am **with you always**, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

--**How long** will Jesus be with us? **Always!**

--**Where** can we go **without Jesus**? **Nowhere!**

B. The promise of His power

II Cor 12:9 “And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: **for my strength** is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, **that the power of Christ** may rest upon me.”

--**When** does Christ’s strength work within us? **In our weakness!**

Phil 4:13 “I can do all things **through Christ which strengtheneth** me.”

--**What** can we do through Christ’s strength? **All that He wants us to do!**

I Corinthians 10:13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: **but God is faithful**, who will not suffer [allow] you to be tempted above that ye are able; **but will with the temptation also make a way to escape**, that ye may be able to bear it.”

--We **can escape temptation**—we do not have to give in to sinful choices—through God’s power.

Romans 6:13 “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God...”

--We **don’t have to be the servant of sin** and addictive behaviors and lifestyles. Christ’s power can enable us to break away from that—regardless of how **strong** the addiction and how **long** we’ve been in it!

C. The promise of His protection

John 10:28 “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall **never perish**, neither shall any man **pluck them out of my hand**.”

--**Who** can pluck you out of Christ’s hand? **No one! No man** can pluck you out of Christ’s hand—and **no devil** can pluck you out of Christ’s hand! And you **can’t pluck yourself** out of Christ’s hand!

If you **want to pluck yourself** out of Christ’s hand, you were **never in Christ’s hand** in the first place!

D. The promise of being a partaker of His nature

II Peter 1:4 “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these **ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

I John 3:2 “Beloved, **now are we** the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him**; for we shall see Him as He is.”

Being a partaker of God’s nature is something theologians refer to as an “**already, not yet**” truth. **Right now**—by virtue of having trusted Christ and having the Holy Spirit in us—**we are a partaker** of the divine nature. But...the fullness of that—the completion of that—will not take place until we “see Him as He is.”

Speaking of someday **seeing Christ** as He is, we know the rest—**and best**—is yet to come, don’t we? Why? Because of... E. The promise of perfection

Revelation 21:4-5a “And God shall wipe away **all tears** from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. ⁵ And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make **all things new**.”

What a future? Crying-free, death-free, debt-free, pain-free, sorrow-free, stress-free, Satan-free, stain-free, and sin-free! That, my friends, is the riches of the glory of this wonderful truth that Christ dwells in us!

Notice one more time the end of verse 27: "...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

--First, the word "hope." You might get tired of me saying this, but "hope" is **not a verb**—it is a noun. We don't hope (verb)—for this glorious future—we have an **expectation** (noun) of it.

What is the **basis** for expecting the riches of glory/heaven!

--Is it because **we were sprinkled with water** as a baby and our sin was washed away?

No; water can't wash sin away!

--Is it because we've **tried to be kind to people**...and helped them?

No; "works don't work!"

--Is it because we are **like Cornelius** in Acts 10—a God-fearing man that was outwardly religious; a man that prayed and gave money to the poor?

No; he **still needed to receive Christ**—and God sent Peter to him so he could hear about Christ!

Our expectation of glory—our inheritance of heaven—will only happen if we have Christ!

Do you **have Christ**? God's Word is plain; we need to **possess** Him.

1 John 5:12 "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

How do we **possess** Christ? How do we "get" Him? How does He **become ours**?

John 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:"

What is it that God would have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First do you have Christ? Is He yours? Do you possess Him?

2. Second, if you are a child of God, are you enjoying the riches of the promises of Christ being in you?

--If not, I would encourage you to read—and reread—these promises from God's Word.

But don't just read them! Think about them—meditate upon them—and claim them for yourself!

3. Third, we have a wonderful message of forgiveness—and a glorious future!

Don't keep it to yourself—tell others about it!