

The Mystery Revealed

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References: **Colossians 1-2**, Colossians 1:24-29; Colossians 2:1-5; Romans 3:23; John 19:30; Genesis 12:3

Introduction

Well, it's right on midday, so we're kind of right on "good morning" and "good afternoon." It's good to be with you. I took my jacket off because it's too warm. And I will be sharing my screen here shortly with you. And I will bring it up here in a second. Okay. Oh, there we are. Okay. And I will share with you. There we go. That's good. Very good.

Happy Father's Day to all the gentlemen in the crowd, and I wish you all the very best today. I've been receiving text messages from family and friends, and it's been very nice this morning. I'm going to be spending some time with children, and it's always a blessing. I have kind of—for some of you that know me and my family a little bit—one of the things is that one of my sons is going to be a father next year. So he and his wife are expecting our first grandchild, so I'm going to be a grandfather. I can't believe it, but it's a true fact. Thank you. I have friends that are younger, and they're already grandfathers a few times over, but we are expecting our first grandchild. My daughter gets married on July 18th, so looking forward to that as well. So we're very grateful to God for the blessings we have. It's nice to be with you here on this Father's Day, and to those online as well, it's nice to be with you today. May the Lord bless you all.

And I've been praying about, "Lord, which message?" I have a number of messages, because I come here once in a while, so there's a number of messages that I really personally enjoy. And sometimes I think to myself, "Which message, Lord?" And I ask the Lord to guide me. And so He's guided me towards this: Colossians chapter 1 here, verse 24 to chapter 2, verse 5. I will have it up on the screen and I will be able to share that with you.

But I want to say that first of all, I've been going through a series in the book of Colossians. I've got about ten sermons that I've put together and I've really enjoyed the book of Colossians. Like the Scriptures, there is always something new to learn and something new to enjoy. And as I've said many times before, listening to a sermon is like a good meal. How many times do you go out to a certain restaurant or you go for a certain meal? How many

times have you gone for dim sum or sushi? How many times have you done that? How many times has Harold gone to a White Spot for a Legendary hamburger? You know? Many, many times, right? And you enjoy it every time, right? Yeah. Well, that's what the Scriptures are like. And that's what learning from the Word of God is like. It's something we learn on a regular basis.

And now sometimes we go someplace and, ooh, that wasn't very good. But one thing I really appreciated about a gentleman that used to attend here—he was a missionary in Bolivia, Frank Haggerty. And Frank... I remember him sitting over on that side when he attended here and later in life. And one of the things that I always enjoyed: one Sunday evening I was speaking here and I just felt like I didn't speak well. And I was much younger in my speaking engagements and career. And so I don't believe I put a very good message together. And I remember walking by Frank and, you know, I think he knew it. But he said, "I really got something out of that." He didn't tell me it was a great message because it wasn't. He didn't tell me that it was, you know, and try to patronize me. He said, "I got something out of it." That was the truth. I really appreciated that and learned something from him that day.

We can always learn something from the Word of God, because it is God's Word. And I hope that today and every time you hear a message from whoever it is, may the Lord open your heart as you receive His Word, and may it be like the Word of God. It may be a balm to your soul. It may be like an ointment, something that you need at that moment.

I don't know where everyone is at spiritually today, whether you are an actual born-again Christian, if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We say, "Are you a Christian? Are you saved?" There's lots of different ways that we can say it. Then I don't know where you are. Maybe you are a true follower of Christ and you're following Him. And each one of us are at different stages and levels of understanding of the Christian faith. As we read, may the Lord guide us and may something today speak to your heart. Let's read, and the title today is The Mystery Revealed. The Mystery Revealed.

Reading the Text

Colossians chapter 1, and we'll read verses 24 to—excuse me, to verse 5 of chapter 2. There we go. There we go. Paul's ministry to the church is, verse 24 begins:

[Colossians 1:24-29 NKJV]

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I

became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Excuse me. I'm supposed to advance. I'm not sure why it's not advancing. Excuse me. Oh. There we go. There we go.

[Colossians 2:1-5 NKJV]

¹ For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

The Big Idea of Colossians

Now, what we can enjoy about this wonderful passage is, first of all, we need to understand what the **big idea** is here. The big idea in this passage is that God's great mystery has now been revealed: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now, Paul's ministry was very costly. He rejoices in suffering because his pain serves Christ's church. Ministry isn't always comfortable. What does that mean? It means that sometimes there are sacrifices. There's cost involved. Might be time, might be money, even sometimes time. A great minister of the gospel to the indigenous people in the eastern United States, a man named David Brainerd—he was a man whose health went because he would go into places and he disregarded his health. I think that, you know, we don't know the circumstances, we don't know if he was careless, we don't know any of those things. But what we do know is that he did die as a younger man because of some of the health issues

that he had. But he had such a heart and a passion for the indigenous people, I think in Pennsylvania and all those areas, as the United States was being formed years and years ago. We've seen people that knock themselves out for God because they desire to do that. So it's not always comfortable, but it's always meaningful when it is for Christ and His people. So, the application here is that faithful service may cost you, but **no sacrifice for Christ is wasted**. We want to make sure that we understand that.

Now, as we think about this passage, as I said, I don't know where you are at spiritually, but I hope that what you look at today and what you read today will be, and as we have up on the screen, my heart is that we all will have a deeper understanding of the Word of God. Now, this theme that we're going to look at is that we reveal here the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because, you see, one of the things that I really enjoy about the Bible is that it teaches me that **Christ is sufficient for all things**. Christ is sufficient for all things: our faith, everything that we believe, and everything that we trust.

And so, it's interesting. Every generation is kind of fascinated by mysteries, right? People, you know, I think all of us enjoy a good detective story, you know, and we love to see how the plot works itself out. And sometimes there's—I mean, on television, these unsolved crimes shows and things like that have made a lot of money because people really like to look at that. Unsolved crimes, sometimes even hidden treasures. Those are the big things. And even some sort of secret codes. People are kind of intrigued sometimes by things that are concealed. If they don't know, they're trying to figure it out. Now, the Bible does speak of a mystery, but not something mysterious in the modern sense that we live in today. But it really is about a truth once hidden and now revealed by God. In this passage, what we see is we see how the Bible here, it speaks to us how Paul unfolds this great truth.

So in verse 27—and if you go back, I'm sorry I'm not going to have it up on the screen, but in verse 27—the mystery, so to speak, changes everything. What does it say? Well, it says the following. Verse 27 says:

[Colossians 1:27 NKJV]

²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Now, what does it do? Here, it changes everything: how we view suffering, how we understand salvation, how we grow spiritually, how we see the church itself, and how we stand against false teaching.

Now, there are some four realities that we can look at.

The Cost of the Gospel

First of all, the cost—what we've talked about here—the cost of revealing the mystery. Now he says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." Now, when we first glance at this particular statement, it kind of seems shocking. Who rejoices in suffering? If I asked you that question, would you? Do you rejoice in suffering? No! You know, I mean, we suffer—we think we suffer with this hot weather, right? "Oh my goodness, it's hot! Where's the air conditioning?" And, you know, we're trying our hardest to avoid suffering in every way, shape, and form in life.

Now, Paul enjoyed suffering, or he embraced the suffering, so to speak, not because it was pleasant, but because suffering for Christ produces eternal life fruit. Kind of an odd thing, right? I mean, to the average person, if you're not a believer today, you might say, "Well, man, I have no interest in being involved in suffering. What is this Christian life all about?" Well, what it is is that you need to not only think about this life, but you need to think about **eternal life**. What that is is, is your heart right with God? Are you truly repentant of sin in your life? Have you made that decision to follow the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His forgiveness? The Bible says:

[Romans 3:23 NKJV]

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

So that's a fact. If you say you are without sin, you've just lied to me. You just lied to yourself. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God—God's standard.

And so, what we see with Paul is that his suffering was **gospel-centered**. His suffering was gospel-centered. What does that mean? Well, he's writing from prison. He is attached to a Roman soldier, and so he's in chains. And the reason he was in prison, or the reason why he was arrested, was the fact that he'd been preaching the gospel. And he'd been beaten, he'd been imprisoned, he'd been stoned—people had thrown stones at him—he'd been shipwrecked. In fact, he had even been rejected by a lot of people that at one point loved him. That is, maybe even family members; we're not 100% sure on that. But for certain, some of the teachers and the people that he had learned from as a young man to become a young Pharisee—he was passionate—they loved him. And when he turned to Christ, they

rejected him. Being rejected is an awful thing, isn't it? But the Apostle Paul suffered. But he said, "It is a greater thing about what I'm involved with here."

Now, his suffering caused him to rejoice. And you ask, why? Well, his suffering was advancing God's purposes. You know, a lot of people ask, "Why am I suffering?" Paul reminds us here that God often uses suffering to accomplish His greatest work in our lives.

Take an understanding of suffering in the sense of from agriculture. A little bit farther down, it talks about being rooted in the faith. I've really been enjoying that—being rooted in the faith. It's an agricultural term. Now, what we see in verse 24, he says, "filling up what is lacking." A seed must be buried before it bears fruit. Likewise, spiritual fruit also grows through sacrifice and suffering.

If you have a garden or any plants or flowers, you put a little seed in some time ago, right? And my wife has some tomato plants that are not doing very well, and she puts them out in the middle of the lawn. And I said, "Why do you put them out in the middle of the lawn?" I said, "It's going to mark up the lawn." She says, "They need the sun. They need to grow." But there was some time ago she put these little seeds in there. And all of a sudden, there's water, there's sunshine, and all of a sudden there's these plants coming up and little tomatoes. Hopefully, they'll come out and we'll enjoy them. Well, it takes a hidden process. And sometimes suffering is very, very hidden, isn't it? People don't see what you go through, but you see, out of that will come something outstanding when we lean into God.

I'm going to give you a couple of very personal examples. I hope you don't mind. Right now, I've got three children. Two of my children have undergone some challenging health issues since the month of March. My daughter is getting married, and she has had severe alopecia—lost a lot of her hair. She had beautiful hair. Very difficult. My son—my second son—he lives with us. He's a wonderful young man, and he had some fainting spells. And so he's gone to the neurologist, and he's not driving right now. And he's gone to the neurologist and they're trying to figure out what's going on. He's getting an MRI this week, and we're going through some challenges as a family. And you know what? With both of my children, we've sat down and said, "This is a time that you lean into God." And you know what? Without my prompting or my wife's, my children have leaned into the Lord. And they have discovered things—and that's to say, I've discovered things about myself, about God, how I feel, and different things. And they have gone to Scripture, and they've trusted the Lord through it all. I hope you don't mind the personal examples. But what does that mean? That means as my wife and myself, my children, we've all prayed together. We have had family prayer meetings. Are the problems solved? No. But God is producing fruit through us and in us in this.

As we go down to verse 24, Paul says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of His body, that is, the church." Filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions—this doesn't mean that Christ's atoning work was incomplete. I want to be clear on that. What it teaches is that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was completely and totally sufficient. In fact, in John 19 and verse 30, He says, "It is finished." He said that clearly.

[John 19:30 NKJV]

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

What Paul means here is that the Lord Jesus Christ continues to suffer through His people as they carry the gospel into a world that is against the gospel. See, he's living out what Christ experienced—we live out in our lives as people reject the gospel. And the world out there is not interested. They're not interested in the gospel. If you're here, I hope that you're interested in the gospel. God loves you. He sent His Son to die for you, and He wants to make a difference in your life. But we know that there is a hostile world out there. The world, it says, that hated the Lord Jesus Christ, and sometimes even still hates His message. But when believers, or people that are true followers of Christ, suffer, they participate in the ongoing cost that is making Christ known.

So when we suffer, it's because of what we believe. Harold mentioned that at the beginning, and he said, "You know, sometimes there is sadness in the Christian life?" There is. Thank you. And that is when family members or people that we know and love have a rejection of the message of Christ. That's tough. And maybe you're experiencing that, brother or sister. Or maybe you are a person who's seeking and you're saying, "Well, if I follow Jesus, my family is going to reject me. My family is not going to love me." It's a big cost. I don't want you to think that we're callous or unsympathetic towards that. But if that's what's going to take place, we understand. But your eternal soul is more important than that kind of a relationship. If it's based on those conditions and transactions, then it's not really love. What we need to do is truly trust the Lord. And you know what? It's always amazing to me how Christians, when they begin to follow—people begin to follow Christ—the Lord fills that need and fills that heart.

A Trustworthy Stewardship

Now, what we see in Paul in verse 25, he says, the gospel of "which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God." He viewed himself as a servant. What is a steward? A steward is someone who is trusted. Stewardship refers to **trust**. So God entrusted Paul with the gospel. Every believer has been entrusted with that same gospel. We're not owners of this message; we're stewards of this message. You and I have been entrusted by God to tell others about Jesus.

You have a job, or you have money, or you have children—we're stewards of those things. None of us would think about going to a store with our little child and saying, "Okay, let's try to steal as much as we can." None of us would do that, because we're proper citizens and proper stewards of bringing up our child in the way that they should go. We need to do that in a way that truly is an example to others, and even our own children, or whoever it is that we speak to.

The church often flourishes when Christians stop asking, "What can the church do for me?" Instead, we start asking this question: "How can I serve the church? How can I serve Christ's church?" John F. Kennedy said those words back in the early '60s when he was voted in as president. I was not alive, but those words echoed. He says, "Ask not what you can do for your country, or ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what can I do for my country." Well, that was for the American people; that was for a nation. Those are good words, but they're much greater when we say in a very clear way, not "What can the church do for me?" but "What can I do for the church? What can I do for Christ?"

The Global Plan of God

And so, as we see the mystery in verses 26 and 27, it's a mystery that's been hidden for the ages and generations, but it's now revealed. This is the heart of this passage. What is the mystery? Now, throughout the Old Testament—throughout the Old Testament, God revealed His plan progressively. We see it through the prophets, we see it through Abraham, we see it through David and Isaiah. But one of the things that we see is that in those ways, those individuals didn't know that their Messiah was coming. They didn't understand. But now, God has fully revealed it. One of the wonderful things is that one aspect of it is the mystery that Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel. You know, the church that he's writing to, Colossians, they were largely Gentiles. What are we? I don't know if anybody here is of Jewish descent, but I don't see too many. I don't think so. We're Gentiles. But we've been included in this. The mystery has been revealed to you and to me as part of the family of God. We've been brought into God's family and enjoy this beautiful blessing.

God's plan was always **global**. It was always to reach. In fact, in Genesis chapter 12, He says:

[Genesis 12:3 NKJV]

I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The gospel, it tears down walls. There's no racial superiority, there's no ethnic hierarchy, there is no spiritual caste system. Like in India, they have a caste system, and it's unfortunate. It's very sad. But we're grateful that in Christianity, there's not a caste system. All who trust God, trust God equally. There's no hierarchy. Just because myself or other brothers that have the privilege of speaking the Word—we're not any better than anybody. Anybody! Don't ever think. And I know that we often respect people based on their academic formation or even wealth or even the kind of car they drive or the house that they live in. How does God view us? He doesn't look at those things. He looks at your heart. How is it devoted to Him? Have you trusted Him? Have you given your life over to Him?

Christ in You: The Hope of Glory

And so verse 27 says, it says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is one of the greatest statements in Scripture. And notice that Paul does not say, not merely "Christ among you." He says, not merely "Christ with you," but rather he says, "**Christ in you.**" That indwelling Christ transforms everything by the power of the Spirit of God that indwells you as you believe in Him through the Holy Spirit. Dwells within every believer. Not merely Christ admired or Christ studied or Christ respected, but **Christ dwelling in His people**. What is the Spirit of God in us? Our life, our strength, our righteousness, our peace, our future. He's all of those things.

The Christian life is not just like an imitation, okay? It's participating in the life of Christ. It's not just trying to imitate someone. It's like, you know, when my boys were young, you know, and they'd see me shaving. They're grabbing the razor. I'm going, "No, no, no, don't grab the razor!" But, you know, I say, "Here," I'd give them some blunt object. They're trying to imitate me as I shave. What it is is, as they get older and they start, they can **participate**. That's the idea. We can participate in the life of Christ as we live for Him. And His life is shown through the way that we behave, through the way that we act. And so what's the purpose of this mystery and with this hope?

Proclaiming a Person

Well, to close it, well, it's Him that we proclaim. It's Him that we proclaim. The message is a **Person**—the Lord Jesus Christ. (Sorry, that's not quite there.) The message is a Person; that's the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, in the world that we live in, often people say, "Well, we proclaim certain principles or certain philosophies, even experiences." But we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is—or Christianity really is—fundamentally about the Lord Jesus Christ. Our primary responsibility is not entertainment, it's not politics. The church exists to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our purpose. And the goal is **maturity**.

Paul says, "Him we proclaim." The church's message is not self-help, politics, tradition, or entertainment. The message is Christ. The aim is clear: to present everyone mature in Christ. That's why you receive so much teaching. That's why here at 16th you come on a Sunday or a Tuesday. And you receive teaching so that you can become mature in Christ. The person that learns becomes the teacher. That's the whole goal. Does that mean that you're going to be standing here? No, it doesn't mean that. What it means is that in your home, you're going to teach your children. In your family, you're going to teach other family members, or maybe your friends. That is the purpose God wishes for us—that we may present everyone mature in Christ. Thank you.

What does maturity involve? Well, Christlike character, biblical understanding, spiritual discernment, and also faithful obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Christian life is not merely just conversion. "I really want to just be converted to Christ." It is about a transformed life by the cross and by the example of the Lord Jesus. And that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Time is gone, and so I will stop there. But I want to just encourage you to understand more deeply, and we need to really truly understand the goodness of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it continues there, and it says that the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to His saints. And we proclaim Him.

Discerning Counterfeits

And the Apostle Paul helps us to understand, and he says, "I want you to be very careful not to follow empty philosophies." He says that "no one"—verse 4—"no one may delude you with plausible arguments."

Now, it's interesting what happens with bank tellers or customer service clerks. Years ago, not as much anymore, when they were being trained in how to deal with counterfeit bills, they didn't give them a bunch of counterfeit bills. They gave them the real one. They gave

them the bills that actually were real, right? And they would be going through them. But every once in a while, they'd put a counterfeit bill into that pile of bills. And as they would go, all of a sudden, the texture and the look and everything about that bill, they'd go, "No, this is false." Why? Because they got used to the **good stuff**. Well, in Christianity and Bible teaching, be careful of plausible arguments. Empty philosophy that could take you in the wrong direction. And that's why we have Bible teaching. That's why we enjoy the Word of God, so that as we're going through the empty philosophy of the world, we'll go, "That's a counterfeit!" Or someone says something that sounds good—"That's a counterfeit!"

You know, just a little while ago, the Secretary of War in the United States, which is the Secretary of Defense, he made some big quotation. It sounded very biblical. It was a quotation from a movie! I was shocked. And it sounded very good, but it was empty. It wasn't true. Let's be individuals that truly pursue what it is: Christ in you, the hope of glory. And let's go for the truth of God.

I encourage you, if you're a father this day, and if you're not a believer, one of the best ways that you can be an example to your family is by repenting and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. And not giving in to the philosophy of the world and the plausible arguments, but repent, trust Jesus as your Savior. And you will have eternal life and hope. And Christ will live in you. And then you have eternal life, the hope of glory. May God bless His Word.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, thank you for the Lord Jesus. Be with us now as we go about the rest of our day. May Christ be exalted in us and through us for Your glory. Thank you for the privilege of being able to serve You and follow You. In Jesus' name, amen.