

The mystery of Christ (Quality: Average)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 September 2000

Preacher: Pickett, Michael (1943-2021)

[0 : 0 0] Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 4, verse 3, and these four words, the mystery of Christ. The whole verse reads, with all praying also for us, that God would open unto us at all of our truth, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in heart. My purpose for reading to you this morning from the first and last chapters was to set before you a comparison. In the first chapter we find the Apostle very much in prayer for this church at Colossians, for the Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossians. He is saints, the Lord's deeds in the hearts of these saints of God. He gives all the glory to the one who is the author and the finisher of their most holy faith. But the Apostle is not complacent in any way to think that these saints should continue carelessly on the face of this earth. But he prays earnestly for them. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, that is the good news, concerning their salvation, do not cease to pray for you. It was a church in its infancy, a church which would have to meet with many difficulties and oppositions through its journey, and a church which needed to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here is a faithful pastor, praying for the Lord and the faithful, that God would continue, and that God would increase that work that he had begun in their hearts. He doesn't leave these things, I say, to take their own course. He doesn't leave them to wander without aid in this world. He shows, he reveals the great value of prayer.

For only while they live they pray, only while they pray they live. Life and prayer are synonymous one with the other. Prayer is the expression of the light of the Spirit in the child of God.

God is the expression of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. And the devil, of course, would have us to cease from there. He would stop the mouths of the saints of God in the church, because he knows that there is a God in heaven who waits. God in heaven who waits to answer prayer. Now, as we turn to the fourth chapter, we see the apostle still with the subject of prayer, but now his desire is that the church would pray for him.

Paul was in prison. He was in bonds. He was limited in his movements, unable to go forth anymore in and out and among the churches.

The Lord had prevented him for a season from declaring that which was his whole heart's desire.

[4 : 4 3] He said at one point, woe unto me if I preach not the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though I come to realize something of what that means. For a minister to be called and chosen of God, to be counted worthy to stand and declare the message of God to be prevented, is a very solemn thing indeed.

It is very hard for a minister to lay aside, though it is necessary at times. A minister to come aside, said the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples and rest a while.

But a minister who has been called to a work is ever anxious to be about that work. And I believe Paul here had a great desire that he might be about his master's business.

He might occupy that position to which God has called him. He might do the work of an evangelist. That he might preach the gospel that he loved, owned and adored.

Because he saw such great value in the gospel. It was his whole life, soul and spirit.

- [6 : 15] It was his great desire to set forth this magnificent person, this great glorious I am, this precious Christ.
- And so he implores the church here at Colossae.
- That they would pray unto God for him. That God would open the door to grant him utterance in the things of God.
- And here, I believe we can see a recognition by the apostles. That if a door was to be opened, God alone could open it. The devil may seek to shut it.
- Men may seek to prevent it. But if God opens the door, the door is open. And no man can shut. And although Paul is bound, he knows that the word of God is never bound.
- [7 : 28] Isn't this a great mercy? A minister may be bound in a pathway of affliction. He may be bound as unable to go forth.
- At any particular time, the word of God is not bound. I think of some of those ministers. They have their books with us today.
- Who, when they were sick and unable to go forth and preach, the Lord enabled to write. And those writings have been counted among their ministry.
- And be made profitable. Unto those to whom those writings have been sent. Now, we mustn't limit God in any way.
- Whatever door he is pleased to open, our prayer should be for God's servant. The Lord would grant them a door of utterance.
- [8 : 30] But don't these words prove to us, here is the mighty apostle. And I say that with the deepest and utmost respect for this man of God.
- Here is a mighty man of valor. A tremendous preacher of the word. One who was above and beyond any in his knowledge of the truth.
- There is no comparison to be made with the apostle. There is no man that has stood upon this earth like the apostle. In whom the great God of heaven gave knowledge of wisdom and understanding of the doctrine of the word of God.
- And yet, here he is, praying, but the Colossians would pray for him.
- And he knew that in that Colossian church there was a diversity of people. People with a diversity of gifts. They were not all well educated, great knowledgeable people.
- [9 : 50] Doubtless there were some among them who were ignorant. Some who were unlearned as to the doctrines of the word of God.
- Ones who are unable to debate upon the great truths of God. But I believe the apostle here prays for even the simplest and lowliest and most humble saint that he would pray unto God for.
- And why should he be so fervent in his desire towards this? Well, let us not think that because a person is eloquent in speech that his prayer avails any more or any less with God.
- You know, we may feel to stumble in our prayers. We may feel to be so ignorant of the things that we ask for.
- We may feel to be such poor things. But God has respect unto the prayers of all his saints. He never call any prayer values.
- [11 : 09] It has a tremendous value in that. And God will hear the plaintive cry. He will hear the humble petition.
- He will answer that which is asked in ignorance. And the Lord is not offended because his people cannot form the right language before him.

So, I believe Paul here valued the prayers of all the church at Colossae. Not excluding one from it.

But that they all individually and collectively would pray for him. Now, again I say why was Paul so zealous?

Why was he so full of zeal? That God would open a door of utterance. Because he saw the value of the gospel.

[12 : 13] I believe this is something we've largely lost today. We do not see the value of the gospel for what it is. I often quote those words that the Lord has put this treasure that is the treasury of his word in earth and vessels.

Yes, the vessels are not much. But the treasure that is put in the vessels is much. And it is to be highly regarded.

And you know the greatest work to which a man can be called is to be a preacher of the gospel. There's no greater work upon the heart.

It is a very humbling thought that God entrusts this to such a one as me. Why should I be so favoured in this life to carry this message of God's grace?

You see, although the means are poor, the vessel is weak, the language is limited, yet God is in no way limited.

[13 : 34] God is able to take the word of his grace and to lay it with power into the hearts and minds of whomsoever he will.

The Lord is not limited to time or to circumstances or to events. a meeting such as we have today. Again, I bring before you those very simple words of where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of Christ.

Christ is in the midst of his church and we believe he is. What purpose is he there for? Is he not there to bless? And if it should please the Lord to bring with power his word into the hearts of one individual, that one individual will go home today rejoicing that God should have mercy upon their souls, that God should single them out for such divine favor, that he should look upon them who are unworthy of a look or a touch or a face.

So the apostle had this burning desire in his breath to go forth with the message of God, salvation through Jesus Christ and yet he says it is a mystery.

These things are a mystery. it is not the only time that he has said it.

[15 : 21] I don't know if you children have got a margin in your Bible. You might look at the margin and there you will find against verse three a number of references.

The references are to Ephesians 6, 18 and 19 and to 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 4, 1.

In each of those places he speaks of the mystery of the gospel or the mystery of Jesus Christ and in some and substance they are the same thing.

We read it also in this first chapter whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you to fulfill the word of God.

Even the mystery which have been hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to his saints.

[16 : 33] Well the Lord helped me that is the subject which I believe he has laid upon my spirit to bring before you to speak of the mystery of Christ.

And although we may be bound in our speech and may be bound in our circumstances again I remind you the word of God is not there. And if it please the Lord to apply it and use it today then it will be firstly to his glory but it will also be for the good of mankind the good of souls.

What a mercy that the Lord is pleased to own and bless his word. The mystery of Christ.

where does that mystery begin? Well surely it begins with God.

It begins with the eternal free in heaven. It begins with that mind of God that would so lay upon Christ that union and communion that he should endure as the mediator of his church.

[18 : 08] Let us turn to those lovely words in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs and I believe there we can see scripture speaking for scripture.

You know when Paul went to the church of Berea the Bereans didn't just take Paul's word. They were eminent people.

They took it to the scriptures to see if these things be so. We can always compare scripture with scripture. Scripture will always commend scripture.

It will always confirm scripture. Now in the eighth chapter of Proverbs and in the twenty-third verse or let us read from the twenty-second it says the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his work before his works of old I was set up from everlasting from the beginning or ever the earth was.

What does it say? I was set up from everlasting from the beginning or ever the earth was.

[19 : 41] Well firstly this verse teaches us that there was before the world began a God in heaven.

This verse also teaches us concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. I believe this is a very important verse for showing unto mankind that the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ is confirmed by these things but what do these words set up mean?

They may seem a little mysterious as we first look upon them. I was set up from everlasting. So it is the Lord Jesus that is speaking and he is saying that before the world began he was set up.

Well I believe that this speaks of God's eternal counsel whereby it was ordained that Christ should be the mediator of his people.

That he should be the head of the church and the saviour of the body. Look at verse 30.

[21 : 34] Then I was by him as one brought up with him and I was daily his delight rejoicing all the way before him rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth and my delights were with the sons of men.

Now let us consider that the world was not yet created. here are the eternal three in heaven God the father God the son God the holy ghost co-equal co-eternal one God and yet it was considered it was envisaged it was reckoned that God would have a people and God knew all about that people from the beginning to the end and God here considered what he would do for that people and there was only one possible plan that could be put in execution that those people might be found with God in heaven forever and forever now in that council in that agreement it was designed that a fullness should reside in Jesus as the head of the church that he should be the one given that authority the authority of God to bring forth a people to God's glory a fullness the fullness of the

God should reside in Christ this was a great council that took place here we see the mind of the Lord Jesus doubtless he delighted in heaven he delighted in that face and portion that was his in the bosom of the Father but he also delighted in the sons of men his desire was toward his people the mystery of Christ and what a mystery it is that Christ should look upon his church before ever the world began before ever man was formed upon the face of this earth and he said they shall be mine my love my grace my desire my all is toward them they shall be mine and he covenanted to rescue man from his perceived fallen condition and to restore them to a place of eminence with the eternal three what a mystery these things are the apostle then would open up would speak of this mystery of Christ it is our desire that we may be enabled as hell to open up this mystery of Christ but we have to recognize that it is a mystery why does the apostle here and in various other places so insist that it is a mystery because these things are not known to all men they will ever remain a mystery to this world to the man to the carnal man of this world this mystery is to be revealed somewhat to God people but it will be forever eternally hidden from the eyes of those who shall be lost

I can remember as a child having a little knowledge of the church and what it meant and yet the whole book of God was a mystery to me the language of the Bible seemed to be couched in such complicated terms I don't like this if Christ is God why doesn't the word of God simply say that Jesus Christ is God that would do away with all doubts and all hindrances oh how ignorant man is how poor in the understanding of the things of God but if

God be pleased to grant a little light those things which were a mystery suddenly are mysterious no more now take a very well known portion of the scripture the gospel of John chapter 1 and birth 1 and there is a mystery revealed in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God what does that mean well if we study our scriptures if we come to any understanding of the word of God we will find that the word describes only one person the Lord Jesus Christ it is a term that is never used of God the

[28 : 35] Father neither is it ever used of God the Holy Spirit but it is a word that is often used of the eternal son in the beginning was the word now what is a word I'm sure our young children I'm sure Jessica is beginning to learn what words mean beginning to spell them out and to understand them but there are many words that at the moment she cannot understand but as our children grow up as they receive more schooling they understand the meanings of words and they convey something to their mind they have some understanding some grasp and they use them to communicate one with another words are very valuable in setting forth the meaning of things

I was to ask someone to describe an object and they used a number of words to describe it those words doubtless would be suitable to impress upon our mind what that object was in the beginning was the word the communication of God unto his people the setting forth of the truth in the hearts of sinners this word then is the communication of God in giving understanding unto God's people his purposes God as essentially God is so mysterious that no human mind could ever comprehend but we see God in the person of the

Lord Jesus Christ in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God so there can be no clearer statement that here is the revelation of God unto mankind in the person of the Lord Jesus now Paul in this portion of his epistle is speaking of the preaching of the gospel that the preaching of the gospel was given unto him that he was blessed that he was favored to be an instrument in God's service in communicating the word of God unto mankind God when the

Lord Jesus Christ was born upon this earth God sent an angel to make the message of his coming known not unto the king nor unto the high priest nor to men of influence or education among people but he sent his angel to four simple shepherds abiding in the field watching over their sheep by night and without any former indication of their arrival suddenly there was a breaking forth of this grand declaration for unto you is born this day in the city of David a saviour which is Christ the Lord and then a host joined with that angel and sang an heavenly song

God would declare unto man that he had sent his son into this world now there are very few examples that we could draw from where God sends an angel to communicate unto man the message of his salvation God choosing rather to use the instrumentality of man and why is this what do angels know of seeing what do they know of the need of salvation they know of election because they were elect before the world began they know of God sustaining and maintaining power because they have been kept holy when some had fallen they know nothing of the need of salvation never having sinned never having done anything contrary to the word or will of

[34 : 31] God God chose rather weak poor insignificant man to declare his message and the Lord Jesus Christ passed by angels as the apostle writing to the Hebrews says that he was made a little lower than the angels he took upon himself our humanity he was found in the likeness of man with but one exception and that of sin he was born in sinless perfection and we read here and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth and the word was made flesh here is a wonderful confirmation of that first verse in the beginning was the word

God's expression unto his people the manifestation of his mercy to sinners this great mystery the incarnation of the son of God Emmanuel God with us these things will ever remain a mystery and yet it has pleased God to open the hearts of his dear people and to give them sufficient understanding that they might believe in him that he is the word of God man Christ Jesus God manifest in the flesh the mystery have begun to be revealed the mystery have begun to be opened up and we see the first indication of that in the very beginning of the word of

God God made man without seed and Adam in the garden lived without that which we have to live with without the knowledge of sin cannot begin to understand cannot begin to appreciate what it must have been like for Adam in that garden to live without seed sin annoys us sin contradicts us sin brings a great burden of guilt upon us sin brings us sometimes to near despair now Adam had not seen he knew nothing of this and yet there came a time when he fell into sin sin or can we not understand from this that if

Adam could not keep himself then none of us can keep ourselves man never can never will be able to keep himself and those who promote the idea so that we can become more holy and that we can live under God live in a delusion because if Adam could not keep himself from sinning although he had never met with sin before we who are steeped in sin we are we who are polluted through and through with sin cannot make ourselves better cannot live near to God except God comes to deliver us from the power and from the effects of that sin that seeks to justify himself and Adam sought to justify himself by charging

God with his fault he says the woman the wife whom thou gavest unto me it was her fault it was her fault if it wasn't for her I would still be in sinless perfection he is as much same and the woman well she justifies herself she says it wasn't me it was the serpent he beguiled me and we did eat we see how Adam and Eve sought to justify themselves in the sight of God by sewing together fig leaves to hide their nakedness and their shame God here shows them that way the Lord

[40 : 48] God called unto Adam and said unto him where art thou where art thou are of God should thus speak to us should say unto us where art thou what what is our answer what can we say we have hidden ourselves out because we are ashamed of our sin and our guilt is ever before us and although we try to bring forth a perfection that is acceptable unto God this we can never do but the Lord here in his great and abundant mercy shows unto man that way in which he will deliver him here we have the first indication but the mystery of

Christ is beginning to be unraveled here is the first light shining in that tremendous darkness that although the ground is cursed because of man's sin yet here is the promise of the saviour here is the first indication of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed it shall bruise thy hair and thou shalt bruise his and

Satan has been and will be bruising the heel of the saints of God to the end of time but the promise is to be found here the mystery of Christ that which was in but a dim light will through the ages of time be gradually brought to the brightness to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ upon this earth and the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of his people and in all those circumstances by and through which they are brought near unto God with all praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ for which

I am also in God for we must leave it there may the Lord help us if it be his will to continue this afternoon Amen Amen good Yeah Amen.

Go