

Let's begin with a secret. There's something enticing/intriguing about a "secret"...

*A friend of mine one day announced he had a secret. And the young people gathered in around him, and he beckoned "come in close", and we all did. And he looked around at us, and he said: "I'm surrounded by incompetence." ... And the joke was on us...*

We all love a secret, don't we...

The love of secrets (that juicy bit of information that nobody else knows) is:

- what fuels a rumour, to take off like wildfire
- what inspires
  - mystery novels;
  - investigative journalists; and
  - paparazzi, digging in to people's private lives;
- when it comes to the internet, claiming to have a secret is the ideal 'click-bait' for
  - news sites;
  - gossip sites
  - conspiracy sites
  - and "Here's a secret weight-loss tip"...

To possess a secret, can give a person a sense of power – "I know something that you don't know" (or better still) "I know something I'm not supposed to know, and I can share it with you." (whether it be true, or whether it be false)...

But if the love of a good secret is so great, then faith in Jesus Christ **should** be the most sought-after learning in the world...

You see, Christianity – God’s plan of salvation for the world, is a mystery... Now, that doesn’t mean that the Gospel is a mystery that cannot be grasped; nor is it a secret that cannot be told...

What it means, is that for so long, it was kept hidden, but then God revealed it...

Throughout the ages/generations, God was doing something with His chosen people (Israel)... He’d even told them, that they would be a light to the nations – that through them, people of other nationalities, would find salvation in God... But when Jesus came (Who was God’s means of salvation), most of Israel totally missed it....

V26 speaks of <sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

God hasn’t revealed this mystery to everyone, but only to His saints, but who are they??? Well, a few weeks ago, we talked about that, as we read the address of this letter: V<sup>2</sup> **To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:**

Some folk tend to think of a saint as someone who’s:

- really patient (patience of a saint);
- extra godly (Oh, that man’s a saint);
- canonised by a man in Rome;
- done extraordinary miracles

But Biblically, saints are literally “the Holy ones”; Christians; Disciples of Jesus Christ... We are holy, because by Christ, our sins have been taken away.

Now, that’s a secret that is truly worth knowing: <sup>26</sup> **the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.**

And so, if you are a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a Saint, and that means you have a secret, worth telling. The mystery has been revealed to you and I???

What this means, is that although “the saints of God” – are generally not seen as “wise” by worldly standards – in fact, the Saints of the Lord Jesus Christ, are often the under-trodden and despised... Often we’re mocked by the world as being idiots – simpletons for even believing in a god at all...

But things are not as they appear. We are indeed privileged, that our Heavenly Father has revealed to us – He has given us *insight into God’s purpose for creation*, and it’s an insight that hasn’t given to the whole world<sup>i</sup>. An unbeliever cannot understand why you would choose to give up everything, to follow Jesus... And yet, to us it’s so clear – “Why wouldn’t you become a Christian too???” But, they just don’t get it, because to them, the mystery remains hidden.

And no matter how much we are trying to teach someone the good news, unless God (by His Holy Spirit) is revealing to them the mystery of Christ, they’re not going to get it...

And the mystery has been **revealed**. (Greek close to – epiphany) – wow. It’s been an epiphany, and our eyes are opened to God’s reality... Usually when this word “epiphany” is used in the New Testament, it’s to do with the coming/appearing of Christ (epiphany)...

Which is entirely appropriate, because what God has revealed to us, isn’t so much a step-by-step chronological/orderly plan of how He’s going to save the world – What has been revealed, is a person – The epiphany, is Christ....

Here’s the mystery/secret:

V<sup>27</sup> To them (to the saints) God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This is the mystery... **Christ in you**, .... In who? Christ in the saints – Christ in the faithful disciples of Jesus – Christ in those who are born again (who die to this world, and live for Christ)... **the hope of glory**....

Wowersers!!! Israel didn’t see that coming...

Something a lot of us don’t realise is that the Jews themselves, were good evangelists... That’s why, wherever the apostles took the Gospel, the first place they preached, was at the

synagogue. Now why were there synagogues, deep into Gentile territory? It's because the Jews were evangelists for their cause... They were going to save the gentiles by turning them into law-abiding Jews, and drawing them in to practice the Levitical/covenantal Law... And by jumping through these hoops, of cleanliness and sacrifice and whatnot, you could get close to God too...

But in Christ, the curtain is pulled back, and we have an epiphany... You don't have to keep all these rules and regulations and ceremonies to get close to God... **Christ in you**, is the hope of glory... If you're wanting to get close to God, how's that – Is that close enough for you??? Not just in the proximity of God, but God **in** us... WOW!!!

And this, is the hope of glory... You know, a lot of people are of the opinion, "That if someone is good person, when they die, they get to enter the glory of God..." That's nothing more than wishful thinking. The Scriptures never say that.

Christ **in** you, is the hope of glory... And Christ is not in you, unless you are in relationship with Christ. Who is Christ in? Christ is in the saints. Are the saints the good/patient/people – the extra-well-behaved??? No. The saints are the born-again – the saints are those who repent of sin, and put their faith in Jesus Christ...

And this is the mystery of Christ in us, and it is so important, it is something that Paul says:

- we proclaim;

- defend – (warning everyone);
- teach (teaching everyone with all wisdom)

Why? that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Last week, we talked about “were”; “are”; “will”; “if”.

- We **were** hostile to Christ.
- By the cross of Jesus Christ, we **are** reconciled to Him.
- Because we are reconciled, we **will be** presented as holy and blameless and above reproach before him
- <sup>23</sup> **if** indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard,

And so, by the Holy Spirit, Paul is:

- proclaiming;
- defending by warning;
- teaching

to help make this happen: that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

He doesn't want any of us to be dropping out half-way through. We will be presented mature in Christ, only if we continue steadfast in the faith. And that's why he's proclaiming; warning; teaching...

And the faith/gospel that is our foundation (**what we believe** about Jesus Christ and salvation), is really important. Last week he talked about being **stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel** –

Now, there appears to be many different versions of the Gospel getting taught today. **Are** there many different versions of the Gospel? No. There is only one Gospel (the Gospel the Apostles taught), and anything that differs from that, is a perversion of the Gospel. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is unchanging – it is the firm foundation... And any kind of man-made gospel – any kind of inoffensive anaemic gospel is not the Gospel.

Now, when it comes to:

- proclaiming the Gospel;
- warning other disciples of Jesus to avoid false teachings, and to stick to the true Gospel;
- **teaching** the true Gospel, and not leaving room for false teachings that appeal to our sinful nature,

there's a very real cost to that. There's always a cost, to holding to the truth, and rejecting deception...

- There's a cost to me today –
- there's a cost to any Bible, Gospel-focused-teacher today;
- as there was a cost to Paul.

He tells us, “For this purpose”, he struggles and he toils... The struggle is persecution and suffering...

In V<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, (he's suffering for a church that he's never even met them) and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in

## Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church

What a bazaar statement... Over the years, there's been a lot of ink spilt over that verse... But, let me explain it very simply...

What makes that verse weird, is that he talks about “**filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions**”... So let's begin by clearing the decks... That does **NOT** refer to there being anything lacking in what Christ has done for salvation... The Scriptures (including the writings of Paul Himself) are absolutely clear on this – **Christ is sufficient**... There is nothing lacking in what Christ has done on the cross, to save us from our sins... And hopefully we're all agreed on this. If not, you might find some heretics to fellowship with somewhere down the road...

No further sacrifice is required. Jesus is the once and for all sacrifice.

Hebrews 10: (ESV) <sup>10</sup> ... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

So we've cleared the deck – the death of Jesus on the cross, is completely sufficient to pay the penalty of our sins.

But Paul reveals a very important truth: Christ continues to suffer today, for the sake of His church. And this suffering, is the suffering of Disciples of Jesus (particularly the suffering of those who suffer because they preach and teach the truth, and warn the church of deception).

But to hear more on that, we're going to have to wait until next time. (2 weeks until we're together again.)

Let's pray:

Oh Lord,

What a privilege it is,

to have this mystery revealed to us, Your saints:

Christ in us...

Lord, help us to cherish this.

And by Your Holy Spirit,

help us to understand the hidden treasures

of wisdom and knowledge of Christ Jesus...

Lord, although we call it,

"a secret" "a mystery",

may we not keep it as a secret,

but may we do what Paul did:

proclaim; teach; warn; love...

And Lord, may You continue

to reveal Your secret,

to those whom you are calling.

That they too, would experience

the hope of Glory,

Christ in us...

Amen.

---

<sup>i</sup> Dunn, J.D.G., 1996. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: a commentary on the Greek text*, Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press.