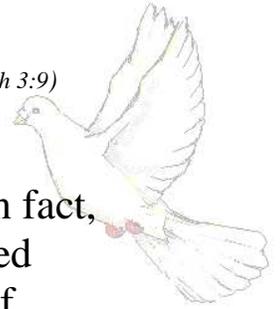




## *The Mystery of the Gospel*

“and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the **mystery**” (Eph 3:9)



Do we really understand the finished work of Jesus Christ? In fact, what is His finished work? What specifically does His finished work mean for us today? And, what does the finished work of Jesus have to do with the Holy Spirit?

Without an understanding of Jesus' finished work the natural man simply cannot discern the Bible. Even Bible scholars who read God's word without spiritual understanding are helpless when it comes to hidden truths. This amazing facet of God's word, which is perhaps best described as “beyond natural understanding,” led our Lord to say, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because ***thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent***, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt 11:25). In effect, God's word is a mystery! According to Jesus, the Father “***hid these things***” from the natural man! Therefore, since God's word has many hidden aspects, several areas continue to be a great mystery not only to scholars, but also to Christendom! This means that, the majority of humanity is ignorant of the great mysteries contained within the Bible! In this lesson, we are going to learn about a great mystery of God, especially as it relates to Jesus' finished work upon the cross!

God's great mysteries are revealed in direct relation to the faith of each believer! In other words, without belief (*faith*) the mysteries of God simply cannot be understood nor can they even be recognized. The root of all sin is unbelief, “for ***whatsoever is not of faith is sin***” (Rom 14:23). Keep in mind that without belief, the great mysteries of God cannot even be perceived!

Perhaps one way that we can gauge our own relative level of belief (*faith*) is by asking ourselves the following question. “Do I view the Gospel as a ‘becoming gospel?’” In other words, do I believe that the Gospel is a message about something yet future? Many Christians would agree with that concept; however, instead of some kid of a “becoming gospel,” we must come to realize that we need to view the Gospel as a “right now Gospel!” The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, ***now are we the sons of God***” (1 John 3:2); Hebrews claims that, “***Now*** faith is.” The point is that ***now*** (*in the present*): we are perfectly sound; we are perfectly accepted, we are perfectly whole in Christ.

Written by M. Larry Perrino

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God has not somehow changed between the Old Testament and the New Testament; instead, His covenant with us has changed! We must grow to understand that the finished work of the cross of Jesus has already satisfied God’s requirement for justice! This means that God is not examining us for sin that He may judge! In the Old Testament we can find statements such as the following passage over ninety times, “Therefore is **the anger of the LORD kindled against his people**, and he hath stretched forth **his hand against them, and hath smitten them**: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. **For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still**” (Isa 5:25). God will always remain a Holy and a just God; nevertheless, His justice has already been satisfied in Jesus! Can we really comprehend that God’s righteous judgment against our sin has already been satisfied in Christ, “he hath **made him to be sin for us**, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21)! Indeed, the opposite is actually true; for God to judge us harshly for our sins, He would have to deny Jesus’ sacrifice upon the cross, “he hath **made him to be sin for us.**” It follows that if God has already judged sin in Him, then we who believe and have our faith in Him have already been judged!

You and I must come to the point where we truly understand the finished work of the cross! We can begin by examining the passage, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt 16:24-25). Jesus addressed His disciples and said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself!” What exactly does that mean?

Various past deep-rooted teachings have influenced us to believe that we are supposed to deny ourselves and lay everything down at the feet of Jesus. It follows then, that only after denying ourselves will we be received by the Lord! We have learned that we must deny everything; this includes any hopes of fulfilling our own personal dreams. Essentially, we must lay it all down for Jesus; and then we can follow the Lord.

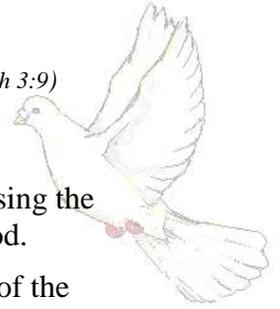
Sounds good; but **that is not at all** what Jesus was talking about in that passage, “If any man will come after me, let him **deny** himself, and take up **his** cross, and follow me” (Matt 16:24). To deny means “to say not” or “to contradict.” Therefore, Jesus was essentially teaching us that in order to follow Him we are to “contradict” ourselves. In essence, we proclaim that we have no power of our own selves to perform the work of God! Instead, we must take up the work of His cross!

Jesus went on to say, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt 16:25). How many of you have tried to save you own life? In context of the last verse, the point made is that when one thinks that he can essentially perform godliness for himself, that person becomes disqualified! But, “**whosoever will lose his life** for my sake shall find it.” This means that when we call out to Jesus, “I just can’t do this!” that is when we are made capable! It’s not about what we



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can do on our own; instead, it is about what we can do in Jesus! Jesus was addressing the concept of people attempting to show evidence of their own capabilities before God.

If we have a hard time believing that it is all about capabilities, notice the context of the very next verse, “For what is a man profited, **if he shall gain the whole world**, (Obviously, Jesus is referencing a very capable individual in this analogy.) and lose his own soul?” (Matt 16:26). We have all met people who are “super spiritual” they are disciplined, intelligent, outgoing and full of character! Is it possible that these exceptional people can somehow find a way to God on their own? No! Instead, nobody (*not the very best of us*) can do the work that only Jesus was able to perform for us!

Within the context of capabilities and works, notice how Jesus continued with that passage, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then **he shall reward every man according to his works**” (Matt 16:27). So how are we supposed to interpret this passage? Most have believed that whatever we accomplish (*do or perform after becoming Christian*), that Jesus will reward us according to our specific works? Once again, the problem is that this interpretation is completely incorrect! Try reading that passage without focusing upon the man’s work; instead, as an alternative, place the focus upon His works, “**he shall reward every man** according to **his** (Jesus’) works!” The passage is essentially saying that Jesus will reward every man according to **His** (Jesus’) own work that He alone accomplished on the cross!

Our job is to put effort not upon doing works but upon believing the good news of Jesus’ finished work on the cross! When we truly believe that we stand before God because of His (Jesus’) works, then good works will naturally tag along; but even those works will be His works in us, not our works! When we really grasp this truth then “Bible hope” can begin to leap in our hearts! Indeed, one of the keys to the good life and feeling perfectly accepted and whole before God is to begin to live in Bible hope! Therefore, let’s take a look at what Bible hope is!

Bible hope is not natural human hope; Bible hope is not the same as our every day hopes such as: I hope I hit the lottery (*Probably none of you have hoped for this!*); I hope I get that better job; I hope that my daughter finishes college with honors; I hope that I can complete this project on time; etc. All of these hopes are natural; however, they do not describe “Bible hope!”

The Gospel is a Gospel of Hope! Let’s notice Jer 29:11 “For **I know the thoughts that I think toward you**, saith the LORD, **thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end**” (Jer 29:11). Most Christians do not really expect for God to focus any of His efforts upon them! They tend to think that He is just so busy that He does not really focus on their insignificance! This is wrong thinking; indeed, He does not just think about us every once in a while during passing moments; He thinks about us all of the time, “I know the thoughts that I think toward you!”



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We have got to stop thinking that God is somehow putting up with us! Most Christians actually believe that every time that we make a mistake, God (*because of his justice*) must one way or another punish us. However, the amplified translation of that passage from Jeremiah says that God regularly thinks about us, “For ***I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you***, says the Lord, ***thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome***” (Jer 29:11 AMP). God’s plans for us are glorious; He is concerned about our final outcome! This should give us great Hope! This passage reveals that God thinks deeply about everyone of His children. Further, God does not harbor any form of displeasure towards even the worst of our sinful actions!

Critics of the concept of grace will say, “Well since God never has any displeasure with anything that we do, does this mean that we can live like the devil!” If you can understand what I am about to convey, then you will realize the proper Biblical perspective. Sin will kill you, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23); nevertheless, God will not kill you because of your sin!

Essentially, we must get to the place where through the finished work of Jesus we live in complete peace with God! Therefore, His thoughts about us are good “and not for evil!” None of God’s plans for us have any evil (*destructive, negative, or disparaging*) intent. Through Jesus’ finished work on the cross we are brought into a place where we have a confident expectation of good things every moment of every day! Instead of thinking, “What can possibly go wrong next?” Bible Hope is a constant confident expectation of good things happening in our lives! Christians are supposed to live in a confident expectation of good things! We should all expect: I know that something good is going to happen to me today!

Notice Eph 2:10, “For ***we are his workmanship***, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). Paul noted that, “***we are his workmanship***,” this means that (I am not/you are not) a self made individual; instead, we are what He is making of us in Jesus Christ! Notice how the passage continues “created in Christ Jesus ***unto good works***, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Notice the Amplified translation “recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] ***that we may do those good works*** which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10 AMP). This means that we have been predestined (*planned beforehand*) “***unto*** good works!” No, we are not supposed to live like the devil, we were born again “***unto*** good works.” Note we were not born ***by*** good works; rather, ***unto*** good works! We have been predestined so that we can go do the good works that God created for us from the beginning of the world! As we perform those good works, we must confess that the works are not our own; rather, they are His works!

When we look naturally at works from the outside, there is no difference between dead works and good works! The only difference between dead works and good works is the



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intention of the heart! If we do a work because we love God, then it is a good work! Not that we get more access to God; not that our work is a browning point toward heaven; instead, we love God; therefore, we do the work that He has placed inside of us!

Notice what John wrote, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: . . . 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us **eternal life**, and this life (*zoe life*) is in his Son” (1 John 5:10-11). This means that the same life that sustains God Himself lives in me, “**He that hath the Son hath life**; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). John continued, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life**” (1 John 5:13). Finally, John concluded with certainty, “And **this is the confidence that we have in him**, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14). John wrote these things so that we could know with absolute certainty!

Living in certainty is the opposite of living in unbelief. We learned earlier that the root of all sin is unbelief, “for **whatsoever is not of faith is sin**” (Rom 14:23). For example, Christians regularly pray, “God bless us!” However, we have already been blessed! So why are asking to be blessed? Notice what the word says, “**who hath blessed** us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Did you notice the **past** tense in that passage? What we should be doing is merely thanking Him for what He has already done for us! This brings us back to the proper perspective of the “right **now** Gospel!”

In order to reach the ultimate outcome (*destiny*) that God has planned for us, we must live with the constant continual expectation of good happening in our lives! The key to Bible hope is understanding the mystery of the Gospel. Paul wrote, “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to **my gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery, which was kept secret since the world began**” (Rom 16:25). In this passage, Paul specifically used the words, “**my gospel!**” Paul wanted us specifically to focus upon **his** Gospel! Paul continued in that verse “and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery** (*GK: musterion which actually means a secret in the past that is now revealed! It is like a widespread password.*) Paul elsewhere referred to this mystery, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a **mystery**, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes (*demon spirits*) of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:7-8). The point is that God concealed this secret (**mystery**) so that nobody (*not even the angels*) could have possibly known about it!

No person can truly walk and live in a consistent confidence of good things until he knows understands and believes in the mystery of the gospel! In fact, that would be impossible! The world cannot partake of what God has provided as long as the mystery remains a secret unknown to them! Paul wrote of himself, “Unto me, **who am less than the least of all saints**, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles” (Eph 3:8). In this



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passage Paul explains that none of us need to be something special in order to advance the Kingdom of God; all we need is to understand the mystery! When we understand this mystery it has the power to transform our lives and the lives of the people around us! Paul continued, “that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable** (*boundless, fabulous, marvelous*) **riches of Christ.**” There are amazing riches in Christ; and, we believers are never too insignificant to take these riches to the world, “**to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery**” (Eph 3:9). Verse 10 reveals God’s whole intent, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places (*angels*) might be known by the church (*us!*) the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10). God wants his manifold wisdom revealed to the spirit rulers and authorities (*angelic beings*) through the agency of His church!

Any person who knows (*understands and believes*) the mystery of the Gospel is recognized as soon as they walk into any specific town and begin to proclaim the mystery of Paul’s Gospel! When this takes place in the natural, every wicked spirit (*in the supernatural*) recognizes and must respond to that Gospel! Beyond the wicked spirits responding to the Gospel, verse twelve of Ephesians three teaches that, “we have **boldness and access** with confidence by the faith of him.” That verse confirms to us that we are welcome into God’s presence anytime that we choose. This means there is never a time when we are not welcome into His presence!

Paul clearly associates “his” Gospel with what he identifies as a mystery! However, whenever a secret has been shared, then it is no longer a secret! Since Paul’s secret has been identified, we are going to share that secret! Obviously, we must understand and believe the mystery of God!

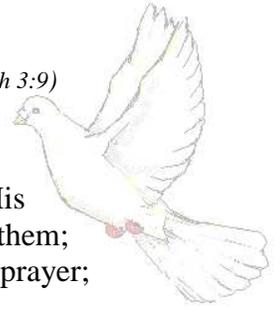
So what is the mystery? Paul writes that God has given me (*Paul*) the responsibility of proclaiming the mystery of the Gospel, “Even the **mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but **now is made manifest to his saints**” (Col 1:26). The church is supposed to know the mystery! We should be asking, “How is it possible that Paul’s mystery still remains obscure?” How many of you would like to know Paul’s secret (*musterion*)? It is described in the very next verse of Colossians; “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**” (Col 1:27). The mystery is the simple concept, “**Christ in you, the hope of glory!**” We should be crying out, “Thank you God! I know the great secret!” But what does “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” actually mean? Along with the knowledge, we need a revelation of exactly what that statement means!

The answer is incredibly awesome; “Christ in me” means that I am forever inseparable from Jesus! I cannot be separated from Jesus Christ! He is in me and I am in Him. What does this mean? It means that God the Father cannot distinguish the difference between us individually and the Lord Jesus Christ! This further means that you and I are completely inseparable from God! Jesus prayed, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those



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whom thou hast given me, **that they may be one, as we are (one)**” (John 17:11); His prayer continues a few verses later, “the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; **that they may be one, even as we are one**” (John 17:22). Now think about Jesus’ prayer; do you think that there is any way that God would not have answered His prayer?

Do any of you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Is there anybody here who will confirm this truth? Notice what John says about those who will admit to this simple fact, “**Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God**” (1 John 4:15). This means that we are supposed to have the absolute assurance and confidence that God dwells in us; He dwells in us in the same way that He dwelt in Jesus!

The Scripture declares that, “**as he is, so are we in this world**” (1 John 4:17). The question is, “How is Jesus?” Is he sick? “as he is, so are we in this world.” Is He poor? “as he is, so are we in this world.” Is God angry with Jesus? We know the answer!

Indeed, God can never get angry with you because He is not angry with Jesus! God will never be disappointed with us because we are inseparable from Jesus, “as he is, so are we in this world!” We are the recipients of the work that Jesus completed upon the cross; it is never about us! Can you really get a hold of this? I pray God that you can; indeed, you must! We all must get to the point where we understand that Jesus is a human who is seated at the right hand of God! He chose forever to be identified with us! He chose to become a human being so that we could be identified in him! The angels cannot entirely understand this concept! That is why they ask, “**But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?**” (Heb 1:13).

Consider the following: Suppose you were completely familiar with my jacket, and you recognized my arm as I opened the door. Suppose further that as I began to enter through the doorway that someone outside of the house beamed to me. Therefore, I did not completely enter into the house; instead, I remained outside and talked to the person, while I held open the door. Nevertheless, you clearly recognized my jacket and you were certain that it was me who was about to enter into the house. At this point, would you announce to everyone “here comes Larry’s arm;” after all, that is literally all of me that you had observed. No! You would say here comes Larry! In the same way, when I walk into a room, because Christ is in me, the demons do not say here comes the little toe of Jesus Christ! Paul wrote, “**we, being many, are one body in Christ**” (Rom 12:5); therefore, since I am part of the body of Christ, I am inseparable from Jesus! This is true of all of us; however, we must believe it!

This means that when I walk into any situation, Jesus has just walked into that situation! Jesus actually believed that He was God! He acted like it! He spoke like it! He believed it! When you and I believe the mystery of the Gospel, we will begin to act and speak and believe the same things that He believed! We are one with the Lord! That is why “**Christ in us**” is so powerful, “all the promises of God **in him** are yea, and **in him** Amen!” (2 Cor



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1:20); indeed, “if we be dead with him, ***we shall also live with him***” (2 Tim 2:11)! In this passage, Paul is referencing the great mystery! Paul continues in this same passage, “if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:12-13). Don’t you just love the way that Paul wrote? Now, if we are always in Him, what could that last passage possibly mean? Could it mean that if we were to ever deny Jesus, He would turn around and deny us? Didn’t He say, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?” (Heb 13:5). This seems like a contradiction. What could be going on here? Obviously we need to clarify our understanding!

We must begin by reviewing again the concept concerning the proper understanding of the Greek word “deny.” To deny literally means “to say not” or “to contradict.” With that more full-bodied understanding of the word, substitute the word “contradict” in place of the word “deny,” “if we (*contradict*) deny him he also will (*contradict*) deny us!” Jesus must not agree with us when we contradict Him; otherwise, He would be contradicting himself! If we say, “I am sick,” he must contradict us and say, “Not true, by my stripes you have been healed;” because, “he cannot (*contradict*) deny himself!”

Do you get the point? Jesus must contradict us when we contradict His word, (*Him*), because He cannot contradict himself! He came in order to position us in Him! Paul writes, “study to show yourself approved of God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed.” We always thought that this means that we should study so we could prove to God our desire to know His word! Here again, that verse does not have that connotation! Who needs to be shown? Paul wrote, “study ***to show yourself*** approved of God.” The point is that we need to study to show ourselves. That verse is saying that we need to study (*take the word of God for the purpose of showing to myself that I am accepted in God that I am loved by God that I am perfect in Christ! When I do this properly, I am rightly dividing the word of truth!*) Any other purpose of reading God’s word is not rightly dividing the word of truth! This truth cannot be perceived by human intellect; only those of faith can really understand it!

When I go into the word of God and spend time with His word, the ultimate outcome needs to be that I am approved of God, that I am loved of God, that he loves me just the way that I am! I am in Him and He is in me. I hope you are beginning to appreciate exactly who you are in Christ? If you do, then you will realize that you do not need to become someone else; you simply become “His workmanship!” We are each a product of His finished work upon the cross!