

“Do You Have a Secret?”—Colossians 1:25-28

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Do You Have a Secret?”, is Colossians 1:25-28 → . . . *to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints. To them 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. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“And the winner is . . .!” These are the words that keep people on the edge of their seats while waiting for the revelation of the best actor, musician, video and so forth in connection with competitions on various TV programs. It’s kind of like waiting for a secret to be revealed so people will either rejoice in the outcome or maybe wonder in the mystery of why that person “won.” For those directly involved as nominees or contestants they are waiting in exciting anticipation for the “secret” to be revealed, even while being apprehensive about the possibility of “losing.”

Secrets are curious things. Sometimes they can be fun as when you keep a secret for a surprise birthday party. In fact, its hard to keep it a

secret. The revelation is usually joyful and filled with blessing! Sometimes secrets can be “haunting” because we may know something about someone else which may disturb us immensely. Many times they can be tormenting as when you must live with mistakes, sins and victimization from your past which you feel you can reveal to no one for fear of rejection or character defamation. While some secrets are meant to be held in confidence, with some secrets revelation is necessary in order for blessing to occur. Do you have a secret?

Our text speaks about God revealing His “secret”—*the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints*. Actually, it really wasn’t a secret. He had talked about it a lot throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. However, as it unfolded there were many parts of this plan of salvation which were very “mysterious” to God’s people.

Paul talked about himself as one who had been commissioned to tell this “secret” in verses 25-26 of our text. He says he because *a minister of the church according to the stewardship from God that was given to him for them, to make the word of God **fully known**, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints*. To what was Paul referring in this *mystery* of God?

The membership of the Church in Colossae was primarily Gentile. Here Paul referred to their relationship with the LORD as a *mystery*—a

term used in many of the non-Christian religions of his day to refer to secret information available only to an exclusive group of people. We also have “secret societies” and sects in our culture where one does not receive the fullness of their doctrine until after one becomes a member. As opposed to such false religions the Christian faith is about “full disclosure” so that people fully know God’s will for them **in Christ Jesus, even as they are *fully known by God*** (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:3; 13:12) **to receive all His blessings!**

Why would Paul refer to their relationship with God as a *mystery*? Verse 27 says: *To them* (that is, the church) *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.* The *mystery* that needed revealing was that the Gentiles are also included in the benefits of salvation simply through faith in Jesus. While this may seem like a “no brainer” for us, it was not so for the early Christians.

Even though it was prophesied in the Old Testament that the Gentiles would turn to the God of Israel and be saved, the Jews (and many Jewish Christians) never envisioned that they would have an equal unity with the Jews. Many thought that one must also become Jewish—that is, get circumcised and follow the ceremonial laws and customs of the Jews—in order to be a “complete” Christian. Thus, the LORD had to take the early church through a “discovery process” during its first twenty

years following the Day of Pentecost. He needed to reveal to them that the Gentiles and Jews alike stand the same in His plan of salvation for them in Christ. Paul reminded the Christians in Ephesus accordingly in Ephesians 3:6 → *This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel—not through the gospel plus becoming Jewish.*

This *mystery* is based **totally** on the grace of God as displayed by His work in Jesus Christ. All people by sinful nature are enemies of God and need **His** life-changing **grace**. Colossians 1:21-22 says: *You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **He has now reconciled** in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.* This salvation comes to anyone who recognizes their sinful hostility toward God through repentance and faith and trusts completely in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ alone. Turning to the LORD in repentance and faith, there is hope for us as we stand firm on the foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ **alone**.

What do you do with *the mystery*? Unfortunately the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a mystery to many people in our circles and culture. This *mystery* needs to be shared with everyone by both our words and our

actions in order for them to also have the hope of glory.

We have a “secret” which we just can’t wait to tell everyone because we ourselves have experienced this great act of God’s grace in our own lives! The prophet Jeremiah contemplated not sharing God’s Will and Word saying in Jeremiah 20:9 → *If I say, “I will not mention Him, or speak any more in His name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.* The apostles expressed the same thought when instructed not to share the Gospel in Acts 4:20 → *We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.* In both of these instances God’s servants were experiencing persecution. We have a “secret” which we just can’t wait to tell everyone because our Lord desires us to let everyone in on His “secret” so that they too may be saved.

As we share this *mystery* with others it will involve taking risks and persecution. Paul made reference to this persecution in Colossians 1:24 → *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, 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.* In his flesh he is *filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of . . . the church?* What does that mean? Wasn’t the sufferings of Christ enough for the church’s salvation? He is not saying that Christ’s suffering was insufficient. Rather, he is stating that there will be added sufferings necessary which will accompany this

Good News as we bring it to a lost and hostile world. In other words, there will be persecution and suffering as the church grows through sharing the Gospel. The suffering is not over.

It is actually a reiteration of Jesus' word from Matthew 10:22 → *You will be hated by all for My name's sake.* Thus the encouragement of Jesus in verses 26-28 of the same chapter: *So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him Who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Our desire is to *present **everyone** to God **mature in Christ.*** ***In Christ*** there is no guilt, no insecurities and no regrets because we are free ***in Christ*** from accusations. Your sin, which may seem like a tormenting "secret" to you, is completely forgiven ***in Christ!*** When it reveals its ugly face Christ reveals His wonderful grace! ***In Christ*** there are no other criteria upon which one is acceptable in God's presence and saved. Galatians 3:26-28 says: *In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Being ***mature in Christ*** happens by partaking of His means of grace

daily so that we can live under **His** grace; serve Him under **His** Lordship; depend upon **His** power to be performed; and suffer under the hope of glory which **He** holds out to us in the Gospel. Thus, *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this we toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within* (cf. Colossians 1:28-29) us by His Holy Spirit! “And the winner is . . . **YOU IN CHRIST!** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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