

Bible Basics Conference 2009: "Walk Worthy of the Calling!"

Part 6

Speaker	Bible Basics Conference; Simon Attwood; Michael Hardt; Graham Warnes; Hugh Clark; Paul Dronsfield; Andrew Poots
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[00:00:01] The unsearchable riches of Christ. The portion of scripture which we should turn to is Ephesians chapter 3 and for our first consideration the verses 1 to 13. So it would be good if we had our Bibles, our New Testaments open at the Scriptures. Can I just say that this word unsearchable does not mean that we are not to search into it. It's not something that's prohibited to us. It is something that we definitely should seek to do and we are doing so in these meetings. But the thought is that the subject is entirely beyond us. We cannot fathom it. [00:01:01] No matter how deeply we are taught, no matter what entrance we have into the truth, there's more resources in God. There's more in Christ. There's more on before. The bucket is in the ocean but the ocean is in the bucket. Now David took five stones from the brook and Andrew took five words from the book. And you have your pieces of paper and you have your pens and it would be a very interesting exercise if time permitted to give you two minutes on intelligence, two minutes on revelation, two minutes on mystery, two minutes on administration, and two minutes in testimony and see what you would write about this subject.

And it would be interesting to collect the pieces of paper and to go through [00:02:06] them in the interval but alas we're not going to have time for that. But just think of those things for a little moment while I turn to what we have in the section 5 on the program. It says this chapter is a parenthesis. Now a parenthesis that highlights the mystery of Christ and the church. What does that mean this parenthesis? Well if we turn to verse 1 of chapter 3 it's saying for this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. And then when we go on to chapter 4 verse 1 it commences I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you and so on. That is to say from chapter 4 verse 1 he carries on from where he had left off at chapter 3 verse 1. And if you have the new [00:03:07] translation of JND right at the end of chapter 3 it says the whole of chapter 3 except verse 1 is a parenthesis. It's something additional, it's something which comes in by the by. We could read chapter 1 and 2 and then we could skip over and follow out from chapter 4 through to chapter 6. The calling of God and then our walk consistently with it. The doctrine and then our practice. The manner the counsels and plans of God for the glory of Christ and the assembly in eternity. And then in chapter 2 the way in which these things are worked out in time. And then our response how we ought to live our lives in accordance with [00:04:01] that. But in between we have this section and actually it's a section where Paul once again turns to prayer as he did in chapter 1. And we see that when we come down to verse 14. He says for this cause I bow my knees and he'd started the chapter for this cause I Paul I'm going to do something. He was going to pray. Then he tells us about himself. He doesn't talk a lot

about himself in his epistles Paul. But if you read here in these first 13 verses you find I and my and he says quite a deal quite a good deal about himself because he has and had a pivotal role in connection with the aspect of truth that we are considering in these meetings. He was a chosen vessel. He had truth committed to him and he has committed that truth to writing in order that we might enjoy it. [00:05:03] And so in a sense this is a digression preparatory to the prayer and the whole thing then it comes in between in a parenthesis. And that's exactly what the assembly is. It's a parenthesis in God's ways. God chose Israel chose Abraham dealt with his purpose for an earthly people. And then with Nebuchadnezzar we come to the times of the Gentiles. That was another interruption. That was another parenthesis. And then we come to the calling out of the church. Another parenthesis. And after that so to speak the Jewish train is going to come out of the siding after the church express has run through. And God is going to take up his dealings with Israel and the earth again. So they assume there is a parenthesis within a parenthesis. And if you read Mr. Darby's introduction to the French Bible he says that time is a parenthesis in eternity. So we might even say a parenthesis within a parenthesis within a parenthesis. But during this [00:06:05] time during this period that we are privileged to belong to God is bringing out heavenly wisdom and he's bringing out truths of eternal value. So to go back to what we have on the screen. Paul speaks about his intelligence. It's knowledge in the King James in verse 4 but the significance is in reading it. What Paul has said you can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ. Paul had an understanding of these things. He was intelligent in the truth. And sometimes we say about a brother oh that's an intelligent brother or a sister yes she's intelligent in the scriptures. But I have to say such are a diminishing breed and in danger of becoming an extinct species. And if you [00:07:10] young people here are not prepared to take time with the Lord and to take time with the scriptures well then you're not going to arrive at this divine intelligence. We need also like Paul to be intelligent in the scriptures and intelligent in the truth and to have a knowledge of Christ. And that comes by effort. And we have to study to show ourselves approved unto God.

And bodily exercise profit is little but godliness for the time that is now present. So we come to the thought of revelation. He says by revelation I made known unto you the mystery. So this is a very important factor in what we are [00:08:05] considering. This special revelation that was given to the Apostle Paul it says that it was revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in verse 5 by the Spirit. And that is true. Others had the revelation. It was revealed to them. But we know from this and other scriptures that it was revealed to Paul. It was revealed to Paul for others. And in fact when we look at his conversion we find even there certain aspects of his conversion which throw a light on this revelation. In the first account in Acts 9 it says there shined round about him Saul a light from heaven. So we're dealing today with heavenly truth which [00:09:03] centers in the risen and exalted Christ at God's right hand. Heavenly light makes all things bright seen in his blessed face. That's what we are considering. We had it this morning. We're blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. In heavenly places in Christ. It's a light from heaven. Marvel not that Christ in glory all my inward soul hath won. Has heavenly light entered your soul?

And then in the second account of Paul's conversion in Acts 22 in verse 6 he says suddenly there shone from heaven a great light. Things in Christianity are great.

[00:10:07] Moses saw the burning bush and he said I'll turn aside and see this great sight. No doubt that was a great sight but there are greater things in Christianity.

The greatness of the glory and we've had it on searchable this riches the riches of his grace grace the glory of his grace the love of Christ which passes knowledge the manifold wisdom of God. It

seems as if Paul was ransacking the Greek language to find terminology to find words that he could put that he could use to put these things into expression. Let's be clear in Christianity in Christ in God's purposes in Christ and the assembly we're dealing with the greatest thing in this universe. We're dealing with God's great purpose so it's [00:11:07] a light from heaven and it's a great light and then in chapter 26 verse 13 it says it was about above the brightness of the Sun. What we're occupied with in Christianity is greater than anything that's possible on earth. You young people get hold of that because the world's your oyster so to speak you know there's so many things at your fingertips now with the internet and everything else you know there's so many avenues open to you but here's something which eclipses anything and everything of earth it's beyond earthly things it's above the brightness of the Sun and then lastly in this presentation [00:12:02] in Acts 26 verse 13 it says shining around about me and then which journeyed with me. It was available! It was available for Paul and it was and is available for those who journeyed with him. Literally there were those who were with him on that journey but I want to give it a figurative present-day application. Are you journeying with Paul? Are you keeping company with Paul dear Christian believer in your spiritual life? Do you value his truth, his teaching, his ministry, his epistles? Book of the Acts, historical account. Most part after dealing with Peter in the earlier chapters is taken up with Paul and in the book of the Acts we read of those who are were sailing with Paul. Are you [00:13:01] sailing with Paul today? Are you in the boat with Paul? Because it's been said if you lose Paul you lose all and I'll say it again it's not original to me but I'll say it and you can take it away with you if you lose Paul you lose all. So we have Paul's intelligence and we've the fact that Paul had received a revelation and listen let's not delude ourselves that we can come together in the Catford Hall and have a nice PowerPoint presentation and that we can take some notes and we can go home with our handout or whatever and we've reached the truth. It's not like that. We were speaking earlier about the eyes of our heart being enlightened that involves our affections centering in a person, centering in Christ and it says here that these things are revealed on [00:14:01] to apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Very important that we've been sealed with the Holy Spirit in order that the Holy Spirit might lead us into these things and there needs to be prayer. Paul bowed the knee and we need also to reach these things by prayer. I wonder do we think of it those of us who speak do we pray about the truths we minister before we speak do we pray about them afterwards that the audience that the hearers might enter into them because Paul did because the great danger and it's a particular danger for us today is just to have an intellectual grasp of the truth just of head knowledge and not heart knowledge. It's what's been referred to by a previous generation of trafficking in unfelt truth. We don't want to traffic in unfelt truth. We want to have the reality of it live in reality expressed in our lives something that comes from the heart and not from the head. There's this matter of [00:15:04] intelligence and there's this matter of revelation and then we come to the ministry which was the keystone of Paul's teaching and I think today it's a great mystery to people the mystery you talk to people about the mystery and it's something mysterious and they don't know what it is it's like some of these other terms they've never heard of it before but on our program it says it's the mystery of Christ and the assembly and that's exactly what the mystery is all about the glory and exaltation of Christ God's purpose to put all things under his hands and the association of the assembly the church of believers taking out of their Jewish standing their outward their external nearness they were in dispensationally and Gentiles who were far off and they've [00:16:05] both not just been planted down in Jewish ground oh no no no they're in Christ it's a new standing before God believers are in Christ before God and we are associated with Christ in all of this glory that's the mystery it's not something mysterious that's not the sense of mystery in the Bible mystery as used in the Bible is something that was not previously revealed which is now made known you've grasped that something which was hidden that's it hid from ages and from generations something that had not been divulged something that God had not revealed something that was never previously known or spoken about and now now at this present

time now in the Catford Hall it's made manifest to the [00:17:03] Saints Paul Paul was the instrument that God used but it says that he wrote about it we don't have Paul personally but with Paul's writings and this truth was committed to inspired writings his intelligence was given in words of revelation by inspiration and we can profit from this so the mystery is something that was hid from ages and generations but now is revealed and there are great riches and glory associated with it that's the truth in Colossians chapter 1 and there's an interesting verse in Romans 16 it's the second text I have up on the screen where it talks about the need of the believer to be established we want to establish Christians today we don't want [00:18:05] wishy-washy Christians we don't want to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine we want to get our feet firmly on the foundation of the Word of God Paul here in Romans 16 tells us what will establish us and he distinguishes his gospel from the revelation of the mystery I have something in front of me here from brief reports a missionary missionary bulletin that some may glance at and in the editorial the lead article by Mark Packer in the October number it says everything in the New Testament is part of the gospel is it says the truth is that the gospel is God's entire revealed plan and the word entire is highlighted in bold letters of salvation no no no not so these scriptures are [00:19:08] telling us that there's something in addition to what Paul refers to as my gospel he says in Romans according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ that's his person according to the revelation of the mystery I think in those three things we've got the truth of Romans salvation my gospel the preaching of Jesus Christ that's Colossians that's the glory of Christ as the head the various headships and the revelation of the mystery and that's what we've come to hear in Ephesians so don't let anyone tell you that the gospel is everything we need the gospel we need to be established we need the truths of salvation but this forms a foundation to build on and from which we can go on and enter into the full truth of Christ and the church as taught as [00:20:05] revealed and as divulged in the writings of Paul and in Ephesians 3 the mystery as I wrote afore in few words where did he write before it must surely be the first two chapters it must be in the preceding part of the letter and he says I wrote in few words actually he says more about it here than he says anywhere else but it is few words but it's sufficient sufficient because this is what God has caused to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures in our New Testaments it may be few words but if we take them up and study them and get on our knees and enter into the truth we're going to be greatly blessed in our souls they're going to come to some feeble perhaps understanding of the mystery and [00:21:03] of what was not previously known on to the sons of men but is now revealed it would have upset the apple cart if this truth had been revealed previously God calling out Abraham separating from his country and kindred father's house making him separate and then fencing Israel off from the nations and keeping them completely apart those soul testament saints could never have conceived of such a purpose of this as this that the believers that the saints would be associated with the Lord Jesus Christ as the heavenly man at God's right hand and there are three things the mystery the others have been speaking about it essentially this is the subject the calling and the inheritance and the power it speaks of three things I think in verse 6 just look at verse 6 we're joint heirs we're a joint body and we're joint partakers [00:22:03] of his promise in Christ Jesus of the same fellow heirs joint heirs that's collective we share the inheritance together we're blessed in everything every spiritual blessing in Christ these things are true in him we are joint heirs for the inheritance we look down we look down in a day to come that God's going to gather all things together the things in heaven and things on earth they're going to be placed under Christ and he's given him to be head over all things to the church that was emphasized we share in that glory that's collective we're joint heirs but a joint body that's corporate because the church is a living organism we're vitally linked by the Holy Spirit we're linked to one another and we're linked to a risen head in heaven that's essentially the truth of the church we're not talking about a building that [00:23:01] we meet in we're talking about a living organism something which is corporate something which is a head in heaven so it's collective and it's corporate and then it says the joint promise and I take it there that the promise is life eternal life which

God had promised before the foundation of the world we're quickened together with Christ we were dead we've been made to live so it's vital it's real it's living and if our Christianity is not living it's not after all worth very much so this mystery involves things that we share in jointly one with another and in association with Christ well this subject would need further development but then we come to the thought of administration and he speaks in this passage also about the administration of the mystery in verse 9 in our King James Version it says the fellowship of the mystery but [00:24:04] the thought is really administration of the mystery there's the administration of the fullness of times that's future but there's a present-day ministration of the mystery that means of the way in which the truth of Christ and the assembly is worked out practically it's to be worked out in our lives our brother Paul has told us it's worked out in localities we have some scriptures about how it's worked out from chapter 4 onwards but a lot of teaching about it is given in 1st Corinthians and in the epistles of Timothy and we have examples in the book of Acts for instance at Ephesus Paul separated the disciples if we want to go on with the truth of God it requires our separation unto God for holy purposes and Paul said he was a wise architect and he laid the foundation now we have to build on it what are we building and it's because of [00:25:05] the administration of these truths that we don't have a clergyman we don't make a distinction between laity and clergy we don't have a pastor and a flock we're all together as members of the body of Christ each has something to do we'd recognize the truth of headship which involves the place of the sister and the brother of the male and the female there many much teaching of Paul about the way in which these things are worked out in practice but that would be a subject for another Bible Basics week and the last point I just say about the unsearchable riches of Christ that about the administration of these things that we haven't time to look at these you can glance briefly at what's up on the screen we're not left to our own devices we've not to adopt our own devices we've not to ignore the divine administration some don't know it some are abandoning [00:26:07] it and face favor of fresh devices let us see that we do not act lust we cannot maintain the truth of the church by doing and practice that which contradicts it thus far mr. FB Hall and mr. Alfred Trench whose lament was that the younger generation were far more occupied with good men popular personalities than with the truth of God what is going to have weight with our souls is it the truth of God or is it just to be following good men and Alfred that was mr. J Alfred Trench and then a name which will be known to some mr. William Kelly he says innovation is another resource of unbelief suited to a different order of mind but no less a dishonor to God and a danger for man so there is this danger of innovation in what we do and the way we do it and we [00:27:08] need to follow out the administration the blueprint the pattern what Paul is a wise master builder is given and follow out the truth for the administration of the mystery in order that we might enjoy these on searchable riches in a practical way last of all there's the testimony the other words are found in the chapter but testimony would cover preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ it would cover making all men know what is the administration of the mystery and it would cover even that the principalities and powers and might know through the assembly the variegated the manifold wisdom of God according to the purposes of the ages eternal purposes which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord that's a sobering truth for us that God is working out his [00:28:03] eternal purposes at this time in our lives and in the way we do things and in the way we come together in assembly how are we are we set for the testimony are we answering to the truth of God I liken it to this think of the children of Israel journeying through the wilderness and it was the tabernacle of the testimony it was the ark of the testimony there was to be a testimony to others through what was being done and times came when they took down the curtains and they covered the furniture and they carried it through the wilderness now they were carrying material things they were carrying external articles but we as Christians have something infinitely more precious to carry we carry Christ with us we carry the unsearchable riches of Christ but we carry them in our hearts and the truth is to be worked out in our lives are we giving a testimony to others and do even the principalities and powers in [00:29:06] the heavenly places do they see the truth of the

assembly being exemplified and practiced do they see something of this mystery in our lives may it be so for his name's sake