

The mystery of godliness

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Nun, I would like you to turn to the first disciple of Gethsemane, and chapter 3, and chapter 4, and chapter 5, and chapter 6, and chapter 7, and chapter 8, and chapter 9, and chapter 10, and chapter 11, and chapter 12, and chapter 13, and chapter 14, and chapter [00:01:07] 15, and chapter 16, and chapter 17, and chapter 18, and chapter 19, and chapter 20, and chapter [00:03:28] 21, and chapter 22, and chapter 23, and chapter 24, and chapter 25, and chapter 26. [00:04:15] for his own health, but he is being told a lot of things in this particular letter so that he might be able to instruct others, and so that he might be able to be a good example to others, so that behavior for Jeremy and for others that he might influence is important in the house of God, according to these verses, and what Paul is anxious to ensure is that this godly behavior is something that is taking place amongst the Christians of Ephesus. I suppose it was at Ephesus where Timothy was at the time that this letter was being written to him, and of course, needless to say, that letter was written for Timothy's benefit, [00:05:03] and for the benefit of those Christians who were around him in the assembling at Ephesus, but it's also in the holy scriptures, and directed towards a bigger audience than the audience that first received it in the first place. And here we have instruction too, as well as Timothy, as well as the local Christians where he was, we have instruction too as to what the proper kind of godly behavior as befits those that have received the Christian truth would be. And here in all these chapters there are words about how men have to behave, and how women have to behave, and what has to be done in relation to widows, and what has to be done in relation to elders, and how a younger man like Timothy ought to be devoting himself, and so on. A lot of details about a lot of different kinds of classes within the Christian community, and in the next chapter [00:06:07] particularly, chapter four, it seems to me that these are directions to Timothy himself in the first place, and some very important things are said to him there in that fourth chapter. But before Paul spells out what is the right kind of behavior for these various persons, he says without controversy there is something pretty large, pretty enormous, pretty tremendous, which ought to be the impulse and the thought behind our Christian behavior. And I'm pretty sure, it seems to me as one reads these verses, that the reason why verse 16 appears where it does appear is that Paul is saying, I'm after godly behavior amongst you Christians, and you [00:07:01] particularly, Timothy, must show this kind of thing. But what he is saying in addition is that there's a tremendous thing that calls for godly behavior amongst Christian people.

And what he is saying, he is using as a lever in pressing home the argument for godliness, and he's using this truth which is spelled out in all its grandeur in verse 16 as a great buttress to this argument that the proper kind of life goes with those that believe so wonderful things as are mentioned in this 16th verse. Without any doubt, he says there is a great thing which is the confession and the basis of

the Christian faith. And if we appreciate the greatness of the Christian truth as it is spelled out for us in this verse, it ought to have an [00:08:02] impact upon our lives, and it ought to have a purifying effect upon our behavior. And all these detailed things about proper behavior in the house of God ought to flow out from appreciation of the marvel of the Christian truth which is mentioned in this 16th verse. Without any doubt, he seems to be saying, beyond any argument, beyond controversy, there is a massive thing, a great thing. This mystery of godliness which is mentioned in this verse is so tremendous that if only we can catch a sight of it, and if only we can appreciate something of its enormity and something of its marvel, it's going to have its impact upon our lives, and it's going to produce this kind of godly behavior. And to try to be godly persons without having some source to draw on, and some truth to appreciate that has come from God in the first place, [00:09:07] is to be attempting the impossible. Godly behavior will spring out of truth that is shown to us and that we are able to look at and appreciate and admire, and not only admire, but draw from it, finding a pattern for godly lives. This seems to be the kind of argument here, and he is saying that he's wanting behavior, wanting godliness in Christian people, and certainly this secret spring of godliness is a tremendous thing. And if only we can get our eyes focused on that, and only appreciate a little more by the Spirit of God, and with the help of God, something of the greatness of the thing that lies at the basis of Christian belief and Christian behavior, we'll find that we're onto a marvelous thing, and it will have [00:10:04] its reflection in our lives, and it will produce the kind of godliness that Paul is asking for, looking for, from Timothy and from all those that read the letter along with him.

So that it seems to me that what we must do in looking at verse 16 is to, first of all, see that he is saying that this is a tremendous truth that is mentioned in this verse. Now, those who know the Greek, and as I said, I only know very little of it, but I have recourse to persons who I can rely on, and I'm sure this statement that I'm going to make must be right, that the emphatic word in the verse is the word great, without any doubt, without any controversy. There is no argument about it, that this thing which he describes as the mystery of godliness is something that is great. It's enormous. It surpasses everything else. It's [00:11:06] beyond comparison. There is nothing else, really, that's on the same plane as this. It's not the thing that can be compared with other things. It's great and momentous, massive, beyond any other comparison. You couldn't put anything else on the same plane as this. This is a great thing that Christians believe. This is the greatest thing of all. This is something that is stupendously great and grand. And Paul, first of all, is saying that we Christians are in touch with something which is great beyond speaking, really, great beyond full understanding. It's a tremendous thing, a massive thing, this mystery of godliness. The size and the weight of this truth that God would manifest in the flesh is the first thing that he draws attention to. [00:12:07] It's something that stands alone, something that is miles above anything else, any other subject that one might talk about. When we talk about the fact that Christ has been here and that God has been manifest in the flesh, we're talking about something that's separate altogether, something that is marvelous and incomparable altogether with other things. We're talking about the greatest thing that's ever happened. And as I've just been saying, it's not really fair to compare other things with it. We're talking about something which is great and wonderful beyond comparison. I wonder if we ever reach the stage where we get so familiar with the Christian truths and the things that are in the New Testament here for us that we lose some sense of [00:13:01] the greatness of the things that you and I have been privileged to consider and to face and to believe. We have believed that God was manifest in the flesh, and that's something that needs thinking about and needs carefully talking about, too, because it's a holy subject and it's a tremendous subject beyond any other subject that we might be talking about here tonight. It's something that is waking. It's something that is unique, as I've just been saying, and it's also something that is factual. I think that's something that's worth pressing, that if you look at the details, when he gets down to spelling out the details of this thing that he's talking

about, it says God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received us in the [00:14:01] glory. And when you think about what that verse really says, it tells us about something that happened. God was manifest in the flesh. God became flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It starts with the moment of the Incarnation, the moment when God came down amongst men. The Word became flesh. It finishes with him being received up in the glory. So that you can see, when you think about it, that it's talking about something that had a beginning, and it's talking about something that came to an end. It's talking about the days of the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's talking about what began at Bethlehem, and it's talking about what finished at the Mount of Olives. And it is focusing our attention, this verse, on that period which took place, that period of time between the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ [00:15:05] in the manger at Bethlehem, right through to the moment after he had died and after he had risen again, to the moment when he went up and his disciples saw him going up and he was received up into glory. So we're talking about something which took place in history. We're talking about something that happens. We're talking about something that's been observed. We're talking about something that isn't a construction of some mind or other. We're talking about something that is factual, something that took place once in this world's history, and took place in those few years from his birth through to after his death and after his resurrection, to the moment when he went back to the glory from whence he came. Something that's factual. It's talking about a certain epoch in time. And what's more, it's talking about something that takes a little bit [00:16:02] of disputing, you know, because he says it's beyond controversy, this great thing that we're talking about. He says it's indisputable. And there is something about the story of the Gospels, you know, the story of all that happened between the birth and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Something that's very remarkable about it. Something that shines in its own right about the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's something that takes a bit of game-playing, you know, and the beauty and the glory of the story of the life, the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, between those two extremes, and some marvellous truth, marvellous incidents, marvellous risks were brought to light when the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth. And, you know, it's not for nothing that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks about his own being here as a light shining amongst men, a light shining in darkness.

[00:17:06] And the darkness didn't understand it, didn't comprehend it, but nevertheless the light shone. And the Lord Jesus Christ speaks about his being here as something that's self-evidently good and great and glorious. There's something about the story of the Gospels, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, that has a quality about it that nobody can really deny, you know. One might turn one's back on it, one might run away from it, one might put it on the shelf and not look at it, but the bright light shines, and the light shone in the darkness. And the light doesn't shine any less if people are turning their backs on it and don't see that it's there. When the Lord Jesus Christ speaks about himself as the light that came into the world, he is essentially saying that there's something self-evident about what he displayed and what he [00:18:02] did when he was here on earth. It's something that's self-confirming. It's something that's immense. It's something that's inescapable, really. The people that don't see this light that has shone are those that prefer to remain in the darkness. They are those that turn their back on the wonder and the beauty and the quality of the story and the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery of Godliness that you and I are talking about here tonight is something that can't be gainsaid. There's no controversy about it. There's no denying that we are talking about something that has a quality about it that surpasses everything else that we might be talking about. And, of course, some of you will know, I think, that there are other translations from the beginning of this verse, and some of the translations confessively break into the mystery of Godliness. And it might well be that in this statement is the idea that this is not [00:19:09] only something that cannot be

denied, but it's something that is better confessed. Those of us who know the truth and have appreciated a little bit of this great thing that we're talking about, it's not just that we believe it, but that it's worthy of our appearance and it's worthy of our confession. It's so great that those that have seen the bright light that shines in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is their confession. This is what we hold to be most valuable. This is the thing we want to talk about more than anything else. This is something that is not only inescapable, but it's something that's so grand that it's good to talk about it and good to be aligned with it, so to speak, on the side of this great truth that God was manifest in the flesh. It's a massive [00:20:02] thing, as I've just been saying. It's a momentous thing. It's a thing that shines in its own right. And it's something that nobody can dispute, really. If you want to dispute it, you've got to turn your back on it. Feel the faces. And it's something to be confessed. You and I, thank God, I want to be on the side of confessing this and appreciating more its greatness. And as Paul says here, certainly that's something marvellous that you and I as Christians hold and enjoy and appreciate, and without any doubt it should have its impact upon our lives as well, as he goes on to say. The next thing that I would like to extract from this verse is that it's spoken about, this theme that we're talking about, as a mystery. It's called the mystery of godliness. And we were saying a little bit this afternoon that there's something so profound about being the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that it will always be beyond us. And certainly we have to say [00:21:05] that it's well described in this verse, this theme, as a mystery. It's something that is so sublime that we're never really going to properly appreciate it. It has depths about it, and it has eternal qualities about it, that it really will take an eternity and more to properly explore. It's sublime, it's fabulous, it's beyond our grasp. And we have to admit that the more one knows about it, the more one wants to admit that here is something that is so great that it's far beyond our grasp, really. And a sense of awe and a sense of astonishment is something that always befits us when we talk about the incarnation of the days of the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can't be casual, you know, when we talk about things like this, and we can't use familiar language when we talk about things that are as great as these that we [00:22:03] are talking about tonight. Something breathtaking about the truth that surrounds the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Something that's transcendent about it. It's overwhelming, really, and it subdues our souls when we get into the light of this great thing. There's something about it that rivets our attention, really, or it's surprising if it doesn't rivet our attention anyway. There's something special about it. It's a mystery. Something unearthly about it. It's a great mystery. It's a truth beyond our coming, so to speak, and beyond our soundings, so to speak. Even when he was here on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, not only those that loved him, but those that didn't love him couldn't help but feel that there was something rather special about him. They sent some of the officers to take him one day. You'll remember this incident in John's Gospel. They came back empty-handed, and they said, Never mind, speak like this man. They found that he [00:23:06] couldn't be arrested. They had all the weapons to arrest him. They had all the power to do it, in one sense, and yet they only listened to his words, and they found that he spoke with such gracious words, Never mind, speak like this man. He was a person far too big for them to handle, and though they were sent to arrest him, they came back without him. They said, There's never been a man like this, speaking like this man does. Something that was too big about the Lord Jesus Christ for men and women to grapple with, really. One can see in some of those chapters that we were reading this afternoon that those that were after having him put to death were having a problem. They didn't know quite how to grapple with the situation. They didn't quite know how to get him arrested safely, and get him out of the way safely, through a problematical person he was, that they didn't really know how to do it. They had to resort to subterfuge, [00:24:05] and they had to do things underhand, so to speak, in order to deal with the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a different man from any other man, a different person from any other person that they'd ever met. There were things about him that were far too big for them to understand, and they stood in awe of him, even though they hated him. Those that received a blessing for him, they

found that there were incredible things about the Lord Jesus Christ as well. The incredible grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was something that was appreciated by many of the recipients of it, and the marvelous compassion that he showed to people, something that wasn't seen on every hand by any name. There weren't people around that had the same kind of grace, and the same kind of love and compassion, mercy and interest in people. He was unique in his incredible approachability, in his marvelous love for men. Something altogether different, [00:25:06] altogether mysterious about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether to those that hated him, didn't want him, or to those that received the blessing. It was all far too much for them in one sense. It was overpowering, and it was overwhelming. He was a greater person than men had ever seen here on earth, and yet they didn't want to own it, some of them at least. He was a person too big to handle, and there's something mysterious, something transcendent about this person that we are talking about here tonight. Those of us who know him well, we'd be the first to admit that there are things about him that are altogether beyond our awareness. This thing is too big for us as well, and yet it's a marvelous thing to appreciate in some small way, at least. It says, the love of Christ passes knowledge, you know, and yet the same verse says we've got to know, it would be a good thing to know [00:26:04] the love of Christ that passes knowledge. While we can't explore the lengths and the depths and the breadth and the height and the extent of all the things that surround the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can know them in some sort of fashion anyway, and we can enter into a little appreciation, at least, of these great things that we're talking about. It's a massive thing, this. That was my first point. It's a mystery, that's my second point. But let us not say that this is so mysterious and so big that we can't enter into it, in some measure, at least. Because by the Spirit of God, we can appreciate these things, that they're not so great that they're altogether beyond us. And by the Spirit of God, we can enter into the awareness of these marvelous things, in some degree, at least. And I like the thought that in this verse, not only is the word mystery there, but the word manifestation is there, [00:27:03] as well. And let us not think that this thing is so remote and so big and so impenetrable that we could never touch anything of it. That's not the truth. This is something that is being brought into the open. And I believe it's true to say that in the New Testament, the word mystery doesn't mean something that's too difficult to take in. It means something that once was hidden, but now is revealed. And it means that in this verse, as well, this is not something that is distant and remote from us. This is something that's come near to us. God has been manifest in the flesh. And this great person that we're talking about hasn't stayed aloof or far from us by any means. He's come close to us. He's come down here amongst us. And the verse has gone to say that he has not only been here in the flesh, [00:28:03] that is to say, in the human frame, he's not only been here as a man, as we were hearing this afternoon, the perfect man, as well, as God manifests in the flesh, but he's been near in the sense of being close and in amongst us, so to speak, close to us, so that we can take it in, and our hands have handled, so John wrote when he wrote this epistle, and we have seen it, and we have heard him speaking, and our hands have handled this very person. The light was manifested and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We're talking about something that isn't so remote that we could never touch it, but something that has come so close to us that it's all available to us. He's been near to us. He's been amongst us. He's been here to be observed. The truth of what he has demonstrated here on earth to be taken in. He's been here to be [00:29:03] appreciated. Those that lay around him were affected by the demonstration of the love and the grace that he brought so near. It's a truth that is not only, has been witnessed, and has been recorded, and has been written down for us in our bibles, but it's the truth that's been proclaimed, that's been preached, the verse goes on to say. It's something that is not unavailable to us. It's something that's been proclaimed to us. The verses speak about not only the fact that he was near to men, but the story of what he has done has been spread around. Angels have witnessed it, and it's been preached amongst the Gentiles. Not only has it been preached amongst the Gentiles, but it's been believed on in the world. It's been brought near

to the camp of many people, including ourselves here tonight. It's something that's not remote and distant and mysterious in [00:30:04] the sense of ill-defined. It's not that at all. It's clear. It's in the clear. It's there for us to appreciate. We can read about it in our bibles. We can talk about it in our meeting here tonight. We can talk about something that is too wonderful to properly explore, and yet something that has been brought near to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what are we to say about these closing phrases of this verse? It seems to me that we've got a lot to say before we have covered this verse. God was manifest in the flesh. When one begins to look at this, it does seem to me, and I think you probably will agree, that it says that certain things have happened in the flesh. And then it goes on to say that other things have happened in the spirit. And then it goes on to say that angels have been observers of this great thing. And then it goes on to say the Gentiles [00:31:07] have been on the receiving end of the preaching about this great thing. And then it goes on to say that the whole wide world, so to speak, has had the opportunity in many parts of the world there has been belief in the truth that we're talking about here tonight. And finally it goes on to say that not only has this person been heard about and seen by many, but he's gone back into the glory and there's been a welcome up there for him, too. So that not only here on earth, amongst humankind, and the angels observed what was going on when he was here on earth, but it also seems to be going on to say that even in the glory there's been a proper appreciation and a proper welcome for the one that once was here on earth and has now gone back into the glory. So it does seem to me, when you come to look at this, that it is talking about six different [00:32:03] areas in which this manifestation that we've been talking about has been on view. Six different areas where it's been appraised in various ways, where it's been appreciated in various ways. And first of all it begins to say, thereby talking about things that have happened in the flesh. And you know probably that that verse, that word, in John's writings particularly, means the human body. The word became flesh at the beginning of John's Gospel.

Manifest in the flesh, it says here. He took upon him flesh and blood, it says in the epistle to the Hebrews. And it means in fact that he took on him the fashion of a man. The human body was his.

[00:33:01] It says of course in Philippians, doesn't it, he was found in fashion as a man. And he who was God and ever was God and ever is God became flesh and dwelt among us. Began to be, when he came here on earth, began to be a man. And this word flesh means the human frame. And not only did he have the likeness of a man, he had the reality of a man. Something that we wanted to say and did say I think here this afternoon, that we're talking about true humanity when we talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. He had the fashion, he had the appearance of a man, but he had the reality of a man. And what a man the Lord Jesus Christ was. A gracious man, a kindly man, an approachable man.

Sinners got near to him, he wanted to get near to them. Not to condone their sin, but to rescue them [00:34:06] from the mess and the morass that they were in. What a man the Lord Jesus Christ was.

Not only a gracious and a kindly man, but a pure man, a spotless man, a holy man, a sinless man, and that he came into that body to be a man amongst men. And the scripture says that a body was prepared for him, and in that body the will of God here on earth was done. No other man had ever done the will of God, as we said this afternoon. The will of God was done. What a story it is. A human being perfectly faithful and loyal to God here on earth. That life of untiring service to God. That life that was finally laid down as a spotless offering to God. What a story [00:35:03] it is. These things happened in the human flesh, so to speak. God was manifest in the flesh.

And then it goes on to say, he was justified in the Spirit. It seems to me that we come in very close here in this expression to that profound thing that we were mentioning only rather briefly this afternoon, the mystery of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. When it says he was justified in the Spirit, it seems to me that we have to bear in mind the part of the Holy Spirit in the story. It says, of course, in scripture that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

It says that he was anointed of the Holy Ghost. It says that he was picked out and selected, by the Holy Ghost. It says that he was led of the Spirit. It says that he was filled [00:36:06] with the Holy Ghost. One of the things that we do have to recognize is that in this flawless person that we are talking about, this flawless man that we are talking about, he was guided and led, and all that he did, his human spirit was totally in line with the Holy Spirit of God. The things that came out in that life that were guided and prompted and in agreement with the Holy Spirit of God, things that came out were just self-justifying, so to speak. It says justified in the Spirit. The quality of all of his ways, not only his actions, but his ways and his demeanor and his thinking, the quality of all that he did, has such a perfection about it that it justifies itself for what it is, it seems to me. This, to my way of thinking, [00:37:05] is what this verse is attempting to say, or seeming to say. The verse says it perfectly, of course, that we have to think about what it may mean, and it seems to me an attempt to say what it does mean would be that all that was said about his spirit was of a quality that confirmed itself and justified itself as being the great thing, the wonderful thing that it really is. Then it goes on to say that not only was this thing observed by human beings, but that there was another set of intelligences, so to speak, that were watching all that took place when he was here on earth. It was seen of angels. Now, one might not think, perhaps, reading the Gospels, that the angels were in on this very much, but certainly there are one or two places in the Gospels where we see the angels in pretty close awareness of what was going on. You know [00:38:06] that when he was born and the shepherds were watching their flocks by night, the multitude of the heavenly hosts suddenly made themselves apparent, so to speak, and their voices and their praise was something that the shepherds heard, a great deal of enthusiasm amongst the heavenly hosts when the Lord Jesus Christ came here on earth. You know, perhaps we are not told a great deal about it. True to that like, there were other beings watching, other kinds of beings than you or I know about, watching what was going on. There is a great deal in scripture that suggests to us that this great subject of ours here tonight was a matter of interest to more than just the human race, and that there are heavenly intelligences and spiritual intelligences that were concerned and aware of what was going on when he was here on earth. You know, as well as I do, that not only [00:39:07] will there be praise from the redeemed in the day to come, but there is going to be quite a volume of praise of a different kind from those that never need to be redeemed, and they learn to say things with loud voices in that day that is to come, in appreciation of what the Lamb that was slain has done. And the angels were watching very carefully, and the angels were around at times when the tomb was empty and the women were weeping, unaware of what had happened. The angels were there to say an appropriate word of the appropriate time. The angels were in detail, as well as in general, on all that was going on watching this great event or set of events that we are talking about here tonight. Preached unto the Gentiles? Well, I suppose the Gentiles [00:40:01] represent the people on the other side of the barrier, so to speak, when we read in the New Testament to the Jews, the Gentiles were those that were beyond the veil. But it says in this message, it wasn't only brought to the Jews, but it was preached to the Gentiles. Preaching is one of the ways in which this great truth makes its impact upon people. Let us not belittle preaching, let us not belittle talking about the great truth that is in our Bibles surrounding the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This great truth, what Christ came to declare, came to bring into manifestation something that has been spread around. It has been preached beyond the immediate barriers of Judaism. It has been preached to the Gentiles, and it has been believed on, not only

preached, but believed on by some, not all, in the world. And you can't have a wider [00:41:01] horizon on earth than the whole world. Kenya, it's been believed on, it's been there to be appreciated, it's been there to be appreciated for a very long time. And not only has it been preached, but it has been believed. And let us be thankful that we are, I suppose, we are a long way away from the center from which it came out in the first place. All these things happened in the Middle East, and yet we are miles away from there. But thank God for those that were so moved by this great story that they wanted to preach it and wanted it to be disseminated, brought it out to heathen Britain, brought it out to these climes of ours. We tend to think of ourselves as those that were once Christian and now getting to be heathen. But before England was Christian, it was heathen, I suppose you would know. We were among the benighted dogs of the Gentiles.

And this great story has come out to us. And it not only has been preached to us, but we believe [00:42:02] it. And this thing that was observed by immediate witnesses is something that has been appreciated by more than the immediate witnesses. We have been on the receiving end of this great preaching, and we have been amongst those that have believed it. And this great thing has been appreciated, as I said, in various areas. And thank God we can claim to be Gentiles who have received the message, though we didn't deserve it, heard about this great person, though we had no idea there was such a glorious message as this to hear. And not only have we heard it, but we have believed it, and something of the value of it strikes a chord within our hearts here today. And not only has it been believed on in the world, but he has been received up into glory. And this last one tells us that he has been appraised in the right way in the place where it matters most. [00:43:03] And he has been put in that place of highest glory, and he has been welcomed there into that area that he knows so well, into that place that God's right hand, where he is rightfully honoured and rightfully acclaimed. And these verses say all this is in manifestation. People have been observing it. People have been seeing it. Angels have seen it. Gentiles have heard about it. People in the worldwide context have not only heard about it but received it. And even the glory where you and I have not been yet is a place where he has been acclaimed and appreciated and appraised the right, and he has been taken in there with great noise and great welcome and great acclamation. The Saviour is known best in the place where he belongs, and the heavenly hosts know all about the work of the Saviour. God knows all about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, [00:44:03] and you and I are coming to get to know all about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as well. Well, it's a great manifestation, and it's been seen in many places, in many different areas of appreciation of it. But when it's received and when it is wondered up in the kind of way that Paul seems to be urging upon the recipient of this letter, it becomes a motivation in our lives.

And as I said at the beginning, this is the reason why Paul mentions it at all, once we get a sight of this great truth that we're talking about here tonight. It has its effect upon our behaviour, it has its effect on our conduct. And Paul is able to say to Timothy, for instance, in this next chapter, exercise thyself unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things. And then he goes on to say, don't let anybody despise your youth, but be an example of the [00:45:06] believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Give thyself to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate on these things. Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine. Continue in them. For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. These practical exhortations to Timothy, that he should be like a man of God ought to be, a flow out of the presentation of the truth that a believer believes. And he's able to use the great truth that Christians believe to urge upon them the right kind of conduct in their own [00:46:05] kind of life. And not only is

this a great manifestation that we've been talking about, but it's a model for godliness in our lives as well. And it's a great spring and source of godliness in our lives. It's the secret spring and the perfect pattern for godly lives.

I'm just attempting to put down words that are suggested to me when I think about all that that word mystery means. It certainly means something so profound that it's totally beyond us in one sense. But it also means something that is a secret that you and I possess, that is a spring to our kind of living. And it's the secret spring that pushes us along in right ways, that are honoring to the one that we believe in. And it's a perfect norm, so to speak, by which to measure ourselves by all those graces of the Lord Jesus Christ that I've been talking about, [00:47:04] are things for you and I to be exemplifying in our lives. We've got to be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in faith, and in charity. And so Paul is able to say that behavior of the right kind springs out of appreciation of the great truth that we have received, the great person that we have come to know. So that I would trust that as a result of considering that verse, we might have new thoughts about the grandeur of the truth that has been manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that it might not be something that we just admire, but that it might be something that so moves us and so holds us and grasps us as those that belong to him. In our lives there might be some little reflection of that kind of godliness that Paul is asking for from Timothy and from his other readers of this letter, [00:48:01] and that includes ourselves, needless to say.