

Prophecy/Mystery Combined #2 - Moses & Paul: Reasons for Confusion

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] I cannot help but wonder how many people we would have here if everybody was here. But there are a number absent and for good reasons. And I want to reiterate something that is in the bulletin.

And you say, well, if it's in the bulletin, why are you bothering to read it? Well, for the simple reason that folks who are at home listening by way of their computer and technology don't get in on this unless we include it.

So this will make it a little bit more of a full service as opposed to just the teaching. And as the bulletin states, for the time being, we continue to encourage each person and family to take responsibility for yourself in view of the unknowns still existing about COVID-19.

Your presence or absence at the services here at Grace are at your discretion. As often stated, personal health issues and a compromised immune system are prudent reasons for remaining at home.

And thanks to the Grace position, you need not have to deal with guilt feelings. Isn't that great? Regrets? Yes. But guilt? No.

[1 : 17] Regrets? Yes. Of course, we miss you and we long for your fellowship. So we can stay in touch via telephone and internet. So blessings to you, Pastor Marv.

And I cheated you out of any time that you might have had last week for Q&A.; So in an effort to make that up to you, I want to provide you with an opportunity this morning for any Q&A; that you may have or any comments that you may wish to offer at the beginning of the service.

And we won't run the risk of my taking all the time. So we'll start out with it right after the announcements and prayer. But I just might have something to share in case there aren't any questions.

So don't worry about that. And I don't think you were worried about that anyway. Okay. Let's look to the Lord.

Our Father, we love you with a love that is inexpressible because we know that the love you have for us cannot really be understood or contemplated as fully as we would like.

[2 : 28] And our prayer this morning is that we might learn something either new or in addition to what we already know regarding your incredible love for us and your plan for us and the lengths to which you went in order to execute it.

That is our prayer. For those unable to be with us this morning because of the virus or other illnesses that perhaps have laid them aside, we pray your richest blessing for them and upon them with whatever they may be dealing with.

Thank you for grace made available to us in so many ways that we scarcely can appreciate it. And we know that it all comes through our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.

Amen. I want to say something about a couple of handouts and the subject matter that we are dealing with, which has to do with trying to draw the valid distinctions throughout the scriptures between mystery and prophecy.

And we'll be talking a little bit more about that later. And in case anyone is wondering, well, Pastor Marv, this is a subject that Grace Bible Church embraced back when you became our pastor in 1971.

[3 : 44] So why are you doing this now? Well, it is true. We did broach that subject back in 1971 and have continued throughout these 49 years.

But as I mentioned, when we commenced the subject, all ministries, all earthly ministries are temporary, including mine. And I realized that I am in the twilight of my ministry here with you.

And I know I said that 10 years ago, too. And other circumstances took over. But I consider this subject so critical and so important.

I consider it of second importance and second only to our personal salvation. That's how highly I view this.

It is the study of the scriptures in accordance with the progression of revelation. It is the only way that makes things fit in the Bible.

[4 : 55] It is the only thing that provides the simplicity that I think was intended when the Spirit of God communicated this word to us. And for the most part, it has escaped Christians for a long, long time.

And I realize full well that I am a voice in the wilderness. I know I have no Elijah complex.

I do not believe I am the only one proclaiming it. But I'll tell you this. Compared to the masses that are under the label of Christianity, there are very few who are proclaiming this.

But why should it be any different now? Because that is the way it has always been. God has always worked through a minority, not a majority.

After all, how much of a minority was involved when there were eight souls saved by water and everybody else perished? How much of a minority was there when God chose Abraham out of all of those people that he could have chosen?

[6 : 04] And a race of people that comprises two-tenths of one percent of the world's population. How much of a minority is that? So God has always been pleased to work in a minority.

And he reiterates that through the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1. He says, writing to the Corinthians, he said, I want to remind you how it is that not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise among you have been chosen.

God has chosen the base things of the world, the things that are despised, and the things that are not, to bring to pass the things that are. So we do not apologize for being in a minority.

But I guess I'm saying it pains my heart. I say this with every fiber of my being.

It pains my heart to know these wonderful, incredible truths of the grace of God and how they so often fall on deaf ears.

[7 : 07] When I came to really understand and appreciate this, like I said, it took second place only to the salvation itself that I have in Christ because it opened the scriptures to me in a way that is otherwise impossible.

And I want to make sure before I leave you as your pastor that I have one more last opportunity to expound on these themes.

And then when the time comes for me to leave, it will make my leaving a whole lot easier than what it would be otherwise, knowing that I left you behind. So connection with that, I have some handouts I want to remind you of.

And this has to do with a subject that we are often, excuse me, through the last five decades, we have often been accused of this throughout the Springfield, Clark County community.

And word gets back to me, and I hear about these things, you know, but you just have to slough it off. Well, that church out there on Group Road, they make too much of the Apostle Paul. So there is an excellent little brochure here that was written by Paul Fromer called, Do We Exalt Paul?

[8 : 34] If you have not read this, by all means, please do. Copies of it are in the literature rack, and more copies will be available. It's very well written, very easily understood, and it is excellent.

It's about the best thing I've ever read on this. I remember meeting Paul Fromer years ago in Tip City when he was filling in, and the church then was the Gospel Lighthouse, and they were between pastors.

And he had an itinerant ministry, and he went around to grace churches filling pulpits for churches that didn't have a pastor. And I remember him giving me a personal copy of this and how much I cherish it at the time.

So, no, we do not exalt Paul, nor would we agree to that. But I'll say this without any apology at all, and I'll shout it from the housetops.

We do exalt the message that Paul preached. The message of the gospel of the grace of God.

[9 : 38] And the fact that it came through Paul is completely incidental. God could have provided the message and brought it through anybody else, but he chose this man.

Some believe, and I'm not prepared to dispute this, some believe that God chose Paul because he was the least likely one in the whole world to have embraced that message and come to it, and it was a contest of wills, and God's will won out.

So, Paul later on, by his own admission, says, when he writes to one of those congregations that he had been instrumental in starting, that if he does this by, in a voluntary nature, if I volunteered for this job, Paul says, maybe I would have some reason for boasting or some credit because I volunteered for it, but I want you to know, I didn't volunteer for this.

I was drafted, and he was. And the only thing I can conclude is that when the risen Christ approached the apostle Paul on the Damascus road, and then he was led by the hand as a blind man because the light, the Shekinah glory from Christ was so brilliant it temporarily blinded him.

He was led by the hand into the city of Damascus, and he sat there in the house of a man who had agreed to entertain him, and he was eating and drinking nothing for three days and three nights.

[11 : 18] And that's when I believe this enormous struggle, this conflict took place between Paul and the risen Christ.

as he sat there at that table, replaying the incident of Jesus appearing to him and what he said and replaying the incident of the stoning of Stephen and his encouraging it and holding the garments of those who threw the stones.

All of those things were going over and over in his mind, and it was all about this risen Christ. And eventually, and maybe, who knows, maybe it took three days and three nights for this struggle that ensued to come to completion, but when it did, Paul, as much as had to say, okay, all right, this is true, you're in charge, you are the Messiah of Israel, you were sent from God, I get it, I submit to it, sign me up, I'm at your disposal.

And when he came to the reality of who Jesus really was, what else could he do? The end of it all is obvious.

In the same manner in which when Jesus began preaching and proclaiming the kingdom of heaven is at hand, he was presented to Israel as the Messiah, there was only one question that amounted to anything, just one question, his identity.

[13 : 07] Is Jesus of Nazareth really the one spoken of and promised by Moses and the prophets, the Messiah who should come? Or, is he not?

There's no fence to sit on. You've got to be on one side or the other. And if it is true that he is the Messiah, then all you can do in the name of common sense is get on your face and knees before him.

And if he isn't, then dismiss him as an egomaniac or a charlatan or a religious huckster or whatever. You can't have it both ways.

That's why he said, he who is not with me is against me. And people who think or who imagine, oh, don't get me wrong, I don't have anything against Jesus, I just don't believe that stuff.

Well, you are against him because there are only two positions you can take. You're either in him or you are not. And there isn't any almost to it. So people need to understand that.

[14 : 16] And that's the reason that we are pursuing this particular study because it answers so many questions that leaves the Bible otherwise a book of contradictions and confusions.

And in addition to that, Mr. Stamm, who was one of the leading lights in the Grace Movement many years ago, published this little pamphlet.

It's just a little two-page thing and these are all available throughout the building. Basic distinctions between prophecy and the mystery. And all you have to do is just glance over these and look at them and compare one with the other and it just, the proverbial light comes on.

I mean, it's very obvious. So, avail yourself of this if you haven't already. As I said, they are around. And the insert in the bulletin today is also from the pen of Mr. Stamm and it's taken from one of the pages in his book, Two Minutes with the Bible and copies are available on the table back there.

Very reasonably priced. And let me say this, if you want the book and you don't have the price of the book or can't afford it, take the book. Take the book. Enjoy it.

[15 : 27] And take it without guilt. No, you haven't stolen it. It was offered to you and you took advantage of it. So, that's how important this material is.

All right. Back to some announcements and then we'll open for Q&A; and I wanted to warn you so if you had questions germinating, you would be able to articulate them. Tuesday morning, we are continuing our study right here at Grace because we don't have a suitable restaurant to meet in that can both provide us with breakfast and social distancing.

So, we have to have both of those things at least for the time being. So, temporarily, we are meeting here at Grace every Tuesday morning for any men or boys who are able to join us and it is a very simple breakfast and to give you an idea of how simple it is, I've provided it.

That's about as simple as it can get. I pick up some baked goods at the local stores and we have coffee and orange juice and that's about it and most of the men have confessed to me already that they usually have breakfast before they come anyway so it's no big deal.

But anyway, we start at 8 o'clock and we try to be finished by 9. You are welcome to join us. You don't need reservations or anything like that. And I think other announcements here are pretty much self-explanatory and I need not go into those.

[16 : 56] But for the sake of those who are listening by computer or technology, be reminded that our 9 o'clock teaching hour is temporarily discontinued until further notice.

This is solely for the purpose of limiting exposure time for us all. That's connection with the virus. We will resume as soon as we can more safely do so.

Likewise, we are advised to refrain from congregational singing temporarily. We have our limits but that we haven't done. And I don't know about singing with a mask on but oh well.

Special music is in order for any wishing to provide it and all would appreciate that very much. And again, thanks to Nathan and his sweet family for leading us in our music.

We adore your children. Thank you for their being here. Now, oh yes, this too.

[17 : 54] Have you read this little thing called Simple As Can Be? Have you read that? If you haven't read that, please get it. It wonderfully sets forth the conflict that many people never confront about what is required for salvation.

And all of the different positions taken by different denominations, churches, backgrounds, et cetera, are expressed here in a very, very simple way, very easily understood and it's very brief.

It's called Simple As Can Be. So if you want to know what this gospel is all about that we preach and rejoice in here at Grace Bible Church so much, you'll find it in that little booklet.

Does anybody else have an announcement that's not in the bulletin that ought to be noised abroad? Yes. Loretta. Yes.

Okay. Okay. The announcement in the back of the bulletin regarding the repainting of the gazebo has been tabled and will be taken up again in the spring of the year when we hope that all of this miserable virus stuff is behind us then and who knows.

[19 : 16] But anyway, we'll think in terms of April or May maybe for the painting of that gazebo. Anything else? Okay.

This is your opportunity and you do not have to have a question or comment regarding what has been taught the last couple of Sundays but it would be preferable if we could maybe stay in that bailiwick.

It might be more helpful than a question from Genesis about whatever. So, I don't want to rule that out but at the same time that would be my preference.

So, this is your opportunity. If you have questions or comment that you would like to make regarding anything that we've been teaching of late feel free. Anyone? Anyone? Anyone? Okay.

Gary, clear in the back. Yeah, I think you cleared up something a little earlier for me but just in case there's others out here who may not that may not be as clear as what you'd like to have it.

[20 : 30] I had, I was looking at what was the, who were the people that were being pursued by Saul of Tarsus and dragged back to the prisons or whatever and what did they believe and anyway, what was it, who were the people that were being pursued by him?

Okay, thank you. First of all, and this is so very critical, so very critical, these were all without exception Jews.

Jews. They were Jews. Saul of Tarsus and he's called Saul of Tarsus simply because that's where he came from in the same sense that Mary Magdalene was from Magdala.

People were often identified with their birthplace or their father and Paul was a Jew and if you want to know his pedigree, read Philippians chapter 3 where he expresses his background about his being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin, all the rest of it.

He was as bona fide Jew as you could get and when John the Baptist came preaching the message of repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, he preached that message exclusively to the tiny nation of Israel, not to the world.

[21 : 59] This wasn't a message for the world. This wasn't the gospel of the grace of God of salvation. This was the gospel of the kingdom that the king was going to bring and Jesus was presented as the king, the Messiah, the one of whom Moses and the prophets spoke.

So, when he began preaching right after John the Baptist baptized him, we are told that Jesus called twelve to be with him, to disseminate the message with him.

These are referred to as the twelve apostles and an apostle simply means a sent one with the authority of the one sending him and they began preaching this message, repent, in other words, Israel, this message that was preached by them as Jews, to Jews, was exclusively limited to Jews because it had no interest or bearing at all for the Gentiles.

Let me make this careful distinction. It isn't that Jesus didn't care about the world. It isn't that he didn't care about Gentiles but it is that a plan had been devised whereby the nation Israel would be the spearhead, the point persons if you will, for proclaiming this good news to all the rest of the world but it had to start with Israel and this is what John meant when he said in the first chapter he came unto his own.

That's not the world. That's the nation Israel, his own people. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and Judah was one of the twelve tribes and he came to Israel comprised of those twelve tribes and the idea was he was to preach a message to Israel for Israel that when embraced by Israel nationally then Israel would be fulfilling the promise that was given regarding them in Exodus 19.7 that they, Israel, would be a kingdom of priests.

[24 : 11] That means the whole nation would be priests and what that means is just as the nation, just as the tribe of Levi was designated to be the priestly tribe for the nation of Israel, the whole nation was designated to be priests for all the rest of the world, Gentiles.

So Jesus came to Israel for the world. That was the plan. the nation Israel said, we don't like that plan.

We don't want that plan. We don't accept that plan. We reject that plan and we reject this one called Jesus of Nazareth who came to implement that plan.

We don't believe he was the Messiah. So they rejected it. But there were those who did believe it and we know for sure that there were twelve. one of them of course was questionable and that was Judas.

But they signed on and they began preaching this same gospel that Jesus was preaching. Same gospel that John the Baptist preached. And it was this. Repent, which means, and by the way, there's only one thing that anybody ever needs to repent of.

[25 : 29] And that is anything that you've been wrong about. Anything that you've been wrong about, that you get additional information that reveals to you that you were wrong about that, you need to change your mind.

And it need not have anything to do with religion or spiritual things. It's just a simple meaning of the word. It's that Christians have confused the word and its definition and they confuse it with penance.

Penance means some kind of payback that you give to God for your sins. And you may, well, go to the extreme of the flagellantes in the Philippines.

They make these cords with barbs on them and they lash themselves during Lent. They go around and they beat themselves and lash themselves on the back.

That's penance. They are self-punishing to compensate for their sins and they believe that this gives them absolution with God because of the pain and suffering that they are going through.

[26 : 41] And other things like even, well, I won't go into it, but the things that people give up for Lent, that's penance. That's some kind of payment that you make. And the scriptures, of course, do not convey that at all.

So repentance simply means change your mind. Change your mind. Who do you think Jesus of Nazareth really was? Well, I don't think he was the Messiah. All right? Let me give you the reasons why I think he was.

And you give the reasons about the Old Testament announcing his birth in Bethlehem, about his dying on the cross, about Psalm 22, how that was fulfilled. You give all the evidences for Jesus being the Messiah, and then the person says, okay, I never knew that before.

I never heard that. I didn't understand that. But now that you've explained all that to me, you know what? I think you're right. I've changed my mind.

That is repentance. Don't confuse it with salvation, because it isn't. But it is the first step. I've often said, you can repent without being saved.

[27 : 50] You can change your mind without making a decision for Christ. You can come to the conclusion where you said, like the fellow I was telling about in the story earlier before when they had a long conversation with a believer, he said, when they reached the end of their destination and pulled in the parking lot, the guy turned to him and said, you know, you've convinced me.

I think you're right. I think the Bible is true, and I think Jesus is exactly who you said he was. Congratulations. I'm convinced. And he said, and I assume that you want to receive Christ as yourself.

Oh, no, no, no, no. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I didn't say that. I don't want to do that. Well, why not? You said that you believe that he was who the Bible said he was and that he died for the sins of the world, including yours.

Why don't you want to receive him? Oh, I don't want to do that. That messed up my whole life. He repented, changed his mind. Matter of fact, he is worse off now than he was before he heard it because now he knows.

Under whom much is given, from him shall much be required. So, these Jews, when the twelve went out and they began preaching and performing the miracles and everything, they had a considerable amount of success.

[29 : 06] A number of people believed and the crowds were growing and these crowds were all Jewish. Remember, this is in the land of Israel. Now, there were Gentiles that lived in Israel too, but they had no interest in, most of them had no conception at all of the Messiah, who he was or what he was supposed to do when he came or anything.

They were just completely out of it. And Paul addresses the Gentiles in Ephesians chapter 2 when he says that, remember that you Gentiles in time past were without God, without hope in this world.

That was their status. So, here you've got a number of people in Israel who embrace Jesus as their Messiah and they begin following him and supporting him and they are identified as disciples.

A disciple is different from an apostle. An apostle is a called one who is sent with the authority of the one who called him. And a disciple is simply a learner.

It's a word from which we get the word discipline. A disciple is a learner, is a student. Jesus chose 12 apostles but he had thousands of disciples.

[30 : 28] And their number continued to grow. And the intelligentsia, the chief priests, the shakers and movers, the Pharisees and Sadducees who made up the upper echelons of Israel and its government, etc., did not accept Jesus and they did not accept John the Baptist.

They did not believe that either of them had a legitimate ministry and they rejected him. So what you've got is a bunch of common people, everyday ordinary people who were absolutely dazzled by the teaching and the miracles of Jesus and many of them were beneficiaries because he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, all kinds of miracles that were undisputed.

Nobody ever said, you know, Jesus was supposed to have performed all, I don't believe it, I don't think they were. Nobody ever said that. Nobody ever accused him, they accused him of having the power of the devil to do it but they never denied the reality of the miracles.

So you've got a growing number of people who are embracing him as a Messiah but you've got the, what shall I say, the elite, the shakers and movers, chief priests, Caiaphas, Annas and that crowd who rejected him and his authority and they rejected John and his authority also.

So you've got Jesus in tension. Some do, some don't. That was the burning question. Is he the Messiah or is he not?

[32 : 11] And it finally got to the place of where these people were having quite a bit of influence and you read the early chapters of the book of Acts, they were something else. They were getting on board and fulfilling the kingdom that what they thought was going to be.

Remember when Jesus approached the rich young ruler, told him, and what must I do to obtain eternal life? And Jesus said, you went through the commandments and the guy says, well I've done all of those things.

What else is there? Jesus said, sell everything you've got and give it to the poor and come and follow me. Now where do you put that in the gospel of the grace of God?

You don't. It doesn't fit. It doesn't work there. Whoever today preaches that, sell all your possessions and give to the poor.

Well that's ridiculous. But listen, that wasn't ridiculous for the time and the place and the purpose for which the message was preached. It was quite literal. And do you know what they were doing in the book of Acts?

[33 : 13] Those who had lands and possessions were selling them and bringing the money and giving it to the apostles and told them to distribute it however you see fit to whoever had needs. What were they doing?

They were fulfilling those kingdom conditions that were being preached by Jesus and the kingdom thing was starting to take hold. But the shakers and movers would not permit it and they began a program of persecution and it began, just hold your question Joe, they began as early as chapter 4 persecuting, threatening, even physically beating those Jews who did preach that message.

And to add insult to injury, they were also preaching that Israel crucified their Messiah but God raised him from the dead. Now we've got this crazy thing called a resurrection from the dead to deal with too.

And we are afraid that the common people out there who don't know any better aren't enlightened like we are, they'll buy into this nonsense. We've got to stamp this thing out.

And Saul of Tarsus came forward and said, let me take charge of this. And he got underway and the persecution began and it intensified and with the stoning of Stephen.

[34 : 37] And all of these were Jews persecuting Jews. There were no non-Jews involved. And I've often thought of this, you know, isn't this ironic?

Isn't this ironic? We have what could be considered the establishment establishment of maybe the first, the first set of stormtroopers.

The first, the first inkling of the Gestapo. Jews against Jews. Hailing them into prison, beating them, threatening them and all the rest of it.

And Paul later says by his own admission, I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. You know what? I really thought I was doing the right thing.

I saw these people and their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, as confusing everybody. And they were a cancer on Judaism, a dangerous cancer.

[35 : 42] And what do you do? You cut it out. You cut it out. You eliminate it. Not only that, but I heard that there's a bunch of them who knew the heat was on here in Jerusalem and they left the country.

Some of them went all the way up to Damascus. That's a foreign country. Syria. Clear out of Israel. 120 miles to the north. Paul said, I'm going after them.

He got a group of men together and they headed up to Damascus. And before they got into the town, somebody showed up that they hadn't counted on. And that changed everything.

So, Jews against Jews. Later, well, I don't want to get too far ahead. So, let's just leave it there. Okay. Other comments or questions? Or do you need clarification further?

Is that okay, Gary? Okay. Anybody else comment or question? Joe. Okay, Joe. I've forgotten. I was going to say there, back when you were discussing what brought about the crucifixion of Christ, wasn't the raising of Lazarus, that kind of was the thing that brought it on when that council, when those leaders, those makers and shakers, they said, we have got to get rid of this guy.

[37 : 02] Yeah. That brought it on when the crucifixion was to come. Yeah. He raised Lazarus from the dead. That was it. Yeah. And Lazarus was a real problem for them. They just got to go.

Got to go. And, you know, and when they got together there, I think it's in John 12. I'm not real sure about that. But I think it was in John 12. when they got together, the chief priests and the Pharisees and everybody, and they said, what are we going to do?

What are we going to do? If, listen, if we don't kill this thing, it's going to continue spreading. And you know what's going to happen? The Jews people, our own people who are buying into this, are going to get very frisky and nationalistic.

And all of us talk about the kingdom. The kingdom requires a king. And if you're going to be talking about a king, now you're getting into politics.

Because Caesar is king. That's going to create a problem. And the Romans are going to come against us and they're going to say, listen, we put you guys, you chief priests and you bunch of flunkies, we put you in charge and we expected you to keep a handle on this thing and keep a lid on these people.

[38 : 20] And you've allowed them to go into all of this kind of nonsense. You're fired. And Caiaphas said, if we don't nip this thing in the bud, the Romans will come and they'll fire us.

They'll take away our place and take away our position and all the perks that go with it. And then one of them said, you guys, you don't know anything at all.

Don't you see what's happening here? It is expedient for the nation. Listen, we've got to save this nation. How can we do that?

We've got to save this nation by eliminating Jesus of Nazareth. Don't you see? That takes away. That takes away the argument. Just eliminate him. And from that time on, the text says, I'm pretty sure this is John 12, maybe 11.

But from that time on, it said that they sought to kill him. And it was shortly after that that they entered into the bargain with Judas Iscariot as to where he would be and when he would be there and they would intercept them.

[39 : 24] So all of this persecution that the Jew is going to suffer and still suffers today in many areas is persecution that they themselves engaged in against their own people 2,000 years ago.

How ironic. That is amazing. Absolutely amazing. Other comments or questions? Okay, you had your chance. Let's go then to 1 Timothy chapter 1.

1 Timothy chapter 1 and we will read beginning with verses 12 through 17. And I'm going to ask you to do something a little different that we haven't done, but I mentioned it a little earlier that it might be a good thing for us to get into by way of, call it, if you will, a habit or ritual or whatever.

I think it is one that shows respect and it is one that is recorded in Scripture, that when they read the Scripture, they stood to read the Scripture. So, and by the way, this is Grace Bible Church, not Law Bible Church.

So, if your bones and limbs are not compatible with standing, by all means, remain seated and do so without embarrassment or guilt.

[40 : 44] Okay? But for those of you who have two good stems and are able to stand for a few seconds, let us stand and read from 1 Timothy chapter 1 down through verse 17, beginning with verse 12.

Paul writing to Timothy says, I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into service.

Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor, and yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul really thought he was doing the right thing. And remember shortly before Jesus spent that last night with the disciples, he told them, he said, fellas, the time is coming when those who would kill you will think they are doing God a service.

That was salt of Tarsus. And I might say today, but in a completely different vein, that is the mental attitude of Islamic extremist terrorists who think they are serving God by putting those whom they would consider, what's the word I'm looking for?

[42 : 15] Pardon? Yeah, infidels. Yeah, thank you. Putting infidels to death that they're doing a service. So, verse 14, And the grace of our Lord was more than abundant with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among whom I am foremost of all.

And yet, for this reason, I found mercy in order that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life.

Now, to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. And thank you.

You may be seated. Paul admits to having acted ignorantly and in unbelief.

[43 : 24] He was a vicious, vicious individual. There are critical distinctions between these two great divisions of scripture, prophecy and mystery. And when we say prophecy, that always requires some explanation because what was known and already clearly revealed and that which was foretold and expected to be revealed at some future time is what most people regard as prophecy.

And we tend to think that prophecy always relates to a prediction of the future. Very often it does. Very often it does not. Sometimes to prophesy simply means to preach.

Just to preach. And it often has nothing to do with the future except on the part of the prophet when he delivers the message, he may well say, if you do not repent, that is change your mind about your sin and your evil way of life.

If you do not repent, this is what's going to happen to you. And that is prophetic. And many prophecies contain that. In fact, Jeremiah preached his heart out for years and he told the nation Israel, you need to change your ways.

You need to get in step with God. You need to get with the scriptures. You need to change your life, change your thinking, change your way. You need to repent. Because if you don't, God is going to bring a pagan nation against you.

[44 : 56] And of course, that would be the Babylonians. And that's exactly what happened, just as Jeremiah predicted it. So prophecy is sometimes just telling forth the word of God.

Sometimes it is telling forth and sometimes it's foretelling. But both words are applicable. Mystery, however, is that which had never been prophesied or promised.

And it was not known or anticipated. And this, this is where the gospel of the grace of God comes in. It is justification by faith.

And that is a truth and a concept that never existed before and is spelled out in such a way that anyone can understand it. It is such good news, such incredible news.

And it isn't just for Israel, it's for everybody. And this gospel of the grace of God, this mystery that Paul says, if you want the best commentary on it, read Ephesians 3.

[45 : 56] It spells it out more clearly than any place. And what Paul says there in Ephesians 3 is that this good news of the grace of God and of justification by faith through grace, by grace through faith, was not made known to the sons of men before.

Nobody knew it. Nobody. And the reason they didn't know it is because God had never revealed it. They hadn't even dreamed of it.

But the text tells us in Ephesians 3 that God had this truth hidden away in his own heart and mind all the while, just waiting for the precise time to reveal it.

And he revealed it through the Apostle Paul. Paul refers to himself as a pattern of that which, you know, a pattern is a prototype.

A pattern when a company is going to make a product and they're going to turn out something, manufacture something, they always begin with a model. It's called a prototype. This is what it's going to look like.

[47 : 04] This is going to be the size of it. This is going to be the shape of it and so on and so on. It's a prototype. It's the very first one. And then once they settle on the prototype and everybody agrees to it, then they begin manufacturing them in quantity.

But Paul was a prototype. He was the first one. This is partly Wiseman opinion, so take it with a grain of salt.

But I am of the opinion that when Paul says he was foremost and when he said he was the chief of sinners, he is describing himself as having been the initial recipient of this program, salvation by grace through faith plus nothing unheard of.

Unheard of. Even with the gospel of the kingdom, it is repent and be baptized. Well, suppose you repent and suppose you say, well, I believe Jesus was the Messiah, but I'm not much for this baptism thing.

I'll forego that. Oh, no, you don't. Oh, no, you don't. It is repent and be baptized. That was part of the message. And if you leave out the baptism, by the way, this is water baptism.

[48 : 21] This is John's baptism. If you leave that out, you've truncated the message. It isn't valid. It is repent and be baptized. And you follow that in the gospels.

Now, it is problematic when Paul comes along because Paul is baptized. He's water baptized. And he baptizes some others. And he makes this strange statement.

In 1 Corinthians 1, when he says, I thank God that I didn't baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius.

What kind of a statement is that? Besides, I don't know whether I baptized anybody. Wait a minute. What is going on here?

Why would he say something like that? And then he compounds it by saying, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

[49 : 27] Don't you have a problem with that? I had a problem with that as a Baptist. And I talked to the Baptist professors about it at Cedarville, the school from which I graduated, and a school to which I shall always be deeply indebted for the love, the patience, the teaching that I got there.

But the best that they could tell me is, well, what Paul meant was that he was not putting an emphasis on baptizing. He was putting an emphasis on the preaching of the gospel. Okay.

Okay. Dr. So-and-so, if that's good enough for you, that's good enough for me. Okay. I'll buy that. And it satisfied me because I didn't know how to make it fit, and it didn't seem to, but...

And then he says, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Hmm. Then the question became this.

Would the 12 have been able to say that? Oh, wait a minute. Now we've got a problem. Could Peter, James, and John, and Andrew say, repent.

[50 : 52] Okay. Repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. But you don't need the baptism. You can forget that. I know.

You go, and you preach, and you baptize into all the nations. Great Commission, Matthew 28, 19, and 20.

And there is no way in the world that you can responsibly leave water baptism out of that. It is part of the package. Like it or not, there it is. And all the gospels support it.

And then for Paul to make a statement like, Christ didn't send me to baptize. Well, that just means that he put the emphasis on the preaching of the gospel and the water baptism was strictly secondary.

And that's what I accepted. And it sufficed until I started hearing some other things. And I thought, hmm.

[51 : 54] Well, this fits a whole lot better than what that fits. And the bottom line is, these are two entirely different programs not to be meshed together.

They are separate and distinct. One is the gospel of the good news of the kingdom. The other is the gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ. And that latter gospel didn't even exist until after the resurrection of Christ.

And I remember, I remember my freshman and sophomore year. Boy, I was spiritually as dumb as a box of rocks.

New Christian planted there in the midst of this Christian school. And most of the kids were PKs and MKs. And they knew their Bible backwards and forwards and upside down.

And every time they'd give a reference, I'd go to the index. Find out where in the world the book of Acts is. And by the time I found it, they were under something else.

[53 : 06] And I was always running behind. And I could not put anything together. And it taught me the value of orderliness and seeing order in Scripture and coming into these truths.

It completely revolutionized my life. And it gave me a love and an understanding and appreciation for the Bible that simply was not possible before. Oh, I believed it all.

Yeah, I believed it all. And even the parts that I couldn't understand, I believed those too. And like the preacher old Bob Harrington, he's what the Lord now used to say.

I read my Bible cover to cover. He says, I believe the whole thing. I believe from Genesis. I believe concordance. I believe everything. Yeah, and that wasn't a problem. But making it fit and seeing how it came together.

And what you do, wow, the book takes on a whole new dimension, a whole new appreciation. Just amazing.

[54 : 04] Well, let me get on to this. Okay. The message of justification by faith alone was met by many with unbelief and suspicion.

That was 2,000 years ago. It still is. Think of that. It still is.

Met with suspicion and unbelief. Why? Well, because it is contrary to the law. And what was it that the Apostle Paul was constantly accused of by the Jews?

He teaches against the law of Moses. Come with me for a moment to Acts chapter 13. And with this, we'll have to start winding things down.

Acts chapter 13. This is remarkable. This is on Paul's first missionary journey. And by the way, I want you time-wise to understand this. That from the time the Apostle Paul had that Damascus Road experience until the time that he and Barnabas took their very first missionary journey, there was almost 15 years had lapsed.

[55 : 22] You understand that? The book of Acts involves chronologically three decades. Thirty years. Thirty years of time had passed from Acts 1 to Acts 28.

Thirty years. And from the time he took that first missionary journey, 15 years had passed.

And then when he goes to Antioch in Syria, the disciples and the brethren come together.

They lay hands on Paul and Silas. And that's another thing that's wonderful. Paul and Barnabas, rather. And they commissioned them for that first missionary journey. And they set sail. And here is in their first encounter, or one of their first encounters, in Acts chapter 13.

And let's just jump in, if we may. And he preaches to them. And he tells them about the gospel. And in verse 32, he says, We preach to you the good news. By the way, understand where he is, if you will, because they are at Antioch.

[56 : 29] And what's... Verse 14. Going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidia and Antioch. And on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue.

Now, there may have been a few proselytes or some God-fearers there, but I can assure you of this. The vast majority of the people that would have made up this congregation in the synagogue were Jews.

And that's why they were there. They were Jews. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue officials sent to them, that is to Paul and Barnabas, saying, Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.

And Paul stood up and, motioning with his hands, said, Men of Israel. He's addressing fellow Jews. And just in case there are some God-fearers there, like Cornelius was, and you who fear God.

That means Gentiles. You're not Jews. You're Gentiles. But you are on board with the Jewish God. You have not submitted yourself for circumcision, and you can't be a bona fide Jew and accept it as a Jew, but you are a God-fearer.

[57 : 38] You are in sympathy with the God of Israel, and so on. Listen. The God of his people, Israel, chose our fathers, made the people, so on, so on, so on. Now, I've got to skip a lot of this for time's sake, but I want you to come over across the page, if you will, in verse 31.

And for many days, Jesus appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. This is after the resurrection. The very ones who are now his witnesses to the people.

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children, in that he has raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second psalm, you are my son, today I have begotten you.

And as for the fact that he raised him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.

Therefore, he also says in another psalm, thou wilt not allow thy holy one to undergo decay. This is Psalm 16. But David, that is King David, and by the way, when Jesus was here in his earthly ministry, King David had been dead and buried for a thousand years.

[58 : 59] And there was a whole list of kings that served after David, and the last one being Zechariah. So we're told that David served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay.

We know where David's buried. We know where his tomb is. But he whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore, now this is such an incredible statement.

This was so unheard of. You know, Christians today, they read a passage like this, and they think, well, that was just standard fare. No, no, no, no. Nothing standard about this. This is monumental stuff.

This is just tremendous content. Therefore, in light of all of that, let it be known to you, brethren, that through him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through him everyone, and that means Jew or Gentile, everyone who believes is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the law of Moses.

You can take it to the bank. What is he saying? He's not preaching against Moses. No, no. He's simply saying Moses and the law had its limitations.

[60 : 34] And what were his limitations? What were they? The law. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. God did in the person of Christ.

Nothing's wrong with the law. The law is just and holy and good. But those to whom it was given were not. They couldn't handle it.

And in one way effort to compensate for that, God provided the Day of Atonement. That was the national, that was Israel's National Forgiveness Day. Yom Kippur!

And on that day the high priest would take blood and enter into the Holy of Holies, the only one ever allowed in there. And he, once a year, not without blood, go in and sprinkle blood on the altar for the people and for himself.

That was the Day of Atonement. And Israel as a nation got a reprieve for another year. And next year, have to go through the same thing all over again. That went on for hundreds and hundreds of years.

[61 : 42] Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Israel got free from its sins for another year. Made it through another year. And the same thing next year.

And then, on that day at Calvary, three o'clock in the afternoon, darkness descended upon the land, earthquake, tremors, confusion.

What was happening? The veil in the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. And God is saying, I'm done with this.

There will be no more days of atonement because of this day of atonement that he who knew no sin was made sin not just for Israel, but for the whole world.

Wow. Are you kidding me? what took place during those six hours from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon represents the most critical, awesome six hours in the history of the universe when he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

[63 : 29] Oh, my goodness. Do you think anything even close to this was preached with the gospel repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?

No. That's an entirely different issue altogether for a different reason. Oh, it was legitimate. Nobody's questioning that. Of course it was legitimate.

But it was for that time and that place. This is different. What took place on that cross? God was in Christ reconciling the world unto him.

The world. Whose redemption was secured in that death? Everybody's. Everybody's. No exceptions.

Nobody left out. The entire human race was redeemed in Christ. Don't confuse that with the entire human race was saved.

[64 : 35] No. The entire human race was rendered savable. Anyone could be saved because Christ made the payment for them.

And what remains for them to do? Admit their sin. Admit their need. Embrace the one who died for them in their place. God will impart to that person the very righteousness that Jesus Christ secured and give it to you as a free gift.

No strings attached. Do you see why that's called good news? Oh, my goodness. This is the panacea for the whole world.

I want you to just read the rest of this. Look at this. Verse 42. Verse 42. And as Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging.

I guess they were begging. Please, we've got to hear more of this. Begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. And when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

[65 : 57] Wouldn't let them go. Wouldn't let them out of their sight. And the next Sabbath, nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. I'm telling you, this news was so electrifying. This buzz went around the town.

You won't believe what these two guys, they came in and what they preached and what they said about it. It's the most incredible thing I ever heard in my life. And they're going to be there next Sunday, next Friday. They're going to be there for the next Sabbath.

You've got coming here. And the next day, that place was packed. You couldn't find a seat anywhere. And they're all geared up for this message, this message that sounds too good to be true, but it is true.

Wow. Oh, my goodness. Well, I'm not finished, but I quit. Question now is, and what I want to close with is, have you embraced this yourself?

My thinking is, the likelihood is that every single person here enjoys a new life in Christ and the joy of sins forgiven. But just in case, just in case there is one here, like a gentleman that I knew several years ago in another church, he was born into a Christian family and raised in a Christian family and taken to Sunday school and church and he knew all the hymns and he quoted some of the scriptures and he'd heard the language and he could speak the language of Zion and he blended and fit right in just like anybody else.

[67 : 30] But he was not regenerated. He was a nice guy. He was a good man. But he had never personally done business with Jesus Christ.

And everyone was shocked when they heard later that Floyd had come to personal faith and called well, he'd been to church for years. I was sure that he was a Christian.

He knew the lingo. He knew the ritual. He knew all that, but he had never appropriated Christ in his life. And there may not be anybody here like that today, but who knows?

Perhaps there is. So would you bow with me please? Our Father, we cannot in any way, shape, or form get over this incredible gospel. This event that so radically changed the world more than anything else is available today for proclamation and for reception and for enjoyment and for life and for liberty and for everything else that the human heart longs for.

And our prayer is that if there is anyone here or anyone in our listening audience by way of computer or technology, we've been confronted with the claims of Christ in a way that perhaps they better understand.

[68 : 54] If they've never made this decision, may they in their heart of hearts even now cry out to you, Lord God, I recognize I'm just like everybody else. I am a sinful being just like everybody else and there is no way that I can affect my own salvation and I realize that.

That's why Jesus died was to take my sin upon himself so I could be set free from it and now I understand and I recognize that and I want that.

Thank you for sending your son and thank you Jesus for being willing to do what you did with a kind of love that I can never understand that I greatly appreciate.

Thank you for dying in my place. I want to embrace you as my Lord and my Savior. I want to serve you. I want you to take over my life and make it whatever you want it to be.

I'm at your service. Would you make that your prayer dear friend, wherever you are, whoever you are and I can promise you, you will never ever ever regret it.

[70 : 12] Thank you Father for allowing us this time together and for this precious wonderful truth that we've heard so many times and yet it comes to us with a new startling freshness that we just rejoice in it all over again.

We thank you and we bless you in Christ's wonderful name. Amen.