

The Mystery of the Gospel  
(Ephesians 6:19)  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. **Introduction:**

- A. Introduce title / turn to Ephesians 6 / Note the intrigue with the description of that which is made known unto all whom God saves in Christ as the "mystery of the Gospel." Note that the word translated "mystery" or "mysteries" is found 27 times in the New Testament.
- B. (Read Eph. 6:18 -19): *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,"*
- C. General Comments about the contrast between the ordinary connotation and usage of our English word "mystery" and its usage in the Bible to describe the Gospel
1. I enjoy a good mystery ó whether a movie or a novel. I enjoy it because (while I appreciate the challenge of trying to solve it as the author grabs my interest and curiosity), I know that I will see how it all turns out at the end. And to me a good mystery is one that I am unable to figure it out by myself. Yet we enjoy mysteries as we read with anticipation to discover the answer to the mystery in the book's final pages. I don't know about you all, perhaps I am just shallow, but I get real frustrated with movies or books that leave you hanging at the end.
  2. We encounter many mysteries in life ó things that we know something about but just can't quite figure out. And if it's pertaining to something important to us ó why that can be a real point of frustration, concern, even fear. A prime example can be seen in the current global financial crisis that impacts on the financial security of many of us. And to me it is a mystery of sorts as we seek to make decisions, yet without having the answers before us. Yet the best investment gurus in this world could not fully foresee or forestall the unprecedented economic events that our country and the world currently face. And there is great fear and uncertainty as a result.

3. Many investment advisors have related how that in this last freefall of the markets there was no place to hide. If you keep everything in cash, you lose to inflation over the long run. Yet bond prices (fixed income instruments that typically rise with the fall of equities) dropped along with the stocks. Even gold declined. If one could solve this mystery so as to accurately predict all future events, why he would have riches untold in this life. But it remains a mystery to us. We cannot control nor predict all the variables that can impact on the financial markets so as to be certain (not 100%) of anything in this life.
4. In the New Testament, the Greek word that is translated "mystery" speaks of something that does not create this same uncertainty and fear of the unknown that we would normally associate with a mystery or something "mysterious." It does not refer to some known or perplexing problem that we are aware exists, but simply do not understand; or for which we do not have the answers; or which we might describe as "mysterious" or baffling to us.
5. The Greek word for "mystery" as it is used in Ephesians and throughout the New Testament is "mysterion" (moos-tayø-ree-on). Unlike our English word for "mystery," it does not denote the mysterious as we typically think of it. But it does denote that which cannot be naturally understood or it denotes that which can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who to whom it is revealed by His Spirit. In our ordinary usage of the word, a "mystery" implies knowledge withheld. Today we will see that its usage in scripture is always in the context of truth revealed.
6. Among the ancient Greeks the mysteries were religious rites and ceremonies practiced by secret societies. So only those initiated into these "mysteries" became possessors of this specific information. To be uninitiated, was to be unaware. The Greek word mysterion (translated mystery) referred to that which was known to the mustes (moos-taysø), meaning "the initiated."
7. In Phil. 4:12, Paul speaks of being instructed (and the word there translated "instructed" is mueo (moo-ehø-o) which is derived from the word mysterion (moos-tayø-ree-on) or mystery. So when Paul speaks of being taught or instructed, it is to declare, I have learned (or been initiated into) the secret. There has been a revelation.

8. So again, the Greek word translated òmysteryö in the New Testament, is not knowledge withheld (as with the English word) ó but rather truth revealed ó an important distinction. We see this as we consider the terms that so often accompany the word translated òmystery,ö terms referring to this mystery as one that is òmade known,ö òmanifested,ö òrevealed,ö òpreached,ö and that some come to òunderstand.ö

## II. Scriptural references that support that the mystery of the Gospel / the mystery of Christ in the New Testament is truth revealed:

- A. We already read there in Eph 6:19, how Paul instructed them to pray for him, saying “... *that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*”
- B. (Turn back a few pages to Eph. 3). Here this mystery of the gospel, is called the òmystery of Christö Beginning in Eph. 3:3, we read, “*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: <to the Gentiles> <sup>3</sup>How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, <sup>4</sup>Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” Now skip down to verse 8: “*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; <sup>9</sup>And to make all men see <Jew & Gentile> what is the fellowship of the mystery, <a kinship in having the mystery revealed in a world that understands us not> *which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: <sup>10</sup>To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church <the ones to be initiated> the manifold wisdom of God, <sup>11</sup>According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:”***
- C. Turn to Mark 4:10-12. (Note almost identical verses to this may be found in Matt and Luke). We read in Mark 4, beginning in verse 10: “*And when he <Christ> was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. <sup>11</sup>And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: <sup>12</sup>That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” So to have this mystery revealed ó to see and to perceive, to hear and to understand the mystery of the kingdom of God (the Gospel) then is to be converted, to discover your sins have been forgiven! It is to be among the initiated.*

D. Turn to I Cor. 2:6-10. As you're turning, let me add to my comments made earlier about the ancient Greeks and their use of this word translated mystery. The Greeks called those who were initiated into these secret societies so as to have a mystery revealed – they called them the *ōperfected ones*.ö Now notice Paul's usage as we read in I Cor. 2:6, as he writes, ***“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: <of course this is speaking of those who are made perfect or complete in Christ ó yet it's the same word used to describe those *ōperfected*ö ones (in ancient Greece) to whom the mystery is revealed.> yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: <sup>7</sup>But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: <sup>8</sup>Which none of the princes of this world knew: <you see they weren't seeking to unravel a mystery as we think of one, they were oblivious to it> for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup>But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. <sup>10</sup>But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”***

E. In Col. 4:3-4 Paul wrote, ***“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: <sup>4</sup>That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”*** It's a manifest mystery!

F. And we can go on. E.g. ó Romans 17:25 speaks of the ***“...revelation of the mystery...”***

G. But I trust you can readily see from all these passages that the mystery of the Gospel (also called the mystery of the kingdom, the mystery of Christ) is one that God's people must be initiated into (as adopted children) by the Holy Spirit revealing Christ in the Gospel unto them. Until God is pleased to bring this mystery our way and give us life to see & perceive, to hear & understand, and to embrace with the heart the mystery of the Gospel ó of the one, sure and certain way of salvation, we don't even consider that a mystery might exist, not concerned with trying to discover out how God could be just and justify us, we imagine we have the answers. But to discover the secret ó to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ ó is to have this mystery revealed. It is not to know all things for we continue to grow in grace and knowledge, seeing through a glass dimly according to the scriptures.

H. Yet, even though we progress in our understanding of things, when it comes to the gospel ó the mystery of Christ ó those who have been illuminated by His Spirit (initiated so to speak) ó they do have the answer as to how God saves sinners by Christ alone. That specific mystery of the Gospel has been revealed to them.

III. Application: So what can we learn from the scriptural truth that the Gospel that is to be believed on unto salvation is a mystery manifested unto all those God saves ó a truth revealed by divine intervention?

A. First, that wherever our hope and confidence lies, if it is in Christ's Person and work as set forth uniquely in God's Gospel ó this revealed mystery (not a false gospel) ó then our hope and sure confidence must be based upon something which we were previously oblivious to as among the uninitiated (all of us by nature who are born in darkness & alienated from God, spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins and so by nature, unable to come to Christ).

1. So we didn't study our way into the kinship of fellow believers. True believers look back in hindsight and marvel at God's hand of providence whereby He brought us to the message of the gospel and revealed to us how God saves sinners by Christ alone. I've heard stories of youngsters who grew up under the gospel for years and knew all the truth of the gospel doctrines, but who (in the day of God's power) were awakened to discover the necessity of their being found in Christ, based solely upon that work He finished in Calvary and convinced in their hearts by His Spirit, that they must have it ó that there is no salvation by any other way before a Holy God. It's not just the accumulation of knowledge ó but it must be made manifest in the heart of a sinner.
2. This is consistent with God's insistence that all must repent or else perish. There must be a 180 degree turning from the way that seemed naturally right to us.
3. Yet, it isn't simply having any truth revealed, or any change of heart. Many change their minds about religious doctrines, change denominations, have spiritual experiences which they sincerely believe to be of God ó whereby perhaps they discover some newfound interest in the things of God, and believe they have now come unto Christ. It's beyond dispute that for many, some religious change has taken place. But if we are all initially oblivious to the mystery of Christ until God is pleased to reveal Him, how can we know if our change of heart, our change of mind, is in fact the revelation of the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Gospel?

B. Well there's the key to it's the mystery of the Gospel! What distinguishes the Gospel (the truth of how God saves sinners from any and all other imaginations of men among all the religions of the world)?

1. Turn to Romans 1 to Why is the true Gospel called the power of God unto salvation. Well, because in Romans 1:16 to 17 God says through the Apostle Paul, ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”***
2. What is this righteousness of God that must be revealed? (Explain satisfaction to God's law and justice to precept and penalty.)
3. Has that righteousness been revealed unto you? Have you submitted to that? Must you have it as your own?
4. Secondly, the scripture is clear, that it is the Gospel of grace. (Quote Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace speaks of the un-merited favor of God by the recipient or object of grace.
  - a. So if like most of Christendom, you think Christ died for all men, you haven't been initiated into the mystery of Christ to for by default, whether you know it or not, you're trusting in another gospel to in salvation by works.
  - b. And if you cry peace to any who hold such God-dishonoring notions, then you obviously don't see the vital aspect of what Christ fully accomplished at the cross to not if you think that for some, the mystery revealed unto them consists of such God dishonoring notions that casts shame and reproach upon our Savior. You see, such notions would expose that the mystery of Christ / the Gospel hasn't been revealed to your own heart so as to bring you to rest solely in Christ. The mystery of the Gospel manifested consists of seeing the sure and certain truth of the gospel of God's grace, seeing that salvation is impossible for any who come to God pleading their own works, rather than the merits of Christ alone to His imputed righteousness as revealed in the Gospel.

5. And so we can see simply by considering these 2 distinctions of the Gospel, that if indeed the mystery of the Gospel has been revealed unto you:

- a. It will give God all the glory ó reveal Him as He is, as both a just God and a Savior.
- b. It will give Christ all the preeminence as the One who alone met all the conditions and requirements for all who are saved.
- c. And it will exclude all grounds for boasting in me and you, the sinner.

#### IV. Closing:

A. Turn to Ephesians 1. Read Eph. 1:8-14.

B. This Holy Spirit, having made known unto you the mystery of His will (vs. 9), is the ðearnestö of our inheritance. Itø how we know weøre bound for the redemption into heavenø glory.

C. And so what is this mystery of the Gospel, this mystery of Christ, called here the ðmystery of His will?ö (Read vss. 3-7).

- 1. Emphasize vs. 4 ó “ ***...that we should be holy and without blame before Him.***” All based upon His righteousness being made mine!
- 2. Emphasize vss. 6 ó7 “***...wherein He math made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption...ö***

D. Well, this mystery of the gospel does not cause us to fret about the things we donø know ó for there is lot we donø know. But all who were made perfect in Christ at the cross of Calvary, shall in each generation be found among those initiated (so to speak), as Godø Spirit under the sound of the Gospel of grace (wherein His righteousness is revealed) reveals unto them the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Gospel.

E. As we read in Mark 4, Unto them “***... it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God...***” They know with a certainty this mystery ó how God saves sinners by Christ alone and thereby they have a sure and certain hope ó so sure it allows them to say with David of their own salvation that it too is “***...ordered in all thing, and sure...,***” for the Holy Spirit likewise has made it unto them all their salvation, and all their desire (2 Sam. 23:5).

- F. Our current global financial crisis reminds us how nothing is certain in this world. Investment strategies come and go, but even the very best financial minds cannot give assurance as to how to even hold on to the portion of this world's material goods God may have provided us ó it remains a mystery, knowledge withheld from our full understanding.
- G. But oh what a blessing to have the mystery of the kingdom of God, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Gospel revealed to us. Oh, to discover (as we read in Eph. 1) that we've been "***...blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.***" The unsearchable riches in Christ are 100% sure & certain ó and they are everlasting!
- H. As Paul wrote to the Colossians in chapter 1, vss. 26-27, in speaking of the Gospel he wrote, *“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; <sup>26</sup>Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: <sup>27</sup>To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ<, > in you, the hope of glory:”* May God's rich blessings be upon you!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.