

98-09-25b Colossians

We're back now from our break and ready to resume in Colossians chapter 1. We left off in verse 25 where Paul says that he has become a minister of the gospel to the church. He's talking about the church of which he has become a servant, a diakonos, according to the stewardship, the oikonomion, that he was given by God. It is a stewardship that was given to him for you, he says, for you Colossian believers and by extension to anyone who is receiving the ministry that's contained in this letter to fulfill the word of God.

What does it mean to fulfill the word of God? To understand that we need to step back one phrase and go back to the commission that Paul has been given. Normally and if you, sometimes you kind of see a phrase that's similar to something you remember from another passage, Paul more often talks about the grace that has been given. You may recall some passages where he says according to the grace that was given me.

And this is the one place where he says according to the stewardship that was given me or according to the commission that was given to me. But if we look at these parallel passages, for example, turn back to Romans chapter 12 and verse 3. We just talked in the first session about Romans chapter 12 where we have not being conformed to the world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Then in verse 3, for I say through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you.

Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think and so forth. And it's the same sort of context, Paul says I have been commissioned, I have been given something from God and it is my calling to pass it on to you and this is a grace that has been given to me. You find the same thing a few pages over in Romans 15, verse 15.

Nevertheless brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points as reminding you because of the grace given to me by God. He uses the same language over in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 10. 1 Corinthians, of course, we also alluded to in the first session, but he says in 1 Corinthians 3.10, according to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds on it.

But let each one take heed how he builds on it. So this stewardship is an expression of God's grace. People tend to look at someone who has been placed in a position of authority or someone who has great responsibility as being privileged.

People sometimes develop a chip on their shoulder because, you can remember back in the days of the exodus when Israel was in the wilderness and some of the individuals go to Moses and Aaron and say well how come you are the only ones who can lead and how come Aaron and his sons are the only ones who can worship and we are Levites and we have just as much right as you two Levites to lead and to do one thing and another. And they don't recognize the divine

calling that has come uniquely to Aaron and his sons to be the priests and the worship leaders in Israel. And they say well we are Levites also and we ought to have just as much right.

And of course eventually the ground opens up and swallows many of them. It was a very apt application of that story made not long ago in some of the theological journals and so forth. There was an article that came out because there was all of this agitation for women in the church and women pastors and women priests and women to hold positions of authority and it's a very good point made in going back to that story and saying it isn't that the other Levites are inferior, less qualified or in any way distinguishable from the ones who have been commissioned.

The thing that distinguishes them is not their quality but their calling. God decides who is called and to whom he is going to assign that function. And it's a wrong view to look at that and take offense and say well I am somehow being cheapened or devalued or I'm being called inferior because I haven't received the calling that this person has had.

This is true in marriage where the husband has been assigned responsibility for the family to be the spiritual head of the house, to be accountable before God for the way things go in that family. That's just the assignment and people have always said well go to Paul and the woman was deceived and so she's got an inferior brain and so forth. That's not it at all.

There are numerous examples of the reverse being true but the fact that God has assigned a specific calling to men in what has been called the patriarchal model of society isn't based on superiority and inferiority. It's based on the divine plan, the divine oikonomia that he then delegates to specific individuals. There may have been many men who had the intellectual gifts and the motivation and so forth that Paul had but Paul is the one that God chose to be an apostle.

He didn't choose Barnabas to be an apostle. He didn't choose Silas to be an apostle. They were closely associated with Paul but they were not apostles in the sense of being one of the twelve.

So again as we look at what Paul says here, having become a minister according to the stewardship or the commission from God which was given to me for you. When this is given by God, why did the Levites receive this priesthood ministry? It was to benefit Israel. There's no intrinsic fun in being responsible for slaughtering the animals and maintaining the temple and sweeping out the ashes and cleaning up all of that blood and so forth.

It is the purpose of it and it did have some benefits associated with it but they couldn't own land. They had an entirely different existence but it was given to the nation of Israel for the nation's benefit. These are the men who dedicate their lives to leading worship in Israel.

It is helpful when we tend to start feeling defensive or threatened in some way by looking at callings that God has assigned in life to remember that these things have been assigned for our benefit. Husbands have been assigned responsibility in the marriage and in the family for the

benefit of the wife, for the benefit of the children. It's a part of the divine design for blessing and to twist it and to turn it into something that amounts to a curse, to an oppression or to a devaluing of people is a terrible distortion of grace.

It's a gift. It's a blessing. It's a blessing that God has gifted men to be communicators of the truth and to exercise authority over the church when it is gathered.

That's another common mistake that's made is that the pastor somehow has authority that goes beyond the gathering of the church that he has authority over your life on Wednesday afternoon at 2 p.m. when you're deciding what you're going to do that somehow the pastor's authority extends over that and it doesn't. The pastor's authority exists simply to make sure that worship is conducted in a fitting and orderly manner. It doesn't extend over people's lives.

It doesn't extend in telling them what they ought to do and how they ought to do it. It doesn't extend beyond the gathering of believers. It's simply to ensure good order and that things are done in a way that reflects the glory of God when believers are gathered and to organize the activities and the functions of that group when it functions as a group.

The people misconstrue pastoral authority and think that it somehow guarantees or underscores teaching. Well this teaching is valid because my pastor taught it and I respect his authority and to disagree with what he has taught is somehow undermining or attacking his authority. This is a complete mixing of apples and oranges.

The pastor's authority to organize and exercise leadership in the church has nothing to do with the accuracy or validity of his teaching. The Word of God needs no help. It doesn't need anybody to bolster it with their personal standing.

The Word of God carries its own authority and teaching is authoritative to the extent that it reflects divine truth. It doesn't matter who it is you can write it on the bathroom wall. If it's truth from the Word of God it carries its own authority.

Somebody can have all the authority in the world and be looked up to and worshiped and be a cult leader and if they're not teaching the Word of God all of that authority and all of that recognition is meaningless in terms of the accuracy or effectiveness of their teaching. The Word of God carries the authority of God himself. God has magnified his word above his name.

It doesn't need any help and we shouldn't misconstrue and hide behind the idea that the pastor has authority and excuse ourselves from critical thinking to determine whether or not these things are so. Whether I teach something or any other person purports to be teaching the Word of God it is your responsibility as one who is listening to filter out for yourself. In the natural world animals generally can tell what's good for them to eat and what's not.

Why is it that cattle pass up some things in the pasture and eat other things. Even we as people

we have taste buds and a lot of things that are bad for us if food has spoiled it tastes spoiled. We can tell when we put it in our mouth.

If we taste it in time that there's. You can you know you can reach into the refrigerator and pour yourself a big glass of milk and gulp it down before you've really stopped to sample it and then realize too late that it's way past its prime. But God has given us built in indicators.

We know if we maintain a certain diet you know seminary students and other people that are on a real hectic schedule are notorious for just eating fast food all the time. Well pretty soon that will catch up with you and you find that you don't feel good and there are things wrong with you that shouldn't be wrong. And your body tells you that your nourishment is not sound.

You don't you know fill that in for yourself. You can tell that your diet is not healthy because your body will tell you God has built that in. Spiritually your soul will tell you when your diet is not healthy.

You will not be able to produce and you will not be able to experience the fruit of the spirit. You won't have a life that reflects love joy peace patience perseverance long suffering gentleness. If you find yourself unable to be sensitive to other people unable to function in love and in forbearance and in temperance and self-control if your self-control keeps slipping away look at your diet.

Maybe you're not giving the Holy Spirit anything to work with in your soul. Maybe what you have taken in over these many weeks and months and years isn't the object of your meditation. You would think you know some some of us have gotten in the mindset especially in the past that well if I didn't hear some Bible teaching this week I'm just going to fall apart and unravel.

What about all of those hours and hours and hours of Bible study we've already had. Have we retained none of that. Can we not sit down in a quiet moment and meditate on a truth a promise a principle a doctrine reflect on the perspective of the plan of God the Lord Jesus Christ our place as his body and bride the bright hope of the future that we are exhorted time and again to not be moved away from.

If you find yourself with 10 or 15 minutes to wait in a waiting room if you find yourself stuck in traffic if you find yourself with a few idle moments between requirements can we not find anything in our soul to remind us of who we are and why we're here. It's treasure it's nourishment it carries the power and the authority of God himself. But we've got to take it out and look at it or it's not going to do any good.

We can stuff it under a bushel. We can stick it into a corner and not let it have its perfect work in us. It's all up to us.

We decide what we do with this treasure. We decide what scope the word of God and the spirit of

God are going to have in our lives and we have to wake up and realize that we're responsible we're accountable. We have this great opportunity and it's such a shame to squander it or to miss it because we've gotten deflected and distracted.

So Paul says I have been given this grace this commission for you. It's to benefit you. It's such a silly thing for people to resent a particular assignment or a particular calling that someone else has received rather than recognizing that this is a way of God expressing his grace to me.

What a great thing that the body of Christ has that gift. We often look and start to feel ashamed. We say well look at that person over there boy they're really on fire for the Lord or look how effective they are look how God is using them.

They've got all this impact and ministry and they they seem to be just a glowing streak in the sky here and I'm just off back here in the backwater I'm not doing anything I'm not noticeable God's glory is not reflecting off of me etc etc. What a terrible way to view the grace that God has given the church to look at a believer who maybe has been an inspiration or a blessing or a help in some way and instead of being joyful instead of having peace instead of enjoying that blessing we turn it into bitterness we turn it into self abuse we turn it into inferiority complex we turn it into an occasion for sins of our mind instead of appreciating the fact that if that is great if it is noble and pure and lovely and right and of good report it's something to dwell on and be grateful for and be thankful that that God gave us the apostle Paul that God gave us other believers who minister to us and that hopefully in our way and in our particular area God can use us and that there are differing parts of the body. There's a lot to think about just in these brief comments that Paul makes about rejoicing in his suffering which is for the church in rejoicing in his commission from God which is for the church.

Paul doesn't say I rejoice because I'm an apostle and I can wave my hand and do miracles and I can write inspired scripture and I can be remembered all down through history and I'm going to have a pillar in the holy city etc etc. Paul rejoices because he's his perspective is this is a great thing for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a great way to continue the ministry and express the love of Jesus Christ for his body and bride the church.

So this oikonomia or stewardship is something that Paul exercises and functions within on behalf of the church. Paul talks about his ministry in different ways he says he is a minister of God in Second Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 4. He says I am a minister I am a the oikonomos of God a little bit later in that same book in Second Corinthians 11 23. He says I am a minister of Christ and then in Second Corinthians 3 6 he says I am a minister of the new covenant.

Different aspects of this stewardship that God has given to him on behalf of the church. He says this was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God. This is the question we left off with in the last session.

What does it mean to fulfill the word of God. Look back at Romans chapter 15 and verse 19

Romans 15 19 Paul uses the same phrase here when he talks about you can start in verse 17. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.

This is the summation of everything we've been saying about Paul and about the example he has by way of attitude. I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me in word and deed to make the Gentiles obedient in mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God so that from Jerusalem and round about to Lyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. The word for preaching is not in this verse that word for fully preached is the very same word that we have over in Colossians chapter 1 verse 25.

Literally he says so that from Jerusalem round about to Lyricum I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ. What is the gospel of Christ. When Paul goes out to communicate the word of God whether he's evangelizing whether he's teaching whether he's training pastors whatever it is he's doing he's fulfilling the gospel of Christ.

He's fulfilling the stewardship that God assigned to him. This is a great example for us. We have been assigned some of us are parents and we are assigned the stewardship for those little souls that grow to maturity under our watchful eye.

Some of us have a spouse and that's a stewardship whether you're the husband or the wife. We have talents. We have relationships with other believers.

We have family members. We have time and time is a stewardship. We are all charged with redeeming the time because the days are evil and the time that we're given however long or short it may be is a stewardship.

It's time that's been given to us by God and we can either make the most of it so that God's glory is reflected and his purposes are accomplished or we can squander it selfishly. It's a stewardship. If we can keep ourselves aware of our stewardship we think well this particular half hour of my day is mine to waste or I'm stuck and I can't do anything with it.

I'm bored. What a terrible thing as a believer to sit and feel bored rather than recognizing here I've got some free space. What a rare and precious thing to actually have a few minutes of time to pull something out of the treasury of my soul and freshen it up in my thinking, remind myself of principles and promises and doctrines, remember who I am and why I'm here.

It's a stewardship. Paul is constantly aware of his stewardship, a grace that has been given to him by God. You stop and think and you'll recognize where it is and what it is and in what way God can be pleased with the way we function in that stewardship.

For Paul it was his apostleship and his constant care for the churches. Even chained in prison you want to talk about boredom and a chance to get depressed and think well you know kick your

toe against the cement wall there or the stone wall and say why am I not out being able to be an apostle and preach to big crowds. Paul says I've still got that stewardship and what a great fulfillment there is of it.

So he says this fulfills the word of God in the same way that from Jerusalem around to Ilyricum he fulfilled the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2nd Timothy chapter 4 and verse 17 Paul says but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that the message might be preached fully through me and that all the Gentiles might hear and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Same word is used here, fully fulfilled.

The message might be fulfilled through me that all the Gentiles might hear. This is a combination of two words, the same pleiroo you may have heard that before in connection with the filling of the spirit be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be filled with the spirit. The verb is pleiroo.

And this fully or fulfilling idea is pleiroo and here in Timothy it's pleiroforeo which means to fully reveal or fully proclaim to fulfill in communication this message. And you find the same word used over in 1st Thessalonians 1 chapter 1 verses 5 and 6. Paul says our gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake and you became followers of us and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit so that you became examples to all of those in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. But the gospel came in much assurance and fullness.

It came not just in a message, not just on a tract or a pamphlet. It was reflected in every aspect of Paul's life because he's aware of his stewardship. He's aware of who he is beside him.

We need to think in the same way. What is this stewardship that he is specifically given for the church? In verse 26 of Colossians 1 it is the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from generations but now has been revealed to his saints. So something in Paul's communication to the church was not known in Old Testament days.

It wasn't known to Daniel. It wasn't known to Moses or to Abraham or to David. It has been hidden from ages and from generations.

The angels, the principalities and powers didn't know about it. The Old Testament prophets didn't know about it. It has been hidden.

The word there is the word from which we get cryptography. It was encrypted. It was hidden away.

It's also the word from which we get crypt. What is a crypt? It's a place where you hide away a dead body. This was hidden away and was not revealed in former times.

Hidden from ages, hidden from generations but now has been revealed to his saints, to his

hagioi. Well, who are the saints? It kind of depends on the context, doesn't it? There's one sense in which every saved person is a saint. There's another sense in which the saints are those who are paying attention in God's plan.

Paul often begins his letters by writing to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. He's writing to those who are reading. He's writing to those who are listening.

He's writing to those who are called according to his purpose. Many are called, few are chosen. We have to recognize ourselves as the called.

You can issue a call. You can issue an invitation and not show up. Are you an invited one? Yes.

But if you don't show up at the banquet, you're an invited one that didn't avail themselves of the invitation. And those who actually show up, they're the true invited ones. They were invited and they recognized it and they came.

Many are called, few are chosen. Many are saints but few become holy and blameless. Because that requires faith.

It requires establishing a pattern of life where we pursue the things of God. And that's a choice that we make. You can be a saint in name.

You can be a saint in deed. You can think of lots of examples in life. There are people who are appointed to an office or even who are elected to an office.

And they may initially be assigned all of the respect and the privileges that pertain to that office. You can achieve a rank in the military. You can be appointed as a, I just spent this past week one night talking to people who are wanting to go to the Naval Academy and talking about the process of getting a nomination and an appointment.

Many people are qualified. A lot of people even receive nominations and a lot of people even receive appointments. But some who receive an appointment actually don't go.

They wind up doing something different. Maybe they got two or three appointments. Maybe they got accepted on a scholarship to somewhere else.

You can be nominated. You can be appointed. And yet you don't ever become a midshipman because it's your choice as to whether or not you're going to avail yourself.

Are you a nominee? Are you an appointee? Yes. But from the standpoint of the Academy, are you standing there in uniform, in ranks, getting that four year education and the commission upon graduation and so forth? Maybe not. It's an option.

It's a choice that people make once that is proffered. The same thing is true of us. We have all

things in Christ.

We have all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. But are we going to reach out and claim those? Are we going to pursue them? Are we going to see our stewardship and exercise it? This is the Gospel. This is fulfilling the Gospel of Christ.

And that's what Paul is doing when he says that he has fulfilled the Word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints. There are a lot of saints in name who don't understand the calling, who don't understand the Gospel, who have no clue as to what the mystery is all about. A lot of saints today think that the mystery is, I got saved and I'm going to go get somebody else saved.

I got coerced to walk down the aisle and I'm going to put pressure on somebody else to walk down the aisle. I received the Gospel and I'm grateful that I'm not going to the lake of fire and I'm going to make it my mission in life to tell as many people as possible not to go to the lake of fire and accept Christ as their Savior. That can be a wonderful and healthy thing.

Evangelism is not to be despised. It's a great function, but it's not the definition of the Christian life and it's not the mystery. It's not the calling.

What is the mystery? Paul tells us right here, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now has been revealed to his saints, to those who are looking and listening. To them God willed to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That's the calling. That's the mystery. That's the great purpose of being a believer in this age.

Christ in you. Some people think, well, you know, at the point that you accept Christ as your Savior, you ask Jesus into your heart so you have Christ in you. So getting saved, that's the big mystery.

Salvation has occurred in every age. Was Moses saved? Was David saved? Was Noah saved? Adam, all the other parties you read about in the Old Testament, they were all saved. This is something that was not revealed in the Old Testament, this mystery, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The indwelling presence of Jesus Christ is unique to this age. There's not a single Old Testament saint that ever was or ever will be indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ. There never was or will be an Old Testament saint that's called the body of Christ.

There never was or never will be an Old Testament saint that's called the bride of Christ. It's unique to this age. That indwelling divine presence and indwelling divine power is only available to us.

It wasn't available to them. And that's why they looked at this age and longed to see it. They longed for this day.

But they were in a different age. They had a different purpose, not necessarily a lesser purpose or an inferior purpose, but it's different. It would be just as wrong for Moses to get all upset about not being a church age believer as it would be for us to get upset about not being in the Garden of Eden or not being in some other part of history.

God has a perfect plan that benefits each believer in history. Our calling, our mystery that has now been revealed is Christ in you. It's such a shame that believers are deflected and distracted with let's go out and sell salvation.

Let's go out and get converts. The mystery and the calling, the stewardship that we have is Christ in us. What exactly is that? Well, this mystery, Paul uses that term, by the way, *mysterion* in Greek, 21 times in his writing.

So it's a big subject in his mind, the revelation of the mystery. You may have heard this in the past when people try to say, well, what is Paul drawing on when he says this is a *mysterion*? And they like to go to the Greek mystery religions. There were religions abounding where you got initiated into a cult kind of like the Masons or some of the other things where as you stay in and get to higher levels, you are initiated, you find, I've found some of my ancestors' belongings that have been passed down to me, little books of cryptic lettering and things.

And you would go down to the Masonic Lodge or whatever and you would be told what these little cryptic notes mean. And you could pronounce ceremonies and walk around in circles and point to different things. And for some reason, it seems kind of childish to me, but I guess there are people that really think that's a big deal, to be initiated into mysteries that other people don't know.

And the Greeks had this kind of thing. Some of them thought their mythology was that you could act out the life of a god. You'd have somebody represent a god and then you would go.

And in this ritual, you would do something to help out or to benefit this god. And in acting out this play, this mystery cult ritual, you would achieve your salvation because you've acted this out and now you're a special person. Now the god is going to smile on you because you've acted out helping him in some way.

So now you're in the crowd. There were others who thought that knowledge itself, this is where Gnosticism came from, that knowledge of the deeper mysteries of life and so forth was the means of elevating yourself to a higher plane. This is not what Paul is drawing on when he talks about the mystery.

What do you think Paul would be drawing on? Where do you think he would get his vocabulary?

As a Pharisee and as a scholar of the Old Testament, he's drawing his vocabulary from the Old Testament. And the word *musterion* was used in the Septuagint to translate a Hebrew and Aramaic term for a secret. In fact, it's used in Daniel, chapter 2, just as an example, just in that one chapter, it's used multiple times.

Daniel 2.18, Daniel 2.19, 27, 28, 29, 30, and two times in verse 47. This secret that's revealed is uniformly in the Septuagint translated by *musterion*. It's a prophetic utterance from God.

It's a revelation of future things from God. It comes to mean in the church age, God's decisive action. People knew that Israel was going to be a light to the Gentiles.

People knew from studying the Old Testament that Abraham was going to be a blessing to the nations, but they didn't know how. They didn't know how this was going to be fulfilled. They just knew that it would be fulfilled.

Well, it's been fulfilled in Christ. Through Christ, through the body of his flesh, he's reconciled everyone in one body. You don't have to go join the nation of Israel now.

Israelites and Gentiles together in coming to faith in Christ and in pursuing the plan of God are reconciled and given peace with God and peace with each other. It's a mystery. It wasn't revealed in the Old Testament how this would take place and that it would be accomplished through the body of his flesh.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. We're fairly familiar, I think, with the concept of the indwelling of Jesus Christ. I think we're not as familiar with exactly how it takes place.

I think a lot of us have been taught or have sort of come to believe that Christ indwells us at the point of our salvation. And that's not what the Scripture teaches. Turn with me back to John chapter 14.

You remember the great statements that Jesus makes in John 14. Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.

He talks about the many dwelling places where the Father is and that he's going to prepare a place for us and so forth. As he continues that discourse with the disciples in the upper room, when you get down to John chapter 14 verse 19, he says, A little while longer and the world will see me no more. But you will see me.

Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. What day is that that we're going to know that he is in us? He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him. How do we experience the manifestation, the self-revelation of Jesus Christ? It's by having his

words and keeping them. This idea of love is not that, well, God just doesn't love me because I haven't been faithful or I haven't learned his word and so forth.

This is love in the sense of benefit. This is covenant love. This is the type of love that the king would state in a suzerain vassal treaty when he says, if you will pay your taxes and not rise up in rebellion against me, I will love you, I will benefit you, I will protect you, I will bless you, I will take you under my wing and give you a prosperous life.

But if you don't obey my laws, if you rise up in rebellion against me, if you fail to pay your taxes, I will hate you. I will send my armies and we will burn down your huts. It is a statement of love in the sense of, he who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me.

People sing the old song, oh, how I love Jesus. But if we really love Jesus, we're going to prize and cherish his word. And we're going to stop and think about it.

We're going to pull it out and meditate on it and think, is this making a difference in my life? Am I living my life in the light of what I know from God's word? All of the hours and hours and hours of Bible study that I've been exposed to, do I have any remnant of it in my soul? Is it making any difference in the way I operate? Or do I look just like a plain, vanilla American? Turn a page to John chapter 17 and look at verse 20. Jesus is praying to his Father. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

That's us. Jesus, in this verse, prayed for you and prayed for me, because we have believed in him through the word of those disciples. That they all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one, I in them and you in me. This is the indwelling of Jesus Christ. How does it come? That they may be made perfect in one, blameless and holy and above reproach.

That the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. You get the idea here that the world is going to see something. This is what we talked about earlier.

The world ought to be able to tell who we are. Are we walking around in camouflage utilities, blending into the background and nobody can see us? Nobody can tell unless we are really forced at gunpoint and coerced into admitting that we are believers. We don't go to the extreme and run around and shove tracts in people's faces and knock on their doors at supper time and otherwise make a big annoyance of ourselves, but neither do we fade into the background.

We are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and the world is supposed to know that the Father loves us. The world is supposed to know that God is a factor in our lives. If the world can't tell that we are believers, we are not having the commandments of Christ and keeping them.

We are not being loved by the Father or the world would know it. So we have to keep a sense of

balance. We are not out there making fools of ourselves and doing things for the wrong reasons in the wrong way and misconstruing the plan and purpose of God.

Neither are we receding into complete anonymity as believers. We ought to be matter of fact. If the occasion comes up, why do I live the way I do? Why do I raise the children the way I do? Why do I operate in my business the way I do? Why am I making this decision? Why am I living in this way? It ought to roll smoothly and comfortably.

It's because of my faith in Christ. I believe this is the biblical way to operate. My goal is to be pleasing in my Heavenly Father's sight.

When people know where we stand, it's God's purpose that they realize that God loves us. That means that the grace of God on our lives is going to be evident to the world. It's just a fact.

Read what Jesus says. Jesus says the purpose is that the world will look at us and know that the Father loves us. He says in verse 24, Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you sent me. And I have declared to them your name and will declare it. Remember, he's leaving now, but he says he's going to continue to declare the Father's name.

That the love with which you love me may be in them and I in them. The indwelling of Jesus Christ takes place when this love from the Father is transmitted through Him and through us and is visible to the world. We have a lot more to talk about in terms of the indwelling of Christ.

I'll give you two things to think about for next week. There are two primary aspects. We tend to think, well, it's hard to get a grip on the indwelling of Christ.

Does it feel like something? Can I tell that somebody is there? Should I start talking to Jesus Christ? If Christ is dwelling in me, why do I only talk to the Father? This is a question I've had. Why do we always pray to the Father when Jesus Christ is supposed to be dwelling in us, but we're not allowed to talk to Him and only pray to the Father? What constitutes the indwelling of Christ? Is it a personal presence where you suddenly are aware of a second consciousness in your soul space? What exactly is it? Two things that Scripture emphasizes about the indwelling of Christ are the peace of Christ and the Word of Christ. The peace of Christ, the personal presence of Jesus Christ is located in a finite way at the right hand of God the Father.

People often talk about a dear relative, a father or a spouse or whatever, and they say, well, you'll never... In fact, there's a popular song that just came out. I think one of the country artists has written a song. His father passed away and he wrote a song about that as long as he carries the memory of his father in his heart, his father will always be here in some way.

And all of us have had that idea that as long as you cherish someone in your heart, they are still having an influence, their example and the relationship that we've had with them over the years will always be a factor in our thinking and there's a sense in which it's just like being geographically separated. I don't see my parents every day when they live one state away, but they're a factor in my thinking. And even after they depart this life, they'll still be a factor in my thinking.

They're in my heart. Their influence and their example and their teaching and their relationship and the knowledge that I have all eternity to continue to enjoy that relationship is always with me. In the same way, the peace of Jesus Christ is said many places in scripture to be in us.

And we'll take a look at those passages next time. And in the same way, the word of Christ is said to dwell in us. In fact, we are encouraged and commanded to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

So these are two concrete aspects of the indwelling of Jesus Christ that ought to be a factor in our lives. And that's where we'll resume next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

We thank You, Father, for the great privilege that we enjoy being believers in this age of having the opportunity to reflect Your glory in such a unique and wonderful way. We thank You for our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the grace that has been given to us through Him and through the teaching of Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of these things and enable us to see the application in our day-by-day, hour-by-hour living in this life so that we will remember our calling, we will remember the stewardship that we have been given, the grace that we experience ourselves and that we are enabled to pass on through the gifts of the Holy Spirit to believers in our periphery.

We pray that in all things our Savior will be full. Hope of that glory will live and be a source of motivation for our faith and our life. We pray these things...