



WHO THEN IS  
**PAUL?**

CHARLES H. WELCH

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By  
**CHARLES H. WELCH**

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**This booklet is a sequel to one published earlier entitled “The Dispensational Frontier” (at Acts 28). It is therefore recommended that this should be read first before proceeding with “Who Then is Paul?”.**

# Who then is Paul?

## An enquiry of the first importance to the Gentiles

It will be observed that the words of the Apostle, adopted as a title for this study, do not constitute a straight question, "Who is Paul?" the answer to which would be a description of the Apostle as a man and as a minister; the question is rather one that arises out of some preceding set of circumstances, in which it would appear that either Paul or some of his followers, had been guilty of foolish adulation. The words occur in 1 Corinthians 3:5 in connection with the divisions that had split the church at Corinth into contending factions, with the party cries "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). The Apostle makes it abundantly clear that such adulation was odious to him, even as it was harmful to the saints. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" he indignantly demands (1 Cor. 1:13), even as he says in the second epistle "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). Paul and his fellow ministers had indeed "treasure" entrusted to them, but they themselves were "earthen vessels".

Returning to our opening passage we note that it is with this same thought that the Apostle continues:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" (1 Cor. 3:5).

Throughout the Apostle's ministry two lines of truth run together, never transgressing the bounds of the other, and both making up a complete whole. First, there is the utter repudiation of self, or selfish motives, which we will set out presently, and secondly, the most stupendous claims are made not for himself as a man and a believer, but for himself as one especially chosen and equipped for high office. The words "I Paul", if read without sufficient attention to their context or without the background provided by the Scriptures, would savour of empty boasting. To ponder them in their relation to the truth entrusted to him, is to step out of confusion into clarity, and from bondage to liberty:

*Paul's own estimate of himself apart from his commission.*

"I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9).

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer,

and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:12,13).

“Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it” (Gal. 1:13).

“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” (Eph. 3:8).

Here are a few specimen passages taken from his early and later epistles in which it is evident that Paul was not guilty of false pride or desire for prominence. This aspect we believe is known and understood by the majority of believers, it is the second aspect that is our present concern, and to that, with the background of the passages sited above, we now turn our attention.

*Paul’s claims made by himself which indicate the importance of his ministry, particularly to us Gentiles.*

“I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am Apostle of the Gentiles, I MAGNIFY mine office” (Rom. 11:13).

“I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not); a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Tim. 2:7).

“I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11).

Here are claims that cannot be ignored by any reader, and particularly so, by the Gentile, for we shall discover that this man Paul is the only one who is called “The Apostle of the Gentiles” in the New Testament.

## **The Prominence of Israel**

The finished work of the Son of God, while forming the one and only basis for the salvation and hope of all who believe whatever their nationality, was not proclaimed *to the Gentiles* during the days of His flesh. Indeed when the twelve apostles were called and commissioned to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven, they were FORBIDDEN to go to the Gentiles, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5,6). This was not a local or temporary restriction, for in the fifteenth chapter it is most solemnly repeated, the only place permitted to the seeking Gentile at that time being one of “dogs” who eat the “crumbs” that fell from their “master’s” table (Matt. 15:24-27). If we come forward to the day of Pentecost, we shall find upon examination that the only ones who participated in that feast or in the baptism of the Spirit that makes that day so memorable, were “Jews”.

“There were dwelling at Jerusalem JEWS, devout men, out of every nation under heaven . . . we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:5-11). Those assembled on the day of Pentecost were addressed by Peter as “Ye men of Judaea”, “Ye men of Israel”, “Men and brethren”, “All the house of Israel”, and a reference to Acts 10 will prove that Peter would never at the time of Acts 2, address a Gentile by any such name. Warned by God in a vision Peter reluctantly visited Cornelius and told this Gentile seeker to his face:

“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a JEW to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

What an admission! How utterly inexplicable if the common notion that “the church began at Pentecost” be true! Note the words “unlawful”, “keep company”, “come unto”, “one of another nation”, “common and unclean”, and then say whether Peter unlocked the door of the church to the Gentiles in Acts 2. We can see from Peter’s own use of the word *athemitos* (unlawful) what an exceedingly strong feeling of aversion it indicates, “The will of the Gentiles . . . *abominable* idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). The word translated “keep company” is *kollao*, a word which has become familiar by its use by chemists who speak of colloids which include gum, starch, gelatin, glue and other adhesives. Not only could Peter not “join” himself to a Gentile up to this point, he was not free even to “come unto” one of another nation. To show that this attitude was not peculiar to Peter we observe that when it was heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God, and that Peter had not only gone in to them but had actually eaten with them, there was no hesitation manifested in calling even Peter himself to account for this, apparently, unwarranted action. “What was I”, Peter asked, “that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:1-17). Strange term this “withstand” God, if Peter was the apostle of the Gentiles. It is significant because the self-same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:16, as the climax sin of the Jews, and accounts for its presence in the last verse of Acts 28 “no man forbidding him”. Even though the church in Judaea at last glorified God, saying,

“Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18)

the form in which the sentence is cast carries with it the feeling that this is an admission that it was exceedingly difficult for the church at that time to make, and the very next verse shows that Gentile evangelisation was not the sequel to this admission.

“They ... travelled abroad ... preaching the word TO NONE but unto the JEWS ONLY” (Acts 11:19).

Unless and until we include the commission of the apostle Paul, the acceptance of the Gentile is by no means assured, but the moment Saul of Tarsus is converted, the door of faith begins to swing open to the Gentiles.

## **The Apostle of the Gentiles**

Ananias who had been sent by the Lord to the house in which Saul, blind and broken, lay fasting and wondering, was told:

“He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

At Antioch where the church waited upon the Lord, the Holy Ghost said:

“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).

Later on we learn that Paul has been “separated” from birth, and in his epistle to the Romans he calls himself:

“Paul a bondservant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1).

Up till Acts 13, the Apostle is known by the name of Saul, but at verse 9 of that chapter we read “Then Saul (who is also called Paul...)” and the circumstances in which this change of name appears are of extreme dispensational importance. A Jew withstood him, seeking to turn away the deputy of the country from the faith, and it is just here, where this opposing Jew is blinded, and where this Gentile is saved, that Saul is called PAUL *bearing the same name* as his Gentile convert, Sergius PAULUS (both names are the same in the original). Peter’s first miracle in the Acts *healed* a Jew. Paul’s first miracle *blinded* a Jew, and Paul’s ultimate ministry among the Gentiles hinges upon the blindness of Israel, who were not “healed” as the quotation from Isaiah 6 indicates in Acts 28. This can be seen by turning to Romans 11. Discussing the problem of Israel’s failure, Paul says that Israel through their fall have brought salvation unto the Gentiles, the diminishing of Israel, being the riches of the Gentiles, and it is here and in this connection with Israel’s defection that Paul says “I am the apostle of the Gentiles”, and magnified his office (verse

13). Israel's blindness and the associated blessing of the Gentiles was a "mystery" but at long last that blindness will give place to sight, and so "all Israel shall be saved". It is evident from what we have already seen, that Paul as an apostle must occupy a large place in the ministry of the truth whenever a Gentile is in view. This unique apostleship was not only claimed by himself, but recognised by Peter, James and John.

"When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles). And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should GO UNTO THE GENTILES, and they unto the circumcision" (Gal. 2:7-9).

### **Paul's Independent Apostleship**

Here is language as clear and plain as it is possible to desire. The apostles are divided into two groups. The one group have the circumcision as their legitimate sphere, the other the Gentile; neither overlap, neither accuse the other of being wrong, both were orders of apostles, both sets of good news being ordained by God, and this was sealed with the mutual right hand of fellowship. This however is but the beginning of a series of claims that are advanced by the apostle Paul. Even in this epistle to the Galatians, the whole matter has already been set out in the most explicit terms:

- (1) Paul's independent APOSTLESHIP. "Not of men. Neither by men. But by Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:1).
- (2) Paul's independent GOSPEL. "Not after man. Neither received nor taught. But by revelation" (Gal. 1:11,12).
- (3) Paul's independent COMMISSION. "Not flesh and blood. Neither to Jerusalem. But into Arabia" (Gal. 1:16,17).

If this threefold claim be not sufficient to establish the unique character of Paul's commission, he adds the following challenging asseveration:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you THAN THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

So whether the gospel preached by Peter, James and John turns out to be “all one and the same” as that preached by the apostle Paul (as some affirm, who oppose “Dispensational Truth”), we know to whom *we* must go, we know the standard by which all such preaching must be measured, we must abide by the Gospel that was preached by Paul. In Galatians two we have already observed that there *was a difference* between these two messages, Paul had the gospel OF, not merely TO, the uncircumcision as surely as the gospel OF, not merely TO, the circumcision was committed to Peter. No wonder, if Paul desired as a steward to be faithful, he sounded out again and again the distinctive note, “I Paul”. He would not have been faithful to his trust had he allowed a false humility to hide such a light under a bushel. In his opening sermon preached at Antioch in Pisidia, the Apostle announced one distinctive feature of the gospel he was commissioned to proclaim, a feature to which we owe the glorious epistle to the Romans, and to single out but one subsequent historic event, to which we owe the great Reformation in the days of Martin Luther. Here it is:

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are JUSTIFIED from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38,39).

Apart from the argument of James concerning Abraham (Jas. 2:21,24), justification by faith without works is to be learned only through the epistles of Paul (where it occurs 26 times) and through the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, written by Luke, the faithful companion of Paul to the very end. If preachers of the gospel limit themselves to the other gospels, or to the epistles of the other apostles, their message will lack that which is its supreme glory.

### **Peter and Baptism for Forgiveness**

Again, let us compare Paul’s first announcement of forgiveness of sins as cited above, with Peter’s first announcement as recorded in Acts 2:38:

“Repent, and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS” (Acts 2:38).

Is there no difference between the message of these two divinely appointed preachers? Peter was gloriously true, and his gospel only becomes false when it is preached to those who were allotted to the stewardship of Paul. Does the reader, who so far may have differed from us about the exclusive nature of Paul’s gospel, does he ever

preach “baptism” for the remission of sins? We sincerely hope not, even though, to be consistent he should have no qualms at so doing. Before leaving the question of the apostleship of Paul, we would draw attention to two passages which speak of apostles. In Ephesians four, Paul stresses the Ascension of the Lord, and it is the ASCENDED Christ, Who is said to have given:

“Some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11).

Now “the twelve” are named in Matthew 10:2-4, and these were called during the early ministry of the Son of God while *on the earth*. It is obvious therefore that there must be two orders of apostles, and that Paul belongs to that order which was introduced by *the ascended Christ*. That Paul did not consider himself as being one of the twelve, 1 Corinthians 15:5-9 makes clear. The “twelve” will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul will not. The names of the twelve apostles will be engraved on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem, the name of Paul will not be there; the names that are found upon the gates of pearl, are the names of the tribes of Israel, no Gentile name will be there. Because of the distinctive Israelitish setting and meaning of the day of Pentecost, the apostles were concerned that the vacancy occasioned by the betrayal and death of Judas should be filled and the number “twelve” be made up. Matthias, who fulfilled the essential condition (Acts 1:21,22, see John 15:27) being appointed, the day of Pentecost came, and the “twelve” including Matthias received the sign of the cloven tongue of fire. If Matthias was not divinely appointed, if the Apostles should have waited for Paul, are we going to believe and teach that the *Spirit of Truth*, endorsed what amounts to a falsehood?

### **What was not Recorded in Acts Nine**

Had we unlimited space and unlimited time, it would be a joy to traverse the whole of Paul’s epistles and revel in the sunshine of grace there displayed, but we must now come to that portion of his ministry which so intimately concerns us today, and which gives its colour to the present dispensation.

First let us establish from the Word, that Paul had a twofold ministry. When the Lord spoke to Paul as he travelled on the road to Damascus, He said to him:

“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and

a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16).

The preceding verses tell us that this message was given to Paul on the way to Damascus, but IT IS NOT RECORDED in Acts 9, nor in any other place, until Paul has come to the end of one ministry, and about to enter another which was closely associated with prison. In Acts 9 we learn only *through Ananias* what Paul was chosen to do, and this is enlarged in the record of Acts 22, but takes us no further than the first ministry indicated in the words quoted from Acts 26:

“For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou *hast seen and heard*” (Acts 22:15),

and in connection with that *ministry* Paul was exhorted to arise and be baptized! (Acts 22:16). That ministry extended up to the end of Acts 19, when the second ministry was envisaged and the way prepared for its operation. Up to Acts 19:8 the “church” was to be found within the synagogue, but the three months spent in the Ephesian synagogue brought that phase of Paul’s testimony to a close.

“When divers were hardened and believed not ... he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus, and this continued by the space of two years so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:9,10).

The reader will be aware as he reads these words, that there is much here that anticipates the close of the Acts. Here it is “all Asia”, there it is “all” without restriction. Here it is “Jews and Greeks”, there it is “Gentiles”, a wider term. Let us set out this parallel.

#### Acts 19:8-20

##### *Ephesus*

He went into the synagogue.  
Disputing and persuading things  
concerning the kingdom of God.  
For the space of three months.  
Divers were hardened and believed  
not...he departed.  
Divers were hardened.  
Separated the disciples.  
The space of two years.  
In the school of Tyrannus.

#### Acts 28:23-31

##### *Rome*

They came...to his lodging.  
Expounded...the kingdom of God,  
persuading...concerning Jesus.  
From morning till evening.  
Some believed... some believed not.  
They agreed not...they departed.  
The heart...waxed gross.  
Sent unto the Gentiles.  
Paul dwelt two whole years.  
In his own hired house.

All...in Asia heard the Word.  
The Word of the Lord Jesus.

Special miracles.  
The Lord Jesus magnified  
at Ephesus.

All that came unto him.  
Things concerning the Lord Jesus  
Christ.

No miracles.  
The epistle to the Ephesians  
written from prison.

We have already seen that Acts 28 is anticipated in Acts 13:7-12, there a Jew withstands and is blinded for a season, a Gentile believes, who is of the same name as Paul. Acts 28 is anticipated at Ephesus also, the extent of the wider ministry being limited to both Jew and Greek, while at Acts 28 itself the Jew passes off the scene and the “Gentile”, without reference to the Jew, a wider term than the “Greek”, is the object of the Apostle’s ministry. The reader who would pursue this matter further is advised to see the first of this series entitled “The Dispensational Frontier”, Acts 28:23-31. We touch lightly here upon the evidences of Paul’s twofold ministry as that has already been considered in the booklet mentioned above, but we cannot pass to the further teaching of the Apostle, without establishing the reality of his claim to be the Prisoner of the Lord in a very special sense.

### **Acts Twenty closes one Ministry**

In Acts 20:17-38 we have the close of one ministry and the prospect of another. Paul opens with a resumé of past service, and introduces the change with the words:

“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem...bonds and afflictions abide me” (Acts 20:22,23).

While the Apostle *knew* that prison awaited him he told the Ephesian elders that he *did not know* (apart from a general reference “to bonds”) the things that should befall him, his second ministry was still in embryo. It is impossible to believe that in Acts 9, Paul received the ministry of the mystery, while in Acts 20 he “did not know” what should befall him apart from the general reference “to bonds”, and it is clear that his earlier commission to the Gentiles did not include the ministry of the mystery, for that hinges upon Israel’s blindness, which, while approaching did not actually fall until Acts 28. All that we see in Acts 20, is his perfect willingness.

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (verse 24).

The remainder of the chapter deals with the fact, and the consequences of the fact, that the Ephesians would see his face no more. By the time we meet Paul before King Agrippa, he is found not only *willing*, but *cognisant* of the scope and nature of this ministry associated most truly with “bonds and afflictions”. We have already quoted from Acts 26:16, and now pause to draw attention to some important words used by the Apostle, “both”, “hast seen”, “will appear”, “now”. Dr. Bullinger says of the Greek word translated “both”,

*Te*, a conjunction of annexation, annexing with an implied relation or distinction” (Eng. Gk. Lexicon).

Paul here declares by the use of this word “both” that he had a two-fold ministry. The early ministry which came to an end in Acts 20 being covered by the words “a minister and a witness of these things which thou *hast* heard”, and the later ministry being indicated by the words “a minister and a witness of those things in the which I *will* appear unto thee”, the word “both” standing midway between the two ministries. There is no ambiguity about the time of these two ministries, “thou hast seen”, “I will appear”, one was past, the other future. These things being so it is evident that Paul neither received this second ministry when commissioned on the road to Damascus, nor was he apprized of its nature, these items being reserved for this future commission. *All he knew at the time of his conversion was that he would receive a second commission.*

If we accept the A.V. we shall stress the word “now”, “unto whom NOW I send thee”. If we follow the R.V. here we shall omit the word “now” and shift the emphasis to the pronoun *ego*, “unto whom I (not Rome, not the Jew, not your own self choosing) send thee”. The verb *apostello* “to send” occurs twenty-five times in the Acts but Acts 26:17 is the *only occurrence* in the book of the word in the present tense, “I AM sending thee”. This commission is unique.

I AM sending implies “NOW” whether the word be stated or not. I AM sending you, following the Lord’s second appearing to Paul, following the apostle’s deliverance from the “People” (Acts 21:28-40), and following his deliverance from the “Gentiles” (Acts 26:32), who now were but the instruments in the hand of the Lord to fulfil His purpose for Paul at Rome, implies the word “NOW” whether we accept the A.V. or the R.V. This commission was *envisaged* in Acts 9 but was not *given* nor *defined* until Paul became the Prisoner of the Jesus Christ for us Gentiles.

Moreover while all callings must go back to the cross, dispensations start from the time that the Lord says “GO”. Until the word is “sent”

the work, though planned before the foundation of the world, cannot commence (Acts 3:26; 13:26; 26:17; 28:28).

### **Acts twenty-six opens second Ministry**

In Acts 20:22,23 Paul tells us that he did not know what things would befall him at Jerusalem, he only knew that in every city the Holy Ghost testified that bonds awaited him. In Acts 21:11 we have an example of this witness of the Holy Ghost in the symbolic prophecy of Agabus.

“He took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

It is *to this* that Acts 26:17 refers:

“Delivering thee from the people (Israel) and from the Gentiles, unto whom NOW I send thee.”

As he then stood, chained and on his way, a prisoner to Rome the words “unto whom now I send thee” can refer only to a ministry that was *imminent* but *still* future. As a fettered prisoner en route for Rome, he would have had no opportunity *to exercise* this ministry, but here it is *Paul* who is “sent”, in Acts 28 it is *Salvation* that is “sent” through him. As soon as he reached Rome, a last appeal is made to the chief of the Jews, they are set aside, the era of their national blindness commencing, and with it the announcement *publicly* of what Paul had known when he stood before Agrippa that the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, independently of Israel, their covenants or their hope. Israel’s *lo-ammi* condition has now well nigh run its course, the parenthetical dispensation of the mystery of which Paul as the Prisoner of the Lord, was the steward, nears its completion, and we sincerely believe that the Lord is enabling and directing us in our feeble way, so that we may be the instruments of His grace to enlighten some, who at the moment may be in darkness or doubt as to “what is the dispensation of the mystery”, believing that the answer to the question, “Who then is Paul?” is essential to the recognition of the mystery. We therefore, even as Paul, have a twofold ministry to perform. Having surveyed the early ministry of the Apostle, we now turn attention to the dispensational importance of his second ministry. And, first, we observe the way in which this matter of imprisonment is inseparably linked with this new commission. Before we speak of “prison” and “bonds” let us not miss the blessed lesson of Acts 26:17. Paul knew that prison and possible death awaited him, yet he was “delivered” from the people of Israel who hated him, and from the Gentiles who had put him in bonds. Consequently he was at all times,

the Lord's free man, and served as a son and not as a slave. This may be true of us also in our own small degree, for grace is still "sufficient". *Desmios* "prisoner" and *desmos* "bonds" occur some 36 times in the New Testament, 7 of which refer to others, the remaining 29 occurrences refer to Paul and his associates. Prison was by no means a novel experience for the Apostle of grace, already, by the time he came to write the second epistle to the Corinthians and the epistle to the Hebrews, he had been a prisoner many times, but this condition is not lifted to the dignity of a title until we pass the boundary of Acts 28, the title being found in Ephesians, and references to bonds with similar significance being found in Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy.

### **An Embassy in a Chain**

Let us set out these passages and note their implications:

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" (Eph. 3:1).

"I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you" (Eph. 4:1).

"For which I am an ambassador in bonds" (*halusis* in a chain) (Eph. 6:20).

"My bonds" (Phil. 1:7,13,14,16).

"Remember my bonds" (Col 4:18).

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ". "I have begotten in my bonds".

"He might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel" (Phile. 1:9,10,13).

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner."

"For which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed" "He...was not ashamed of my chain" (*halusis*) (2 Tim.1:8,12,16).

"Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds" (2 Tim. 2:9).

If these references to prison and bonds were introduced by the Apostle simply to show that he had suffered for his loyalty to the truth, they would not make this set of epistles a distinct group, but examination shows that the words "the Prisoner of Jesus Christ" or "of the Lord" constitute as definite a title as does the word "Apostle". Associated with these terms of imprisonment is a peculiar sphere of ministry "for you Gentiles", and he conducts as it were a special embassy "in a chain". In the immediate context will be found claims that as the Prisoner of the Lord, Paul had received by revelation a dispensation likewise directed to the Gentiles, and called "the dispensation of the mystery" (Eph. 3:9 R.V.). This dispensation, he declared "filled up" or "completed" the word of God (Col.1:25), and

that the mystery which was its central witness had been “hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col. 1:26), and moreover was exclusively entrusted to himself:

“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, and make all men see what is the fellowship (dispensation R.V.) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God” (Eph. 3:8,9).

In his last epistle, as the Prisoner of the Lord he declares that there had been “committed” some special line of teaching, which without actually mentioning the mystery, is so evidently associated with it that we cannot avoid the consequences of this persistent claim. Before going further in our examination of the claims of Paul upon us as believing Gentiles during this interim of grace, let us see the way in which these five “Prison Epistles” present a definite body of truth.

## The Prison Epistles

### STRUCTURE SHOWING THEIR DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES AND THEIR INTERRELATION

#### KEY WORDS\*

- |   |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| A | EPHESIANS.<br>Seated<br>together. | The dispensation (3:2 and 9 R.V.). Mystery (3:3).<br>The church which is His Body (1:22,23).<br>The fulness (1:23, 4:10). Christ the Head (1:22).<br>Principalities and powers (1:21). |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|

#### KEY WORDS

- |   |                            |   |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| B | PHILIPPIANS.<br>The Prize. | Try the things that differ (1:10 margin).<br>Strive (1:27). Press toward the mark (3:14).<br>Prize (3:14). <i>Depart</i> * (1:23). <i>Offered</i> * (2:17). |
| C | PHILEMON.                  | The Truth in practice.  |

#### KEY WORDS\*

- |   |                                    |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| A | COLOSSIANS.<br>Complete<br>in Him. | Dispensation (1:25). Mystery (1:26).<br>The church which is His body (1:24).<br>Fulness (1:19). Christ the Head (2:19).<br>Principalities and powers (1:16; 2:10). |
|---|------------------------------------|--|

#### KEY WORDS

- |   |                          |  |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| B | 2 TIMOTHY.<br>The Crown. | Rightly dividing the Word (2:15).<br>Strive (2:5). Course finished (4:7).<br>Crown (4:8). <i>Depart</i> * (4:6). <i>Offered</i> * (4:6). |
|---|--------------------------|--|

» None of these expressions occur in *Philippians* or *2 Timothy*.

\* Only occurrences in Paul's epistles.

## Paul the Pattern

Paul was not only an Apostle and a Prisoner, he was also a Pattern.

“That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a Pattern” (1 Tim. 1:16).

Throughout his ministry, on either side of Acts 28, this most wonderful office is maintained. We remember that the Corinthian church had been split into rival factions, some also saying “I am of Paul” (1 Cor. 1:12) and it would be reasonable to expect that the Apostle who so abominated this party spirit, would have sedulously kept himself well in the background. Instead, in 1 Corinthians 4:16 he clinches his appeal to them “not to think of men above that which is written” by saying:

“Wherefore I beseech you *be ye followers of ME*”

When we look at the intervening verses, and read “we are made as the *filth* of the world, and the *offscouring* of all things” in verse thirteen, the exhortation is all the more amazing. In chapter eleven, the exhortation is repeated, with a blessed addition:

“Be ye followers of me, *even as I am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1),

which brings the argument of chapter ten to a conclusion:

“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit” (1 Cor. 10:33).

It was this complete absence of self seeking that made it possible for Paul to insist upon his own doctrine and manner of life being taken for an example.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4)

Paul follows this injunction with the most blessed example of the Lord Himself (Phil. 2:5-11), with the example of Timothy (19-21) and of Epaphroditus (30), and then gives this most comprehensive appeal in chapter four:

“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

What a thing for any man to say! Imagine any one of us demanding a scrutiny of our every hour, and then calling upon our examiners to

DO the self same things — and not only so, but to be able to add *as a consequence* “and the God of peace shall be with you”. This is the man whose list of sufferings and indignities made Paul seem like a fool in his boasting (2 Cor. 11:16-23). Writing in his last epistle, this same apostle said to Timothy:

“Thou hast fully known (didst follow R.V.) my doctrine, manner of life” (2 Tim. 3:10).

It was his ability to link together what he *taught* with what he *did* that made his testimony so powerful, and his example so potent.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14).

The word translated “pattern” in 1 Timothy 1:16, re-appears in 2 Timothy 1:13 where it is translated “form”.

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of ME.”

“The things that thou hast heard of ME among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

Does he say in chapter one:

“All they which are in Asia be turned away from ME” (verse 15)?

He balances it by saying:

“They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:4).

## **Paul the Prophet**

Not only was Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, the Steward of the mystery, the only one through whom the mystery was made known, the only one who made known the exalted position “far above all”, “where Christ sits”, or who speaks of an elective purpose that goes back *before* the foundation of the world, he also occupies the role of Prophet to the Church of the Mystery, revealing the character of the last days of this present dispensation. The Apostle not only taught the truth but he warned every man so that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, and with this end in view he wrote the warning

passages of 1 Timothy 4, and 2 Timothy 3 and 4. We do not expect, nor do we find any prophetic statement in the epistles written after Acts 28 that deals with the hope of Israel, even though that hope dominates the whole period covered by the Acts, but Paul keeps within the bounds of his stewardship and gives us a picture of the state of things just before the end of this parenthetical period. The two great prophecies concerning the close of this dispensation are found in the epistles written to Timothy. The first is in 1 Timothy 4, the second in 2 Timothy 3 and 4. We know that after the Church of the Mystery has been completed and the present dispensation closed, that the Man of Sin spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2, will arise, and that, while no such event belongs to the dispensation of the mystery, it is but reasonable to believe that the forces of evil that will presently emerge, are already at work, for these evil agents while working within the *period* covered by the mystery, are not in the *dispensation* of the mystery, a distinction that it is wise to observe when considering every calling, time and season that is made known in Scripture.

1 Timothy 4:1 opens with the words:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.”

The apostacy of the last days of this dispensation is not a departure from the faith in general, but from the particular and vital doctrine which the structure places central in this epistle to Timothy, namely:

“God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

This departure from the faith has near and remote consequences. The near consequence is a state of affairs depicted in 2 Timothy 3 and 4 (when the “perilous times” will have come), and will at the same time prepare the way for the greater apostacy of 2 Thessalonians 2 which belongs to the dispensation that follows. The incipient opposition to the “mystery of Godliness” reaches its fulness in the “mystery of iniquity”. We must distinguish between “the latter times” of 1 Timothy 4:1 and “the last days” of 2 Timothy 3:1. The times spoken of in the first epistle might refer to the period immediately following the Apostle’s own day, whereas the times of 2 Timothy 3 refer to the closing days of this dispensation. “Latter” is the translation of *husteros*, “last” of *eschatos*, they are related as “later” is with “latter”. “Seducing spirits”, “doctrines of devils”, “lies in hypocrisy”, these are the factors and instruments of this dread apostacy. A word may be necessary in the true significance of the doctrine of “devils”. There is but one “devil” according to the Scripture, and the word here so translated is literally “demon” and at first we may feel that there is

little to choose. When the Athenians heard Paul preach “Jesus and the resurrection”, they said he was setting forth “strange demons”. It is not so well known as it should be that in these earlier times a “demon” was looked upon as a “mediator” between the distant Olympian gods and man, and in “The City of God” Augustine (A.D. 354-430) has a chapter headed:

“To the attaining of blessedness, man hath no need for a demon for his mediator, but of Christ alone” (Bk. ix. cp. xvii).

These are “the lords many” of 1 Corinthians 8:5,6. 1 Timothy 2:5 stresses the glorious truth that there is “One Mediator” the Man Christ Jesus; 1 Timothy 3:16 that this one Mediator is “God manifest in the flesh” and 1 Timothy 4 reveals that the germ of the apostacy that will mark the time of the end, is to be found in the intolerance manifested by so many to the exclusive character of the position of Christ, as “the way, the truth and the life”. Christian men bow their heads in prayer, but omit at least in words, to recognize the mediation of Christ, little children are taught all manner of ways of “saying grace” but so many omit the words “For the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake”. Pulpit and wireless sermons can be listened to with anxious and painful consciousness that while “God” may be continually mentioned, the one and only Way back to God is scarcely recognized. The apostacy of 1 Timothy 4 is not necessarily a future event, it is evident all around us. The truth implicit in the words “For Christ’s sake” has been shelved by many.

Turning to 2 Timothy we learn further characteristics of the apostacy of the last days. The first is that they are denominated “perilous”. *Chalepos* has an affinity with the Hebrew *caleph*, a word of violence, being translated “axe”, “hammer” and the like. The Greek word describes the mental condition of “two possessed with devils” who were “exceeding fierce” (Matthew 8:28). In the preparatory stages of this apostacy the bait is cleverly hidden. There, in 1 Timothy 4, we have inducement to abstinence and self-denial, but as the end approaches, this disguise is thrown away and the hideous nature of this hidden plague is made manifest. Where 1 Timothy 4 tells us that the doctrine of demons will forbid to marry, the prophecy of 2 Timothy reveals “incontinence” and “without natural affection”. Where the early apostacy was marked by a specious sanctity, the latter makes no such pretences, they are “unholy”. The most marked characteristics of this dispensation is its relation to love, *philos*.

“Men shall be *philautos* (lovers of their own selves);  
*philarguros* (lovers of money);  
*philedonos* (lovers of pleasure): rather than  
*philotheos* (lovers of God).

The time will come, said the Apostle, when men will not endure sound doctrine. It is the hearers, not the false teachers who will have the “itching” ear, the false teachers will be only too ready to suit their doctrine to their congregation. Moffatt gives a suggestive reading of this passage:

“Keep at it in season and out of season, refuting, checking and exhorting men; never lose patience with them, and never give up teaching, for the time will come when people will decline to be taught sound doctrine, and will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies; they will give up listening to the truth and turn to myths” (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

### **Mystery or Myth, Which?**

The word “fable” (A.V.) or “myth” (Moffatt) is related to the word mystery, *muthos*, *musterion*. The failure on the part of the Christian Evangelical Church to see the essential place that the mystery occupies during the present time, and its ostracism of those who do, will cause that church to share some of the responsibility for the departure from the truth that sets in at the end. Failure to perceive the distinctive character of the mystery, has led expositors and teachers to falsify the plain statements of Holy Writ. The strong and exclusively Jewish character of Pentecost is ignored or explained away. Where claims are put forward to-day to Pentecostal gifts the intelligent enquirer soon becomes aware of exaggeration and distortion, and not seeing the “mystery” is driven to the “myth” even as Paul has foretold. Not only so, two passages in 2 Timothy fall into line:

“All they which are in Asia be turned away *from ME.*”

“They shall turn away their ears *from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 1:15, 4:4).

This brings us back to our subject, “Who then is Paul?” It looks as though the turning away from *Paul* in Asia, was but the first of a series of movements that will ultimately lead to the turning away from the truth. Paul may be “an earthen vessel” but he was at the same time a “chosen vessel”. From one point of view he was “not worthy to be called an apostle”, from another, he was “not a whit

behind the chiefest apostles". He referred to himself as "less than the least of all saints", yet in the same context as the sole depository of the distinctive truth of the mystery and commissioned to "enlighten all". Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles as distinguished from the apostles of the circumcision, the steward of the dispensation of the mystery, the preacher of the gospel of the grace of God as distinguished from the gospel of the circumcision. He is the divinely appointed "pattern" and his teaching constitutes the "form of sound words" that must be held and regarded as our yard stick throughout the present dispensation. Seeing that this chosen vessel rightly assumes so important a place in the ministry of the Word, let us note some of the titles that the Scriptures give him, and their bearing upon the truth and upon our salvation.

### **Some Titles of Paul**

**AMBASSADOR.** — It has been objected that the word *presbeuo* does not indicate one who like an ambassador of state, represents his sovereign with full delegated authority, but should be rendered "elder" as *presbuteros* is in Titus 1:5. This limitation however cannot be admitted. We read in Luke 14:32 of "ambassage" being sent from one warring king to another desiring "conditions of peace". The word here is *presbeia*, and the idea that this embassy was merely a group of old men is inadequate. Again, the word is employed in Luke 19:14 where "sent a message" translates *presbeia*, which most evidently indicates an embassy. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, where Paul says of himself and others with him "Now we are ambassadors for Christ", the idea of intruding the words "old men" or even "elders" is absurd. How could Paul introduce into such a context the idea "Now then we are elders for Christ?" "For Christ" is literally "on behalf of Christ" and is extended in the next sentence "as though God did beseech you by us". Again, in Ephesians 6:19-20 he says "The mystery of the gospel, for which, or on behalf of which, I am an ambassador in bonds" or possibly "I conduct an embassy in a chain". This would not be the only occasion where the victorious spirit of the Apostle enabled him to see above his present distress, and use his bonds in a light-hearted figure, as in 2 Timothy 2:9 where the words "but the word of God is not bound" should be read with a little touch of cheerful, joyful impudence. The fact that Paul was really an Ambassador for Christ, that he could say "We pray you in Christ's stead", makes the neglect of this Apostle serious in the extreme. Much that is implied by the word "ambassador" is intended by the title "Apostle". Let us give this a consideration.

APOSTLE. — The word has come straight over from the Greek into the English language, but it is not, except for this adoption, an English word. Its meaning must be sought in the original language of the New Testament, where it is found under the form *apostolos*. This word is found both in the Greek version of the O.T., called the Septuagint (a translation generally indicated by the sign LXX, and so designated in this article) and in classical or common Greek used outside the Scriptures.

In classical Greek *apostolos* meant “a messenger, ambassador or envoy”, and in later usage, “the commander of a naval force”. This rather limited meaning of the word is further seen in the use of *stolos*, “a fleet ready for sea, a naval squadron or expedition”. In the LXX *apostolos* occurs in 1 Kings 14:6 in the phrase, “I am sent to thee with heavy tidings”, where “sent” translates the Hebrew *shalach*, which immediately connects with such missions as that of Joseph (Gen. 37:13), Moses (Exodus 3:14) and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8); and generally, with the bearing of “tidings” whether of deliverance or judgement. The composition of the word is simple. *Apo* is a preposition, and, like nearly all prepositions, carries with it a sense of motion, direction or rest. In this case the translation “from” indicates origin, motion and direction. *Stello* is the verb “to send”, and so an apostle is one “sent from another”.

*Apostello* is used of the “sending forth” of the twelve (Matt. 10:5), of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2, John 1:6), of preachers generally (Rom. 10:15), of angels (Heb. 1:14), and of Paul (Acts 26:17). There is however, one other occasion where *apostello* and *apostolos* are used, that gives all subsequent apostles and messengers their true and only authority. Both words are used of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is pre-eminently “The Sent One” (1 John 4:9,10,14), He is pre-eminently “The Apostle”.

“Consider the APOSTLE and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. 3:1).

Here therefore is revealed the character of the solemn office denoted by the title “Apostle”. Here Paul’s insistence on the use of the word “ME” in 2 Timothy 2:2 is carried back to another and higher use of the pronoun, “He that receiveth you, receiveth ME (Matt. 10:40) and, through Him, to the ultimate source of all authority, God Himself.

PREACHER. —

“Whereunto I am appointed a preacher...of the Gentiles” (2 Tim. 1:11).

Here the word translated “preacher” is the Greek word *kerux*, the herald, which gives us *kerugma* “preaching” (2 Tim. 4:17); and *kerusso* the verb “to preach” (2 Tim. 4:2). It is to be observed that the word *euangelion* “gospel” and *euangelizo* “to preach”, give us the title “evangelist” (Acts 21:8, Eph. 4:11 and 2 Tim. 4:5), and although the epistles of Paul abound with references to the Gospel, and that he continually and faithfully preached it, his official title is a “herald” not an “evangelist”. The verb *euangelizo* “preach” occurs but twice in Paul’s epistles written after Acts 28, namely:

“And came and preached peace” (Eph. 2:17).

“That I should preach among the Gentiles” (Eph. 3:8),

neither passage being a reference to the simple gospel of salvation. The *kerux* who cried before Joseph, “Bow the knee” (Gen. 41:43), cannot be conceived of pleading with the Egyptians to accept Joseph as their deliverer or ruler; it would have been more than their life was worth to object. Again in Daniel 3:4 the herald did not plead with those to whom he was sent, but said “to you it is commanded” on pain of death for refusal. Noah, is called, in 2 Peter 2:5 a *kerux*, a herald, and it is entirely untrue to picture Noah standing on the steps of the ark, and pleading with his neighbours to come in and be saved. He received no such commission, he knew that but eight souls were to be saved from the wrath that was coming, and he knew too that there would have been no accommodation for any outside that number. *Kerusso*, “to preach” occurs some twenty-six times in the LXX of the Old Testament but always in the sense of making a proclamation, never in the sense of preaching a gospel. This is true even of the preaching of Jonah, which was “yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jon. 3:4). Paul was a herald. He proclaimed the truth entrusted to him and left it with the Lord Who sent Him to accomplish whatever purpose He had in making that truth known. When we come to examine the gospel which this apostle preached, we shall discover how rich and full were its contents, but that study must be reserved for another occasion. Paul was not only an Apostle, and a Preacher, he was a Teacher. The Greek word *didaskalos* is rendered mostly by the word “Master” and is only once rendered “teacher” in the Gospels (John 3:2) and once in the Acts (13:1), but rendered “teacher” eight times in the epistles of Paul. This word is probably derived from the Greek *deiko* “to show”, and “from this Greek word may be deduced the Latin *doceo*, the Saxon *taecan* and the English *teach*” (note in Parkhurst’s Lexicon). *Didaskalia* is the word translated “doctrine” about which the Apostle expresses so much concern in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. One of the contributory causes of

modern declension is the discontinuance of definite doctrinal teaching in many a pulpit. Tit-bits and husks do not build robust bodies, neither do topical ear-tickling addresses, reinforced with emotional hymns and choruses, make for Christian virility, and one of the characteristics of the last days is that while “they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3) and heap unto themselves “teachers” of their own choice, they fall a prey “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers were the gift of the Ascended Christ to His church, and usually these offices were kept apart, but it seems that this earthen vessel, Paul, had them all. If we add to this the fact that he was given as a pattern and could call upon the believer to become a follower of himself, and to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him, we get a very full and gracious and important character.

### **Paul’s Special Fitness for his Task**

While he continually maintained that his fitness for the work given to him was all of grace, that while he was a chosen vessel he was most certainly an earthen vessel, there is nevertheless most evident in the circumstances of his life, the overruling and guiding hand of the Lord.

“It has happened not infrequently in the providence of God, that the destroyer of a creed or system has been bred and trained in the inmost bosom of the system which he was destined to shake or destroy ... The deadliest antagonist of Judaic exclusiveness was by birth a Hebrew of the Hebrews. The dealer of the death-wound to the spirit of Pharisaism was a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” (Farrar, “Life and work of St. Paul”).

“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, yet brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3).

Tarsus, the birthplace of the Apostle was the capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor, and the seat of philosophy and literature, ranking with Athens and Alexandria. Yet even though he was not a Palestinian Jew, his parentage and upbringing enabled him to call himself, not only a Jew, and an Israelite (Rom. 11:1), but also a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5), to whom the Hebrew language was evidently so familiar, that on the road to Damascus he heard a voice from heaven speaking unto him in the Hebrew tongue (Acts 26:14), and in that tongue he addresses the multitude from “the stairs” of the castle in Jerusalem (Acts 21:40).

“That St. Paul was a ‘Hebraist’ in the fullest sense of the word is clear from almost every verse of his Epistles. He reckons time by the Hebrew calendar. He makes constant allusion to Jewish customs, Jewish laws and Jewish festivals” (Farrar, “Life and work of St. Paul”).

Paul was not only a Jew, an Israelite and an Hebrew, he was “a citizen of no mean city” (Acts 21:39) and to the astonishment of the Roman captain “spoke Greek” and was also “born free”, a citizen of Rome (Acts 21:37; 22:27,28), who could and did on occasion say *Civis Romanus Sum*. While Tarsus was a seat of learning, it was also in such low moral state as to have earned the unenviable notoriety of being counted among three most villainous k’s of antiquity, the *Tria Kappa Kakista*, namely Kappadokia, Kilikia and Krete. Paul must have read the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of Sardanapalus who is represented as snapping his fingers while he uttered the words:

“Eat, drink, enjoy thyself: the rest is nothing.”

He must have early realised the gulf that existed between the high sounding words and the low morals of the Philosophers in that city of learning and looseness. “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened”. “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”, while expressing his conviction after he became a believer in the Son of God, would have had the backing of his early acquaintance with such teaching in his native city. The Rabbi unto whose care the young Saul of Tarsus was committed at the age of thirteen, was the renowned Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel. Only seven of these doctors of the law were given the title Rabbin, and three of these were Gamaliels of this family. The Gamaliel under whom Saul of Tarsus sat, was a liberal Pharisee, who, while zealous for the tradition of his fathers, had none of the exclusiveness which characterised the rival school of Shammai. His liberal learnings are manifested in his speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34-40).

Now while the grace of God is all sufficient to equip the veriest fool for the highest office, we must not limit the activities of the grace of God to the period of a man’s conscious exercise of faith. Did not Paul recognise this pre-Christian grace when he said:

“But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother’s womb,”

as surely as he recognised his appointment as an apostle “separated” unto the Gospel of God, after his conversion? (Gal. 1:15, Rom. 1:1). Paul uses imagery, borrowed from Greek athletic sports, that it would have been well nigh impossible for Peter to have employed. He had

been indeed made “all things to all men” for their salvation and blessing. Here then in brief outline is the history, upbringing and equipping of this earthen vessel, destined, by grace, to be the mightiest instrument in the hands of the Lord that these two thousand years of Christian testimony have known.

### **A Steward of the Mysteries**

Among other features of his ministry, that set this man apart, is his stewardship of the mysteries of God. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are made known in the Gospels, and the mystery of God and of Babylon are found in the book of the Revelation, but no mysteries were entrusted to or communicated by Peter. To Paul before Acts 28, eight “mysteries” are revealed or touched upon, and twelve “mysteries” are made known through or to Paul after Acts 28. These mysteries touch upon the two great antagonistic secrets of the whole of the Scriptures:

- (1) The mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).
- (2) The mystery of iniquity “showing himself as God” (2 Thess. 2:7).

Whoever neglects the testimony of Paul robs himself of one of the master keys of Scripture.

In the epistle to the Romans he speaks of two mysteries, both of which are vital to an understanding of the place of the Gentiles in the scheme of redemption:

- (1) The mystery associated with Israel’s blindness (Rom. 11:25).
- (2) The mystery associated with Adam (Rom. 16:25).

What was the mystery of Romans 16:24-27?

“According to the revelation of a secret”. — It is entirely unnecessary to assume that this is the secret, or mystery, revealed in the third chapter of Ephesians. When examining Romans 5:12-8:39 we see that it constitutes a unique section of the teaching of the epistle. It goes back to a period before Israel, before Abraham. It goes back to Adam. Solomon writing in Ecclesiastes 3 says, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven”, and in enumerating them he says, “A time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (3:1,7). The word translated in the Authorised Version “kept secret” is *sigao*, translated elsewhere in the New Testament “keep silence” and “hold one’s peace”.

Much important truth latent in Genesis chapters 1-11 was “hushed” or “silenced” until the “time to speak” had arrived, and

that was when Paul was inspired to write the epistle to the Romans. The study of Genesis 1-11 in the light of Romans 5:12-8:39 is therefore of the utmost importance to the believer who would realise the peculiar character of his calling. From the twelfth chapter of Genesis until the end of the Acts one nation holds the pre-eminent place, and that part of the Old Testament which deals with Israel knows no salvation apart from that chosen race, or the covenants made with Abraham.

If Israel should fail and fall, the *prophets* had nothing to tell us of how God would cope with the resulting problem. It is, accordingly, the purpose of the central section of Romans to reveal the relationship of man, as such (i.e. as neither Jew nor Gentile), to Adam and to Christ, irrespective both of promises made to the fathers, and the failure or success of the chosen people. But this is not the theme of the O.T. prophecy in general. The period covered by the Scriptures from Genesis 12 to Matthew 1 is as long as that covered by Genesis 1:3 to chapter 11 both being about 2,000 years. In the small space of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is written all that can be known of the first 2,000 years of this present creation. What is written is pregnant with truth, but it awaited its appointed time, and just as the gospel itself revealed teaching hidden in O.T. Scriptures (as we may see in Habakkuk 2:3,4 &c.), so these early chapters of Genesis hold much basic teaching which throws light on the position of the believer who is saved and justified without reference to the law of Moses. Volumes have been written to associate the obedience of Christ with the law of Moses, whereas this law was but transient, it was "added because of transgressions", it was "found fault with", and passed away (Heb. 8:7).

The secret enshrined in Romans 5-8 was hushed in *eonion times*. We read of some part of God's purpose as being related to a period "before *eonion times*" (Tit. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:9), and in Corinthians we read of "the wisdom of God in a mystery" which has been "hidden", and which God "foreordained before the ages" (1 Cor. 2:7). The mystery of the prison epistles was "hidden from the ages, and from the generations" (Col. 1:26). These hidden subjects had "their own seasons" of manifestation, and these manifestations were through the medium of "preaching", and "according to" a "commandment" (Tit. 1:3). In like manner the revelation of this secret of Romans 16:25,26 was according to a commandment.

The mystery of Romans 16 is not said to be related to a period "before age times", but to have been silenced in age times. This secret

is the theme of the central section of Romans, and its subject is *Adam*, not Abraham, *man*, not Israel or Gentile; the law of *sin*, not the law of *Sinai*; the dominion of *sin and death*, not the domination of *Canaanites* or *Babel*.

What are the “prophetic writings” that Paul refers to? The words translated in the Authorised Version, “the scriptures of the prophets”, are not exactly the same as those used in Romans 1:2. In Romans 1:2 the original reads: *Dia ton propheton autou en graphais hagiiais*, whereas Romans 16:26 reads: *Dia te graphon prophetikon*. The suggestion is made by some that not only a difference of expression is intended here, but a real difference, and that the reference in Romans 1:2, is to O.T. prophets, whereas that in Romans 16 is to N.T. prophets. It may be so, but the reader should be aware that nothing in the language used constitutes a proof of this. *Prophetikos* is to *prophetes*, what *pneumatikos* is to *pneuma*, simply the adjectival form. As the only other occurrence of the word will show, every one of the O.T. prophecies are “prophetic writings” (2 Pet. 1:21).

It was when the Apostle received commandment to make this early truth known, that the prophetic writings, which had for generations held their secret, began to speak.

The fact that what was made known both in Romans 1 and 16 was “for the obedience of faith to all nations”, establishes the unity of purposes that links the whole of Romans 1-16:27 together as an indivisible whole, as a comparison of Romans 1:1-5, with Romans 16:25,26 will show. There is no need to adopt the suggestion of Lightfoot that the doxology was added some years after.

In Ephesians, where the word mystery occurs six times, two related, but different, mysteries are made known:

- (1) The mystery, *par excellence* and without qualification (Eph. 3:3).
- (2) The mystery of Christ, about which Paul had a greater knowledge than the apostles and prophets before him (Eph. 3:4).

In Ephesians and Colossians is found the twofold claim of Paul to be the sole depository of this special and unique dispensation of the mystery among the Gentiles:

- (1) By revelation He made known unto me the mystery ... to make all men see what is the dispensation (R.V.) of the mystery (Eph. 3:3, 9).
- (2) For His body's sake, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to complete the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints (Col 1:24-26).

These sacred secrets so graciously revealed in their due season, are neglected at our peril. If the ministry of Paul be unperceived, these priceless revelations will be discounted, and the glories of the “high calling” will never be realised. Is it possible that the “forgiveness” that obtained under the ministry of the kingdom (Matt. 6:14,15; 18:32-35) is preferred to the full and perfect irrevocable forgiveness that is the glory of the Gospel preached by Paul? (Acts 13:38, Eph.1:7, 4:32). Where, outside of Paul’s ministry and epistles can we learn of that most wonderful act of justification, that is not of works, or of law, but which is the very righteousness of God accounted ours by faith of Jesus Christ! What other writer in the New Testament sheds such light on “immortality” as the apostle Paul? and above all else, where shall we find a Christ, so exalted, so glorified, so gracious, so triumphant, as the Christ Jesus\* of this apostle of grace? What would make up to us the loss of that hymn of Divine Charity, 1 Corinthians 13, or that soul moving testimony to the resurrection 1 Corinthians 15? Is there anywhere outside of Paul’s writings anything to compare with Romans 8:31-39, where shall we read such a list of sufferings for Christ’s sake, if we had not 2 Corinthians 11:16-33. What could take the place of Philippians 2:5-11 or of 3:3-21. But we desist. It is invidious to attempt to compare or to assay.

The shadows of prophetic imagery begin to darken the sky. The nations of antiquity, Iran, Irak, Egypt, Israel, are awaking out of sleep, and when the hour strikes and the prophetic clock once more begins to tick, the days of this present dispensation of grace will be numbered, and those who have neglected the testimony of the Lord’s prisoner, will take a place somewhat like to that of the foolish virgins:

“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, the night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:11,12).

We conclude this testimony to the ministry of the Apostle to the Gentiles by quoting two tributes, one to his peculiar fitness for the office he was called to fill and one to his character, the man who was made “all things to all men” that by all means some may be saved.

“Here was one to whom no single man that has ever lived, before or since, can furnish a perfect parallel. If we look at him only as a writer, how immensely does he surpass, in his most casual Epistles, the greatest authors, whether Pagan or Christian, of his own and succeeding epochs. The younger Pliny was famous as a letter-writer, yet the younger Pliny never produced any letter so exquisite as that to Philemon. Seneca, as a

\*By following the readings of the critical texts we discover that no other writer in the New Testament uses this wondrous title “Christ Jesus” than the apostle Paul.

moralist, stood almost unrivalled, yet not only is clay largely mixed with his gold, but even his finest moral aphorisms are inferior in breadth and intensity to the most casual of St. Paul's. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius furnish us with the purest and noblest specimens of Stoic loftiness and thought, yet St. Paul's chapter on charity is worth more than all they ever wrote. If we look at the Christian world, the very greatest worker in each realm of Christian service does but present an inferior aspect of one phase only of Paul's many-sided pre-eminence. As a theologian, as one who formulated the doctrines of Christianity, we may compare him with St. Augustine or St. Thomas of Aquinas; yet how should we be shocked to find in him the fanciful rhetoric and dogmatic bitterness of the one, or the scholastic aridity of the other. If we look at him as a moral reformer, we may compare him with Savonarola; but in his practical control of even the most thrilling spiritual impulses—in making the spirit of the prophet subject to the prophet—how grand an exemplar might he not have furnished to the impassioned Florentine! If we consider him as a preacher we may compare him with St. Bernard; yet St. Paul would have been incapable of the unnatural asceticism and heresy-hunting hardness of the great Abbot of Clairvaux. As a reformer who altered the entire course of human history, Luther alone resembles him; yet how incomparably is the Apostle superior to Luther in insight, in courtesy, in humility, in dignity, in self-control! As a missionary we might compare him to Xavier, as a practical organizer to St. Gregory, as a fervent lover of souls to Whitfield, and to many other saints of God in many other of his endowments; but no saint of God has ever attained the same heights in so many capacities, or received the gifts of the Spirit in so rich an outpouring, or borne in his mortal body such evident landmarks of the Lord. In his lifetime he was no whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, and he towers above the very greatest of all the saints who have since striven to follow the example of his devotion to his Lord" (Farrar).

"Here we see that fearless independence with which he 'withstood Peter to the face'—that impetuosity which breaks out in his apostrophe to the 'foolish Galatians';—that earnest indignation which bids his converts 'beware of dogs, beware of the concision,' and pours itself forth in the emphatic 'God forbid', which meets every Antinomian suggestion;—that fervid patriotism which makes him 'wish that he were himself accursed from Christ for his brethr'en, his kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites'; that generosity which looked for no other reward than 'to preach the Glad Tidings of Christ without charge', and made him feel that he would rather 'die than that any man should make this glorying void'; that dread of officious interference which led him to shrink from 'building on another man's foundation'; that delicacy which shows itself in his appeal to Philemon, whom he might have commanded, 'yet for love's sake rather beseeching him, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ' and which is even more

stiking in some of his farewell greetings, as (for instance) when he bids the Romans salute Rufus, and *'his mother, who is also mine'*; that scrupulous fear of evil appearance which *'would not eat any man's bread for nought but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that he might not be chargeable to any of them'*; that refined courtesy which cannot bring itself to blame till it has first praised, and which makes him deem it needful almost to apologise for the freedom of giving advice to those who were not personally known to him; that self-denying love which *'will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend'*; that impatience of exclusive formalism, with which he overwhelms the Judaizers of Galatia, joined with a forbearance so gentle for the innocent weakness of scrupulous consciences; that grief for the sins of others, which moved him to tears when he spoke of the enemies of the cross of Christ, *'of whom I tell you even weeping'*; that noble freedom from jealousy with which he speaks of those who, out of rivalry to himself, preach Christ even of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds; *'What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice'*; that tender friendship which watches over the health of Timothy, even with a mother's care; that intense sympathy in the joys and sorrows of his converts, which could say, even to the rebellious Corinthians, *'ye are in our hearts to die and live with you'*; that longing desire for the intercourse of affection, and that sense of loneliness when it was withheld, which perhaps is the most touching feature of all, because it approaches most nearly to a weakness. "When I had come to Troas, to preach the Glad Tidings of Christ, and a door was opened to me in the Lord, **I had no rest** in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but I **parted from** them, and came from thence into Macedonia.' And *'when I was come into Macedonia, my flesh had no rest, but I was troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. But God, Who comforts them that are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus'. 'Do thy utmost to come to me speedily; for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia; only Luke is with me'.*" (Conybeare and Howson).

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