



NEWS BULLETIN

RELEASE DATE: 23rd July 2024

1 Timothy Chapter 3 “The mystery of godliness”

In 1 Timothy 3: 14-16 we read: *“I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”*

In my bible the passage above that we are looking at this morning is entitled “The Mystery of Godliness”. This forms part of the “Mystery of the Trinity” that we discussed last time.

In order to convey to Timothy how he and the gathered church should conduct themselves Paul put pen to paper or more likely parchment!



Written revelation occurred as God directed the personal lives of His messengers. Paul would have preferred instructing Timothy in person, but with the probability of delay in such a meeting, and knowing the urgency of the matter in hand, he wrote out the instructions instead. Thus, writings directed to specific life needs became part of inspired scripture. How thankful we should be for that delay that brought about this marvellous and instructive letter from Paul to Timothy.

The question is “how do you explain God in a simple statement?” That is the problem faced here. God goes beyond our human understanding. He towers so far beyond us in every way that he is shrouded in mystery except for the ways He has stooped to reveal Himself to us. Even where He has revealed Himself to us, as in the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ, we are yet confronted with profound mystery. The height of sinful human ego may be thinking we understand all of the mystery about God.

In Isaiah 55 v 8 & 9 we read: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

People of God. God's household is the church, a family trying to live in obedience to God. The church knows and teaches the truth because it serves the One who is Truth.

In John 14 v 6 we read: *"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

In Galatians 6 v 10 we read: *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith"*

The imagery obviously refers to the people of God in the Old Testament. The church fulfills Old Testament expectations for the covenant and looks forward to the complete fulfillment. As God's family, the church cares for one another in all personal needs as well as doing what is right and good for nonbelievers. The people were chosen to serve God.

The mission of Christ summarised in this hymn is the centre of the Christian confession of faith. Jesus' mission included:

Incarnation – becoming human.

Resurrection – God's Spirit showing Christ, and not his enemies, was right in God's sight.

Victory – Angels witnessed His power over ALL spiritual forces.

Proclamation – His gospel broke the barriers of race and religion to reach ALL nations and people groups.

Acceptance – people around the world believed in Him for salvation.

Ascension – He was taken into glory.

Looking in particular at "Proclamation", this should be simple and transparent. The desired result of preaching is repentance and faith. The message is not to be obscured with eloquent words and confusing rhetoric.

Paul refused to use clever language or to manipulate God's word. He presented the gospel with a simple and open statement of truth. He depended on the Spirit's power to change lives.

In 2 Corinthians 4 verses 1-6 we read: *"Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice^[b] cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,*

to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servant for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

This dramatic change in the heart and life of the individual, which comes when one is saved, does not come about by the emotional power of enticing words but by the simple, straightforward presentation of the gospel in all its clarity and power. Attention must be focused on the Word, not the proclaimer.

In 1 Corinthians 1 v 17 & 18 we read: *"For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

In Galatians 1 v 6-12 we read: *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant^{bl} of Christ. ¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."*

In Ephesians 3 v 8 & 9 we read: *"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, "*

The heart of the gospel is Jesus Christ. Everything we preach centres in Him. The focal point of His ministry is His substitutionary death on the cross.

In Romans 5 v 8 we read: *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

In Galatians 3 v 13 we read: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree".*

1 Timothy 2 v 6 we read: *“who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”*

The lost have no other way to be saved, so the proclaimer must always seek to magnify and lift up the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ can saved individuals be united.

In Acts 4 v 12 we read: *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

People are not saved by accepting a system of theological propositions, but by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He must always be the central theme of our proclamations.

In Acts 8 v 35 we read: *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”*

In 1 Timothy 3 v 16 we read: *“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^l was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”*

In 2 Peter 1 v 16-21 we read: *“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,^[i] with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The wisdom and power of the gospel that changes people's lives come from above, from God, not from humans. The implication of this is that we must be careful not to try to substitute human wisdom and power for the authentic power of God.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church home group on Tuesday 23rd July 2024. All scripture is from the ESV Translation.