

We are continuing in the series *God's Work Through Paul*. This is *Part 7*, and if everything goes well, this will be the last portion of this particular series.

The last time that we went through this, I guess was up in Detroit, *Part 6*, we came to where Paul gave his defense to king Agrippa in Caesarea when king Agrippa was there on his visit with Felix, the governor of Judea. It was after Paul had given his defence that the king stated that he should have been able to just be released except that he had appealed to Caesar. So anyway, the story continues on then from that in Acts 27.

**Acts 27:1—But when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustus Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium** (a sea in Mysia up near Troas if you're interested in that). It says, **we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coast of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.** So again, it goes into a lot of detail on these trips, of who was there, who was doing what, where they were going, some of the ports that they were in and the like, some of the travels.

Then **verse 3** here it says, **And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave liberty to go to his friends and receive care.** So again here, speaking of the centurion and how that he'd taken a liking to Paul in that regard, being kind to him. And continuing on then he said he gave him certain liberty obviously there.

**And when we had put to sea from there,** it says, **we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were against us. Then,** it says **when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra of Lycia.** So again, just, again mapping all these places out. That's why when I started going through this I went to all these places looking at them, trying to familiarize myself with the trips, be more familiar with them.

And then it goes on to say here in **verse 6—There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy.** So, it wasn't like us where we can kind of plan ahead and know what ship we're going to get or what train or what plane or whatever. They didn't have that; they had to take what was available, and so this is what was happening.

**...the centurion found the Alexandrian ship that was sailing to Italy and put us on board. And when we had sailed slowly many days and could hardly be over against Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under Crete off Salmone.** So again here, if you look at the different areas there, Cyprus and Crete, going that particular direction toward Italy.

And it says, **We could hardly pass by it, we came to a place called the Fair Harbor, near the city of Lasea. Now, when much time passed and sailing was now dangerous because the fast was now over, Paul advised them...** So again here, not sure what this was about. Atonement? I don't know. It doesn't say. But it pointed out there was a fast. But some of these things had to do with their fasting for a long period of time. It sounds like it got so bad as we go through the story here, the sea did, the Mediterranean did, that they went without food for a really long time. So, how they survived, I don't know, but that's basically what the story is saying.

It goes on to say here that **Paul advised them, saying, Men, I perceive that this voyage will be with harm and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives. Nevertheless, the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship more than what Paul had spoken to them.** So again, this was that which Paul was being given in that respect, saying that "our lives are in danger," and to "be cautious of this," to "do something different if possible," but the others wanted to keep sailing.

**But because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest.** I didn't realize, you know, until going through some of this and looking online about some of these areas and the kind of storms they had there, how bad it can get in the Mediterranean at times. It's quite treacherous.

**But when the south wind blew softly, thinking they could lay hold of what they'd purposed, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, they were cast into a tempestuous cyclonic wind called Euroclydon.** So, reading up on that there, it's incredibly powerful, some of those are, and so this is what they came across.

**So when the ship was caught up by it and could not bear up into the wind, we let it be driven forth by it.** Some of the things you look back in time, they didn't have the power, the ability. They were totally dependent upon everything going right as far as weather is concerned for sailing, and they definitely didn't have it here; they're totally without control.

**And running past an island called Clauda, we could hardly secure the vessel, which taking up ropes to undergird the ship, fearing not to be cast into the shallows, they struck sail and so were driven.** So again, using what they could to help them hopefully (their thoughts) get out of there.

**Now, because we were being exceedingly tossed by the waves the next day, they lightened the ship. On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us...** So here, no navigation is what they're saying, absolutely no navigation whatsoever. There wasn't much they could do anyway, but they didn't know where they were. **...all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.**

**But after a long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.** Not sure they would want to hear all that at this point, knowing human nature and how it is, but he let it be known. **So, now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.** So again, receiving this from God, letting them know that this is where they stand.

**For there stood by me this night an angel of God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has given you all those who sail with you. Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be even as it has been told to me. However, we must be cast upon a certain island.**

**Now when the fourteenth night had come, and we were driven up and down the Adriatic...** So, this is the sea between, in this point here between Italy and Greece. **...about midnight, the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some coast. So, they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms,** which is right at 36 meters, **and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.** So, they're getting into areas here where perceiving they're getting close to land, and it was 27 meters.

**Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and wished for day to come.** To even have four anchors on board like that, incredible. **But as the sailors were seeking to flee from the ship, and they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense as though to cast anchors from the bow,** which is at the front of the ship. So, here they were, some were going to try to escape in a skiff and pretending to do otherwise so they could go unnoticed and escape.

**Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. Then, the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.** So, here is their only means for some to possibly get away if it were, and so they just let it go, cut it off.

**Now, while the day was about to dawn, Paul implored all to take food, saying, Today is the fourteenth day you have been on watch and continued without food, and eaten nothing.** I don't know how that is possible that long, whether they just had liquid or something, I don't know, but that's a long time to go without food. Obviously, they had to have something to be able to keep moving, keep living, but that's how bad it was. They didn't let down their guard. They were kept awake. I can't imagine. You know, it was a matter of life and death, and you think you're about to die. I guess it does a lot of things to the mind and how one thinks and what you do to try to stay alive.

Then it goes on to say, **Therefore, I urge you to take food, for this is for your survival. Truly, therefore, not a hair will fall from the head of any of you. Now, when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken the bread he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged and also took food themselves. Now, in all, we were two hundred and seventy-six lives.**

So, this wasn't a small ship. This was a good-sized ship to have that many with all the goods they had on there they were transporting—that's the kind of ship it was—plus all the people that were there. So, two hundred and seventy-six lives.

**So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast out the wheat into the sea.** So, things that they were carrying. **And when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they determined to run the ship if possible.** No small decision on something like that because the cost of doing something like that, of building something like that, and the captain and the owner of the ship were there. And so, they were at a point to do whatever it takes to survive.

**Then they let go of the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosened the rudder ropes and hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. But striking an isthmus they ran the ship aground and the bow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.**

**Now, the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners.** So, puts another light on things. In order to survive, they thought this would be a good part of their plan so they don't have to watch out for any of them, **unless any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, forbid them their purpose.** You know, it's amazing here, different stories in the Bible. When God gives favor, different ways He works that out through different ones, oftentimes leaders, oftentimes a ruler like this or someone in charge.

God does those kinds of things in the Church as well. I've seen it over and over and over again with people in jobs and so forth. There might be times when you go through the opposite of that too, and you have to experience what it's like to work for individuals who are oppressive, who are harsh, who are hard. There are lessons we learn from that as well as we look to God for help in how to deal with some of those kinds of things. But oftentimes, very often, God gives a lot of favor to His people.

So again here, **but the centurion desiring to save Paul forbid them their purpose and commanded that those who could swim should jump first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on pieces of the ship. Now so it was that they all escaped safely to land.** Just as Paul had told them.

So, the next time your car breaks down or your plane is delayed, chill. It's an easy thing. You know, compared to some of these things, it's mind-boggling sometimes. And it's good to think back sometimes about different ones and what they went through and realize how blessed we are today. We take things for granted. We take the technology and everything that's happened in the last forty, fifty years, we tend to take things for granted. Our idea of stress and pressure and hard times, it isn't so hard really when it all comes right down to it.

**Acts 28:1—Now, when they had escaped, they then learned that the island was called *Māliṭā*,** which is how it was pronounced at that time. It's Malta. **Now, the barbaros people...** This is a term used of people "barbarous," but again, this word has to do with people of harsh speech. So, don't know if it has to do with fully that or not, but that's basically the reputation that this area had. Tough, harsh, not real friendly.

It says, they **showed not a little**, again, those expressions, "a lot." Why didn't you just say, "a lot"? Anyway. **They showed a lot of kindness.** So, for them, this was an unusual situation. Again, God giving favor. **...for they kindled a fire and took us in because of the present rain and because of the cold.** So again, that attitude there of helping them out knowing what they'd just gone through, and they responded properly as people should.

**But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.** So, here it is, hanging there on his hand, and of course, they see it. We know the story.

**So when the barbarians saw the creature hanging on his hand, they said to one another, No doubt...** And these people were so superstitious. On the gods and some of the things they worshiped, and they were so far out there it was amazing. But it says, **No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he escaped the sea, yet justice will not allow him to live.** Pretty tough.

**But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.** Can you imagine? Because he shook it off just like this, and here it is hanging from him, it had a bite on him, fangs definitely, everything is there and just shaking it off. When I think about this, I think about Johnny sometimes here, sitting here talking about Moses and the snake. It's an encounter a lot of us really don't want to have, snakes.

**So, he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. But they were expecting he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.** Fickle; one extreme to the other.

**In the same place, there was land of the leading person of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and lodged us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery, and Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands upon him and healed him.** So, God performed this miracle through Paul, and of course, this is going to have an impact now on people around there.

**So, when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came, and they were healed.** Amazing, things that God did at different times worked in different ways with people. That's the way it's always been through six thousand years. Never the same in that regard over different periods of time, different experiences that people had, and here we are reading about this one.

**Who also honored us with personal valuables. And when we departed, they laid upon us such things as were needed to continue on. After three months, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered on the isle, marked with a sign of Castor and Pollux.** They were sons of Jupiter. So again, just showing some of the thinking of people and what Paul had to deal with in the gentile world.

**Then landing in Syracuse, a maritime city in Sicily, we stayed three days. And from there we circled round and reached Rhegium, a town in Italy. Then, after one day, the south wind blew and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. So, it says, we went forward/toward, if you will, which is Rome.**

So, this was going over land in that respect at this point in time and having come to this place here. Amazing here that so quickly to find people in the Church. This area around Rome and some of these areas like this one here already had people who were in the Church. And yet Paul had never even been there to our knowledge, no apostle had been there. But all that started because of what took place a long time before this and of communications they were able to have back and forth. But they were part of the Church.

**Verse 15—Now, from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Taverns.** So, this is right at thirty-three miles away from Rome at this point, fifty kilometers. **And when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.** So again, more brethren. And the word spread fast because they all knew each other in that region so there were those who went ahead or whatever and let them know. This is big because they'd all heard of Paul; they all knew of Paul obviously.

**Now, when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.**

**Verse 17—Now, it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them, Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers...** This is an amazing thing to me, as you continue through from beginning to end here, constantly it was a matter of meeting in synagogues and discussing things of the Old Testament about the Messiah. This is what Paul preached to them.

They had a very common bond at this particular time in the sense of everything in the Old Testament and the ways of the Old Testament, but they weren't, as a whole (the Jews obviously) aware of some of the teachings about Christ, and yet they'd heard a certain amount. But they didn't understand or agree with it, obviously. But that's who Paul went to first, in that respect, over and over again. So, he's telling them the story.

**I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go**

**because there is no cause for putting me to death.** Just making it very clear to them his background, who he was, what had taken place, and letting them know that there was no cause whatsoever of a death penalty to be placed upon him, but he'd appealed to Caesar.

**But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had done anything which to accuse my nation. For this reason, therefore, I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because of the hope of Israel I am bound with the chain** or some binding as it is because it's not always a chain. Some of these translations aren't that grand, so it can be just a matter of being bound. It can be a matter of just being bound and restricted in an area or to literally have leathers they used oftentimes or actually chains and so forth. So, don't know what it was exactly.

And so, he's explaining this history to them. **Then they said to him, We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken of against everywhere.** In other words, this sect of those who follow Christ and teach about those things, they had enough knowledge to know it was spoken against, everywhere that they knew of in that respect. So, it's spoken against everywhere.

**So, when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them.** So, he used things in the Old Testament, very obviously so knowledgeable, and was able to explain the things of scripture to them in a way that they probably had never heard to that degree, and talking about things that they would agree with to a point.

And so it says here, again here, **concerning Joshua from both the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning until evening.** So again, speaking about Joshua and then going on and talking about, if he did, it doesn't really say here to that point, how much of the teachings and so forth that varied from Judaism but just showing the belief there that he fulfilled the things about the Messiah.

But again, going back in the story here. I jumped ahead a little bit because of what he always did in the synagogues there, he would begin to point out to an audience the things that they would be in agreement to and then he would continue on as it shows here about Joshua and those things having to do with the things he fulfilled as a prophet.

**Now, some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had spoken one other word.** It's referring to what he's getting ready to say. It always comes up to a certain point. **The holy spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people and say, Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive.**

It's not the way to win friends and influence people, but that's not the job. And so again here, hitting some of them very powerfully so. They knew exactly what he was talking about and that it was to them. Others who were more in agreement, another matter.

He goes on, **For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and be turned, so that I should heal them. Therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the gentiles, and they will hear it!**

So, in essence, he's going into all the history here of why it's moving away from Judaism and going to the Jews, that it's going into the world in that respect, to all other nations, having no concept of just how far it would go because of time. But again here, that which was to be fulfilled and showing that the Jews rejected Christ and that it was to go beyond them, that God's plan wasn't just about the Jews, it wasn't just about Israel.

**So, when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.** So, disagreement, agreement, back and forth.

**Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him.** So, when things were spread around and talked about. He had to stay confined, if you will, to his own place, and during that entire two-year period, but word spread, and people talked to each other. People could invite others along and hear him, and that's exactly what took place. But especially the Church, obviously, helped tremendously at this particular time, those who could come and visit with him.

**...two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Joshua the Christ with all confidence and with no hinderance.**

So, Paul was confined, he was imprisoned in his own rented house, his own rented home if you will, for that whole two-year period. And that was around 61 to 63 AD. Amazing, wasn't that long. Thirty years. Thirty years the Church... Only thirty years. I think back thirty years; it's been thirty years since the Apostasy. Astounding, time, how fast it goes and all that we've experienced. But for some of us, we experienced a lot of things well before that.

From here, he wrote the epistles, if you will, in Rome while he was imprisoned there or confined to his home (a better way of saying it). So, he wrote Ephesians, he wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. I marvel. When I started going through all this, it hadn't hit me before in the same way as it had as I was preparing a lot of this. Again, the amount of things he wrote and what's contained in those writings that really established a foundation in a very powerful way for the Church.

John wrote a lot of things, but he wrote things later on as well. And obviously, Peter wrote some things there. But you think about what was given to Paul – incredible – that God planned, prepared all this,

Christ worked with him directly, giving him insight, teaching him for a long period of time before he ever started going to the gentiles. And then, as he was travelling, God just continued to give him more and more through the experiences and the things that He had already taught him. Incredible what's here.

It's kind of interesting here. I'm going to put a little more history in this, and some of this is going to be in the book as well. And this is, to me, is not by accident because of the direction of the book, that there are things having to do with the Roman Empire, there are things having to do with Judaism and what happened in Judaism, why they turned away, why they rejected Christ and going on through that, and the process they went through in doing that as well. And then knowing certain rulers that came along.

Nero played a very important part in what happened to the Church. He played a very important part of what happened in Judaism. And it was kind of in the beginning here, candidly, that God began to turn the tables on Judaism. He began to correct them. Because they were persecuting the Church and have persecuted the Church for a long time now, thirty years, and God was about to turn that around to where they were going to be the persecuted ones. But it still came after the Church. They never let down, they just changed who was doing the persecuting.

So, Nero at this time was the Roman Emperor. He was the Emperor from 54 to 68 AD and was sixteen years old when he began. Incredible! And there is no mention that he was ever taken before Nero, although it said that he needed to go before Caesar. So, to my knowledge it's not recorded anywhere specifically and what might have happened.

And so again, this is his first imprisonment in Rome because he's going to go a second time. And this here is the first time then in Rome being confined (imprisoned, if you will), but confined, he couldn't go anywhere, had to be for two years in that home. And we'll come back to some of that history later on. I believe it's in a two-part sermon because we're not going to stop about Paul today; we're going to continue on. But this finishes the book of Acts if we get there.

So, we're going to take some time just looking at some of these as we've been doing, going through this, some of the things that were written, established for the Church. I don't want to go through the entire books of Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians, but picking out certain parts here just again to stress the fact of what God gave to him in a very powerful way.

Colossians 1. We'll take some time and look at a little bit of Colossians. **Colossians 1:24—I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of his Body, which is the Church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.** So again here, he's making it very clear where it came from and what was given to him to help the Church, but he had no idea how much it was going to help the Church. This was going to take care of things for the next nearly two thousand years as far as the Church was concerned.

**...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations.** Powerful! Mystery. Again, in the book talking about progressive revelation and going into it more than what we have in the past. It is incredible the things that God has done through time over six thousand years and what God was doing at this particular time here. And candidly, everything that the Church has been given up to this point in time, especially during PKG, that I feel very blessed to be a part of, to be writing, because that knowledge, that information that was given to the Church is going to be written in there.

And just share with you as well (maybe I did part of this), but what we've done in the past when it comes to, especially the last book, was to start out slowly with advertising to see what areas or what we might be able to do and how to do it, but we've learned from that. We found out what the world is like a little bit more so. This time here, we're going to hit it with everything we can all at one time in the very beginning so that if we get kicked off, there is going to be a far greater impact in the very beginning of seeds planted, if you will.

So, we live in that time. I don't know how much time we're going to have, but I tell you what, all this working in the way that it is, it's closing in, it really is.

So, he talks about this mystery, and when you go through and read some of these or when you go through some of the things that God has given to us, you think of all the things that we've been blessed to be a part of helping to uncover, to see, to grasp, that God has given to us. It's incredible, it really is.

Just before Joshua returns as King of kings and to think about all the truth and yet humbled by the reality the scattered Body is not able to see or experience that. They can't see it. And yet God called out a few, just a few to work with, to establish this, to establish the truth over this period of time, for God to reveal it and establish certain things. That's exciting to be a part of something.

This is far greater than what we grasp and comprehend in our own minds. It really is. Because there is more revealed in this period of time that it's mind-boggling, it really is. And the ability to clarify, to show these things, to present it, if you will, to the world in a way that helps to bring it all together to the end, to Christ's coming, it's an awesome thing.

Anyway, so it's talking about this mystery. It's always been about a mystery because the world can't see it, the world doesn't understand it, the world doesn't know it, and yet God is getting ready to show it to the world. That's where we are. That's what it's all about. It's one Church that's going to be established. We can't comprehend that, how there's going to be just one Church. If anyone else tries to raise something up and teach something else, it's going to be dealt with. It's not going to be allowed to happen.

There's been enough damage, enough hurt over the last six thousand years, and that's going to be prevented from happening, to where there's just one ability to see what is true and to see all the other garbage that's false. I mean, they're going to have the ability to see it. It's going to be right in front of

them. Now, that doesn't mean they're all going to accept it, but it's going to be there, truly, very powerfully so.

**...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations.** That's what's coming to light. It won't be a mystery any longer. **...but now has been revealed to His saints.**

I want to say something else. I was just thinking about this. It is scary, frankly. It used to be that you could do searches on the internet and find historic fact more so than you can now, that you could find things pertaining to things that happened in times past that are connected with the Church or things that were taught that are a part of a false system. It's a lot harder today. I don't know if it's a result of AI programs working in some of this; I don't think people are that smart. There is a being that's that smart and maneuvering things, but there's an effort. After a while, people will just be drinking in stupidity. What is that stupid show that's out there? Jeremy talks about it sometimes. *Idiocracy!* Concerning truth, concerning knowledge, concerning the Church, concerning history. In going through some of these things that in the past I've been able to research and go into, they've changed it, and they're absolutely lying.

They give definitions of things that are not true at all. The word "Easter" is now a matter of something that is absolute in one respect. It's like, "This is absolute truth," that it comes from some German word they worked together and something else in another language and after a while it starts out with the word for Passover. But now they give the authority, "This is Easter." I mean, they don't beat around the bush anymore – lying through their teeth! And anyway, it's so frustrating.

But I think, you know, if time were to go on and if there were not some truth, if there wasn't some truth out there, what hope, where would people be? I mean, it's incredible. Thank God He's about to intervene. And prayerfully, the sooner, the better. This is such a sick world and what's being done. Truly is. All with the tool of technology giving one being more power than he's ever experienced. More power to reach the world.

Because he's using it. That's what we have to understand. There is a being that's using this, promoting it, working with individuals, working with groups, working through corporations, whatever it is, to push certain things. He has that power; he truly does. And now, he has more power to reach out in the world because of that ability through technology. Incredible! It's not just the world, it's not just mankind doing this. There is a lot more power behind it in the sense of what's being motivated and inspired to be done.

**...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to His saints.** So, that's it, to His saints, and that was going to go on for two thousand years. The rest of the world still couldn't see it. So, Paul could talk to groups, he could talk to the Jews first, which was what he followed, "to the Jew first, and then the gentiles." So, everywhere he went, that's exactly what he did, and they rejected it over and over and over again. Some were called, but as a whole, obviously Judaism totally rejected it.

And so again here, just revealed to His saints, those who were called into the Church. The rest of the world is still blinded. Two thousand years of that. Can't see it. And God's about ready to change all that.

**To them, God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles.** This was a big thing that was taking place. Before, it was only to Israel. Anything to do with God Almighty only went to Israel and to some gentiles who might come in to be persuaded to become part with them in the community as even happened in the Exodus. Some came out and stayed with them and became part of Judaism, if you will, as far as the belief.

Other than that, you think, what an incredible time that they were living in right here. Now, it's going into the world. Wherever God wants it to go, it's for everyone. It's not just for one particular nation of people, it's for everyone. So, this was big for them because this is what it's about; that was the excitement of it.

It says, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**

**Colossians 2:1—For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea—so, this is both Colossae and Laodicea, due east of Ephesus there—and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love (agape, God's love), and attaining to all riches in the full assurance and understanding of the knowledge of the mystery of God.** So, not a mystery anymore because the power of God to call, the power of God to open the mind and to be able to hear and to see on a spiritual plane.

**...both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.** So this is, again, following them around. He'd already had to deal with certain people, and it's still going on. And it's been in the Church for two thousand years. Incredible! People who would start to teach something different, people who would learn certain things and then out of haughtiness and pride begin to teach something else for wrong reasons, for wrong motivations entirely.

**For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit.** And I was thinking, not just that, I think of all the ministry that did what they did, you know. It wasn't a matter of just doing it to take it someplace else, it's to do it within the Church! Incredible!

**...yet I am with you in spirit rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.** So, he knew what was going on in these areas. It's hard for us to understand that even though we read about it. They were being persecuted. They were still being persecuted, and not anything like we've ever experienced in that regard. They were being persecuted with bodily harm, with threats, with death, and so forth, and prison. It was still going on in different areas. And not only that, then the gentile world rising up against them as well in different areas.

**As you therefore have received Joshua the Christ, the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him.**

So, this is for all time. It's the way we should live. That's how we should think. That's up to us, to be rooted and built up in him. That's up to us and what we put into it. It's up to the work we put into it as to what we're going to receive back. It's not just given to us on a silver platter in the sense it's pumped into our brains and all of a sudden that's us. No, we've got to choose it; we've got to want it. That's an awesome thing to understand.

And so, as we choose it and want it and work with it and pray to God for more help to build upon it, He blesses us, He gives us growth, He helps us to produce fruit. Because without Him, without that ability, without that relationship, we can't produce anything that's worth anything.

**...rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith.** That's God's desire for every one of us, to be established in the beliefs He's given to us already, that we made the choices to live it. That's what faith is. We made the choices then to live by what He gave us to believe. And if we do that, we become established then in the faith. That's what it's talking about.

**...as you have been taught,** as it says here, **abounding in it with thanksgiving.** I think of sermons that just flash through my mind here as I'm thinking about some of these things we talked about. This matter of thanksgiving. If that isn't a part of our thinking toward God and a part of our thinking toward one another, to be thankful for people we're able to visit with and have fellowship with, thankful for what God has given us in this end-time, thankful for the truths that God has given to us, thankful for the relationships, and thanking God continually. If that isn't a part of our thinking and our minds, we're missing the mark! We truly are. We have to have and be of a thankful spirit.

And in this world today, it's more selfish than ever, and if you're not careful, you get caught up in that selfishness, and it becomes then a part of your character, your mind, your thinking. And you've got to fight against that! You've got to practice being thankful. You've got to think about it. Again, things that God gave to Paul, that Christ gave to Paul to teach to the Church, to write about so that we can go through it today and learn and be edified and strengthened by spiritually.

**Colossians 3:1—If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.** This is a means to an end, and if we don't have a right thinking and a right mind, we'll put too much emphasis on here and now and things and whatever else. That can't be our mind. First, it has to be God. Above everything else, truly. That's our goal, that's our motivation, to realize and to know and to live by that – this is a means, not an end, but an incredible beginning, if you will. That's what it's all about.

This just lasts for a little while, and sometimes we don't realize that until you get close to the end of a little while. The closer you get to the end of a little while it can sober up your thinking. But before that, if we're not careful, we get caught in the here and now, and that seems a long way away. All of you will reach that little while, if you know what I'm talking about. The end of it. That's the way God designed it.

**Set your mind on things above and not on things of the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ.** We either know that, believe that, see that, and live that, or we're missing something, and we need to build upon that. We died. When we were buried in the water, self was supposed to have been put to death, truly, put to death. And we're to live different. Incredible!

**For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.** What an incredible thing! This goes by so quickly. The physical things we can put emphasis on in life, they're not that important. If God's not in the picture, they're not important at all. This is all people have if this is all that they want, if that's all that they see. How blessed are we that we realize it's beyond that forever.

**Verse 5—Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, disorderly affection, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.** It's all idolatry.

That's why I even talk about the stupid cigarette. You know, I've had so many encounters in times past. I remember the Erie area. One time we came down here where they were shocked that people weren't smoking. Yeah. Because up there, men, women, and children were smoking. You think, what is this? Smoke haven of the world!

Anyway, I know it wasn't, but it was like tobacco companies; they might as well started producing it up in that area, you know, and shipping it out quickly because everybody had to have a cigarette in their mouth. A lot did in the Church. They'd come into Sabbath services. One guy I remember coming in he got caught because it was in his pocket still when he came into services. Not too bright.

But I've often made those comments. Even there, spiritual idolatry. If you're told, "No, this is not the way to live. This is not what you're supposed to do. It doesn't honor God, it dishonors God; it dishonors one another within the Church. Who wants to smell your stinking smoke?" You know? And so, if we don't have that amount of love for one another, we don't have any love whatsoever. That's what it boils down to.

And so, you might as well just go out in your backyard, make this thing that looks like a cigarette, and have smoke coming out the top. Put some red light things around it or whatever at the top where it looks like it's on fire and smoke coming out the top. You've got it, bow down to it, kiss it, kiss it at the bottom. You know, you could make something down there to kiss it and wear out the rock, whatever. I mean, idolatry is idolatry, something small or something big, it doesn't matter. It's not loving God. It's not loving God's way of life.

And I've known a lot of people who have left God's Church over stupid cigarettes! Because I stood a line and said, "No, you can't do it! If you can't stop this, what are you working on in your life?" Yes, it's addictive, but I know too many people who were addicted and they quit, and they received help from God. Where is your mind? It reveals the mind. And that's just a small thing!

I hope you understand what I'm saying. If we're not convicted in something small like that, we're not convicted in big things. I know that! That's a law that's in motion. Our minds are not focused on the big things if something small like that has got us all tripped up. Amazing!

**...evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering. Beautiful! ...bearing with one another, forgiving one another.** Sometimes, it's hard for people to forgive about different things. Give them a break. We can be so hard.

**If anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so do you also.** Look at what He's forgiven us of. Can't we work a little bit on small things and try to work through relationships and not let small things bother us compared to the big things that God forgave us of?

**But above all these things put on agape.** It comes from God. You can't decide when you leave in the morning, "I'm just going to love everybody. I'm going to be so outgoing and giving, no selfishness whatsoever. Oh, just going to be filled with love." It has to come from God. That's the only way it's real. It has to be motivated by His holy spirit.

**...which is the bond of perfection.** Love is. God's love, the bond of perfection. It binds everything else together in God's plan and purpose. Everything that comes from God concerning love is what binds everything else together that's right, true, and just.

**Now, let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one Body; and be thankful.** Beautiful!

Jump over to Ephesians now. We could go through the entire book of these things. I'm just picking out certain things here and there. Powerful stuff. Powerful stuff that God has given to us to live by.

**Ephesians 2:11—Therefore, remember that you, once gentiles in the flesh—who are called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.** So, they didn't have anything in essence.

It was given to Israel. It was given to Judah. God's truth that God had given to them. They didn't understand it, but still, they were the only ones being worked with until Joshua. And now, it's being given to the whole world. That's what he's saying.

**But now in Joshua the Christ you who once were afar off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in**

**ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man (person) of two, thus making peace.** So again, offered a Jew, it's offered a gentile. All can become one in the Body of Christ, the Church of God. **...and that he might reconcile them both to God in one body through being nailed to a pole, thereby putting to death the enmity.**

**Ephesians 3:1—For this reason I, Paul...** It says, **“the prisoner,”** but in bonds here is what it is. **...in bonds of/for Joshua the Christ on behalf of (as it is here in the word “for”) you gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery.** So again, he was able to see. He's saying, “You are able to see.” It's no longer a mystery, in other words.

**I have...** doesn't say **“briefly”** here. **I have written a little/somewhat already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has been revealed by the spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.**

So again here, showing that this hasn't been out there. People haven't been able to receive what you're able to receive, and he's trying to help push this message across of how blessed you really are.

**...that the gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same Body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.**

**Ephesians 4:1—I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk in a worthy manner of your calling which you were called.** So, that's for all time, isn't it? To walk in a worthy manner, in the calling that God has given to us – to reflect that.

**...with all lowliness and meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in God's love, agape, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit.** That should be at the forefront of our minds, and yet we've had quite a struggle through the Church to get to the point we are now. Because this has been an ongoing thing through the Church, and it's gotten better and better and better. We're becoming more and more refined. That's evident through time.

And going back and seeing some of the kinds of things that have happened, has happened, over and over again and getting to a point here you realize the battles we've gone through to come to a point that we have this unity, we want this unity. You have to fight for unity. You have to seek it with one another, toward one another in the Body. Not just of teaching and so forth but of practicing it and that comes in our relationships with one another.

**...in the bond of peace. There is one Body and one spirit, just as you are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith.** One belief then. There is only one thing to believe. What an awesome thing to know and to understand. **...one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all,**

**and in you all.** Because if He's not in us all, something is missing. He has to dwell in us to give us what we have been blessed to receive.

**Philippians 1:12—But I would that you to know, brethren, that according to what has happened to me has actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ have become manifest to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest.** So, he saw it in that light. He knew that there are things that they knew, seeds had been planted. Whether it was for that time or for later on. Great White Throne, they're going to be far ahead, those who heard the message, those who received it.

I think of all those who were a part of Worldwide in the sense of just being those who were helping to support but never a part of the Church. They went to a certain point, called co-workers, into the thousands and tens of thousands of co-workers, and they're very blessed because when they're resurrected, they're going to be out ahead by a long shot most of the world. They gave, they supported something, and God blessed them. Incredible! And He's going to bless them when they're resurrected.

So, as long as the seed is planted and has whatever growth it is, even if it's not on a spiritual plane fully, God is drawing and working with people into that period of time as well that have great opportunity to be way ahead of everyone else. Because there are going to be a lot of people who are going to resist right from the get-go.

And to have more who are going to be able to come along through different ages who have been around God's people? The palace guard, whoever it might be? I think of those who went into captivity in Persia, Babylon, if you will, and Persia and the rulers of that time and of people in the palaces and the prisons. Think of all the people that some of them touched their lives because of God Almighty, the God of all mankind and that relationship. And they knew, and they saw something unique and special in them.

And it's going to be so much easier for them, it really is, when they're resurrected, when they have the ability for it to all come together in their minds. They're going to be excited. It's maybe hard to understand. They're going to be excited for the small portion they received then, truly. Think about it. And they're going to be able to piece it together in a way and think, "You're that one? Joseph?" Yeah. Whomever. Blessed to know them, blessed to have been around them, blessed to have seen their life. Incredible. That'll give them a boost, motivation.

**...so that now my bonds in Christ have become manifest to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest.** So, he knew that things were being talked about that he had shared with different ones. Different ones had come to him, to his house. People talk and people came, and he preached to them, told them about Christ. Seeds were planted. Not to take root until fully so and spring forth until the Great White Throne.

**...now many of the brethren in the Lord, being persuaded by my bonds, and much more bold to speak the word without fear.** It had to be a motivation. It motivates me. It encourages me. And this is, you know, nineteen hundred plus years beyond that. And you think, what an incredible thing the ones

around there he knew that as they heard these stories that helped them to be more bold, especially the time of such persecution, and it helped them to be bold in what they were saying. They weren't afraid as much because seeing the example of Paul and seeing Paul, what he went through.

So again here, **more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even by envy and strife**, debate and contention. So, there has always been that in the Church for the wrong reasons. But again here, it produces some good because they're discussing it and talking about it and some places some good will come out of it.

So, he says, **but some also by good purpose**. So, especially there. What a blessing when that happens.

**Indeed, preaching Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but from out of love, knowing that I am set in place for the defense of preaching the good news.** So, again here, very positive look on everything. He saw God's plan, God's purpose; God gave that to him, and to see what he was going through, and there was a purpose in it.

**What then? Nevertheless, in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.** So, it gets out there still. I think of the different ones who are out there who are part of the scattering. There is still truth that's out there that's not in the world right now, and they're not benefitting from it in the same respect that you are until a certain time comes in their life to where they can be awakened and some of the things that need to take place spiritually.

But it's still going out there, things about the Sabbath, things about the Holy Days, things about Passover. Some of it may be very watered down, but there is truth there. And if people can hear it, you know what? They're better off because of it. Because there is so much garbage, so much filth, so much swill out there that to have something that's of the truth, that's an awesome thing, truly is.

And that's what Paul is basically saying here. So, whether people talk about what Paul has preached out of contention or debate, people are hearing it, they're thinking about it. Others as well. God can use that in His time, whatever that might be for those individuals.

So, it says, **What then? Nevertheless, in every day, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.**

So, we'll close there today in this particular part of the series and pick the rest up after the Holy Days.