

W380_The_Mystery_10.mp3

[00:00:01] This is a recording in the Chapel of the Open Book and is number ten of the series dealing with the mystery. It is our custom at this meeting to read a portion of scripture together. And those of you who are sharing this tape ministry, if you care to join us, will you switch off for a little while and read together with us? The 28th chapter of the Book of Acts. We have been looking in this series of studies at the mysteries that are mentioned in the scriptures with particular interest. In that section of the Scripture which deals with our own high calling. The very dispensation under which we live is called the dispensation of the mystery. And before we finished or felt that we finished an examination of the subject, it would be wise if we just went over the ground again from this angle. That the the mystery had to be made known. Didn't dawn upon anyone's conscious out of the blue. A minister was raised up. And consequently, if you know that. You say, Well, who was the one that was appointed to receive this revelation? And of course, the answer is the Apostle Paul. So while we believe all scripture is given by inspiration of God and profitable. We don't go to Moses or we don't go to even Matthew. To discover that which was a secret hidden in God. A secret hidden away from the generations and only revealed when Paul was a prisoner.

[00:01:47] That seems just common sense. And are very conscious that most of you who are in this chapel this evening will be just sharing with me in something we already delight in and know in order that those who are going to use this tape recording in the days to come will have this, which I think is necessary. You understand it's not possible for me to avoid repeating some things we know in this endeavor to to extend our ministry beyond the confines of this chapel. And I'm sure you will be the first to agree. Now if it will just notice this x 28 for a moment as we read it. You notice that Paul was bitten by a viper. Now, of course, there are some people. They remember with advantages Shakespeare puts into the lips of somebody that they were out over a common and they saw a snake. And if you'd examine the poor little snake, it would have been just a worm. There are worms that are mistaken for snakes, but there was no mistake here. These people in that island, they knew what was going to happen. They waited for him to drop dead suddenly and swell up. So nothing has. The city is a god. We read in the last chapter of Mark 16. They shall take up serpents. And should not harm them. I met people who say they belong to the Pentecostal church. I bet you see that sort of test.

[00:03:27] Has even been put into practice in America as a set over there that more than once have ventured their faith and taken up a serpent and died as a result. But he is a man who has got the power. And then not only so. There were those who were sick and again, without being unkind to our Pentecostal friends. Publius had a father who hasn't got a sort of undiagnosable funny pain somewhere. This word, which we got in Anglo-Saxon. A bloody flux is in the Greek language, dysentery. And the idea that you can play fast and loose with regard to dysentery. And the Apostle Paul healed him like that. So much so that others came and never healed. And then. He says in verse 20, for the Hope of Israel. I am bound with this chain right through to the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Pentecostal gifts were there, the taking up serpents, their healing, and the hope of Israel. But it was getting right to the very end. Would Israel repent? That was the one word Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John the Baptist repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Our Lord's opening Ministry. And here they were. And Paul arrange for a whole day Bible study. There are two sets of Bible studies that I think we would envy. The period covered by 40 days on and off when our Savior went through the scriptures with his disciples before he ascended to sit down at the right hand of the Father.

[00:05:12] 40 days Bible study by the Risen Christ. And then some had the cheek to tell me when that 40 days Bible study was over. The first question they ask was altogether wrong. They wouldn't have been asking about a church. And instead of that, they were asking about a kingdom. After 40 days, instruction by the Risen Christ. And then we have this all day conference with a man like the apostle Paul going through Moses and the prophets from morning till evening. And what was the consequence? Disagreement. And apparently the disagreement was intense. And so we have quoted. A passage of Isaiah Chapter six. And this chapter is a key point. The first occurrence, of course, is naturally in Isaiah itself. And it says at the end of that chapter there'll be a great forsaking. Is a bitch of the land. But I shall return again. But there's a great forsaking. But after that was said, there was a great forsaking in the land and that people were taken a captive. And a prisoner. Was used by God to use the word mystery for the first time in the Old Testament scriptures. And that prisoner was not Paul. It was Daniel. Will be moving to the New Testament. It's our savior who quotes Isaiah six. And then introduces the word mystery. So I think we must go there for a moment and see.

[00:06:49] This is so Matthew the 13th chapter, just to refresh your memory. You remember that? The disciples asked him, Why do you speak in parables? And he said verse 14, and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says and then quotes that prophecy. And when that was quoted. These people's eyes were shut. Their hearts were hardened. And instead of, say, the kingdom, he said, the secrets of the kingdom or a different aspect altogether. Well, now there comes another one at the end of the Acts of the Apostles. Paul says, Well, spake the Holy Ghost unto our fathers and re quotes Isaiah six. And when you finish the quoting of that, he said, be it known, therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews not merely departed. If you read the original. The Jews were dismissed. They didn't just walk out. They were dismissed. And the word is also used in the New Testament of a divorcement process. Here were Israel divorced for the time being. It had fallen upon them. They were gone as a nation before God. They became low ami not my people. And this man, the prisoner, said, the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they will hear it. Andy was there receiving them and preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

[00:08:30] But no reference now to Moses and the prophets. For this reason, not because he didn't believe the Old Testament, but because God had given him something that the Old Testament didn't contain. A mystery, a secret which he says was hidden in God in Ephesians three and was hid away from the generations. In Colossians one. So you see, this is a very critical passage. All the teaching that we are associated with in this chapel and in our publications stems from this chapter, this chapter not because it contains the truth in this chapter, but it is a dividing line. We come here to the end of the presentation of the Kingdom teaching and the hope of Israel. And if God hadn't any more to say to us, we should be out into a blank for the Old Testament doesn't tell you what God would do if Israel failed. They were the chosen people. They were to be a priest and kingdom and they were going to be the teachers for the rest of the world. And here they're dismissed. But God wasn't taken by surprise. Before the foundation of the world. This was in his mind. And now the critical moment had come to give it to his servant, Paul. Well, I think we know all that. But I'm asking you just to let me go over it again for the sake of clarity and the completion of this series of studies, will you notice the first line on this chart? I'm referring to Chapter 26.

[00:10:05] When I've got the word, both these things are would appear. Chapter 26 If you say, well, why didn't you put. Chapter 26 Well, you try to do one of these charts and you fight off. Your trouble is you haven't got room. Chapter 26 Paul is making his defense. He was stricken down on the road to Damascus. And in verse 14, he said, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus. Whom thou persecutest? Now you can read that in the ninth chapter of the acts, but you do not read what the Lord said to him. In the ninth chapter of the acts, you read what the Lord said to Antonius. Go and tell him this. And he didn't tell, as these words he said, is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the children of Israel and kings and so on. See? Bear my name to the Gentiles, too. But this was not said. Now, he says the time has come for me to make known. That I had a second visit from the Lord. But he told him he would. He said he would appear again unto you. Let's read it.

[00:11:24] But rise and stand up on my feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness. Now notice both. You don't need to be told that both means at least to do you. I've appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and a witness. Both of two things. Both of these things which thou hast seen. That covers the early ministry and of those things in which I will appear unto thee. Surely the will appear unto thee means another appearing. I have appeared unto thee to give you one ministry. And then I will appear unto you again. Or let him go on and explain a bit further. Delivering thee from the people. That's the people of Israel and from the Gentiles. Was the Apostle Paul delivered from the Gentiles on the road to Damascus. Gentiles weren't in it. No Gentiles were persecuting Paul. No Gentiles bothered not in at nine, but he delivered from the Gentiles. Now he's in their hands. He's a prisoner going on the way to Rome. But he says I'm the one that's looking after you. This is different from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee to whom? To the Gentiles. Now there are some manuscripts that leave the word now out and those who are very antagonistic to our teaching. They rejoice to think that there are some manuscripts where the word now is out. And they drew my attention to it and said that I was not quite acting straight forward.

[00:12:58] And then I had to do this. I said, Excuse me, won't you? But if you got your companion Bible, you'll find Dr. Bullinger draws attention to it long before I have

anything to be called over the columns. And it's there. We acknowledge that some manuscripts read that. Leave out the word now. But I'm going to ask you, supposing I leave out the word now? And I read that this. Delivering thee from the people of whom the Gentiles unto whom I send thee. Does that mean and to whom I send thee? A long while ago. Will he say, That's not grammar? Of course it isn't. The word now simply intensifies the fact that it was present. But I send the is present. So you give him a present of the word. Now, if they don't want it and it's still I said him now when he's speaking to him, not when he first called him. Now look at the next word. It's a summary of the great teaching of Ephesians and Colossians. To open their eyes. That was the prayer of the apostle. To turn them from darkness to light. That is similar to having delivered us from the authority of darkness. And from the power of Satan unto God, the Prince of the power of the air. But they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those them which are sanctified by faith.

[00:14:18] That is in me. So you see, right at the end of the acts, Paul reveals that he had a second visit from the Lord with a new message to give. And he says, Now I can make it known. The reference to his early ministry. If you'll notice, the reference on the chart is chapter 22:15. You'll see he's referring to his early ministry by those words. 22:15. It's Ananias speaking to him. So he goes back to the ninth chapter of the acts. The verse 12 one Engineers a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there. Notice the law and the Jews. This man is not said to be a man who is bubbling over with the grace of God to the Gentiles. He is a devout man with a good report among the Jews. And this Ananias comes and says to him. That is all. Receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him and he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee. And the God of our fathers is also a limited word. It would never be used with regard to a Gentile, not by a Jew. Think of Peter. The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know the will, His will, and see that just one and should is hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

[00:15:52] Well, Paul said that was my. That was my first calling. I was told by Ananias in the recorded in the Acts nine and here in chapter 22 that I was to be a witness of what I'd seen and heard. Now he says, I've got to be a witness of something else. So there's the two ministries involved in the Acts 26 And as a check on this scene and heard, you might like to look back to the other reference which is given there, Chapter

four, two and 20. Chapter four, two and 20. Now in chapter four verse to be grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. And in verse 20, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So the apostle was preaching the things which he had seen and heard. He said, I have seen the Lord Jesus on the same level as Peter or the same level as Matthias. I have the qualification of an apostle. For I have seen the Lord Jesus and I have heard his voice. That's my early ministry. So you see, it was a definite term. Now he says, I've got this other laid upon me and I've come to come to Rome and it will be there, made manifest in chapter 20, verses 20 and 21. We have these words. He's speaking to the church that belonged to the two in Ephesus.

[00:17:23] They had been called to meet him at the estuary of a river rather than going right up the river and back again. If you're acquainted with the map, you will see that it could be very much like somebody alighting at Southend on Sea. And of arrange that somebody should come out from London and meet them at the pier so that he wouldn't take all the bother of going up to London and back again. He is off on his way, you see. So he called the elders to meet him at Miletus at Ephesus and asked them to meet him there. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Now, when a person starts talking about his own faithfulness and the way in which he's taught people well, sometimes you say, Oh, well, that's rather bad. But there may come occasions, friends, when it's very essential that a congregation should be reminded of the ministry that they've had, especially if it's coming to an end. As suppose you have to stand up here one day and say, well, for some many years. Dear friends, you know all this? I've been here and so on. You begin to look at when I say. What's happening? What's happening? And I've been called to be the dean of some Oh, goodness me or the other, you see, he say, what, are you going away going to leave us? Well, this is what the apostle said.

[00:18:43] He wasn't going to be the dean of anything like that. But he said, serving the Lord with all humility of mind. And I think that's a lovely thing for a man to be so truly humble that he doesn't mind saying he is. You didn't want saying that he served the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. And someone said, You know this The Apostle was a man who took notice of all sorts of

things, and sometimes he incorporated them in his teaching. He'd been on board a ship, and he says, I've reached up nothing. He used a term he borrows from the Greek sports and he says, I'll restart nothing. I've spelled it out. That was profitable to you. But they've showed you. They'll talk to you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But now or and now he is another one of these changes. Now, bring you to that present moment when Acts 20 was becoming history. I'm telling you something, he says. I'm bringing. I'm bringing something to your notice that's new.

[00:19:53] Behold, I go bound if I stop there. You might imagine if he'd stopped there that he'd got the shackles on his wrists already. Or he said no, they'll put them on presently, but I'm bound in the spirit already. I've already anticipated it. I'm already the Lord's prisoner without shackles on the wrists or the ankles. I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. I don't know them all in detail. Perhaps that was a kindness on the part of the Lord. You remember our savior when he spoke to his apostles? He said, The son of man goes up to Jerusalem. They're going to hand him over to the Gentiles. He's going to be scourged. They're going to mock him. Oh, he knew it all. He knew it all. And the apostle said, I don't know what I'm in for, but I do know that this is true. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions are awaiting me. And if you look at the next chapter, you'll see how they did it. It says verse ten. And as we tarried there many days there came down from Judea, a certain prophet named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, 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 openeth his girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

[00:21:17] So that's how he was told in every city. They were telling him. A great test for a man's faith to be told by his friends and those who loved him all. Don't go. Don't go. You know, our savior had that when Peter said, Oh, it cannot be. And our savior said, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou savior of the things of men and not of God. But Paul didn't say that to these people. But you see, it says here, when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Don't go. Then Paul answered What we need a weeping to break my heart for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. All they said, Well, what's the good of us arguing when He would not be persuaded, they said the will

of the Lord be done. Well, it was the will of the Lord all the time. So sometimes you have to say, Lord, save me from your friends. Well, let's put the members up against. Now, coming back to chapter 20, save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide or await me. But none of these things move me. And the one thing about the apostle Paul was a man who could be moved.

[00:22:37] He could be moved. This is who suffers an eye burn. Not boy. He was a man of feeling. You could be conscious of it, but he said none of these things move me. Why neither count on my life, dear unto myself. Why? So that I might finish my course with joy. Two Timothy Chapter four. I have finished my course, he says. I've got it in front of me. This is where he started on a new ministry. He says the old is finished. You'll see my face no more. You'll tell. You're saying this chapter. I'm now looking to a ministry which won't allow me to travel miles and speak at different places. I shall be a bon, a bon man, or should be in prison. But the one thing I pray for is that I may finish my course with joy. And two Timothy four says, I have finished my course. In Philippians he said, if I had the option, I would. I would depart. He said the time for my departure has come. In Philippians it says, If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice. He says I'm now about to be offered all that he said he was willing for. All comes true in that last chapter of his last epistle. So you see, we've got evidence in the book that he was conscious that he'd had a cold. He'd finished one ministry. He now starts a second one.

[00:24:06] And so he says that I may finish my course with joy and the ministry and the word. The word finish must be supplied as being implied and finish. The ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, not merely to preach the Gospel of the grace of God, but to testify. I think the reason is this and there's an article in one of the back numbers of the Brian I've got such a lovely memory. I don't know where, but it says somewhere in one of the articles in the Brian that every change of dispensation that you find in the New Testament is introduced by someone who is a witness. A witness. A witness. John the Baptist came for a witness. Those were the beginning of the acts of the Apostles. You shall be witnesses unto me. It's not merely somebody have an idea in their mind and thought they'd talk about it. It was given to them as a testimony. So he says to bear this testimony. And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God shall see my face no more. And that was one thing to grieve the most. Verse 36. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them

all. Can't you see? And they all whipsaw. And fell on Paul's neck and kissed him. Sorry most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more.

[00:25:34] Finish. From that moment he enters into. The beginnings of it, of course, is going up to Jerusalem. The accusation that he'd taken Greeks into the temple, put him into the hands of the Romans. He had two years prison in Caesarea. Then he appealed unto Caesar, and he goes and he has to two years prison at Rome and in that prison and at that time. He had this most marvelous revelation given to him. And so we are insisting that in the acts of the apostles, we have a two fold ministry of the Apostle Paul. One while he was a free man and one after he became the prisoner. Now that. Ministry was not merely spoken, although a lot of passages their friends, you could look them all up, of course, if you wish, but time will not permit. This ministry is not merely a spoken ministry. Thanks. Be unto God. It has been recorded not on a tape, but it's been recorded so that we can almost hear the words of the Apostle speaks. We can read the letters that he wrote. And those vessels are our priceless heritage and they fall into two groups. There are seven epistles written while Paul was a free man travelling from place to place. The last epistle of the series is the Epistle to the Romans, and he says that I want you to help me on the way to Spain. So he was still travelling when he wrote his last epistle of the series, whether he got to Spain or not.

[00:27:17] Nobody could be perfectly certain. Some of the early fathers say he did. And there is a record that the very earliest possible time you can go back. There was a Christian witness in Spain. It doesn't matter. It shows you that when you wrote the epistle to the Romans, he was still planning his course. He said, When I come to you, he said of the Romans, When I come to you, I know I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. I think he said more than he knew, because he did when he did get to Rome, he had a revelation of the fullness and the blessing of the Gospel of Christ that even eclipsed what he'd already told them. And show this man he could say, none of these things move me. The one thing that matters, that I've been given this glorious opportunity as a mouthpiece for the risen Christ. And whether it's prison or whether it's a free man, whether I'm here or there, is subsidiary. Tune. Every one of us can take that stand. But it's a very blessed attitude of heart and mind to get anywhere near to it. And so we look at these epistles. All I know, you know all this beforehand, but I have a feeling you're forgetting that you know it all beforehand.

[00:28:31] You're saying, Yes, that's true. Yeah, go on. Give us a bit more. Well, that's so. So now you see, the second part of this chart emphasizes the fact there are a series of epistles which are stamped with the word prison. I don't mean to say on the outside of the epistle there's any stamp like Newgate or Wandsworth or something, but he speaks about it so that you can't miss it. Now then you have Ephesians chapter three. I therefore the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. Well, that's obvious that he's writing a prison epistle. And in chapter four, verse one, he says, I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord. And you notice he changes the title. He says, I'm the prisoner of Christ Jesus. That's what he's giving you, the revelation and the doctrine. Now he says, I'm going to talk about practice. So I changed the name to the Lord. The word Lord comes many times in Ephesians four, five and six, but it only comes once in chapters one, two and three. It's the same person that we are saved by Christ and we serve the Lord. So he says, I'm the prisoner of Jesus Christ to give you the revelation and I'm the prisoner of the law to ask you to walk worthy of the calling. And so we've got that. And then I have a little feeling that he wasn't quite so deadly serious. He says in the last chapter of Ephesians that he conducted an embassy and with a chain.

[00:30:01] Our version, says verse 20 or verse 19. And for me. Pray for me. That utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel. For which I am an ambassador in bonds, and the words are I conduct an embassy in a chain and are almost feel somehow is having a little poke. He says all these all these dignities have all got their chains of office. Even at this day, the Lord Mayor has his chain. He says, I've got mine. And you know, when you can poke a little bit of fun, that a deadly thing like that, it hasn't got you. You've got it. And you'll find that it's true. For when he wrote his last epistle. He plays with it again. He said, I'm suffering now as a malefactor, as an evildoer, even unto bonds. He says the word of God is not bound like that, you see, That's how he put it. He says, I've got a chain wide enough. But he says, That doesn't trouble me. I'm the bond slave of Jesus Christ. Chain or no chain, This is merely an external symbol of it. So there we have three references that show you without the possibility of demur, that Ephesians is a prison epistle. All right. What about Philippians? He says, My bonds in Christ are known in all the palace among the Roman guard.

[00:31:24] I'm there for the defense of the gospel. My bonds and the guided chapter one, verse 11. My bonds for Christ. But he's only said it twice. But you need not keep

saying that he more than twice to show that he was a Bond man, especially when he speaks about Caesars Palace and the Roman guard. 0313. Chapter four, Verse 22. He speaks of the Saints of Caesar's household, and he was therefore associated with Caesar's household. He was there in his prison. Well in Colossians. He repeats in a measure what he'd said before, that he was a prisoner. He says he now has these bonds for the mystery of Christ. He speaks about someone as a fellow prisoner. Well, you can't have a fellow prisoner if you're not a prisoner yourself. And then he says at the end, just a little bit pathetically perhaps, remember my bonds. Come on is given the thought. He says, you know, this man was in what they call military custody. It's known that the Romans had different forms of custody and punishment, and he was given military custody because he hadn't offended anything against the laws of Rome. He was only a prisoner because the Jews had handed him over. And you notice the attitude of. Galli Gallio in the Acts of the Apostles. He was a Roman. When they came up and all he cared for none of these things. He was a Roman who's going to worry their heads about all your little ideas about breaking the Sabbath and eating this and that? Oh, you drove them to the from the judgment seat, see? And so he says.

[00:33:13] And remember my bonds. And the custody head was that there was a guard always with him. It was changed. Of course, the soldiers had relief, but they were always chained to his wrist and to the wrist of the the soldier on guard. So when you pick up a pen to just write, as he said, in all my Epistles, I write like this. You can almost feel the chain hitting the corner of the table. Says, Remember my bone? Remember Malpon? Title. And then we have. Demon. A precious little epistle very often neglected. Showing how wonderful personally their personal the faith the man possessed. Entered into his relationships. He wrote to Filemon, whose church was in his house. Pleading for a runaway slave and a runaway slave. Could be crucified in those days. The runaway slave had found the Apostle Paul, or rather been found by him. And he became a believer. And now he says, I could I could ask you. He said, I could demand of you. You know what you owe me for Fatima, but I would rather beseech you, for love's sake. If he owes you anything, put it down to my account. I will repay. But of course, if anyone could do nothing of the kind. He said you sent him away.

[00:34:51] Thatrillioneceived him back as a brother. It's a wonderful little epistle to study in many, many ways, but it's a prison epistle, and it comes in that series. Well, did you know the last epistle he wrote? The second epistle to Timothy was when he was back

again, as far as we can put all the history together by the testimony of antiquity and the books in the Bible. He he was he was given release. He was expecting it. When he wrote to the Philippians. He was expecting it when he wrote to Philemon. We haven't looked at 41. I think that means to say I ought to have gone to it. Will you just look at Philemon That comes immediately for the Epistle to the Hebrews? He says, verse 21. Having confidence in my obedience. I wrote unto thee knowing that thou would also do more than I say. But with all, prepare me also a lodging. For. I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. So here's Paul, the prisoner, verse one, asking for leave to prayer to prepare him a lodging. Well, he said, Does that mean he was expecting to be released? What does it mean? But it just must mean that. And when you wrote to the Philippines, he said, I believe this is going to turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ and my expectation. Well, now the story is that he was re-apprehended on a new charge.

[00:36:29] So the cat and mouse business is. And one of the reasons is this, that in between just at that very time that he was liberated and the time it was taken back, Nero had done that deadly thing. And part of Rome was burned. And in order to have a scapegoat, the Christians were rounded up and they were set alight as blazing torches themselves and tortured terribly. And there was no longer now to be a Roman. As the apostle Paul was and get justice. The anger of the people in the mob were now to be satisfied against the Christians. And Paul says, oh, this time is finished. I know. But it's good to know that he says, I have finished my course. Chapter four two Timothy. He says in verse six, for I am now ready. I'm now ready to be offered. And the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. Nero might have thought he'd finished him. According to tradition, Paul could not be crucified. Isn't it wonderful? Paul could not descend so low as his Savior and Lord as a Roman citizen. He could not be crucified. He would be beheaded. Be kind, Whitney. It could be beheaded. That was dignified. He was led out and beheaded. That is. I'm ready. And this is. I finished. Nero thinks when he leads me out there to be beheaded is stopping me.

[00:38:14] He is not stopping me. I've stopped already. I finished. And Charlie says, picking it up again. Verse 16 at my first defense or answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me. Always think those words are a good illustration of trying to be

extraordinarily literal. In your translation, you try to translate into another language. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and you have a little sympathy with people who try to translate the New Testament into idiomatic English. Is it not withstanding the Lord stood with me. He can't do it, you see, because it make nonsense of it. All right? That by me the preaching might be fully known, not half known, not three quarters finished. Fully known. And that all the Gentiles might hear. And then he says in verse 18, The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Then. And there is sufficient interest outside of his own self to send salutations to Prisca and Aquila. And the household discovers and speaks of Erastus and Trophimus and all these others. There's also a bearish possibility I wouldn't I wouldn't say I know this is true, but there are a good many odds and ends of early history to make you wonder.

[00:39:57] I suppose at school we all sort of rather felt a little bit of interest. In the captive Brittany, who was taken to Rome and was gave such an exhibition of his independence and freedom. He was about the only captive who was ever set free and allowed to live without being executed. But his wife was a Christian. His wife was a Christian. And Claudius named his son Britannicus, because Britain at that very time had become a colony of Rome. Everybody was talking about Britain and the Sun, and Claudius was named Britannicus. And Paul knew all about him. He was there. Now the the daughter of. This body was taken captive and brought to Rome. Her name was Claudia. And she married a Roman named Pudens. Now, that's history. Now I'm going to read this verse, do the diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greets thee and Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. That doesn't prove anything because of the common names. But isn't it a little bit of interest to see that a bare possibility that the first church in Rome met in the house of a British princess who was taken captive there at that very time? And she had a daughter named Claudia, who married a soldier whose name has been left here in this country in stone. His name is Pudens. Well, what's it matter whether it's true or not? It's one of those things we can just allow ourselves a little bit of license.

[00:41:44] Let's thank God that there are names of those who were born in these islands that are in the Book of Life, whether they're in Paul's epistle or not. Well, now, if you look at the bottom of this chart, you will see that the seven epistles written by Paul after he became a prisoner, five of them are prison epistles. Two of them were written in

the interval when he was set free and he went round to the churches and stirred up Timothy and Titus with regard to the ministry. Let's look at them as a little cluster, shall we, before we bring this study to a close. In Ephesians, the authorized version says the fellowship of this Mystery Ephesians three nine. But the better text reads the dispensation of this mystery. And I think most of you know that the change in the word is only like the letters at the front. The word dispensation is *oikonomia* and the word fellowship is *Koinonia* k i k. Have you ever written things back or would I have any? Many times you ask some of the friends that have to see to it. Then we have in Philippians a changeover. It's not the hope of the calling, but it's the prize of the high calling. And he says, I strive and I press. Well, then if you notice the same letters, letter A is the Ephesians, letter B is Philippians. If you come down to Colossians, that's the dispensation of the mystery again, in chapter one entrusted to Paul the Prisoner and then second Timothy, not the prize, but the crown.

[00:43:19] And he says, Strive and I have finished my course. He says, in in Philippians I press toward the mark. He says, I finished. And then we have. In the middle. Suleiman, an epitome of a gentile state and a piece of witness to grace. And here we have one, Timothy and Titus, which speak of the bishops and deacons who are mentioned in Philippians. Philippians speaks of the bishops and deacons because Philippians is dealing with service all the way through. It doesn't really address the Saints, which are at Philippi, but were the bishops and deacons. So now we've got a complete set of epistles. And in that complete set of epistles, we have the revelation of the mystery. We have the emphasis upon the terms of salvation, forgiveness, acceptance, access, heavenly places. Before the foundation, there were all what wonders there are. So I felt, what can we do this evening but start our meeting by singing Blessed be our God and Father, who such wondrous love hath shown choosing us in Christ our Savior. Ere the world was overthrown. And what can we do better to bring this meeting to a close this evening? If our hearts have been stirred in any measure to see this wonderful new dispensation, shall we turn and sing together? Hymn number 45 Sing of the great Revelation, The secret now fully made known, wonderful new dispensation of grace abounding alone.