

W385_Two_Fold_Mystery_of_Paul.mp3

[00:00:01] This is a recording made in the chapel of the opened book, and we are dealing this evening with the prison ministry or the twofold ministry of the Apostle Paul. It is our custom at this meeting to read a portion of scripture together. And those of you who are listening to this tape recording, if you care to join us, will you switch off while we read together the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? And there's quite a feature in this chapter of the combination of the very wonderful spiritual and the very homely. I don't know whether any of you realize that the Apostle went on till midnight, till somebody fell asleep. And of course, you don't always get people falling asleep. And if they do, they're not always so revived as they were in those days. But I think you will discover that the apostle Paul usually didn't break faith with folks. And I do hope that nobody who has the temptation to run on a meeting half an hour after the time with everybody sitting on edge and missing their buses, would take the cue from this passage and say, well, Paul did it. Now, I think this is an extraordinary thing. And you will notice, I suppose, with a certain amount of interest that there were some bereans here, Sopater of Berea. He was there, which is interesting because we are going to deal with the twofold Ministry of the Apostle which is revealed in this chapter and that has a bearing upon us.

[00:01:41] We were singing. You remember singing? We were singing 105. You need not turn to it, I'll remind you. It opens with these words now, blest in heavenly places, in Christ at God's right hand, and filled with all his fullness, complete in Him to stand under our churches. You could go to where if the folks stood up to sing that they would not know where to find it in the New Testament. Those words were taken from Paul's prison ministry. And then somebody says to you, and what is the prison ministry? Well, friends, it was the ministry that Paul exercised when he was in prison. So what's that got to do with us? Well, he says in Ephesians chapter three. I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord for you Gentiles. If you have heard of the dispensation, of the grace of God given unto me to you, Ward. How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery. If that's not stating that he had a message and a ministry which was associated with a mystery that nobody had ever heard about, and the only received it after he became the prisoner. What is the use of language at all? So I felt that as we were looking at the acts of the Apostles in this month, I didn't think nothing was going to be recorded. I was

being let off, but they're taping me just as a friend, so somebody will get it and share it with us.

[00:03:12] We looked at the acts of the apostles as a whole and found that we could go through its teaching by observing three cities, Jerusalem at the beginning, Antioch in the middle, Jerusalem and Rome at the end. And the terms that are used are Jews only if you don't know where to find it, you'll find it in the acts of the apostles, those who were scattered abroad. After the the persecution that arose about Stephen went everywhere, preaching the word to none but Jews only. That's a long way through the acts of the apostles. You'll find that then in the middle at Antioch. He still speaks to the Jews, but he said whosoever among you feareth God as well. The Gentiles, he said, are coming in for so it is written. You count yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. Lo We turn to the Gentiles. And then at the end. He rehearses once more with the Jews at Rome for a whole day. The things concerning our saviour and the kingdom of God. And when they were still unrepentant and unbelieving, he quoted Isaiah six for the last time in Scripture and said, The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles. And that's where we come in. We do not belong to a period when we have to say the Jew first. We are not wild olive branches grafted into the olive tree of Israel.

[00:04:40] But there's no olive tree of Israel at the moment for us to be grafted into. We belong to a new company that was never known before, a body in which every member is on absolutely equal terms. Now, all these things are a part of the prison ministry of the Apostle Paul. And alas, although we may not so say God knows what he's doing. The generality of Christian folk have no more knowledge of it. I was going to say that the man in the moon, but he's more up to date, isn't he, today, than even some of the teachings of Scripture. Well, now we're going to try to explore this a little bit. And although you are listening to me before we start, you say, well, I know all about it. Well, we bring out of our treasure. I trust these new and old. And you sit back and be very glad and pray for those who will hear it for the first time. For sometimes it means the opening of a door to blessings that are beyond dreams. But first of all, we just examined this 20th chapter a little bit more closely. We not only observe the little little bit about. He's speaking a long time until somebody falls asleep. That has another little bit there that has often used myself when I've been away from home and meeting after meeting as followed. And you do get to a point when you say, Oh, if I could only have ten minutes to be self.

[00:06:04] And you know what's going to happen. They seem to be putting the hat on and somebody says, are you going out? I said, yes. He said, I'll come with you. I said, You won't. You go back and read Acts 20, verse 54, verse 13 and 14. Or by the time he's looked at that, I've gone. He said, This is what he says. And we went before to ship. They went before the ship and sailed on the Athos. They're intending to take in Paul for So had he appointed minding himself to go afoot. And if you look at the map, there's a piece that sticks out like this and they went right round the coast like that. And he walked 50 miles on his own across that bit and joined them. Permissible human, isn't it? Just for a moment to get a few hours to himself. Well, enough of that. Although there's plenty of that in the Scriptures for God knows our frame. He remembers. We are dust. Now when he reached Miletus in verse 17, If you don't know the geography, let me translate it. The River Thames. London is wonderfully situated as a city, just about, what, 60 miles back from the sea? Especially in the early days when invasion was so easy and possible. So you imagine on the map that Paul has arranged already that the folks in London should go down and meet him at Southend, and then he goes on his way and they go back in the saving time for he was wanting to get to Jerusalem.

[00:07:32] And he starts to speak to them. And this is how he speaks to them. You know, verse 18 from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I had been with you at all seasons serving the Lord with all humility of mind, I always stop there, for I think, A there must be genuinely humble to be able to put down in black and white that he served in humility. So this was a genuine thing. You just said it because it was true. And this has many temptations and tears and which we felt we were the Levite of the Jews and is rehearsing a ministry. I kept back nothing. I've taught you publicly. As you could imagine that by the time he said these words, those who listened to him looked at one another. They said, But what's this mean? Does that mean to say he is leaving us? It did. Friends. He was he was bringing a ministry to a close. But he was starting another one. It wasn't that he was going to retire on a pension. The apostle never did that. He said, verse 22, and now behold, I go bound. This man was the bondslave of Jesus Christ long before any Roman shackles were put on his wrists.

[00:08:48] He said, I go bound in spirit. And I'm ready for it when the actual bondage came. Of course, it made it so much easier. He says, I go. I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. I've got no details. But I do

know this. With the exception that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions are waiting for me. The word abide is to wait. So we knew that he was going to be subjected to bombs. And if you look at Chapter 21, from which you'll see one instance of how they warned him. Verse 11. 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 of Jerusalem bind the man that only this girdle and he shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. So he knew. He was told that. And then they tried to dissuade him. And when he said he was not really ready to go to Jerusalem but to die if needs be for the Lord's sake, they said, Oh, then the will of the Lord be done so, but the will of the Lord all the time. So the Apostle Paul out of his hand, even the attitude of his own brethren who were trying to spare him.

[00:10:08] Well, back again. Back again in verse 23. Verse 24 Now. But none of these things move me. Now that could be lifted out and said the man had no feeling. But the man was a very sensitive man, if you read the story. I think Peter would have would have endured a lot more shocks without turning a hair that the Apostle Paul went through because of a different temperament. But none of these things move me, he said. Not account of my life dear unto myself. And that's the secret. He was already offered. Already willing to be poured out as a drink offering, as he said in the epistle to the Philippians presently. So that I might finish my course with joy. And there's the secret to this man. And here is starting to run. And in the last epistle that he wrote, he said, I have finished my course. Here. He says all that. I might finish my course. Writing to Timothy at the end, he said, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. So that's good to know that somebody not only made a good start, but persisted and came and touched the tape at the end. And not only the finish my course, but he enlarges it. And to finish the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify, the Gospel of the grace of God. Well, those words indicate if they mean anything, anything at all that Paul was saying, I'm bringing one ministry to a conclusion.

[00:11:42] I'm now facing another. My public ministry going from place to place and plotting my journeys here and there are finished. I'm now going to be taken. He was No need to go to Rome. I suppose you remember he said after this, I must see Rome. And the Lord in a vision said to him. Quite right, Paul. After you've been witness for me in this city, you shall go to Rome. But Paul didn't have to bother about paying his expenses. It was the Romans that carried him there and took him there. So that was all

right, wasn't it? Although of course, he was put in prison, but he wasn't put into a jail in the dungeon sense. He was a prisoner in military custody. He broke no law of Rome. It was merely a fanatical Jewish opposition that put him there. And so he had a hired house. The only thing he was shackled continually by the wrist to a Roman century who was there on guard and, of course, was changed. Well, I can't go into the whole of these chapters, but I thought you ought to get the atmosphere of it, you see. And here he says at the finish he runs over, first of all, how he had taught them and kept back nothing. And then at the last he says, I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

[00:12:59] And then he says something else, which is very touching. Yes. Oh. You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities. But he went a stage further and to them that were with me. Not originally a possible label with his own hands to keep himself, but yet to keep some of these other people who couldn't. He says so. So here we have this wonderful apostle. As I said earlier, the only one who had common sense and gumption enough to go and gather some firewood was not the prisoners or the sailors, but it was the Apostle Paul. Gathering firewood. So you see, it doesn't always follow that because you'll believe God and trust his word that you're the ninny of the family, that some people think that's the case. But it doesn't always work out. Of course, present company may be accepted. Of course. I don't know. And I would like to speak about myself. Well, now, just blessed with you at the analysis of this, which you set out on this chart. So this will be a guide to you if you know it and keep it. Got it in your mind as to the way in which underlying personal scriptures, I'm perfectly certain of one thing that the Apostle Paul wouldn't have the remotest idea that he was speaking, or Luke wouldn't have had the remotest idea when he was writing that underneath what he was saying was the most perfect pattern, that that's one of the evidences of inspiration.

[00:14:28] You know, I entertain a nice little idea that when we get to glory, one of my I forget which one of my daughters said she was a tidy mind and she may have changed her mind now once she wanted to see most was David. I said, Yes, that'll be lovely. And I said, You know what? I want to see No, Daddy. I said, I want to see the apostle Paul and ask him if he'd ever seen the structure of the epistle to the Galatians. Will there be a time when he says to be a structure in Galatians? I never said, Let's have a look because I'm moderately certain that he had the remotest idea. When he wrote Galatians, he was writing inspired scripture. He was trying to save that little company

from being desolated by this legalism. Paul already got into it. And then God overruled it to become a word that can come right down the ages, right down to the present time and speak to us. What you see is in chapter, the first verse is he calls the elders to come. And then at the last, he leaves them. Let's look at that Leavetaking. Verse 36. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down. And prayed with them all. And they all went sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more.

[00:15:49] As an aide. You'll see my face no more. This is the end of my public witness. From now on. It's not very long before he's taken prisoner. At Jerusalem. There he is for two years in Caesarea being listened to by this one and that one and the other one one hoping to get money out of him and whatnot until at last he got, so shall I say, fed up. He said, I appeal unto Caesar. And the moment he did that as a Roman, all the magistrates there had to stand back. They couldn't stop him. And a way he had to go. Well, now it says, he says here I have kept back nothing. And the bottom here is I have not jammed. And you remember that he's not. Is calling attention to the character of his witness. And one of the words that he uses there for keeping back nothing is a ship shipping term. And there is an indication in the writings of the Apostle that he was one of those types of persons who picked up words on the way he was going and said, Well, hey, be a good one to use a little bit like I think Shakespeare was listening to everybody and keeping it in his memory till he could use it later on. I've reached up nothing, he said. Like the reef up a sail.

[00:17:06] There is a temptation and he knew it. He wrote to the Corinthians, He said, We have not handled the Word of God deceitfully. We have not corrupted it. And one of the words used there is we haven't watered it down. There is a temptation on the part of some and it's a great one to say, well, don't emphasize this prison ministry of the Apostle Paul and its peculiar thing. You can preach the epistle to the Romans and the Gospel of John and people will give you a hearing and you'll get a fine congregation, but you preach to the half of them away. So what? The apostle and the Scripture urges that a steward is not to be popular or even clever, but faithful. And here we have to be faithful to a trust that we have received. You will notice, too, that he says, I have showed you. He puts that in verse 35. I've showed you all. And the word show, which of which. That's a part Dick in the middle of it, this little green word here is the word that he's used in the first verse of Book of the revelation he sent and showed it. By his angel. By a

series of signs. And the apostle says, I haven't really spoken to you, dear friends. I've shown you I've showed you by a series of signs. And what were they? I labored with the own hands and those who were with me.

[00:18:37] That's a sort of the way in which the doctrine can be demonstrated, isn't it? And the one thing about the apostle Paul, whether you liked him or not, you'd have to agree that his doctrine and his manner of life walked together. He was a man who could write an epistle, and he could write to someone who would know him intimately, like Timothy. And he said, the things which you have heard of me among many witnesses. The sign. See the sign? You do what you have heard and seen in me do. And the God of peace shall be with you. That's a sort of man whose words have power because it's backed by a life that's in harmony. And so we have the emphasis upon this. I have shown you up there teaching. I have taught you. The teaching and the showing, balance one another and go together. Well, our time will not permit us to go into this too intimately because I've got another chapter that I want to refer to. We now pass over chapters 2022 where we find him taken Caesarea. At last he appeals unto Caesar and. It's all over by the time we get to chapter 26 because. In chapter 25, we find that Agrippa comes and in verse 23, on the morrow, when Agrippa was come and buried with great pomp and was entered into the palace of hearing, the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city at Festus Command, Paul was brought forth.

[00:20:20] And Festus, said King Agrippa and all men which are here present with us. You see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. You remember when the thing was brought up earlier, the Roman governor there, he said, if that's a matter of your law, you see to it he was not interested. This is a matter of their law. And there were a lot of fanatics in their view. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I had determined to send him a whom I am no certain thing to write. You see, this was the thing that troubled them. Another person said, What can I put down? I don't know what to say. A charge against him. I must make an accusation. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, especially before thee O King Agrippa, that after examination had I might have someone to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not with order signified a crime laid against him. Well, that's reasonable, isn't it? Well,

now Paul has got his opportunity to speak in the presence of King Agrippa. And this is how he does it.

[00:21:33] Then Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Or I do wish some people have as much decency as King Agrippa, for they won't let you speak for yourself. They'll tell you what you're supposed to teach. And when you look at it, you don't recognize your own child. So let's remember that, too. He says you're permitted to speak for yourself. Then, Paul, you know this. He stretched forth his hand. Luke writes this, Paul lightly, with his eyes, fixing his eyes upon him. Paul Stretching forth his hand. Paul Doing this. He must have been a character, you know. I suppose. And you was fond of him. Only Luke is with me. Stuck to him right to the very end. And Luke is writing this. He says, I think myself happy King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself at this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of, the Jews especially, he says, as I know you're an expert. He doesn't do any harm to tell the truth. If it's a nice little patronizing bit first, you see, especially if you're a prisoner in front of a king and a judge, Then he says, My manner of life from my youth, my nation know. And he says from the beginning, verse five, the most straitest sect of all. Of course that is a figure of speech because you can't be most straightest. But you could criticize Shakespeare when he says the most unkindest cut of all.

[00:22:58] But you write, you're in that predicament, then you'll find it perhaps natural. The most straitest sect of our religion. I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand in of judge for the hope, for the promise made of God unto our fathers. And to which promise our 12 tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come. I'm not going to embark on this theme, but didn't you know that the ten tribes are lost, Paul? No, he said. I never heard about that. He says, my 12 tribes are instantly serving God. And what about James? He wrote to the 12 tribes scattered abroad greeting, and the letter never came back. Said not now. He found them. All right. So we'll leave that part to speak for itself. He says in verse eight, Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? You see, it is a thing. Almost incredible, isn't it? Without the consciousness and knowledge of God and his redeeming love. That was the hopeless condition in which the world was in. The religions and the philosophies gave no hope beyond the grave. And so, as the apostle put it, in one Corinthians 15, if there be no resurrection of the dead, let's eat and drink for tomorrow, we die. Everybody corrected me and said, I've forgotten to say and be merry. It isn't their friends. You can't even be merry.

[00:24:21] You only just eat and drink and tomorrow you die. So he said, I've already thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I shut up folks in prison and I use my voice against them. And I persecuted them in strange cities. And then he tells the story of the road to Damascus. You know how he was on that way, breathing out, threatening and slaughter. And then he was stricken down by a paralyzing light. And he heard a voice. And this man, who was a Pharisee and a Hebrew, said, Lord. Now, you may have meant by the word Lord afterwards writing the New Testament something different. I'm not going to argue that, but I know this, that that man, when he said, Lord, at that moment when he was not a Christian but was a Pharisee, was only one person he had in mind. That was the Jehovah of the Old Testament. That was the name Lord. He looked up to heaven. That's the place where the Lord lives in the Pharisees view. And he heard that voice and he said, Lord. Out. And would you believe it? The voice of heaven said, I am Jesus. Whom thou persecutest? That's a finish of the Apostle Paul as a persecutor and the beginning of the Apostle Paul as the bondslave of Jesus Christ. The whole thing was answered at once.

[00:25:45] He knew why the tomb was empty at Jerusalem. He knew why they were circulating those rumours. He knew why these fishermen had gone to run away, were suddenly standing for the truth. He knew all that for that one fact. I am Jesus. Whom thou persecutest? That rights stand upon my feet. And so now. If you were to ask, say, a Bible quiz. And say to what chapter would you go in the Acts of the Apostles to discover what Christ said to Paul on the road to Damascus? I think a good many of us had fallen into the trap and say, Acts nine. Police shooting. But when you go there, it's what Ananias told Paul. This is where he tells you himself. Not what Ananias came to tell him, but what the Lord said to him. Now let's listen. He said at midday. Okay. I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining round about me and them, which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And the word pricks is just the word an ox goad. And it was used by the farmer in plowing so that a backsliding heifer who was gibing at the Plough would jib right back onto a sharp point. But if it was pulling, it would be a long way away from it.

[00:27:12] So that's what you're doing, Saul. Don't you see? Andrew found his brother Peter. Who found Saul? Do you know Stephen? He said. He stood listening to Stephen, and they were pelted with stones. And he held their clothes. And he saw that name space like an angel. And he had to say to himself, And I am siding with those brutes. And the man who's praying for his murderers, I'm against him. It was worrying this Pharisee. And what did he do? He stifled his conscience, he said to the Sanhedrin. Give me some work to do. And I always think of my old dad who muttered up proverbs terribly. He said, a guilty conscience requires no recreation. And he was true. Paul would have agreed with that. The thing he didn't want was time to think. And they'd all put his finger on it. He said. You, Jimmy, you know already. And this is where it comes to a crisis. And that's nine says As soon as he got that again, you confounded the Jews by proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Don't you see? He was so fully prepared. He knew everything except one thing that the Bible that he loved and studied and knew was all focusing upon that one person. And when he got that, he got the lot. He was a man whose ministry could be described as christocentric. The center of it all.

[00:28:32] The risen ascended. The crucified, Risen ascended Christ. And so he said, here is the. We've got to watch very carefully, verse 16, but rise and stand upon thy feet. I was just looking to see where I'd got the the structure here. You notice in where it says letter E verses 16 to 18. Paul's Commission. Reveal for the first time. Reveal for the first time. And the game in 22 and 23. The first commission restated he's going over the ground, but he's bringing it forward. So here we are again. Now that rise and stand upon my feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make the a minister and a witness. Now look at the word both. The word both. It must mean in the ordinary use of the word. Two things you can't say both if there's only one ministry, if there's only one call. But he said, I'm going to tell you of another one, Paul. I'm making you a minister and a witness. Both of those things which thou hast seen. That's in the past. And of those things in which I will appear unto thee, that is in the future. The past is over, said he said to Paul. The future is now coming very near and becoming the present. Now what about the ministry of the things which thou hast seen? Will you turn just back a page or two to the. 21st chapter.

[00:30:04] I think it is. 22nd chapter, possibly. Yes. This is what Ananias is telling him. Verse 14, and he said, The god of our fathers were hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know 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. That you witness. Paul Go on with that. Now he says, I've stopped. I've got another witness. He says, not only will I have I appear to you once on the road to Damascus, but I've appeared unto you again. He said, I will appear unto thee. And he's done it. He said to Agrippa, He's fulfilled the second time he's visited me again. We don't know how it may have been in secret, but he says so. And he says, I made you a witness of those things which are will appear unto thee. Delivering thee from the people. That's the people of Israel and from the Gentiles. Is he? Paul couldn't be delivered from the Gentiles in Acts nine. Seven Gentiles bothering about Paul in Acts nine. They were out of it. He was a he was a dealing with the people of Israel only. But now he's dealing both with the Roman power that got him as a prisoner and with the antagonism of the Jews. And he said, I'm delivering you from them both. Unto whom now I send thee as to the Gentiles.

[00:31:31] So in the last chapter, the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. And you can tell when a dispensation commences, not because you look into the secrets of God, but you hear God saying to his servant, I am sending you to say that. And that's the beginning of it. All the way through this act, you get those marks. Peter said, You are the children of prophets. It was therefore right that it should be first sent unto you. Save the Children, the Prophets, then in Acts 13 and on the in the synagogue at Antioch. He says to you is the word of this salvation Saint. Whether you are children of Abraham or whether you are whosoever that fear God. And then here at the last chapter 28, Israel dismissed. And the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. You have no right to pick up any part of the Bible and take it to yourself. It must be sent to you. And you realize that you have a book here which deals with a variety of people, all sorts of callings going to be enjoyed in at least three different spheres. There's going to be a renewed earth. There's going to be the heavenly Jerusalem and there's the position of the right hand of God, far above all heavens. And so if you pick and bits and pieces out of everywhere, you get such a muddled idea that you won't know whether what they say coming or going.

[00:32:59] But if you let the Word of God be rightly divided and say who was sent to me as a Gentile? Was Matthew sent to you? Was Peter sent to you? Was James sent to you? There's only one man in the New Testament who is called the Apostle of the Gentiles. Well, that divides up the New Testament, then. So far as I'm concerned. I want a lot. I need it all. But it doesn't all speak about me. It teaches me that he doesn't all

speak about me. I don't put myself into the position of it. Oh, wait. Now, this apostle of the Gentiles, he was working through the acts of the apostles right to the end with the possibility that Israel would repent. And if Israel would repent, the kingdom would be set up and the whole thing would be finished. So will he wrote to the Thessalonians. He shared with them the hope of the second coming of Christ in his own lifetime. He said, We which are alive and remain. Well, that was true at that time because Israel was still on the edge. They might repent. They might accept their savior. And then there came a moment when they went out and they didn't. Well, then he changed his position altogether. So we are thankful for the testimony of Paul, the free man, the apostle to the Gentiles, who lays the great foundation, the doctrinal foundation beneath our feet for all time, which is summed up in the great Epistle to the Romans justification by faith without the works of the law.

[00:34:32] Salvation by grace. Forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ. They are there and there they remain. They don't alter. But the place of Israel in the epistle to the Romans does, for they are no longer first. They are out of it. If they if they believe now, they don't believe that because they happen to be Jews, they believe because they are sinners the same as we. They have no preference. But they did once. When the Jew objected in Romans and said, Well, what advantage is there of being a Jew? He said much every way. There is no advantage of being a Jew just now. It's up sometimes the other way round. But the day will come when they will be first again, when they look upon him, whom they pierced. And this present dispensation has ended and that is picked up again, which has for the time being laid down. And so we have the emphasis upon this fact, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee. I must mention this again, because I don't know who will be listening to this, but there are some who object very much to the teaching that I stand for. And they pounced upon this fact that in some manuscripts the word now.

[00:35:41] Is admitted. Well, you know, that betrays their animus because if I were dealing with some other verse and some other thing, they would say, well, now means the present and I send thee is the present. So whether you have the word now in it or whether you don't, it's present, isn't it? Well, they wanted to make it past it was referring to at nine. The good now only intensifies the present. But if you leave it out, it's still there. You can't say I'm too I in the past and sending you. You can't say that. If I am sending you in the present, it's now. I just mentioned that in case you should feel that

there was insuperable difficulty. Well, that leads us then, to the conclusion of the matter. After he had spoken to the in this way. He says. My early ministry can be summed up like this. Verse 22. Having therefore obtained help of God. I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great saying none other things than that than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. His early ministry. You've only got to start this first chapter of Romans, he says. Paul, a Bond slave of Jesus Christ, separated unto the Gospel of God. Then in brackets, which he had promised before by his holy prophets and the Scriptures. See the very second verse. Or when he sums up the great basis of his gospel that he preached, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

[00:37:15] For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith to faith. As it is written, the just shall live by faith. That's quoting Habakkuk. This man said nothing that was not substantiated and backed by the Old Testament scriptures. But now you turn the page and look at the epistle to the Ephesians chosen in him before the foundation of the world. Never mentioned anywhere else in the whole range of Scripture that any company of believers were ever chosen before the foundation of the world. So you say, Oh, we mustn't be too particular. I'd like to see you when you were sent for by the solicitor to do your Aunt Mary Anne's will read and say, Don't be too particular. What's put in it. This is a will of God. This is picking out your inheritance. And you say, Don't be so particular. This is vital. If you stick here, your eyes will be shut and you won't see it. But if you say never before this moment. But any company ever said to be chosen before the foundation of the world, this is something new. Yes. And then it says they are blessed with all spiritual blessings. All you say no. Now, come now. Every blessing we have throughout the New Testament is spiritual. Yes, I know. But you find it. Find it. You won't discover that expression is used till you get to the epistle.

[00:38:34] To the Ephesians. And then where are they to be enjoyed in heavenly places? Where is there? Where Christ sits at the right hand of God, far above all heavens. There is no passage in scripture outside of these prison ministry of Paul that tell you that that is a possibility for any believer. And then when you've said it all as a shrug of the shoulders, would you say, that's all right, Don't worry. Are not be one single member of the church that will be left out. And your ministry and mine is not so much to be organizing great meetings and running great campaigns, but to be ever ready to speak a word in season to meet this person, that person and the other, and you drop the word. And by the mercy of God, it turns out that you. Have been contacted.

Somebody else that was foreknown before the foundation of the world. If that's not an issue, that's worth doing because you haven't got a spectacle to show to people what can be. And that's what's happened in this very chapel. There are some who come here who have the remotest idea of its teaching. So if somebody just said a word to them, just said a word to them. And okay in some turned on their heel and say heresy. All right. That's all right. I'm in the same box as the Apostle Paul over there.

[00:39:56] And another one says, you know, I've been looking for this half my lifetime. One man came to me many years ago, and I never I'd never seen him. Never met him. He said to me, I've been looking for you for 20 years, and he didn't know I was existed. So I knew what he meant. But he was waiting for this thing and couldn't put it into shape. He'd been buzzed all up by the other teachers he was floundering about in the Sermon on the Mount. He was doing all things like that with one thing He didn't know that Paul's prison ministry was the one that was governing this present interval. And we are living in a period which you could put in brackets like that. Here was the purpose of the ages and prophetic times. Daniel's prophetic times running right out. Christ had come just as Daniel said. In all stops. The clock stops. It's going to be picked up again after the interval of about 2000 years, an interval and carry on in the nations of the earth. All the troubles round about the Iraq and Persia and Palestine are all getting ready to pick up the threads where they left off nearly 2000 years ago when the king of kings was rejected. And we are living in that interval and that interval is coming to its close. I'm no prophet. I don't know when. I only know that we are living near the edge and end of time so far as this calling is concerned.

[00:41:16] And so. We can't help but feel that this little chapel, a tiny spot here on the map. And the radiating of the tape ministry, which has been going on now for these few years, is under the Lord's control and hand. And we feel it's a wonderful responsibility as well as a privilege. And it's calling out the ones and the twos of all these places of the earth who respond to this fact that here is a ministry which is meeting them and was sent to them. Now, when we say that we are not leaving the rest of the scriptures, we need the whole Bible before we can understand any one of the callings, but we don't put ourselves in the whole Bible. I can't understand what he says chosen in him before the foundation of the world. I look at that word foundation. Cantabile and cantabile means to break down and destroy. If you go to your doctor and he speaks about metabolism and catabolism and anabolism what he's telling you about the building up of your body or the

breaking of it down. And yet we get it translated in our Bible foundation. In the Old Testament. It's confounding, not founding. And he goes back to Genesis one, verse two. There's the overthrow of the world. And we were chosen before Genesis one, verse two.

[00:42:35] And now the calling goes back there. All other callings are since the foundation of the world. This one is before. That's the testimony of the Lord's Prisoner. And so in order to round this out as far as I can possibly in this few minutes, I want to read the words of Ephesians chapter three, just a few verses. I'm not going to emulate the apostle and obedient anything. His second name is Eutychus. Ephesians three. For this cause I. Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. That's a challenge, isn't it? And the Apostle Paul knew it because he stops. He doesn't go any further. He began to say something, but he doesn't say it. Have you ever been in that fix? I've never started to speak to somebody on these lines. And you look at the glazed look on their face, it's like, Oh, dear, goodness me. Hey, look. And you have to start here right away. Back. Oh, I don't know how long it takes you to get right through, Matthew. Go. Not into the way of the Gentiles over the not sheep of the house of Israel. Peter's attitude to Cornelius armored Jews is all in the times gone. And he catches his bus and he said, All right, we'll meet again. But we have these baffling things. And the apostle said, for this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, do something, say something. But he says, Oh, I'm assuming that you've heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me.

[00:44:02] To you, Lord. Held it by revelation. He said, I got this by sitting at no man's feet. I received this by revelation. By revelation, he made known unto me the mystery. Now, every other mystery in the Scriptures has got a title to it. This is the mystery par excellence. It's an extraordinary thing that there's only one Alpine club in the world. Did you know that? And that's not Swiss. The Swiss have to have a Swiss Alpine club. Would you believe it? The only Alpine club that has no other name to it is the English one. Because they were there first. See. So this is the mystery without anything to say as to what it is. The mystery. Now, then. As I wrote before in a few words, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the Mystery of Christ. Many people say it's all one and the same. He said, Look, the mystery of Christ has started in Genesis 315, when it says the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. And it's been added to by every writer in the Old Testament and new to this moment. He said, But I've

got a knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which just puts the cap on everybody else's knowledge. And you say, what did he mean by that? Well, look, if you look at the Septuagint version of Psalm eight against that psalm, it says the secrets of the son, the secrets of the son that was written there by some Greek writer in the Septuagint.

[00:45:32] The secrets of the son. And so Paul takes that site and he says one in a certain place testified Now, what is man that is mindful of him that put all things under his feet? But I'll tell you what Paul never says. He never quotes Psalm eight there. He doesn't say all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen founded there. He says Principality and power and throne and dominion. Don't you see what he says? He says, Look, there's not a single writer in the whole Bible who could see that all things under his feet that were under Adam's feet, the sheep and the oxen was a picture of all under his feet, principality and power. He said, Now, I've written that before in chapter one at the end, because people go looking about, they say, Oh, what a pity. As I wrote before, and a few words, Oh, where is it as a lost epistle over all? But he says, I've just written it in this very epistle. I've told you that nobody in the whole Bible has said all things under his feet. Me? He says in Corinthians It's so universally true that the only one who is not under his feet is God himself.

[00:46:36] Now he says, We'll pick that up again, which in other ages was not made known under the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs at the same body partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel. Stop there and you'll be wrong again. You must go right straight on promise in Christ for the Gospel. Whereof I was made a minister. We won't allow Peter in here because Peter had to agree long before her that just as the gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter. So the gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to Paul. And so we could go on this testimony. Writing his last epistle before he died, he wrote to his son, Timothy. He says, Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. So the prison ministry is an essential feature in the doctrine of Scripture. And you may write your books and you may preach your sermons, you may teach for all your work. And if you haven't got that, you've got an unfinished Bible because the epistle to the Colossians I'm still watching the clock rings. The epistle to the Colossians says this. He says, I am now a minister. Verse 24, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions

of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is a church whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you.

[00:48:15] Our version says to fulfill the Word of God. Well, in the next chapter it's the word complete. Ye are complete in him. It's not fulfilling anything, he says. Unless you got the mystery that's entrusted to Paul, the prisoner in your Bible. You haven't got a complete Bible. Now, of course, everybody's got it. It's bound in Morocco and it's got red edges. Oh, yes. But so far as they are concerned, they might as well not have it in print. They don't know it. They haven't heard Fleet Bible. And the complete Bible is when you get all this building up from Adam and Abraham right the way through. And then on the very top, the top stone is placed by the testimony of the Lord's Prisoner. So we'll finish it by reading the next verse. What is it that completes the word of God? Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations. Yeah, we put it the other way around in Ephesians. It was hidden. God. Here says it hidden away from the ages of generations. And wouldn't you believe it? Somebody says he can find it in the Book of Genesis. And you said, Where do you find that? Oh, when Isaac meets Rebecca. Oh, I say, you're supposed to believe the Bible.

[00:49:31] And it tells you it was hid in God and hidden from the generations is not entitled shadow. It was never known until this man received it by revelation. And that's the reason why we are here. And that's the ministry we have to give. It's like a voice crying in the wilderness. But blessed be God. Some even believed John the Baptist, didn't they? Well, we know that some are believing, even though it sounds sometimes preposterous in the eyes of many. So he says. From there. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations and now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known. What is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles? Which is Christ among you, not Christ in you personally, but the fact that Christ is now preached among you Gentiles, irrespective of Israel, is the evidence that something new is afoot. Well, I thought that this would round off our studies that we've been having in the Acts of the Apostles. We looked at it in the large the three great steps. Jerusalem. Antioch. Rome. Peter's Ministry at Pentecost. Paul's ministry at the beginning, laying the doctrinal foundation and Paul's ministry at the end when the door was shut on Israel and the door opened to us and he had a little glimpse of the testimony of the Lord's prisoner. Or if we know it, let's thank God we've had eyes to see

it. If we say we don't see it, the apostle says, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling.