

The Mystery of the Gospel

"We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 "God has chosen to make known... the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27

Jesus Christ lives in us! This is God's glorious mystery, hidden for ages and now revealed to His church through the New Covenant. Imagine what God's people of the Old Covenant would have thought if they had known the Messiah would live in them. This is why the Bible calls the New Covenant a better covenant. To understand this divine mystery, which the apostle Paul called the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19), requires divine revelation. Unless we receive divine revelation that Jesus is the Christ, we cannot be born again. In the same way, without divine revelation we cannot understand the mystery of how Jesus Christ can live in us. "For beyond question, great is the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3:16)."

The cross is at the heart of this mystery. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the triumph of the ages. God's eternal purpose was for His Son to live in fullness in His church, which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus fulfilled His Father's desire by willingly coming to earth to die on the cross for us. Jesus Christ not only gave His life to forgive us from the penalty of sin (Romans 5:8-9); He also gave His life to free us from the power of sin (Romans 6:6-8). Since we were born into sin, God freed us from Satan's dominion and sin's captivity by including us in His Son's death. To do this, God spiritually immersed everyone who is born of the Spirit into Christ's death (Romans 6:3). Thus the mystery of the gospel is also the mystery of the cross. Like two sides of a precious coin, there are two divine facts that compose the mystery of the whole gospel. The first divine fact is "we died in Christ" and the

second is "Christ lives in us." These are the undivided facts of Christ's completed work on the cross. Without the first divine fact, there would be no second. Before God's Holy Son could inhabit us, God had to first remove our unholy nature. Thus God used the death of His only Son to perform a divine heart transplant. When Christ died on the cross, God replaced our sinful heart with His Son's divine heart (Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:11-3:4). God then raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted Him as the eternal King of glory. Thus God incorporated us into His Son's death so that His resurrected Son might live in us (Romans 6:5; Colossians 1:27). Therefore, the whole gospel can be stated as "Christ died for us and included us in His death so He might live in us." Paul personally expressed it this way, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20)."

In another sense, these two divine facts of the gospel form the two sides to the door of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved (John 10:9)." The front of this divine door is "we died in Christ." The other side of the door is "Christ lives in us." Of course, these two spiritual transactions occurred simultaneously at our new birth when by faith we entered into Jesus Christ, who is our door of salvation. The Bible says when we were born again of the Spirit we were spiritually united with Christ in both His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5). Although we may not comprehend this mystery of the gospel when we are initially saved, we must embrace both these divine facts by faith to walk in the gospel of Christ after we are saved. In order to overcome the world and inherit the kingdom of God, we must abide by faith in Christ's death and resurrection. First, we must believe when Christ died we died with Him. Next, we must believe Christ now lives in us. Our glorious redemption in Christ is only limited by our unbelief. For example, what if we believe we died in Christ but we do not believe Christ lives in us? Then Christ's ability to sovereignly

overcome in us is limited by our unbelief. Or, what if we believe Christ lives in us but we do not believe our sinful nature has died with Christ? Then Christ's ability to live His overcoming life in us is still limited by our unbelief. For as long as we continue to believe that sin still has power over us, God will not overrule our free will and unbelief.

We cannot just mentally consent to the facts of the gospel that Christ died and rose again and then expect to be saved. The eyes of our heart must first be enlightened by divine revelation and then we must receive the Son of God as our Lord (Romans 10:9). This is true faith that saves us. In the same way, we cannot just mentally agree with the facts of the gospel that we have died in Christ and then expect the Son of God to live His overcoming life in us. Unless we know in our hearts by divine revelation that our sinful nature has died, we will be stuck in Romans 7:24 crying, "What a wretched man I am! Who will set me free from this sinful nature?" If we don't believe in our spirit that we have died in Christ, we will try to live as though Christ is our life by our natural ability. We will mistake our positive attitude, passionate energy, and personal attributes for Christ's life. This is tragic and grievous since only the Holy Spirit gives life; our natural soul-life has no spiritual power (John 6:63).

Therefore, walking in the power of Christ's resurrection life requires two stepping-stones of faith. We cannot just lightly skip over the first (we died in Christ) and hope to stand firm on the second (Christ lives in us). We cannot count ourselves to be alive in Christ (Romans 6:11) unless we first believe and act on the truth that we have died in Christ (Romans 6:6). This is the mystery and power of the gospel of Christ.

"For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Colossians 3:3-4