

STUDIES IN 1 TIMOTHY

LAW NUMBER EIGHT: "Jesus Christ Is the Great Model of Leadership"

1 Timothy 3:14-16

Key Verse 3:16: "And most certainly great is the mystery of godliness: Who was made visible in the flesh, proved to be right by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

TEXT:

v.14 These things I am writing to you, hoping to come to you quickly;

v.15 but if I am delaying, you may know how it is necessary for men to be conducting themselves in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God, a pillar and support of the truth.

v.16 And most certainly great is the mystery of godliness: Who was made visible in the flesh, proved to be right by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

INTRODUCTION:(All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten:
Uncommon Thoughts on Common Things by Robert Fulghum)

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These are the things I learned:

Share everything.
 Play fair.
 Don't hit people.
 Put things back where you found them.
 Clean up your own mess.
 Don't take things that aren't yours.
 Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
 Wash your hands before you eat.
 Flush.
 Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
 Live a balanced life--learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.
 Take a nap every afternoon.
 When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.
 Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.
 Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup--they all die. So do we.
 And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned--the biggest word of all--LOOK.
 pp. 6-7

And it is still true, no matter how old you are--when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.
 p. 8

(Why America Doesn't Work by Chuck Colson and Jack Eckerd)

These six principles--the value of the worker, walking and talking in the trenches, responsibility and the pursuit of excellence, the value of training, dollars and sense, and working to serve--sound simple enough, but if applied sincerely they can revolutionize the workplace in America.
 p. 174

(Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun by Wess Roberts)

Committed leaders, those with a lust for leadership, a willingness to serve, will, however, be distinguishable by their wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, authority and courage. They will have a human quality and a strong commitment to their cause and to that of those they serve.
p. 25

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks by Steve Brown)

During the American Revolution, a man in civilian clothes rode past a group of soldiers repairing a small defensive barrier. Their leader was shouting instructions at them but making no other attempt to help them. Asked why by the rider, the leader said with great dignity, "Sir, I'm a corporal!"

The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. The job done, he turned to the corporal and said, "If you need some more help, son, call me." With that, the Commander-In-Chief, George Washington, remounted his horse and rode on.
p. 164

In this series of studies, we have been pursuing the theme:

"The Laws of Leadership" - Studies in 1 Timothy.

We are now coming to the final study in Part 1 in this series of studies in looking at LAW #8.

Let's review for just a minute to see where we have come:

LAW #1: A Statement of Goal Is Essential in Leadership

LAW #2: Never Get Over the Privilege of Your Position

LAW #3: To Be a Leader You've Got to Be Willing to
Fight

LAW #4: A Commitment to Leadership Is a Commitment to
Prayer

LAW #5: Leadership Is Primarily a Man's Role

LAW #6: Character Is a Vital Ingredient of Leadership

LAW #7: There Is No Place in Leadership for Dishonest,
Double-Tongued Drunks

LAW #8: Jesus Christ Is the Great Model of Leadership

We come now to a study of:

LAW #8: "Jesus Christ Is the Great Model of Leadership."

I think it would be well for us to reflect on Lock's paraphrase of these 3 verses that we are going to be considering together:

I hope to come to you soon and strengthen your hands by my presence; but in case I should be delayed, I write at once that you may know what is the true Christian life, the true relation of one with another in God's own family, for it is a Church belonging to God Himself, the living source of all life; and its task is to hold up the truth for the whole world to see and to give it a firm support in the lives of its members. And confessedly the secret of a true religious life is very important; for it centres in a personal relation to a Living Person: to one of whom we sing in our hymns that He was--

"In flesh unveiled to mortals' sight,
Kept righteous by the Spirit's might,
While angels watched him from the sky:
His heralds sped from shore to shore,
And men believed, the wide world o'er,
When he in glory passed on high."

pp. 41-42

Chapter 3:16--the final verse of the chapter--is the KEY VERSE to this particular study.

Demarest says:

Here is the old pro at his best. Paul was hoping very much to return to Ephesus for a visit with his young protege, Timothy. His departure, perhaps, had been somewhat hasty, and a lot of things had been left unsaid. But pressures were mounting on Paul, and any certainty of his getting to Ephesus was fading. Fortunately for us, Paul wrote the letter to his young pastor friend--just in case.

p. 190

Lenski says:

Just as Paul writes a personal word to Timothy at the end of the orders about the fanatical teachers in the churches (1:18-20), so at the end of the orders about men and women in the church and about the qualifications for church offices (2:1-3:13) he again writes a personal word to Timothy, (v. 14-16). As 1:18-20 concludes chapter 1, so 3:14-16 concludes chapters 2 and 3. This is so plain that we do not begin the third section of the epistle with v. 14.
p. 604

Guthrie says:

This section marks a pause in the apostle's instructions in order to put them in a right perspective, to give the reason for them, and to give a reminder of the wonder of the Christian revelation which must never be divorced from practical arrangements.
p. 86

Hiebert concurs with this thought when he says:

In concluding this second main division Paul again turns to Timothy with a personal word to him. "These things" has reference to the instructions contained in chapters 2 and 3. In glancing back over these instructions Paul pauses to indicate his purpose in writing them to Timothy (vv. 14, 15), briefly touches on the nature of the church where they are to be observed, and concludes with a majestic summary of the substance of Christian truth (v. 16).
p. 72

Hendriksen points out:

Paul now states the reasons for conveying these instructions (2:1-3:13) in writing. They are:

(1) Though I hope to see you soon, I fear that I may be delayed.

(2) Yet, the matter permits no delay, for it concerns God's house.

These things I am writing to you though I am hoping to come to you shortly.

p. 136

Lock puts our present passage in perspective when he says:

This section primarily gives the reason for the regulations in the preceding chapters, especially cc. 2 and 3; but it also leads on to the warning against false teaching and the advice about Timothy's teaching which follows. It thus becomes the very heart of the Epistle; it should be compared with similar doctrinal conclusions in 1:15, 2:3-5, 6:13-16; Tit 2:12-14, 3:5-7. But this goes deeper than all in its picture of the Incarnate and Glorified Christ as the centre of the true life of the whole world, cf. 2 Ti 2:8. It is the poetic expression of Gal 2:20.
p. 42

v.14 These things I am writing to you, hoping to come to you quickly;

"THESE THINGS" point back to the qualifications that he has been writing about in verses 1-13.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

If Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to pastor the church (cf. 1:3), he also hoped to rejoin Timothy there soon. In the meantime, in case of delay, Paul wanted the Ephesian pastor and congregation to have these instructions in hand. "Instructions" no doubt refer to what has come before as well as the exhortations to follow.

Lenski says:

If v. 14-16 conclude 2:1-3:13, "these things" = those mentioned in 2:1-3:13 and not those written in the entire letter, not those stated in the two preceding parts, and by no means those yet to be discussed in the part that follows 4:1, etc. Paul is giving these things to Timothy in writing because, while he is hoping to come shortly (4:13), he rather expects (v. 15) to be slow.
pp. 604-5

Barnes comments:

That is, he hoped to come there to give instructions personally, or to finish, himself, the work which he had commenced in Ephesus, and which had been interrupted by his being driven so unexpectedly away.
p. 150

Lange says:

These things write I unto thee. The Apostle does not mean here the whole Epistle, but only the admonitions which he has given in chaps. ii. and iii. Probably, before he parted from Timothy, he had left behind for him a general direction, but not special rules for each individual case.
p. 44

2 John 12

Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.

v.15 but if I am delaying, you may know how it is necessary for men to be conducting themselves in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God, a pillar and support of the truth.

"BUT" forms the contrast to the previous wish of the apostle in coming quickly.

"IF I AM DELAYING."

This could be a real possibility in the apostle's schedule.

"YOU MAY KNOW HOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES."

The words "IT IS NECESSARY" are found back in:

chapter 3:2:

"It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach (give no grounds for accusation), one wife's husband, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,

Paul, in these previous 13 verses, has carefully outlined what is "NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES" acceptably in the realm of leadership.

Barclay says:

Here in one phrase is the whole reason why the Pastoral Epistles were written; they were written to tell men how to behave within the Church. The word for to behave is anastrephesthai; it describes what we would call a man's walk and conversation. It describes his whole life and character; but it specially describes him in his relationships with other people. As it has been said, the word in itself lays it down that a Christian Church member's personal character must be excellent and that his personal relationships with other people should be a true fellowship.

Within the Church a man should be in fellowship with God, and in fellowship with his fellow men. A Church is a body of people who are friends with God and friends with each other.

p. 101

J. Vernon McGee says:

I have selected this as the key verse of this epistle because 1 Timothy is a book about church order. While he is away Paul writes, "I've written this to you so you will know how to act in the house of God."

p. 445

Barnes says:

Paul appears to have been uncertain how long circumstances would require him to be absent. He expected to return, but it was possible that his hope of returning soon would be disappointed.

p. 150

Hiebert says:

This possibility of delay induced him to write out these instructions in order that "thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God."

p. 72

"BUT IF I AM DELAYING, YOU MAY KNOW HOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN THE HOUSE OF GOD."

This takes us back to chapter 3:5:

For if a man does not know how to preside over his own house, how shall he take care of God's assembly?

This is not a reference to THE PLACE but to THE PEOPLE.

Barclay says:

First and foremost the church must be a family. In a despatch written after one of his great naval victories, Nelson ascribed his victory to the fact that he "had the happiness to command a band of brothers." Unless a Church is a band of brothers it is not a true Church at all. Love of God can only exist where brotherly love exists.
p. 101

Wiersbe says:

God's church is a family, so "household" might be a better translation. One of Paul's favorite words is "brethren" (see 4:6). When a sinner believes in Jesus Christ as Saviour, he immediately is born again into God's family (John 1:11-13; 1 Peter 1:22-25). Paul advised young Timothy to treat the members of the local church as he would treat the members of his own family.
p. 46

Guthrie agrees with this:

The idea of the church as a household has already been introduced in verse 5. The house of God is defined precisely as the church of the living God, which is clearly no material building but a spiritual assembly. The image is a favourite one in Pauline thought. The absence of the article before ekklesia in the Greek (as in verse 5) suggests that the local community is again primarily in mind, yet conceived of as part of a larger whole.
p. 88

Hiebert points out:

"The house of God" does not mean a church building, a meaning which it never has in the New Testament, but rather the members of the church themselves who compose God's house, since He indwells the Church. The reference may be either to the Church Universal or to the local church.
p. 72

Hendriksen says:

Believers are God's house or sanctuary (I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16) because God dwells in them.
p. 136

Barnes also goes along with this position by saying:

This does not mean in a place of public worship, nor does it refer to propriety of deportment there. It refers rather to the church as a body of believers, and to intercourse with them. The church is called the "house of God," because it is that in which he dwells. Formerly, his peculiar residence was in the temple at Jerusalem; now that the temple is destroyed, it is the church of Christ, among his people.
pp. 150-51

CHURCH ETIQUETTE

. . . worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
I Chronicles 16:29

The apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy, "These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:14, 15). He was setting forth the qualifications for bishops and deacons so that the affairs of the church would be carried out in an orderly manner. When he used the phrase "house of God," he was of course referring to the local assembly, not to a hall or a building. Although the passage relates primarily to the "living stones" which comprise the body of Christ, I believe we can safely say that our conduct in the building itself is also important. The church sanctuary is a special place that is set aside for the worship of God, and therefore it should not be desecrated by careless conduct. Reverence is a vital part of true worship.

In many services it is common to hear the hum of whispering and to observe people "doodling" with a pencil on the bulletin or trimming their fingernails. Instead of engaging in silent meditation and prayer for the pastor and for those around them, they do a great deal of rustling and stirring. Latecomers disturb the meeting even more. Beloved, "these things ought not so to be"! If we really believed that Christ is present where "two or three are gathered together" in His name, we would be punctual, reverent, and worshipful. What we get out of a service depends to a great extent upon our preparation for it.

Let's give more serious thought to our behavior in "the house of God."
--M. R. De Haan, M.D.

The quiet hush of reverent hearts
Prepares us for God's Word;
It brings a stillness to our lives
That lets His voice be heard. - D.J.D.

THOT: If you must whisper in church, whisper a prayer!

(From Our Daily Bread, December 20)

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

"BUT IF I AM DELAYING, YOU MAY KNOW HOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LIVING GOD."

Lenski says:

"God living" is the tremendous opposite of dead idols. They are placed in a temple, a house made of dead material. What more can there be? But God is living, his very being is life. His "house" are we ourselves, we the "church," in all our being, as assembled and called to be God's own spiritually. Wonderful and blessed indeed! And here Timothy is appointed to direct how things ought to be "in God's house."
p. 606

Lock says:

Perhaps with semi-conscious contrast to heathen gods; but emphasizing the thought that a God of life can give life and make such intercourse possible, and perhaps the thought that He is alive to punish those who fail to live the true life: so "a contrast with the true God made practically a dead Deity by a lifeless and rigid form of religion."
p. 43

Hiebert says:

This reference to "the living God" gives a pointed contrast to the dead idols enshrined in pagan temples and ministered to by their devotees. But the living God is the author and source of all life; He constantly cares for and guides all in connection with His church.
p. 73

Barclay says:

The word ekklesia literally means a company of people who have been called out. It does not mean that they have been selected or picked out.
p. 102

(You Can Make a Difference by Gary R. Collins)

Captain Timothy Lancaster was at the controls as the aircraft rose slowly over the rolling green hills of southern England and headed in the direction of Malaga. Strapped in their neat rows of seats, many of the passengers on that airliner were eagerly looking forward to relaxing vacations in the warm sun of the Spanish riviera.

But their journey was interrupted.

Silently and without warning, the left windshield in the cockpit popped out. The cabin quickly lost air pressure, oxygen masks dropped from their hiding places above the seats, and Captain Lancaster was pulled out of his loosened seat belt and sucked through the open window. Without hesitation, a member of the cockpit crew grabbed one of the captain's feet--and hung on. An alert cabin attendant dashed to the cockpit, strapped himself tightly into the captain's chair, and firmly grasped the other foot. The copilot took over the controls and headed the plane toward the nearest airport.

As the giant airliner inched gently toward the ground, each minute seemed like an eternity to the fully-conscious pilot dangling over the nose of the aircraft. Meanwhile, shocked passengers sat helplessly in their seats, unable to see the drama unfolding a few yards in front of them.

Next morning, newspapers around the world carried pictures of the pilot sitting in the hospital between his two rescuers, telling reporters that he felt fine and was ready to go back to work. The crew members who saved Timothy Lancaster's life were difference makers who acted instinctively and with great courage.
pp. 35-36

"BUT IF I AM DELAYING, YOU MAY KNOW HOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LIVING GOD, A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH."

First, we learn that it is not the temple of dead idols, but:

"THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LIVING GOD."

1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The CHURCH is:

AN "ASSEMBLY,"

"A PILLAR,"

and A "SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This merges into an architectural image involving the church as a pillar and foundation of the truth.

This is also seen in:

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17,

2 Corinthians 6:16,

Ephesians 2:20-22.

Barclay says:

The church is the pillar of the truth. In Ephesus, to which these letters were written, the word pillar would have a special significance. The greatest glory of Ephesus was the Temple of Diana or Artemis. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28). That temple was one of the seven wonders of the world. One of the features of that temple was its pillars. There were in it one hundred and twenty-seven pillars, every one of them the gift of a king. All of them were made of marble, and some of them were studded with jewels and overlaid with gold. The people of Ephesus knew well how beautiful a thing a pillar could be. It may well be that the idea of the word pillar here is not so much support--that is contained in the word buttress--as display.

Often the statue of a famous man is set on the top of a pillar that it may stand out above all ordinary things and so be clearly seen, even from a distance. The idea here is that the Church's duty is to hold up the truth in such a way that all men can see it. It is the Church's duty to display and to demonstrate the truth.

pp. 102-3

Wiersbe says:

This is an architectural image, and it would mean much to Timothy at Ephesus. For the great temple of Diana had 127 pillars. The word, ground suggests a bulwark or a stay. The local church is built on Jesus Christ the Truth; but the local church is also itself a pillar and bulwark for the truth.

It is likely that the pillar aspect of the church's ministry relates primarily to displaying the truth of the Word, much as a statue is put on a pedestal so all can see it. We must hold "forth the Word of life" so the world can see it (Phil. 2:16). The local church puts Jesus Christ on display in the lives of faithful members.

As a bulwark, the church protects the truth and makes sure it does not fall. . . . When local churches turn away from the truth (1 Tim. 4:1ff) and compromise in their ministry, then the enemy makes progress. Sometimes church leaders must take a militant stand against sin and apostasy.

This does not make them popular, but it does please the Lord.

p. 48

Hiebert says:

"Pillar and ground" indicate the function of the church in relation to the Gospel. It is a "pillar" of the truth in that it holds up and supports it before the world. The church is also the stay and buttress (this is a better rendering than "ground") of God's truth in that it supports and maintains it in opposition to all attacks upon it.
p. 73

Hendriksen says:

Having been called "God's house," we now note that the church is next compared to a pillar and foundation. As the pillar supports the roof, even better (note the climax!) as the foundation supports the entire superstructure, so the church supports the glorious truth of the gospel.
p. 136

Lenski says:

"The living God's church is the pillar, yea more, even the foundation of the truth." We do not translate "a pillar, a foundation" as if there were others; the church is the only one; the absence of the articles stresses the qualitative force of the nouns.
p. 606

Barnes says:

The figure here is evidently taken from architecture, as the use of the word pillar is. The proper meaning of the one expression would be, that truth is supported by the church, as an edifice is by a pillar; of the other, that the truth rests on the church, as a house does on its foundation. It is that which makes it fixed, stable, permanent; that on which it securely stands amidst storms and tempests; that which renders it firm when systems of error are swept away as a house that is built on the sand. . . . The meaning then is, that the stability of the truth on earth is dependent on the church. It is owing to the fact that the church is itself founded on a rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, that no storms of persecution can overthrow it, that the truth is preserved from age to age.
p. 151

J. Vernon McGee says:

"The pillar and ground of the truth." "Pillar" means the stay, the prop, or that which is foundational. What Paul is saying is that the church is the pillar, the bedrock--it is the prop and support of the truth. If the officers do not represent the truth, the church has no foundation, no prop, and it cannot hold up the truth of God. p. 445

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It is a support and bulwark, not the source, of God's truth. His word should not be stretched beyond this.

Barclay goes on to say:

The Church is the buttress of the truth. The buttress is the support of the building. It keeps the building standing four-square and intact. In a world which does not wish to face the truth, the Church holds up the truth for all to see. In a world which would often gladly eliminate unwelcome and unpleasant truth, the Church supports the truth against all who would seek to destroy it. p. 103

(The Body by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

Thus, the orthodox creeds, which flow from Scripture and which have historically been regarded as the fundamentals of the Christian faith, are rooted in absolute and ultimate truth.

In the middle of the darkest night of Pilate's life, Jesus told him, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate had ears, but he did not hear. And so he turned away, asking, "What Is truth?" even as he stood before the truth Himself.

But Pilate is more than a tragic figure of Shakespearian proportions, condemned by history to wash his bloodstained hands forever. For he symbolizes the very mind of man, particularly modern man. You can see Pilate asking his disdainful question in living color any day. Simply turn on your television. p. 164

(The Grace Awakening by Charles R. Swindoll)

James Russell Lowell was a contemporary of William Ernest Henley. They were separated by the Atlantic Ocean geographically and by an even larger distance theologically. Lowell, an American, wrote in his work "The Present Crisis" of a philosophy that was much different from the one in Henley's "Invictus":

Truth forever on the scaffold.
 Wrong forever on the throne--
 Yet that scaffold sways the future, and,
 behind the dim unknown,
 Standeth God within the shadow,
 keeping watch above His Own.

p. 22

The hymn writer expresses it beautifully:

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
 Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
 What more can He say than to you He hath said,
 To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

(From The New Church Hymnal. Copyright - 1976, #320)

The word "SUPPORT" occurs only here in the New Testament and is a reference to "a foundation," or a "mainstay."

"BUT IF I AM DELAYING, YOU MAY KNOW HOW IT IS NECESSARY FOR MEN TO BE CONDUCTING THEMSELVES IN THE HOUSE OF GOD WHICH IS":

1. "THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LIVING GOD,"
2. "A PILLAR,"
3. A "SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH."

"THE TRUTH" refers to the scriptures.

"THE TRUTH" is explained in verse 16. We are going to see the highlights of the life of the One who is the truth in the next verse.

Verse 16 is the KEY VERSE in this particular study of:

LAW #8: "Jesus Christ Is the Great Model of Leadership"

v.16 And most certainly great is the mystery of godliness:
Who was made visible in the flesh, proved to be right by
the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the
nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul had been discussing proper godly conduct in the church--behavior which is in every way consistent with the truth rather than contrary to the sound doctrine (chap. 1:10). In 3:16 he expressed a simple idea which becomes difficult due only to its compactness.

Barclay says:

The great interest of this passage is that here we have a fragment of one of the hymns of the early Church. It is a kind of setting of men's belief in Christ to poetry and to music. It is a hymn in which men sang their creed. We cannot look in poetry and in a hymn for the precision of statement for which we would look in a creed; but we must try to see what each line in this hymn is saying to us.
p. 103

Lenski says:

Since they were used in a hymn or a chant in the congregations themselves they express "in an acknowledged way" that "the mystery of godliness," the saving truth which the living God's church upholds as pillar and foundation, "is great."
p. 608

Hendriksen says:

The heart of this gospel and of our whole devotion is
Christ.
p. 137

Lock says:

The main thought, then, is that one who has really lived a perfect human life on earth has a message for the whole world, and lives to give his righteousness to all.
p. 45

Demarest says:

Before Paul goes on with his practical counsel for young Timothy, he bursts forth into a great hymn. So majestic is the verse, Paul introduces it with a phrase which occurs nowhere else in the Bible: "great is the mystery of godliness." What a magnificent way to herald the encapsulation of the Gospel that follows. The lyric quality of the Greek is lost in English translation, but we must try in our imagination to put it to music.
p. 191

Paul begins this verse with a word that only occurs here in the New Testament and I have translated it "AND MOST CERTAINLY."

Guthrie says:

The Christian hymn contained in this verse is introduced by a formula intended to intimate something of the grandeur to follow. The adverb translated without controversy, means 'by common consent'.
p. 89

Barnes says:

And, without controversy. Undeniable, certainly. The object of the apostle is, to say that the truth which he was about to state admitted of no dispute.
p. 152

"AND MOST CERTAINLY GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS."

The apostle says, "Everyone will agree undeniably or by common consent: 'GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.'"

The word "GREAT" in the Greek text is mega. We hear people today talk about business deals that are going to bring "mega-bucks," or it's a "mega-deal."

In other words it's:

TREMENDOUS,

SUBLIME,

IMPORTANT,

BIG.

Anyone who listens to RUSH LIMBAUGH must have the key lingo to be recognized: "Mega-dittos."

"GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This truth about godliness being a mystery means that it was hidden but now is revealed. Further, it is a great, large, important mystery in that it is overwhelmingly large in scope and sublimely important in significance.

Ephesians 5:32

This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Paul says this is without controversy, so sit down and feed upon it. It is not something to be PREACHED but to be PONDERED.

This takes us back to:

1 Timothy 3:9

holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Romans 16:25, 26

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

1 Peter 1:20

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

2 Thessalonians 2:7

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

Just as "the mystery of lawlessness" is centered in a person:

the man of sin;

so the "MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" is centered in a person:

our King and Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hendriksen says:

Great is the church because great is its exalted Head, Jesus Christ. That the expression "the mystery of our devotion" refers to Christ is clear from the fact that whatever follows in verse 16 refers to him. It is he who is great, and this confessedly, that is, thus acknowledged by the church in its daily witness, its preaching, and, as here, its hymns.
p. 137

Hiebert says:

"The mystery of godliness" means the revelation of the truth which godliness embraces and on which it rests.
p. 73

J. Vernon McGee says:

The mystery of godliness is that God in the person of Jesus Christ entered this world in which we live, paid the penalty of sin, and is making men and women godly--that is, with Godlikeness.
p. 445

Hendriksen comments on the word "GODLINESS":

The word used in the original occurs here in a sense slightly different from piety or godliness when this is viewed as a quality or condition of the soul. It is here used in a more active sense. It is piety in action ("operative piety"), godly living (as in 4:7) the conscientious devotion of our lives to God in Christ, the fear of God. . . .

Christ is called the mystery of our devotion, not only because had he not been revealed to us, we would not have known him (a "mystery" being "a revealed secret"), but also because he transcends our comprehension (Eph. 3:18, 19). The more we know him, the better will we be able to discern the mysterious, unfathomable character of his love and of all his attributes.
p. 137

We are going to learn that godliness is not wrapped up in a PERFORMANCE but in a PERSON, even Jesus Christ himself.

"THE MYSTERY" refers to that which is "hidden" or "concealed" and is now "revealed."

There are 6 of these in the New Testament:

1. the MYSTERY of godliness - 1 Timothy 3:16
- 2.the MYSTERY of our union with Christ and His church - Ephesians 5:31, 32
- 3.the MYSTERY of the calling of the Gentiles into the body of Christ - Ephesians 3:4-6
- 4.the MYSTERY of the Jews and the restoration of Israel - Romans 11:25, 26
- 5.the MYSTERY of the rapture of the church - 1 Corinthians 15:51-54
- 6.the MYSTERY of lawlessness - 2 Thessalonians 2:7

Make no mistake about it, this particular mystery is a "GREAT MYSTERY."

"THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" = CHRIST

Colossians 1:27

to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 2:2

that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

"THE MYSTERY" is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:7, 8

but 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;

"GODLINESS" = A GODLY LIFE.

"GODLINESS" is nothing more than Christ manifested in our CONDUCT and CONVERSATION.

"GODLINESS" is the result of a genuine work of God in an individual's life. He is never the same after that. "By their fruits you shall know them."

2 Timothy 3:5

While having an outward form of godliness, they are strangers to its power.

Now the apostle Paul is going to proceed to give us a revelation of the truth--a revelation of this "GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS."

Paul is going to spell out this great truth in 6 STATEMENTS which come from one of the old hymns sung by the early church.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul cited the content of this truth in the form of an excerpt from an early hymn about Christ who is the essence of the mystery.

Hendriksen says:

The six lines of this Hymn in Adoration of the Christ begin with a line about Christ's lowly birth and end with a reference to his glorious ascension. It is clear that if in such a humiliation-to-exaltation hymn the chiastic thought-movement is to be maintained, there must be not less than six lines.

The contrasts are clearly drawn:

Weak flesh (line 1) contrasted with strength-imparting Spirit (line 2)

Heavenly angels (line 3) over against earthly nations (line 4)

The world below (line 5) over against glory above (line 6).

Yet, the beauty of it is this, that though the hymn pictures these regional contrasts, the thought is throughout that of glory and adoration.

p. 139

Lange says:

All this is, in the Apostle's view, the great mystery of godliness--the pillar and ground of the truth, on which the house of God rests unshaken; and it is an apostasy from this in the bosom of the same church to which he looks forward (chap. iv. 1).
p. 46

Lenski summarizes what we are getting ready to look at by saying:

Six terse statements, all with aorist passives, all with the verbs placed emphatically forward, all statements of fact, of alapeia, "truth," reality, that cannot possibly be annulled or even modified. Six tremendous facts, heaped one upon the other, all soteriological, all infinitely blessed. They are like the facts stated in the second article of the Apostolic Creed.
p. 609

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Whether the fragments should be divided into 2 or 3 parts is disputed. Whichever one chooses, the 6 elements of the excerpt are what follows.

The rest of this verse, then, is made up of these 6 VERBS in the aorist passive tense which points to "point action." They are in succession, and of course, as has been mentioned, there are some who believe that they are part of a hymn that was sung.

It is the outline of the life of Christ.

The focus of godliness is Jesus Christ.

He is totally adequate for:

salvation,
sanctification,
and glorification.

Our responsibility as believers is to let God work. If you are making progress and growing in your relationship to Christ, you have to let God work.

He is the Potter, we are the clay. He wants to change us. It is His purpose to make us more and more godly.

It is really a song of praise and adoration of Christ that begins with His lowly birth and ends with His glorious ascension.

In the first step God came down, and in the 6th step God went up.

It will be our purpose in the remainder of this exposition to pursue "THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" in these 6 STEPS that are outlined for us:

STEP #1: THE MISSION ATTEMPTED

We have the statement:

"WHO WAS MADE VISIBLE IN THE FLESH."

When you speak of the subject of godliness, it is simply wrapped up in a person: Jesus Christ. All we have in these remaining phrases is an outline of the life of Christ.

Here the mission is begun. We are at the point of blastoff. Everything in the plan of God is activated for the REDEMPTION and RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIP between a holy God and sinful man.

There are no holds in this countdown because this mission was planned before time began.

Here we are talking about the INCARNATION OF CHRIST. It is God appearing in a body.

Lock says:

Of the human life, as an unveiling of a previous existence, and perhaps including the manifestation after the Resurrection. . . .

p. 45

Guy King says:

His eternal existence is understood. He did not begin at birth, any more than He ended at death; but Bethlehem was the point at which He showed Himself to man. In order to fulfil the blessed mission on which He was to embark, "a body hast Thou prepared Me", Hebrews x. 5; and in that human body He made His appearance amongst us on earth. It was as I John i. 2 describes it, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it . . . that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us". That Form, whose feet trod the ways of Galilee and the waters of Gennesaret, was the very same Form of the Fourth", Daniel iii. 25, that walked in the fire to rescue the three, and is come down now to "deliver" from the fire again. Here, then, in such simple terms is stated the amazing fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

p. 66

J. Vernon McGee says:

Just as God was not visible in the tabernacle in the wilderness, so Jesus Christ was veiled when He tabernacled among us in human flesh. He did not appear to men what He really was; man did not recognize who He was. The One who in the beginning was God, was with God, and who made all things, became a little, helpless baby. He was the image of the invisible God and had all power in heaven and in earth, but down here He took upon Himself human flesh. Because He was not recognized by man, He was treated as an imposter, a usurper, and a blasphemer. He was hated, persecuted, and murdered. God manifest in the flesh was poor, was tempted and tried, and actually shed tears.

p. 445

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks
by Steve Brown)

Two women walked by a department store and saw in the window a creche with shepherds, angels, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. "How about that?" said one of the ladies. "The church is trying to horn in on Christmas too."

Lady, you don't understand. The King owns Christmas. He owns the department store. Even if you don't know it, He owns you. And furthermore, you can't stop Him.
p. 52

(The Birth: The Chronicles of the Door by Gene Edwards)

The carpenter smashed his mallet hard upon the table, picked it up again, and threw it against the wall. Then he turned and kicked at the door until his foot was numb. Circling the room in a dance of madness, the young man came at last to the center of the room, placed his hands over his ears, threw back his head, and screamed at the top of his voice. When he could do that no longer, Joseph dropped to the floor, buried his face in the sawdust, and wept uncontrollably.

He raised his head, and between dry lips, cried, "Mary, Mary, how could you do this? Of all the women upon the face of the earth! You of all people! How could you do this?"

Once more Joseph clenched his fists and, as in some ceremonial cadence, began beating the floor.

"Everything about her said she loved her Lord," the young man anguished. "She was the purest thing I have ever known. If Mary cannot be trusted, then no man can trust any woman who ever lived!"

He stood and cried out again. "How could she do this? It is inconceivable. How? How?" The sobs exploded from Joseph's soul. "I will never marry her. I will never marry anyone. I will never trust another woman. Never!"

Emotionally spent, and on the edge of exhaustion, the young carpenter fell once more to the floor and cried himself to sleep.

At that moment, the Door swung open. Gabriel slipped through the portal, surveyed the destruction Joseph had inflicted upon his wood shop, and then, tenderly, knelt beside the young man who was lost in fitful sleep.

Son of David, Joseph. Do not be afraid. Take Mary as your wife. The child in her was conceived of the Holy Spirit. When he is born, call his name Jesus. This is that One who will save his people from their sins.

Joseph moved slightly, let out a long sigh, and began to breathe evenly. The agonizing groans that had been rising from his throat ceased. Gently Gabriel laid his hand upon Joseph's forehead and waited--waited until his sleep flowed evenly and peace had worked its way across his face.

Then Gabriel spoke again.

Our God has well chosen the man who will raise the very Son of the Most High God. And, Joseph, as you will learn in the days and years to come, God has also well chosen his mother . . . and your wife.

With that, Gabriel slipped back through the Door and into his own realm. Joseph opened his eyes. What he saw was a room . . . no, an entire world, quite changed from what it had been just a few hours earlier.
pp. 49-51

Galatians 4:4, 5

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

A VISIT FROM GOD!

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "This great Prince entered our abode. This little planet of ours was made to burn with a superior light among its sister stars while the Creator sojourned here in human form. If for the first time you had heard of the visit of the Incarnate God to this world, you would be struck with a wonder which would last throughout eternity. This is the heart of the Gospel--the incomparable fact of the incarnation of the Son of God, His dwelling upon the earth, and His presentation of Himself as a sacrifice unto God for the sins of mankind."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THEY WORSHIPED AND GAVE

Marie L. Olson has written this poetic commentary on the attitude and actions of those Oriental visitors who came to Bethlehem:

They opened their treasures, the wise men of old,
And prostrate they fell on the ground;
Exultant in spirit, they worshiped the Lord,
For Jesus, the Savior, they'd found!

The treasure of Heaven in Bethlehem lay,
Incarnate was God from above;
No wonder their treasures they opened to Him--
Their feeble expressions of love!

We may not have treasures of glory or gold,
Nor perfume to pour at His feet;
Though if we but knew the true worth of Christ,
We'd give Him our homage complete.

Our treasured desires let us open anew,
Our secrets, our dreams, and our all;
We offer as incense our praises to Him,
Adoring before Him we fall!

This Savior from Heaven is worthy indeed;
And things of this world become dim!
But joys everlasting in Jesus are found!
Now open your treasures to Him!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

SUFFERING MADE BEARABLE

A special issue on South Africa, Part 1. Quote from Desmond Tutu's guest editorial: "Our God knows our human condition from inside. He did not shout good advice from a safe distance. He was embroiled in the muck, in the suffering, in the confusion and misunderstanding. He was a baby. He was born. He lived. He died. He rose again. Christ's life says God cared, God still cares, that babies matter, that family life matters, that homes matter, that people matter, that decent living matters, that relationships matter, and that our existence matters--matters so much that God glorified it by becoming a human baby. God be praised."

"Suffering made bearable" by Desmond Tutu.

International Christian Digest, Mar 1989. Page 3.

Part 2. A biography of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, substantiating the claims that he is a thoroughgoing, incarnational theologian who claims that Christians (with God) must opt for the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized, and that such activities are no more subversive than the Bible itself. Desmond Tutu by Simon Maimela. Pages 6-8.

Part 3. The general secretary of the South African Council of Churches gives his reasons why anti-communist rhetoric isn't convincing in South Africa: 1) Black South Africa has never been part of East-West ideological conflict and the related cold war.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

GOD'S MARVELOUS GRACE

Commenting on the condescending grace of God, Charles Hadden Spurgeon said, "How great a stoop from the height of His throne to a dunghill! How wonderful that power which occupies itself in rescuing beggars, all befouled with the filthiness in which they lay. For He lifts them out of the dunghill, not disdaining to search them out from amidst the base things of earth that He may by this means bring to naught the great ones, and pour contempt upon all human glorying."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

There are 3 REASONS for this 1st action:

1. God must become man,
2. God must live a perfect life,
3. God must die if there is any hope for man's salvation.

It is Jesus Christ who is responsible for genuine godliness.

He was sent down in #1 and was taken up in #6.

Romans 1:3

concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

He is:

JESUS,
 GOD,
 MAN,
 SON OF DAVID,
 SON OF GOD,
 SON OF MAN,
 MESSIAH,
 THE CHRIST,
 THE SERVANT OF GOD,
 THE GOOD SHEPHERD,
 THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN,
 THE SAVIOR,

THE PROPHET ,
THE HIGH PRIEST ,
THE KING ,
THE STONE ,
THE BRIDEGROOM ,
THE BREAD OF LIFE ,
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD ,
THE DOOR ,
THE VINE ,
THE WAY ,
THE TRUTH ,
THE LIFE ,
THE RESURRECTION ,
THE JUDGE ,
THE LAMB ,
THE SCAPEGOAT ,
THE APOSTLE ,
THE FORERUNNER ,
THE SURETY ,
THE MEDIATOR ,
THE LEADER ,
THE BELOVED ,
THE ONLY ,
THE CHOSEN ,
THE JUST ONE ,
THE AMEN ,
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA--THE BEGINNING AND THE END ,

THE HEAD,
 THE IMAGE OF GOD,
 THE CHRIST OF CREATION,
 THE FIRSTBORN,
 THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR,
 THE LORD,
 THE WORD,
 THE MASTER,
 AND THE TEACHER.

"Man of Sorrows--what a name
 For the Son of God who came
 Ruined sinners to reclaim,
 Hallelujah! what a Savior."

2 Peter 1:3

seeing that His divine power has granted to us
 everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the
 true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and
 excellence.

STEP #2: THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

"PROVED TO BE RIGHT BY THE SPIRIT"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This refers to God's demonstration through the resurrection.

Romans 1:3, 4

concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of
 David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son
 of God with power by the resurrection from the dead,
 according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our
 Lord,

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

When Jesus died upon the cross, the last 2 THINGS that He spoke were:

1. "Tetelestai, it is finished,"
2. and He breathed a prayer:

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

There are differences of opinion as to whether this refers to the Holy Spirit or to the Spirit of Jesus. I personally take it as being an indication of His human spirit. He commends that spirit into the hands of the Father after successfully completing His mission, and it is the Father's work now by means of the resurrection to accomplish the remainder of the mission.

Everything is now in the hands of MISSION CONTROL.

Those who would hold to the other position would speak like this:

Gabelein, for instance, quotes from Hebrews, "And having offered himself by the eternal Spirit, without spot, to God."

Barclay says, "The Spirit is the power who proved Jesus to be what He claimed to be."

Barclay puts it this way:

It may be that this is a reference to the Resurrection. Men took Jesus and crucified Him as a criminal upon a cross; but through the power of the Spirit He rose again; the verdict of men was demonstrated to be false, and He was vindicated because by the power of the Spirit He rose again and conquered death. No matter how we take this line, the meaning is that the Spirit is the power who proved Jesus to be what He claimed to be.

p. 104

Barnes says:

It means to vindicate, and the sense is, that he was shown to be the Son of God by the agency of the Holy Ghost; he was thus vindicated from the charges alleged against him. The Holy Spirit furnished the evidence that he was the Son of God, or justified his claims.
p. 153

Hendriksen says:

Not everyone saw his glory. "He was despised, and rejected of men" (Is. 55:3). By his enemies his claims were denied, and he himself was cast out (Heb. 13:12). But by the spirit he was vindicated: his own perfect righteousness and the validity of his claims were fully established.
p. 140

(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)

Do these facts convince you that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead?

Fact 1: The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth were dramatically changed, because of something that happened after Jesus died.

Fact 2: The disciples were willing to die for their claim that they had seen Jesus after His death.

Fact 3: Altogether, more than five hundred people saw Jesus alive after His death.

Fact 4: The religious and governmental institutions had a vested interest in stopping the rapid spread of the Christian faith, but they could not do it.

Fact 5: The first-century witnesses to the resurrection must have been credible witnesses, because otherwise their testimonies would not have held up.

Fact 6: Following the death of Jesus, the church He founded spread quickly throughout the Western world--an amazing accomplishment if in fact He remained dead.
pp. 116-17

On several occasions, through His life, you hear of the statement, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." The greatest vindication of who He was and what He did was seen at the time of the resurrection.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Acts 3:14, 15

But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

Acts 7:52

Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

STEP #3: MISSION AFFIRMED

"SEEN BY ANGELS."

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The angelic audience witnessed all of this great mission. They had never seen love and condescension, tenderness and pity. They had never experienced being the recipients of grace.

Holy, holy, holy is what the angels sing,
 And I expect to help them
 Make the courts of heaven ring.
 And when I sing redemption's story,
 They will fold their wings,
 For angels never felt the joy
 That our salvation brings.

"He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all."

1 Corinthians 4:9

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

Galatians 3:19

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.

1 Peter 1:12

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.

Luke 2:13-15

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." And it came about when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks
by Steve Brown)

Clovis Chappell tells the story about one of the shepherds who heard the proclamation of the angels about the birth of Jesus but did not go to Bethlehem to see for himself. Decades later, as he held his grandson on his knee, he told the child the stirring story about Jesus and the angels.

"Is that all?" asked the boy. "What did you do when you heard the good news? Was it true? Was the Christ child really born?"

The old man replied, with some sadness, "I never knew. Some say it was true; some say it was only a dream. I didn't take the trouble to go and see."
p. 43

Matthew 4:11

Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Matthew 28:1-6

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

They brought His chariot from above
 To bear Him to His throne.
 Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
 "The glorious work is done."

Guy King says:

Doubtless, angels had watched His departure to this earth, watched with wonder His human growth from childhood to manhood, watched with bated breath His battle-royal in the wilderness, watched with delight as He went about doing good, watched over Him when His intimates could not watch with Him one hour in the garden, watched, as "the winged squadrons of the sky", for the signal that never came to rescue Him from infamous arrest, watched with veiled faces throughout the excruciating hours of Golgotha--all this, in all likelihood. But, in this credal sequence, I imagine that the reference is to the arrival of the angelic warders, sent by the Heavenly Governor, to open the prison-door of death, seeing that, having completed His sentence, it was no longer "possible that He should be holden of it"--Acts ii. 24, they were the very first to see "the Living One, that was dead", Revelation i. 18. Not till afterwards was He seen of men--of Mary and the women; "of Cephas . . . of the twelve . . . of the five hundred . . . and last of all [as Paul avers] . . . of me also", I Corinthians xv. 5-8. What joyful tidings would those "angels" take back to their fellows, awaiting news of the success of their mighty errand to the Tomb.
 pp. 66-67

RAPPROCHEMENT

A young man who had not had much schooling was being examined for a preaching license. One of the questions asked of him was, "What is the difference between the seraphim and cherubim?" He thought for a while and answered, "I know there had been a little trouble between them, but I thought it had all been cleared up."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

The angels sensed the grandeur and the glory of His work. They felt a deep interest in what was going on. It attracted the attention of the heavenly hosts. It drew them from the skies to proclaim His advent, to sustain Him in temptation, to witness His crucifixion, and watch over His tomb.

Matthew 26:53

Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

The winged squadrons of the sky witnessed:

His departure from glory,

His human growth,

the battle with Satan, fully aware of His royalty.

They were all on alert status as He went into the Garden of Gethsemane, awaiting a rescue signal that never came.

We have considered 3 THINGS thus far:

1.THE MISSION ATTEMPTED in the phrase:

"WHO WAS MADE VISIBLE IN THE FLESH."

2.THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

"PROVED TO BE RIGHT BY THE SPIRIT."

3.THE MISSION AFFIRMED:

"SEEN BY ANGELS."

This brings us now to #4:

"PROCLAIMED AMONG THE NATIONS."

STEP #4: THE MISSION ANNOUNCED

It all began that first Easter morning:

Matthew 28:6, 7

He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Acts 1:8

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Colossians 1:23

if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

1 Corinthians 15:3, 4

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

These early believers were consumed with communication.

The hymn writer expresses it correctly:

We've a story to tell to the nations
That shall turn their hearts to the right;
A story of truth and mercy,
A story of peace and light.

We've a Saviour to show to the nations
Who the path of sorrow hath trod,
That all of the world's great peoples
Might come to the truth of God.

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noonday bright,
And Christ's great kingdom shall come to earth,
The kingdom of love and light.

This brings us to #5:

"BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD."

STEP #5: THE MISSION APPLIED

John 1:11, 12

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks by Steve Brown)

A Parisian painter in 1875 named Marcel de le Clure wrote a love letter to his beloved. Though that doesn't seem so strange, it is. In this love letter, he repeated three words 1,800,000 times: "I Love You." No one knows how she responded, but I have a guess.
p. 42

(Confronting Casual Christianity by Charles F. Stanley)

Nothing has changed except we are two millennia closer to the glorious coming of our Lord.

And neither has our propensity toward a casual, comfort-seeking brand of Christianity--a Christianity without the "cup" and the cross, and line-of-least-resistance faith.

In the Christian community there is an inordinate amount of posturing about the problem of indifference in the ranks.

Yet, there is a shortage of remedies for that complacency.

Will "the last trumpet" be the only instrument to awaken slumbering, groggy Christians? Is there a road away from the debilitating effects of casual Christianity?

p. 19

I repeat: there is no such thing as partial commitment. When the pilot of a giant airliner is speeding down the runway, there is a certain point where he cannot decide to remain on the ground. When he crosses that line, he is committed to the air, or either the plane crashes disastrously to the ground. That pilot cannot change his mind when the plane is two-thirds of the way down the runway.

Unfortunately, our churches are filled with members who "have never left the ground." They have been sitting there for years and years gunning their engines. "Vrooomm. Vrooomm. Vrooomm." They are always "prepping," getting ready. They are going to get busy. They have been planning on it, meaning to, wanting to, trying to, going to, aiming to, hoping to. But tragedy of tragedies, they have never left the ground!

That grieves the heart of God Almighty: God has blessed you, equipped you, gifted you. You have good health, material possessions, plenty to keep you alive and kicking.

You have sunshine. You have rain. You have a free country. You can travel anywhere you please, and you are luxuriating in the blessings of the Lord. It breaks His heart to see you sitting on the runway and revving up your engines all these years. You never have left the ground!

p. 30

STEP #6: MISSION ASCENDED

"TAKEN UP IN GLORY."

This is MISSION ASCENDED.

Whereas "THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" began with A MISSION ATTEMPTED, as God came down; it concludes with God going back up:

"TAKEN UP IN GLORY."

The mission is accomplished. Touchdown has been successful. There is a safe return.

Acts 1:9-11

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

The picture here is: He is taken up in glory. What a glorious triumph.

It is Kenny Rodgers singing,

"Let's go out in a blaze of glory . . ."

It is the last act in the great fireworks show of heaven.

Myriads and myriads of angels welcoming home the victorious and triumphant Son of God. It is more than ticker tape parades, television interviews and mass celebration. It is God's Son who has been on a mission for 33 years, who has now come home; and by His work He has won the Gold Medal. He has accomplished the redemption of man and the foundation for the reconciliation of sinful man with a holy God. All praise and glory be to His name!

Thou art worthy . . . thou art worthy . . .
 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory;
 Glory, honor, and power!

Barnes says:

This is mentioned as among the "great" or remarkable things pertaining to "godliness," or the Christian revelation, because it was an event which had not elsewhere occurred, and was the crowning grandeur of the work of Christ. It was an event that was fitted to excite the deepest interest in heaven itself. No event of more importance has ever occurred in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, than the re-ascension of the triumphant Son of God to glory after having accomplished the redemption of a world.
 p. 155

Hendriksen says:

While the echo of men's voices, "Crucify, crucify," had scarcely died, heaven opened wide its portals, and, upon receiving back its victorious King, resounded with the echoes of the jubilant anthem, sung by ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands, "Worthy is the Lamb." Truly, he was taken up in glory.
 How great is the church which has such an exalted Head!
 p. 141

All heaven was moved with His 1ST ADVENT and will be with His 2ND, but the earth regards it with unconcern.

The countdown for the 2ND MISSION began with the successful completion of the 1ST.

Hiebert summarizes by saying:

The words "Manifested in the flesh" are a statement of the Incarnation and imply an unveiling of a previous existence. "Justified in the spirit" refers to the vindication of His claims when God raised Him from the dead. Men rejected and crucified Him as a criminal but in the resurrection God reversed the verdict of men. "Seen of angels" apparently means that they watched His earthly life as God incarnate. "Preached among the nations, believed on in the world" sets before us the great evangelistic mission of the church in which Paul himself was so zealously active. "Received up in glory" refers not only to the fact of the ascension but also denotes the fact of His ascension "in glory," the glorious character of the One who ascended.
p. 74

Guthrie says:

In any case there seems to be some thread of thought linking the fifth and sixth phrases, for Christ's triumph on earth (in the faith of His people) is concluded by His triumph in glory. The hymn could not close more suitably than with the humiliated Messiah's exalted entry into His heavenly sphere.
p. 91

This "MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" involves 6 STEPS that we have considered:

STEP #1: THE MISSION ATTEMPTED

HE WAS "WHO WAS MADE VISIBLE IN THE FLESH."

STEP #2: THE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

HE WAS "PROVED TO BE RIGHT BY THE SPIRIT."

STEP #3: THE MISSION AFFIRMED

HE WAS "SEEN BY ANGELS."

STEP #4: THE MISSION ANNOUNCED

HE WAS "PROCLAIMED AMONG THE NATIONS."

STEP #5: THE MISSION APPLIED

HE WAS "BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD."

STEP #6: THE MISSION ASCENDED

HE WAS "TAKEN UP IN GLORY."

J. B. Phillips's translation of this verse is so well done:

No one can deny that this religion of ours is a tremendous mystery, resting as it does on the One who showed himself as a human being and met as such every demand of the spirit, in the sight of angels as well as of men. Then after His restoration to the heaven from whence He came, He has been proclaimed among men, of different nationalities, and believed in all parts of the world.

Philippians 2:5-11

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

One writer has put it this way:

His birth was contrary to the laws of life; His death was contrary to the laws of death. He had no corn fields or fisheries, but He could spread a table for 5,000 and had bread and fish to spare. He walked on no beautiful carpets or velvet rugs, but He walked on the waters of the sea of Galilee and they supported Him. When He died few men mourned, but a black crepe was hung over the sun. The men trembled not for their sins, the earth beneath them shook under the load. All nature honored him, sinners alone rejected Him. Corruption could not get hold of His body. The soil that had been reddened with His blood could not claim His dust.

Three years He preached His gospel. He wrote no book, built no church house, had no monetary backing. But after 1900 years He is the one central character in human history, the pivot around which the events of the ages revolve, and the only regenerator of the human race.

Was it merely the son of Joseph and Mary who crossed the world's horizon 1900 years ago? Was it merely human blood that was spilled on Calvary's hill for the redemption of sinners? What thinking man can keep from exclaiming, "My Lord, and my God!"

(The Making of a Leader by J. Robert Clinton)

With this basic attitude, Wiersbe began to minister and to identify absolutes for ministry as he went. He wrote his article as a retrospective reflection on this process. The ten statements were worked over and reworded to make them apply generically. (The labels are my own, and I have listed these principles in my own words.)

LABEL FOR PRINCIPLE	SIMPLE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE
1. Character	God's work of developing character in a leader is foundational, for effective ministry flows out of being.
2. Ministry	The nature of ministry is service--first of all to the Lord and then to those we lead.
3. Motivation	Ministry must fundamentally be motivated by love for those being ministered to and not by gain nor duty nor giftedness.
4. Sacrifice	Effective ministry will require sacrifice.
5. Authority and submission	A leader must first learn submission to authority; it is essential in order to exercise authority properly.
6. Ultimate purpose	God must receive the glory in the life and work of a leader.
7. Dynamic balance	A leader must grow in and effectively use the basic tools of the Word and prayer.
8. Faithfulness and capacity	Faithfulness in ministry increases one's capacity for ministry.
9. Spirit empowered	Ministry must be empowered by the Holy Spirit.
10. Modeling principle	Jesus is the supreme model for ministry.

p. 193

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's life was always flexible because he was following in the steps of His Lord.

LESSON #2: When we become believers, we are part of "the assembly of the living God."

LESSON #3: We are to be "a pillar and support of the truth."

LESSON #4: Jesus Christ is "the mystery of godliness."

LESSON #5: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who was "made flesh and dwelt among us."

LESSON #6: Jesus Christ was vindicated in His mission and ministry at the resurrection.

LESSON #7: Angels were on constant alert status during His 33-year mission.

LESSON #8: We are to be witnesses of Him among the nations.

LESSON #9: The single condition of salvation is believing on Him.

LESSON #10: Christ was received into glory at the successful completion of His work. We too shall experience the same if we know Jesus Christ as Savior.

Lange says:

The marvellous facts of the gospel history a chain, in which not a link is wanting.--From these facts the preaching of the gospel must proceed, and to it constantly return.--The minister of the gospel is not called to declare to the church the religious ideas of his time, but God's eternal truths of redemption and salvation.
p. 47

BLINDNESS AND CHRISTMAS

During the Christmas season of 1879, an agnostic reporter in Boston saw three little girls standing in front of a store window full of toys. One of them was blind. Coming closer, he heard the other two trying to describe the playthings to their friend. He said he had never thought of how difficult it would be to explain what something looks like to someone who has never been able to see. That incident became the basis for a newspaper story.

Two weeks later this same agnostic attended a meeting conducted by Dwight L. Moody. His purpose was to catch the evangelist in some inconsistency. He was greatly surprised, therefore, when Moody used his newspaper account of the three children to illustrate a spiritual truth. "Just as the blind girl couldn't visualize the toys," said the preacher, "so an unsaved person can't see Christ in all His glory." He said that God opens the eyes of anyone who acknowledges his sin and accepts the Savior in humble faith. The newsman saw his need [and] discovered for himself the truth of Moody's words.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

"TAKE MY WORD FOR IT!"

An elderly man said to H. A. Ironside, "I will not go on unless I know I'm saved, or else know it's hopeless to seek to be sure of it. I want a definite witness, something I can't be mistaken about!" Ironside replied, "Suppose you had a vision of an angel who told you your sins were forgiven. Would that be enough to rest on?" "Yes, I think it would. An angel should be right." Ironside continued, "But suppose on your deathbed Satan came and said, 'I was that angel, transformed to deceive you.' What would you say?" The man was speechless. Ironside then told him that God has given us something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given His Son, who died for our sins, and He has testified in His own Word that if we trust Him, all our sins are gone. Ironside read 1 John 5:13, "You may know that you have eternal life." Then he said, "Is that not enough to rest on? It is a letter from heaven expressly to you." God's Spirit used that to bring assurance to the man's heart.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Men Who Win: Pursuing the Ultimate Prize by Steven Lawson)

Eternal life is a new dimension of living. A new quality of life. A supernatural life. It is the life of God in the soul of man.

It is not just getting man out of hell and into Heaven.

It is also getting God out of Heaven and into man.

p. 57

(Rediscovering Holiness by J. I. Packer)

Well, then, might the hymn-writer say to the Lord:

O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me,
And all things else recede;
My heart be daily nearer thee,
From sin be daily freed.

Each day let thy supporting might
My weakness still embrace;
My darkness vanish in thy light,
Thy life my death efface.

In thy bright beams which on me fall
Fade every evil thought;
That I am nothing, thou art all,
I would be daily taught.

More of thy glory let me see,
Thou holy, wise, and true;
I would thy living image be
In joy and sorrow too.

Fill me with gladness from above,
Hold me by strength divine:
Lord, let the glow of thy great love
Through my whole being shine.

Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be thou my life and aim;
O make me daily, through thy grace,
More meet to bear thy name!

It is thus, through our decrease and his increase as
described, that we shall grow in grace.
pp. 194-95

(Growing More Like Jesus by Richard L. Strauss)

I enjoy Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous short story entitled "The Great Stone Face." It is the story of Ernest, a boy who lived in a valley under the shadow of a great mountain, on which the forces of nature had formed what resembled the features of an enormous human face. Very early in Ernest's life, his mother had told him a legend predicting that a child would be born in those parts who was destined to become the noblest personage of his day, and whose countenance in manhood would resemble the great stone face. He never forgot the story, and after his chores were done each day, he would go out and gaze at the kind, encouraging features of the face.

One day the entire valley came alive with excitement as word arrived that the great man foretold in the legend had appeared at last. A shrewd and wealthy business tycoon, he had spent his boyhood in the valley, had moved away, and now was coming home in glory. The people of the valley welcomed him with great fanfare, only to realize that they were sadly mistaken. Their hero was anything but noble. The same thing happened two more times, once with an illustrious and successful general, and again with a silver-tongued statesman who was running for president.

Ernest was becoming an old man now, known for his quiet and gracious wisdom. In fact, outsiders would come to the valley to meet the simple husbandman and listen to his profound thoughts. One who came was a famous poet who had once lived in the valley and whose poems Ernest had eagerly read. Ernest thought the poet must surely be the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy. But it was the poet himself who made the astonishing discovery. As they stood outside and talked together with a group of neighbors, he looked to the mountain and then at Ernest, threw his arms high and exclaimed, "Behold! Behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face!"

pp. 18-19

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks
by Steve Brown)

She was fifteen and he was seventeen when they met. All through high school, they went steady. So after high school, no one was surprised when they got married.

Some four years and two children later, she was standing in her kitchen with a pile of dirty dishes in the sink and a pile of dirty diapers in the corner. Tears were streaming down her face. Looking back, she could never be quite sure why she made the decision, but she did make it. She took off her apron and walked out.

She called that night and her young husband answered the phone. He was understandably quite worried and also quite angry.

"Where are you?!" he demanded, his concern and his anger fighting for control of his voice.

"How are the children?" she asked, ignoring his question.

"Well, if you mean to ask if they are fed, they are. I've also put them to bed. They are wondering, just as I am, what you think you are doing."

She hung up that night, but it wasn't the last of the phone calls. In fact, she called almost every week for the next three months. Her husband, knowing that something was seriously wrong, began, in those phone calls, to plead with her to come home. He would tell her that the children were with their grandparents during the day and were well cared for. But he would also tell her that he loved her. He would tell her how much they all missed her, and then he would try to find out where she was. Whenever the conversation turned to her whereabouts, she would hang up.

Finally, the young husband could stand it no longer. He took their savings and hired a private detective to find his wife. The detective found her and reported that she was in a third-rate hotel across the country in Des Moines, Iowa.

The young man borrowed some money from his in-laws, bought a plane ticket, and flew to Des Moines. After taking a cab from the airport to the hotel, he climbed the stairs to his wife's third-floor room. (Those kinds of hotels don't have elevators.) If you had been there, you would have seen the doubt in his eyes and the perspiration on his forehead. His hand trembled as he knocked on the door.

When his wife opened the door, he forgot his prepared speech and simply said, "We love you so much. Won't you come home?"

She fell apart in his arms. They went home together.

One evening, some weeks later, the children were in bed, and he and his wife were sitting in the living room before the fire. He finally got up enough courage to ask the question that had haunted him for so many months: "Why wouldn't you come home? Why, when I told you over and over again that I loved you and missed you, didn't you come home?"

"Because," she said with profound simplicity, "before those were only words. But then you came."

pp. 179-80

STUDY #8 - 1 Timothy 3:14-16

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Paul's life was always flexible because he was following in the steps of His Lord.

LESSON #2: When we become believers, we are part of "the assembly of the living God."

LESSON #3: We are to be "a pillar and support of the truth."

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