

Everything you teach, you tell us to be patient and to love the children. He said, "Uh, yeah, I believe you ought to love children in the abstract, but not in the concrete." (end of a cutoff joke) And you love one another in the concrete, not in the abstract. I think I ought to get a raise in salary after telling a joke like that. I want to thank all the visitors for being here this weekend, too. All right, saints. We're going to start over, I mean, we're going to start again where we were last night. I am not apologetic for the message last night, but I will say that it was unique. This morning, I am sane and clothed in my right mind. Okay, we're still on page four.

Now I rejoice in my suffering, that's just about the middle of the page, beginning of a paragraph. I rejoice in them for the sake of all of you who gather in Colossae. For it is by my sufferings that I do my part in my flesh on behalf of the Lord's body, which is the church, to fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. And though we should read that a hundred times, we will never fully understand the depths of that statement.

Now, in any translation, the next words will be, "of this: I became a minister," but no one knows what "of this" is. Was this the suffering, or was it the ekklesia of, or was it the Lord? So, I resolved the problem and put all three of them in there. Of this suffering of this ekklesia of this Lord, I became a minister according to the stewardship which I received from God. It was for the benefit of all of you and the ekklesia in Colossae that this stewardship was bestowed upon me. All this has come about so that I might make full use of the word of God. Well, we have some more of this mystery here hanging.

Paul has been made a steward of the gospel of the mystery of the Lord. And then he says to the church in Colossae, "I was made a steward of this for your sake." Was I made a minister of Jesus Christ for the sake of the brothers and sisters in Chicago? I never saw so many blank faces in my life. Do you not know? Oh, Carmen, you're just too enthusiastic about everything. I have no idea, but Paul of Tarsus, if he were standing here, even though he had never seen you before, he would say, "It is for you, the church in Chicago, that I was made a minister."

I don't even know how to interpret that other than to say to you, the man was obsessed with the church. And somehow or other, he could ignore the fact that he had raised up four churches in Galatia, four churches in Greece, a church in Asia Minor, and that he was in Rome, and they were in Colossae, Asia Minor, and yet he could say, I was given the stewardship of these things for your sake. But this I can say that I have been given that stewardship, and the only place it is worth a hoot is in the churches. This stewardship is not worth anything outside the churches that I work with. Nobody's interested, nobody cares, and if I try to speak on it, it falls like a great big wad of lead foil right in the middle of the room; folks don't know. And I realize when I walk out of there that I was not given these things for them. I cannot say that I feel that it is exclusively for Chicago, but I can say that when I'm here, that's the way I feel. When I'm in Chicago, I forget there are any other churches. In fact, if you didn't live in such an abominably horrible-looking neighborhood, you were living out in Winnetka. Well, just for the record, I spent a week in Winnetka preaching

in the church there. Y'all just don't know how high-fluting I used to be. There's another little town next to it that's just as fancy. What's the name of it? Willow Meadow, I think.

What conclusion can we draw here? And I'm going to come to one, and that is, we need more brothers who've been given the stewardship of the gospel that is for the churches. If you see such an animal running around, you give me a phone call, would you? Call collect if you need to, if you want to. Brother, they don't come around very often in this century. I could not name you over four men who had been given the stewardship. And quite frankly, a couple of those I don't even want to name, I would name Bakht Singh. You've never heard of him, India. He's dead now; he died a couple of years ago of Parkinson's. He was probably the greatest Christian worker of this century. He eclipsed Watchman Nee, and we never heard of him. He was almost worshiped by the brothers and sisters in India, but he lived a very hidden life. By the way, when he came to the Lord, his wife had disowned him, and so did his family. He never remarried, and he lived in a room about 6 by 8 his whole life; there was nothing in it but a bed and a Bible from a little chair. I understand, I never saw it. And he traveled all over India raising up churches that somewhat matched the people of India, although I have to say there was a little Plymouth Brethrenism thrown in there. Brother Watchman Nee will be remembered in our century as one who was such a steward. Interestingly enough, Prem Pradhan was and didn't know it. He just was so much out there all by himself that he never had any idea who he was, didn't know how unique he was, and didn't know how unique his gospel was.

Now we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, and I stand there trembling. First of all, I'm not even sure I'm going to make it to the 21st century. I'll do my best, but I'm definitely going to try to make it until July 1999. Do you know why? Because that's when you and I are going to go to Santa Barbara. And next year, the brothers are going to meet together in Denver, and that's '97. So, in 1998, we'll get to have a sisters' conference. Where are we going to have it? We had it in Orlando, didn't we? You'll have it in Puerto Rico.

All right, there is so much more to talk about of the stewardship, and if you can ever get a hold of a double volume by another brother who certainly gave us a lot of revelation, but he felt the only task he had was to preach it rather than to experience or practice it, and that was T. Austin Sparks. If you can get a hold of his little two-volume set, *The Stewardship of the Mystery*, it's the best thing he ever did. You'll really enjoy it.

Okay, let's read some more. I'm going to read that last sentence again. All this has come about that I may make full the Word of God. Okay, we're going to talk about this. This is a little scary. Harry Truman was asked what he learned while he was president of the United States. He said, "I learned two things. Never speak ill of J. Edgar Hoover and never attack the United States Marines." He said something derogatory about the United States Marines; they almost impeached him. He also said something derogatory about J. Edgar Hoover.

Well, brothers and sisters, there's something that you never say anything derogatory about, and that is the scripture. Do you understand that? And I'm not, but I want you to know that when

you read this passage and someone tells you that this passage is in reference to the Bible, it is not. And most references in the New Testament to the word of God are references to the gospel. Let me do that again. Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit are the proclamations of the gospel. That's what most of them are in reference to. Brother Mike Brodie said there are three people who get together every day and weep. One of them is Mary, the second one is the Bible, and the third one is the Holy Spirit. Mary, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit sit down and cry, and this is what they cry over. Each one of them says, "I came here to glorify Jesus Christ, but others have turned glory on me." Mary, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is here to glorify the Father and the Son, and other than that, He keeps as close to the background as He can.

Mary, I don't have to tell you about Mary, the mother of God. A simple comment that was made by St. Augustine of Hippo and others interpreted as meaning literally that she was God's, the mother of God, that God has a mother, which makes her greater than God. And of course, the scripture, which in our day, especially, and I rarely use that term in our day, because all days are about as miserable as the others. You say nowadays, everybody's going to pot and the churches. Well, it was 100 years ago, 200 years ago, 500 years ago, but there's been in this, since the 1830s, an incredible emphasis on knowing the scripture to the point it has virtually dethroned Jesus Christ.

Do you remember my telling you at Winona Lake, do you remember a statement I made there? It was unbelievable. A professor had said to a student, and this student was a friend of mine. It's from a seminary that's located near one of the lakes. The only reason we know we have an indwelling Lord, the only way we can know we have an indwelling Lord, is because the Bible tells us so. I'm grateful that the Bible tells me so, but I don't know what his relationship is to the Lord; I know I have an indwelling Lord. I am absolutely personally confident of that on the basis of experientiality. Otherwise, somebody better lock me up.

Now, brothers and sisters, what is the word of God? What's the word of God? Well, we're just going to take all of that, but you left one out. I'll read it to you. This stewardship was given to me that I might fulfill the word of God. Let's just stop here and consider that the word of God is to be fulfilled. Alright, last paragraph. The word of God is a mystery. That mystery has been hidden from past ages or eons and generations. And here is the odd thing about this word of God that has been hidden, and this mystery that has been hidden. It remained hidden throughout all the ages until we, us, uncircumcised heathen came along.

Now, why the Lord would want to wait until such brutish people came along, I do not know. There's a very interesting passage in the Gospels. I wish I knew, no, I don't. I never pay attention to chapters. I wish I could tell you which book it's in. At least I stand with Barnabas somewhere. It says, Do you remember this incident? The Lord is going along in his ministry, and he's just going along and just going along and going along, and one of his disciples says to him, "There are some Gentiles who want to speak to you." And just like that, he said, "It's time for me to be crucified." Just instantly, it is some way the signal to him that it is all over, and the hour of fulfillment has come. I do not understand that, but there was a mystery even in that that the Lord

had proclaimed the gospel to the Jews, and I suppose He knew if the Gentiles ever got a hold of it, they would absolutely overrun the Jews, and He knew that His task was first to the Jewish people and that He didn't need to be concerned about reaching the Gentiles. And He gave Himself up to salvation, to your salvation and mine.

Now, saints, there was a mystery. It started out in creation, and there are two aspects to this mystery. One of them is Christ, and I'm going to tell you what the other one is. You could say it in one word, but I'd like to say it in one sentence. But what is it in one word? The church, but I'm going to put it another way. This was the mystery: that there was a girl hidden inside of God.

Christ was in God, and that girl was in Christ. Adam walked around here on this earth and didn't know there was a girl hidden inside of him, but the Lord knew it. The Lord walked around on this earth and knew there was a girl hidden inside of him, a divine creature. Paul has been made a steward of the word of God, and that word of God is the mystery.

There's nobody in this room, essentially, but a broken-down old Frenchman and a bunch of Puerto Ricans. You come here and you meet together, and you sing and you praise the Lord. I would like you to do one other thing. You don't know this, but someday you're going to get old. Honest to goodness, I have not always been old. I say that to you deliberately because when I was a little kid, I thought everything was static. My grandfather was always 70, my parents were always 30, and I was always six. Then I got to be seven and my parents got to be 31, 32. My granddad got to be 71, and when I was about 30 years old, this will happen to you, or it has happened to you, you figure out this is not going to stop. But no matter what age you are, you never can figure out that someday you're going to be anxious, and you are.

I would ask you to be stewards of the mystery, to be able to look people straight in the face and you can, and say to them, "I am part of a great mystery, I am part of and have experienced and lived in known and seen revealed, comprehended and apprehended, and have been part of my life, the mystery of God." And that's what's really happening here, and that's who we are, and that's God's central heartbeat, and that's real. It may be unseen, but saints, it's real. And if it's yours, you're a steward of it. If I proclaim the mystery which is Christ, and you lay hold of that mystery which is Christ, then you become with me a steward of that mystery. Don't be ashamed of who you are, what you are, or what you've known and what you've experienced. You are part of the revelation of the word of God. This is the outcome of the word of God. This is the outcome of the word of God.

I will continue reading. The word of God is the mystery, and this mystery has been hidden since creation. But today, this mystery has reached the holy ones. It is you, the holy ones in the assembly in Colossae, that God desired and willed to make known... What should the next word be? What should the next word be? The mystery who? To make known what is the church? What is the mystery? But it does not say that. Now, saints, this is important, and I want you to listen to it.

A man can open a book. You can go buy a book somewhere, I suppose, and it'll say the mystery is the church and Christ in the church. The mystery is the word of God. And he can say, "Oh, I know that." and he can teach it and preach it, and other people will listen, and they'll hear, "Oh, yeah. Uh-huh." But Paul did not come to give you a mental intellectual understanding of the mystery, nor did I. You don't have anything when you know what the mystery is. He came to give you the riches of the ministry, that's experiential. That's something you lay hold of; that's something you take a bath in; to know the riches of that mystery. I don't know what to say after that. I'm not telling you how to have them. As far as I'm concerned, you've got them. The only thing I want you to know is to know that you've got the riches of that mystery. Here, wake up, you have the riches. You're taking a bath in them. There is something about the church of Jesus Christ, especially on a good day, when you feel like you've touched heaven, and He has given us all the riches in heavenly places that are in Christ. You are the recipient of the riches of things in heavenly places, not to come, but now, and you touch them. Now then, is this true or not? If this is not true, then I need to know. Do you touch the riches of the mystery? You're not lying to me. Yes, you're lying to me. Sometimes, yes. Alright, praise the Lord.

I will leave Chicago this weekend richer than I came. Mrs. Edwards, is that what you were thinking of when you saw that? And Paul, I resent this about Paul. The man can't write. I wish he'd let me edit his books. He won't be satisfied with the riches of the mystery, the riches of the mystery, of the grace, of the this, of the that of the other. And then he'll get off the subject, and he'll say something about the knowledge of and the wisdom of and your tongue's hanging out, and then you finally get to the end of the sentence and find out what it is. You know why he does that? Sometimes you might find it interesting to read the first draft of the books I write, and I get carried away just like this brother does, and the sentences are incomprehensible. And I'm just almost in a trance here, you know, talking about the things of the Lord, they're the riches of the glory.

Did you learn yesterday that glory has might and power? Now you find that glory has riches. And what is the glory? The glory is the revelation of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ is revealed to you, brother, that's glory. And there's might and there's power and there's riches, and you know where they're located? Two places: in the church and in you. Say Amen!

Audience Member: I'm really sorry. I've just been biding my time; I've been waiting for years for an explanation like this. Now you just made a statement about why it was that Paul makes all these long sentences. Please clarify that. What is your opinion? What's the reason?

The man is transported and the word grace means so much to him, and the word glory means so much to him, and the word truth means so much to him, and wisdom, not knowledge, wisdom, and then he uses a special word, he says spiritual knowledge, and then he comes to Christ, and Christ, and then he thinks about grace again, and grace comes in there. These words are powerful words to him, and the word glory especially has meaning to him because he saw the glorified Lord, and it changed him, and the man didn't edit his letters. I wish to goodness he had. I'm trying to translate this book right here, and he's driving me crazy. He just goes on and on,

stacking superlative after superlative after superlative, and I'm trying to find out what it was he was trying to say here.

Audience Member: Some of your books are that way.

Frau, get him out of here. (laughter) You have no idea how hard I try to make my books simple. I agonize over it, and then you come in here and bust my balloon. That you might know what is the riches of the glory of the mystery, and that reads best backwards. And by the way, if you want to figure out what Paul is saying when he starts dumping his superlatives, read the sentence backwards. There is a mystery, and it is glorious, and there are riches in the glory. There is a mystery—Christ. There is a mystery, and it is the glorious Christ. And there is a mystery that is glorious, and in that glory are great riches. When Gene, why doesn't it say Christ in the church? There is only one mystery: it is Christ. But brothers and sisters, that Christ has a head and a body. He is the great glorified Christ. Not the Lord who walked in Judea and Galilee only, but who ascended and who, before creation, was the Creator Himself. And today is Lord of lords and King of kings, and in whom the entire creation is in Him and it's being held together by Him, in Him, and that is the richness you have in Christ.

Okay, this mystery and I put in the word “who”, has now come among you Gentiles. This mystery is Christ. This mystery is Christ in you. This mystery is Christ, your hope of glory, and now I must confess something. I honestly don't know what that last sentence means. If you can enlighten me someday, do, but in the meantime, let me talk to you about something. The mystery is Christ, but it's not just Christ; it is this incredible Christ.

You remember yesterday, I came back? I jumped forward and came to this. The Christ that is in you is the Christ who created, who was raised from the dead, who ascended, who is the beginning, who is the end, and in whom all things consist, and who is Lord over all, and has created all authorities and kingdoms and rulers and powers. This is the Christ who lives in you, and that's part of the mystery. Not only that it is Christ, but it is Christ in you. And that is probably the greatest news in the world, and you know what else it is? That's the word of God. And boy oh boy oh boy, we could do with a little bit more of the word of God. Say amen! But I don't know what it means.

Audience Member: Well, if glory is light, it's the revelation of the Lord. And Jesus Christ glorifies God because, like John says, we saw He came to show us what God was like. We see the Father in the Son, and we can see the Son in each other. Christ is in us so that at times we can see Him. The reason I'm in church is because I wanted to see Him in my brothers and sisters.

Bill, that's not my problem; my problem is the word hope. Christ, the hope of glory. What does that mean?

Audience Member: Christ in you.

The hope of glory. What does hope mean?

Audience Member: That we can see Him. That I can see Him in you. Christ is in you.

Is that hope? I don't know what it means. I've been trying to figure it out all my life, and the best I can come up with is not anything great. It may be right, but the hope of glory and glory is used in another way and that is when we are glorified and we are like Him and part of Him and that we have the hope that one day we will be able to see this Christ in us in a greater way, that we have a hope beyond death, and that's the hope of glorification, that there is the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, there is the ascension of Christ, there is the enthronement of Christ, and that is there is the glorification of Christ. And we will be glorified with Him when He returns, and we will be changed. And that's a hope, and if that's what it means, then you have just been given it, but if it means something else, I don't know. Will you take that, Carmen? All right.

My problem is, excuse me. My problem is, I don't have any. I don't care if I die and they put me in a grave, and nothing happens. Billy Graham said when he was quite young, and I remember his statement, I'd be a Christian if there were nothing after the grave. Well, Amen. I would too. And I would be in the church, and I would be right where you are. If there is no life after this one, but Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ and the church is the church, I'm perfectly happy. I want you to know that when I die, if I wake up in glory, I'm going to faint. You mean, Gene, you're afraid you're not saved. No, I just have never needed to go to heaven. I have never needed to... Man, listen. When I met Jesus Christ, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me, and I haven't found anything I need beyond that.

Audience Member: You need to listen to that message that I heard one time about glory. You can if you only care about glory, and if you can find the message, really. I bought a tape that Gene preached about in 1971, and the name of it, I think, is "Ruled by His Glory". It's my favorite message of all.

My wife is living in the past; no matter what I say, that was almost as good as ruled by glory. Amen.

In all wisdom, I proclaim this Christ, this Christ in you, admonishing and teaching every man, and that's the first singular reference I have found in this book, and I really wish you'd make a notation of it. You might even want to put a "1" by it. That I might present every man perfect in Christ. It is for this purpose I labor, striving according to His working, which works within me in power; an awful lot in this. I proclaim Christ, and I do it with wisdom, brothers and sisters, from Paul's viewpoint, not from Webster's dictionary, but from Paul's viewpoint, wisdom is a divine thing, and it's smart and it's wise, but it's not human wisdom, and it's not human smart.

He proclaims Jesus Christ by means of something that is divine. Paul knows that the way he presents his Lord is unique. At the moment this book was written, I doubt that Peter or John understood as well as Paul the greatness of Christ. And someday you will hear someone say the gospel was such and such. Then Paul came along and changed it. Later, he came along and changed it. Saints, Paul wasn't later; he was the first; he is the first person to put out a piece of Christian

literature. He put out the second piece of Christian literature, the third, the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth. John wrote in his old age, and Matthew wrote after Paul. John wrote Revelation, and he wrote the book of John, and that brother was really getting smart as to who his Lord was.

Now this brother led the way in giving us this incredible Christ. He had met Him face to face, not in His Judean and Galilean state, but in His glorified state, which is our hope of glory. I proclaim this Christ with wisdom, admonishing and teaching every man. Now, this is what I would like for you to do when I'm dead. To be bold about the Christ you have and have known, that I might present every man perfect in Christ. And one more time, Paul sees himself presenting a person to Christ and Christ announcing this person is perfect. The word is stronger than complete. The word is perfect, flawless.

You have already learned in chapter one that you are holy, but I want you to just say it. "I am holy, I am holy." By the way, I'm a holy one, I am a holy one, I am blameless, I am beyond reproach, and that's what you are in the presence of Jesus Christ, and Paul would like to do that with every man. Well, I don't know if that implies that he's trying to get every man into the church because he knows exactly where he expects these things to happen. It is for this purpose I labor, and here is a true sentence of humility and really anti-American in every way.

We Americans are going to take the gospel to the ends of the world by grit, by gum, and by golly. Someone said if there had been a bunch of American Christians out there when Moses got to the Red Sea, those American Christians would have got out there in the middle of that river and they would have built that thing dry and walked over on dry land. They didn't need God or the Holy Spirit; they'd do it all by themselves. And here are the words work, and here are the words power, but I want you to see how he tames those words in his life. I do this proclaiming Christ, I do it with wisdom, I admonish, and I teach, and I do this with labor, but, I am striving only by means of His working in me, and striving which works within me in power, and that is not Paul's strength, nor Paul's stress—that is all the work of God inside a man.

Now, I don't want to make any of you lazy, but brothers and sisters, as you know, in the Old Testament, priests were never supposed to sweat. You knew that, didn't you? Somebody in here must have known that priests were never supposed to sweat. Brothers and sisters, pray for three hours every morning, every day. Did you hear that? Did they hear that? Did that take up? Good.

Well, you've got to watch these preachers; they'll make you sweat. You have to witness somebody every day, and you have to pray for 30 minutes every day. You've got to do this; you've got to do that. I remember when I left the organized church, the last words I said before I died were, "Lord, I will never serve you again." And I have kept that promise, and the Lord has kept that promise, too.

I was physically, emotionally, and psychologically tired, as are most ministers in the gospel. And I swapped my striving for His work in me. Brothers and sisters, I would admonish

every man. I would preach to every man the gospel. I would give them Christ. But you are not going to force me to do that.