

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 1 of 39

INTRODUCTION

In Christ, there are central matters that are to dominate our hearts and minds. Secondary things must never be approached or handled as though they were primary, and primary things are not to be addressed as though they were secondary. As simplistic as that may appear, it is staggering how much contemporary Christianity majors on minors, and minors on majors. This is never insignificant, and always yields disastrous results. Those who choose to relegate Divinely emphasized things to the background of their thinking will not escape the judgment of God. God will be “justified” in all of His “sayings” (Rom 3:4). Those “sayings” are characterized by an emphatic tone – an undeniable accent.

The passage before us focuses on three fundamental Kingdom realities. One is objective, and the others are subjective, dealing with our experience. The first is “the Gospel of Christ,” which is a Divine source, or resource. At no point is it relegated to a secondary position. There is no such thing as a point in the life of a believer when the Gospel can cease to be heard and discerned. The second and third are “the righteousness of God” and “faith,” or believing, experienced by the child of God. Throughout the Scriptures “righteousness” and “faith” are always primary. They are never represented as a “step,” or a one-time event. They are never treated as though they were inconsequential, and are never represented as “not as important” as other things.

This has not always been as apparent to me as it is now. I was an inadvertent victim of an institutional emphasis that made little of the Gospel, the righteousness of God, and believing. The Gospel was acknowledged to be the power of God, yet was rarely preached with that in mind. The righteousness of God was hardly mentioned at all, and believing was viewed more as a commandment, or even a step in the sequence of an imagined “plan of salvation,” than the appointed means of REMAINING alive before God. I entertain these memories with great sorrow and shame, thankful that grace has retrieved me from their delusive power during these last fifty-six years of my life.

The person enamored of a religious institution does not view the Gospel as an ongoing necessity. It can easily be forgotten, or upstaged by church, theological, social, or economic issues. Very rarely is the Gospel of Christ a subject of exposition in an institution-centered setting. There, at the best, it is invariably associated with reaching the lost, and rarely, if ever, connected with abiding in Christ. It is essential that every professing “Christian” know, and acquiesce to, the fact that the stress of apostolic doctrine is ABIDING in Christ. Jesus clearly spoke of those who “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Lk 8:13). It must be clear that such people are rejected by God, and are incapable of bringing forth fruit – which is, in the first place, the practical objective of being “in Christ” (Rom 7:4).

The institutional mind-set also sees righteousness, if ever considered, as a goal more than a possession. Believing is considered noble, but is largely taken for granted, with a greater stress being placed on initial obedience, or strict adherence to a moral code. This is largely done from Mount Sinai, with little regard for the grace of God. Where the emphasis is placed upon the “church” rather than “the Head of the church” (Eph 5:23), there is not much talk or exposition of the Gospel, faith, righteousness, or grace. These, however, are consistently the stress of apostolic doctrine.

I do not mean to be overly critical on these matters, but feel it is imperative to briefly address them. I have personally experienced the impact of an institutional-approach, and can testify to the difficulties that attend recovery from its debilitating affects. In this series of lessons, I will endeavor to capture the revealed view of the Gospel of Christ, without any regard whatsoever for its impact upon historical or contemporary religious thinking. I make no apology for this approach. In fact, I am compelled to labor with everything that is within me to see the Gospel from heaven’s point of view. I see no other view as desirable or profitable.

We will find the Gospel has a direct relationship to the conferment of God’s righteousness upon men, and men having faith in God, and living by that faith. Where the Gospel of Christ is not continually preached or known, faith will, at the very best, be weak. Further, there will be no lively awareness of acceptance by God (Eph 1:6), or the experience of His righteousness (Phil 3:9). These things, and more, make an understanding of the passage before us a critical one. Salvation is not a one time event, but a process that commences with a new birth, and advances on to maturity, or conformity to the image of Christ.

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I AM NOT ASHAMED

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

This is a most wonderful expression of confidence: “I am not ashamed.” Further, to declare this without hesitancy is evidence of a faith that has apprehended the truth of the Gospel. Shame, in this case, does not mean remorse, or a sense of guilt, as Adam and Eve felt after their transgression (Gen 2:25). Here it means a fear of embarrassment, or expecting to be proved false. This type of shame produces a reluctance to speak, through fear of being humiliated.

I should suppose that nearly every believer has, at some time, wrestled with this kind of shame. It is what constrains a person to keep silence around those who are intimidating – like the armies of Israel before Goliath. Such shame comes from a lack of “the full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22). In its initial stage, such shame may not of itself be sinful. However, unless it is addressed and overcome, it will have eternal consequences. Thus our Lord said, “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). That makes this a serious consideration.

CONFLICT WITH THE WORLD

In saying He is “not ashamed” of the Gospel of Christ, the Apostle is acknowledging that it is in sharp conflict with “the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 3:19). Elsewhere, the Spirit affirms this is, indeed, the situation. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). The prophets foretold that God would decimate the wisdom of this world, showing it to be poverty-stricken and impotent. “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor 1:19; Isa 29:14; Jer 8:9). The NIV reads, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

If God has “destroyed the wisdom of the wise,” who is the person who will attempt to resurrect it? Where is the individual who will imagine he can buttress the Gospel of Christ with one toothpick of worldly wisdom? It cannot be done, and where it seems to have been done, men have only been deceived.

When God says He has “brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent,” He means there is no capacity there to take hold of the things of God. It can neither discover nor support what is revealed in the Gospel of Christ.

I am going to wax bold here and say that those who attempt to buttress Scripture, and particularly the Gospel of Christ, with special arguments and proofs spawned in the think-tank of “flesh,” are really “ashamed of the Gospel.” They are sisters with those who are afraid to speak what God has given to be announced and proclaimed. The Gospel does not need any human support. It contains a reservoir of unequalled Divine power, as this text will affirm. That power cannot be unlocked, so to speak, with methods, plans, and procedures developed by men. As you must know, there are humanly devised plans that allege the grace and power of God can be experienced through them. They promise the ones deceived by them that they can gain victory over sin through these plans, and come into an area of more grace. In other words, they ascribe to their plans the power and influence that belongs to the Gospel and “the Word of His power” (Heb 1:3). Such men have not told the truth, and they are NOT laboring for God. They have demonstrated by the very development of their supposedly effective plans that they are, in fact, ashamed of the Gospel.

David once said of a message that was a precursor to the Gospel, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest” (Psa 40:9). Again he said, “My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof” (Psa 71:15). He was “not ashamed.”

To the carnal Corinthian church, which had been led astray by false teachers (2 Cor 11:4), Paul wrote, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Again, full well knowing of their defection, and their propensity to believe things that were not true, he wrote, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor 15:1-2). **HE WAS NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!**

It appears there are relatively few people who have entertained even a faint view of the inexplicable power of the Gospel of Christ. If, commencing today, there were confident and bold proclamations of the Gospel of Christ in the churches, there would be a shaking that transcends every imaginable human expectation. It would reduce to obsolescence massive numbers of programs, literature, and professional careers.

Let those who are “not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ” stand up and speak up. Let them shout those who have other messages, like David boldly shouted Goliath (1 Sam 17:45-47). Press the battle! Force the hand of those who do not have a message of power.

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THE SUPREME DISPLAY

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

The height of folly found in the world’s wisdom relates directly to the Gospel of Christ. In sending His Son into the world – “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16) – God brought down the seeming bastion of worldly wisdom. The Spirit puts it this way. “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:6-8).

By saying “the princes of the world,” the Spirit is viewing the world’s wisdom in its most refined and developed state. He is not speaking of only governmental princes, but of those expert in the thought patterns of this world. They came from the philosophical, political, and religious sectors of humanity. The early church referred to this conspiracy as “Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel,” declaring they “were gathered together” against Jesus, whom God had anointed (Acts 4:27). This was the combined wisdom of the world at work. Jesus Christ was seen by them all. Multitudes that called for His death had witnessed His unparalleled miracles. Pilate and Herod had both seen Him and spoken with Him. The high priest had examined him. When He was tried, a single legitimate charge could not be made concerning Him. Pilate could find no fault in Him (John 19:4,6). Yet, the people who brought him to Pilate demanded that He be crucified (Mk 15:13-14). They even pledged allegiance to Caesar rather than to Jesus (John 19:15) – even though Jesus was sent to them, as promised through the prophets (Acts 3:24-26).

The rejection of Christ by the Jews, together with the Gentiles, Pontius Pilate and Herod, was based upon human assessment. The combined conclusion of this conglomerate of unbelievers was that Jesus was unworthy to live. He was, according to their wisdom, forthrightly rejected,

even though even the devil and his wicked hosts knew who He was (Mk 3:11; Lk 4:34). These opponents of Jesus represented the best of the world's wisdom. Concerning these people, Paul said through the Spirit, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which NONE OF THE PRINCES OF THIS WORLD KNEW: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor 2:7-8). Mark it well, for it is the absolute ruth of the matter, "For the wisdom of this world IS foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that THEY ARE VAIN" (1 Cor 3:19-20).

In Jesus, the Divine nature was displayed in this world in a more precise and extensive manner than ever before. The testimony of creation, as impressive as it was (Psa 19:1-5), was but a faint whisper when compared to the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord was "a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst" of a people who had been cultured to receive Him (Acts 2:22; Rom 9:1-4). And what did they do? They "crucified the Lord of glory!" Jesus could truthfully say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). To His own disciples He said, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him" (John 14:7). And yet the world's wisest men did not, and still have not seen Jesus as He is. Ghandi, with all of his political wisdom, did not see Jesus as He was. Although they lived when prophecies of this King of glory were available, Socrates and Plato did not look for the coming of the promised Christ. When Jesus was born, Herod was told who He was, and sought to kill Him when He was but an infant (Matt 2:16).

These unbelievers and opponents of Jesus did not do this dastardly deed as barbarians, but as those who professed to have reasoned out the matter. They condemned Him to death upon the basis of their perverted understanding of the Law, and on the basis of imagined expediency (Mark 14:64; John 11:49-50). Pilate thought it wise to consent to the matter because of political convenience (Mark 15:15).

Now, I ask you, why should anyone be "ashamed" of the Gospel of Christ before such a motley crowd. What do their credentials mean? Why should we consult this pool of invalid wisdom to, in any way, assist us in either understanding or proclaiming the Gospel. May faith be found in all professing to be followers of Christ, so that they can confess with Paul and "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph 3:15), "I am of ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!"

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"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

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GOD'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

With remarkable clarity, the Spirit speaks on this subject – justifying those who rely solely on

the power of the Gospel. “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” [NASB] (1 Cor 1:21-24).

Neither Greek philosophy nor Jewish theology brought people to know God. Indeed, it was both that philosophy and theology that moved men to crucify the Lord of glory! When it comes to the salvation of men, and causing them to be righteous, all human wisdom is excluded – forthrightly and completely.

In His infinite wisdom, God knew the poverty of the human mind apart from revelation. His Word is sufficient proof that this is the case. But to render humanity totally without excuse, He displayed the abysmal deficiency of worldly wisdom by saving men entirely apart from it. He ignored the Jewish quest for signs, and the Greek’s search for wisdom, choosing to save men through a message – a revealed Message; not through a system, but through a Message. That Message is the announcement of what the Lord has done, not what men should do.

THE NATURAL MAN IS DESTITUTE

“The natural man,” cultured or not, “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” [NKJV] (1 Cor 2:14). When it comes to comprehending the things of God, the Spirit affirms the situation with no uncertainty: “verily every man AT HIS BEST STATE is altogether vanity” (Psa 39:5).

The Spirit does not let this matter go, as though it was of little consequence. “For the wisdom of this world IS FOOLISHNESS with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’: and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile’” [NKJV] (1 Cor 3:19-20). What God said of the most astute world thinkers in Isaiah’s time can be said of our day as well. “The princes of Zoan are mere fools; The advice of Pharaoh’s wisest advisers has become stupid. How can you men say to Pharaoh, ‘I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings’ Well then, where are your wise men? Please let them tell you, And let them understand what the LORD of hosts Has purposed against Egypt. The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly, The princes of Memphis are deluded; Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes have led Egypt astray. The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion; They have led Egypt astray in all that it does, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit” [NASB] (Isa 29:11-15).

The challenge is shouted from the ramparts of heaven, “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Cor 1:20-21). Paul confessed, “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing” [NKJV] (1 Cor 2:6).

If God’s assessment of the wisdom of this world was actually believed and embraced today, there would have to be a massive rewriting of the curriculum of virtually every Bible College

and Seminary in the land. With no significant exceptions, there simply is too much of the world's wisdom in those institutions, and it is annoying to those who have received "the love of the truth" (2 Thess 2:10-12)..

Paul, knowing the Gospel and firmly relying upon it, is not ashamed to declare the message that is unapproved by the world. He will not engage in a lengthy dialog to show the Gospel is harmonious with the wisdom of this world, for it is not. Nor, indeed, does He attempt to prove it according to the world's criterion. All such efforts, however valuable they may appear, are a manifestation of shame. Those who attempt to show that the Gospel of Christ is not at a fundamental variance with the wisdom of the world bring no honor to Jesus by their efforts. Further, their attempts will not accomplish the work of God. That, among other things, is why Paul is "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." His lack of shame is not a mere sectarian statement.

NOT UNREASONABLE

It is not that the Gospel is unreasonable, and it must never be presented as though it is. In it, Divine reason is presented, which is the only valid reasoning. The "wisdom of this world" is a species of reason that has been repudiated by God. Consequently, it must also be disowned by us. In its place, the Lord offers a higher form of reason that is based upon faith. This reasoning is both satisfying and precise – so much so, that none who see it are ashamed to declare it. It is, in every way, superior and solitary.

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THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ . . ." (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Here is spiritual precision: "the Gospel OF CHRIST." It is not the gospel of the church, or of the Gospel of the Spirit, or of anything else finding its focus in this world. It is not the Gospel of health and wealth, the Gospel of happy homes, or the Gospel of a trouble-free life. It is a revealed and effectual announcement Jesus Christ.

Concerning its origin, it is "the Gospel of God" (Rom 1:1). Considered from the standpoint of what it brings, it is "the Gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13), the "Gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15), and the "Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). But when it comes to the substance of the Gospel itself, it is the announcement of the Person, accomplishments, and present ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ – "the Gospel OF CHRIST."

The word "Gospel" is defined as a message of "good tidings" – a proclamation, or declaration. It is the report of something that has been accomplished – a heavenly news report.

THE GOSPEL – GOOD NEWS

“GOOD”

The Gospel is “good news.” It is not the word of a good moral discipline, or a good law, but good “news.” It is not a message of “good directions” or of “good advice.” It is not an admonition, or an exhortation, but a proclamation. It is inherently “good”– that is its nature. This is a message that speaks of benefits, as compared with requirements. The birth of Jesus was accompanied by these angelic words: I bring you GOOD tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Lk 2:10). Paul described the Gospel as “glad tidings of good things” (Rom 10:15). In Scripture the word “good” comes from a word meaning, “good constitution or nature; useful, salutary; good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy; excellent, distinguished” (Thayer).

The Gospel is “GOOD news” in view of the circumstance brought on by sin. It is not “good” because of its impact upon economics, social circumstances, or political conditions. Those elevating such matters to undue importance will, by that very emphasis, abandon the Gospel. They will no longer perceive it as the ultimate good news.

There is no flaw in this message – it is “good.” It is like a thoroughly good tree, from which only good fruit can come (Matt 7:17-18). Nothing inherently bad can come from the Gospel of Christ. If there are flawed “Christians,” it is not because of the Gospel. There is nothing about the good news that it brings that is of itself morose or sullen. No matter how you look at it, it is “good.” It is beneficial and it is righteous, partaking of the character of God Himself. This is what makes opposition to the Gospel so reprehensible.

The Gospel itself contains no “if’s,” because it is not a message of direction, but of things that have been achieved by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a word about an agreement God wants to make with men, but a message of what has been accomplished for men by Jesus Christ, at the command of God the Father.

“NEWS”

The Gospel is not a good idea, or a good philosophy. It is good “NEWS” – a message that is beneficial, sound, and wholly sufficient. It is not a word about what men can be, but of who and what Jesus IS. It is the proclamation of Divine provision. The word translated “Gospel” is an exceeding large one. It emphasizes the proclamation of the message, as well as the nature of the message itself. This is the “good news” of something achieved by someone else in the behalf of humanity. It is a message that is not subject to change or updating.

The Gospel is a Divine announcement. It is the broadcast or report of something that has occurred in the behalf of men. It is not the announcement of possibilities, but of accomplishments. Unlike worldly news, this is news that never becomes obsolete or useless. When proclaimed in the twentieth century, it is as fresh and powerful as it was when announced in the first century. The trends and preferences of the world have no effect upon the Gospel. New discoveries by the sons of men do not impact upon the Gospel, alter its message, or nullify its power. Nor, indeed, do they add any weight to it.

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ENTIRELY BY REVELATION

The Gospel in its entirety has come by revelation. Not a single syllable of the Gospel is a conclusion of men, or the result of human reason. Over and over this is emphasized in the Scriptures. From the standpoint of the benefits announced in the Gospel, they are said to be “revealed” to men “through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:10). The point of this particular affirmation is not who the men were through whom the revelation came, but the NECESSITY of the revelation: i.e., “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). Unless God had undertaken to make them known to men there is no possible way they could have been perceived.

The prophets were given some limited information concerning the coming Savior. Moses said He would be a “Prophet” (Deut 18:15,18). Jacob said the people would gather to Him (Gen 49:10). Isaiah informed us of His name, and that He would reign over a Kingdom that would never cease to increase (Isa 9:6-7). Isaiah was also given some insight concerning His death (Isa 53), and that He would sit upon the throne of David (Isa 9:7). Jeremiah related Him to righteousness, saying He would be a “Righteous Branch” (Jer 23:5). Malachi said He would be “the Messenger of the Covenant” (Mal 3:1), and would rise with “healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2). However, no Prophet developed the remarkable results that would come from His death, or that He would rise from the dead and be given all power in heaven and earth. Isaiah only hinted at His intercession, and His Mediatorship was not developed. The holy prophets yearned to know more about this coming Messiah, or Anointed One, and of the times during which He would come. They were forthrightly told, “that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12).

You can search the Gospels and never read about precisely why Jesus died, what happened when He rose from the dead, that He would bring many sons to glory, and would Intercede for His people, and Mediate the New Covenant. Those are matters that were revealed in the Gospel, which is the elaboration of Christ’s purpose accomplishments, and ministry. That Gospel is expounded in the Epistles, where the purpose and effects of Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and present reign are delineated.

The great benefits announced in the Gospel were formerly hidden from men. As it is written, “the mystery of Christ, which in other ages WAS NOT MADE KNOWN to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”

(Eph 3:5-6).

The “Gospel of Christ” could never have been compiled by either men or angels. No created intelligence, regardless of its superiority, could have constructed the Gospel, even with the prophecies of the holy prophets in hand. It had to be revealed from heaven, through the Holy Spirit – and that at Divine discretion. The purpose for Christ transcends Him being a Friend, or sympathizing with the dilemma caused by sin and sinfulness. The Gospel of Christ is not elementary, but is “the power of God unto salvation” – salvation in its entirety, which begins with regeneration (Tit 3:5) and re-creation (Eph 2:10), and concludes by passing through the judgment and being forever with the Lord. There is no phase of “newness of life” in which “the Gospel of Christ” is moved to a secondary place, or is no longer emphasized. O, that more were able to comprehend this!

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HIDDEN TO THE PROPHETS

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

There were prophecies of the coming Messiah, and some details about what would occur when He came – but they were all very obscure. The prophets through whom those revelations came were intrigued by what they said, but were not granted a clear understanding of them. As it is written, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, BUT TO US they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:10-12, NKJV).

These holy prophets knew nothing of the contemporary use of the word “relevancy.” They declared something that, at that time, did not pertain to them. But the marvelous message intrigued them, and they sought to understand more of it, “inquiring and searching carefully,” or “searched and inquired earnestly” (Amplified), or “made careful searches and inquiries” (NASB). The New Living Translation is very weak at this point: “wanted to know more about.”

These were prophets – God-ordained prophets. “Holy prophets”(Acts 3:21). Among the sons of men prior to Christ, the “holy prophets” rank among the highest. Although they were inspired by God, yet they were not able to decipher the grandeur or the details of the central message of which they prophesied. The message was so extensive, and so replete with spiritual advantages, they could only introduce it. And, even their introduction to it had to be revealed.

The word “Gospel,” therefore, includes these key elements.

1. It is essentially a GOOD and GLADDENING report, bringing glad tidings to the hearers. It is not a morose announcement of the condition of men.
2. It is fundamentally an ANNOUNCEMENT, not an outline of acceptable conduct, or a moral code of law. It is not a directive on how to live, but the proclamation of the provision of life.
3. It is a MESSAGE that would never have been conceived or known had God not revealed it. No mortal could have originated even the concept of a Savior that is revealed in the Gospel.

To my knowledge, those in Christ Jesus are the only people on the face of the earth who have an essentially good message to proclaim. In fact, they are the only ones with a message – a report of glad tidings – something that the Lord has done. All other religions, including many that profess to be from Christ, have a word that is nothing more than a set of rules and procedures. There is no essential news in their avowals. They have nothing to declare, affirm, report, or announce.

It should be apparent why Paul was not ashamed of such a marvelous Gospel. It towered above Grecian philosophy and the traditions of the Jews. It even dwarfed the Law, which was “given by Moses” (John 1:17), and “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal 3:19).

A good question to ask the leaders of an assembly you are considering is, “What is your message?” – your core message. “What is it that you are reporting, or announcing?”

When Jesus first set forth the Gospel in His hometown synagogue, He made an announcement: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to PREACH THE GOSPEL to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). Now, that message has been fully developed – and it is glorious. Think of the marvelous message of the Gospel of Christ, and the things made known by it – hidden to the Prophets of old, but revealed now through the Holy Spirit. Here are a few of them.

1. Sin has been “put away” (Heb 9:26).
2. Satan has been “destroyed” (Heb 2:14).
3. Principalities and powers that once dominated the world have been plundered (Col 1:15).
4. A new and living way has been opened up by which men can come to God (Heb 10:2).
5. God has been satisfied by the vicarious death of Christ (Isa 53:11).
6. “Christ is “Head over all” (Eph 1:22).
7. Life and immortality have been brought to light, or illuminated (2 Tim 1:10).
8. The Gospel brings “the fulness of the blessing” (Rom 15:29).
9. The Gospel is the announcement of “your salvation” (Eph 1:3).
10. The Gospel announces peace (Eph 6:15).
11. The Gospel announces “everlasting consolation and good hope” (2 Thess 2:16).
12. Peace is preached to the Gentiles, who “were afar off” (Eph 17).

All of these things were hidden to the prophets – not because of their deficiency and unworthiness, but because the time had not come for them to be made known. However, now is

the time they are to be made known – preached, declared, announced, and set before the people. If, within the professed church, there are things that are not understood, it is not to be the Gospel.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 8 of 39

THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPEL, #1

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ . . .” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

The Gospel is “good news,” or “glad tidings,” because of what it says, not how it is said, or who says it. It contains the message of “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” He is the Subject of the Gospel. As soon as Jesus Christ is relegated to the background, the Gospel is no longer being preached, and thus Divine power “unto salvation” is no longer being experienced. This accounts for much of the spiritual impotence that is found among professed believers.

At this point, men are tempted to be too simplistic. They imagine, for example, that First Corinthians 15:3-4 is an exhaustive definition of the Gospel. “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

This is not intended to be an intellectual definition, to be handled as though it were a mere creed. Rather, it is a SUMMATION of the Gospel, which itself, contains many declared details.

I am compelled to show the glory of these three cardinal points by pointing out the matters related to them. A remarkable number of insights are contained in them. This is what makes the Gospel, “the Gospel!”

CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

Christ’s death, necessitated because of “our sins,” is the subject of Divine elaboration. All of the points shown below are inherent in that death, and are the subject of extensive Divine exposition. This exposition is the details of the Gospel.

1. He bore, or carried, our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24).
2. He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21).
3. In His death, He was cursed by God (Gal 3:13).
4. He gave His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).
5. He took away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
6. He gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
7. No man took His life from Him, He laid it down that He might take it up again (John 10:17-18).
8. He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).
9. We are justified freely through the redemption of Christ (Rom 3:24).

10. God has set Jesus forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (Rom 3:25).
11. God commended His love to us in the death of Jesus (Rom 5:8)
12. We are justified through His blood (Rom 5:9).
13. We are reconciled to God through the death of His son (Rom 5:10).
14. We are buried by baptism into Christ's death (Rom 6:3-4).
15. God condemned sin in the flesh of His Son (Rom 8:3).
16. God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom 8:32).
17. In His death, Christ is our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
18. We are bought with the price paid in Christ's death (1 Cor 6:20).
19. If One died for all, then all are dead (2 Cor 5:14).
20. He died that we might no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us (2 Cor 5:15).
21. He gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world (Gal 1:4).
22. In His death, He redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
23. We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7).
14. We are made nigh unto God by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:13).
15. In His flesh, Jesus abolished the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Eph 2:15).
16. He gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse the church (Eph 5:26).
17. Christ died in order to present His church to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27).
18. He made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20).
19. In the cross, He plundered principalities and powers, making a public display of them (Col 2:15).
20. In His death, he delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).
21. He died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him (1 Thess 5:10).
22. He gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a special people, zealous of good works (Tit 2:14).
23. He tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9).
24. Through His death, He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14).
25. He obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb 9:12).
26. He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14).
27. Through Christ's blood, our conscience is cleansed, or purged, from dead works (Heb 9:14).
28. Through His death we receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).
29. The New Covenant, or "will," has been sanctified by the blood of Christ (Heb 10:10).
30. In offering Himself in death, Jesus has perfected forever all who are sanctified (Heb 10:14).
31. Through His blood, we enter into the holiest place—the very presence of God—Heb 10:19).
32. The way to God has been dedicated through Christ's death (Heb 10:20).
33. Through His blood, we are washed from our sins and made kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:5-6).

No other death has been so absolutely and gloriously productive!

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

HE WAS BURIED

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

“And that HE WAS BURIED, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1Cor 15:4)

The burial of Christ was not simply a technicality. He was active during the time He was buried. Peter makes a point of this: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: BY WHICH also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet 3:18-20). Peter alludes to this again in First Peter 4:6: “For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that ARE DEAD, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

Some allege that this is a reference to the preaching of Noah – but this simply is not possible.

1. In the first place, Noah had no “gospel,” or good news to preach.
2. Second, from the very beginning God told Noah ONLY he and his family would be saved (Gen 6:18).
3. Third, Noah being a “preacher of righteousness” had to have taken place during the 480 years that preceded him commencing to build the ark.
4. Fourth, Noah is never said to have preached to “spirits.”
5. Fifth, the “spirit of Christ” was not in Noah, for the Word had not yet been made flesh, which is the context of the very concept of “the Spirit of Christ.”
6. Sixth, Noah is never said to have preached to anyone in order that they might “live unto God according to the Spirit.”
7. Seventh, Peter alludes to the reasoning of Jesus after He had died: “Therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad; moreover also My flesh shall rest in hope: Because Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance” (Acts 2:26-28). The “hell” of reference is not the lake of fire, but the region of the dead – “hades.” The penalty for sin was not paid in “hell,” the “lake of fire,” but on the cross. That is where Jesus was “made to be sin” (2 Cor 5:21), and was “cursed” for us (Gal 3:13).

In his letter, Peter is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ in the interim after He yielded up His life until He was raised from the dead. Jesus went and “preached to the spirits . . .” Admittedly this does not handily fit into man’s compilation of main things. It surely does not blend well with the soul-sleeping hypothesis. It does, however, confirm that God is not looking for a reason to condemn people. During the days of Noah there was no Law, no Bible, and no known revelation

outside of nature itself. There is no record of Noah receiving any revelation except the coming flood – and there was not a shred of hope held out to anyone but Noah and those with him.

I will leave the matter there, content to believe what has been written, and acknowledging that I am willing to wait for a fuller explanation – which, I must add, will not violate either the nature of God Himself, or the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

The burial of Christ also provided time to assure that He really did die, tasting death for every man in the fullest sense of the word (Heb 2:9). Part of tasting of death was the experience after death and before the resurrection. Here is also a point at which unity with Christ is realized.

1. In His burial He was “numbered with the transgressors” (Num 53:12).
2. While His body was in the tomb, He preached to the spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah (1 Pet 3:18-20; 4:6).
3. In our baptism, we are “buried with Christ” (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).
4. The burial of Christ was “the sign of the prophet Jonah” to an adulterous generation (Matt 12:39-40).
5. His grave was made with the wicked, and the rich as well (Isa 53:9).
6. The woman with the precious alabaster box of ointment anointed Jesus for His burial (Matt 26:7-12).
7. The grave was not capable of holding the body of Jesus (Acts 2:29-26-32).

Thus every aspect of human experience has been sanctified by Jesus: Living in the flesh, dying, and the interim between death and the resurrection of the dead.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 10 of 39

HE ROSE AGAIN

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

The resurrection of Christ is the engine of our salvation – the source of its power. Over and over this is affirmed in Scripture. Without the resurrection of Christ, His death would have counted for nothing. As it is written, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, YEA RATHER, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34). When Jesus came back from the region of the dead, it validated His death, confirming that Satan had been destroyed (Heb 2:14), and that principalities and powers of darkness had been plundered (Col 2:15). Jesus did not return to heaven until He had personally and completely defeated “the last enemy” (1 Cor 15:26; Rev 1:18).

Ponder the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1. In regeneration, we are united with Jesus “in His resurrection” (Rom 6:5).

2. The desire to know and experience “the power of His resurrection” dominates those living by faith (Phil 3:10).
3. Jesus was declared to be “the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).
4. We are begotten again to a living hope “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).
5. The resurrection of Christ is what validates our baptism: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21).
6. The resurrection of Christ validated His death, and inducted Him into His intercessory ministry (Rom 8:34).
7. We are reconciled by His death, and saved by His (resurrection) life (Rom 5:10).
8. He is able to save us because, being raised from the dead, He “ever lives to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25).
9. The blood of the cross obtained its effectiveness when, after His resurrection, Jesus entered into heaven with it (Heb 9:12).
10. The risen Christ, having entered into heaven, is now appearing in the presence of God “for us” (Heb 9:24).
11. The power employed to raise Jesus from the dead, is precisely the power that is now devoted to those in Christ (Eph 1:19-21).
12. Jesus was “raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25).
13. Christ’s resurrection is God’s pledge that we will also be raised (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14).
13. Jesus being raised from the dead, we can now be joined to Christ and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom 7:4).
14. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in believers, giving sanctifying life to their mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).
15. Confessing the Lord Jesus with our mouth, and believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, results in our salvation (Rom 10:9).
16. If Christ is not raised, our faith is vain (1 Cor 15:17).
17. Believers are raised up together with Christ and made to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
18. In His resurrection, we were “delivered from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10).

If Jesus Christ is “risen indeed” from the dead (Lk 24:34), then every person living by faith is NOT living in vain, or without a promising future. We do not serve an historical Christ, but a risen one – a reigning one, who “over all, God blessed forever” (Rom 9:5). Our Lord and Savior died “once” – that is all (Heb 9:26). He is not dying over and over as Catholicism teaches. He is now “alive forever more,” as He Himself testified to John: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:18).

Lift up your heads, saints of God. Jesus is alive, and because He lives, “ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every

one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 11 of 39

CONCLUSION CONCERNING THE GOSPEL

There is no aspect of salvation that is not immediately related to the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, the association falls under one or more of these realities: The death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. A matter that does not connect with these essentials is unrelated to salvation. Further, at the point we are not identified with all three of these, we cease to be identified with Christ. God has made no provision for anyone to be saved without being identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son.

The “Gospel of Christ” is the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It includes the insightful declaration of the result of these pivotal accomplishments, and their bearing upon our acceptance with God. There is no Apostolic writing that does not major on the preaching of the Gospel. It is found in all of their writings, and provides the logic and incentive for living by faith. At some point, all of their doctrine intersects with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

I cannot leave this matter without again emphasizing that Jesus Christ is the subject of the Gospel. Ponder the statements made of Him. All of these statements have to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and are inherent in the Gospel. These references to them are expositions of the Gospel, which was first spoken in seed form in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15), then given to Abraham in summary form (Gen 3:8). Following its fulfillment by Jesus, it was then declared to all men, and expounded to the churches.

1. Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6).
2. Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
3. Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (5:11).
4. It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom 8:34).
5. Christ came, who is God blessed forever (Rom 9:5).
6. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness (Rom 10:4).
7. Christ pleased not Himself (Rom 15:3).
8. Christ also received us to the glory of God (Rom 15:7).
9. Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).
10. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
11. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor 5:19).
12. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
13. Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:25).
14. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15).
15. Christ is appearing in the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24).
16. Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).
17. Christ has made us free (Gal 5:1).

18. Christ has suffered for us in the flesh (1 Pet 4:1).

These are only representative of the consistent thrust of the Scriptures. When it comes to accomplishments, the premier and effective ones belong to Christ, and to Christ alone. Only what He has done provides a basis upon which the grace of God is conferred upon men through faith.

Salvation is only as near as the Gospel is clear. Where the Gospel is suppressed, or pushed aside in favor of supposedly more relevant matters, the salvation of people is at stake. It makes no difference whether the people are presently alienated from the life of God, newborn babes, or tenured saints – if the Gospel is not preached salvation will not be accomplished. God has made no provision for salvation without the Gospel – at any time, or in any sense.

I realize all too well that this perception is rejected by a significant number of professed believers. Yet, it is the truth, and is consistently and overwhelmingly affirmed and supported by the Scriptures. The “Gospel of Christ” has not lost its absolute centrality, nor its magnificent power!

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 12 of 39

THE POWER OF GOD

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for IT IS THE POWER unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Paul is elaborating on WHY he is “ready to preach the Gospel” to those who are in Rome (1:15). These are “Christians” to whom He is determined to “preach the Gospel.” He already identified those who “are at Rome” as “beloved of God, called to be saints,” whose “faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (1:7-8). He is NOT referring, therefore, to declaring the Gospel in the market places and halls of learning, although he doubtless is determined to do that also.

At this point, however, he is focusing on those who are in Christ Jesus, loved greatly by God, and renowned for their faith. He is “ready to preach the Gospel to them,” persuaded of the advantages it will bring to them. He will open the Gospel more fully to them, for the Gospel is like a rich fruit of many tasty layers. Further, Paul had been granted unusual insight into the Gospel – an understanding to be shared as a rare jewel with those of “like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1).

NOT A PROBLEM SOLVER

While a considerable amount of the Apostolic writings deal with problems and difficulties in the church, that is NOT the primary ministry of the Apostles. Nor were they sent as mere recruiters, aiming only to enroll individuals, so to speak, among the people of God, or to inflate their own

number of disciples. Paul stated it well when he wrote, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17). Those who imagine this to be a denigration of baptism betray an inexcusable level of spiritual ignorance. No such notion is found in Scripture.

The fundamental responsibility of the Apostles was to declare and expound the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any rebuke, correction, or resolution of difficulties was to bring people within hearing distance of that glorious Gospel. They were not sent to correct the churches, although that often had to be done. The reason for doing it, however, was not merely so the people would live right, but it was to bring them within the perimeter of blessing where they were called in the first place. Nothing truly beneficial to men takes place apart from fellowship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9), living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). There will not be a single person in glory who failed to walk and live in this manner.

Knowing this, the Apostles labored to correct flawed thinking and living, not merely so the people would live correctly, but so they would be prepared to dwell with the Lord forever (1 Thess 4:17). Their role was to get the bride ready for Jesus – so that bride-to-be might be presented “as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). Jesus will present that bride to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). Whether men like to hear it or not, today’s “church,” for the most part, cannot be so described. In other words, it is not ready to meet the Lord – which it is going to do.

While it may have an appealing sound to it, those who represent the church as existing primarily for assistance of those in difficulty and need, have seriously misrepresented the case. The “church of the living God” is fundamentally “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Lest there be some question about what constitutes “the truth,” the Spirit provides a marvelous elaboration. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (verse 16). All of that “mystery” pertains to the Lord Jesus, and is contained in the Gospel Paul is determined to preach.

THE GOSPEL ITSELF

Thus, the Gospel itself is the point of consideration: “IT is the power. . .” It possesses indispensable spiritual properties that are necessary to our salvation – and that “salvation” is not completed until we are forever with the Lord. Furthermore, the Gospel has not lost any of these qualities, nor have any believers passed beyond their need of them: “it IS the power. . .”

All of this may appear to be an exercise in futility, but it is not. If those especially precious to God, whose faith was proclaimed throughout the world, needed the Gospel, how much more do many churches of our time, which give little evidence of either characteristic – “beloved of God, called to be saints, and whose “faith is spoken of.” Let the people of God place a high priority on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let none assume they have grasped more than a small measure of its magnitude. A message that affirms what the Lord has done cannot be small in any sense.

THE POWER

Here we rise higher than the limits of human language. As ordinarily perceived, the word “power” is an exceedingly small receptacle, incapable of containing an adequate concept of the Gospel. Thus, the Spirit says “the power OF GOD.” The accent is thus placed upon God, not the power itself. In other words, the power is something God employs to accomplish His intentions.

The word from which “power” is translated has long been the subject of academic comment. It comes from a Greek word (dun-a-mis), which some say equates to the English word “dynamite.” It all sounds plausible to the sophist: i.e., “the Gospel is God’s dynamite.” While it is true that the secondary meaning of “dynamite” is something having a powerful effect, it is still not an adequate word to use in our text. Dynamite is explosive, blowing things apart. But the Gospel has power that brings things together. The proper comparison is “DYNAMO,” not “dynamite.” Gospel “power” has to do with God-glorifying productivity, not destruction. Paul referred to this kind of power when writing to the wayward Corinthians: “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and NOT for your destruction” (2 Cor 10:8).

A powerless message is NOT the Gospel of Christ – even though such claims may be made. The importance of preaching the powerful Gospel of Christ in the churches is confirmed by the condition of most professing Christians. They simply are NOT “reigning in life” – the manner of living that is secured in Christ Jesus: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness SHALL REIGN IN LIFE by one, Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:17).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 13 of 39

THE MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for IT IS THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

“The POWER” refers to the means employed by God to accomplish His purpose – “salvation.” It is effective in bringing about the fulfillment of what God has determined – “salvation.” This is the “power” that belongs to God (Matt 6:13). It is only effective to accomplish His purpose. As it is written, “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psa 62:11). This power is not realized by voting, or planning, or mere human determination. This is “power” that does something, accomplishes something – something that has been determined by God Himself.

This power will not implement the will of men. It is not accessible in any sense to those who are not reconciled unto God. It is toward them “who believe,” and only so, as affirmed in Ephesians 1:19: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of

his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power TO USWARD WHO BELIEVE, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph 1:18-19). This is something that is to be seen, comprehended, and understood by the saints of the Lord. It is of such magnitude that their eyes have to be opened by the Lord in order to see it, be convinced of it, and rely on it. Enough of powerless religion – religion that has to be buttressed by the plans and inventions of men. It is time for the church to get out of the planning room, and into the praying room! The kind of power that is intended for the church cannot be uncovered by education, word studies, the original language, etc. God must open men’s eyes to see it, and He is disposed to do so.

The “power of God” is always associated with the accomplishment of something. It is never related to mere theory, or to a pointless display. Thus, when Mary conceived the Savior, “the power of the Highest” overshadowed her to accomplish the conception (Lk 1:35). When sick people came to Jesus “out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, the power of the Lord was present to heal them” (Lk 5:17). The “preaching of the cross,” to those who are being saved, “is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). In every case, God has an objective, and His “power” is the means of fulfilling or accomplishing it.

MERE RELIGIOUS DISPLAY

Men must exercise themselves to come away from the tendency to desire mere religious display. We live in an entertainment-crazed culture, where amusement and diversion from the realities of life are a primary objective. This mind-set has penetrated the professed church, causing people to think more subjectively than objectively – that is, they become more conscious of self than of God. They are being led to think of what pleases them rather than what pleases the Lord. By that, I mean their concept of religion is scarcely related to what God is doing. It has more to do with what they are doing.

Those in the grip of this delusion measure everything by its applicability to everyday life. They do not think in terms of what the Lord IS doing, or the world TO COME, or of the inevitabilities of death and judgment. This condition is precisely why the Gospel of Christ is not afforded a place of prominence. Professed preachers find it much easier to speak on other matters – novelties that appeal to the self-seeking interests of men. That is why they are not “determined” to “preach the Gospel” with power and insight to those who are “beloved of God” and “called to be saints.” The result of this misplaced emphasis is the ABSENCE OF POWER. Men attempt to deal with this absence of power by creating programs, procedures, etc. However, because their efforts lack power, they do not effectively repulse the attacks of the wicked one, do not deliver the people into spiritual liberty, and do not cause God to be glorified.

This is not an innocent and harmless circumstance, and God will hold in strict account all who either neglect or pervert the Gospel of His Son – which IS “the power of God unto salvation.” That is a salvation that is presently being “worked out” by the saints (Phil 2:12).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

IN ORDER TO SALVATION

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . .” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

The “power of God” is always employed to effect a purpose, to fulfill a Divine objective. It is not merely for display, nor is it intended to simply be talked about. Furthermore, it is not effective to accomplish anything unrelated to Divine purpose. This is precisely why the effective preaching of the Gospel requires some understanding of what God is doing. God has not called men to be robots that parrot a message. Rather, in Christ, men becoming “workers together with God,” “fishers of men,” and “ministers” by whom men “believe” (1 Cor 3:9; Matt 4:19; 1 Cor 3:5).

SALVATION

The gospel is the appointed means of effecting salvation – “the power of God unto (in order to) salvation.” He does not say initial salvation, but “salvation” – “salvation” in its entirety. Salvation involves more than extrication from the guilt and power of sin, just as the salvation, or deliverance of Israel involved more than simply coming out of the confines of Egypt. Israel was not fully “saved” until they entered the promised land, triumphantly wresting it from the hands of the heathen.

THE CASE OF ISRAEL

Israel is set before us as an example of salvation. Their salvation was INITIATED when they came out of Egypt. For those who believed, it was CULMINATED when they entered into the promised land of Canaan, and successfully drove the enemies out of the land (Josh 11:23). Between those two points were a number of salvation-details. In addition to actually coming out of the land of Egypt, the following was also included in their salvation.

1. They all were under the cloud (1 Cor 10:1a).
2. They all passed through the sea (1 Cor 10:1b).
3. They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:2).
4. They all ate the same spiritual food (1 Cor 10:3).
5. They all drank the same spiritual drink (1 Cor 10:4).
6. They were led by a pillar of cloud by day (Psa 78:14a).
7. They were led by a pillar of fire by night (Psa 78:14b; Ex 13:21-22).
8. Though nomads for forty years, their feet did not swell (Deut 8:4; Neh 9:21).
9. Their clothing and shoes did not wear out (Deut 8:4; 29:5).
10. Enemy nations were conquered by them (Deut 31:4).
11. Bitter waters were purified for them (Ex 15:25).
12. A covenant was given to them (Ex 19-20).
13. The Jordan River parted for them (Josh 3:17).
14. The walls of Jericho fell down for them (Josh 6:3-20; Heb 11:30).
15. The city of Jericho was given them (Josh 5:2).

All of this was “salvation” – “He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen THE SALVATION of our God” (Psa 98:3). That salvation was not complete when all of Israel was physically out of Egypt. It continued when they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and saw the Egyptian army drowned before their eyes. Their salvation involved being sustained on the way to Canaan, and being triumphant over armies that tried to stop them.

Indeed, there was more involved in Israel being saved than simply leaving Egypt! They had to be fed with manna in the wilderness and nourished with water from a rock in a desert place. Their clothing and their health had to be sustained, and their enemies repulsed. It was Divine power that accomplished it all! Not only were they led to pass through the Red Sea, but they also crossed the Jordan River at flood-stage (Josh 3:15). The wall around Jericho was caused to fall before them, giving them entrance into the city, triumphing over it with the sword (Josh 6:20-21).

All of that was “salvation,” commencing with walking out of Egypt, and brought to culmination when they walked into the promised land and took charge of it.

Salvation in Christ Jesus is of the same order. It commences with our baptism into Christ, and it continues until the church will stand before the Lord, the wife of Jesus that is “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). Until that time, as long as we are in the world, we are “being saved” (1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 2:15, NKJV). During that continued process, “the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.” It is the preeminent message of proclamation and exposition.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 15 of 39

SO IT IS IN SALVATION

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God UNTO SALVATION to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

When we are delivered from the guilt and power of sin, we are no more put on automatic pilot, than Israel was in the wilderness. They needed to be led in the day, and in the night as well – after they came out of Egypt (Ex 13:21-22). It was part of their salvation, essential to their arrival in Canaan, and a requirement for their survival. Even when they came to the borders of the promised land, enemies were confronted and victory had to be achieved. It was all through God’s power. That was part and parcel of their salvation! They were saved when they were delivered from Egypt, saved when they journeyed through the wilderness, and saved when they were later delivered from their enemies. So it is with those in Christ Jesus.

Unfortunately, a generation of preachers and teachers came into prominence that led the people of God to believe that “salvation” is only related to being converted, coming into Christ, and the

initial forgiveness of sins. Along with that came the erroneous teaching that preaching the Gospel was only for the sinner, and not for the church. That perspective was actually perpetrated by the devil and his demons (1 Tim 4:1). We know this is so by the results of that view. Gradually the church became popular under Constantine, institutionalized under the various popes, neutralized by the Age of Reason – “The Enlightenment” – and divided by heresies. It all happened because Jesus was no longer perceived as a Savior – a needed Savior. There came a clouding of the fact that Christ’s Kingship has to do with salvation in its entirety. In fact, salvation may be summed up in these words, Jesus is “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10). That is what salvation is, and the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” – salvation in its entirety!

The largeness of our salvation serves to emphasize the necessity of the Gospel. The time in which we are blessed to live is not “the initial experience of salvation,” but “the DAY of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2) – and those in Christ are “children of THE DAY” (1 Thess 5:5) – a Divinely protracted period of time while we are in this world. It is the time when salvation is being effected by the powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ponder how the Spirit speaks of this salvation – salvation that is the result of the Gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation.”

1. It is a “helmet” of protection (Eph 6:17), and therefore is never irrelevant.
2. It produces “hope” (1 Thess 5:8), and thus cannot be put into the background.
3. It is a “great salvation” that cannot be neglected with impunity (Heb 2:3), and therefore is obviously a necessity.
4. It is an “eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), and therefore cannot be confined to time.
5. There are indispensable things that “accompany salvation” (Heb 6:9), and therefore there is no time when salvation is not pertinent.
6. It is “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5), and therefore has not yet been fully revealed.
7. It is the objective, or “end,” of our faith (1 Pet 1:9), and therefore is not yet experientially complete.
8. It is presently “nearer than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11), and there has to be a “last” as well as a “first.”
9. God succors, or nourishes us, “in the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). Therefore, the saved are still in “the day of salvation.”
10. We are to “work out” our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12), therefore it has not yet been finalized.
11. Holy angels are presently ministering to those who “shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14), and their ministry would not be needed if the initial experience of salvation secures the believer forever.
12. If once men are saved they are always saved by virtue of their initial faith, then there can be no need for the ongoing ministry of Jesus – interceding (Rom 8:34), mediating (1 Tim 2:5), leading (Heb 2:10), and feeding (Isa 40:11; Heb 13:20).

What is there about these expressions that would lead any soul to believe salvation is experienced in its totality when one is put into Christ (1 Cor 1:30)? What would lead anyone to imagine there is nothing more to salvation than what was initially experienced? If there was no more saving to be done when Israel was delivered from Egypt, why was it imperative that they

have Divine protection, direction, and sustenance? The word translated “salvation” has a meaning that includes continuance: “deliverance, preservation, safety” (Thayer). That is what salvation is. Jesus Christ is the One through whom it is experienced. The Gospel is what announces it and brings the power to do it. If you doubt that you are not yet fully saved, consider your body, which is a part of you. It is not yet saved, and is never portrayed as being so.

The truncated view of salvation that views it as a single act at a single time has spawned spiritual feebleness. It has caused people to trust in a doctrine or teaching rather than in the Lord Jesus Christ. Religious men argue about this, but it may be said of those who introduce the argument, “understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7).

There are enormous vistas of this great salvation yet to be seen, to say nothing of being experienced. As I have already said, our bodies are not yet “saved.” But they will be, and we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23). This will occur at the resurrection of the dead, and not before it. Until that time, our bodies are a “purchased possession” (Eph 1 :14). The salvation has yet to be “revealed” (1 Pet 1:5). Jesus is presently described as “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). That is, He is saving the people who are saved – saving them to “the uttermost” (‘completely, perfectly,’ Thayer). That makes the Gospel not only relevant for those in Christ, but imperative.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 16 of 39

DIVINE INTERCESSORY MINISTRIES

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

If, as some allege, once you are in Christ you are in an unalterable state, then we are at a loss to explain the Divinely instituted activity of INTERCESSION – to say nothing of spiritual growth. Within the institutionalized church, there is very little being said about Divine intercession. This is because the theology that is being presented to the people does not require Divine intercession – else it would be declared with power. This is part of the Gospel, being founded on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

CHRIST’S INTERCESSION

The intercessory ministry of Jesus confirms that salvation has not yet been brought to its culmination. Thus it is written, “Wherefore He is able also to SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). In his insightful letter to the Roman believers, Paul accented this intercessory ministry: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, YEA RATHER, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34). In the

place of “yea rather,” other versions read “more than that” (ESV), and “more importantly” (GWN). This indicates that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ cannot be eternally profitable without the intercessory ministry of Christ. This is something God has purposed in order that the saints may be safely brought to glory (Heb 2:10).

THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The work and intercession of the Holy Spirit is also required in this great work of salvation. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom 8:26). This is not a reference to praying in tongues, as some falsely allege. Tongues are an utterance, but this intercession “cannot be uttered.” That is, it is accomplished without the personal involvement of the believer, who is ignorant of certain things that are needed. While our salvation requires our own involvement, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), that is not enough to get us to the glory. There are some things we need that require the intercession of the Holy Spirit, because we are not aware of them. Praise God for this marvelous ministry.

THE INTERCESSION OF FELLOW BELIEVERS

There are also certain occasions when the rescue of a faltering disciple depends upon the intercession of other believers. John had this in mind when he wrote, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:16). Other versions read, “God will give him life – to those who commit sins that do not lead to death” (ESV), “God will give that person life” (NLT), and “[God] will give him life [yes, He will grant life to all those whose sin is not one leading to death]” (AMPLIFIED).

A “sin unto death” is a sin that leads to the judgment of death – like that of Onan (Gen 38:8-10), Uzzah (2 Sam 6:6-7), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

OUR OWN INVOLVEMENT

In addition to all of this, we ourselves are involved in the process, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, persuaded that it is God who is presently at work in us (Phil 2:12-13).

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Salvation is a Divine work-in-process. We “SHALL be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom 5:9). We “SHALL be saved by His (intercessory) life” (Rom 5:10). We “are BEING saved” [NKJV] (1 Cor 1:18). “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are BEING saved” [NKJV] (2 Cor 2:15).

Salvation is the process whereby we are being “conformed” to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are advancing “from glory unto glory” (2 Cor 3:18). By means of the mutual ministry realized in the assembly of the saints, we are being

brought to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:15). From the subjective view, we are “pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14). Also, we are running the race that is set before us, “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:1-2). All of this comes under the umbrella of “salvation.” The objective view is seen in the Intercessory ministries of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Until we are fully “like Him,” with Satan bruised under our feet, and “ever with the Lord,” we are “BEING saved” (1 John 3:1-2; Rom 16:20; 1 Thess 4:17). As long as we wrestle “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12), salvation is not to be taken for granted.

NOT FINISHED YET!

If our salvation was complete, we would not require the intercession of Jesus. It would no longer be essential for the Spirit to intercede for us. There would be no need for the ministry of the holy angels. Our own spiritual aggression against darkness, and in pressing toward the goal, would be an absurdity if salvation had already been brought to its culmination. God’s people need to know this. This kind of knowledge is required if we are to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12), and run the race set before us with endurance (Heb 12:1-2).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 17 of 39

THE APPOINTED MEANS

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16-17)

And what is the appointed means of bringing salvation to its constituted completeness? What is the “power of God” to effect the appointment to salvation? – “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, BUT TO OBTAIN SALVATION by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:9). How will that appointment be carried out? How will it be brought to fruition? What is “the power of God” through which it will be accomplished?

IT IS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST! That is pointedly and precisely “the power of God UNTO salvation – salvation from its beginning to its end.” Other versions read “giving salvation” (BBE), “bringing salvation” (CJB), “for salvation” (NASB), “working unto salvation” (AMPLIFIED). We embrace the Gospel in order to COME into Christ, and we cling to it to REMAIN in Christ. Thus it is written of the Gospel, “By which also ye are saved, IF YE KEEP IN MEMORY what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor 15:2).

There is no point where salvation moves you beyond the perimeter of the Gospel, or reduces the gospel to something that is secondary, or no longer essential. If the Son of God is presently appearing in the presence of God as a newly slain Lamb (Rev 5:6) – if that is what is required in

heaven – how necessary it is for us to maintain such a view of Him on earth!

There is a common doctrine in some circles, one to which I was subjected, that affirms the preaching of the Gospel is for alien sinners, but teaching is for the church. This is a false doctrine, and the fruit of it proves that to be the case. It is driven by a minuscule view of “salvation,” and a failure to see that Christ never ceases to minister in the capacity of a “Savior.” He is not only the Savior of sinners, but is also “the Savior of the body,” which is His church (Eph 5:23). The Kingdom into which we have been translated (Col 1:13), and into which an entrance will yet be “ministered,” is “the Kingdom of our Lord and SAVIOR Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11). The saints of God are commissioned to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and SAVIOR Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). That is, the knowledge in which we are to grow and make advance has to do with Jesus Christ being our “SAVIOR ” – and that is something affirmed in the Gospel. Therefore, the Gospel is not only preached to bring people into Christ’s Kingdom, but to keep them there as well.

I affirm that the massive numbers of people who have retrogressed spiritually, fallen away, and returned to their old ways, have done so largely because of the failure of men to preach and expound the Gospel continually. If you will examine the Epistles with understanding, you will find that they are declaring the Gospel, together with its benefits and implications.

It is not enough for people simply to be told what to do. More is needed than sound counseling! Effective teaching and counseling must be accompanied with power – “power unto salvation.” The Law of Moses proves that to be the case, both by experience and by proclamation (Acts 13:39). There must be an incentive to do what is required. God has already shown us this cannot be accomplished through the Law, even though the Law pronounced “death” upon the transgressor (Ezek 18:4). The “fear of death” did not produce liberty, but brought bondage (Heb 2:15). The Law was the “strength of sin” (1 Cor 15:56), but it had no strength to produce either faith or hope. Therefore, being “weak through the flesh,” (Rom 8:3), it could not empower men for “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” (Tit 2:11-13), or constrain us to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Only the grace of God can do that, and the Gospel of Christ brings that message (Tit 2:12). It is “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) – and no person in this world will outlive the need for God’s grace. Further, God’s grace is inextricably associated with the Gospel (Acts 20:34; Gal 1:6).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 18 of 39

THE GOSPEL AND THE LORD’S TABLE

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Jesus instituted the Lord’s table to keep the Gospel alive and vibrant in our hearts and minds (1 Cor 11:23-28). That alone should establish to our hearts that the Gospel was never intended to be delivered only to alien sinners, or those who are God’s “enemies” (Rom 5:10). As long as

“salvation” is in the works, or being “worked out”(Phil 2:12), or some aspect of our persons is not yet “saved” – like our bodies (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14) – the declaration and exposition of the Gospel is not merely relevant, but ESSENTIAL. The necessary work of sanctification (1 Thess 4:3; 2 Thess 2:13) will not be accomplished where the Gospel is not being preached and expounded.

The remembrance of Christ is not a recollection of His ministry, His miracles, or His parables. It is the remembrance of Him, particularly as it relates to His death, which is the first component of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:3). In this remembrance the words “this is My body” and “this is My blood” relate specifically to His death. The preaching of the Gospel is not simply relating the facts of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. It is rather the exposition of WHY they took place, and WHAT OCCURRED at the time they were accomplished – and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were all accomplishments. Further, they are realities with which we become experientially associated. We die with Jesus (Rom 6:3; 2 Tim 2:11), are buried with Him (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), and raised with Him to walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).

The details of the Gospel are also referred to as “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). These are declared exclusively to the body of Christ, which is the church (Col 1:24).

The continued declaration of the Gospel – as in First Corinthians 15:1-23 – is an essential part of apostolic doctrine – the “doctrine” in which the church continues (Acts 2:42). For example, the words “the Gospel” are found sixty-five times in the Epistles (Romans thru Jude). Part of “the whole armor of God” involves “the Gospel” (Eph 6:15). Paul desired to come to the church in Rome “in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel” (Rom 15:29) – a church whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world (Rom 1:8). Paul wrote to the Galatians of his fervent desire that “the truth of the Gospel might continue with” them (Gal 2:5).

Paul preached “the mystery of the Gospel” to the churches (Eph 6:19), not to the heathen. We do not have a single example reporting “the mystery of the Gospel” being declared to anyone but the churches (Eph 6:19). “Life and immortality” are brought to light through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10). Writing to scattered believers, Peter wrote, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel IS PREACHED unto you” (1 Pet 1:25).

Partaking of the Lord’s Table is not a mere formality, to be fulfilled out of a sense of obligation. Rather, it is an activity that brings us closer to the heart of the Gospel, and consequently within the influence of “the power of God.” The death of Christ is related to the removal of sin (Heb 9:25), the destruction of the devil (Heb 2:14), the plundering of evil spiritual forces (Col 2:15), and reconciliation to God (Eph 2:16). In fact, “the dying of Jesus” is actually being lived out by His people: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor 4:10). The world is not told these things. They are exclusively announced to those who are “in Christ.”

INCENTIVE FOR GODLINESS

When the Spirit ministered rebuke or correction in righteousness, He consistently made an appeal to the Gospel of Christ. Remember that IT is God’s power in order to effect salvation – salvation in its entirety, not merely in its commencement. A few examples will suffice to confirm

this point.

1. Incentive to give of our resources to help needy brethren (2 Cor 8:9).
2. To provoke the avoidance of fornication (1 Cor 6:13-19).
3. To be longsuffering with our brethren, being tenderhearted and forgiving (Eph 4:32).
4. To purge sin from among us (1 Cor 5:7).
5. Discouraging a return to Law as a means of gaining Divine acceptance (Gal 3:10-13).
6. To receive one another (Rom 15:7).
7. The pursuit of humility (Phil 2:5-8).

EVERYTHING RELATES TO SALVATION

In Christ, everything relates to salvation. Nothing pertaining to life and godliness is separate from salvation. Every single aspect of spiritual life is driven by the power associated with the Gospel of Christ. The knowledge of this single reality will produce a revolution among God's people that can scarcely be imagined.

Wherever the Gospel is not being preached, salvation is not being initiated or brought to its intended culmination. God's "great salvation" can neither be initiated nor maintained apart from the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim 1:11). Settle it in your mind to give a high priority to the Gospel of Christ. Then you will find God giving a high priority to you.

Those who ONLY declare prohibition and rules for living, or who make such things their emphasis, have failed to perceive the power that is resident in the Gospel itself – the power that is "unto salvation."

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 19 of 39

TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVES

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Because of the low estimation given to believing God, this verse is often glossed. It is one of the great affirmations of the Spirit, pregnant with both meaning and power. It is not a deficient statement, or one that must be coupled with other affirmations to become effective.

Believing is not a "step" in a sequence of "steps" having to do with being "saved." There are at least two theological stances that view believing as a one-time activity. The first is the "once saved always saved" view that perceives believing as a one-time event that guarantees the finalization of salvation. The other view understands faith to be a one-time step in "the plan of salvation," and makes a point of declaring it is not of itself sufficient. Let it be clear that these

views are not set forth in the Word of God. The word of James that declares “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20,26), does not postulate that there is such a thing as dead and unproductive faith. He is declaring that faith without works is no more real; than a body without a spirit is a real person (James 2:26).

The noun “faith” is what is possessed. “Believing” is what is done with that faith. There is no such thing as a faith that does not do anything. Conversely, there is no legitimate work before God that is not the result of having faith and, consequently, believing – and believing always moves the believer to do something.

Faith, or believing God, is what connects us with “the power of God.” Believing a word from God is ALWAYS viewed as bringing advantage to the one believing. Disbelieving God always brings disadvantage to the one refusing to believe. The text before us accentuates the former. The Gospel of Christ “IS the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

The effectiveness of believing is frequently stated in Scripture. Here are a few clarifying samples.

1. “And by Him ALL THAT BELIEVE ARE justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).
2. “That WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).
3. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).
4. “He that BELIEVETH ON HIM is not condemned: but he that BELIEVETH NOT is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).
5. “He that BELIEVETH ON THE SON hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).
6. “I am come a light into the world, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON ME should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46).
7. “. . . WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).
8. “. . . WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM shall not be ashamed” (Rom 9:33).
9. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH” (Rom 10:4).
10. “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME shall never thirst” (John 6:35).
11. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME hath everlasting life” (John 6:47).
12. “I am the resurrection, and the life: HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).
13. “And WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME shall never die” (John 11:26).
14. “Behold, I lay in Zion a Chief Corner Stone, Elect, Precious: and HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM shall not be confounded” (1 Pet 2:6).
15. “WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1).
16. “If thou canst believe, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM HAT BELIEVETH” (Mark

9:23).

17. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, EVEN OUR FAITH. Who is he that overcometh the world, but HE THAT BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

The words “should not” do not mean “might not,” or suggest there is a possibility the promise might possibly not be experienced. The believing is itself the qualification for the blessing. The statement is an unequivocal promise made to those who believe, or are believing.

As is evident in the affirmations above, none of the things mentioned are to be combined with something else to be effective. All of the statements are quite clear on this point. None of these affirmations add an “if” statement. Ineffective faith is not really faith – it is unbelief. A mere PROFESSION of faith is not of itself sufficient.

The strength of these texts is evident. In all of them, believing is the fundamental thing. It is the supreme qualification, and in every instance it is based upon the Gospel of Christ – the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

To clarify the nature, power, and effectiveness of faith, the Holy Spirit recounts an impressive list of those whose faith caused them to react as they did (Hebrews 11:1-40). Real faith always does something – something that is right, and approved of God.

Care must be taken to avoid any view of God’s Word that minimizes believing. If someone imagines that believing has nothing to do with obeying, they must think again. Faith always obeys, as confirmed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. It is always unbelief that disobeys. Those who walk acceptably with God are called “believers” (Acts 5:14; 1 Tim 4:12). As already stated in the twenty-sixth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Romans, their obedience is the result of their faith, or believing – “the obedience of faith.”

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 20 of 39

WHAT IS BELIEVING?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Because of the general disregard of the value and effectiveness of believing, further consideration of it will be profitable. Remember, the Gospel of Christ IS [not “was”] the very power of God in order for salvation “for everyone who BELIEVES” [not “did believe” or “has believed”].

Etymologically, the word “believe” has strong implications, but they are only introductory, and by no means exhaustive of that meaning. The word comes from a Greek word (pis-teu-on-ti), which is in the present active mode. A precise translation would read “IS believing.” The words

“believeth” and “believes” are NOT referring to a point in time, or an event that took place in the past. This is something PRESENTLY occurring, or taking place. It is a trust and reliance that is IN PROCESS now. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God in order to salvation to everyone who IS BELIEVING. That is what the text says in both English and Greek. This casts an entirely different light on this verse than is ordinarily entertained. The Amplified Bible also puts it in the present tense, reading: “to everyone who believes with a personal trust and a confident surrender and firm reliance.”

Some read the verse with a mind to those who are alienated from God and lost in sin. To them, the text reads “to everyone who WILL believe.” But that is not what the text says. Others, convinced their aggressive involvement is not required in their salvation, see the verse as saying “to everyone who HAS believed.” But that is not the word declared here. This statement has no applicability whatsoever to someone who is NOT in the process of believing – convinced of God and His promises, trusting in Him, and relying on Him. Those who “ARE believing” are, in fact, living by faith (Heb 10:38).

THE NATURE OF BELIEVING

“Believing” is not mere intellectual assent, or lifeless acceptance. It involves persuasion, confidence, and trust, or reliance on the truth declared. “Believing” is the verb form, or expression of, faith. Faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). The word translated “substance” is larger than a single English word. It involves confidence, assurance, conviction, and realization. By saying faith is the “substance of things hoped for,” the Spirit means faith makes them real to the individual, “substantizing” them to the soul. The things themselves are real, and the persuasion is real, reaching into the human spirit. The word translated “evidence” is equally large. It means verification, proof, and certainty. It means that FAITH ITSELF is the proof of the things “not seen.” It involves the total absence of doubt, distrust, uncertainty, and a lack of confidence.

A person, then, who IS believing is living in the assured persuasion of the truth of the Gospel. Its certainty has been so impressed upon the human spirit that, to the precise degree of that faith, the entire life is shaped in view of the realities proclaimed in the Gospel of Christ. No human expression has the power of faith.

DEMONS BELIEVE, BUT NOT THIS WAY

All of my adult life I have heard people who do not see the preeminence of faith refer to even the demons believing. They do not use the text properly, nor do they understand it. Of the demons it is written, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: **THE DEMONS ALSO BELIEVE**, and tremble” (James 2:19). Their persuasion is not of the truth of the Gospel, but of the existence of God. They believe there is “one God,” conducting themselves with an acute awareness of their accountability to Him (Matt 8:29). Further, their persuasion of God has not come from the Gospel, but from their exposure to His immediate presence and influence. Their believing has not changed them. They believe because they have seen God, been in His presence, know why they were expelled from His presence, and are painfully aware of their appointed destiny (Matt 8:29). It requires something less than intelligence to liken their believing to the

belief of the Gospel – which deals with an unseen God, an unseen Christ, and the unwitnessed death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement of Jesus. Believing the Gospel involves the full and unquestionable persuasion of the reality of those unseen things – things that cannot be proved by natural means, or accessed by any human sense.

The “believing” of our text is NOT the believing that is ascribed to demons. It is said of those who are believing in Jesus, “Whom HAVING NOT SEEN, ye love; in whom, though NOW YE SEE HIM NOT, yet BELIEVING, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet 1:7).

Completely unlike the believing of demons, this believing of the Gospel is totally impossible without Divine assistance. It deals with something outside the border of human experience – something that is not apparent to any human sense. Man was not created with the capacity to know what was unseen. In his natural state, man cannot sense or know anything that is “unseen.” In fact we teach our children with this principle in mind. To even be aware of such things, men must hear a true testimony of them, or have a means of making some things that cannot be seen visible – like a microscope.

This is why Paul wrote to the Philippians, “For unto you IT IS GIVEN in the behalf of Christ, not only TO BELIEVE on Him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil 1:29). Faith is said to “come” (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:23– which means neither faith itself, nor the ability to have it, is inherent in men by nature. It is categorically stated that “peace,” and “love WITH FAITH” are “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 6:23). It is also written, “the grace of our Lord was exceeding ABUNDANT WITH FAITH and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 1:14).

Men cannot produce “substance,” and “faith IS the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

Let no person attempt to neutralize this text by equating demons believing there is “one God” with a reliance upon, or believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlearned arguments concerning “believing” serve to further cloud the truth to the people. By that I mean that anything that is not precisely real will have no power, and will be incapable of rendering any kind of spiritual assistance to men. After all God has said about faith and believing, during the day of judgment there will no doubt be an extensive dealing with corrupt views of believing and faith. I understand that to be involved in the saying, “let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged” (Rom 3:4). The Amplified Bible reads, “Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men].”

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 21 of 39

AN UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for IT IS THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17).

The unmitigated statement of this text should speak to our hearts. The Gospel of Christ IS the power of God unto salvation to EVERYONE who is believing. The Spirit does not say it CAN be the power, but that it IS the power. It is not God’s power to salvation for SOME who believe, but to EVERYONE who believes.

Believing has to do with PERSUASION – persuasion as seen in our father Abraham. When God promised him a son that he would father through Sarah, “being NOT WEAK in faith, he CONSIDERED NOT his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He STAGGERED NOT at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG IN FAITH, giving glory to God; And being FULLY PERSUADED that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Rom 4:19-21). It is written of Sarah, who shared that faith, “Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because SHE JUDGED HIM FAITHFUL who had promised” (Heb 11:11).

This is not what faith should do, it is what faith DOES. These are characteristics of a person who believes the Gospel of Christ. They are persuaded of the truth of the Gospel – what it announces, and what it promises. They do not consider their own sinful condition as inhibiting. They do not stagger in unbelief at the promise of eternal life. Their faith is strong, as exhibited in them obeying the Gospel. They comprehend God as fully able to do what He has promised.

This is why those on the day of Pentecost, when they were told what they should do, “gladly received the word” and were baptized – without requiring further explanations, and only being told once (Acts 2:41). THEY BELIEVED! It is why the entire city of Samaria believed and were baptized after hearing a single proclamation of the Gospel (Acts 8:12). THEY BELIEVED! It is why the Ethiopian eunuch insisted on obeying the Gospel after a single exposure to the Gospel of Christ (Acts 8:36-38). HE BELIEVED! It is why Lydia and her household, after hearing the Gospel of Christ once, “was baptized, and her household” (Acts 16:5). SHE AND HER HOUSEHOLD BELIEVED!! It is why the Philippian jailor and his household, after hearing the Gospel one time, were immediately baptized (Acts 16:32). THEY BELIEVED!

And how is it that such marvelous things took place without lengthy explanation, coercion, or some form of extended persuasion? It was because “the Gospel of Christ is THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation!” It is the appointed means through which the power of God works to accomplish salvation – salvation in its entirety.

What, then, ought to be our approach to believing? How should we regard it? If it is true that we must “fight the good fight of faith” with zeal (1 Tim 6:12), endeavoring with all that is within us to keep believing, trusting, and relying upon Christ Jesus, then we must be exposed to the Gospel of Christ, which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12), we must continue to hear the Gospel of Christ, which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are to be succored in the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2), we must hear the Gospel of Christ which IS God’s power unto salvation. If God has appointed us “to obtain

salvation” (1 Thess 5:9; 2 Tim 2:10), then we must hear the Gospel of Christ which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are to be “heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14), then we must hear the Gospel of Christ which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Pet 1:5), then we must hear the Gospel of Christ which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are to receive the object of our faith, “even the salvation of our souls” (1 Pet 1:9), then we must hear the Gospel of Christ which IS God’s power unto salvation. If we are to “keep in memory” the Gospel, we must hear it declared and expounded, for it IS God’s power unto salvation.

We cannot have the salvation either commenced or concluded without the Gospel of Christ.

God has made a pledge in this statement, and will not repent of it. If we will exercise ourselves to believe the Gospel, the power of God will see to it that we stand at last, pure before the Lord. It is time to abandon shallow views of “the Gospel,” “believing,” and “salvation.” Anything that requires God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, Divine power, the grace of God, being “kept,” continuance, Divine leading, and unwavering expectation must have POWER – Divine power. And it is unequivocally stated, “the gospel of Christ . . . IS THE POWER of God unto salvation.” (Rom 1:16). You can – yea must – take it from there.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 22 of 39

THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO THE GREEK

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

The words “also the Greek” refer to the Greek-speaking world, and compared to the Jews, who spoke “Hebrew” – “the Jew’s language” (2 Kgs 18:26; Isa 36:13), or “Hebrews tongue” (Acts 26:11). “The Greek” equates to “Gentiles.”

There have arisen all manner of teachings in the modern church concerning the Jews. Many of them reflect an extremely distorted view of the Word of God. Remembering that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” this text is to be viewed as precise and without flaw – as contemporary and not obsolete. The tendency to conform Scripture to preconceived notions must be mortified, and our thoughts brought into harmony with Divine utterance. No person can afford to be in disagreement with something God has said, for God “will be justified in all of His sayings”(Rom 3:4).

THE JEW FIRST

First, if God has thoroughly repudiated the Jews, this statement could not be made. Not only is the Gospel God’s power unto salvation to the Jew, it is to the “Jew FIRST.” The Spirit does not say the Gospel WAS God’s power unto salvation to the Jew “first,” but that it IS – and this was written at least twenty-eight years after the inauguration of the New Covenant on the day of

Pentecost. The word “first” means first in rank as well as in time.

Elsewhere, applicable to the era of the New Covenant, the Spirit identifies three distinct categories of people. They are “Jews,” “Gentiles,” and “the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32). The superior distinction is given to “the church of God,” to be sure, for that is the body of Christ (Col 1:18). In it, there is “neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28). In Christ “Jew” and “Gentile” have been joined together, comprising “one new man” (Ephesians 2:11-16). However, that by no means indicates that the Jews are no longer recognized as a people by God.

MENTIONED ELSEWHERE

This is not the only place the phrase “Jew first” is used. The other places will confirm to our hearts both the nature and declaration of this text. “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of THE JEW FIRST, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to THE JEW FIRST, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom 2:9-11).

Thus we have three affirmations concerning the Jews being “first.” (1) In the experience of the power of the Gospel to those who are believing. (2) The punishment of every soul that does evil. (3) The gift of glory, honor, and peace to every soul who works good. None of these have any contemporary significance whatsoever if God now has no regard at all for the Jews. In such a case, some of God’s word would have passed away, and even the promises of Moses would now be obsolete (Deut 15:15,18; 30:6), as well as the promise given through Jacob (Gen 49:10).

The Spirit also refers to Jews and Gentiles in expounding the nature of salvation. “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles ALSO? Yes, of Gentiles ALSO, since indeed God who WILL JUSTIFY the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” (Rom 3:29-30). Notice, the Spirit does not refer to a past arrangement, but a present one: “IS.” This text also places the Gentiles in second place: “Gentiles ALSO.” The same identity is ascribed in Romans 9:24. “Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but ALSO of the Gentiles?”

Rather than the Jews being summarily dismissed from Divine consideration, in Christ the Gentiles are made “fellowheirs (with the Jews), and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6). In Christ Jew and Gentile are made “one new man” (Eph 2:15) – a condition with no significance if the Jews no longer have a Divinely recognized identity. Gentile believers did NOT take the place of the Jews. Rather, they were joined together with the believing Jews who are also in Christ. They are also joined to the body of the Jews to whom the promises were made (Rom 9:4) – “grafted in among them” (Rom 11:17, NKJV).

GENTILE DISTINCTION RECOGNIZED

To further show the absurdity of the notion that the Jews have utterly ceased to be a people before the Lord, note that the Spirit continues to refer to “the Gentiles.” It is the existence of the Jews that allows for the term “Gentiles,” or “Greeks.” The word “Gentiles” obtains no significance apart from the “Jews.” Further, the Epistles refer to “the Gentiles” no less than 40 times. Outside of Christ, both Jew and Gentile still exist. Neither of them has ceased to be. In fact, the ONLY

place those distinctions are removed is “in Christ” (Gal 3:28; 5:6; 1 Cor 12:13).

WHAT ABOUT JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION?

Some, inordinately eager to justify the position that the Jews have been summarily rejected, trace that hypothetical rejection back to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It was at that point, they affirm, that the Jews were finally written off and repudiated as a people.

This destruction was foretold by the Lord Jesus. He even told WHY the judgment would come. It was because that “generation” rejected Him, not knowing the time of their “visitation” from on high. Our Lord wept over the prospect of that coming judgment (Luke 19:42-44). He also referred to this destruction when affirming the devastation of the temple (Matt 24:2; Mk 13:3). He associated this destruction with the “abomination of desolation” prophesied by Daniel. It would be so fierce that those with child would suffer, and running, or fleeing from the city would be required (Mk 13:14-20). The curse was NOT pronounced upon all Jews, but upon a certain “GENERATION” of them (Matt 12:41-42; 23:36; Lk 11:50-51; 17:25).

Did all of this mean a total rejection of the Jews, as some affirm? Indeed not. The Lord spoke most precisely on this matter. “But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES BE FULFILLED” (Lk 21:23-24). The word “until” speaks of limitation. Jesus left the door open, and we do well to consent to His word. Paul further elaborated on this matter delivering the following reasoning: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness IN PART is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness FROM JACOB: For this is MY COVENANT UNTO THEM, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they ARE beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:25-29). Further, it is affirmed that only “SOME of the branches be broken off” (Rom 11:17).

The church is never referred to as “Israel” or “Jacob.” I do realize that some say that Galatians 6:16 refers to the church as “Israel” – “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” The church is referenced in these words “as many as walk according to this rule.” “Israel” is not a redundant reference to the same people. The Gospel is still “the plower of God unto salvation TO THE JEW FIRST.”

What is more, the current status of the church strongly suggests that “the times of the Gentiles” is approaching an end (Lk 1:24), and “the full number of the Gentiles” (NLT) is approaching (Rom 11:25). That time will conclude the judgment upon Israel, and the exalted Christ will “turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 23 of 39

CATEGORICAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE JEWS

“ . . . to the Jew first . . . ”

There is so much said in the Scriptures on this subject. It is a marvel that the erroneous doctrine to which I have referred has risen – namely that the Jews have been written off, and the church has taken their place. Later in this Epistle, the Spirit will also refer to a time associated with the Gentiles. “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part UNTIL THE FULL NUMBER OF THE GENTILES HAS COME IN” [NIV] (Rom 11:25).

The third chapter of Romans affirms the Jews **STILL** have certain advantages. Such a statement is foolish if they are no longer a people. “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? **GREAT IN EVERY RESPECT**” (Rom 3:1, NASB). Compare their advantages with that of a flourishing Gentile church. There you might find a youth minister and youth program, a family life minister, a worship leader, an exercise facility . . . etc.

First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God” [NASB] (Rom 3:1-2). The advantages are detailed in the ninth chapter. “Israelites, to whom **BELONGS** the **ADOPTION** as sons, and **THE GLORY** and the covenants and the **GIVING** of the Law and the **TEMPLE SERVICE** and the **PROMISES**, whose are **THE FATHERS**, and **FROM WHOM IS THE CHRIST** according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (9:4-5, NASB). If a person imagines this is referring to the church, viewed as spiritual Israel, then the “giving of the Law and temple service” as well as the fleshly generation of Jesus, has come from the Gentiles – which thought is the epitome of ignorance.

The eleventh chapter of Romans develops this thought in a most extensive manner. From that chapter, I will only list the strong arguments presented concerning the Jews.

1. God has **NOT** cast away His people (11:1a).
2. The conversion of Paul himself, an Israelite according to the flesh, confirms this did not occur (11:1b).
3. Just as surely as there was a remnant in Elijah’s day, so there is a remnant among this people today (11:2-5).
4. Israel has **NOT** stumbled so as to fall, or be beyond recovery (11:11a).
5. Salvation has come to the Gentiles **TO PROVOKE** the Jews to jealousy (11:11b).
6. If their fall brought riches to the Gentiles, much more will blessing be brought **BY THEIR RECOVERY** (11:12).
7. Paul’s Apostleship to the Gentiles was **IN ORDER TO** provoke the Jews to jealousy, saving some of them (11:13-14).
8. If casting them away meant the reconciling of the world, the **RECEIVING OF THEM** will be

life from the dead (11:15).

9. The “firstfruit” and the “root” are all “holy.” That is why the larger mass and the branches are “holy” (11:16).

10. Only “SOME of the branches” of the natural Jewish tree were broken off (11:17a).

11. Some of the Gentiles, from a wild olive tree, have been GRAFTED IN “among” the Jews (11:17b).

12. Gentile believers are partaking of the nourishing sap of the OLIVE ROOT OF ISRAEL (11:17c) – which “root” does not exist if the Jews have been summarily cut off.

13. The Jewish branches were NOT broken off so that the Gentiles might be grafted in. Salvation is NOT a replacement program (11:18-21).

14. God is able to graft the Jews in AGAIN (11:23).

15. It is REASONABLE for them to be grafted into their own tree once again (11:24).

16. Blindness “IN PART” has happened unto Israel (11:25a).

17. The blindness of the Jews is only UNTIL the full number of the Gentiles are come in (11:15b).

18. The Deliverer WILL TURN AWAY ungodliness from Jacob (a name never applied to the church, 11:26).

19. God’s covenant to TAKE AWAY their sin is still in place (11:27).

20. Although presently they are “enemies” for the sake of the Gentiles, they ARE STILL “beloved for the fathers’ (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) sake” (11:28).

21. The gifts and calling of God are WITHOUT REPENTANCE (11:29).

22. Just as we Gentiles have obtained mercy because of their unbelief, so through the mercy extended to the Gentiles, the Jews will also OBTAIN MERCY (11:30-31).

23. All of this is a remarkable display of the arresting WISDOM OF GOD. It confirms His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out (11:33-36).

It is exceedingly difficult for me to imagine how a case for “the Jew first” could be established with any more certainty! I unhesitatingly and confidently reject the erroneous postulate that the Jews have been totally cut off, and the Gentile church has taken their place. That hypothesis is a glaring display of ignorance and unbelief.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 24 of 39

GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN THE JEWS

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

God has not forgotten the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nor, indeed, has He blotted from His recollection the covenant He made with Israel – the promised New Covenant we presently enjoy, and over which Jesus is now presiding (Jer 31:31-34).

One final word from Jeremiah will confirm the reason for the Gospel being the power of God unto salvation “TO THE JEW FIRST.” I will give this marvelous prophecy from the New

Revised Standard Version. Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:16-17 confirm that this is the New Covenant we are now enjoying, and which Jesus is presently mediating (Heb 8:6).

“The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:31-34).

All who are acquainted with the New Covenant know that it is the framework in which our salvation is being accomplished. Outside of Christ, not one syllable of this covenant finds fulfillment.

The Lord did not end this promise through Jeremiah with these words. With solemnity and determination He added the following words, which He is never represented as withdrawing. “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the LORD of hosts is His name: If this fixed order were ever to cease from My presence, says the LORD, then also the offspring of Israel would cease to be a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD: If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will reject all the offspring of Israel because of all they have done, says the LORD” (Jer 31:35-37).

Again, the Almighty God promised Israel: “Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD : for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I WILL NOT make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished” (Jer 46:28). Hear the Lord speak to Israel: “For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:6-10).

Thus, those who say God is finished with Israel must give an account of themselves to God. They have not told the truth, whether inadvertently or in stubbornness. They must also explain to us why the sun is still shining, and why the moon and the stars can be seen at night. They are obliged to account for how the “fixed order” of nature could remain while Israel has been repudiated. Let them stand before us and give their measurement of the heavens, and tell how they have explored the foundations of the earth. If they can present such evidence, then we will acknowledge that

God did “reject all the offspring of Israel because of all they have done, says the LORD” – which would necessarily mean that God lied to Israel.

But if they must acknowledge the continuance of the sun, moon, and stars – and if they cannot measure the heavens or explore the foundations of the earth – then let them throw away their despicable doctrine, for it cannot be true! In their doctrine they have reproached God and contradicted His promise! Their teaching reveals the presence of unbelief and brings dishonor the God of Israel.

The Gospel IS the power of God unto salvation “TO THE JEW FIRST.” Let none doubt it, or allow their hearts to entertain some imagination concerning the total rejection of the ancient people. Let us acknowledge the truth of our Savior’s own words: “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 25 of 39

AND ALSO TO THE GREEK

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and ALSO TO THE GREEK.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

The word “Greek” is not a geographical consideration, but a cultural one. At the time this Epistle was written, Greek was the universal language. This was done under the administration of Alexander the Great, who headed up the third global Kingdom – Greece – prophesied by Daniel (Dan 2:31-35). Providentially this was a preparation for the Gospel going into all the world.

“The Greek” represented the world, or non-Jewish population, in its most refined and cultured state. Non-Greek-speaking people were referred to as “Barbarian” or “Sythian, who were considered “the wildest of the Barbarians” (Thayer). However, in spite of the seeming disparity between oppressed Jews (whose only distinction was their revealed religion) and the self-developed superiority of the Greek world, the Jews ranked “first,” and the Greeks were viewed as “also.” In fact, another word for “Greek,” as commonly known, is a non-Jew or pagan.

The Greeks, the Spirit declares, had a desire for wisdom. As it is written, “the Greeks seek after wisdom” (1 Cor 1:22). Because of this demand, they considered the “preaching of the cross” to be “foolishness” (1 Cor 1:23). The Apostles did not cater to this penchant, but preached “Christ crucified.” Unlike impotent Grecian wisdom, the Gospel declares the “power of God and the wisdom of God,” neither of which were found in Grecian culture (1 Cor 1:24).

The Jews were the best in the religious realm, and the Gentiles excelled in the cultural realm. But they both needed salvation, and the Gospel of Christ is God’s power to accomplish that need.

Here, in the spectrum of humanity, we have those chosen by God as the people through whom the

Savior would come, and people who received no revelation other than the limited disclosure of Deity that is witnessed in the creation (Rom 1:20). The Gentile world had no Divinely ordained prophet, no revealed Law other than the conscience, and no inspired writing or Scripture.

As men would think, this cultural disparity would require two different Gospels – two different approaches to the matter of salvation. However, this is not at all the way in which God thought. He could say to the whole world what He said to Israel, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8-9).

The Gospel of Christ is not presented on a cultural level, nor is its exposition submitted on a societal level. Those who teach Scripture from a cultural point of view are thinking in an unlawful manner.

The Gospel addresses all men from a Divinely assessed point of view – “by nature,” not by culture. It is written of the unsaved – both Jew and Greek, or Gentile: “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were BY NATURE the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3). ‘Natural men’ have no innate or independent capacity to think properly before God (1 Cor 2:14). The Gospel addresses all men as “alienated from the life of God” (Eph 4:18), in need of reconciliation (Heb 2:17), “enemies in their minds” (Col 1:21), “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), “having no hope and without God” (Eph 2:12), and being “not a people” (1 Pet 2:10). Whether the individual is a king or a pauper, that is the assessment of his condition. Whether educated or uneducated, that is their status. Whether male or female, or bond or free, that is their state, and that is the framework within which the Gospel is presented.

With all of the preparation and advantages given to them, there is not a special Gospel for the Jews. There is not a special Gospel tailored for gender, social status, age-categories, or professional distinction. This, of course, is in sharp conflict with special ministries for the single, the married, the youth, the aged, etc., etc. In Christ a politician like Theophilus, a doctor like Luke, a former Pharisee like Paul, a woman like Phebe, and a young man like Timothy can have profitable fellowship together, based around the same Gospel.

We do not proclaim “A Gospel,” but “THE Gospel.” It does not require adaptation to people groups of any sort. That is because it addresses all people at a common level – sinners by nature who need a Savior. Blessed is the individual who can perceive these things.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 26 of 39

CONCLUSION of ROMANS 1:16

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Verse 16, Romans 1:16-17)

Salvation, in all of its aspects, is accomplished through the Gospel of Christ. As soon as the Gospel is considered secondary, salvation, from an experiential point of view, immediately begins to wither, and the believer becomes weak (Lk 8:13). It makes little difference what profession of faith is made, apart from the Gospel of Christ salvation in all of its fulness cannot, and will not, be realized. The Gospel “IS the power of God unto salvation.” That is a precise statement. Further, as already stated, our salvation is presently being “worked out” (Phil 2:12). The race has not yet been completed (Heb 12:1-2), and the “good fight of faith” is still going on (1 Tim 6:12). Those are related to this salvation. We still require an Intercessor in heaven (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), and one within as well (Rom 8:26-27). We need One in heaven to “keep us from falling” (Jude 1:20). We presently occupy a body that cannot transport into the world to come, and we are therefore waiting for its redemption (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14). The power to effect those processes is resident in the Gospel of Christ. It is as the Gospel is preached and expounded that we are able to tap into that indispensable power.

The circumstance of neglecting the Gospel, accounts for the spiritual poverty and moral weakness that is too often found in the churches. There is no “POWER unto salvation” apart from the declaration and exposition of the Gospel of Christ. The exposition of the Gospel is found in the Epistles, written to the churches. In the Epistles (Romans thru Jude), the words “Jesus” and “Christ” occur 466 times – always in regard to His death, burial, and resurrection. There is considerable teaching on what occurred at the time of those events, and what is now taking place because of them. These are things that are not found in the Gospels, and are only briefly mentioned in the book of Acts (ex: Acts 13:39).

On the other hand, wherever the Gospel is declared with insight, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, salvation will become more evident through appropriate growth in Christ.

Whatever makes the Gospel seem irrelevant cannot be from God – unless it is a delusion, sent as a judgment for not receiving the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10-12). In Scripture, when men refused to embrace the Gospel, they were told, “but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

Not only, therefore, is the Gospel “the power of God unto salvation, to every one who believes,” it is something that can be rejected, thereby bringing the judgment of God upon the individual. Allow no teaching to enter your heart that makes little of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It is the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

Those apostolic expositions of the Gospel are the delineation of the POWER resident in the Gospel—i.e. “Christ the power of God” (1 Cor 1:24); “the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 5:4); “the power of Christ” (2 Cor 12:9); “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:19-20); “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20).

That is the marvelous “POWER of the Gospel,” all, of which is based upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

Lesson 27 of 39

THE REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed . . .” (Verse 17, Romans 1:16-17)

Here we begin the doctrinal portion of this Epistle – and it is lofty. Keep in mind, this is a declaration of the Gospel – an opening up of the good news. It will immediately be apparent to you that what is here proclaimed is rarely heard in Christian circles. In the sense of this text, I have scarcely ever heard any reference whatsoever to “the righteousness of God.” This is, however, an extensive theme that will be expounded from this point through the conclusion of the eighth chapter.

The expression – “the righteousness of God” – is found eight times in the epistles (Rom 1:17; 3:5,21,22; 10:3; 2 Cor 5:21; James 1:20; 2 Pet 1:1). It is always associated with salvation, and the implications, of that salvation. In salvation “the righteousness of God” is manifested, or made known (Rom 3:21,22). In Christ we are “made the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). We have “obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God” (2 Pet 1:1).

“THEREIN”

The word “therein” refers to the Gospel of Christ. Not only is it “the power of God unto salvation,” the Spirit now tells us WHY it is: “FOR therein . . .” I have rarely heard a message, or read an article, dealing with Romans 1:16, that associated it with the Divine explanation of its power, which is verse seventeen – “the righteousness of God.” I credit this significant omission to the effect of institutionalized religion upon those embracing it. A systematized religion encourages the tendency of imposing spiritual blinders upon the soul, producing extremely restricted views and understanding.

The Gospel is more than a simplistic message. It is a spiritual container in which much can be found. Too often the Gospel is viewed entirely apart from this fundamental consideration: it is an appointed receptacle that holds life-giving benefits. Further, it is what is IN the container that makes it effective.

ILLUSTRATED IN NATURE

The Gospel is much like a complex fruit, containing many nutritious elements. A marvelous example of this principle is the peanut. From this seemingly uncomplicated fruit George Washington Carver produced over 300 different products. They included cereals, oils, dyes, soaps, flavors, and food substitutes. He found a use for the nut, the shell, and the plants left in the ground. His work in this area is one of the remarkable achievements in this world.

By simply viewing a picture of a peanut in the shell, or of the nut within the shell, or of the plant

in the ground, these incredible things are not evident. It required someone with insight to open the possibilities of the peanut to us mortals. However, even if brother Carver (himself a believer in Christ) did not discover these uses, they were all still resident in the lowly peanut.

How much more is this kind of revelation found in the Gospel of Christ! It is filled with power and resources for the believer. However, their perception strictly depends on their faith. Further, if the Gospel is imagined to be only for sinners, the door of understanding will be shut, and the people will be confined to a state of spiritual ignorance. They will not “grow up into Christ in all things” (Eph 4:15), be able to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12), be “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:9), “continue in the faith” (Col 1:23), be “established in the faith” (Col 2:7), or be “sound in the faith” (Tit 1:13). All of that postulates continued exposure to the declaration and exposition of the Gospel of Christ (Rom 1:15; 15:29; 1 Cor 15:1; 2 Cor 8:18; 2 Cor 11:7; Gal 2:5; Eph 3:6; 6:15; Phil 1:7; 2 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 1:10; 1 Pet 1:25).

In the most minute sense, and to the furthest extent, “the Gospel of Christ IS the power of God unto salvation. Salvation cannot be worked out without the Gospel (Phil 2:12-13). No one can be “partakers of His promise” unless it is “by the Gospel.”

I come from a background in which the “Gospel” was not viewed as essential among the saved, and where “the faith” was seen as a compendium of apostolic doctrine. Both views are seriously wrong. They have further made a place for a plethora of “the doctrines of men.”

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 28 of 39

THE GOSPEL REVEALS SOMETHING

“Therein is revealed . . .” Whatever is “revealed” in the Gospel is what gives it effective “power unto salvation.” We are to understand that salvation cannot be realized apart from what is “revealed” within it. This is something that is found wherever the real Gospel is found. It is not a mere part of the Gospel, but is REVEALED in the Gospel. The Gospel, then, sheds light on something—something that is required for our salvation. The truth is that until the righteousness of God has been experientially revealed in the Gospel, it has not really been believed. This is the righteousness that is imputed to men.

The surface view of the Gospel – like looking at the peanut itself – is the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. These are the pillars upon which the Gospel are founded. However, it is what is made known by these pivotal accomplishments that brings “power unto salvation.”

This is the bane of declaring the Gospel from merely a historical perspective: i.e., “two thousand years ago.” It is also the weakness of seeking to buttress the Gospel with tangible evidence and logical proofs. Neither of those things, however useful they may appear, possesses the “power of God.” I suppose that both, like the law, are good if a man uses them lawfully (1 Tim 1:8).

However, a considerable amount of effort is yet to be expended to support that supposition.

Remember, the Spirit is accounting for the power and effectiveness of the Gospel of Christ. The proclamation of the Person and accomplishments of Christ reveal what is now affirmed. Any Gospel that does NOT reveal this, is really “another gospel,” and is to be discarded as theological garbage.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

The “righteousness of God” is mentioned five times in this book. In every case, it is a pivotal deliberation (1:17; 3:5,21,22;10:3). This is not an academic consideration – like learning a mathematical table – because it is “revealed.” Later, the Spirit will affirm “the righteousness of God” is “manifested,” or “made known” (3:20). This is, then, something to be perceived, comprehended, or understood.

NOT REFERRING TO GOD BEING INHERENTLY RIGHTEOUS

This is NOT referring to an understanding that God IS inherently righteous. It is certainly the truth that “God IS righteous” (Isa 41:26). Unquestionably, “the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which He does” (Dan 9:14, NKJV). He is “righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Psa 145:17). Whatever He has done is right, and is not to be questioned by mortals. His judgment, whether condemning or justifying, is always “righteous” (Rom 2:5; 2 Thess 1:5). In delivering up His Son He was righteous (Rom 8:3). He is also righteous in justifying the ungodly (Rom 3:25).

However, this is not the sense in which “the righteousness of God” is used in this text. The point being made here is that the justification of sinners by God, were it not for the vicarious death of Jesus Christ, would NOT be righteous. An atoning death through which the sins of the world were taken away (John 1:29), was essential if sinners were to be justified. Any person who was accepted by God prior to Jesus (like Abraham, Genesis 15:6), was received upon the basis of the coming death of Christ, upon whom “the iniquities of us all were laid” (Isa 53:6).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 29 of 39

A CONFERRED RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Gospel reveals a righteousness that God confers upon men – and it is His very own righteousness – “the righteousness of God.” The glorious Gospel does not merely make known that God is righteous, although that can certainly be seen in it. That revelation, however, has been affirmed from the beginning of God’s dealings with men, namely that God is righteous (Gen 18:25; Judges 5:11; Ezra 9:15; Job 36:3; Dan 9:14).

Righteousness – “the righteousness of God” – is a premier consideration in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS . . .” (Matt 6:33). This is a righteousness to be appropriated. Seeing this, Paul affirmed his life was lived in order to be “be found in Him (Jesus), not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that

which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is FROM GOD by faith” (Phil 3:9, NKJV). He knew that righteousness was imperative to be accepted by God, and that he could not develop such a righteousness himself. The righteousness of God is the only valid righteousness!

I am persuaded the masses of professed believers have not yet been convinced of the necessity of having righteousness – God’s righteousness. They have heard a Gospel so thoroughly diluted with the wisdom of this world that they can scarcely arrive at a valid conclusion concerning righteousness or Divine acceptance.

Know that this righteousness is a very real righteousness. It is not a theoretic righteousness, or one that does not result in proper living. God does not give men righteousness like a sort of spiritual label that does not reflect the proper nature of the people possessing it.

We must exercise ourselves to break free from shallow and distorted views of salvation. It is still true, “the unrighteous SHALL NOT inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9), and without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Make no mistake about this, the unrighteous man has a mandate from heaven, and there is no way to avoid it with impunity. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:7-9). Unrighteousness, then, has to do with more than our deeds. It has to do with our ways, or manners, and our thoughts as well. Unless we are righteous in those areas, our future is hopeless!

To put it another way, in Christ Jesus men are “MADE righteous” (Rom 5:19). Their nature is changed by re-creation. That new creation is described as being “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). God’s Law is written in their hearts and minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16). They are made “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14).

This righteousness is said to be “imputed” to believers (Rom 4:11,22-24). Other versions read, “accounted” (New King James), “reckoned” (New American Standard), and “credited” (New International). The word translated “impute” means “to pass to one’s account” (Thayer). Like the natural creation, this is a status that is conferred by God speaking. That is, even as the worlds were “framed by the word of God” (Heb 11:3), so men are made righteous by Divine pronouncement or decree. God does not create by His hands, so to speak, but by His word. The righteousness of which our text speaks is as real in the moral arena as the original creation is in the seen realm.

“The righteousness of God” is revealed in the Gospel. That righteousness is appropriated and maintained by faith – “from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17). God was righteous in making Jesus “to be sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21), and He is righteous in making men “to be the righteousness of God” in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). The righteousness the saved are “made” is as real as the “sin” Jesus was “made” to be on the cross. If men are not righteous, it is because they are not being “made righteous,” and if they are not being “made righteous,” they are not believing on Jesus Christ. Furthermore, whoever is genuinely righteous has been “made righteous.”

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 30 of 39

TWO WAYS TO BE RIGHTEOUS

There are two types of righteousness mentioned in Scripture. One depends upon men keeping the Law, and the other comes from God, imputed by means of faith.

OF THE LAW

The first is called a righteousness which is “from the Law.” This is NOT a righteousness from God, but one proceeding from self-effort alone: “my own righteousness” (Phil 3:9). When Jesus comes, He will “find” all men. At that time, there will be no hope whatsoever for any person having only his “own righteousness, which is from the Law.”

In this righteousness, the individual fulfills the “righteous requirements of the Law,” carefully and without flaw doing everything that God requires without a single deviation. This “righteousness” is particularly described for us. Appropriately, the description is provided by Moses, through whom the law was “given” (John 1:17). “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which DOETH those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5). The Levitical law declared, “Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man DO, he shall live in them: I am the LORD” (Lev 18:5). Nehemiah also said of God’s laws, “which if a man DO, he shall live in them” (Neh 9:29). Ezekiel made the same statement: “which if a man DO, he shall even live in them” (Ezek 20:11,13,21). Jesus said the same thing in answer to a man asking about obtaining eternal life: “Thou hast answered right: this DO, and thou shalt live” (Lk 10:28). The word does not say “want to do,” or “ALMOST do,” but “DO!”

The Spirit declares that this approach has nothing whatsoever to do with faith. “Yet the law is NOT OF FAITH, but the man who does them shall live by them” (Gal 3:12). The Amplified New Testament reads, “But the Law does not rest on faith – does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith – for it itself says, He who does them (the things prescribed in the Law) shall live by them, [not by faith].” This is too strong for those with a propensity for Law. But it is the truth!

Here DOING is compared with BELIEVING. Under Law, becoming righteous is traced back to DOING as its cause. Mind you, this is not the doing of God. Remember, the Law is “not based upon faith.” This is NOT speaking about God working in us “to will and to do of His own good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). The life of the individual is thus placed in his own hands. There will be NO Divine intervention, NO new birth, and NO provision for reconciliation. Being alive to God will depend solely upon the impeccable and flawless performance of the individual. That is the “righteousness of the Law.” A single offence voids all other seeming works of goodness, making

the individual guilty of breaking every jot and tittle of the Law (James 2:10).

Let us imagine for a moment that we did, in fact, find someone who did everything they were commanded by God to do. Even though that is only an imagination, Jesus did tell us what would occur were such a person found. “So likewise you, when you have done ALL those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (Lk 17:10, NKJV). Ponder what good word is ever said to an “unprofitable servant!” Tell me if there is so much as a spark of hope held out to such a servant.

But let us take the matter even further. Hear the Spirit as He reasons concerning our father Abraham, “the friend of God.” “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, BUT NOT BEFORE GOD” (Rom 4:1-2).

If you have ever thought yourself equal to the challenges of the Law, quickly abandon such foolishness! The righteousness that comes from the Law is a vaporous one. It simply is not possible, for the Law “was NOT made for a righteous man” (1 Tim 1:9). It can neither produce nor sustain a righteous man. The Law itself is “righteous,” but it cannot produce a single righteous deed, or right a solitary wrong. Its ministry is that of condemnation, not justification. As a covenant, the law was “the ministration of death,” and “the ministration of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7,9). It did not remove sin, but defined it and confirmed men were guilty of it (Rom 3:19-20).

Throughout history, men have had a propensity to imagine they could become righteous by keeping the very Law they had broken. Once broken, however, the Law cannot be mended together in such a manner as to produce righteousness. That should be apparent to every thoughtful soul. It will also produce a strong longing in the tenderhearted for a righteousness that is accepted by God. The Gospel announces just such a righteousness.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 31 of 39

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH

The Gospel reveals a righteousness that is appropriated by faith. It is called “the righteousness of faith” (Rom 4:13), or “the righteousness that comes by faith” (New International Version) “the righteousness that trust produces” (Complete Jewish Bible); “the uprightness of faith” (New Jerusalem Bible), or “a right relationship with God that comes by faith” (New Living Translation).

This righteousness must be revealed before it can be appropriated, confirming it does not proceed

from man, nor is it the result of keeping the Law, or obeying the commandments of God. Rather, it is brought to man – quite different from the righteousness of the Law. This will be more fully developed as I proceed with this series.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

There is only one righteousness that is acceptable to God, and that is HIS OWN – “the righteousness OF GOD” (Rom 1:17; 3:31,32; 2 Cor 5:21). Here is a spiritually technical point that will yield much benefit.

It is God’s own righteousness that is granted to us because of our “faith in His [Christ’s] blood” (Rom 3:25)–i.e. , our persuasion of its effect.

Some have viewed this righteousness as the “righteousness of Christ,” even though no such reference is ever found in Scripture. This particular view sees Jesus as fully keeping the Law in our behalf. Because of His flawless obedience, His righteousness is then imputed to us. Although Jesus was flawlessly righteous, it is not His righteousness that is imputed to us. That is, it is not the righteousness DEVELOPED in the arena of spiritual warfare that is given to us. That is the kind of righteousness “the Man Christ Jesus” had upon earth.

The purpose of Christ’s righteous life was not the development of a righteousness to be imputed to us. Rather, it was in order to qualify Him to make the required sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the world. It was in order that He might fulfill the righteous demands of God for reconciliation. It is not Christ’s Deity that saves us, but His humanity. The enthroned “Lamb of God” (John 1:29,36) is bringing us to glory. Twenty-seven times in The Revelation the exalted Christ is referred to as “the Lamb.” That depicts a Savior that died – an experience that is never attributed to God the Father.

The death of Christ atoned for sin because of His impeccable righteousness! He “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21), “did no sin” (1 Pet 1:22), and “in Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). He is, in every sense of the word, “the Righteous (One)” (1 John 2:1). Again, His righteousness validated His atoning death. He was tempted (Matt 4:1; Heb 2:18; 4:15), but He “did no sin” (1 Pet 1:22).

While the righteousness of our text does, indeed, come from God, it also belongs to Him. It is a righteousness to which men submit themselves (Rom 10:3) – not one that is developed by them. This is precisely the point developed in the tenth chapter of Romans: “Since they (Israel) did not know the righteousness THAT COMES FROM GOD and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to GOD’S righteousness” [New International Version] (10:3).

Thus the Gospel not only reveals that God Himself is righteous in reconciling the world to Himself, but that He graciously and willingly confers that very righteousness upon all who believe in Christ. This is a required righteousness, without which there is no hope of heaven. That is a righteousness that will stand uncontested before the tribunal of heaven, both now and in the last day. It is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, and is appropriated by faith.

Permit me to underscore this again. Jesus did not keep the Law for us, He “DIED for us” (Rom

5:8; 1 Thess 5:10). Now, God's own righteousness can be imputed to us – a very real righteousness. It is not found in our flesh, but in the “new man,” which is “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). When we “put on the new man,” which we are admonished to do (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), it results in us DOING righteousness. Thus a truly righteous life is not the result of doing righteousness, but doing righteousness is the result of having been “made righteous” (Rom 5:19). Therefore, it is written, “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness IS born of him” (1 John 2:29). And again, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness IS righteous, even as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7). Praise the Lord!

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

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FROM FAITH TO FAITH

“ . . . from faith to faith . . . ”

Other versions read, “through faith for faith” (New Revised Standard Version), “by faith from first to last” (New International Version), “from faith unto faith” (American Standard Version), “from start to finish by faith” (New Living Translation), “based on faith and addressed to faith” (New Jerusalem Bible), and “a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed through the way of faith that arouses to more faith]” (Amplified Bible).

This is doubtless one of the most profound of all utterances. It declares the means by which righteousness is appropriated, and the effect it has upon the individual. The phrase “from faith to faith” is my particular focus. The thing that is revealed through the Gospel is this: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD [which] is “from faith to faith.” That is, this righteousness is appropriated by faith, and it leads to further faith, and growth in faith. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith GROWETH EXCEEDINGLY” (2 Thess 1:3). That growing faith confirmed they had appropriated righteousness, for righteousness promotes the growth of faith. You might say that righteousness fuels faith. The person who has been “MADE righteous” (Rom 5:19), trusts God more, depends upon the Lord in increasing measures, and has a greater quantity of Kingdom “substance” (Heb 11:1).

The idea is that our experience of the righteousness of God springs from faith, then feeds, nourishes, and enhances faith. To put it another way, we must believe in order to be given the righteousness of God, and we must possess the righteousness of God in order for our faith to be perfected. Righteousness – the imputed righteousness of God – is the Divinely appointed link between “first believing” (Rom 13:11) and possessing faith when the Lord comes again (Lk

18:8). Fighting the good fight of faith and laying hold of eternal life (1 Tim 6:12) is contingent upon this righteousness. At no point is righteousness severed from faith.

The individual who lives by faith (Heb 10:38), walks by faith (2 Cor 5:7), stands fast in the faith (1 Cor 16:13), has a purified heart by faith (Acts 15:9), and is waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal 5:5), has been “made righteous.”

Let it be clear, believing, or having faith, is not an event, or a step in an imagined “plan of salvation.” It is not a one-time experience. This is a posture of life that begins when we believe the Gospel, and continues until we leave this world, or Jesus comes – whichever is first. A person who is NOT living by faith is not justified, for “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH” (Rom 1:17, American Standard, New American Standard Bible). The Complete Jewish Bible reads, “But the person who is righteous WILL live his life by trust (Rom. 1:17). The English Standard Version reads “The righteous SHALL live by faith.” The New International Version reads, “The righteous WILL live by faith.”

There is no question about the affirmations of the Spirit. Men ARE “justified,” pronounced “righteous” by faith, and those who are justified, or made righteous, live by faith. Armed with this understanding, it is the solemn obligation of all professing believers to do the following: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor 13:5). The Amplified Bible reads, “Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing the proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?”

The Christian world allows for too much assumption. God does not allow for any! People who are really saved have really been justified, and people who have really been justified are really living by faith. That is the way it is, and it is incumbent that every believer examine himself to see if this is an appropriate description of himself.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 33 of 39

PAUL’S TESTIMONY

It is no wonder Paul was so eager to be found possessing this righteousness in the last day, when nothing else will really matter. He wrote, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ,

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF FAITH” (Phil 3:8-9, NASB). The relevance of this to the life of faith is confirmed in the Apostle’s next words. “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil 3:10-11). Thus the righteousness received by faith is seen as itself provoking further faith. The more aware the believer is of the possession of the righteousness of God, the more strength faith gains.

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

The righteousness of God is appropriated by an appointed means – FAITH. Apart from faith, it cannot be possessed – not under any other condition! Later in this Epistle, the Spirit will strongly affirm this to be the case. With a soul-jarring emphasis it is declared, “with the heart man believeth UNTO righteousness” (10:10). The NASB reads, “with the heart man believes, RESULTING IN righteousness.”

When early believers were lured into the snare of Law, they were reminded, “knowing that a man IS NOT JUSTIFIED by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, THAT WE MIGHT BE justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Gal 2:16, NKJV). The word “justified” means to be “made righteous.” Not only is the individual exonerated from all sin, but is given a new and spotless nature – the “new man” (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10) The “new man,” or the “new creation,” is nothing less than “the righteousness of God,” granted upon the basis of faith in, and reliance upon, the Lord Jesus Christ. The perception of this will clarify First John 3:9 and 5:18. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and HE CANNOT SIN, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9); “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one TOUCHETH HIM NOT” (1 John 5:18). Those texts are unusually strong. Men are not to tamper with them in an effort to justify their shallow views. That which is “born of God,” or “begotten of God” is the new nature – the “new man” which “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24), and is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

And what is it that sparked that indispensable faith? Was it the Law? Indeed, not, for “the Law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12). It was the Gospel that brought the righteousness of God within our reach – that declared Christ died and has been exalted because He thoroughly pleased God in His atoning death. That is why it is written, “faith comes by hearing” – the hearing of the Gospel of Christ (Rom 10:14-17).

To put it another way, the righteousness is offered by the Gospel and received by faith. Someone has well said that when we are first born again, we see the Lord’s favoring look toward us – but at a distance. As our faith grows, however, that favor of the Lord toward us is seen more clearly. This produces a bold confidence and determined perseverance. Without faith, it is not possible to obtain the righteousness of God. Further, without the righteousness of God, it is not possible for faith to grow. Thus His righteousness comes to us through our faith, and our faith is strengthened by His righteousness – “from faith to faith,” or from initial faith to increasing faith.

This arrangement confirms to our heart that salvation is not a once-for-all matter—at least not from the participative point of view. Salvation is a work that can only be brought to a culmination while we are within the favor of God. It cannot be accomplished from a distance, or while men are in a state of practical alienation from God. The imputation of the righteousness of God allows for the completion of the work.

Your own experience will confirm to you that there is scarcely a word being uttered in modern churches on this subject. Where this is true, the work of God is not being done, people are not being perfected, and victory is not being experienced.

Should a person choose to still cling to the foolish notion that the Gospel is not for the believer, let him ponder how utterly absurd this text would be if that were true. The Gospel is always as essential as it is to be found in Christ possessing the righteousness of God that comes by faith.

Now the text will elaborate on the phrase “to faith,” or “in order to faith.” We will see that it is not possible to remain spiritually alive without faith. Also, it will become apparent that faith is not possible – at any point of life in this world – apart from hearing the Gospel of Christ. Faith and the hearing of the Gospel are joined together, and cannot be separated.

The Gospel continues to be a feast of fat things, and wine on the lees, nourishing our faith (Isa 25:6).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 34 of 39

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

“ . . . as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

Here is one of the most frequently quoted sayings in Scripture.

HABAKKUK

It is first affirmed by the prophet Habakkuk. He states it with a very personal tone. “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by HIS faith” (Hab 2:4). Here believing is contrasted with pride, so that the unbelieving soul is the proud one, and the believing soul is not proud. The prophet also concludes that only PERSONAL faith can sustain the soul—i.e. “HIS faith.” One person cannot live toward God upon the basis of the faith of another.

GALATIANS

Paul concludes from this statement (“the just shall live by faith”) that it is EVIDENT no man is justified by the law. “But that no one is justified by the law IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IT IS EVIDENT, for the just shall live by faith” (Gal 3:11, NKJV). Those, therefore, who fail to see this are blind. This truth can only be seen if, by faith, God is in view. Our thinking must be theocentric (God-centered) if this truth is to be seen – and it MUST be seen, or understood!

Notice that living is associated with justification as well as being born again. Those imagining they can remain justified while believing only “for a while” (Lk 8:13-14) are in the grip of delusion – Satanic delusion!

HEBREWS

In the book of Hebrews, the Spirit makes a strong case for the necessity of faith, showing that without it condemnation is inevitable. “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back TO PERDITION, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:38-39, NKJV).

Here, faith is contrasted with drawing back from God, shrinking into the bushes of delusion. From this perspective, faith is leaning and pressing toward the Lord. It is getting closer so He can be the better heard, and His hand can be placed upon us, as Jacob’s hands were placed upon Joseph’s sons (Gen 48:1-14). Believers make every effort to draw closer to the Lord – like Moses. And, when they are as close as they can get, they cry out, “Show me Thy glory!” (Ex 33:17-23).

I come from a background where faith was rarely mentioned, and was not set forth as it is in Scripture. My good father, Fred O. Blakely, was the notable exception, always speaking of “faith” to me. Whether, in others, the omission of faith was intentional or not, most people adopting the view that I also had considered believing to be a step in a “plan of salvation” that had been codified by earlier members of the movement. It was not stressed that a believer is someone who IS BELIEVING – not believing certain facts, but trusting in the Lord, persuaded of His Person and grace. The impact of this distorted view shaped how I read the Bible, and attempted to live for Jesus. I simply read over the thirty times “by faith” is mentioned, and the fifteen times “through faith” is mentioned. When I read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, I found myself looking at those who are mentioned as heroes, rather than fellow believers – now they are “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23).

So, you will pardon me if I glory in the Lord, thanking Him for the indispensable role of faith, that faith can grow, and that the grace of God is exceeding abundant with the supply of faith (1 Tim 1:14). Let it be heartily embraced and proclaimed: “Now the just shall live by faith!” “Shall” – not as in OUGHT to live by faith, but as it is in reality, they WILL live by faith.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

AN EXPOSITION

The statement, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” is now expounded by the avowal “The just shall live by faith.” This is a fundamental consideration.

THE JUST

A “just” person is a “righteous” person, or one whose life is marked by uprightness – as God views uprightness. That person has been “made righteous” by God (Rom 5:19). This has taken place by imputation, or by conferring righteousness by a Divine fiat – like light flooding the formerly dark world with light (Gen 1:3). That “light” was real, and so is imputed righteousness. The standard by which the state of rightness is measured is the will or character of Jesus Christ. Thus we read, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, EVEN AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS” (1 John 3:7). Viewed from the standpoint of legality, the “just” person is one who can stand before the Divine tribunal and NOT be condemned (John 3:18).

PRIOR TO THE LAW

NOAH. Prior to the giving of the Law, the first man said to be “just” was Noah. It is said of him, “Noah was A JUST MAN, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9). Considering the time in which he lived, and the scarcity of Divine revelation, Noah is a most remarkable man. Of the multitudes living at that time, he is the ONLY man who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). His righteousness was viewed in comparison with the wicked generation in which he lived: i.e., “perfect IN his generations . . . “righteous before Me IN this generation” (Gen 6:9; 7:1). From Noah to Abraham, nearly a thousand years, no person was said to be “just” or “righteous.”

ABRAHAM. In Abraham, God introduced the kind of righteousness experienced in Christ Jesus. Abraham was righteous, but not merely in comparison with his generation. His righteousness, or becoming “just,” was imputed to him. Thus it is written, “And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). Of this Paul said righteous was “counted to him” (Rom 4:3), “reckoned” (Rom 4:10), “it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Rom 4:22), “it [his faith] was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gal 3:6).

This affirmation is the basis of Apostolic doctrine (Rom 4:3-6,9,11,20-25; Gal 3:6-14; James 2:23). It is written, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:23-24). It is said of the righteousness of Abraham, “that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:” (Rom 4:11).

The Psalmist also referred to this imputation of righteousness in Psalm 106:31, where the righteous deed of Phineas is cited: “And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.” (Psa 106:31).

Thus, in Abraham, we are introduced to a man that was MADE righteous by God because of his faith – not because of his deeds.

THE LAW. Under the Law, being “just,” or “righteous,” had to do with approved conduct – meticulously keeping the Law. Viewed in the strictest sense of the word, Solomon said, “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl 7:20). It is further confirmed in the Psalms and this very Epistle, “There is NONE righteous, no not one” (Psa 14:1-3; 53:2-3; Rom 3:10). In the general sense of the word, there were people considered “just” because of their upright character and devotion to keeping the Law. Among them were Joseph, husband to Mary (Matt 1:19), Zechariah and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist (Lk 1:5-6), John the Baptist (Mark 6:20), Simeon, who blessed Jesus in His infancy (Lk 2:25), Joseph of Arimathaea, in whose tomb Jesus was buried (Lk 23:50), and Cornelius (Acts 10:22). If you were to examine them carefully, you will find that they all were people with faith, which is th sanctifying possession (Acts 26:18).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

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DEVELOPING OUR TEXT

When our text speaks of “the just,” or “the righteous” (NASB, NIV), it is NOT speaking of a comparative righteousness like that of Noah. Nor, indeed, is it speaking of people who are “just” in the sense of Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Simeon. This is not “just” as defined by the Law: i.e., Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who DOES these things will live by them” (Rom 10:5). Thus the law affirmed, “Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD” (Lev 18:5). Declaring that this is NOT the definition of “righteousness” in Christ, apostolic doctrine states, “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which DOETH those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5), and “And the law is NOT of faith: but, The man that DOETH them shall live in them” (Gal 3:12). Under the Law, “righteousness” came because of what men did. Under grace, what men do is the result of being made righteous. Therefore John wrote, “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness IS BORN OF HIM” (1 John 2:29). Such an individual is NOT born of Him because he did righteousness, but did righteousness because he was born of Him. Again John writes, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness IS RIGHTEOUS, even as he IS righteous” (1 John 3:7). Again, such an one is not righteous because he did righteousness. Rather, he did righteousness because he IS righteous.

If a person insists on tracing the cause for being righteous to what he has done, Paul informs us of two things that must be done if anyone is to be “made righteous.” There is a potency in these words that transcends the most lofty capabilities of human thought. “But the righteousness which

is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" (Rom 10:6-7). There you have two things that must be done if you are to be saved, or "made righteous" (Rom 5:19). You must go up to heaven and bring Jesus down in order that He must die. Then, as if that was not enough, you have to go down to the regions of the dead, and bring Jesus back from the dead.

Those two things had to happen if you are to be justified. If your justification depends upon what YOU do, you are the one who has to do them. If you cannot do them, then your justification, or being made righteous, cannot possibly be the result of what you have done or are doing. Let it be clear in your mind, your justification depends wholly on what the Lord has done, and is doing. He has come down from heaven. He has died. He has come back from the dead. He has been enthroned in heaven (Heb 1:3. He is interceding for those He is saving (Heb 7:25). He is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). He is keeping His people from falling (Jude 1:20). Men are not causing these things to happen, or assisting the Lord in the doing of them – not in any sense. If the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had not done, or is not doing any of these indispensable works, no one extant in the world at this time could possibly be saved, and none of the ancients could be saved, from Adam through John the Baptist.

In this text "the just" are those who have been MADE just. Like Abraham, their righteousness has been imputed to them upon the basis of their faith. This is the whole argument of the text. The Gospel is God's power in order to salvation to all who believe that Gospel. Therein, by means of the Gospel, a "righteousness from God" is revealed (1:17; 3:20).

I must be emphatic on this point. This is not a mere technicality. The Spirit will reason on this precise point through the eighth chapter of Romans. It is one of the most extended developments of a subject (if not the most) in all of Scripture. We learn from this that men are easily blinded to this. We also see that no real progress will be made in spiritual life where this is not comprehended.

Now, the Spirit will tell us how the life, granted in justification, is maintained. He will declare how those who have gained God's approval remain in that status. He will affirm how those who have been raised from death in trespasses and sins keep alive.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 37 of 39

LIVING BY FAITH

"The just shall live by faith," or "The righteous will live by faith" (NIV).

Note, it does not say “the just” OUGHT to live by faith, but that they WILL live by faith. Those who are justified do not live by their wealth. They do not live by their influence. They do not live by their own wisdom or ability. They live by faith. Their faith has brought them life, and their faith will maintain that life—spiritual life.

“Living” is not mere existence. It is not simply being in a certain place, or maintaining a certain identity. In professed Christian circles, this is too often the view. So far as our text is concerned, being “alive” involves being “married” to Christ and bringing forth fruit to God (Rom 7:4). It includes the capacity to hear “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev 3:22). It also involved following Jesus wherever He goes, bearing ones cross every day (John 10:27; Lk 9:23).

Being alive is running the appointed race with endurance while “looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:1-2). It is wrestling against the inimical powers of darkness (Eph 6:12), and waiting for God’s Son from heaven (1 Thess 1:9-10). It involves the “fruit of the Spirit” being found in us (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:9), and working out our “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12).

Those who are “living” are wearing the “whole armor of God” (Eph 6:10-17), “hastening unto the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet 3:12), and submitting to God and resisting the devil (James 4:7). They are anticipating a “better country,” and thus consider themselves to be “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13-14,16). For them, living is saying and doing everything “to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). It is keeping “pure” (1 Tim 5:22), and not touching the unclean thing (2 Cor 6:17). It is putting on the whole armor of God, and standing against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:10-18). It is successfully denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly and righteously in this world, all the while looking for the coming of “our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:11-13). It is maintaining the fellowship of Christ into which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9). It is abiding in Christ (1 John 2:27-28).

Where this posture is not found in an individual, the person is not “alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). Such a person does not, in that condition, have “ears to hear” (Lk 8:8; Rev 2:7). Like the church at Sardis, such people are “dead” (Rev 3:1).

And how are the justified ones able to maintain that life? How is it that they are able to “endure unto the end?” (Matt 24:13). They are living by faith, for that is how the person who has been made “just” lives. Elsewhere it is said, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). And again, “stand fast in the faith” (2 Cor 1:24; 1 Cor 16:13). We live in peace with God “by faith” (Rom 5:1), have access to the grace of God “by faith” (Rom 5:2), and “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7). The reality that dictates how the justified live is their faith – faith that came to them (Rom 10:17; Gal 3:23).

How marvelously Paul testified of his own life in Christ Jesus. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20, NKJV). There simply is no other way to remain “dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God” (Rom 6:11).

The very thing that brought us life keeps us alive. The Spirit says it this way. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col 2:6). Faith constrains us to lean

the weight of our souls upon the Lord, depending upon Him to “bring us to God” in a blameless and joyful state (1 Pet 3:18; Jude 24-25).

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 38 of 39

FAITH AND THE GOSPEL

If “the just shall live by faith,” then how is that faith kept strong and vibrant? Settle it in your mind that there is no spiritual life where there is no faith! How CAN we “continue in the faith grounded and settled,” seeing as that is an absolute requisite to being presented before God “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Col 1:22-23)? The secret is, **IT IS OUR EXPOSURE TO, AND EMBRACE OF, THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!** This simply cannot be done on a once for all basis. That is, initially believing the Gospel and embracing it is not a one-time event that fulfills our obligation to the Gospel.

It should not be necessary to make such an observation. The word “gospel” is mentioned eighty times from Romans thru Revelation. If we knew nothing more than that, we should thrust from us the vain notion that the declaration of the Gospel is intended for sinners, not for saints. That is a notion spawned in the regions of darkness! In fact, the Gospel is nowhere expounded in the Gospels. It is never affirmed in the record of Jesus’ life WHY He died, WHY He rose from the dead, and what was actually accomplished in those pivotal realities. Even the book of Acts provides very few expositions of the Gospel of Christ – the exposition of what was actually accomplished by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is in the Epistles that the Gospel is preached with the thoroughness required to save the soul.

Do not imagine this to be an overly simplistic and powerless statement. Men may accent human effort, which is indeed required. But the Spirit will associate our faith with the Gospel, never allowing it to be sustained without that Gospel. Thus believers are admonished to strive together “FOR the faith of the Gospel” (Phil 1:27). And what is “the faith of the Gospel”? It is not the faith itself of which the Gospel speaks, for the Gospel does not speak of faith, but of the One in whom faith resides. Faith “comes” to us as we reach out, taking hold on the Gospel. In this case, faith is like the hand of the soul with which we grasp eternal verity.

This is nothing less than the faith that “comes from hearing” the Gospel (Rom 10:14-17). Colossians 1:23 refers to a faith that does not allow us to be moved away from the “hope of the Gospel”–i.e., the hope announced by the Gospel, and produced and sustained by the continual embrace of it. When Paul determined to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonians in their faith, he sent Timothy, a “fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess 3:2). This is why Paul was ready to “preach the Gospel” to the believers in Rome. He knew it was the nourishing root from

which faith springs and by which it is also sustained.

If it is true that “the just shall live by faith,” then spiritual life cannot be found where faith is not present. Further, faith cannot come or remain independently of the Gospel of Christ. That is why we begin our spiritual lives by overtly participating in the Gospel through our baptism (Rom 6:1-8). It is also why we continue to refresh our hearts and minds by the regular remembrance of the Christ of the Gospel around the Lord’s table.

Faith will never take you beyond a need for hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it cannot remain without that life-giving message. The Gospel is a deep and refreshing well that sustains the soul as well as being the means of converting it.

Further, as Scripture affirms, the Gospel is anything but simplistic. It is more than an historical narrative. Neither, indeed, is it the statement of a lifeless theological creed. It is THE message through which God reveals what we so sorely require. How we need to hear it! It towers above all other messages, bringing life and hope to humanity, and nourishing and sustaining our faith. It announces atonement and reconciliation. It proclaims the demise of the devil, and the objective of God in redemption. It affirms that its effects reach beyond the end of the world and the day of judgment. It announces that its power transforms, sanctifies, and perfects the saints. Referring to the Gospel of Christ, John writes, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:10-12).

It simply is not possible that believing God’s record of His Son refers to a single event – an initial believing. Men do not taste of the “power of God unto salvation” once. They must continually draw water from this well – and this simply is not possible if they cease to hear the message, or be exposed to it.

THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17)

Lesson 39 of 39

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with one of the most profound passages of Scripture. It is ironic that it is often viewed as one of the more simplistic ones, and is therefore very much neglected. Many have made mention of this text only in reference to evangelism and reaching the lost. But the Spirit has associated it with being right before God and living by faith. Further, it is addressed to the churches. The Gospel of Christ is an ongoing spiritual resource in which “the righteousness of God” is made known. The Spirit does not say this righteousness WAS revealed by means of the

Gospel, but that it IS made known IN the Gospel.

No believer will go long without having to contend with the devil's assault upon his sonship. Just as surely as Satan aggressively sought to bring Christ's Sonship into question at the beginning and conclusion of His ministry (Matt 4:3-6; 27:43), so he will seek to bring your Divine acceptance into question. He will use adverse circumstances, false teaching, and even personal imaginations, to convince you that God has really not received you. When this happens, you must "fight the good fight of faith," aggressively engaging the devil and his devices in order to keep the faith (1 Tim 6:16).

While all of your effort is involved, the real source of your victory is your faith. It, and it alone, "is the victory that overcomes the world" (1 John 5:4). And, if that is too ambiguous for you, the Spirit clarifies what is meant. "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5). The person who maintains that persuasion cannot lose!

And, how is it that the conviction that Jesus is the Son of God can be kept fresh? It is through the Gospel, and only through the Gospel! As meaningful as apologetic, historical, and archeological evidences may appear, which one of them has ever contributed one gram of substantiation that "Jesus is the Son of God?" The only source of that proof is found in the Gospel, which itself is a revelation from God (2 Tim 1:10), and is referred to as "the record God has given of His Son" (1 John 5:10-11)..

If the people of God are to be strong, they must hear the Gospel of Christ, both declared and expounded. Men of God must take this precious message and open its sustaining contents to the people. Their recollection of Jesus at the table of remembrance must be lifted above lifeless routine into the realm of invigorating life.

Let those who have correctly required believers to be baptized now take the Gospel and open to those "baptized into Christ" what really occurred in that singular event. None of them knew the fulness of that occasion when it took place, and precious few of them have a remotely adequate knowledge of its effects now. They are, because of a high level of spiritual ignorance, trusting in their baptism instead of the One into whom they were baptized. It is all in the Gospel of Christ.

Those who have a penchant for church patterns and organizations need to hear how it has been purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and raised up to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6). They need to be reminded of the remarkable and unparalleled power that is devoted to them (Eph 1:19; 3:20), and how Jesus is preparing to present the church to Himself as a spotless bride (Eph 5:27). It is all in the Gospel of Christ.

The Gospel is a great light from heaven. In a grand statement of our God, the Spirit affirms He "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and **BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL**" (2 Tim 1:9-10).

What is there that is pertinent to any aspect of salvation that has no connection with “life and immortality?” Is there any commandment or obligation that has nothing to do with “life and immortality?” Is there any human relationship divorced from “life and immortality?” Is there a single aspect of the body of Christ that has nothing to do with “life and immortality?”

Let those who imagine the Gospel to be irrelevant point us to a single human responsibility or relationship having nothing to do with “life and immortality”

Of course, to ask these questions is to answer them. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, having to do with our relationship to God through Christ, that is disassociated from “life and immortality.” Here, in “life and immortality,” the whole of our lives is encompassed. These deal with this world and the one to come; with fighting the good fight and obtaining the prize. Both living and dying are found in them. And it is all “brought to light,” or illuminated, by the Gospel of Christ!

– Given O. Blakely