



## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 3



# THE GOSPEL AND LIVING BY FAITH

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. 17 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, KJV)

## 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.

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. The righteousness of God was hardly mentioned at all, and believing was viewed more as a commandment 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.

### LESSON OUTLINE

- I. I AM NOT ASHAMED (1:16A)
- II. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST (1:16B)
- III. THE POWER OF GOD (1:16C)
- IV. IN ORDER TO SALVATION (1:16D)
- V. TO ALL WHO BELIEVE (1:16E)
- VI. THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO THE GREEK (1:16F)
- VII. THE REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (1:17A)
- VIII. FROM FAITH TO FAITH (1:17B)
- IX. THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH (1:17C)

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. The second and third are “*the righteousness of God*” and “*faith*,” or believing, experienced by the child of God. Throughout the Scriptures these are always primary. 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

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.

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 obedience, or strict adherence to a

moral code. This is largely done from Mount Sinai, with little regard to the grace of God.

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 such an approach, and can testify to the difficulties that attend recovery from its

debilitating affects. In this lesson, I will endeavor to capture the revealed view of the Gospel of Christ, without any regard whatsoever of 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. Where the Gospel of Christ is not preached or known, faith will, at the very best, be weak. Further, there will be no lively awareness of acceptance with God, or the experience of His righteousness. These things, and more, make the passage before us a critical one.

## I AM NOT ASHAMED

<sup>1:16a</sup> **For I am not ashamed . . .**”

This is a most wonderful expression of confidence: *“I am not ashamed.”* Further, to declare it without hesitancy is evidence of a faith that has apprehended the truth. 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). While such shame is not of itself sinful, 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).

### 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. 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.”*

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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.

### The Supreme Display

The height of folly found in the world's wisdom relates directly with the Gospel of Christ. In sending His Son into the world—*God manifest in the flesh*—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 governmental princes, but of those expert in the thought patterns of this world. They came from the philosophical, political, and religion 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).

In Jesus, the Divine nature was displayed 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!*”

They 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 expediency (Mark 14:64; John 11:49-50). Pilate thought it wise to consent to the matter because of political convenience (Mark 15:15).

**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*”<sup>NASB</sup> (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!

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.

**The Natural Man Is Destitute**

“*The natural man,*” cultured or not, “*does not receive the things of the Spirit*

*have led Egypt astray in all that it does, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit*”<sup>NASB</sup> (Isa 29:11-15).

Paul, knowing the Gospel and firmly relying upon it, is not ashamed to declare

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*of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (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’*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (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*

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.

**THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**

<sup>1:16b</sup> . . . of the gospel of Christ . . . Here is spiritual precision: “*the Gospel of Christ.*” It is not the gospel of the church, or of the Spirit, or of anything else finding its focus in this world. 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  
“Good”**

The Gospel is “good news.” It is not a good moral discipline, or a good law, but good “news.” It is inherently “good”—that is its nature. This is a message that speaks of benefits, as compared with requirements.

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. There is nothing about the 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.

“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. The word translated “Gospel” is an exceeding large one (εὐαγγέλιον—eu-ang-gel-ion). 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 twenty-first 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.

Entirely by Revelation

The Gospel in its entirety has come by revelation. Not a single syllable of the Gospel is a conclusion, 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 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 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.

Hidden to the Prophets

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).

Among the sons of men prior to Christ, the “holy prophets” rank the highest. Although they were inspired by God, yet they were not able to decipher the grandeur or the details of the central message they proclaimed. 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.

- † It is essentially a good report, bringing glad tidings to the hearers.
- † It is fundamentally an announcement, not an outline of acceptable conduct, or a moral code of law.
- † It is a message that would never have been conceived or known had God not revealed it.

To my knowledge, those in Christ Jesus are the only people on the face of the earth who have a good message to proclaim. In fact, they are the only ones with a message—a report of glad tidings. 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, 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*

- † He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21).
- † In His death, He was cursed by God (Gal 3:13).
- † He gave His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:28).

**The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are 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.**

*the hand of a mediator*” (Gal 3:19).

### CHRIST

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.

### 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.

- † He bore, or carried, our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24).

- † He took away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
- † He gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
- † No man took His life from Him, He laid it down that He might take it up again (John 10:17-18).
- † He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).
- † We are justified freely through the redemption of Christ (Rom 3:24).
- † God has set Jesus forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (Rom 3:25).
- † God commended His love to us in the death of Jesus (Rom 5:8)
- † We are justified through His blood (Rom 5:9).
- † We are reconciled to God through the death of His son (Rom 5:10).
- † We are buried by baptism into Christ’s death (Rom 6:3-4).
- † God condemned sin in the flesh of His Son (Rom 8:3).
- † God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom 8:32).
- † In His death, Christ is our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
- † We are bought with the price paid in Christ’s death (1 Cor 6:20).
- † If One died for all, then all are dead (2 Cor 5:14).
- † He died that we might no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us (2 Cor 5:15).
- † He gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world (Gal 1:4).
- † In His death, He redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
- † We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7).
- † We are made nigh unto God by the blood of Christ (Eph 2:13).
- † In His flesh, Jesus abolished the enmity, even the law of commandments

- contained in ordinances (Eph 2:15).
- † He gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse the church (Eph 5:26).
- † Christ died in order to present His church to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph 5:27).
- † He made peace through the blood of His cross (Col 1:20).
- † In the cross, He plundered principalities and powers, making a public display of them (Col 2:15).
- † In His death, he delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).
- † He died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him (1 Thess 5:10).
- † He gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a special people, zealous of good works (Tit 2:14).
- † He tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9).
- † Through His death, He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14).
- † He obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb 9:12).
- † Through Christ’s blood, our conscience is cleansed, or purged, from dead works (Heb 9:14).
- † Through His death we receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15).
- † The New Covenant, or “*will,*” has been sanctified by the blood of Christ (Heb 10:10).
- † In offering Himself in death, Jesus has perfected forever all who are sanctified (Heb 10:14).
- † Through His blood, we enter into the holiest place—the very presence of God—Heb 10:19).
- † The way to God has been dedicated through Christ’s death (Heb 10:20).
- † Through His blood, we are washed from our sins and made kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:5-6).

### He Was Buried

The burial of Christ was not simply a technicality. He was active during the time He was buried. Too, it provided time to assure that He really did die, tasting death for every man in the fullest sense of the word. Here is also a point at which unity with Christ is realized.

- † In His burial He was “*numbered with the transgressors*” (Num 53:12).
- † 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).

- † In our baptism, we are *“buried with Christ”* (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).
- † The burial of Christ was *“the sign of the prophet Jonah”* to an adulterous generation (Matt 12:39-40).
- † His grave was made with the wicked, and the rich as well (Isa 53:9).
- † The woman with the precious alabaster box of ointment anointed Jesus for His burial (Matt 26:7-12).
- † The grave was not capable of holding the body of Jesus (Acts 2:29-26-32).

### He Rose Again

The resurrection of Christ is the engine of our salvation—the source of its power. Over and over this is affirmed in Scripture.

- † In regeneration, we are united with Him *“in His resurrection”* (Rom 6:5).
- † The desire to know the power of His resurrection dominates those living by faith (Phil 3:10).
- † Jesus was declared to be *“the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rom 1:4).
- † We are begotten again to a living hope *“by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Pet 1:3).
- † The resurrection of Christ is what validates our baptism (1 Pet 3:21).
- † The resurrection of Christ validated His death, and inducted Him into His intercessory ministry (Rom 8:34).
- † We are reconciled by His death, and saved by His (resurrection) life (Rom 5:10).
- † He is able to save us because, being raised from the dead, He *“ever lives to make intercession”* for us (Heb 7:25).
- † The blood of the cross obtained its effectiveness when, after His resurrection, Jesus entered into heaven with it (Heb 9:12).
- † The risen Christ, having entered into heaven, is now appearing in the presence of God *“for us”* (Heb 9:24).
- † 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).
- † Jesus was *“raised for our justification”* (Rom 4:25).
- † His resurrection is God’s pledge that we will also be raised (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14).
- † Jesus being raised from the dead, we

can now be joined to Christ and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom 7:4).

- † The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in believers, giving life to their mortal bodies (Rom 8:11).
- † 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).
- † If Christ is not raised, our faith is vain (1 Cor 15:17).
- † Believers are raised up together with Christ and made to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
- † In His resurrection, we were *“delivered from the wrath to come”* (1 Thess 1:10).

### CONCLUSION

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, or 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

subject of the Gospel. Ponder the statements made of Him.

- † Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6).
- † Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
- † Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (5:11).
- † 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).
- † Christ came, who is God blessed forever (Rom 9:5).
- † Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness (Rom 10:4).
- † Christ pleased not Himself (Rom 15:3).
- † Christ also received us to the glory of God (Rom 15:7).
- † Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).
- † Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
- † God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor 5:19).
- † Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).
- † Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph 5:25).
- † Christ Jesus came into the world to

**The death, the burial, or 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.**

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

save sinners (1 Tim 1:15).

- † Christ is appearing in the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24).
- † Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).
- † Christ has made us free (Gal 5:1).
- † 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 Gospel.

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!

## THE POWER OF GOD

<sup>41:16c</sup> . . . **for it is the power of God . . .** Paul is elaborating on WHY he is *“ready to preach the Gospel”* to those who are in Rome (1:15). He already identified those who *“are at Rome also”* as *“beloved of God, called to be saints,”* whose *“faith is spoken of throughout the whole world”* (1:7-8). He is not speaking, therefore, about 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.”*

to bring people within hearing distance of that glorious Gospel.

While it has 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

especially precious to God, whose faith was proclaimed throughout the world, needed the Gospel, how much more many churches of our time, which give little evidence of either characteristic. 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.

**If those especially precious to God, whose faith was proclaimed throughout the world, needed the Gospel, how much more many churches of our time, which give little evidence of either characteristic.**

### THE POWER

Here we rise higher than the limits of human language. As ordinarily conceived, 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.

### NOT A PROBLEM SOLVER

While a considerable amount 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.

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 . . .”* It possesses indispensable spiritual properties that are necessary to our salvation. Furthermore, the Gospel has not lost any of these qualities, nor have any believers passed beyond their need of them: *“it IS the . . .”*

The word from which *“power”* is translated has long been the subject of academic comment. It comes from the word *δύναμις* (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 brings things together.

### The Means of Accomplishment

*“The power”* refers to the means employed by God to accomplish His purpose. It is effective in bringing about the fulfillment of what God has determined. This is the *“power”* that belongs to God (Matt 6:13). It is **only** effective to accomplish His purpose. This

The fundamental responsibility of the Apostles was to declare and expound the the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any rebuke, correction, or resolution of difficulties was

All of this may appear to be an exercise in futility, but it is not. If those

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 *“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 (δύναμις) of the Highest”* overshadowed her to accomplish the conception. When sick people came to Jesus *“out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, the power (δύναμις) 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 (δύναμις) 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 is a primary objective. This mind-set has penetrated the professed church, causing people to think more subjectively than objectively. 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.”* This is not an innocent and harmless circumstance, and God will hold all in strict account who either neglect or pervert the Gospel of His Son.

## IN ORDER TO SALVATION

<sup>1:16d</sup> . . . *unto salvation . . .* The *“power of God”* is employed to effect a purpose, to fulfill a Divine objective. It is not effective to accomplish anything unrelated to that 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 involves more than extrication from the guilt and power of sin, just as the salvation, or deliverance, of Israel involved more than coming out of the confines of Egypt.

#### 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. 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.

- † They all were under the cloud (1 Cor 10:1a).
- † They all passed through the sea (1 Cor 10:1b).
- † They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:2).
- † They all ate the same spiritual food (1 Cor 10:3).
- † They all drank the same spiritual drink

them (Deut 31:4).

- † Bitter waters were purified for them (Ex 15:25).
- † A covenant was given to them (Ex 19-20).
- † The Jordan River parted for them (Josh 3:17).
- † The walls of Jericho fell down for them (Josh 6:3-20; Heb 11:30).
- † The city of Jericho was given them (Josh 5:2).

**Salvation involves more than extrication from the guilt and power of sin, just as the salvation, or deliverance, of Israel involved more than coming out of the confines of Egypt.**

Indeed, there was more involved in Israel bring saved than simply leaving Egypt! They had to pass through the Red Sea and the Jordan River at flood-stage. 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!

#### So It Is In Salvation

So it is in salvation! 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. 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. So it is with those in Christ Jesus.

- (1 Cor 10:4).
- † They were led by a pillar of cloud by day (Psa 78:14a).
- † They were led by a pillar of fire by night (Psa 78:14b; Ex 13:21-22).
- † Though nomads for forty years, their feet did not swell (Deut 8:4; Neh 9:21).
- † Their clothing and shoes did not wear out (Deut 8:4; 29:5).
- † Enemy nations were conquered by

The largeness of our salvation serves to emphasize the necessity of the Gospel. The time in which we are blessed to live is *“the day of salvation”* (2 Cor 6:2). It is the time when salvation is being effected by the powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ponder how the Spirit speaks of this salvation.

- † It is a *“helmet”* of protection (Eph 6:17).
- † It produces *“hope”* (1 Thess 5:8).
- † It is a *“great salvation”* (Heb 2:3).
- † It is an *“eternal salvation”* (Heb 5:9).
- † There are indispensable things that *“accompany salvation”* (Heb 6:9).
- † It is *“ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Pet 1:5).
- † It is the objective, or *“end,”* of our faith (1 Pet 1:9).
- † It is presently *“nearer than when we first believed”* (Rom 13:11).
- † God succors, or nourishes us, *“in the day of salvation”* (2 Cor 6:2).
- † We are to *“work out”* our own salvation *“with fear and trembling”* (Phil 2:12).
- † Holy angels are presently ministering to those who *“shall be heirs of salvation”* (Heb 1:14).

What is there about these expressions that would lead any soul to believe salvation had been experienced in its totality? What would lead anyone to imagine there is nothing more to salvation than has presently been experienced?

There are enormous vistas of this great salvation yet to be seen, to say nothing of being experienced. 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).

**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).

**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).

**Our Own Involvement**

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 Process**

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”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Cor 1:18 ). *“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ*

**It is not enough for people simply to be told what to do. There must be an incentive to do what is required. God has already shown us this cannot be accomplished through the Law. The Law was the “strength of sin” (1 Cor 15:56), but it had no strength to produce either faith or hope.**

*among those who are BEING saved and among those who are perishing”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Cor 2:15).

Salvation is the process whereby we are being *“conformed”* to the image of God’s Son (Rom 8:29). We are advancing *“from glory unto glory,”* 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.”*

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.

**THE APPOINTED MEANS**

And what is the appointed means of bringing salvation to completeness? What is the *“power of God”* to effect the appointment to salvation (1 Thess 5:8)? It is the Gospel of Christ! That is *“the power of God for salvation.”* We embrace it 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 it 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!

It is not enough for people simply to be told what to do. There must be an incentive to do what is required. God has already shown us this cannot be accomplished through the Law. 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,”* 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).

**The Lord’s Table**

Jesus instituted the Lord’s table to keep the Gospel alive and vibrant in our hearts and minds (1 Cor 11:23-28). This 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.”*

**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. A few examples will suffice to confirm this point.

- † Incentive to give of our resources to help needy brethren (2 Cor 8:9).
- † To provoke the avoidance of fornication (1 Cor 6:13-19).
- † To be longsuffering with our brethren, being tenderhearted and forgiving (Eph 4:32).
- † To purge sin from among us (1 Cor 5:7).
- † Discouraging a return to Law as a means of gaining Divine acceptance (Gal 3:10-13).
- † To receive one another (Rom 15:7).
- † 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 implemented. God’s *“great salvation”* can neither be initiated nor maintained apart from the *“glorious Gospel of the blessed God.”* 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.

**TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVES**

<sup>4:16e</sup> . . . **to every one that believeth . . .**” 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.

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.

- † *“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).
- † *“That whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:15).
- † *“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

- † *“I am come a light into the world, that whoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness”* (John 12:46).
- † *“. . . whoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43).
- † *“. . . whoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed”* (Rom 9:33).
- † *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Rom 10:4).
- † *“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).
- † *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life”* (John 6:47).

- “confounded”* (1 Pet 2:6).
- † *“Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”* (1 John 5:1).

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.

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

**The word “believeth” or “believes” is not referring to a point in time, or an event that took place in the past. This is something presently occurring. It is a trust and reliance that is in process now.**

- † *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”* (John 11:25).
- † *“And whoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die”* (John 11:26).
- † *“Behold, I lay in Zion a Chief Corner Stone, Elect, Precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be*

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 fifth verse of the first chapter, their obedience is the result of their faith, or believing.

**WHAT IS BELIEVING?**

Because of the general disregard of

**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.**

the value and effectiveness of believing, further consideration of it will be profitable. Remember, the Gospel of Christ IS the very power of God in order for salvation *“for everyone who believes.”*

Etymologically, the word *“believe”* has strong implications, but they are only introductory, and by no means exhaustive of its meaning. The word comes from πιστεύοντι (pis-teu-on-ti), which is in the present active mode. A precise translation would read *“is believing.”* The word *“believeth”* or *“believes”* is not referring to a point in time, or an event that took place in the past. This is something presently occurring. 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**. This casts an entirely different light on this verse than is ordinarily entertained.

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.

#### **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.”**

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**

This is not the believing that is ascribed to demons. Of them it is written, *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble”* (James 2:19). Their persuasion is not of the truth of the Gospel. 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 influence.

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.

#### **An Unequivocal Statement**

The unmitigated statement of this text should speak to our heart. 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.

What, then, ought to be our approach to believing? How should we regard it? With zeal, we must *“fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim 6:12), endeavoring with all that is within us to keep believing, trusting, and relying upon Christ Jesus. 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.

## **THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO THE GREEK**

<sup>1:16f</sup> **... to the Jew first, and also to the Greek ...** There have arisen all manner of teachings in the 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. The tendency to conform Scripture to

preconceived notions must be mortified, and our thoughts brought into harmony with Divine utterance.

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

Elsewhere, the Spirit identifies three 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. However, that by no means indicates that the Jews are no longer recognized 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 significance whatsoever if God has no regard at all for the Jews.**

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 is one”* (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 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**

**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.**

Some, inordinately eager to justify the position that the Jews have been summarily rejected, trace it back to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It was at this point, they affirm, that the Jews were finally written off.

This destruction was foretold by the Lord Jesus. He even told WHY the judgment would come. It was because they 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).

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). Jesus left the door open, and we do well to consent to His word.

**Categorical Statements**

There is so much said on this subject it is a marvel that the erroneous doctrine to which I have referred has risen. 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”*<sup>2NTV</sup> (Rom 11:25).

The ninth 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.** First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Rom 3:1-2). The advantages are detailed in the 10<sup>th</sup> 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). If a person imagines this is referring to the church, or spiritual Israel, then the *“giving of the Law and temple service”* as well as the fleshly generation of Jesus, has come from the Gentiles.

The eleventh chapter of Romans develops this thought in a most extensive manner. Because we will expound it later, I will only list the strong arguments presented concerning the Jews.

† God has NOT cast away His people (11:1a).

- † Paul himself, an Israelite according to the flesh, confirms this did not occur (11:1b).
- † Just as surely as there was a remnant in Elijah’s day, so there is a remnant among this people today (11:2-5).
- † Israel has **not** stumbled so as to fall, or beyond recovery (11:11a).
- † Salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy (11:11b).
- † If their fall brought riches to the Gentiles, much more will blessing be brought by their recovery (11:12).
- † Paul’s Apostleship to the Gentiles was in order to provoke the Jews to jealousy, saving some of them (11:13-14).
- † If casting them away meant the reconciling of the world, the receiving of them will be life from the dead (11:15).
- † The “*firstfruit*” and the “*root*” are still “*holy*.” That is why the larger mass and the branches are “*holy*” (11:16).
- † Only “*some of the branches*” of the natural Jewish tree were broken off (11:17a).
- † Some of the Gentiles, a wild olive tree, have been grafted in “*among*” the Jews (11:17b).
- † Gentile believers are partaking of the nourishing sap of the olive root of Israel (11:17c).
- † The Jewish branches were NOT broken off so that the Gentiles might be grafted in. Salvation is NOT a replacement program (11:18-21).
- † God is able to graft the Jews in again (11:23).
- † It is reasonable for them to be grafted into their own tree once again (11:24).
- † Blindness “*in part*” has happened unto Israel (11:25a).
- † The blindness is only until the full number of the Gentiles are come in (11:15b).
- † The Deliverer will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (a name never applied to the church, 11:26).
- † God’s covenant to take away their sin is still in place (11:27).
- † 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).
- † The gifts and calling of God are without repentance (11:29).
- † Just as we Gentiles have obtained

mercy because of their unbelief, so through the mercy extended to us, they will also obtain mercy (11:30-31).

† 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 any more certainly!

**God Has Not Forgotten**

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

**Thus, those who say God has finished with Israel must give an account of themselves to God. They must also explain to us why the sun is still shining, and why the moon and the stars can be seen at night.**

Israel—the promised New Covenant we presently enjoy, and over which Jesus is presiding.

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 NRSV. Hebrews 8:8-13 and 10:16-17 confirm that this is the New Covenant we are now enjoying.

*“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).

Thus, those who say God has finished with Israel must give an account of themselves to God. 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.*”

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

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

considered secondary, salvation immediately begins to wither, and the believer becomes weak. It makes little difference what profession of faith is made, **apart from the Gospel of Christ salvation will not be realized.**

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

Savior’s own words: *“salvation is of the Jews”* (John 4:22).

### AND ALSO TO THE GREEK

As I have pointed out in a previous lesson, the word *“Greek”* is not a geographical consideration, but a cultural one. At the time this Epistle was written, Greek was the universal language. It represented the world in its most refined and cultured state. 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-

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 in the cultural realm. But they both needed salvation, and the Gospel of Christ is God’s power to accomplish that need.

### CONCLUSION

Salvation in all of its aspects is accomplished through the Gospel of Christ. As soon as the Gospel is

This circumstance 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 Gospel of Christ. On the other hand, wherever the Gospel is declared in the insight of 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 loving 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.

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## THE REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

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<sup>17a</sup> ***For therein is the righteousness of God revealed . . .*** 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.

### “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. I credit this significant omission to the effect of institutionalized religion upon those embracing it. A systematized religion has the tendency of imposing spiritual blinders upon the soul, producing extremely restricted 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 crop 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.

**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 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 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 Righteous**

This is NOT referring to an understanding that God is 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”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Dan 9:14). 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

**I am persuaded the masses of professed believers have not yet been convinced of the necessity of 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.**

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—or in any other texts using that expression.

**A Conferred Righteousness**

The Gospel reveals a righteousness that God confers upon men—and it is His very own righteousness. The glorious Gospel does not 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 (Gen 18:25; Judges 5:11; Ezra 9:15; Job 36:3).

Righteous—*“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”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Phil 3:9). He knew that righteousness was imperative to be accepted by God, and that he could not develop it himself.

I am persuaded the masses of professed believers have not yet been convinced of the necessity of 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.

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 way, or manners, and our thoughts as well. Unless we are righteous in both of those areas, our future is hopeless!

**Two Ways to be Righteous**

There are two types of righteousness mentioned in Scripture. One depends

upon men, and the other comes from God.

*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. 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 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 to do. Even though that is only an imagination, Jesus did tell us what would occur were such a person found. *“So likewise you,*

**This righteousness must be revealed before it can be appropriated, confirming it does not proceed from man. Rather, it is brought to man—quite different from the righteousness of the Law.**

*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’*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Lk 17:10). 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 or 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.

*Of Faith*

The Gospel reveals a righteousness that comes from faith. It is called *“the righteousness of faith”* (Rom 4:13), or *“the righteousness that comes by faith.”*<sup>NIV</sup> This righteousness must be revealed before it can be appropriated, confirming it does not proceed from man. Rather, it is brought to man—quite different from the righteousness of the Law. This will be more fully developed in the next section.

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

There is only one righteousness that is acceptable to God, and that is His own. Here is a spiritually technical point that will yield much benefit. Some have viewed this righteousness as the *“righteousness of Christ,”* even though no such reference is ever found in Scripture. This 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. It is God’s own righteousness that is granted to us because of our *“faith in His blood”* (Rom 3:25)—i.e. , our persuasion of its effect.

The purpose of Christ’s

righteousness 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.

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—not one that is developed by them. This is precisely the point developed in the tenth chapter. *“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”*<sup>NIV</sup> (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 appropriated by faith.

## FROM FAITH TO FAITH

<sup>17b</sup> . . . **from faith to faith** . . . ”

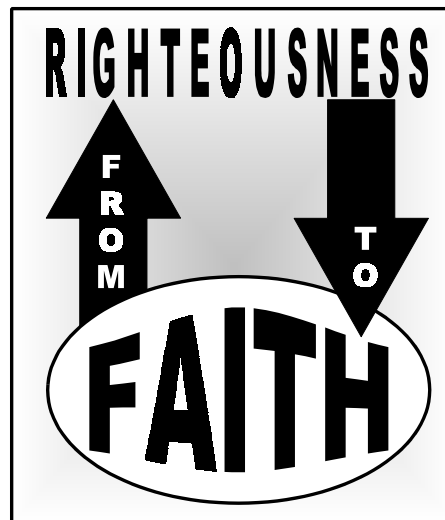
This is doubtless one of the most profound of all utterances. It declares the means by which righteousness is appropriated, and the effect it has upon the individual. The phrase *“from faith to faith”* is my particular focus. The thing that is revealed through the Gospel is this: the righteousness of God is *“from faith to faith.”* Other versions read, *“through faith for faith”*<sup>NRSV</sup>, *“by faith from first to last”*<sup>NIV</sup>, *“from faith unto faith”*<sup>ASV</sup>, *“from start to finish by faith”*<sup>NLT</sup>, and *“based on faith and addressed to faith”*<sup>NJB</sup>.

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.

### 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. *“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”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Phil 3:8-9).

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 appointed means—**FAITH.** Apart from faith, it cannot be possessed. 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”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 2:16). 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.”* 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.

And what is it that sparked that indispensable faith? Was it the Law? Indeed, not, for *“the Law is not of faith.”* 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.”*

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.

Because this subject will be developed extensively in the third and fourth chapters, this should suffice to introduce it to us. 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 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 one the lees, nourishing our faith.

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## THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

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<sup>17c</sup> . . . *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 vice versa. The prophet also concludes that only personal faith can sustain the soul. 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 is evident, for the just shall live by faith”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 3:11). Those, therefore, who fail to see this are blind.

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.

### 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”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Heb 10:38-39).

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.

### 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. The standard by which the state of rightness is measured is the will or character of God. Viewed from the standpoint of legality, the *“just”* person is one who can stand before the Divine tribunal and NOT be condemned.

### 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). This affirmation is the basis of Apostolic doctrine (Rom 4:3-6,9,11,20-25; Gal 3:6-14; James 2:23). The Psalmist also referred to this imputation of righteousness in Psalm 106:31). Thus we are introduced to a man that was MADE

righteous by God because of his faith.

**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 Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was buried (Lk 23:50), and Cornelius (Acts 10:22).

**Our Text**

When our text speaks of “the just,” or “the righteous”<sup>NASB,NIV</sup>, 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).

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. 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.

**LIVING BY FAITH**

“The just shall live by faith,” or “The righteous will live by faith.”<sup>NIV</sup> Note, it does not say the just OUGHT to live by faith, but that they **will**. Their faith has brought them life, and their faith will

**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.**

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. 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).

Being alive is running the 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), 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).

And how are these justified ones able to maintain that life? How is it that they are able to “endure unto the end?” **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).

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**”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Gal 2:20). 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).

**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 unreprouvable in his sight” (Col 1:22-23)? **IT IS OUR EXPOSURE TO, AND EMBRACE OF, THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!**

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” us as we reach out, taking hold on the Gospel.

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 produced by the embrace of the Gospel. 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.**

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.

## 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. 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.

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 proof is found in the Gospel, which itself is a revelation from God (2 Tim 1:10).

If the people of God are to be strong, they must hear the Gospel of Christ. 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, and raised up to sit with Him in heavenly places. They need to be reminded of the remarkable and unparalleled power that is devoted to them, and how God is preparing to present the church to Christ as a spotless bride. 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!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/25/2000. Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 1:18-32: "WRATH AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." In developing the indispensability of righteousness through faith, the Spirit will show us what a lack of faith has produced. Sin will be declared in all of its ugliness, and an explanation for the deterioration of moral character explained. This text will show the effects of sin among those who were given no written law, but were allowed to go their own ways. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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