



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 51



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

FINAL LESSON

A GRAND BENEDICTION

16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. ²² I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. ²⁵ Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith; ²⁷ to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. ^{NKJV}

(Romans 16:21-27)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this review of the book of Romans, we have been exposed to the power of the Gospel of Christ. That Gospel is central to all "sound doctrine," and pivotal in all Apostolic teaching. Apart from it, there can be no effective edification or enlightenment. It is, in the words of

this Epistle, "the power of God unto salvation" (1:16). All of this has little significance to those who have institutional agendas, or who are enslaved to profitless forms of theological thought. The Gospel of Christ lights up the universe of Divine communication. It illuminates the

creation itself, the origination of a favored people in the Israelites, the giving of the Law, and the proclamations of the Prophets. Take away the Gospel, and a spiritual fog descends upon the entirety of Scripture. It becomes a book men think themselves capable of

OUTLINE

- < TIMOTHY, LUCIUS, JASON, AND SOSIPATER (16:21)
- < TERTIUS (16:22)
- < GAIUS, ERASMUS, AND QUARTUS (16:23)
- < GRACE, GRACE, AND GRACE (16:24)
- < TO HIM WHO IS ABLE (16:25)
- < THE MANIFESTATION (16:26)
- < TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST (16:27)

manipulating for their own purposes.

I am going to wax bold and say that a failure to comprehend the Gospel of Christ is the cause of all doctrinal error in the Christian community. It is the reason for distorted understanding, erroneous emphases, and corrupted vision.

There is no purpose for delineating the fall of man if there is no Gospel. There is no reason for the Law itself and the definition of sin if there is no Gospel of Christ. The record of Divine workings, and the prophecies of old time lose their significance if the Gospel is removed from our thinking. This is involved in Jesus declaring the Scriptures testified of Himself (John 5:39). It is why Peter said the Prophets testified of the *"sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"* (1 Pet 1:11). It is why *"the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy"* (Rev 19:10).

THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL

Throughout the reasoning of Romans, the Gospel remains in the forefront.

- ▶ The *"righteousness of God,"* so sorely needed by man, and required by God, is revealed in the Gospel (1:17).
- ▶ The Gospel announced a Divine resolution to the otherwise hopeless, universal human dilemma (3:21-31).

- ▶ Justification by faith, apart from the Law, is proclaimed in the Gospel (4:1-5:11).
- ▶ A new federal head of humanity is announced in the Gospel, declaring Jesus to be the One upon whom the total recovery from Adam's fall is realized (5:12-21).
- ▶ The inward conflict between good and evil is explained and neutralized by the good news of the Gospel (7:14-25).
- ▶ The status of *"no condemnation"* can only be accounted for through the Gospel 8:1-10).
- ▶ The provision of a Divine Helper, the Holy Spirit, is declared through the Gospel (8:11-27).
- ▶ A beneficent purpose is announced in the Gospel that cannot fail of fulfillment to all who believe its report (8:28-39).
- ▶ The Gospel, being God's power to salvation *"to the Jew first,"* enables us to anticipate the recovery of the Jews, with whom God has made a covenant (9:1-11:36).
- ▶ Once perceived, the Gospel makes total submission to the Lord perfectly reasonable (12:1-2).
- ▶ Being reconciled to God, the Gospel confirms we have also been endued with a measure of faith that will benefit the members of Christ's body (12:3-21).
- ▶ If the Gospel is true, and the Lord is for us, we can submit to the governmental powers without fear (13:1-7).
- ▶ The impact of the Gospel upon our hearts will constrain us to do good to our neighbors, thereby fulfilling the Law (13:8-14).
- ▶ The perception and embrace of the Gospel will move us to be considerate of one another (14:1-15:33).
- ▶ Belief of the Gospel moves us to perceive the brethren with greater clarity, giving them honor where honor is due (16:1-27).

In this closing chapter, Paul especially commends one sister, and sends special greetings to a number of brothers and sisters – twenty-seven in

all (vs 1-16). His descriptions and greetings all have the glow of the Gospel upon them.

- ▶ *"Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea . . . she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."*
- ▶ *"Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus . . . the church that is in their house."*
- ▶ *"Salute my well beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ."*
- ▶ *"Mary, who bestowed much labor on us."*
- ▶ *"Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."*
- ▶ *"Amplias my beloved in the Lord."*
- ▶ *"Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved."*
- ▶ *"Apelles approved in Christ."*
- ▶ *"Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord."*
- ▶ *"Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord."*
- ▶ *"The beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord."*
- ▶ *"Rufus chosen in the Lord."*
- ▶ *" . . . the brethren which are with them."*
- ▶ *" . . . all the saints which are with them."*

At some point, our perception



of the people of God must intersect with the Gospel of Christ. That is the

single factor that causes eternal benefit to flow from our association with them. If the Gospel is not central in our vision, we will not be able to see the saints correctly or assist them in their race to glory. The Gospel is the Divine pigment that gives proper color to our dealings with both God and man. It is the appointed clarifier that puts the truth of God within our grasp and causes understanding and wisdom to flourish.

REASONING UPON THE GOSPEL

Ponder the direct references to elements of the Gospel that are made in this book, and behold how central they are. These are only a sampling of the many statements that depend upon Christ's atoning death, resurrection, and enthronement in glory. The Gospel is the Divinely

ungodly (5:6).

- ▶ God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (5:8).
- ▶ We are now justified by Christ's blood, and are being saved by His life (5:9).
- ▶ When we were enemies, we were reconciled through the death of God's Son (5:10).
- ▶ The grace of God, and the gift by grace, is through one man, Jesus Christ (5:15).
- ▶ By the obedience of Jesus Christ, many are made righteous (5:19).
- ▶ Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (5:20).
- ▶ In our baptism we are identified with the key elements of the Gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (6:1-10).
- ▶ We are alive to God through our

righteousness to every one that believes (10:4).

- ▶ If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved (10:10).
- ▶ Faith comes through the hearing of the Gospel (10:14-17).
- ▶ For this purpose Christ both died and arose, that He might be the Lord of the dead and the living (14:9).
- ▶ Just as Christ pleased not Himself in dying for us, so we are not to seek to please ourselves (15:3).
- ▶ We are to receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God (15:7).
- ▶ One can come to us *"in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ"* (15:29).

All of these statements, and more, put the Gospel at the foundational level. The validity and power of every word relating to salvation depends upon the reality and integrity of the Gospel of Christ.

Not a single statement in Romans is made from an institutional perspective.

There is not a single word declared from the standpoint of "our church," "our movement," or some other form of sectarianism. We have no idea where the church of Rome met, how many were numbered among them, how they were perceived by the community, or what roles they may have played in political and social activities. No person is commended for earthly credentials, academic achievements, or anything but service to God and His people.

If the crimson thread of the Gospel of Christ is not the most prominent yarn in the fabric of theology, it cannot be true!

When men are tempted to make some other thing their emphasis, they immediately begin to wander. If other issues begin to dominate their minds, they will lose their bearings in the treacherous sea of life, becoming an offense to both God and man. This certainly does not insinuate that there can be no correction, or that there are

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appointed base of reasoning.

- ▶ The power of God unto salvation (1:16).
- ▶ Reveals the righteousness of God (1:17).
- ▶ Justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (3:24).
- ▶ God set Jesus forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood (3:25).
- ▶ God's righteousness is declared for the remission of sins that are past (3:25-26).
- ▶ Righteousness is imputed to those who believe God raised Jesus from the dead (4:24).
- ▶ Jesus was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification (4:25).
- ▶ When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the

Lord Jesus Christ (6:11).

- ▶ There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).
- ▶ The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death (8:2).
- ▶ What the Law was incapable of doing, God did in sending His Son and condemning sin in His flesh (8:3).
- ▶ If the Spirit that raised up Jesus dwells in us, He will quicken our mortal bodies (8:11).
- ▶ He that spared not His own Son will also freely give us all things (8:32).
- ▶ It is Christ that died, yea rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and also makes intercession for us (8:34).
- ▶ Christ is the end of the Law for

never matters of practical life that are to be addressed. It **does** mean that the priority of those matters is to be weighed on the scale of the Gospel, and the manner in which they are addressed is to be dictated by the direction of the Gospel.

The Gospel of Christ not only announces the righteousness of God for men, it also sheds satisfying light on all human obligations, bringing power to

fulfill them. It makes duty pleasant, and labor gratifying. It is the Christ of the Gospel who offers us a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light, then urges us to take it, thereby receiving a blessing and rest for our souls.

ALL OF THIS IS GERMANE

It may appear on the surface as though I have rambled a bit in this introduction – but I have not. Every word of this Epistle, including his closing remarks in this text, drip with

honey of the Gospel. The greetings Paul sends have the scent of grace upon them. The blessings he bestows depend upon the Gospel. The announcements he makes are confirmations of the truth of the Gospel. The glory that he ascribes to God is the result of his own persuasion of, and commitment to, that glorious Gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim 1:11)! The sweetness and profitability of his words are due to the Gospel of Christ. Glory be to God!

TIMOTHY, LUCIUS, JASON, AND SOSIPATER

“ 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.” Having sent personal greetings to many of the saints in Rome, Paul now speaks in the behalf of those who labor with him. They are all of *“one mind,”* and with *“one mouth”* join in glorifying the Father (15:6). **Part of glorifying the Father is giving due recognition to His people.** It is not possible to glorify God and disdain His people at the same time. As soon as those upon whom He has placed His grace are held in disregard, the Father Himself begins to be dishonored.

This little known principle is declared throughout the Scriptures. When Israel contended with Moses, they were really contending with God (Num 16:3-32). When Israel rejected the Judges, put in place by God, and preferred a king like other nations, they were rejecting God (1 Sam 8:7). When Israel did not hear the Prophets, they at once became guilty of not hearing God (2 Chron 36:13).

You will find this repeated pattern in Scripture. When those sent by God are recognized and received, the people are blessed. When they are not recognized and received, the people are cursed. The ultimate example of this is the Lord Jesus. The ultimate Man, and the One sent by God in a unique and unparallel sense. Thus Jesus said, *“he that receiveth*

Me receiveth Him that sent Me” (Matt 10:40; John 13:20).

The text before us is nothing less than Paul recognizing the servants of the Lord. He has a Divine perspective of them. I do not doubt that these brethren were not perceived by the world as having the value related in this passage. Oh, for a revival of viewing those in Christ Jesus as they are viewed in heaven!

worker.” Other versions read *“my co-worker,”* ^{NRSV} and *“who is working with me.”* ^{NJB} He does not refer to Timothy as one who is simply accompanying him, but as one who is engaged in the work with him. What noble things are said of this young man, who from the very first was *“well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium”* (Acts 16:2). The very first time Paul met him, he recognized Timothy’s

Oh, for a revival of viewing those in Christ Jesus as they are viewed in heaven! Whatever is involved in their acceptance by God, reception by Jesus, and direction by the Spirit, ought to be prominent in our thinking when we consider them!

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If the holy angels are ministering to them, they ought to be assessed as worthy of our recognition, honor, and respect. With these things in mind, behold how Paul speaks of these men.

TIMOTHY, MY FELLOW WORKER

“ . . . Timothy, my fellow

spiritual caliber, choosing him to “go with him” (Acts 16:3). At one point, Paul rejected John Mark because of his immaturity (Acts 15:37-39), but he never had such a reaction to Timothy

Paul discreetly chose those who worked with him. Being with Paul was more than being in a spiritual training camp. **Those with him joined in the work of the Lord, which was of preeminent importance.** When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said it came from

himself and Timothy: *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth”* (2 Cor 1:1). It appears as though Timothy was with Paul in prison when he wrote to Philemon: *“Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother”* (Phile 1:1). The book of Hebrews declares that Timothy was released from prison: *“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you”* (Heb 13:23).

commendable manner: *“For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ”* (1 Cor 4:17). He instructed the brethren at Corinth to conduct Timothy on his way in peace, ministering his needs to him: *“for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren”* (1

Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith” (1 Thess 3:2).

When, therefore, Paul refers to Timothy as *“my workfellow,”* or *“co-worker,”* ^{NRSV} it was not a mere formality. He did not say they belonged to the same congregation, or that Timothy had done well working among a special sub-group of believers. He had joined together with the most prodigious Kingdom laborer the world has ever seen, apart from the Lord Jesus Himself. His youth was no hindrance to him. The fact that he came from a divided home brought him no deficiency. He was not from Jerusalem, or some other city in the promised land. Instead, he was from Lycaona in Asia Minor. Yet, he became a premier laborer for the Lord, and has been known throughout history as faithful and true.

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There is no sin recorded against Timothy, no reluctance, and no hesitancy to serve the Lord. He was imprisoned for Christ, and was trusted to travel with other spiritual notables like Silas. He stands as an example of what can be done in a young man who is willing to forsake all to follow the Lord Jesus!

Timothy was also a companion of Silas, who came to Paul in Corinth from Macedonia: *“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia”* (Acts 18:5). He preached the Gospel with Paul and Silas (Silvanus) in Corinth: *“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus”* (2 Cor 1:19). Paul also sent Timothy with Erasmus to Macedonia after they had ministered to him: *“So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erasmus”* (Acts 19:22). Later, when Paul returned to Macedonia on his way to Syria, Timothy accompanied him with several others: *“And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas”* (Acts 20:4-5). Truly, Timothy was a fellow worker.

Cor 16:10-11). Timothy joined with Paul in writing the letter to the Philippians: *“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons”* (Phil 1:1). Paul described him as unique among all who labored with him: *“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel”* (Phil 2:20-22). Timothy also joined Paul in writing the letter to the Colossians: *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother”* (Col 1:1). First Thessalonians was sent by Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy: *“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians”* (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to establish them in the faith and comfort them: *“And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of*

LUCIUS, JASON, AND SOSIPATER

LUCIUS was a noted prophet and/or teacher from the church in Antioch, which was an extraordinary assembly. *“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene”* (Acts 13:1). He distinguished himself as a man of faith early in the history of the church. He was among those who, as they *“ministered to the Lord, and fasted,”* heard the Holy Spirit say, *“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* He also was among those who *“laid their hands on them, (and) they sent them away”* (Acts 13:2-3). Now, approximately twelve years later, he himself is working together with Paul, having proved himself to be a faithful servant. He has been brought higher, so to speak.

When sending Timothy to Corinth, Paul described him in a most

Cyrene was a city in Lybia, which is in North Africa. This was the city from which Simon came, who was compelled to carry the cross of Christ (Matt 27:32). There were also “devout Jews” from this city in Jerusalem, when the day of Pentecost was fully come. They heard the Gospel that day (Acts 2:10). Some of the converts from Pentecost, who were scattered abroad in the first persecution preached the Gospel as far as in Phenice and Cyprus. Some of these men were also from Cyrene (Acts 11:20). Lucius is an example of the Word of God falling upon good soil, and bringing forth fruit to the glory of God.

JASON is probably the one who received Paul and Silas into his house in Thessalonica. At that time, Paul reasoned for three Sabbath days out of the Scriptures. Some of the Thessalonians believed and joined Paul and Silas. A multitude of devout Greeks did the same things, as well as a number of prominent women (Acts 17:1-4).

Unbelieving Jews were moved to envy, and caused a great uproar in the city because of the powerful preaching of Paul. The city being in an uproar, the people gathered in a mob and “assaulted the house of Jason.” They told the rulers of the city that Jason had “received” Paul and Silas, whom, they charged, did “contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one

Jesus.” They then made Jason post bond for Paul and Silas, then letting them go (Acts 17:9). Now, Jason also is laboring together with Paul. His hospitality was the doorway to

of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of

Thus Paul sends greetings from four fellow workers: Timothy from Lystra, Lucius from Cyrene, Jason from Thessalonica, and Sosipater from Berea. How marvelous are the uniting effects of the Gospel! Though they were from different cultures, yet they were one in Christ.

becoming a copartner with Paul in the Gospel. **Holy alliances will surely yield good fruit!**

SOSIPATER is probably another name for “Sopater.”^{Robertson} If this is the case, and many are of the opinion that it is, he is referred to in Acts 20:4, where he is said to be among those accompanying Paul into Asia. There we are told that he was from Berea, a place where believers were distinguished for their diligent searching of the Scriptures. Of them it is written, “*And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness*

men, not a few” (Acts 17:10-12). Perhaps Sosipater was among the first Bereans who received the Word with “all readiness of mind.”

He is also distinguished as Paul’s “kinsman,” a term Paul uses for “fellow countrymen,” rather than immediate family relationships (Rom 9:3; 16:7). They were fellow Jews, of the stock of Abraham and in Christ Jesus also – twice blessed.

Thus Paul sends greetings from four fellow workers: Timothy from Lystra, Lucius from Cyrene, Jason from Thessalonica, and Sosipater from Berea. How marvelous are the uniting effects of the Gospel! Though they were from different cultures, yet they were one in Christ.

TERTIUS

“²² **I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord.**” It was Paul’s manner to dictate his letters to a amanuensis. We would call such a person a stenographer – one who precisely records the thoughts and words of another person. Paul would, then, add his own signature to certify the validity of the Epistle. Thus he wrote to the Galatians, “*Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with*

mine own hand” (Gal 6:11). To the Colossians he wrote, “*The salutation by the hand of me Paul*” (Col 4:18). He wrote to the Thessalonians, “*The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write*” (2 Thess 3:17). For whatever it is worth, church tradition says Tertius was one of the seventy disciples, and was the bishop of Iconium.^{John Gill} His name is Latin, indicating he as a Roman citizen.

Now Tertius, confirming he is more than a professional stenographer, adds his salutations, mingling them with others. He also is a brother “in the Lord,” and thus greets the saints in Rome. Among other things, this reveals that those outside of Christ were not normally chosen to participate in the work of the Lord. Phoebe, a servant of the church, brought the letter, and Tertius, a brother in the Lord, wrote

it. **Only the saints were greeted, and only the saints sent greetings.**

This single fact is the only thing we know about Tertius. We do not know where he was from, what other brotherly relationships he had, or if he traveled elsewhere with Paul. All we know is that he was used to write the book of Romans. I suppose that if the only thing you knew about a man was that he wrote the book of Romans, you would have to acknowledge such a one had achieved more fame than many men and

women throughout Christian history.

When the hand of a person is put upon the Gospel plow, he at once obtains a certain spiritual dignity. He is worthy to salute the saints of God, and his name is worthy of mention. **Should I have set before me the opportunity to obtain impeccable academic credentials, and rise on the ladder of religious fame, and were I asked to compare it with the standing of Tertius, I would without hesitation choose to follow him.** His role in the work of

the Lord is closer to heaven.

He had the opportunity of mingling his brief greeting with the greetings of the most prodigious Apostle that ever lived, who *“labored more abundantly than they all”* (1 Cor 15:10). What refreshment it must have brought to this dear scribe to mingle his salutation with that of Paul the Apostle! It is a revelation of his fellowship. Surely Tertius can be of worth in assisting us to adjust our values and priorities to be more in agreement with godly activities.

GAIUS, ERASTUS, AND QUARTUS

“²³ Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.” In these salutations and greetings, you will notice a peculiar absence of carnal ranking. While

esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

Let there be no question about this in your mind: these greetings reflect the mind and purpose of the Head of the church. They confirm a certain

who traveled with Paul (Acts 19:29). There was also a *“Gaius”* from Derby who accompanied Paul to Asia (Acts 20:4). The Apostle John wrote to *“the well beloved Gaius,”* who was noted for his hospitality (3 John 1:1-5). It is not likely the Gaius of our text is one of the first two that are mentioned. Even though the hospitable character of the Gaius of Third John matches those of our text, it is not certain it is the same person Paul mentioned here.

Let there be no question about this in your mind: these greetings reflect the mind and purpose of the Head of the church. They confirm a certain awareness held by those who live by faith: it is that those whom Christ has received are worthy of formal recognition.

It is likely that the *“Gaius”* mentioned in First Corinthians is the one of reference. *“I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius”* (1:14). Because this letter was written from Corinth, this is no doubt the Gaius to which Paul refers.

mention is made of one holding a political position, the greeting is in the Lord. Every person’s value is directly related to the salvation that is *“in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”* (2 Tim 2:10). That is of particular significance when you consider the religious trends that dominate in our day. We have no idea of the size of the assembly with which these saints were related, their academic achievements, or other things that are held in high regard by men. Every time I read this passage, I am brought to recall the words of our blessed Lord: *“for that which is highly*

awareness held by those who live by faith: it is that those whom Christ has received are worthy of formal recognition. That is not because of what they have achieved in the flesh, but because their names are *“written in heaven”* (Lk 10:20; Heb 12:1:23). Should this approach to the people of God be heartily embraced, denominationalism would instantly collapse, and great would be the fall of it!

GAIUS

“Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you.” There was a *“Gaius”* from Macedonia

The testimony to Gaius’ hospitality is remarkable. It certainly was not confined to Paul. Notice how the Apostle describes him: *“my host and the host of the whole church,”* ^{NKJV} *“host to me and to the whole church,”* ^{NASB} and *“whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy.”* ^{NIV} We do not know how large the church was at Corinth, but the tone of First Corinthians, together with the reference to an unusually wide variety of spiritual endowments (1 Cor 14:26), suggest it to be of considerable size. The city itself, historians affirm, had approximately 600,000 citizens. They were comprised of *“a seething mass of*

Jews, merchants, philosophers, ex-soldiers, retailers, and agents of vice.” PULPIT COMMENTARY In that kind of setting, being a host to “the whole church” takes on a special significance.

Gaius must have been a man of means, yet he had devoted them to hospitality toward, and the care of, the people of God. What grand fellowship and advantages he must have reaped while he hosted the Apostle Paul. The book of Acts tells us that Paul remained in Corinth for one year and six months (Acts 18:1-11). During that time he was also hosted by Aquila and Priscilla, while reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 18:3).

He also was entertained by a man named Justus, whose house was next door to the synagogue. It was at that time that a great number of the Corinthians believed and were baptized (18:7-8). At that time the Lord spoke to Paul in a night vision, saying, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.” After that incident, Paul “continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (18:9-11). I understand this to be the period during which Gaius’ “hosted” Paul.

During this time, the church at Corinth was probably formed, growing rapidly. Gaius, therefore, proved to be a key person, hosting “the whole church” in Corinth during its formation. It is one thing to be noted as such a “host” in a well known and popular church. It is quite another thing to do so when a congregation is being formed in the midst of tumult and agitation (Acts 18:12-17). I pay tribute to Gaius, a Kingdom notable, who dared to side with, and support, the people of God in a critical time. He cared for the saints of God at his own expense.

ERASTUS

“... Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you.” Other versions

refer to Erastus as “the chamberlain of the city,”^{KJV} “the city’s director of public works,”^{NIV} “the steward of the city,”^{DBY} and “the manager of the accounts of the town”^{BBE}

There is mention of an Erastus in the book of Acts, who was sent with Timothy into Macedonia (Acts 19:22). It is assumed that is the same Erastus who remained in Corinth as Paul moved forward in his journeys (2 Tim 4:20). The nature of the office held by this good brother does not seem to allow for extensive

Gaius, therefore, proved to be a key person, hosting “the whole church” in Corinth during its formation. It is one thing to be noted as such a “host” in a well known and popular church. It is quite another thing to do so when a congregation is being formed in the midst of tumult and agitation.

journeys, as is suggested by the Erastus of Acts and Second Timothy. Theoretically, I suppose it is possible that the Erastus who “remained in Corinth” eventually became the treasurer of the city. However, Second Timothy was written approximately 6-8 years after Romans, and does not seem allow the Erastus who traveled with Timothy to be the one of reference here.

Considering the size of Corinth, Erastus held a significant office: treasurer of the city. He was apparently in charge of the dispersement of monies. The mention of him, particularly in this capacity, is worthy of a few observations. First, Corinth was a heathen city ruled by a heathen government. Yet, here was a faithful brother holding a public office. It had not corrupted him, which is a tribute to his faith.

One might conjecture that some of the city monies may have

been distributed to causes that were not approved by Christ, thus forbidding the involvement of any of His people. All such thought, of course, is mere speculation. **We should not be surprised that Erastus maintained his faith in a place of authority in Corinth like Joseph did in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, or Nehemiah in a Persian palace in Shushan.**

The presence of Erastus in these greetings also confirms the universality of the Gospel. Here was a

“treasurer” like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27), yet he was also one of many brethren who sent their greetings to the church in Rome. Whether Onesimus the slave (Phile 10-12), young Timothy (Acts 16:1-2), tent makers like Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:3), “aged” men and women (Tit 2:2-3), or Erastus the treasurer, we are “all one in Christ” Gal 3:28). Thus Erastus sends his greeting, not as a city official, but as a member of the household of faith.

QUARTUS

“... and Quartus, a brother.”

This is the only mentioning of this saint in the Bible. All we know of him is that he was “a brother.” Other versions read “THE brother,”^{NASB} and “our brother.”^{NIV} I do not know how those who are averse to the use of the term “brother” would have referred to such an individual. To them, I suppose, Quartus would have been altogether insignificant. That, of course, highlights the utter

foolishness of opposing the use of this term. We are to consider individual believers as our “brother” (Rom 14:10,15). Saints referred to as “brother” include Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1), Apollos (1 Cor 16:12), Timothy (2 Cor 1:1), Titus (2 Cor 2:13), Tychicus (Eph 6:21), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Onesimus (Col 4:9), Philemon (Phile 1:7), Silvanus (1 Pet 5:12), and Paul himself (2 Pet 3:5). **Think of**

Quartus in association with such men, and it will elevate your estimation of him. Jesus was not ashamed to call Quartus “brother” (Heb 2:11), and neither was Paul.

By calling *Quartus* “a brother,” we know he was reconciled to God, in fellowship with Jesus, and in the body of Christ. We know he was a son of God, an heir of God, and

a joint heir with Christ. His name was written in heaven, an inheritance was reserved for him there, and he was being kept by the power of God. He had been given the Holy Spirit, was being tutored by Jesus, and taught by God. The Holy Spirit interceded for and strengthened him, and the holy angels ministered to him. He was also living by faith. Oh, it is no small thing to be called “a brother.”

GRACE, GRACE, AND GRACE

“²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Within this very chapter, this is the second time these exact words have been written (Rom 16:20,24).

me to briefly enumerate these Romans mentionings.

- ▣ Related to Paul’s Apostleship (1:5).

If it is true that salvation, in its entirety, is “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8), then this is a prayer for the fulness of that salvation to be experienced by the brethren in Rome. It is a petition for them to walk in a greater awareness of “the love of Christ,” and a broader experience “the fulness of God”

The expression asks for the smile and favor of Jesus to be upon the people. It is a petition for the Lord Jesus to be kindly disposed toward them, and to heap the benefits of salvation upon them. If it is true that salvation, in its entirety, is “*by grace through faith*” (Eph 2:8), then this is a prayer for the fulness of that salvation to be experienced by the brethren in Rome. It is a petition for them to walk in a greater awareness of “*the love of Christ*,” and a broader experience “*the fulness of God*” (Eph 3:19).

Paul refers to “*grace*” twenty-four times in this book. The references unveil something of the magnitude of this Divine quality, and many benefits that flow from it. Allow

- ▣ Coupled with peace, and conferred upon the saints (1:7).
- ▣ The cause of our justification (3:24).
- ▣ Contrasted with salvation by works (4:4).
- ▣ Righteousness is conferred by faith that it might be by grace (4:16).
- ▣ Saints have access into this grace (Rom 5:2a).
- ▣ Saints stand in this grace (5:2b).
- ▣ The “*gift of righteousness*” is “*by grace*” (5:15, twice).
- ▣ Because of Christ we receive an “*abundance of grace*” (5:17).
- ▣ Grace abounded “*much more*” than sin (5:20).
- ▣ Grace reigns “*through*” God’s righteousness (5:21).

- ▣ We do not sin that grace may abound (6:1-2).
- ▣ Sin does not have dominion over us because we are “*under grace*” (6:14).
- ▣ Grace does not promote sin (6:15).
- ▣ There is still a Jewish remnant “*according to the election of grace*” (11:5).
- ▣ If salvation is by grace, it cannot be by works (11:6, four times).
- ▣ Paul spoke through the grace given unto him (12:3).
- ▣ Saints have differing gifts according to the grace given to them (12:6).
- ▣ Paul wrote boldly because of the grace given to him (15:15).
- ▣ The grace of Christ can continually be with us (16:20,24).

From First Corinthians through the Revelation “*grace*” is mentioned ninety-two more times. It is related to God, and comes from God (1 Cor 1:1-2). It is associated with Jesus, and comes from Him (1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 1:2). It is also connected to the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:29). It makes us what we are (1 Cor 15:10), can be caused to abound toward us in all of its fulness (2 Cor 9:8), and is sufficient during great trials (2 Cor 12:9). We have been called into this grace (Gal 1:6), and it is replete with “*riches*” (Eph 1:7). Grace is the means through which we are saved (Eph 2:5,8), and it is given to every child of God (Eph 4:7). God’s grace can be personally known “*in truth*” (Col 1:6), and dwelling in our hearts can prompt us to sing for God’s glory (Col 3:16).

It effects the way we talk (Col 4:6), and brings us “*everlasting consolation and good hope*” (2 Thess 2:16). Grace is “*exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 1:14), and is the reason God has called and saved us (2 Tim 1:9). We can be “*strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 2:1). The “*grace of God*” not only brings salvation to us, it teaches us “*that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our*

Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:11-13). Grace is the cause for our justification (Tit 3:7), is the reason Jesus tasted death for every man (Heb 2:9), and is dispensed to us from a Sovereign throne that is devoted to grace (Heb 4:16). Grace can establish our hearts (Heb 13:9), and is dispensed in increasing measures (James 4:6).

The Prophets prophesied of it, and its fulness will be brought to us at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:13). God’s grace is “*manifold*,” taking various forms (1 Pet 4:10), and is given to the humble

(1 Pet 5:5). The Word of God refers to “*all grace*” (1 Pet 5:10), “*true grace*” (1 Pet 5:12), and growing in grace (2 Pet 3:18).

We dare not view this grace from a mere academic viewpoint. When the prayer for grace to be “*with*” us is uttered, there is a certain perspective that is encouraged. **This is nothing less than a prayer for all of the benefits and gifts of grace to be experienced by the believer.** The magnitude and sufficiency of grace is thus being sought for the people of God.

TO HIM WHO IS ABLE

“*25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began . . .*”

One of the traits of revelation is that a lot is said in a few words. It is a characteristic of fallen man that little is said with a lot of words. Current religious fads seem to go out of their way to emphasize miniscule thoughts with a surplus of verbiage. But such speech is hollow, lacking substance for the soul. It is flowery, but its glory quickly fades.

On the other hand, it is the nature of the truth of God to be able to be condensed and summarized. You will note, however, that **summarization and condensation cannot be done with simplicity.** It is particularly true of spiritual simplicity that it comes in a large container of meaningless babble. You can only summarize something having much detail and complexity. You can only condense something that is significant in size. Perhaps this accounts for the extreme brevity that characterizes much preaching.

There are some who perceive the great truths of God as basically simplistic – things a little child can understand. It is not unusual to find

believers accepting this nonsense. **Let those who speak so foolishly take up the books of Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews, and the Revelation, and point out the intellectual simplicity in them!** Let

benediction. He has not only written to the brethren in Rome, he has done so with an acute awareness of the Lord God Almighty. He is going to ascribe to God the glory for what he has declared with great effectiveness.

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them show us the childlike simplicity of the proclamations of Jesus’ humility (Phil 2:5-8) and Paul’s motivation (Phil 3:5-10). What such people mistake for simpleness is really Divine summary. **It is truth in a seed form, which, when it blossoms, is vast in both scope and depth.** We have just such a verse before us. It is something like a large umbrella that is compacted into something very small. Or, more precisely, like a small mustard seed that contains the makings of a mighty tree.

Here Paul beings his

He will also leave the saints trusting in God, not relying upon his intellectual superiority. Whatever marvels he has unfolded have been given to him by the Lord. Now he will tell believers that the Lord also has an immediate association with them.

HIM WHO IS ABLE

“*Now to Him who is able.*” Other versions read, “*Now to him that is of power,*”^{KJV} “*Now to Him who can.*”^{NAB} The ability of God is a constant accent in Scripture. There are certain things that simply cannot accomplish the will of the Lord. The

Law itself *“could not do”* what God had determined for men (Rom 8:3). NO man *“by any means”* can redeem his brother or give a ransom to God for him (Psa 49:7). When it came to the salvation of men, among the entire empire of created personalities, *“there was none to help”* (Isa 63:5).

No such inability exists with our God. He is fully capable of doing anything and everything that is required for the salvation of men.

- ▣ He is *“able”* to raise up children to Abraham from *“stones”* (Matt 3:9).
- ▣ He is *“able”* to graft the Jews into

or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20).

- ▣ If you ponder the forces that are aligned against you, *“He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself”* (Phil 3:21).
- ▣ When you have committed your life and gifts to the Lord, remember *“He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that dy”* (2 Tim 1:12).
- ▣ When your soul seems famished, and spiritual nourishment is not as evident as you desire, remember *“He is able to succor them that are tempted”* (Heb 2:18).
- ▣ At such time as the race seems

However, the truth of the matter is that there is no Gospel, no good news, concerning human capabilities, or power that is resident in the natural man. We do not preach the good news of man, but the good news of God and of Christ Jesus. This verse provides an aspect of that glorious Gospel.

ESTABLISHMENT

“ . . . who is able to establish you.” Other versions read, *“able to strengthen you,”* ^{NRSV} and *“able to make you strong.”* ^{BBE} The words *“strengthen”* and *“make strong”* can be misleading, as though they referred to enabling you to DO something great. The word used here means to **make stable, place firmly, set fast, and render constant.** ^{STRONG} More literally, it means to **set something up so that it remains unmoveable.** ^{BARCLAY} Thayer says, *“to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix.”*

No such inability exists with our God. He is fully capable of doing anything and everything that is required for the salvation of men.

I suppose if there is one trait that identifies the modern Western church, it is the LACK of this quality. There is hardly a congregation in this part of the world that does not lose as many, if not more, people than it gains. The religious landscape is cluttered with the carcasses of souls who began, but *“were not able to finish.”* (Lk 14:29). Jesus referred to such souls as those who *“for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away”* (Lk 8:13), and those whose love *“waxes cold”* (Matt 24:12). Paul spoke of those who *“depart from the faith”* (1 Tim 4:1), *“cast off their first faith”* (1 Tim 5:12), and *“fall away”* (Heb 6:6). He also spoke of those who were *“tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”* (Eph 4:14). Peter mentioned those who are *“again entangled”* and *“overcome,”* after being delivered (2 Pet 2:22). Both James and Peter wrote of those who were *“unstable”* (James 1:8; 2 Pet 2:14; 3:16).

- ▣ their tree again (Rom 11:23).
- ▣ He can make a believer stand (Rom 14:4), and cause all grace to abound to YOU (2 Cor 9:8).
- ▣ To those who think they lose a lot by coming to the Lord He says, *“The LORD is able to give thee much more than this”* (2 Chron 25:9).
- ▣ To those who are threatened with the opposition of dark forces, God *“is able”* to deliver them (Dan 3:17).
- ▣ When mighty men of the earth arise, seemingly dominating over everyone, God *“is able to abase”* them (Dan 4:37).
- ▣ To those who imagine they are invincible, He *“is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt 10:28).
- ▣ When you elevate your mind to its most lofty capabilities, soaring upon the mountain peaks of grace and truth, you must remember *“Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask*

long, and the task seems too great, remember, *“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Heb 7:25).

- ▣ In every possible sense of the word, *“He is able to save”* (James 4:12).
- ▣ When life becomes treacherous and fraught with difficulties, *“He is able to keep you from falling”* (Jude 1:24).

Carnal men speak of the abilities of men. Spiritual men speak of the ability of God Almighty. No person will be built up in the most holy faith by being pointed to their natural abilities. **If people are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, gaining the victory, they will have to be directed to the consideration of God.** A lot of preaching is godless. It has little or no Divinity in it. The accent of such preaching is humanity.

Who is not able to see the dominance of this condition all around us? Such souls are vulnerable to the devices of the devil, and are sure to fall if their condition remains unchanged. What is the answer to this dilemma? This text has the answer!

God is able to establish believers! He is able to make them firm, grounded, and immovable. **It is a cardinal rule in Scripture that whatever is required of men, God is able to work in them.** Along these lines, immovability and stability ARE Divine requirements. There can be no question about this in our minds.

- ▶ “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye **steadfast, unmoveable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).
- ▶ “. . . to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith **grounded and settled, and be not moved away** from the hope of the gospel” (Col 1:22-23).
- ▶ “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we **hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end**” (Heb 3:14).

I know of no word of Scripture that offers hope to unstable souls. They are described as “double minded” (James 1:8), those who will be beguiled (2 Pet 2:14), and those who wrest, or twist, the Word of God (2 Pet 3:16). Jesus said those who did not “abide” in Him would be violently removed and cast into the fire (John 15:6). Paul said those who did not remain in Christ, but chose to leave, could only expect God’s “of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb 10:27).

God’s people must settle it in their minds that He will not tolerate static discipleship and lifeless profession. Either they become established, or they will be discarded. When this is perceived, and heartily embraced, the text before us becomes a joyful sound of jubilee!

God is able to establish us, and will do so through our faith. He will cause our spiritual roots to go downward, and our fruit to grow upward (2 Kgs 19:30; Isa 37:31). He is “ABLE” to do this. In connection with

establishing you, He is “able to keep you from falling,” and will do so as you give yourself to spiritual diligence. As it is written, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 1:20-21). **Our God will see to it that such people do not fall!**

Take hold of this truth, for it will assist in sustaining your soul. God has power to establish your heart, so that you are blameless and holy in His sight (1 Thess 3:13). He is able to establish you “in every good

firmness of the saints. Their past has been blotted out, their names written in the Lamb’s book of life, and a reconciliation with God effected. They have been given the Holy Spirit, exceeding great and precious promises, and everlasting consolation and good hope. They have a better covenant that is established upon better promises, and their adversary has been destroyed. They have an ever-living Intercessor in heaven, and One within their own hearts. They have been given a message that is conducive to joy, peace, and spiritual stability. What possible reason can be adduced for weak and vacillating disciples. Who is the wise man that can step forward and give an

His absolute faithfulness is held before you as a basis for establishing you and keeping you from evil (2 Thess 3:3). The Holy Spirit has moved holy men to declare that God will, after you have suffered a while, “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you”

word and work” (2 Thess 2:17). His absolute faithfulness is held before you as a basis for establishing you and keeping you from evil (2 Thess 3:3). The Holy Spirit has moved holy men to declare that God will, after you have suffered a while, “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10).

This is an aspect of the Gospel that must not be neglected. Those in Christ must be reminded of this again and again. This speaks of a salvation that fulfills the word of Isaiah: “We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks” (Isa 26:1). In Nehemiah’s days, the walls of the holy city were broken down, and its gates remained burned with fire (Neh 1:3). But there is no God-honoring cause for that condition existing in this “day of salvation.” Everything has been set in place that is required for the stability and

acceptable reason for the massive weakness and instability that exists in the contemporary church

Those in Christ must be told, God “is of power to stablish you.”^{KJV} From the mouth and from the pen, let the words be made known, God “is able to establish you.”^{NKJV} Let no child of God be left imagining their stability and steadfastness depends upon their own strength! Let none of them remain ignorant of this foundational and indispensable truth!

ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL

“. . . according to my gospel.” The Lord uses appointed means to accomplish His will. He used Moses to bring Israel out of Egyptian bondage. He used Solomon to build His temple. He used Nebuchadnezzar to chasten His people. He used John the Baptist to prepare the people for His Son and their Savior. He uses His Word to

begat us, and His Spirit to strengthen us. What does He use to establish His people? What is the means through which He makes His people solid, dependable, stable, and immovable?

Our text says God will use the message Paul preached – “according to my Gospel.” Other versions read, “BY my Gospel,”^{NIV} “in agreement with the good news which I gave you,”^{BBE} and “just as the Good News says.”^{NLT} The word translated “according to” or “by” literally means “toward,” or “denoting a relationship to

CHRIST

“ . . . and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” Other versions read, “and the proclamation of Jesus Christ,”^{NIV} and “the message about Jesus Christ.”^{NLT} The expressions “my Gospel” and “the preaching of Jesus Christ” are two sides of the same coin. “My Gospel” accents the container, and “Jesus Christ” emphasizes the contents. **To put it another way, Jesus Christ is declared through the Gospel alone, and the Gospel deals with Christ alone.** God has nothing to say

going to have to declare Christ Jesus. **Academic lectures and learned disquisitions on the nuances of humanly conceived theology will not yield a strong and stable church.** Such things may, indeed, be impressive to men, but they will not prepare men and women for eternity!

A weak and emaciated church is the result of the preaching to which it has been subjected. This may appear to be an unfair statement, but it is, in my judgment, even understated. The religious message to which people are subjected, and which they receive, shapes their thinking. It sets the limits for their lives, both toward the earth and toward heaven. A flawed message allows for more liberty in the earth. A strong Gospel message allows for more movement in the heavenlies. The reason for this circumstance is that God uses “the Gospel,” or “the preaching of Jesus Christ” as the means through which He establishes the people. You must settle it in your mind that if God does not establish the people, they will not be established. Conversely, if He does establish them, they will be established.

Preaching is not lecturing. It is not a logical presentation, as men think of things. It is proclamation, announcement, and reporting. It is the declaration of something that has occurred, is presently occurring, or has been determined to occur.

something.” The idea here is threefold. First, the Gospel points to this fact, that God is able to establish you. Second, the ability of God to establish you is confirmed by the message of the Gospel itself. Third, when the Gospel is received, it produces a spiritual environment in which God brings stability to the believer. These three things – God’s power to establish, the Good News of the Gospel, and the environment produced by the belief of the Gospel – are “a threefold cord,” and cannot be “quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12). A purported Gospel that does not carry this message is no Gospel at all. It is spurious, having no sustaining power.

If you are a preacher or a teacher, you must ask yourself this question: “What can God do with my Gospel?” Can saints be established by the message you declare? The contemplation of this interrogation will lend itself to more acceptable and profitable preaching.

THE PREACHING OF JESUS

about Jesus that is not contained in the Gospel, which is “the record” He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

Preaching is not lecturing. It is not a logical presentation, as men think of things. It is proclamation, announcement, and reporting. It is the declaration of something that has occurred, is presently occurring, or has been determined to occur. Thus what Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection is in the Gospel. What He is presently doing at the right hand of the Father is in the Gospel. What He will yet do in gathering us to Himself and bruising Satan under our feet, is in the Gospel!

God works through the declaration of His Son, not the declaration of morality. He establishes His people in strict accordance with the Gospel of Christ, not the Gospel of the Spirit. Believers are made solid by what God has said about Christ, now what He says about domestic and social relationships. If you want the people to be immovable, you are

THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

“ . . . according to the revelation of the mystery.” The Gospel, or the preaching of Jesus Christ, is not a synopsis of human opinion. It is not the result of human analysis and study. **This is something that has been revealed by the God who purposed salvation!** Apart from this revelation, the Good News would have forever remained “the mystery.” Man, who is wrapped in mortality, cannot discern on his own what is wrapped in immortality. A message that is conceived and saturated with Deity cannot be uncovered by the fallen men for whom it is intended. This ought to be so apparent it would require no iteration. But that is not the case. The landscape of theology has been so muddled with the wisdom of men they hardly think of revelation. If, indeed, the very concept

of “*revelation*” is entertained, it is immediately relegated to the past. Therefore, it is treated much as a theological museum piece.

Our text does not say “*what WAS revealed,*” but “*according to the revelation.*” **Revelation is something like the lingering glory of God on Mount Sinai, and in the face of Moses. It continues to illuminate after it is initially given.** Only things that are temporal fade. That which is eternal continues to glow with the glory of the Lord, illuminating both heart and mind. Furthermore, faith comes when that unfading glory is seen in the Gospel. You can never promote faith with historicity and the supposed confirmations of science, human logic, or archeology. Whatever value may be assigned to those things, God will never use them to establish His people, for they do not immediately relate to Jesus. Science, the wisdom of men, and other such matters, can stand without Jesus. They do not need Him to exist, and thus they will all ultimately perish. The Gospel, on the other hand, requires Jesus, and consequently necessitates revelation. This is because there is not an artifact in all this world that God uses to expound Jesus. **His Presence cannot be confirmed by any human sense or ability. He cannot be heard with the hearing of the ear, nor seen with the seeing of the eye.** If God does not reveal Him through the Gospel, He will not be known at all!

In Scripture, the word “*mystery*” does not denote something that is mysterious by nature, and unable to be comprehended. Rather, it is something intelligent and apprehensible, but hidden and kept secret. In this case, “*the mystery*” is what God had determined to do through Jesus Christ, *His “only begotten Son.”* This “*mystery*” is only “*revealed,*” or made known, to those whom God approves. **It is of such a nature that it cannot be discovered independently of God Himself.**

The Good News is that God is disposed to reveal this glorious

message. There is a twofold sense in which it is revealed. First, it is revealed so that it may be proclaimed, or declared. That declaration becomes the means through which He will accomplish what he has purposed. Second, it is revealed to those who receive it. They are enabled to see the implications of that revealed mystery in order to conform their thinking and living to it.

Remember, we are speaking of the establishment of the people of God – of being immovable and grounded and settled. God will do this through the Gospel, which is the proclamation of God Son. That proclamation is in

Remember, we are speaking of the establishment of the people of God – of being immovable and grounded and settled. God will do this through the Gospel, which is the proclamation of God Son.

strict accord with the unveiling of a mystery that had been concealed since the world began.

This “*mystery*” was hidden in the types and shadows of the tabernacle service. It was announced by the Prophets, yet remained a mystery even to them because the time had not yet come for it to be made known more fully. However, now that sin has been “*put away*” (Heb 9:26), the devil “*destroyed*” (Heb 2:14), principalities and powers “*spoiled*” (Col ;15), and the law ended as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4), the “*mystery*” has been revealed.

Frequently the message of the world’s reconciliation is referred to as a “*mystery.*” Elsewhere Paul reminds us the message remains a mystery to those wed to the world. Thus he says he spoke “*the wisdom of God in a mystery*” (1 Cor 2:7). Later in that very passage, he confirms there are no human capacities capable of uncovering this mystery. It had to be

revealed (1 Cor 2:9-10). He also referred to it as “*the mystery of His will*” (Eph 1:9), and “*the mystery of Christ*” (Eph 3:4). He also confirms it was “*hidden in God,*” that is, God alone was capable of opening it up, for it pertained to His own immutable purpose (Eph 3:9). He also calls it “*the mystery of the Gospel*” (Eph 6:19).

This mystery, the Spirit affirms, “*now is made manifest to His saints*” (Col 1:26), and contains “*the riches of the glory*” of God (Col 1:27). Emphasizing the thorough involvement of Deity in this message, it is called “*the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*” (Col 2:2).

Also, showing that Christ Jesus Himself is the core of this message, the Spirit elsewhere speaks of it in this manner. “*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*” (1 Tim 3:16).

KEPT SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN

“*. . . which was kept secret since the world began.*” Other versions read, “*hidden for long ages past,*”^{NIV} “*kept in silence from times eternal.*”^{ASV} If God had not revealed this secret, there is not an angel in heaven or a man upon earth that would ever have known it. We know this is the case, because it remained concealed “*in God*” for 4,000 years. **Until the Object of God’s affection was sent into the world, the purpose that depended upon that Object, His Son, remained concealed and inaccessible, hidden in His own Person.**

Many godly and wise men lived from Adam until Christ, but none of them comprehended the mystery. They wanted to understand it, but God told them it was not for them to know while they remained in the world (1 Pet 1:10-12a). The time for understanding had not yet come. Even holy angels, stronger and wiser than men, desired to look into these

things, but had to wait until they were revealed to men (1 Pet 1:12b). Jesus told His disciples, *“that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Lk 10:24). They did not understand at that time – we should in our time!

In order to affirm the willingness of God to make His will known, the fact and means of that revelation will now be briefly expounded. This message is the one God uses to make His people stable, grounded, and settled. Spiritual stability depends upon this message being proclaimed and believed. It is not possible apart from that.

THE MANIFESTATION

“²⁶ . . . but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith.” The shroud of Divine silence has now been lifted, so that the mystery can be unveiled. That mystery is not a message of the closing period of history in which a tyrant will rule the

Father. By saying *“But,”* the Spirit contrasts the *“day of salvation”* with all time prior to it.

This being the case, there is no acceptable reason for being ignorant of what God is doing in Jesus Christ. It is being opened up in Christ Jesus, who is both the sum and core of the Gospel. If a person wants understanding of the will of the Lord, the ears must be attune to the Gospel,

^{KJV} and *“made known through the prophetic writings.”*^{NIV}

Here the Spirit uses Peter to open this more clearly to us. On the surface, it may appear confusing that what was previous hidden is now made known through the writings of the Prophets, who ministered during the time when the mystery was hidden. Peter affirms, *“Concerning **this salvation**, the prophets, who spoke of **the grace that was to come to you**, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that **they were not serving themselves but you**, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things”*^{NIV} (1 Pet 1:10-12).

That mystery is not a message of the closing period of history in which a tyrant will rule the world. It is not a message concerning a world government, or a highly successful organized church. Rather, it is “the word of this salvation”

world. It is not a message concerning a world government, or a highly successful organized church. Rather, it is *“the word of this salvation”* (Acts 13:26). It is a message that is supported by the Prophets, and made known for all peoples.

NOW MANIFESTED

“ . . . but now has been made manifest.” Other versions read, *“But now is made manifest,”*^{KJV} *“but now revealed and made known,”*^{NIV} and *“but is now disclosed.”*^{NRSV} **The point is that the mystery is being revealed during the reign of Jesus from the right hand of the**

and the eyes pointed toward those who proclaim it. God does not open His mystery apart from the Gospel of His Son. It is not comprehended by studying Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. You can wade through Leviticus and Deuteronomy and never see this message. **All of those sections of Scripture must be illuminated. They are not themselves the illumination itself.** Light must be shed on them, they are not the light.

BY THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

“ . . . and by the prophetic Scriptures. . . ” Other versions read, *“by the scriptures of the prophets,”*

Here, then, was a message written centuries before, and **intended for us** *“upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor 10:11). It was delivered by holy men to whom it did not immediately pertain! Now, through the Spirit, those very writings become a means for opening up the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, Peter opened the Gospel through the writings of the prophets. He appealed to Joel (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32),

David (Acts 2:25-28; Psa 16:8-11; 49:15), and a prophesy delivered to David (2 Sam 7:11-16). He did exactly what our text affirms.

Peter later announced to Cornelius that *“all the Prophets”* bore witness to Christ and the remission of sin that comes through belief in Him (Acts 10:43). Paul said he preached *“none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come”* (Acts 26:22; 29:23). The extensiveness of these prophecies is staggering. Ponder a few of them, which are a very small representation.

- ▣ He would utterly frustrate the Devil (Gen 3:15).
- ▣ Through Him the world would be blessed (Gen 12:3).
- ▣ The people would gather to Him (Gen 49:10).
- ▣ He would be a Prophet, and the people would hearken to Him (Deut. 18:15)
- ▣ He would stand on the earth in the latter day (Job 19:25).
- ▣ The details of His death are provided (Psa 22).
- ▣ He would humble Himself willingly, coming into the world to do what sacrifices and burnt offerings could not do (Psa 40:6-10; Heb 10:4-8).
- ▣ He would lead captivity captive in His ascent to glory (Psa 68:18; Eph 4:8).
- ▣ The Stone which the builders refused would become the Head of the corner (Psa 118:22-24).
- ▣ He would be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14).
- ▣ He would be a Son given to Israel, the government would be upon His shoulder, and of its increase there would be no end (Isa 9:6-7).
- ▣ He would come from Jesse, growing out of his roots (Isa 11:1).
- ▣ He would be impeccably wise and discreet (Isa 11:2-4).
- ▣ The Gentiles would seek unto Him, and His rest would be glorious (Isa 11:10).
- ▣ He would have authority to open and close (Isa 22:22).
- ▣ All the glory of God’s house would depend upon Him (Isa 22:24).
- ▣ The burden would be cut off in

Him (Isa 22:25).

- ▣ He would be a Foundation Stone, a Tried Stone, and a Precious Cornerstone. Whoever believed on Him would not be ashamed (Isa 28:16).
- ▣ A Man would for protection and sustenance in a desolate domain (Isa 32:2).
- ▣ A voice from the wilderness would prepare the way for Him (Isa 40:1).
- ▣ A bruised reed He would not break, and a smoking flax He would not quench (Isa 42:3).

captives and the opening of the prison to those who were bound, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Isa 61:2-3).

- ▣ He would comfort those who mourned, give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isa 61:3-4).
- ▣ He would bring His reward with Him (Isa 62:11).
- ▣ His days would be marked by salvation and safety, and His name would be *“The Lord Our Righteousness”* (Jer 23:5-6).

Much contemporary preaching leaves much to be desired. However, one of the most tragic characteristics of it is a near-total misrepresentation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

- ▣ He would not fail nor be discouraged (Isa 42:4).
- ▣ He would be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6).
- ▣ In His day God would hear the people and accept them (Isa 49:8).
- ▣ His death would be vicarious, and He would suffer as a Substitute (Isa 53:4-6).
- ▣ He would justify man and bear their iniquities, bringing satisfaction to God (Isa 53:11).
- ▣ He would make intercession for the transgressors (Isa 53:12).
- ▣ He would be a Leader and a Commander for the people (Isa 55:4).
- ▣ He would bring salvation, and His righteousness would sustain Him (Isa 16-17).
- ▣ He will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Isa 59:10).
- ▣ The Spirit of the Lord would be upon Him, and the Lord would anoint Him (Isa 61:1).
- ▣ He would preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the

- ▣ All people, nations, and languages would serve Him (Dan 7:14). He would make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24).
- ▣ He would be the Desire of all nations (Hag 2:7).
- ▣ He would open a fountain for sin and uncleanness (Zech 13:1).
- ▣ He would be the Messenger of the covenant, in whom God would delight (Mal 3:1).
- ▣ He would be the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings (Mal 4:2).

The Bane of Much Preaching

Much contemporary preaching leaves much to be desired. However, one of the most tragic characteristics of it is a near-total misrepresentation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Thinking to make the Lord more relevant, He is largely presented to the people as an answer to their problems. He is submitted to men within the context of present day circumstances, and in the language of the street. All of this may sound as

though it is wise, but it is not.

God used the holy Prophets to define the real dilemma of humanity. He described a coming Savior that had a fundamental appeal to fallen humanity. These descriptions are very pointed, and are universal in their application. If men do not know the kind of Savior the Lord has provided, then they can learn from the Prophets. The Prophets, after all, did not speak a message that was for them or their generation. They delivered a word that is for us. How is it, therefore, that their delineations of the Savior are so rarely heard?

prophetic writings” is not a contrivance of the sons of men. Nor, indeed, is it one of several options available to men. **This means of revelation has been commanded by the eternal God.** Not only was the message of the Prophets itself given by God’s command, the opening up of that message by those sent out by Jesus has also been commanded. One version reads, “*by the order of the eternal God, the knowledge of it has been given to all the nations.*”^{BBE}

What Does This Mean?

This whole arrangement means that Jesus cannot be properly

affirmations of the 32nd chapter of Isaiah Did not your heart leap for joy? And why so? Because that is the appointed means through which God has chosen to make His Son known. Your own experience in the faith will attest to the truth of what I have said.

FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

“ . . . for obedience to the faith.” Other versions read, “*for the obedience of faith,*”^{KJV} “*leading to obedience of faith,*”^{NASB} “*so that all nations might believe and obey Him,*”^{NIV} “*to bring about the obedience of faith,*”^{NRSV} “*so that they may come under the rule of the faith,*”^{BBE} and “*so that they obey in faith.*”^{NJB}

If men do not know the kind of Savior the Lord has provided, then they can learn from the Prophets. The Prophets, after all, did not speak a message that was for them or their generation. They delivered a word that is for us. How is it, therefore, that their delineations of the Savior are so rarely heard?

This is the purpose for which God is revealing the formerly hidden mystery through the message of the prophets. It is **not** in order to meet humanly perceived needs. It is **not** for the purpose stabilizing the home or buttressing the government. It is **not** to gratify man’s quest for attention or for possessions. Nor, indeed, are we left to speculate about why God is unveiling His secret. It is in order to “*obedience to the faith.*”

Endeavoring to maintain some form of civility and godly restraint, I make the following observation. The reason preachers and teachers do not open the Prophets to the people can be traced to only two possibilities – and both of them are inexcusable. Either they have no knowledge of the Prophets, or they do not feel their Messianic prophesies are relevant to the people to whom they speak.

But allow me to carry this matter one step further. I am going to say their very perception of salvation is distorted – that it has been molded by misapprehensions of God, Christ, redemption, and the glory to come.

ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF AN EVERLASTING GOD

“ . . . according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” The disclosure of the great salvation of God “*through the*

presented apart from the Prophets. **If what God has promised concerning the Savior is not declared, then who the Savior is and what He does will remain unknown!** It is no wonder that Paul confessed before Festus, “*And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles*” (Acts 26:22-23).

Who is there among us that can recall when they first saw Jesus in the Prophets? Did not your heart leap for joy when you read what they said the Savior would do? What of when you became acquainted with the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, or the 22nd Psalm, or some of the remarkable

This is a significant phrase, and does not fit into the fanciful theological molds men have created. A literal translation would read, “*unto obedience of faith.*” At this point, Paul is tying together the first part of Romans with the last part. He has already declared that the Gospel announces a righteousness for men – a righteousness that comes from God and is appropriated by faith (1:17). **The meaning of the verse under consideration is that the Gospel properly preached is designed to constrain men to receive the righteousness God offers through their faith.** The Gospel is designed to produce this result. Faith itself is the fundamental obedience, and procures the fundamental benefit, which is the righteousness of God.

In its essence, to obey the Gospel is to believe it. If sin is, at its very core, unbelief (John 16:9), then obedience at its very core is believing. **I know of no word from God that**

suggests a person can believe without obeying. The lack of obedience is tied to unbelief, not faith! When Abraham, for example, *“believed in the Lord,”* it was *“counted unto him for righteousness”* (Gen 15:6). And how was Abraham brought to believe in the Lord. What motivated him to yield the obedience of faith? God delivered a glorious promise to him – good news. Here is the very word that moved Abraham to believe. *“And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be”* (Gen 15:5).

When Daniel was threatened with the contrived edict of the king, he continued to pray to his God. After being delivered from the lion’s, Darius *“was exceeding glad for him,”* and commanded that he be removed from the den. In assessing why Daniel was delivered, even this *“Darius the Mede”* knew what was at the root of Daniel’s deliverance: *“because he believed in his God”* (Dan 6:23).

The commanding need of *“all nations,”* and the church as well, is that of *“the work of faith”* (1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11). Unless that is accomplished, everything else is for naught. If all who believe not are to be *“damned”* (Mark 16:16), there should be no question about where our stress

is to be placed. If any one thinks faith is a mere step in a procedure, and that it allows for a failure to obey God, they have simply thought wrong.

We must not miss the means

door, and others believe it opens it. Whatever you may think about the matter, no person of understanding has ever been comforted by Divine silence. Holy men have even implored the Lord, *“keep not silence, Oh Lord”*

We must not miss the means of bringing about this faith. It is the preaching of Gospel of Christ. Or, as our text affirms, revealing the mystery of the ages by opening up the message of the Prophets concerning the Lord Jesus.

of bringing about this faith. It is the preaching of Gospel of Christ. Or, as our text affirms, revealing the mystery of the ages by opening up the message of the Prophets concerning the Lord Jesus.

A BRIEF WORD ABOUT SILENCE

I am constrained to say a word about Divine silence. Among the people with whom I have journeyed, there exists a notion that Divine silence is a medium of instruction. It is not unusual to find some poor soul trying to prove a point by saying God did not say anything on that subject. Some believe Divine silence shuts the

(Psa 35:22).

Regarding our text, *“silence”* is equated with *“mystery,”* and speaking with revelation. As long as God did not speak extensively about salvation, even though He granted a few tokens, the matter was garbed in mystery. Even those who wrote of it did not understand it, to say nothing of the holy angels, who themselves did not have the faintest notion of the extent of the Savior and His salvation. The church must become occupied with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the appointed means of Divine enlightenment.

TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

“²⁷ . . . to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” The phrase *“the only wise God”* is not uncommon in Scripture. It is also found in 1 Timothy 1:17 and Jude 25. *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God . . . To the only wise God our Savior.”* This verse (16:27) is the continuation of a thought started in verse twenty-five. *“Now Him who is able . . . to God, alone wise . . .”* The latter part of verse twenty-five, together with verse twenty-six, is parenthetical – an elaboration of God

Himself. **It attributes to Him what our salvation requires.**

The wisdom of God is a subject the Spirit often develops. All of His works have been *made “in wisdom”* (Psa 104:24). *“His understanding,”* we are told, *“is infinite”* (Psa 147:5). It is characterized by both depth and richness (Rom 11:33). Salvation is, in fact, God abounding toward us *“in all wisdom”* (Eph 1:8). This is the very quality God is displaying to heavenly hosts through His dealings *with “the*

church” (Eph 3:10).

Yet, this text is not simply affirming that God is *“wise.”* Nor, indeed is it only saying He is all wise. It is not the quality of His infinite wisdom that is the subject here, but its absolute uniqueness. He is the *“ONLY wise God.”* There is no wisdom outside of His own. All other forms of valid wisdom come from Him. Everything else is obsequious and pretentious. **No other God is wise, or, to put it another way, no other wisdom is valid.**

A Fitting Conclusion to a Remarkable Exposition of the Salvation of God--by Given O. Blakely

SALVATION IS AN EXHIBITION OF DIVINE WISDOM

The Lord is known for His wisdom as well as His power. It is written, *“He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion”* (Jer 10:12). The same statement is made again in Jeremiah 15:15. Twice in the Revelation both wisdom and power are ascribed to the Lord (Rev 5:12; 7:12).

While it is true that Divine

and prudence” (Eph 1:8). Now, through the church, the *“manifold wisdom of God”* is being displayed to eager and inquiring heavenly hosts (Eph 3:10).

The fact that God can be *“just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”* (Rom 3:26), confirms that He is *“the only wise God.”* Because of His wisdom, none can condemn those whom God justifies (Rom 8:34), or lay anything to the charge of His elect (Rom 8:33). Both the Father and the Son have

GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

“... be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.” It is essential that God be glorified, for *“all things are of God”* (2 Cor 5:18). This is particularly evident in salvation, which is the most extensive display of Divine power and wisdom. For *“the only wise God”* to receive glory involves the recognition of what He has done. This will not be prompted by a consideration of nature, although that does cause one to give glory to God in a measured way. **However, nature is not the object of Divine attention.** It is man that has moved God to consideration.

Thus, when David studied the vast universe, together with its complexities, he burst forth in praise. *“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?”* (Psa 8:3-4). The *“sweet Psalmist of Israel”* (2 Sam 23:4) knew something of the intricacies of nature. The heavens belong to God – they were His. The moon and the stars were ordained by Him, and fulfill their destiny in strict accordance with His appointments. Yet, God’s attention is not focused on the heavens, or the various bodies that occupy them. He has not visited nature, but man. There – upon man – is where He has placed His attention and love. He is mindful of man – mindful enough to provide a Savior for him, an inheritance, and a place of dominion in the world to come.

It is THAT work that produces the glory of reference. That is why it is said to come *“through Jesus Christ.”* That is a description of His redemptive capacity. Regarding His humanity, He is *“Jesus.”* Regarding His commission, He is *“Christ.”* God is so exalted, and His wisdom so infinite, that glory can only be given to Him *“through Jesus Christ.”* Thus, in our redemption, we are being suited to render Him the sort of glory that is properly due to Him. In giving that glory to Him, we ourselves will reap eternal benefits.

While it is true that Divine power is made known in the effective rescue of lost humanity, salvation involves more than God’s power. In Christ power and wisdom are united for the purpose of extricating man from the clutches of the wicked one, and bringing him to glory.

power is made known in the effective rescue of lost humanity, salvation involves more than God’s power. In Christ power and wisdom are united for the purpose of extricating man from the clutches of the wicked one, and bringing him to glory. Thus it is said of the Savior, *“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”* (1 Cor 1:24). In fact, Jesus is, by God, *“made unto us wisdom . . .”* (1 Cor 1:30).

The marvelous dealings of God with the Jews and Gentiles is encapsulated in the words, *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”* (Rom 11:33). The appointed role of preaching in the economy of salvation is declared to have been due to God’s *“wisdom”* (1 Cor 1:21). When the Gospel is declared in truth, it is said to be the declaration of *“the wisdom of God in a mystery”* (1 Cor 2:6-7). The immensity and diverseness of salvation is referred to as God abounding *“toward us in all wisdom*

maintained their righteousness in saving us. God will not only be justified in all that He has said, He will also be justified in the manner in which He has saved His people from their sins.

Our great God has overcome the devil without rendering him helpless during the battle. He has given him leave to exercise all of his craftiness and power, then in wisdom used those very efforts to work salvation in the midst of the earth! In bringing many sons to glory, none of them are being brought unwillingly. They are, according to His own word, *“willing”* in the day of His power (Psa 110:3). They have not always been so. God’s wisdom was employed to so direct them that they became willing without having to be forced to do so. This was also done without God compromising His character, will, or promises. That requires inexplicable wisdom. Only God possesses wisdom, and thus only God can save. Thus it is written, *“Salvation is of the Lord”* (Jonah 2:9). God alone is *“able to save”* (James 4:12).

This glory is “forever.” That is, the effects of it will ripple throughout eternity. As the ceaseless cycles of eternity roll on, the glory that is given to God because of His great salvation will never wane or diminish. I can only imagine the swells of glory increasing, and being magnified in the “ages to come.” In fact, the Spirit makes a point of this very thing. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and

made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus**” (Eph 2:4-7). The grace that brought salvation, taught us how to live, and made us what we are, will be the subject of inquiry and marvelous exposition throughout the ages to come.

That is the grand purpose of God! He has, in salvation, unveiled an aspect of His Person that never before has been seen so extensively – **His**

grace. In the display and working of that grace, He has employed His “manifold wisdom,” and it has delighted and instructed the heavenly hosts. How fitting, therefore, that those who are being saved also be earnest students of this grace, inquiring into it, and receiving the rich bounty that flows from it. The church is to be noted for its embrace and proclamation of the grace of God. Here, in this day of salvation, among the people of God, His grace can be both experienced and comprehended, enjoyed and perceived. Let it not be strange to any one of us.

CONCLUSION

AMEN!

“Amen!” What a fitting word for this marvelous Epistle! It is also the last word in the Bible: “**AMEN!**” (Rev 22:21). This word is used seven times in the book of Romans.

- ▶ 1:25: “. . . the Creator, who is blessed for ever. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 9:5: “Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 11:36: “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 15:33: “Now the God of peace be with you all. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 16:20: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 16:24: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. **Amen.**”
- ▶ 16:27: “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. **Amen.**”

This is a Scriptural word of assent, agreement, and faith. Literally it means “verily,” “let it be so,” or “truly.” At the conclusion of an affirmation, such as those I have mentioned, it means “*this is indeed true.*” ROBERTSON If expressed in the spirit of thanksgiving it means, “*that is the way it should be.*” ROBERTSON Etymologically it means “*verily, of a truth, so be it, or certainty.*” LIDDELL-SCOTT It is also used in the sense of a

strong affirmation and assent to what has been said. FRIBERG

Having said all of that, the word “Amen” is the response of faith.

Having said all of that, the word “Amen” is the response of faith. It is the result of comprehending to some degree what has been said, agreeing with it, and letting the agreement be made known. There is no shame in “Amen,” no doubt, and no unbelief.

It is the result of comprehending to some degree what has been said, agreeing with it, and letting the agreement be made known. There is no shame in “Amen,” no doubt, and no unbelief.

When the twelve curses of the Law were read, the children of Israel were required to say “Amen” after the reading of each one (Deut 27:15-26). Faith, however, does not need to be commanded to say “Amen” when the working of the Lord is declared. It is a spontaneous response of joy, confirming the desire of the godly to

participate in the blessing of the Lord.

Thus we come to end of this marvelous Epistle. We have glided over its surface rather swiftly, but

there are unspeakable depths in this letter. It gets down to the core of our salvation, declaring its greatest benefits and the cause of them. The words that have been expounded are all pivotal. They include the Gospel, sin, righteousness, faith, justification, grace, and hope. The matter of our baptism into Christ was opened in an unprecedented way. The inner warfare produced by our faith has been delineated, together with the state of no condemnation. The role of suffering and the assistance of the Holy Spirit has been expounded. Spiritual gifts have been declared,

together with brotherly love and consideration. Our relationship to the government, as well as to one another was expounded extensively. The role of Israel in the Divine economy was explained, together with the role of the conscience.

All of these things, and more,

have been placed within the grasp of our faith, and with no respect of persons. You may have imagined yourself unequal to the task of understanding the book of Romans. However, if it is true that Paul belongs to you (1 Cor 3:21-23), then this book also belongs to you. It has been provided to clarify your

salvation, enable you to have a strong faith, and cause your hope to abound. Let your faith reach out and receive it. Divine assistance will be given to you. Truly, we have been blessed to sit down beside still waters, and in green pastures. May your heart ponder these things often, and with profit. Now, may the Lord direct your heart.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/11/2002. We will begin an overview of the book of Daniel. During the Babylonian captivity, the Lord revealed marvelous things regarding the future to this prophet. Those revelations are still challenging to the world's most prodigious students of Scripture. We will see in them the Divine manner of working, the superiority of heavenly Kingdom, and the inferiority of the kingdoms of this world. The first lesson will be an introduction to this book. 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. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

NOTE: Special New Year's Eve (Monday, 12/31/2001) services will be held in the Blakely home. You are invited to join us in praying out the old year, and praying in the new one. The meeting will begin at 8:00 PM. We will have a season of singing, testifying, a message, and a time of prayer. Prior to our prayer session, we have a brief interlude for refreshments and informal fellowship. Please plan to join us in this time of thanksgiving for the old year and anticipation of the new one.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Adah/Jason Hutchcraft (hutchcraftj@esr.edu)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

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