



The Epistle to the Romans

LESSON NUMBER 1



APOSTOLIC GREETING

1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, ²(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) ³Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: ⁵By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: ⁶Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: ⁷To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7, KJV)

INTRODUCTION

The book of Romans is to inspired literature what a unique and exquisite painting is to finer art. It is set within the framework of “*eternal purpose*,” and highlights the means through which we are brought into fruitful affiliation with the Living God. The rich colors of grace and Divine love are accented throughout the book, showing salvation to be the focus of Divine intention.

While “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*,” there are Divinely inspired words that are addressed more specifically to faith. These are foundational words, upon which the faith, hope, and love of the saints of God rest. All books of Scripture contain, and revolve around, these utterances. There is correction in God’s

word, but that is not the heart of it. There is also instruction in righteousness—words that speak directly to living godly in this world. Neither are these words are the center of Scripture. This situation does not take from their essentiality and seriousness. It is, in my understanding, a cardinal principle of Scripture, that all rebuke, correction, and instruction are designed to bring the believer back to the foundations, where real progress in the faith can be made. For this reason, it is written, “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psa 11:3).

A SUMMATION OF THE BOOK

A number of subjects will be addressed in this Epistle, but the Spirit will always bring us back to these foundational

considerations.

- † The indispensability of men possessing righteousness.
- † The absolute failure of men to be righteous in their own strength.
- † The provision of righteousness announced in the Gospel.
- † Justification, or the realization of righteousness, comes by faith.
- † A very real union with Jesus Christ is realized in our justification.
- † The “*flesh*,” or what we are by nature, is totally unacceptable, and invariably leads to death, or separation from God.
- † Justification causes the future to become more relevant than the present, thus compelling us to live, and be saved, by hope.

- † The entirety of salvation, from beginning to end, is of the Lord, and is according to a predetermined purpose.
- † Faith, above all things, is effective before God.
- † The foundational role of Israel in the formation and growth of the church.

All other subjects addressed in Romans are but branches sprouting from the trunk of Divine purpose. **The larger branches always have to do with how God has and is implementing this purpose through Christ Jesus the Lord.** The fulfillment of that purpose depends solely upon the Son of God. Our participation in that glorious purpose depends upon our faith, which alone can take hold of the wondrous message of the Gospel of Christ.

INNER WARFARE

The most extensive teaching concerning the inner warfare experienced by the believer is found in this book (Chapter 7). This wonderful exposition of spiritual life sheds great and indispensable light on the life of faith. You will find it to be a key to spiritual understanding. The Spirit will set the stage for understanding this warfare in the preceding chapters with unusually strong affirmations.

PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

This book was written while Paul was still a free man (as compared with the prison Epistles). It is generally understood to have been written from Corinth around 58 A.D. By his own admission, Paul had not yet been to Rome when he wrote this foundational Epistle. Yet, he longed to come there to impart “some spiritual gift” to them (1:12), be comforted by their mutual faith (1:13), and preach the Gospel to them (1:15). He also declares that he had frequently “purposed to come” to them in order that he might have fruit among them (1:12).

His arrival in Rome (Acts 28:16) came approximately three years after this Epistle was written (A.D. 61).

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

We are not provided any record of the origin of this body of believers. There is no evidence that it was founded by an Apostle, which is itself an arresting consideration. Roman Catholic tradition affirms it was founded by Peter, but there is no evidence of this. Further, Paul would doubtless have mentioned Peter in the Epistle if this were the case.

The larger branches always have to do with how God has and is implementing this purpose through Christ Jesus the Lord. The fulfillment of that purpose depends solely upon the Son of God.

Yet, this church had become renowned throughout the world: “*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*” (1:8). Paul refers to several in Rome with words of unusual commendation. “*Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ . . . 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 fellow prisoners, 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 . . . them which are of Aristobulus’ household . . . Herodion my kinsman . . . them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord . . . Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord . . . the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord . . . Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine . . . Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them . . . Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them*” (16:3-15).

An impressive list, indeed! Notice their only real distinction is found in their association with Christ Jesus. That is the

thing that made them unique. How wonderful it would be to see an impressive list like that concerning the churches of our day.

Here was a body of believers, in the midst of a despotic political empire that had no former association with the Prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, or the Apostles. All of this WITHOUT the apparent presence, at that time, of an Apostle! There were “*strangers of Rome*” present at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). We know from Acts 18:2, that Aquila and Priscilla had been expelled from Rome with other Jews. How sparse our knowledge of this body of believers.

A Great Testimonial

The “*beloved of God*” in Rome, “*called to be saints,*” stand as a testimony to what the Lord can do. There was no Apostolic effort to found the church. The congregation in Jerusalem did not plan a strategy to establish a church in this citadel of paganism—around 1,200 miles away. Yet this church was raised up—and a significant one at that!

The worth of a church is not determined by its founder, but by its faith. Those who are sectarian in spirit could not have received the church at Rome, because it was not founded by the Apostles. But Paul, who had the Spirit of Christ, received them as brethren, acknowledging the unusual number and quality of believers among them.

PURPOSE FOR WRITING

The objectives realized by this marvelous Epistle are, in my perception, several. I will only mention them here, developing them further as we proceed with an exposition of the book.

Each of these matters is carefully expounded in the power of the Holy Spirit, and are central in Apostolic doctrine. It is difficult to conceive of a more weighty presentation of the Good News.

- † The **meaning** of the Gospel of Christ.
- † The relationship of the Gospel to **the Law**.

† The relationship of the Gospel to the Prophets.

† The relationship of the Gospel to the

universal need of humanity.

THE MAN GOD USES

Rom 1:1 **Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.** While this appears to be a somewhat standard introduction, there are precious jewels of truth to be found in it. **Any word of Scripture must be addressed as a profitable word from God.**

PAUL

Throughout Divine history, there have been men who have so distinguished themselves in their service to God, that their names have been sanctified. It is, after all, the person who makes the name, and not the name who makes the person.

Think of the renowned names of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Joseph, David, Peter, John, and others. Who can forget such names as Sarah, Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Mary, and Elizabeth. Their faith and manner of life made those names significant to the entire world. Others have brought reproach upon names through their unbelief and sin—people like Cain, Nimrod, Achan, Korah, Herod, and Judas. The power of character can thus be seen—power to cause honor or reproach to be brought upon a name.

The name “Paul” has been recognized by saints and sinners alike from the beginning of his life in Christ Jesus. The distinction given to that name is owing to his faith, and the aggressive manner in which he served the Lord Jesus Christ. This name is mentioned no less than 156 times in Scripture, and every single time it refers to the same individual.

Formerly, Paul was known as “Saul, of Tarsus” (Acts 9:11). The name “Saul” means “Desired,”^{Strong’s} certainly befitting of one so eagerly sought by the Lord Jesus Himself. Precisely when he began to be known exclusively as Paul is not

clear. The first reference to the Apostle of the Gentiles as “Paul” is found in Acts 13:9, around A.D. 46, or nine years after his conversion. “Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,)” From that point on, he is referred to as “Paul.” The only reference to “Saul” after that is when Paul recounts the appearance of Jesus to him in his call to the apostleship (Acts 22:7,13,14).

The name “Paul” means “Small,” or “Little.”^{Strong’s} By way of comparison, when Samuel upbraided king Saul for his flagrant disobedience, he referred to the time when he was in God’s favor. “When thou wast LITTLE in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee

been dulled in our time by thoughtless use. The word “slave” is more appropriate, carrying the real meaning of the word to our generation. It describes a person whose sole existence is wrapped up in carrying out the will of someone else. Unquestioning obedience identifies the slave, and so it was with the Apostle Paul. He knew nothing of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” When it came to life in this world, he chose death to life, servitude to liberty, and the pursuit of God’s will to a quest for happiness.

CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE

In the Kingdom of God, key positions are assigned. This is evident throughout Scripture, and is quite different from an institutional approach to serving the Lord. Think of the people God chose, and whose role in history was assigned. Noah (Gen 6:8), Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), Joseph (Psa 105:17-21), Moses (Ex 3:4-10), Aaron (Heb 5:4), David (), the Prophets (Amos 2:11), John the Baptist (John 1:6), and the Apostles (John 15:16). None of them volunteered for their office, or gained it by pursuing a “career path.” The supreme example, as always, is that of our Lord Himself. It is said of Him, “And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to day have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb 5:4-6). Precisely the same procedure was involved in Paul becoming an “Apostle.” He was CALLED to be one.

Throughout Divine history, there have been men who have so distinguished themselves in their service to God, that their names have been sanctified. It is, after all, the person who makes the name, and not the name who makes the person.

king over Israel?” (1 Sam 15:17). In the case of Paul, his commendable smallness was the latter part of his life, as compared with king Saul, whose latter life was his worst time. Paul’s smallness consisted of his renunciation of everything that was gain to him. He did this in order to “win Christ” and be “found in Him not having a righteousness” of his own (Phil 3:7-14). Everywhere his name is mentioned, his zeal for the Lord is what comes to mind.

A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

The distinguishing trait he first mentions is that of being Christ’s “servant.” The meaning of this word has

It is no different to this very day. We are told preachers cannot preach “except they be sent” (Rom 10:15). Elders are made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Evangelists, pastors and teachers

are gifts from Christ, not careers (Eph 4:11). Every member is strategically placed in Christ's body. As it is written, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired"^{NASB} (1 Cor 12:18,28). Spiritual gifts are distributed according to God's will (1 Cor 12:11). The Word of God knows nothing of highly polished professional ministers, carrying about with them the credentials of this world. In the Kingdom of our God and His Christ, the placement of God is the individual's credential, or authorization.

This is precisely why Paul says "CALLED to be an Apostle." He does not appeal to self-developed expertise, professional training, or any natural gifts and abilities. He makes no appeal to his instruction by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He is writing to them in an appointed role, and that is sufficient reason to receive what he declares. The validation of his ministry will be confirmed in the message he

delivers, and its power upon those receiving it..

SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL

God-given gifts and abilities are to be employed in His work, and His alone. An Apostle was not called to be a politician, business man, or academic scholar. Paul was "set apart for the gospel of God."^{NASB} By this, he means he was detached from the world in order to declare and expound the "Gospel of God."

And why is the Gospel here called "the Gospel of God?" Is this not a strange sound in our day? Of course, this is not the only place such an expression is used. At least seven times the Spirit refers to "the Gospel of God" (Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2,8,9; 1 Pet 4:17)^{KJV}. Here is a term rarely heard in our day.

The Gospel is the proclamation of what God the Father has accomplished

through Jesus Christ His "only begotten Son." Jesus did the Father's will (John 5:30), reconciling the world unto Him (Rom 5:10). The Gospel if most properly called, "The Gospel of God." It is the good news of His satisfaction, and is therefore called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim 1:11).

Being "separated to the Gospel of God," that is where Paul's expertise was found—and how clearly that is seen in his writings. Although he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, Paul makes not a solitary reference to anything that notable Jewish teacher communicated. He was separated unto the "Gospel of God." Although himself a Roman citizen, and able to appeal to judicial protocol (Acts 22:25-29; 25:11), he provides not a single syllable about governmental issues, trends, or advances. He was "separated unto the Gospel of God." His ministry was in strict comportment with his calling. In keeping with what is required of stewards, he was "faithful" (1 Cor 4:2).

A GOSPEL THAT WAS PROMISED

"(Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.)" The Apostle is most careful to distinguish what he proclaims from all other gospels; i.e., "another gospel" (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6). Right here we soar high above contemporary religion. Rarely, if ever, will one hear a correlation made between the Gospel of God, or the Gospel of Christ, and the holy Prophets. But this a repeated association made by the Holy Spirit.

HE PROMISED by HIS PROPHETS

From one perspective, the whole matter of salvation in Christ Jesus is referred to as "the promise." This is particularly true when it is considered from the vantage of the New Covenant, which is the pledge, or basis, of our salvation.

ABRAHAM

Three times in the fourth chapter of Romans, what is experienced in Christ Jesus is called "the

promise" (Rom 4:13,14,16). The focus of that passage is the blessing of righteousness by faith, as revealed in Abraham, "who is the father of us all." In him we find the example of having faith, and the response of God to that faith.

The third chapter of Galatians also refers to the Abrahamic promise,

From one perspective, the whole matter of salvation in Christ Jesus is referred to as "the promise." This is particularly true when it is considered from the vantage of the New Covenant, which is the pledge, or basis, of our salvation.

equating it with the New Covenant. Five

times in that chapter, the Spirit refers to "the promise" (Gal 3:14,17,19,22,29). In that passage, "the promise" is the announcement that God would bless the world through the Seed of Abraham. In relation to our text, this was "the Gospel of God which He had promised before by His prophets." Abraham, by Divine definition, was "a prophet." In fact, the word "prophet" is first applied to Abraham (Gen 20:7), which is a most arresting consideration.

THE PROPHETS

From the very beginning, the Gospel was identified with the message of the prophets. When Jesus first began to preach, announcing His mission, He said He was doing what Isaiah the Prophet had foretold (Luke 4:18-19). On the day of Pentecost, Peter distinguished both the happenings of the day and his unique message with the prophets (Acts 2:16,30). Throughout the book of Acts, the Gospel was consistently said to be according to the words of the holy Prophets. "All the Prophets . . . have

likewise foretold of these days” (Acts 3:24). “To Him give all **the Prophets witness**” (Acts 10:43). “And to this agree the words of **the Prophets**” (Acts 15:15). Paul confessed, “I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which **the Prophets and Moses did say should come**” (Acts 26:22). From morning until evening he “expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of **the Prophets**” (Acts 28:23). Peter affirmed the salvation declared in the Gospel had been announced beforehand by **the Prophets** (1 Pet 1:10). There is no

understanding—the “eyes of the blind will be opened.”

- † The ability to discern the voice and direction of the Lord—“the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.”
- † The debilitating effects of sin would be overcome—“the lame man leap as an hart.”
- † Acceptable praise would be offered by the people—“the tongue of the dumb will sing.”
- † Where no awareness of God was found, an abundance of revelation and refreshment would break forth—“for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

causing them to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments, and do them. (Isa 35:4-9; 61:1-4; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:25-27).

A LITTLE KNOWN APPROACH

Today, this approach to Jesus has been placed to the side in preference of answering people’s perceived needs. Little is known of Jesus Christ and His great salvation because of a fundamental ignorance of prophets. Even though the church is “built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets,” the professed church has grossly neglected those prophets. This neglect has contributed to the extensive spiritual ignorance that prevails among professed Christians. The result has been the development of “another Jesus” bearing little resemblance to the One foretold by the Prophets. The “other Jesus” is not only proclaimed by perceived cults, but in many churches that are considered to be fundamental, orthodox, and conservative.

The message of the Prophets serves as the great confirming evidence of valid spiritual experience. Their prophecies are a sort of spiritual encyclopedia, defining what happens when a person is “born again.”

† The refreshment would be consistent, and not sporadic—“And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.”

† A way of access to God would be made for those rescued from the world—“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness.”

A thorough knowledge of the Prophets is certainly not essential to receiving Christ and obeying the Gospel, and we should not present this subject as though it were. But there is more to the life of faith than a beginning. If believers intend to successfully navigate through the wilderness of this life, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets must not be strange to them. Gentile churches were reminded of the words of the Prophets (Rom 3:21; 16:26; Eph 2:20; 3:5), and so must the churches of our time.

The message of the Prophets serves as the great confirming evidence of valid spiritual experience. Their prophecies are a sort of spiritual encyclopedia, defining what happens when a person is “born again.” Both the nature of the New Covenant and those within it are described in most remarkable detail. Any view of life in Christ that does not stand the test of the Prophets is not true, and is therefore not on the proper foundation.

The Apostles opened up what the Prophets foretold. By Divine determination, their doctrine lays down a foundation for our faith. The proper interpretation of experience will come through an understanding of the Prophets. When what they affirmed would happen, occurs in you—and you

question about this.

The Lord Jesus Himself

As the “Author of eternal salvation” (Heb 5:9), the Lord Jesus Himself was the theme of the Prophets. His birth (Matt 2:6; Mic 5:2), life (Lk 2:40; Isa 53:2), ministry (Lk 4:18-19; Isa 62:1-3), death (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:4-6), resurrection (Acts 2:27; Psa 49:15), ascension (Eph 4:8; Psa 68:18), and high priestly ministry (Heb 5:6; Psa 110:4), were foretold by the Prophets. Thus the heart of the Gospel, the Son of God, was declared by the Prophets.

The Nature of Salvation

The nature of salvation was also prophesied by **the Prophets**. A genuine change would be wrought in man. A new character would be given that would compel the individual to obey God by preference. A sampling of these wonderful promises will suffice to confirm this point.

† Men would receive

- † Good tidings would be proclaimed to the meek.
- † The brokenhearted would be healed.
- † Liberty would be announced to the captives.
- † The prison in which bound prisoners were confined would be opened.
- † A time of Divine acceptance would be announced.
- † A Divine exchange program would be inaugurated: beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.
- † The waste places of life would be rebuilt.
- † A new kind of covenant would be made in which God’s laws would be put into men’s inward parts and written on their minds, they would all know the Lord, and iniquity would be remembered no more.
- † Thorough cleansing and sanctification would be realized.
- † A new heart and a new spirit would be given to those blessed by God.
- † The stony and rebellious heart would be removed.
- † God’s Spirit would be put within men,

know it—confidence will erupt like a spring of everlasting life in your heart.

HOLY SCRIPTURES

With great deliberation, the Holy Spirit moves us away from human philosophy and opinion. There was a time in history when the truth of God was passed along among men by word of mouth. There are at least two things that can be said of those times. First, the scope of revealed truth was very narrow. Second, it was known among relatively few people. Even the record of great revelations and prophecies came long after their origination.

So far as Scripture is concerned, Moses is declared as the first writer (Lk 16:29; 24:27,44; John 1:45; 5:46-47). The whole of Scripture prior to Jesus is referred to as *“Moses and the Prophets”* (Acts 26:22; 28:23). Again, Jesus referred to the whole of pre-Apostolic Scripture as *“in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms”* (Lk 24:44).

THE FIRST PROPHECY

The first prophecy of Scriptural record is that of Enoch, *“the seventh from Adam”* (Jude 14). It is generally understood that his prophecy was handed down by word of mouth rather than by writing—a most remarkable thing of itself. There is a view of the Jude text that states it was taken from the Apocryphal *“Book of Enoch.”* There is, however, no satisfactory support for this view.

However a person chooses to consider this quotation from Enoch, its inclusion in Scripture is a rich commentary on how God keeps His word in tact and pure. Here is the most ancient prophecy spoken by a man. It was uttered over 2,900 years before Jesus was born.

If God kept the word of Enoch intact without it being written, how much more will He maintain the integrity of Scripture—written truth inspired by Him. While Enoch undoubtedly prophesied of the coming of the flood, Jude applies his word to the second coming of the Lord. *“Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches*

which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14-15). Therein is again confirmed that Jesus is the locus of all Scripture.

INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE ASSUMED

Thus, in saying the Gospel of God was according to the Holy Scriptures, the Spirit has established their absolute integrity. If there was any doubt whatsoever about the truth of Scripture, our faith could not be founded upon what if written therein. The higher critics, therefore, who have caused men to question the accuracy of Scripture have attacked our faith. They are not qualified to be the critic of Scripture. However, Scripture shall be their critic in the day of judgment. As Jesus said, *“the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48).

It is no wonder that Paul said of the *“holy Scriptures,”* *“which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim 3:15). Contained within the framework of Scripture—particularly the writings of the holy prophets, are promises of a proclamation that would be good news—*“glad tidings of good things”* (Rom 10:15).

THE CENTRALITY OF SCRIPTURE

In this day of distorted theological emphasis, the centrality of Scripture must again be affirmed. These days more attention is being paid to HOW it is said rather WHAT is said. Human programs have supplanted Divine promises, and *“science falsely so called”* has upstaged holy Scripture, given by inspiration of God. Even among professing preachers, there is an unhesitating acknowledgment of a lack of acquaintance with Scripture. The condition tragic beyond description, yielding insipid and powerless followers.

The *“Gospel of God”*—the good news of the *“wonderful works of God”*(Acts

1:11)—is not according to human logic. Nor, indeed, is it according to self-perceived, or institutionally dictated, human needs or desires. It is according to what God *“promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”*

The righteousness of God, now given to men upon the basis of their faith, was *“witnessed by the law and the prophets”* (Rom 3:21). The revelation of the Gospel mystery *“now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets”* (Rom 16:26). Jesus died and was raised the

In this day of distorted theological emphasis, the centrality of Scripture must again be affirmed. These days more attention is being paid to HOW it is said rather WHAT is said. Human programs have supplanted Divine promises, and “science falsely so called” has upstaged holy Scripture, given by inspiration of God.

third day *“according to the Scripture”* (1 Cor 15:3-4).

In a classic demonstration of the truth of Scripture, and because it is living, the Spirit assigns personality to it. *“The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you”^{NIV} (Gal 3:8). And again, “the Scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal 3:22). And again, “Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded” (1 Pet 2:6).*

What will be declared in the book of Romans is in strict accord with the word of the Prophets in the Scriptures. Do not look for new and novel teachings, like those confused Athenians (Acts 17:21).

Rather, there will be a powerful proclamation of the message for which the Prophets prepared us. If the holy Prophets did not foretell the gospel that is being preached, it may be discarded as spurious and powerless.

Every true proclaimer of the Gospel can say with Paul, *“Having therefore*

obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come . . . (Acts 26:22). By so doing, men can be encouraged to *“search the Scriptures”* to confirm whether the Gospel being heard is really true (Acts 17:11).

If it were required of every professed preacher to declare what the prophets declared was coming, their ranks would quickly be thinned out. However, this is what God requires, and He will hold every preacher accountable for properly presenting Christ Jesus and salvation.

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

“Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The identity of the Gospel is not taken for granted. The Holy Spirit makes the proper Gospel associations to those who have already heard, believed, and obeyed it. The criticality of the Gospel to the walk of faith necessitates these continual associations. Already the Spirit has reminded us the true Gospel is the one promised by the Prophets. If there is no correlation between the gospel embraced and the one promised by the Prophets, *“another Gospel”* has been espoused. Now the text goes to the very heart of the Gospel—the spirit of the message. Just as surely as a person has a heart, or central part, so does the Gospel have a pivotal point.

CONCERNING HIS SON

The Gospel is fundamentally about the Son of God—it is the Gospel *“concerning His Son.”* Everything about the Gospel hinges upon the Lord Jesus Christ. When it reveals the righteousness of God (Rom 1:17), it does so through the proclamation of the Son. If the wrath of God is made known in the Gospel (Rom 1:18), it is by beholding the cursing of the Son for the sake of fallen man (Gal 3:13). The Gospel is about the Son of God, sent to be the Savior of the world.

The basic view of the Savior is that He is *“the Son of God”*—the *“only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). As a believer, you are **A** son of God (Rom 8:14,19; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2). Jesus Christ is **“THE** Son of God” Matt 14:33; Lk 1:35; John 1:34). In his gospel, Mark made this clear: *“The*

beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, THE Son of God” (Mk 1:1).

In this identity—*“His Son”*—the Spirit is affirming that Jesus came into the world to perform *“the will of the Father”* (John 5:30). He was begotten by the Spirit of God to fulfill the will of God. He came into the world to save the world because that was the purpose of the Father. At the very heart of the Gospel, therefore, is the proclamation of the Son of God who came to accomplish the will of God in our behalf.

The Gospel concerns Christ’s humanity as it relates to our salvation. It spends no time whatsoever addressing novel matters about His life that have no immediate relevance to our salvation.

JESUS CHRIST

The expression *“Jesus Christ”* refers to the Son’s ministry as a Man.

JESUS

“Jesus” is His human name, and emphasizes what He came to do. When the Savior was born, the angel of the Lord told both Mary and Joseph His name was to be called Jesus. *“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS . . . Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your*

wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Lk 1:31; Matt 1:10-21). In obedience to this word, it is said of Joseph, *“and he called His name JESUS”* (Mt 1:25).

The name *“Jesus”* is the Greek equivalent of Joshua, who is referenced in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8. The name *“Jesus”* appropriately means *“the Lord saves.”* This name was not unique to Jesus, but was common among the Jews. Thus we read of *“Jesus, which is called Justus”* (Col 4:11). It is also the Greek equivalent of Joshua (Heb 4:8). However, our Lord has ascribed such greatness to the name, that throughout the world, wherever it is heard, HE is remembered.

Among men, Jesus has no peers. He is *“THE Man”* (1 Tim 2:5), *“the SECOND Man”* (1 Cor 15:47), and the *“LAST Adam”* (1 Cor 15:45). The Gospel concerns Christ’s humanity as it relates to our salvation. It spends no time whatsoever addressing novel matters about His life that have no immediate relevance to our salvation. No wonder it is written, *“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* (Rev 19:10).

CHRIST

“Christ” means *“anointed one”*—in this case, THE anointed one. Others have been anointed: i.e. Aaron (Ex 29:7), Saul (1 Sam 9:16), David (1 Sam 16:12), and Solomon (1 Kgs 1:34)—but none of them were *“THE Christ.”* That honor belongs to the Lord Jesus alone. While men

anointed the ones mentioned before, God the Father anointed Jesus. As it is written, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*” ^{NKJV} (Acts 10:38). Again, it is said of Him, “*Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows*” (Heb 1:9).

As “*the Lord’s Christ*” (Lk 2:26), Jesus was appointed to by Himself resolve the dilemma of sin. Upon the basis of His vicarious, or substitutionary, death those who believe on Him would be released from both the guilt and power of sin. Thus, when Jesus began His ministry, He declared this word was fulfilled in Him: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord*” (Lk 4:18-19).

The Gospel particularly opens up that marvelous announcement. It declares we are living in a time when God will accept men, absolving them of guilt, purifying their hearts, and making them “*partakers of the Divine nature*” (2 Pet 1:4). All of this is upon the firm foundation of the work of “*THE CHRIST, the Son of the living God*” (Matt 16:16-18).

As “*the Christ*,” Jesus is the only Man truly and fully recognized by God. Upon Him, and Him alone, hangs the destiny of all men. That is the precise teaching of Romans 5:15-21.

OUR LORD

To remove any question concerning the relevancy of the Person of the Gospel, the Spirit adds He is “*OUR Lord*.” Right here, it is important to deal with a bit of theological haberdashery that has become fashionable. You have no doubt heard people say men should “make Jesus their Lord.” Others have said, “You have made Him your Savior, now make Him your Lord.”

No such language or concept can be found in the Word of God. Let it be clear

that it is not possible for Jesus to be Savior and not Lord—in ANY sense. You have no role whatsoever in making Jesus Lord. The Spirit has spoken expressly on this matter. “*God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). Further, “*He is Lord of all*” (Acts 10:36), whether men choose to accept Him in that capacity or not.

Secondly, everywhere the terms “*Lord*” and “*Savior*” are ascribed to Jesus, “*Lord*” is either used first, or clarifies Who the Savior is. Concerning the latter, when Jesus was born, the

The Lord Jesus Christ cannot be received partially, or only in one of His capacities. It is not possible to experience Him as Savior, but not as Lord. The very notion is an absurdity.

shepherds were told, “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which IS Christ the Lord*” (Lk 2:11). And again, “*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, THE Lord Jesus Christ*” (Phil 3:20). And again, “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope*” (1 Tim 1:1). In all other instances, “*Lord*” is always before “*Savior*” (Tit 1:4; 2 Pet 1:11; 2:20; 3:2,18).

The point is that Christ Jesus cannot be compartmentalized. He cannot be received partially, or only in one of His capacities. It is not possible to experience Him as Savior, but not as Lord. The very notion is an absurdity. Men must flee from such approaches to the Savior, for they dull the conscience and cause spiritual sleep to descend upon the soul.

SEED OF DAVID

Jesus is “*the Seed*” of the “*woman*” (Gen 3:15), the “*Seed*” of “*Abraham*” (Gal 3:16), and “*the Seed of David*” (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8). Each of them emphasize an aspect of His humanity.

† Because deliverance from sin must be

accomplished by someone partaking of the human nature, Jesus is called the Seed of the woman—one “*made of a woman, made under the law*” (Gal 4:4).

† Because He is the solitary One through whom the world would be blessed, He is called Abraham’s Seed, to whom the promises were made (Gal 3:16; Heb 2:16).

† Because He would accomplish salvation through a righteous rule, or reign, He is called “*the Seed of David*.” In this case, the Lord became the Savior, and the Savior was exalted to be the Lord (Acts 2:36; Phil 2:9-10).

Here is a wonderful aspect of redemptive truth that appears to be scarcely known. Our salvation is being brought to its completion by a reigning King. He is presently ruling “*in the midst of His enemies*” (Psa 110:2), bringing “*many sons to glory*” right through the enemy’s territory (Heb 2:10).

All of this is the fulfillment of God’s ancient promise to David, the man after His own heart. “*I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.*”

He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Sam 7:12-13). **The Psalms** also confirm this promise: “*The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne*” (Psa 132:11).

Isaiah also declared it: “*And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness*” (Isa 16:5).

Jeremiah proclaimed this truth: “*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*” (Jer 23:5-6).

Ezekiel announced it: “*And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My Servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their*”

shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My Servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it” (Ezek 34:23-24).

Jesus is pointedly declared to be “*the Son of David*” (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 15:22). He is the promised “*Seed*,” or Offspring, that would reign forever. Peter declared the fulfillment of this promise on the day of Pentecost: “*Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins,*

according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30-31). Death was the vassal of Jesus, serving His purpose. When His death had met the Divine requirement, Jesus struck it down to the ground in an act of triumph.

Thus the promise of an everlasting

kingdom, administered in righteousness by the Offspring of David, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our Lord. The nature of salvation demands such a King. The challenges of this great salvation are of such magnitude men cannot manage them. As an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, Paul was appointed to declare and expound this truth. He will this it with power in this very Epistle, blessing our hearts, strengthening our faith, and anchoring our hope.

THE GREAT CONFIRMING WORK

“*And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*” Again, the focus is still on “*the Gospel of God*,” to which Paul was separated. That Gospel was foretold by the prophets. It concerns the Son of God, who is the Man Jesus, who is God’s anointed One, and our Lord. He is also the fulfillment of God’s promise to David, that He would raise up someone to seat on his throne forever. I cannot proceed further without noting that none of these things are given preeminence in the institutional church. All of them are areas of theological weakness in the average congregation. This situation, however, can be resolved by returning to Christ-centered preaching and teaching.

The obscurity of the Son of God in much preaching is staggering to consider. It is, in my judgment the reason for such a high level of spiritual sterility within the professed church.

DECLARED TO BE

In salvation, **declaration** takes the precedence over explanation. The power of God is channeled through the **proclamation** of the Gospel, which is itself “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). The Gospel of God is an **affirmation** of Divine accomplishments. It announces amnesty, proclaims propitiation, and reports reconciliation. All of this centers in God’s appointed

Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa 42:1; 49:9; 52:13; Zech 3:8; Matt 12:18).

WITH POWER

In order for this salvation to be fully accomplished, not only was a basis required, but a powerful reigning King

The obscurity of the Son of God in much preaching is staggering to consider. It is, in my judgment the reason for such a high level of spiritual sterility within the professed church.

also. Upon the ground of the accomplished reconciliation and satisfaction of God, Jesus was granted “*all power in heaven and earth*” to bring the sons home to glory. That is what is required to convey us safely through the morass of sin and this “*present evil world.*”

Now, through the Gospel, Jesus Christ is proclaimed to be the Son of God “**WITH POWER**”—all power in heaven and earth. While Divine power will be the means through which His enemies become His “*footstool*” (Matt 22:44; Acts 2:35; Heb 1:13; 10:13), that is not the focus of this text. The “*power*” given to Him is in order to the justification, sanctification, and glorification of those

believing in Him. Justification refers to the Divine work whereby sinners are acquitted of their sin, cleansed of its guilt and power, and given the very righteousness of God. Sanctification is the process whereby believers are separated from the power of sin, and brought into conformity to the image of Christ Jesus. Glorification is the grand culmination of salvation in which perfect spotlessness and blamelessness are achieved, and every vestige of sin and the sinful nature removed from us—when we will “*be like Him.*”

Now it takes power, Divine power, to accomplish such a large work! The “*Gospel of God*” announces that Jesus Christ has been given that power. He has been given to the church in this marvelous capacity: “*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything FOR the church*”^{NIV} (Eph 1:21-22). The extent of His dominion exceeds our abilities of comprehension. Elsewhere the Spirit says of His exaltation, “*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*” (1 Pet 3:22). There is no power, or authority, that is not subject to Him—whether it is for us or against us. Both our enemies and the multitudes of holy angels that are appointed to minister

to us, bow to Him.

In a remarkable declaration of the extent of Christ's authority, it is affirmed that there is a single personality that is NOT subject to Him. It is the Father Himself, Who has subjected all things to the Son. "Now when it says that 'everything' has been put under Him, it is clear that **THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE GOD, who put everything under Christ**"^{NIV} (1 Cor 15:27).

It is no wonder, therefore, that such wonderful promises are given to those who believe on Jesus—or trust wholly in Him. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life . . . He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life . . . he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live . . . whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness . . . whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins . . . whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed . . . he that believeth on him shall not be confounded . . . Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (John 3:15,16; 3:36; 11:25; 12:46; Acts 10:43; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6; 1 John 5:5).

While such texts clearly imply the necessity of believing, that is not their focus. The concentration of such passages is the RESULT of believing—the outcome of unreservedly replying on the Son of God. The reason for the strength of these promises is the power of the Savior. Because He is the "Son of God WITH POWER," we may trust implicitly in these Divine commitments. How blessed, indeed, is the person who trusts in Christ!

SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

The declaration that Jesus is the Son of God with power is "according to the Spirit of holiness." This is a unique phrase, and conducive to much exploration. Most versions read the same way (NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB). The NIV reads, "Who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God."

"The Spirit of holiness" refers to Christ's fundamental nature. Although the Holy Spirit played a prominent role in the resurrection of Christ, it is Christ's own Spirit that is the focus of this verse. Peter preached this truth with great power on the day of Pentecost, opening it to our understanding. He confirmed that Christ could not be retained by the grave—it was simply not possible. This is owing to the superiority of holiness. Thus Peter proclaimed, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because **IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN OF IT.** For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should

Because He was absolutely holy and sinless, death could hold neither His Spirit nor His body. Thus, we have a Savior who is both all-powerful and all-holy!

not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades, or abode for the spirit), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (the body, in the grave)" (Acts 2:24-27).

Thus, though Christ "was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4). Because He was absolutely holy and sinless, death could hold neither His Spirit nor His body. Thus, we have a Savior who is both all-powerful and all-holy!

THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Christ confirmed the Father's acceptance of His death for the transgressors. The resurrection of

Jesus was the MEANS by which He was declared to be the "Son of God with power."

Salvation hinged upon three great accomplishments of Christ: His death, resurrection, and intercession. The Spirit reasons with us in this manner. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that **died, yea RATHER, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us**" (Rom 8:34).

The same truth is powerfully affirmed in the ninth chapter of Hebrews. "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (**intercession**) . . . but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (**death**) . . . so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him (**resurrected Christ returning for us**)" (9:24,26,28).

The centrality of Christ's resurrection is declared in a number of ways.

- † Through it Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom 1:4).
- † We have been born again to a living hope through Christ's resurrection (1 Pet 1:3).
- † Our baptism obtained its effectiveness through Christ's resurrection (1 Pet 3:21).
- † The imputation of righteousness upon the basis of our faith is owing to our Lord's resurrection (Rom 4:24).
- † Christ's resurrection is the Divine pledge that we also will be raised from the dead (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14).
- † In Christ's resurrection, we have also been raised up to sit with Him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:5-6).
- † Christ's resurrection confirms those trusting in Him have been delivered from the wrath that is coming (1 Thess 1:10).
- † Jesus was raised in order that we

might be justified (Rom 4:25).

† The power devoted to those in Christ Jesus is the very power that raised Him from the dead (Eph 1:19-20).

It is no wonder, therefore, that such a great emphasis is placed on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a Gospel emphasis—the heart and core of “*the Gospel of God*.” Seeing this, the Apostle abandoned all competing pursuits that he might know Christ “*and the power of His resurrection*” (Phil 3:10).

In the resurrected Christ we not only find Divine confirmation that he is the Son of God, we also find power for living. It is a power that cannot be grasped without the eyes of our understanding being opened by God—but God is willing to do open the eyes of our understanding that we may see “*the exceeding greatness of the power that is toward us who believe*” (Eph 1:15-19). God is “*able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*” (Eph 3:20).

One further thing should be noted on the matter of Christ’s resurrection. **The ONLY proof we have of it is the testimony of the Gospel.** The evidence of it has been withdrawn from the arena

of flesh and blood. Those who say they demand tangible evidence before they will believe are in great error. You may recall that Thomas made this foolish assertion: “*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand*

not seen, and yet have believed.” He did NOT, however, confer a blessing upon Thomas who only believed after he had seen! Taken seriously, this account is conducive to great sobriety. As well, it is devastating to many attempts to prove the authenticity of Scripture by physical

In the final analysis, grace is a stewardship, given to men in order that they might work together with God. Everyone in the body of Christ receives grace—grace to do something. They are responsible for fulfilling their role to the glory of God.

into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Confronted with the living Christ, he quickly recanted on this demand, saying, “*My Lord and my God.*” Jesus gave a telling reply to the confession of Thomas—one to which we all do well to take heed. “*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” (John 20:28-29). Notice, Jesus conferred a blessing on those who “*have*

evidence.

Thus the Spirit anchors our faith to a risen, yet unseen, Christ. He points us to the “*Gospel of God*” for proof of the matter—a testimony impregnated with Divine power! He tells us God Himself has declared Jesus Christ is His Son “*with power.*” The ONLY proof of that indispensable reality is the word of the Lord. But, as all real believers know, that is really all the proof we require!

WHAT AND WHY

“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name.” The Spirit never leaves us in the hands of human reasoning. The truth of God is consistently declared in such a manner as to encourage faith and trust in God. Although Paul has already affirmed his Apostleship, and the focus of it, he now elaborates on it. In doing this, he is, through the Spirit, drawing attention to the purpose of His Apostleship, rather than to the Apostleship itself.

This, of course, is not characteristic of the wisdom of this world. Among men, office is more frequently exalted above function, bringing glory to men. But in God’s Kingdom, function is exalted above office, so that the office is nothing unless

the function is carried out. Were this single verity to be seen within the professed church, it would radically alter its view of preachers, elders, evangelists, deacons, etc. Paul had been called to DO something, not merely to fill a formal office. In this very Epistle, we will find him effectively doing what he was called to do.

GRACE AND APOSTLESHIP

First Paul has summarized the Gospel for us, showing it to have originated with God, and proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he will authenticate his role in the Kingdom by showing its relationship to that Gospel. If what we do does not directly interface with “*the Gospel of God*,” it has no relevance in the Kingdom of God.

The order of the gifts received is important. First grace, then Apostleship. First Divine favor, then ministry. Grace is given to us to fulfill our ministry, not as a reward for performing it. In this, we are to understand that being called to the Apostleship was owing to the grace of God. By grace, Paul was an Apostle. That, of course, is how anyone comes to be a laborer together with God. The understanding of this contributes significantly to a faithful and fruitful ministry. A failure to perceive it causes one to trust in human wisdom and rely upon the flesh.

When “*received*,” grace is always productive. It is never an end of itself, but the Divinely appointed means to an ordained end. It is the means through which we are saved by faith (Eph 2:5-8).

“Everlasting consolation and good hope” also come “through grace” (2 Thess 2:16).

As Paul indicates in this passage, he was given grace to do something. Elsewhere he states the grace of God made him a skillful master-builder, who could lay a good foundation (1 Cor 3:10). Because of grace, he “labored more abundantly” than the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10). His impeccably holy life was also owing to the grace of God (2 Cor 1:12). Grace made the Apostle what he was, and he knew it. That is a blessing.

In the final analysis, grace is a stewardship, given to men in order that they might work together with God. Everyone in the body of Christ receives grace—grace to do something. They are responsible for fulfilling their role to the glory of God. Peter states it this way. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet 4:10).

The grace of God is “manifold,” or multifarious and diversified, because that is the nature of God’s work. While there are common graces found among God’s people—traits that are to be found in us all—there are also unique ministries. Paul will now elaborate upon his own ministry—the “Apostleship.” It was a ministry given to him by the grace of God, and was given in strict accord with the Divine agenda. **The grace of God will not undergird a humanly conceived agenda.** Neither will the Lord assign a ministry without providing grace to fulfill it. It is a blessed condition when these two matters are perceived with some degree of clarity.

FOR OBEDIENCE

The stated objective of the Paul’s “Apostleship” was “for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name.” This is an intriguing phrase, and conducive to much meditation. Other versions read, “to bring about the obedience of faith” (NASB). “To the obedience that comes from faith” (NIV). Both the etymological structure and the doctrine of this verse confirm it means “the obedience that springs from

faith”^{Robertson}. **Faith is the living spring from which all valid response to God issues.** It is the sanctifying factor in all Kingdom labor. “Without faith, it is impossible to please” God (Heb 11:6). That is a Scriptural axiom that must never be allowed to dim in our understanding.

Holy people had always obeyed out of faith, which is a higher principle than Law. Thus the Scriptures speak of “the law of faith” (Rom 3:27). This is a “law” that produces the results required by God.

Later in this Epistle, the Spirit will refer to this same truth. He will state that God’s eternal purpose “was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for **THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH**” (Rom 16:26). In the Greek text, the wording is precisely the same, with not a single variation: εἰς ὑπακοήν πιστεωῶς. The meaning here is that **Paul’s Apostleship was to this intent, or for this objective: that men might render obedience to God because they believed the Gospel.** Someone has well said of faith, “Faith is a commanding principle exacting obedience to itself.”^{J. Barny}

UNLIKE OBEDIENCE UNDER THE LAW

This is totally unlike the obedience that was common under the Law. That was an obedience of mere routine. The reason for this circumstance was owing to at least two things.

First, the people did not have a heart for obedience. At the foot of Sinai, when they declared in fear they would do all God had commanded, the Lord gave His response to Moses—and it is a telling one. “I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto

thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. **O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!**” (Deut 5:28-29). Their hearts were unrenewed, and therefore their obedience was flawed to the core. Law, spoken from heaven, could not effect a change in the heart of the people. Therefore, the Lord declares their intentions were good, but they did not have the capacity to fully do what God required of them.

Second, the Law was not an economy of faith. It did not require faith, and was not established on faith. This is not a matter of conjecture, but of express revelation. “**The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, The man who does these things will live by them**” (Gal 3:12). The Law, or First Covenant, depended wholly upon doing. Life was promised to the one who thoroughly kept the Law, without a single deviation—and ONLY to such.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF OBEDIENCE

Now, in Christ Jesus, comes a different kind of obedience that was commanded under the law—**obedience that springs from faith.** It is not that such obedience was totally strange. Holy people had always obeyed out of faith, which is a higher principle than Law. Thus the Scriptures speak of “the law of faith” (Rom 3:27). This is a “law” that produces the results required by God.

One of the classic passages of Scripture on this matter is the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. That text is devoted to affirming the effectiveness of faith, and why it is not possible to please God without it. The passage is filled with examples of extraordinary human responses to God—and **all of them proceeded from faith.** A brief review of them will serve to confirm the truth of our text.

- † By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice.
- † By faith Noah, being warned of God, built an ark to the saving of his house.
- † By faith Abraham obeyed when he

was called to leave his country and kindred.

- † By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.
- † By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, accounting God was able to raise from the dead.
- † By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Eau concerning things to come.
- † By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, while worshipping.
- † By faith, Joseph commanded that his bones be carried out of Egypt when Israel was delivered according to God's promise.
- † By faith Moses' parents hid him, not fearing the edict of the king.
- † By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.
- † By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.
- † By faith Moses kept the Passover.
- † By faith the Israelites passed through the Red Sea.
- † By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.
- † By faith Rahab received Israel's spies in peace, and did not perish with those who believed not.

None of these exceptional responses could have been elicited by Law. They all came from faith, the most powerful incentive among men. It is greater than a trembling mountain and earth-shattering noise. Faith, because it is in the heart, provokes obedience *"from the heart"* (Rom 6:17), which is an absolute requisite with God.

Settle it in your mind, where there is no obedience, there is no faith. As James would say it, *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26). Just as a body without a spirit is not a person, so faith without works is not faith. It is only a pretension.

The obedience that comes from faith is *"obedience unto righteousness"* (Rom 6:16), or an obedience that results in righteousness^{NASB}. It is the obedience that also proceeds from the sanctifying work

of the Holy Spirit. As it is written, *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet 1:2). Just as surely as faith made sick people whole through the word of Jesus (Matt 9:22; Mk 10:52), so faith produces obedience in those who believe the Gospel.

A BRIEF SUMMATION

Thus Paul's Apostleship was an assignment from God, by grace, to declare

Too much preaching puts no pressure upon the hearers. It is too novel, too intellectual, too entertaining—too academic. It neither brings faith nor provokes obedience. Such preaching is more related to the novelties of the "Epicurean and Stoic philosophers" of Athens than the preaching ordained by God

"preach the Gospel"—but not merely to voice it. Through his preaching he was to elicit a response from men—the *"obedience that comes from faith."* He was not merely fulfilling an obligation, but working together with God in the grand enterprise of salvation.

This is a facet of preaching the Gospel that sorely needs to be restored. Too much preaching puts no pressure upon the hearers. It is too novel, too intellectual, too entertaining—too academic. It neither brings faith nor provokes obedience. Such preaching is more related to the novelties of the *"Epicurean and Stoic philosophers"* of Athens than the preaching ordained by God (Acts 17:18-21; 1 Cor 1:21). When hearing about the lifeless philosophers of Corinth, who were influencing the church, Paul wrote the following. *"But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power"*^{NASB} (1 Cor 4:19-20).

The Gospel itself is a compelling message. It cannot be heard with indifference. It is God's *"power unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16). The failure to obey it will also result in sure condemnation (2 Thess 1:8). Oh, that God would raise up great preachers of the Gospel. Powerful proclaimers that would bring such pressure to bear upon the hearts of men that they would cry out, *"What shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37; 9:6; 16:30), thereby rendering an obedience that is honoring of the Lord Jesus. It is time to declare war on lifeless lectures and entertaining speeches in the churches!

AMONG ALL NATIONS

The Gospel is not a provincial or parochial message. It is the message through which the promise to Abraham is being fulfilled: *"all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"* (Gen 18:18; 22:18). When Israel disobeyed God, they were judged by being dispersed, or driven, into *"all nations"* (Deut 28:37; 30:1). But now, Jesus having *"put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"* (Heb 9:26), the nations are targeted for a blessing through the message of the Gospel. Sin had extended to every nation, and thus the Gospel will be brought to every nation—even to *"every creature"* (Mk 16:15).

Some men have a burden for a particular people, or a specific country or nation. This is a noble thing. But ponder a ministry to *"ALL nations!"* Some few men have so regarded their ministry. The great preacher John Wesley is reported to have said, "The world is my parish."

If you imagine that you have a lot of responsibilities, consider the extent of Paul's call and ministry. He was *"THE Apostle of the Gentiles"* (Rom 11:13). His ONLY qualification for this extensive ministry was the *"grace and Apostleship"* he had received! He thought in terms of *"Rome," "Spain," "Macedonia,"* and *"Syria"* (Rom 1:15; 15:24; Acts 16:10; 15:41). He ministered in synagogues (Acts 18:4), market places (Acts 17:17), and places where philosophers gathered (Acts 17:19). He preached by rivers (Acts 16:13), in prisons (Acts 16:30-32), and before kings and judges (Acts 23:24; 26:2). His words were heard in the

palaces of Rome (Phil 1:13; 4:22) and an upper chamber in Troaz (Acts 20:8-11). His ministry was experienced in the barbarous island of Malta (Acts 28:4). The extent of his ministry would be impressive and unparalleled in this day of jet planes, television, and internet communications. Yet it was all accomplished under relatively crude circumstances.

And look how effective his ministry has been! From every nation men and women have yielded the obedience of faith because of the Gospel he faithfully preached. In the last day, when the final harvest is gathered, the fruit of this single man will be a sight to behold! Paul himself was an example of the type of obedience faith produces. The secret to his prolific ministry was his faith!

FOR HIS NAME

The Spirit adds these significant words: “for His name,” or “for the sake of His name”^{RSV}. The New Jerusalem Bible reads, “for the honor of His name,” while the New Living Translation reads, “bringing glory to His name.” Here is a wonderful aspect of the preaching of the Gospel and the obedience that comes from faith. The meaning of the words is that Paul sought to bring honor and glory to Christ through his Apostleship. He did not seek his own glory, having discarded as “dung” those things that were “gain” to him (Phil 3:8).

Whatever reproach has been brought upon the name of our blessed Lord, it never came from the Apostle Paul! Throughout history, men, causes, and institutions have arisen that have heaped glory and honor unto themselves. Men have become so vain as to “call their

lands after their own names” (Psa 49:10). But it was not so with Paul, nor will it be the case with any person of faith.

God Himself honored, or glorified, the Son! Jesus once said, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father that honors me” (John 8:54). In one of the great prophecies of the extent of Christ’s salvation, the Father said, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a Light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth”^{NASB} (Isa 49:6). This truth had been written upon the heart and mind of Paul. He was in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He therefore sought to bring glory to His Lord in “all nations.”

Those who limit their spiritual focus to a specific society, limit the glory due to Christ. Their interests should extend as far as their God-given abilities allow. The honor of Jesus is at stake!

Every time someone believes and obeys the Gospel, honor is brought to the Lord Jesus. It justifies His death, proving it to be efficacious. It glorifies His resurrection, confirming its power can raise men from death in trespasses and sins. It demonstrates the power of His intercession, which supports all believers in their ministries as well as their circumstances.

Lest we become proud in our approach to Kingdom work, God works among men for the sake of His beloved Son. While God surely loved the world, He loves the Son more! Jesus is His “well

beloved Son” (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Col 1:13). When the Father forgives us, it is “for Christ’s sake” (Eph 4:32). When it comes to our faith, and the fellowship of suffering that prepares us to reign with Christ, it is written, “For unto you it is given **IN THE BEHALF OF CHRIST**, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil 1:29).

Thus, in his ministry, Paul joined with the Father in bringing honor and glory to the Son. After all, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:34). What is more fitting than to minister “for His name.” What greater honor can be afforded a mortal than to say, He expended himself for the honor of Jesus’ name! Think more of Jesus, and of the glory that is due His holy name. It is godly to think in such a manner, and ungodly not to do so.

If you have been associated with organized religion for any length of time, you know this is an exceedingly rare perspective. That very circumstance confirms the aloofness from God, rank unbelief, and lifeless routine that is being promoted.

Wherever an acute awareness of God is not being produced, or honor is not being brought to Jesus, or hearty obedience is not being rendered to God, only two possibilities exist. Either the Gospel is not being preached, or it is not being believed. Unless that situation is remedied, there is no hope of being saved. I realize these words may appear strong, but the Word of God leaves us with no alternatives.

THE HEAVENLY CALL

“Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” The manner of this text is a heavenly manner—it is the way God speaks of our salvation. Where such language is strange, the people do not know “the manner of the kingdom” (1 Sam 10:25). We live in a day when speech has become loose, casual, and empty. It is not capable of carrying great

thought. Men have even sought to reduce the Word of God itself to the language of the street, which is not capable of conveying Divine thought in a powerful manner. Much of the Scripture involves the development of a special nomenclature through which God can effectively communicate with His offspring. This is one of the great

ministries of the Old Covenant, with the tabernacle service. Time will not allow me to develop this thought to any significant extent here. It is enough to observe that the pivotal points of the Gospel are all expressed in terms that were developed in God’s covenantal relation with Israel. Some examples include lamb, altar, sacrifice, blood, washing, holiest place,

holy place, priest, high priest, intercession, pleasing fragrance, atonement, sanctify, redeem, reconcile, anointed, and others. The promises of a coming Savior were all expressed by holy Prophets, and in specially revealed terms. Their words were the appointed containers of Divine concepts.

To my knowledge, it was never God’s manner to employ the language of alienated people, using it as a container for heavenly truth. With remarkable consistency, the Holy Spirit took ordinary words and assigned to them extraordinary meanings, making them special to the people of God.

AMONG WHOM

This verse is an excellent confirmation of this truth. A view of God’s people is stated that is most edifying. It serves to clarify our understanding of salvation. First, the Spirit includes the Roman believers as suitable recipients of the Gospel. They were “among” the “all nations” to whom the Gospel was sent, and for whom it was tailored. This view at once devastates any notion of fleshly distinctions. Even though citizenry in Rome was counted as something superior, yet from heaven’s viewpoint, they were “among the nations”—one portion of a needy populace.

The Spirit provides another view of human commonality to the Ephesians. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:1-3). Although men are prone to “measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves” (2 Cor 10:12), the Gospel approaches them as having a common need. That is why a devastating blow is dealt to sectarianism and human pride wherever the Gospel is believed.

The truth of the matter is that “in

Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22). Sin has leveled the human race, so that the barbarians of Malta need the Gospel, and the salvation it announces, as much as the lords of Caesar’s household. Men may boast of superior civilizations and greater attainments, but it is all in vain. That view is too low for the people of God. While there is a very small element of truth to it, it is unworthy of embrace, for it contributes to pride, and moves people to consider the Gospel as less needful than it really is. It is a fleshly view, which is prohibited in the Kingdom of God.

WE WERE CALLED

At the point we were subjected to the Gospel, a distinction began to develop. Through the “glad tidings of good things” (Rom 10:15) we were “called” by God to God. As it is written, “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”^{NASB} (2 Thess 2:14).

The very idea of a “call” emphasizes an initiative. In this case, a Divine initiative. A call is not in answer to a request, but is an invitation offered by an interested party who has an concern in the one being called.

For some, this is too difficult to believe. To them, it is like as theological brier or thorn that cannot be handled. But this is not an appropriate response to the truth. It is honoring to God to believe His Word, and confess that it is the truth. After all, God will be “justified” in all of His “sayings” (of which this is one), and will “overcome,” or prevail, when there is a conflict between His words and man’s perception of them (Rom 3:4).

The people of God are frequently referred to as “called.” One of the more familiar texts is Romans 8:28. “And we know that all things work together for

good to those who love God, to those who are **the called** according to His purpose.”^{NKJV} The Spirit further affirms, “Moreover whom He predestined, these **He also called**; whom **He called**, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

The “calling” of reference, therefore, is central in our salvation. It is not tangential, or something of novel interest on the side. The importance of the concept of calling can be seen in the following affirmations of Scripture.

- † **Called** into the fellowship of God’s dear Son (1 Cor 1:9).
- † **Called** to peace (1 Cor 7:15).
- † **Called** into the grace of Christ (Gal 1:6).
- † **Called** into liberty (Gal 5:13).
- † **Called** in one hope of our calling (Eph 4:4).
- † **Called** to obtain glory (2 Thess 2:14).
- † **Called** out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).
- † **Called** to inherit a blessing (1 Pet 3:9).
- † **Called** to His eternal glory (1 Pet 5:10).

Paul has already said he was “called to be an Apostle.” Now he tells the Roman brethren they are also “the called of Jesus Christ.” Other translations highlight the uniqueness of this expression: “among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” (NIV, RSV, NRSV), “and by His call you belong to Jesus Christ” (NJB), “marked out to be disciples of Christ” (BBE). Literally, the phrase may be translated “called to be Jesus Christ’s”^{Robertson}. Although of themselves these translations do not establish the truth of the text, they do confirm that it is a lofty one, not to be viewed through the template of man’s theology. Fleshly thinking must not touch this Gospel!

DIVINE INITIATIVE

The very idea of a “call” emphasizes an initiative. In this case, a Divine initiative. A call is not in answer to a request, but is an invitation offered by an interested party who has an concern in the one being called.

The saints of God are exhorted to remember their calling—when it first registered upon their conscience that there was room for them at the Master’s table. That call came by means of the Gospel, yet it was intensely personal. It was a call that transcended earthly distinctions. *“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth”* (1 Cor 1:26). There was a single objective in the calling: **“ONE hope of your calling”** (Eph 4:4). It was a *“high calling,”* or an *“upward call”* (Phil 3:14).

The calling was *“holy,”* and not prompted by our works or accomplishments. It was wholly at the discretion of a wise and loving God. As it is written, *“Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began”*^{NKJV} (2 Tim 1:9). Because the call came from heaven, it is appropriately called a *“heavenly calling,”* of which we are *“partakers”* (Heb 3:1).

Referring to his own Apostleship, Paul confesses that even though he was appointed to be an Apostle, yet He was called by God’s grace. *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus”*^{NKJV} (Gal 1:15-17). It is important to avoid a view of our calling that does not allow the unreserved acceptance of statements like this. He is a wise man that is willing to accept the testimony of holy Scripture without doubting.

A *“call”* assumes some recognition of the invitation on the part of the one being called. Men have longed debated this subject. Some affirm no response is possible unless there is a quickening from God, while others affirm the ability to respond is inherent in the human nature. I am not sure, however, that the Word

approaches the subject in such a simplistic manner.

Something must be said about the **necessity** of a call in the first place—and no one responds who is not first called. The very fact that the God of heaven sends out an invitation to humanity indicates how far sin had taken us from Him. The indictment of heaven against

The awakening of the soul is not to be taken lightly, as though it were the mere product of human initiative. If men are sensitive of God, have an ear to hear, or eyes to see, they are obligated to confess the origin of them both.

the human race is, *“there is none that seeketh after God”* (Rom 3:11). Some might object that there are SOME who do seek after God—but the Spirit says there are *“none.”* The meaning is that no one *by nature* persistently seeks after God—in spite of the fact that philosophers have said that they do. There is a vast difference between making false gods, and earnestly seeking after the true God.

God has appointed that men seek Him, making every effort to find Him. As it is written, *“From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”*^{NIV} (Acts 17:26-27). Yet, because of sin, any seeking that men do on their own misses the mark, bringing them to the wrong conclusion.

Amidst this hopeless condition, the calling of God surfaces—a Divine summons that is effectual. Just as surely as God called out for Adam (Gen 3:9), through the Gospel a call goes out from heaven. We must learn to count on this call attending the preaching of the Gospel.

Divine Drawing

The call of God is the manner in which He draws, or allures, us to Himself. Jesus declared the indispensability of this drawing. *“No man CAN come to me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him”* (John 6:44). Later, in the same discourse, this same truth is stated in another way. *“Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”* (John 6:65). This is the Divine manner of the heavenly Kingdom.

This is not strange language. The Lord has consistently presented Himself as engaged in drawing people. *“The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you”* (Jer 31:3). *“I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love”* (Hosea 11:4). *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her”* (Hosea 2:14). Let us have done with any view of salvation that makes no allowance for the drawing power of God.

The awakening of the soul is not to be taken lightly, as though it were the mere product of human initiative. If men are sensitive of God, have an ear to hear, or eyes to see, they are obligated to confess the origin of them both. *“The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them”* (Prov 20:12). Everyone does not possess a hearing ear—or an ear capable of detecting the voice of the Lord. That is precisely why Jesus said, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (Matt 11:15; 13:9,43). It is why the Spirit repeated said to the churches, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9).

Moses told Israel, *“Yet the LORD hath NOT given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day”* (Deut 29:4). This was not an arbitrary decision—as though Israel wanted ears to hear, but God refused to grant them. Their obstinate hearts withheld these things from them (Ezek 12:2). See how different it is with those in

Christ Jesus? They have been given ears to hear, and have thus been effectively drawn, or called by God Himself, to Jesus. They have a preference for the Lord, and a longing to hear from Him.

If one chooses to believe men have an innate ability to hear, or be sensitive of, the Living God, very well. That is very much a part of the Divine likeness that we bear—even by nature. However, that ability cannot be aroused without Divine influence. Thus it is written, *“He awakens my ear to hear as the learned”*^{NKJV} (Isa 50:4).

This in no way negates the universality of the offer of salvation. It excludes no one who is seeking, or desires to come to the Lord. It is not a fatalistic view. Rather, this is the Divine explanation of your salvation. It is one that brings all glory to God, and it is the truth.

CALLED TO CHRIST

Our text says we are *“the called of Christ”*—or the called ones belonging to Christ. This expression parallels that of First Corinthians 1:9: *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*^{NKJV} The nature of our salvation is expounded in this statement. In order for us to be saved, we have to be brought under the care and direction of the Son of God. God gave us to Jesus in order that He might *“bring us to God”* (1 Pet 3:18).

This aspect of salvation is so particular that Jesus took special note of it when He was preparing to die for our sins. *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of*

them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You . . . I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:12-15).

If any believers imagine they are capable of being kept through their own efforts alone, let them bend low, still their souls, and hear the prayer of Jesus! The Lord Jesus would not leave His disciples unprotected for three days and three

Mediator of the New Covenant.

And how is it that God brings us under the care of this *“great Shepherd of the sheep”* (Heb 13:20)? We are **“CALLED”** to Him! There is an appeal that requires sensitivity of heart and soul. If you have any doubts about the sincerity and effectiveness of this call, *“the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”*^{NKJV} (Rom 11:29). It is a *“high calling”* (Phil 3:14), a *“heavenly calling”* (Heb 3:1), and a *“holy calling”* (2

We also learn from this that it is out of order to attempt to serve men until we have first honored God through Christ, and in the Gospel. Too, if our intentions are not to promote the obedience that comes from faith, we are not really serving the Lord.

nights! In that appointed interim, the powers of darkness were being loosed. The Son, mindful of the gravity of the situation, turned them over to the care of the Father while He laid down His life and took it up again! What a rich commentary on the weakness of man and the love of God and Christ!

Now, Jesus is the Captain of our salvation, leading us to the *“better country”* and the *“city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God”* (Heb 11:10,16). He is the Shepherd who leads and feeds us, and the Minister of the heavenly sanctuary from Whom our supplies are being received (Heb 8:1-2). There is nothing we need that He does not give, or WANT to give. He is the

Tim 1:9). The ONLY ones who do not profit from this calling are those who *“refuse”* it (Heb 12:25). But those giving heed to it, will be given by God to Jesus Christ for safe keeping and direction. It will be a most satisfying and joyful condition, yielding the full assurance of faith! In the lively awareness of this truth, you will be able to live triumphantly. You can trust in that!

Does this not open the marvelous treasure of First Corinthians 1:30? *“It is because of Him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”* How gracious of our God to be so precise on the matter of our salvation!

AN APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTION AND BLESSING

“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The priorities of the Apostle are certainly revealed in this introduction. We have no idea of the recipients of this marvelous Epistle until this verse. The man of God

first tells us his heavenly assignment and role in the salvation of God. He then affirms he is declaring what the holy prophets of God said was coming. He identifies the true Christ, relating Him to the eternal King that would come from David. He affirms this is the One—the ONLY One—that has been declared to be

the Son of God with power through *“the resurrection from the dead.”* He is the One that has commissioned and enabled Paul. His purpose is bring about the obedience that results from faith. He then declares we have been called to be given to the Lord Jesus.

What a marvelous context in which to address believers. In his opening words, he has stripped away all flesh, and shown the world to be worthless. He has not given a syllable of worth to anything proceeding from the flesh, firmly fixed our attention on God, Christ, the Gospel, and the real reason for preaching. Suffice it to say, there are countless believers that are regularly submitted to preaching and teaching that rarely, if ever, make such holy associations.

We also learn from this that it is out of order to attempt to serve men until we have first honored God through Christ, and in the Gospel. Too, if our intentions are not to promote the obedience that comes from faith, we are not really serving the Lord. All vain activities are to be forthrightly abandoned in favor of joining with the Lord in His revealed purpose—working with Him (1 Cor 3:9). No other work is acceptable.

ALL THAT BE IN ROME

Because Paul has the spirit of Christ, he is not a sectarian. He writes to “ALL” the believers in Rome. He is not writing to the magistrates, the university teachers, or the merchants of Rome—at least not in those temporal capacities. He will clearly identify that his words are addressed to those who are in Christ Jesus.

We know from the close of this Epistle that “*all that be in Rome*” included a wide range of believers. There was an assembly meeting in the home of Aquila and Priscilla (16:3-5), people in prison (16:7), households (16:10-11), and all the saints with “*Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas*” (16:15). There were married and single, men and woman, relatives, and those “*of note among the Apostles*” (16:3-7). All of them were included! Wherever a person aligned with Jesus could be found in Rome—this was for them.

A Gospel that cannot be preached to everyone should not be preached to anyone! Whether he was writing to his relatives, prisoners, spiritual leaders, or a married believers, the message was the same—“*all that be in*

Rome.” Such a condition is possible because there are no fleshly distinctions in Christ Jesus. As it is written, “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:26-28).

As soon as we begin to minister the truth of God with fleshly distinctions in mind, the Gospel necessarily loses its prominence in the minds of both the speaker and the hearers. This is because

A soon as we begin to minister the truth of God with fleshly distinctions in mind, the Gospel necessarily loses its prominence in the minds of both the speaker and the hearers. This is because “the Gospel of God” (to which Paul was separated) recognizes no such distinctions.

“*the Gospel of God*” (to which Paul was separated) recognizes no such distinctions. While the Scriptures do contain words addressed to special people (husbands, wives, children, servants, masters, married, single, etc.), they are never at the heart of the Gospel. They are always secondary, and designed to bring the people into the center of the Gospel, where common affiliation and true spiritual benefit are experienced. One of the telling signs of a powerless church is the penchant to present the Gospel as though there were fleshly distinctions in Christ Jesus.

BELOVED OF GOD

Through the Holy Spirit, and under the administration of the Lord Jesus, Paul will now speak to the people of God. He will address them from the highest view, thereby appealing to their new natures. It is the Apostolic manner to begin Epistles in this manner—recognizing the status of the people of God in Christ Jesus.

What a gracious word: “*beloved of God!*” Other versions read, “*To all in Rome who are loved by God*”^{NIV}, “*To all God’s beloved in Rome*”^{NRSV}. The NIV is very weak in this regard, for the word used here is not “loved,” but “*dearly loved*,” as I will establish. It speaks of a special relationship, not an ordinary one.

Notice, he does not address those who love God (although they surely did), but those GOD LOVES! Through these words, the Spirit is teaching us where to begin with our spiritual reasoning. It is ever true, “*We love him, because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). The river of love belongs to Him. Our love is but a small tributary when compared with overflowing His. As it is written, “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*”^{NKJV} (1 John 4:10).

Too, let none imagine that this salutation was for every citizen of Rome. While, in a general sense, “*God so loved the world*,” that is not the love of which Paul writes. Nor, indeed, does the Spirit know anything about God loving every person alike, be he Paul the Apostle or Judas the betrayer. Although such heresy is often spouted from the mouths of the unlearned, it is totally false, and a gross misrepresentation of the Living God.

If this word—“*beloved of God*”—was suitable for saints and sinners alike, it would derive no special comfort for the saints. If the grace of God, which brought salvation (Tit 2:11) makes no distinction in those receiving it, of what value is it? If God loves us no more when we are in Jesus than when we were bond-slaves to sin, what benefit is there to being in Christ Jesus?

Jesus has already declared the Father’s love is not lavished upon just anyone. He provided a Savior in His love, but He will not heap His love upon a single rebellious soul. Thus Jesus affirmed, “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;*

and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:21,23). This is the love of which our text speaks, and it is a wonderful love indeed!

The word “beloved” is a special word in Scripture. It is derived from the Greek word ἀγαπητός, which means beloved dear, very much loved, one not only greatly loved, but in a unique way.^{Robertson} No person separated from Jesus is ever so described! This word is used over sixty times in the New Testament Scriptures, and is never applied to someone outside of Jesus Christ.

“Beloved of God” means especially endeared to Him because of their association with His well beloved Son. To be loved by God is to be advantaged by Him. It is to experience Him being “for us,” so that none can effectively be “against us” (Rom 8:31). To be “beloved of God” is the opposite of provoking God, as did the Israelites of old (Deut 32:16; 1 Kgs 14:22; Psa 78:58; 106:29). God finds great delight in those who are “beloved” by Him. He delights to walk with them as He did with Enoch and Noah (Gen 5:22; 6:9). Such are people “after His own heart,” as David (Acts 13:22), and are His friends like Abraham (James 2:23).

SPECIAL TO GOD

To be “beloved of God” involves being special to Him. As it is written, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE”^{NKJV} (1 Pet 2:9). In another place it is stated that Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself HIS OWN SPECIAL PEOPLE, zealous for good works”^{NKJV} (Tit 2:14). We do well to NOT be among those thinking these words to be strange.

This should not be a strange idea to us. God said this to Israel, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex 19:5-6). When He delivered them from Egypt, it was “to be

unto Him a people of inheritance” (Deut 4:20). Again, it is said of them, “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut 7:6), and again, “Thou shalt be blessed above all people” (Deut 7:14).

The concept of being special to God, therefore, is not an unusual one, but has been articulated many times. However, when it comes to those who are in Christ Jesus, this endearment is brought to a new level. The church is so special, it is

While it is totally unreasonable to do so, Satan tempts men to believe they can be unholy and still retain the status of “beloved of God.” All manner of teaching has been propagated to encourage this type of thinking.

the chosen “bride” of Christ (John 3:29; Rev 21:2,9,17). Think of the magnitude of this statement: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4). If Abraham was particular about obtaining a bride for Isaac (Gen 24:7-9), how much more is God discriminating concerning the bride of His Son? You may rest assured, no one will be married to Christ who is not precious and beloved of God! Conversely, no one who loved by Him will be excluded from the Bride.

This specialness can be experienced at the personal level, as confirmed in the Apostle John- “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 19:26; 21:20).

Only to the degree that we can see we are “beloved of God” will the accolades of this world come to mean nothing to us.

One further word on this. The status

of “beloved of God” is not one TO BE attained by the saints. It is a condition that is unquestionably enjoyed in Christ Jesus. Paul’s salutation is simply a recognition of the status of those who have been “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17).

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

While it is totally unreasonable to do so, Satan tempts men to believe they can be unholy and still retain the status of “beloved of God.” All manner of teaching has been propagated to encourage this type of thinking. The Spirit, however, will not give men the luxury of thinking in such a spiritually slipshod manner. If we had to be delivered from the guilt and power of sin to be made acceptable to God, it is inconceivable that we could revert to sin again, and remain accepted by God. Such a thought reflects a level of spiritual stupidity that is completely unacceptable.

The call of God is in order that we might be “saints.” The same phrase- “called to be saints”-is found in First Corinthians 1:2. Coming from the word ἅγιος, “saints” means pure, blameless, consecrated, holy.^{Strong’s} This word- “saints”-is like a two-sided coin. One side is HOLY-pure, and free from sin; blameless, and without spot. The other side is CONSECRATED-dedicated to the Lord, and able to come into His presence without being consumed. Both of these are inherent in the word “saints.”

Here, then, is the reason why God called us: **to be holy, and to be consecrated, or devoted, to Him.** Any approach to religion, or Christianity, that is not based upon these objectives is not of God. It is a delusion that has been perpetrated by the devil. An unholy church is a reproach to Jesus and a desecration of the name of God.

The truth affirmed in these words- “called to be saints”-is repeatedly proclaimed in Scripture. In a marvelous association with Divine choice, the Spirit declares, “He (God) hath chosen us in Him (Jesus) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph 1:4). The ultimate objective of our

salvation is said to be *“That He might present it (the church) to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph 5:27; Col 1:22).

Those who allow for identity with God while maintaining a preference for sin are deceived. We have been called *“with a holy calling”* (2 Tim 1:9), and holiness is imperative. The Spirit leaves no question on this matter. *“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’”* (1 Pet 1:15-16). And again, *“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord”* (Heb 12:14).

The phrase *“called to be saints”* does not suggest believers are not saints NOW. It is an affirmation that this is what God intended by summoning us to Himself. We experience the firstfruits of being saints now, and are so recognized. No less than forty-seven times, the Epistles refer to the people of God as *“the saints”*—the holy ones! The status will be fully realized when we see the Lord as He is, and are thereby conformed fully to His image (Rom 8:29; 1 John 3:1-2).

GRACE AND PEACE

The nature of life in Christ can be seen by the blessings conferred upon believers. Here two indispensable things are mentioned: *“grace and peace.”* How often these are joined together in Scripture (1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 John 1:3 . . . etc., etc.). These are Kingdom necessities, like bread and water are to the flesh.

GRACE

“Grace” is Divine favor, wherein a preference for the individual is found with God. It is the cause of our salvation, and the means through which it is maintained (Eph 2:5-8). No man can enter into the Kingdom of God without grace, and no one can advance in Christ without it. There are no Divine requirements that can be fulfilled without it, and no ministries that can be accomplished apart from it. The grace of God pervades every aspect of the

Kingdom of God.

God’s grace is the spiritual environment in which we *“stand,”* or are stabilized. As it is written, *“we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand”* (Rom 5:2). And again, *“this is the true grace of God in which you stand”* (1 Pet 5:12). By this, the Scripture means we can only survive in this world by remaining in God’s favor. Should we choose to *“provoke the Lord to jealousy,”* we will not be able to stand. We are not *“stronger than He”* (1 Cor 10:22).

Lest any despair, thinking that remaining in God’s favor is wholly dependent upon our accomplishments,

11:5). The Spirit makes clear that FAITH was the prominent trait in Enoch. That is why he *“pleased God”*—he believed and trusted Him, convinced that God *“IS, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6). And what was the result of this pleasing? He *“was translated that he should not see death.”*

Those who imagine they have no need of grace are walking in darkness. What is more, they are a source of displeasure to God. It is no wonder, therefore, that Paul expresses the desire for the people of God to experience *“grace.”* in increasing measures.

I have deep regrets that I have long been identified with a movement that rarely speaks of the grace of God. I know all too well of the futility of life without this wonderful grace. I must confess that whatever I have learned of the grace of God has come independently of that movement. Much of my own understanding has been appropriated in the crucible of conflict with the Bible in my hand. Further, I have found my experience is not at all uncommon. I am quick to say there are many others within the group of reference that have also discovered the grace of God, and been richly satisfied with it. For this, I praise God. I also must acknowledge they have discovered the glory of God’s grace outside of the theological boundaries of an institution.

PEACE

“Peace” involves quietness of soul—a condition where agitation does not dominate the inner man. Here is a possession that is given to men, not achieved by them. Jesus said to His disciples, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). Our text confirms this was not an experience unique to the Apostles.

Just as surely as we cannot stand without the grace of God, **neither can we remain firm while in a state of agitation and inner turmoil.** Your

Thus our text awakens the soul concerning the grace of God. Not only are we to know of its necessity, we are to expect more of it to be given to us. As it is written, “He gives more grace” (James 4:6). When we are pleasing to the Lord, He will lavish His love upon us.

the Spirit makes clear that grace is accessed by faith. Salvation in its entirety, from beginning to end, is *“by grace”* and *“through faith”* (Eph 2:8). It is our acceptance of, and adherence to, the Son of God that endears us to Him.

Thus our text awakens the soul concerning the grace of God. Not only are we to know of its necessity, we are to expect more of it to be given to us. As it is written, *“He gives more grace”* (James 4:6). When we are pleasing to the Lord, He will lavish His love upon us. That is why it is written, *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”* (Col 1:10). The effect of pleasing God is set forth in the person of Enoch. He is one of two men in the history of humanity, that did not experience death. There are two things we know about Enoch. (1) He *“walked with God”* (Gen 5:22,24), and *“he pleased God”* (Heb

own experience in Christ will confirm this to be the case. As soon as we become agitated and distraught, we begin to waver, thinking and acting foolishly. We need the stabilizing influence of His peace. Elihu spoke correctly when he said, *“When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?”* (Job 34:29). That is precisely why Jesus followed His promise of peace with the words, *“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27b).

This is a peace that *“surpasses ALL understanding”* (Phil 4:7a). It cannot be comprehended by the sociologist, nor explained by the psychiatrist. It is a gift from God, transcendent to anything of the natural order. As such, it is able to *“guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”*^{NKJV} (Phil 4:7b). Like a powerful and alert sentinel *“peace”* keeps our hearts from being distracted by temptation and moved away from the grace of God.

In Christ, we have been called to possess this peace. What is more, this peace is dominating, or ruling, in nature. It is capable of controlling our hearts, ruling them with tenderness and eternal profit. Thus it is written, *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace”*^{NIV} (Col 3:15).

The peace of God will enable the saints to spend the night with lions (Dan 6:22), and walk about in a furnace of fire (Dan 3:25). It will enable Peter to sleep in prison, expecting death in the morning

(Acts 12:6), and Paul to shake off a venomous snake that had fastened to his hand (Acts 28:3-5). The peace of God will enable you to walk confidently in the very midst of trouble.

However, peace is more than quietness in the time of trouble. It is also confidence in the presence of the Lord, trouble or not. It empowers the believer to remain close to the Lord in feast or famine, flood or drought.

FROM GOD AND JESUS

With great care the Spirit anchors our faith in God. The grace and peace we require are available in abundant supply. They will come to us *“from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This blessing is repeatedly written to believers: i.e., *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Philemon 3; 2 John 1:3). This, then, is a general blessing conferred on all saints everywhere. It is our business to ponder and receive it.

The Father and the Son are active in our salvation. They work together in bringing us to glory. Jesus alluded to this when He said, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”*^{NKJV} (John 14:23). They are not inactive Residents. Let it be clear that grace and peace are ministered from **within** the believer—out of the experience of Divine fellowship. We

cannot receive blessing from the Father and the Son while in an alienated state. If we are aloof from God, we are also aloof from grace and peace.

There is a great need for believers to be **convicted** of the presence and blessing of both the Father and the Son. The fall of humanity was so extensive that it requires the involvement of the entire Godhead to accomplish its retrieval. The holy angels are included as well (Heb 1:13-14). A special realm—*“heavenly places”*—must be occupied (Eph 1:3; 2:6), and a glorified King must be our Leader! Who is the soul who will take such a great salvation casually, as though it required no effort from us? To “neglect” it is disastrous (Heb 2:3).

An approach to God that hinges upon Law knows nothing of this, choosing to focus on the works of men rather than the *“wonderful works of God.”* It gives too much credit to fallen man. Let us rejoice and be glad in our involvement with the Father and the Son. As it is written, *“He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son”* (2 John 9). Abiding *“in the doctrine of Christ”* is remaining in a state where we are motivated by, and earnestly cling to, what God has declared concerning Christ. It is maintaining a joyful grasp of the record God gave of His Son, and experiencing the *“power of God unto salvation”* that is experienced through it. The Spirit does not speak in vain when He ascribes the very power of God to the Gospel of Christ!

CONCLUSION

Thus we have been introduced to this marvelous Epistle. Our hearts have been pointed upward, and our minds focused upon God and Christ. The worth of the Apostle Paul has been traced to him being Christ’s servant. This was not an honor he took upon himself, but he was *“called”* to this privileged role. Whatever other involvements may have been available to Paul, God *“separated”* him from them all. His major activity was declaring *“the Gospel of God”*—the good news concerning *“how great things the*

Lord hath done.”

Our thoughts concerning the Gospel have been associated with the promises declared through the Prophets, who spoke *“concerning His Son Christ our Lord.”* No other message is honored by God. No other message possesses Divine power. If an understanding of our salvation is to be gained, it will come through a Gospel that declares what the holy Prophets said was coming. A Gospel based upon a human assessment of

human need has no place in the church.

The Divine validation of Christ’s Sonship took place at His resurrection. By that resurrection God Himself confirmed and declared that all power belongs to Christ—power to seek and save us, bringing us to glory. The ultimate confirmation is not what you experience, but what Jesus experienced by the power of God. That confirmation is contained in a testimony that is designed for faith. All who do, in fact, take hold of that Gospel

testimony by faith, will experience the blessing of God. God will not ignore the one who believes the record He has given of His Son! Such belief brings glory to God and honor to the Son of God.

The purpose of true ministry is declared to be inducing obedience that comes from faith. That is a common objective to be realized among “*all nations*.” Fifteen hundred years of moral administration under the Law confirmed that valid obedience cannot be induced by a demand—not even a Divine demand. This is not owing to any weakness or deficiency on God’s part. God forbid that such a vain imagination should find our place in our thinking. The failure of the Law to evoke acceptable obedience among men was due to the weakness of the flesh (Rom 8:3). The highest work of the Law was found in the ministry of the High Priest. But with the advent of Jesus Christ, even that ministry was abolished. The Spirit states it this way, “*For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect*”^{NKJV} (Heb 7:18-19).

The people of God have been

identified as those who have been called **by God to Jesus Christ**. The objective of the call was to bring them to, and under the beneficent reign of, the Savior. Our immediate identity with Christ by faith is the appointed means through which we will be brought to glory. A blessed arrangement, indeed!

Believers are also dearly loved by God—special to Him, and the objects of His affection. They are thus suitable recipients of grace and peace, which come from both the Father and the Son. Through Christ, a way has been made for us to remain in Divine favor, or to “*abide*” in His “*love*” (John 15:10). It is the unique prerogative of faith to enable us to “*keep ourselves in the love of God*” (Jude 21). That is the all-pervading objective for believers: to remain in love and favor of God.

The remainder of this Epistle will keep these pivotal realities in focus. Nothing will be declared that ignores them, or places them into the background. Frequently, and in different ways, the Spirit will point to the truth declared in these opening verses. He will make no provision for flesh to be prominent or Christ to lack prominence.

The absolute criticality of identity with the Father and the Son will be constantly affirmed. Not a single word will be said about affiliation with a religious institution created by men. No value will be placed on mere human assessment. When salvation is addressed, it will always center in the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, He will consistently be seen as God’s appointed Minister. The centrality of Divine favor in the whole of our salvation will also be accented. **Anything displeasing to God jeopardizes salvation.** Faith will be held forth as our preeminent response, always effective, and always honored by God.

The Spirit will lead us into a manner of thinking that finds the eyes of our heart focused on Jesus as the exclusive Means of salvation—in all of its aspects. Everything depends upon Him! What we are by nature will be declared to be unacceptable to God, and utterly powerless and ineffective. We must live in the power of what God has given us in, and because of, His Son. The Spirit does not speak in vain when He ascribes the very power of God to the Gospel of Christ.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/28/2000. Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 1:8-15: “**PAUL’S DESIRE TO COME TO ROME.**” The driving compulsion of the regenerate life is to experience Divine influences. The fellowship of the people of God is involved in this, and is therefore consistently sought by those who are “partakers of the Divine nature.” This aspect of spiritual life is revealed with great power in the text we will cover. 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.