



## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 34



# THE INDISPENSABLE GOSPEL

<sup>10:14</sup> How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" <sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. <sup>18</sup> But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." <sup>19</sup> But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." <sup>20</sup> But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." <sup>21</sup> But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."  
– Romans 10:14-21 <sup>NKJV</sup> –

## INTRODUCTION

Moved by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle has confessed his *"heart's desire and prayer to God"* for Israel, his *"kinsmen according to the flesh."* This desire has been sparked by the consideration of the *"gift of righteousness"* as revealed in the Gospel of Christ (1:17-18). That Gospel, the Spirit revealed, was God's power in order to effect salvation, *"to the Jew FIRST"*

(1:16). How fitting, therefore, that this knowledge should awaken a fervent desire for the Israelites to be saved! This was not a fleshly desire, prompted by national pride or a mere general interest in their spiritual welfare. This fervent desire was prompted by the new man, fellowship with Christ, and the mind of the Spirit. This is how an Israelite reasons when they have been *"joined to the Lord."* It is

the result of spiritual life, and is not to be viewed as an expression of the flesh.

### A MERE TECHNICALITY?

Some might imagine that the phrase, *"to the Jew first,"* is a mere technicality, with no practical implications at all. In such a view, God is seen as obligated to offer this salvation, which includes the imputation of His own righteousness,

## LESSON OUTLINE

- I. THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING (10:14a)
- II. THE NECESSITY OF HEARING (10:14b)
- III. THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING (10:14c)
- IV. THE NECESSITY OF BEING SENT (10:15a)
- V. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MESSENGER (10:15b)
- VI. OBEDIENCE AND BELIEVING (10:16)
- VII. FAITH COMES (10:17)
- VIII. HAS NOT EVERYONE HEARD? (10:18)
- IX. DID NOT ISRAEL KNOW? (10:19)
- X. THE BOLDNESS OF ISAIAH (10:20)
- XI. GOD'S PATIENCE WITH ISRAEL (10:21)

because of the promises made to the fathers. Those same promises also "pertained" to Israel (9:4). In this view, "the promises" are considered an offer, or an opportunity. But that is not how they are presented in Scripture. **They are a Divine commitment**, based upon the "foreknowledge" of God, and are to be implemented by His unalterable determination.

### FIRST IN SEQUENCE?

Others might consider "to the Jew first" to mean they were to be the first to hear the Gospel. While this is true, it is not all the truth. It is true that the proclamation began with them. However, the word "first" also means of first importance – first in place as well as in time. A similar use of the word is found in the description of the various gifts the Lord placed in the church. "And God hath set some in the church, **first** apostles,

secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor 12:28). Here, as in Romans 1:16, the word "first" is more than a sequential term.

As long as the world remains, there will never be a time when the Gospel will cease to be "the power of God unto salvation, **to the Jew first.**"

### Paul Preached to the Jew First

In order to confirm this is the meaning of "to the Jew first," consider the nature of Paul's ministry. As soon as he was delivered from the power of darkness and translated into Kingdom of God's dear Son, "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues" <sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 9:20). When Barnabas and Saul were separated by the Holy Spirit, they immediately sailed to the Gentile island of Cyprus. When coming to the city of Salamis, on the east coast of Cyprus, "they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews" (Acts 13:5). Following their expulsion because of the Jews, they came to Iconium, in the southern part of Galatia. There, "they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 14:1). When coming into Thessalonica, Paul and Silas went into "a synagogue of the Jews," reasoning with them for three Sabbath days (Acts 17:1-2). When they were forced to leave that city because of the Jews, they went to Berea and "went into the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:10).

When Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he was stirred in his spirit when he saw the city given completely to idolatry. His first response to that stirring is recorded in these words: "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews" (Acts 17:17). When he came into Corinth, Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded

the Jews and the Greeks" (Acts 18:4). When he came into Ephesus, the Apostle, "entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19).

The Gospel, therefore, was not simply preached to the Jews first in sequence. It was not declared first in Jerusalem, and to the neglect of the Jews after that. Paul's not only fervently desired the salvation of the Jews, his preaching conformed to that desire.

### NECESSARY CONSIDERATIONS

It is necessary to consider these things because of the religious climate that has been created by Christian sophists. There is a different kind of mentality extant in the professed church. It has placed "the nations," or the Gentiles, ahead of the Jews in Gospel prominence. The result, whether intentional or not, has been the near-removal of the Israelites from the minds of the people.

There are even pretentious ministers who are aggressive against the ancient people, affirming they have been expunged from the tablets of heaven, and are no longer in the heart and purpose of God. Chapters nine through eleven of the book of Romans is a sword from heaven that cuts these spouting imaginations down, dashing them to pieces.

The Holy Spirit provokes the Apostle to write extensively on this matter. He is not only writing as moved by the Holy Spirit, he is unveiling his sensitive heart to us. He integrates it with the Gospel, the conferment of righteousness, and the salvation of God. It is related to the purpose of God, the power of God, and the promises of God. It is not possible for a subject to have more lofty associations. It requires an extraordinary measure of unbelief to deny these realities. Great joy is realized in acknowledging them.

## THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING

<sup>d10:14a</sup> **How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?"** Here we are exposed to the Divine economy – how the Lord works among men. While it is true that God was

"found of them that sought Him not" (Isa 65:1; Rom 10:20), we are not to conclude there is no human involvement in men finding God. It is also true that the Gentiles "attained to righteousness," even

though they did not pursue it (Rom 9:30). Yet, none of this occurred independently of someone bringing the Gospel to the people. Nor, indeed, did it take place without the people calling upon the name

of the Lord. These two things – bringing the Gospel, and calling upon the name of the Lord – necessitate human initiative and response. We will also see the role of faith, or believing the Gospel, in the obtaining of salvation.

### CALLING ON THE LORD

The statement now expounded by the Spirit is this: *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (v 13). This is one of the pivotal expressions of Scripture, standing between hopelessness and a living hope, between darkness and light, between ignorance and illumination.

Calling upon the name of the Lord is the proper response to the Gospel, which announces the salvation of God for man. Thus David, a man ahead of his time, said, *“What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD . . . I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD”* (Psa 116:12-13,17).

In our text, the activity of calling is **not** related to finding relief in outward difficulties. **Rather, it is specifically related to the appropriation of salvation, or the attainment of righteousness.** More specifically, it related to this marvelous phrase: *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness”* (10:10). **Calling upon the name of the Lord is a fervent quest to obtain that righteousness.** That call is provoked by the awareness of two realities.

**Calling upon the Lord involves human initiative,** and is absolutely essential for salvation. However, our text is going even further than this. It is not representing calling upon the name of the Lord as a requirement. Rather, the affirmation has been that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord *“shall be saved”* (10:13). **No one has ever called upon the name of the Lord who has not been saved!** That is the glorious point of this text.

### The Awareness of Unrighteousness

First, that the one calling upon the name of the Lord has an acute awareness of personal unrighteousness. By nature, there is an utter lack within of the righteousness God requires, and the person calling upon the Lord knows it. Such an one correctly views himself as *“a sinner”* (Lk 18:13).

### Righteousness Is Available

Second, the heart of the calling one is convinced that the righteousness of God is accessible. Although it is not presently

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possessed, the Gospel has convinced the individual that there is a righteousness to be had, and that it can be obtained.

### THE GOSPEL CALCULATED TO INDUCE THIS CALLING

The Gospel of Christ brings the awareness of these things: i.e.,<sup>1</sup> personal unrighteousness, and <sup>2</sup> the availability of a righteousness from God. Where honest and good hearts are not convinced of these things, the Gospel has **not** been declared.

### The Aim of the Preacher

Those who speak in the name of the Lord must devote themselves to delivering a message that provokes these perceptions. It is the message itself that accomplishes this, and not the reasoning, or supposed logical conclusions, of the speaker. Technically, the aim of the true preacher is **not** to convince men they are unrighteous, and persuade them that they can be righteous. Rather, it is to preach the Gospel with insight and power. The Gospel of Christ will accomplish these

things, for that is precisely what it is designed to do.

The objective for the preacher is to be a specialist in Gospel, not the supposed state and need of humanity. The psychologist, for example, specializes in the human condition. The sociologist particularizes in the status, trends, and needs of society. The man of God is a specialist in the Gospel of Christ. This is involved in Paul’s admonition to Timothy, and all others who labor in the vineyard of the Lord. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth”* <sup>NASB</sup> (2 Tim 2:15). **Nowhere are we admonished to specialize in people, categories of people, or classifications of life’s problems and challenges.** All of that may sound noble to some, but it does not reflect the mind and purpose of God. There are higher and more consequential matters upon which we are to focus. The one who speaks for God must address these matters pointedly and effectively.

The Gospel, given by God Himself, is designed to uncover the real human dilemma, and provide an eternal solution to it. Every legitimate area of concern is addressed within the framework of the Gospel. Although all of these are not particularized, the effective remedy for all deficiencies can be arrived at within the perimeter of the righteousness revealed in the Gospel. The salvation of God has left no area unattended. The spirit, soul, and body, are all included in the salvation of God (1 Thess 5:23). A *“preacher”* who does not see this cannot be effective.

### HOW???

How can a person call upon the name of the Lord if they have not believed in Him? If the individual is not persuaded that *“God is, and that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6), Divine benefits will not be pursued.

The question is pointed. It is not an interrogation to be answered. This is a rhetorical question, designed to show the

indispensability of believing the Gospel. *“How then are they to call on Him if they have not come to believe in Him?”<sup>NJB</sup>*

The truth of the matter is that men will not call upon God to save them if they do not believe in Him. A petition to the Lord that begins, “O God, if there really is a God,” is vain. It is not a valid call, even though some imagine it is acceptable. As it is written, *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6). In this case, coming to God is equivalent to calling upon Him.

No real quest for God, or what He provides in Christ, will be found where men and women do not *“believe.”* **Where people are not engaged in a fervent**

**quest to obtain the righteousness of God, they have not believed in Him.**

Where an acute sense of a need of the Lord is absent, souls are not believing in Him! When there is no seeking, there is no believing! When there is not knocking, there is no believing! When there is no asking, there is no believing! That is precisely why Jesus spoke of these activities as He did. *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”* (Matt 7:7-8). The certitude woven into those words is remarkable. There is not the slightest hint that asking, seeking, and knocking will be in vain. In fact, these words are but another way of saying, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

**The Nominal Church**

Anyone who has been in Christ for any length of time has been impressed with the lack of fervency in the professed church. One is hard pressed to find an assembly in which people are calling upon the name of the Lord – asking, seeking, and knocking. Actually, the nominal church is wedded to the world, and the world is its wedded name. The world is not calling upon the Lord, and the average churchmen is not either. That is confirmation that an unlawful wedding has taken place.

The reason for this situation is unfolded in our text. It is because men have not believed in the Lord. That failure to believe has aborted any quest for His righteousness. Thus men stumble on in darkness and despair, not convinced of the accessibility of the righteousness of God.

**THE NECESSITY OF HEARING**

<sup>10:14b</sup> ***And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?*** The philosopher may think that believing *“in Him”* can come from introspection, or even by studying nature in all of its marvelous order and complexities. Such a view gives too much credit to man, and makes too little allowance (if any at all) for the Gospel of Christ. Believing in God is not the same as believing God exists, and that is not the intent of this statement. Rather, believing in Him is being assured that He has a righteousness to give – one that is sorely needed, and one that can be obtained. **If a person is not persuaded that God provides a righteousness, and that it can be obtained, there has been no believing in Him.** To put it another way, if one is not convinced God has graciously provided a means whereby man will be accepted by Him, one has not believed in Him. What, then, is the appointed means whereby men will *“believe in Him?”*

**There is a message that must be heard.** It cannot be obtained by seeing, or

by visions. It cannot be appropriated by pondering the creation, or searching our own hearts. It must be **heard!** That is, **someone who knows the message**

*of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them”* (Acts 8:5). When they heard, *“they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”* (Acts 8:12). Cities cannot believe until they hear!

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**THE ETHIOPIAN**

**EUNUCH.** Here was a religious man from the African quadrant of the world. He had been to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning to his homeland. He was reading the book of Isaiah, but did not yet believe in the Lord, or know of His *“gift of righteousness.”* If believing can be induced by reading, surely this man will believe. He was, after all, reading a synopsis of the Gospel in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. But he did not believe until the Lord sent Philip to declare Jesus unto him, for individuals cannot believe until they hear.

**must bring it within the hearing range of those who do not know it!** A few examples will suffice to confirm this.

**THE CITY OF SAMARIA.**

Although within the proximity of the earthly ministry of Christ, the city of Samaria had not believed in the Lord. Consequently, they had not called upon Him. Thus, *“Philip went down to the city*

**CORNELIUS.** If Cornelius is going to believe in the Lord, thereby appropriating His righteousness, someone must bring the message to him. God sent Peter to preach the message so Cornelius

could “believe to the saving of the soul” (Acts 10:1-48; Heb 10:39), and directed Cornelius to send for him, for households cannot believe until they hear!

The hearing of reference is nothing less than “the hearing of faith” (Gal 3:2,5). That is, the hearing that results in believing. It is the Gospel of Christ that is heard. The fact that it is “the power of God unto salvation” is confirmed by the effects of believing it. It moves people to call upon the Lord, for “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”

This is the reason why the Gospel must be preached. Jesus declared, “Go ye into all the world, and **preach** the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This is the message that, when heard, brings men to believe in the Lord.

This hearing is not the mere exercise of natural abilities. There is such a thing as having “ears to hear” and they come from the Lord. As it is written, “The

hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them” (Prov 20:12). This is an ear that is “planted,” or “implanted,”<sup>NIV</sup> by the Lord (Psa 94:9).

They represent a spiritual capacity to understand what the Lord declares, particularly the Gospel of His Son. They are the appointed means to believing.

**There are ears, given by God, which are intended to respond to His Word. They represent a spiritual capacity to understand what the Lord declares, particularly the Gospel of His Son. They are the appointed means to believing.**

When Israel failed to effectively hear the Word of the Lord, Moses explained the circumstance in these words. “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 condition is why the Scriptures speak in the following manner: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt 11:15; 13:9,43; Lk 14:35). “He that hath an ear, let him hear” (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9).

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However, until the sound of the Gospel falls upon them, men will not believe, nor will they call upon the Lord. Further the “ears” are granted when the “sound” of saving words come to the person.

Our text will confirm that this is not a one-time hearing of the Gospel. **Believing is sustained by hearing**, as will be declared in verse seventeen. Therefore, the people of God must place an emphasis upon hearing – hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to be the constant theme of exposition.

## THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING

“<sup>10:14c</sup> **And how shall they hear without a preacher?**” A “preacher” is a proclaimer – “someone to proclaim Him.”<sup>NIV</sup> The word “preacher” means “a herald,” or someone who announces something that has occurred. A “preacher” openly proclaims something that has been done. He publishes things that have been already accomplished, or are readily accessible and profitable to men. The “preacher” is someone who makes things extensively known. That is, he is able to announce and expound things that are realities. In this case, it is what “the Lord hath done,” or “the wonderful works of God” (Psa 126:2; Acts 2:11).

The Word of God often declares what was “preached,” published, or publicly made known. John the Baptist “preached,” or announced, the coming of the Savior (Mark 1:7). Jesus “preached the Word” (Mark 2:2). Jesus sent out His disciples to “preach that men should repent” (Mark 6:12). The Kingdom of God

was “preached” (Lk 16:16). Jesus sent His disciples, affirming that “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47). Christ was “preached,” as well as “the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 3:20; 4:2). The preaching of “the Gospel” is preeminent in Scripture (Mark 16:15; Acts 16:10; Rom 1:15; 1 Cor 1:17; 2 Cor 10:16).

The “preacher” in this text is someone with a revealed message. It is a message of accomplishment and access. This message brings the accomplishments of Christ within the range of the hearers, and assures them that eternal benefits have been provided for them.

The purpose of the preached message is not to get people to do something, but to bring them to “believe in Him” who gave the message. If people can be brought to believe in the Lord, they will even ask what they ought to do (Acts

2:37; 16:30). The lack of godly response to the preaching of the Gospel always indicates a lack of faith.

At Sinai, “the voice of God” was heard in the proclamation of the Law (Deut 4:33). But, the Gospel is not preached to men by God, like the Law was given on Mount Horeb! The Law is also referred to as “the word spoken by angels” (Heb 2:2), but no angel ever preached the Gospel to men. An angel directed Cornelius to call for a man who would tell him “words” whereby he and his house would be saved (Acts 11:14). Men will not call upon the Lord until they believe in Him. They will not believe in Him until they hear of Him. And, they will not hear of Him until someone declares Him—someone who knows Him.

Real preachers are “ministers **by whom you believed**, even as the Lord gave [or, as our text says it, ‘sent’] to every man” (1 Cor 3:5). The believing that saves

the soul is consistently represented as directly related to hearing. Even when that hearing was attended by confirming signs and wonders, as in the case of Samaria, the preeminence was given to the hearing. *“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did”* (Acts 8:6).

**A PREACHER HAS A MESSAGE**

The “preacher” of reference has a message. It is a message originated and given by God Himself. True preaching is not flowery oratory, although it may be masterfully spoken. It is not the sounding of an opinion, or the binding of heavy burdens upon men.

Scripture represents preaching as a noun as well as a verb – a message as well as an activity. For example, the Lord told Jonah, *“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (Jonah 3:2). Other translations read, *“preach to it the message,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“proclaim to it the proclamation,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“proclaim to it the message.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Jesus referred to the preaching of Jonah. Although a different word was used, our Lord also used it in the noun form. *“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here”* (Matt 12:41). The Greek form confirms this is the noun, not the verb, form of the word (τὸ κήρυγμα).

The noun form of “preaching” is also applied to the Gospel of Christ. *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Cor 1:18). This does **not** refer to an activity, but a **message, report, or announcement**. The doctrinal thrust of the statement confirms this, as well as the Greek form of the text (Ὁ λόγος). A second reference to the message that is preached, or declared, is found in Romans 16:25. The exact wording is used here that Jesus used in reference to the message declared by Jonah (τὸ κήρυγμα). *“Now to Him that is*

*of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.”*

The same expression is used to declare the appointed means through which God is now making known what He has all along intended for humanity. *“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of*

**The “preacher” of reference has a message. It is a message originated and given by God Himself. True preaching is not flowery oratory, although it may be masterfully spoken. It is not the sounding of an opinion, or the binding of heavy burdens upon men.**

*Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior”* (Tit 1:1-3). Note, there is an appointed means through which God reveals, or manifests, “the truth” pertaining to “eternal life.” It is “His word” that is made known, and it is made known “through preaching.” Again, the word used is a noun, not a verb (κήρυγμα). **That is, it is a message, not an activity.** To put it another way, it is **WHAT** is preached, and not the mere exercise of human speech.

**The Relevance of This**

All of this may appear to be completely irrelevant – a sort of smoke screen that has no bearing on our salvation. However, this is not at all the case. There is an appointed means through which men are brought to believe in the Lord and thereby receive His

righteousness. Neither believing nor the experience of righteousness can occur independently of this designated means. Already that means has been defined as “the Gospel of Christ,” declared to be “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). In the sense of our text, there is no valid “preacher” who does not declare this exclusive and powerful message.

Allow me to show further why this is such a vital point. There are all manner of messages being preached within the professed Christian community. By “message,” I mean the core message, or emphasis that is being declared. As you must know, sectarianism requires different messages. You cannot have different kinds of “churches” without different kinds of messages. It is the doctrinal emphasis, or message, of the denomination that makes it what it is. Remove that **emphasis**, and the pillars of the institution fall to the ground. An emphasis is to doctrine what flour is to bread. It is the bulk of what is taught. An emphasis is to

a church what gasoline is to a car. It is what makes it run. An emphasis is not the only teaching, but it is the fundamental one. It is the touchstone by which both people and groups of people are judged to be acceptable.

For purposes of clarity, allow me to mention some of these emphases that have contributed to the hostile divisions within Christendom. In mentioning them, I do not intend to cast reproach upon anyone. Neither, indeed, can I disgrace the Lord Jesus by imagining that He condones such doctrinal thrusts. I will use the word “gospel” to denote these doctrinal thrusts. However, and make no mistake about this, these are not gospels at all. They are departures from the true Gospel, which is “the power of God.”

❑ **The gospel of the church.** This is a message that focuses on the church, viewing it much like an institution. In this message, being the true church is the fundamental thing. The organization and name of the church is emphasized. By virtue of this

emphasis, Christ and His magnificent accomplishments are relegated to the background.

- ❑ **The gospel of the Holy Spirit.** In this case, the power of the Spirit, together with various experiences purported to be wrought by Him, are the emphasis. Being baptized in the Spirit, slain by the Spirit, and receiving gifts from the Spirit are represented as the fundamental and distinguishing things. This approach, of necessity, puts the Son of God and His great salvation into a secondary position.
- ❑ **The gospel of the Sabbath day.** Those who embrace this gospel make the distinguishing thing the Sabbath day. That is where the line of demarcation is drawn, determining whether what the individual does is fully acceptable to God. While Christ is acknowledged, the Gospel of Christ is not the main thing.
- ❑ **The gospel of good works.** This is the presentation of Divine acceptance from the standpoint of Law. The acceptance of the person by God is

are accented. As a result, there is a decided minimization of the “*eternal inheritance*,” “*eternal life*,” and the “*ages to come*” – all of which are integral to the Gospel of Christ.

- ❑ **The gospel of problem resolution.** Those who embrace this gospel perceive the day-to-day problems of individuals as the most critical area. Jesus is declared as the answer to our problems. He is held forth as the solution to family difficulties, social disturbances, and political deficiencies. Jesus is offered as a solution to troubles that have only to do with this world. Sin is de-emphasized, and Christ’s Saviorhood is consequently greatly obscured.
- ❑ **The gospel of the family.** Here the family is set forth as the principle institution in humanity. Because it was first in institution, it is therefore considered to be preeminent for all time. The structure of the family is giving great emphasis, and the program of the local congregation is structured to give the fundamental advantage to the family unit. All of

this ignores that Christ affirmed following Him required placing the family into a secondary position (Luke 14:26). It also reduces eternity and the world to come, thereby making Christ of less significance.

These observations by no means suggest the relationships mentioned are without significance, or that they are to be ignored. They are not, however, to be the fundamental thing, or the point of emphasis. **At the precise point the stress is placed upon them, for whatever reason, the Son of God is toppled from the throne, salvation is pushed away from the individual, and acceptance with God becomes less critical.**

based upon the works performed in the energy of the flesh. Social issues, political stances, and general disciplines of life are the focus of this gospel. Consequently, only passing references are actually made to the Gospel of Christ.

- ❑ **The gospel of happiness.** In this case, the well being of the individual is emphasized. Life in this world is presented as the ultimate domain of benefit. Health, security, and prosperity are given undue emphasis. Life in this world, together with feelings of elation,

invalid, issues. I know it is not fashionable to say this, and that a certain penalty is exacted by the religious hierarchy for doing so. Yet the penalties for failing to sound this trumpet are infinitely worse.

#### FURTHER COMMENTS

People will not call upon the Lord unless they believe on Him. Further, they will not believe on Him unless they hear the message He has ordained. Additionally, that message will not be heard until it is declared by someone who possesses it.

#### Jesus’ Word to the Lawyers

The distraction to other messages, then, has actually stopped people from believing! The same thing is happening in our day that was occurring when Jesus walked among us. Jesus said to the law-experts of His time, “*Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered*” (Lk 11:52). **In our time, that “key of knowledge” is the message of the Gospel.**

#### A Word to the Scribes and Pharisees

The Gospel unlocks the mystery of obtaining the righteousness of God. Jesus also said to the scribes and Pharisees, “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*” (Matt 23:13). The reference to shutting up the Kingdom of God “*against men*” is represented in this way in other versions of Scripture. “*You shut off the kingdom of heaven from men,*” <sup>NASB</sup> “*You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces.*” <sup>NIV</sup> **In our day, the entrance into the kingdom of God is shut in men’s faces by placing stress on something other than the Gospel of Christ.** When our attention is moved away from Jesus, we are moved away from salvation.

No one who fails to declare the Gospel of Christ can bring men to believe with the heart unto righteousness. The ONLY preacher recognized by heaven is the one who correctly emphasizes the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ – the good news of the Gospel. You will find this to be the emphasis of all Apostolic doctrine.

**At the precise point the stress is placed upon other things, for whatever reason, the Son of God is toppled from the throne, salvation is pushed away from the individual, and acceptance with God becomes less critical.**

## THE NECESSITY OF BEING SENT

<sup>15a</sup> ***And how shall they preach unless they are sent?*** Preachers that bring a message that induces faith do not come on their own. They “are sent.” The fact is, there would be no faith-inducing preachers at all unless they were “sent” – sent by God!

These are ministers whom **God has given** to every person who believes. Wherever someone believes on the Lord, a “preacher” has been “sent” to proclaim the message of the Gospel – the message God uses to accomplish salvation. As it is written, “*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?*” (1 Cor 3:5). “Preacher” is a category in which both Apostles (Paul) and non-Apostles (Apollos) were included. Yet, both were divine placements.

Of old time, the Spirit established that a valid message had to be the result of a Divine commission. Here are some sober reminders of this reality.

- ❑ “*But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak*” (Jer 1:7).
- ❑ “*Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them*” (Jer 7:25).
- ❑ “*Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed*”

(Jer 14:14).

- ❑ “*I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*” (Jer 23:21).
- ❑ “*For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD*” (Jer 29:9).

The Lord said to Moses, “*Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain*” (Ex 3:12). It was said of John the Baptist, “*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*” (John 1:6). The Lord said to Ezekiel, “*And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the*

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*children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day*” (Ezek 2:3).

When Jesus first sent out “the twelve,” He said to them, “*Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*” (Matt 10:16). When He sent out the seventy, He said to them, “*Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves*” (Luke 10:3). When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He said to him, “*I have*

*appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee*” (Acts 26:16-17). Following His resurrection, when Jesus appeared to His disciples, He said to them, “*Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*” (John 20:21).

### Sent with Understanding

No person who takes the message of God seriously will fail to see the necessity of being “sent” by God to declare it. That sending is **accompanied with a measure of understanding, or comprehension**. It is foolish to attempt to declare a message upon which salvation is hinged while being fundamentally ignorant of it. Yet, we are daily confronted with such “preachers” – men who babble before the people in the name of the Lord, yet have not been sent by Him. As the false prophets of old, “*understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm*” (1 Tim 1:7).

### Sent with Power

Those sent by God are empowered by Him – endued with abilities and gifts necessary for the effective proclamation of His Gospel. Paul spoke of power, or authority, that had been given to him “*for edification, and not for destruction*” (2 Cor 13:10). This Divine enablement does not always take the form of signs and wonders. It is my understanding that this is not even the primary evidence of the power. The power, or enablement, of which I speak is a personal sufficiency that makes the “preacher” equal to his commission. Paul spoke of this empowerment in these words. “*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the*



*spirit giveth life*" (2 Cor 3:5-6). Other versions read "competent ministers,"<sup>NIV</sup> or "adequate as servants."<sup>NASB</sup>

Some imagine this only applies to the Apostles. However, the Scriptures are clear that **any** effective proclaimers are gifts from God. Those "gifts" not only include "apostles" and "prophets," but "evangelists" and "pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:8-11).

### **Sending Is Sometimes Discretionary**

During the beginning of the spread of the Gospel, specific direction was given by the Lord. In a general sense, the commission was "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), making disciples of "all nations" (Matt 28:19). However, everything was not left to the discretion of those who labored in the Lord's vineyard.

After Paul and Silas had "gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia," "they were **forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia**" (Acts 16:6). The "Asia" of reference is where the seven churches to whom the book of Revelation was written were located (Rev 1:4). At the time the Spirit forbade them to into Asia, Paul and Silas were ministering in Asia Minor, or the modern peninsula of Turkey.

Still, even there, the Spirit did not allow them to set their own agenda. When Paul and Silas came to Mysia, in the northwestern part of Asia Minor, "they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them"<sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 16:7). Bithynia would have led them into the part of world currently occupied by Russia, Korea, China, and India. Instead of allowing the preachers to go into that area, they were led into the Grecian part of the world – Macedonia in particular. Later, the Gospel did get into the Asian section of the world. However, in strictly orchestrating the spread of the Gospel, Paul and Silas were not "sent" there at that time.

### **How Are Preachers Sent Today?**

Some, betraying their sophistry, scoff at the idea of preachers being "sent" in our time. They imagine that the Lord directed

the early activities of the church, but has now abdicated that function, leaving it wholly in the hands of men. In such a case, He would no longer be the "Head of the church" (Eph 5:23), at least not in the ministry of sending preachers. **What kind of reasoning would lead a person to believe holy and gifted Apostles, placed "first" in the church (1 Cor 12:28), had to be directed, but men of the twentieth century do not require such direction?**

Mind you, nothing in Scripture suggests that such a time would ever come with Divine approval. No word of God

connection between every member of the body and "the Head" (Col 2:19). It is that connection, held by faith, that is the means through which heavenly direction is realized. Further, that direction is what is referenced by the word "sent."

### **THE COMPULSION TO PREACH**

One of the evidences of being "sent" is a **compulsion** to preach the Gospel. That compelling inner drive is evidence of being "sent." Again, we summon Paul to the witness stand to confirm the truth of this observation. "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is

**What kind of reasoning would lead a person to believe holy and gifted Apostles, placed "first" in the church (1 Cor 12:28), had to be directed, but men of the twentieth century do not require such direction?**

remotely suggests that Jesus is the "Beginning," but not the "Ending," or that He is only "the First," and not "the Last" (Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). And, if the Lord begins things He does not finish, how are we know which ones they are? Precisely at what point do we cease to inquire of the Lord and trust that He will "direct" our "steps" (Jer 10:23)? Has the time now arrived when our "goings" are no longer upheld by the Lord (Psa 17:5) – particularly in the matter of preaching the Gospel? Are the "steps of a good man" no longer "ordered by the Lord" (Psa 37:23)? Are the preparations of the heart man's doing, but "the answer of the tongue" no longer of the Lord (Prov 16:1)?

As with all Divine direction, sending is accomplished through faith and tenderness of heart. Such direction falls into the category of Jesus manifesting Himself to those who love Him and keep His words (John 14:21). It is involved in "learning Christ" and being "taught by Him" (Eph 4:02-21). There is a vital and perceptible

written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak" (2 Cor 4:13). This very circumstance eventually separates the preacher who is "sent" from the one who is not. Solomon put it this way, "A false witness will perish, But the man who listens to the truth will speak forever" (Prov 21:28).

This compulsion is so strong that it overrides competing discouragement or pride. It is written, "Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me"<sup>NIV</sup> (1 Cor 9:16-17).

This frame of mind enabled Paul to endure all manner of difficult and grievous opposition, yet continue to preach. His determination to preach the Gospel could not be stifled by adversity and circumstance. This confirmed that he was "sent." The absence of this

compulsion suggests the person is NOT “sent,” and has been driven by something

other than Divine constraint. There is far too much of this absence in the

modern church. It greatly dishonors God. Preachers must be “sent!”

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MESSENGER

<sup>15b</sup> *As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’*” Being “sent” by God is one thing. The hearers recognizing this is the case is another thing. The Thessalonians, for example, knew that the ones through whom they heard the Gospel had been “sent.” Thus it is written of them, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess 2:13).

### THE QUOTATION

The reference is to Isaiah 52:7; “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” In keeping with the thrust of this passage, this text is given to confirm that **preachers cannot preach unless they are “sent.”** It is necessary to note the manner in which the Apostle reasons. Here is an example of being “spiritually minded,” or having a mind “controlled by the Spirit”<sup>NIV</sup> (Rom 8:6). The way Paul substantiates his point is refreshing. It is challenging intellectually, yet is vastly superior to lifeless pedantics, or academic approaches.

The fifty-second chapter of Isaiah contains a message of Divine summons -- God speaking to people through an appointed messenger. It calls for the people of God to “Awake!” and put on their strength. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are told “henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (52:1). A discouraged people are told to shake the dust from themselves, acknowledging they had sold

themselves for nothing. Yet, they would be “redeemed without money” – that is, the Lord would resolve their dilemma. Although their enemies had ruled over them ruthlessly, the Lord promises “My people shall know My name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am He

**When the messengers, or “watchmen,” took hold of the message and announced it, the joyful optimism would take hold on the people. They would “see eye to eye,” waste places would break forth into joy, and the people would be comforted.**

that doth speak: behold, it is I” (52:6).

All of this would be made known through a message – a proclamation. It would not be beheld in a vision, but brought by a word from God. It would be delivered by God’s messenger, into whose mouth His words had been placed. The core of the message was this: “**YOUR GOD REIGNS**”<sup>NIV</sup> (52:7b). Isaiah’s message announced an end to the Babylonian captivity – recovery from Divine judgment!

When the messengers, or “watchmen,” took hold of the message and announced it, the joyful optimism would take hold on the people. They would “see eye to eye,” waste places would break forth into joy, and the people would be comforted. Then, couched within this joyful sound, the Lord speaks of the whole world being impacted. “The LORD hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of

our God” (52:10).

**Those laboring under great restrictions would be changed by a message!** Consequently, a high value would be placed upon the messenger. He would bring the message which, if believed, would bring salvation. He would come, as it were, over restricting mountains and hindrances, being sent by God. Like Philip came to the desert, Paul and Silas to the water and jail cell, and Paul to the barbaric isle of Melita, so the message comes through formerly insurmountable difficulties.

### THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

The Spirit now elevates the matter of the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, something foreshadowed by Isaiah’s words, but not fulfilled by them. The Gospel is declared to be a message of peace. It is the announcement of amnesty, the proclamation of peace, and the report of reconciliation! Something has been done in the behalf of mankind that is of such power that heaven itself has been moved by it. Here is a message of Divine conciliation. God will neither destroy nor turn away those who come to Him because of this message!

When Jesus was born the holy angels announced, “*peace on earth!*” (Luke 2:14). Peter declared to the household of Cornelius that there is a “*word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all)*” (Acts 10:36). Following the reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile to God, Jesus is said to have come and “*preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*” (Eph 2:17). The Gospel is, indeed, “*the Gospel of peace*” (Eph 6:15).

This is the “*glorious Gospel of the blessed God*” (1 Tim 1:11). He saw the travail of Christ’s soul and “*was satisfied*”

(Isa 53:11). Those who, believing this Gospel, come to God through Christ, will find a blessed and jubilant God! His arms will be extended to them in gracious welcome. They will not be met with lightning and thunderings as Israel was at Sinai. The earth will not tremble beneath them as they approach to the Lord, nor will the mountain before them blaze and smoke as Mount Horeb. This is the "Gospel of peace," and it brings calmness to the souls of all who receive it.

A message that does not leave an acute awareness of an accessible peace with God is not Gospel, and it will not save! No message that fails to announce the "Gospel of peace" is the power of God,

**A message that does not leave an acute awareness of an accessible peace with God is not Gospel, and it will not save! No message that fails to announce the "Gospel of peace" is the power of God, nor will men be saved by it.**

nor will men be saved by it.

**GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS**  
**Glad Tidings**

"Glad tidings" are words that produce gladness in believing hearers. They bring alleviation from the sorrows of life, particularly those related to being sinners in the hands of an angry God. It has been a long time since many precious souls have heard any "glad tidings." Their souls are thirst to hear something that will gladden their hearts. There is such a message, and it is the Gospel of Christ. It fulfills the saying of Solomon, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Prov 25:25).

The inquirers at Pentecost received good news! They were told their sins would be remitted, and that they would

receive the Holy Spirit of God (Acts 2:38-39). The promise of God was for them! From that day until this, preachers of the Gospel have brought "glad tidings" of peace – a peace with God that also overflows to bring peace among formerly hostile people, like Jews and Gentiles.

You do not want to miss the emphasis of this passage. The Living God effects His great salvation through a message that brings "glad tidings" of peace to the people. It is very true that we must save some "with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22). The "fear" of reference, however, is not fear induced in the hearer, but in the one snatching them from the fire. Some people are so mired in iniquity that special care must be taken not to allow them to defile us. However, even in such cases, it is the Gospel of peace that enables them to begin moving toward the light. It is "glad tidings" that awakens a desire to be saved within them.

**GOOD THINGS**

How the people of God must master speaking of "good things." When Joseph sent to bring his father Jacob into Egypt, "he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way" (Gen 45:23). Will the great God of heaven do less when He sends ambassadors to bring the people home to Him? If the sins of the people have withheld "good things" from them (Jer 5:25), much more does the sacrifice and exaltation of Christ clear the way to send a message of the availability of those "good things" now—"good things" from heaven! If God gives "good things to those who ask Him" (Matt 7:11), then the Gospel is designed to provoke men to ask for them. Christ is now a "High Priest of good things to come," and the Gospel declares it (Heb 9:11). The Law had "a shadow of good things to come," and the Gospel announces they are here, and can be possessed (Heb 10:1).

**SOME FLAWED THINKING**

With the advent of self-professed religious experts, all manner of flawed thinking sprang up like tares in the field of thought. One of the most harmful of these wicked intrusions is the notion that the "Gospel," or "good news," is only for the person who is alienated from God. Some sophist once said, "No man should hear the Gospel twice until every one has heard it once." That was not only ignorance in seed form, it was a sizeable tree that can never bear good fruit. The truth of the matter is that grace never brings us where we do not need to hear the Gospel! Those who admit to being "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13) need to hear "glad tidings of good things." Nothing in all of Scripture suggests this good news is to be withheld from the household of faith. In fact, every word of God strongly affirms the opposite to be true. Take, for example, the writings of the Apostles, placed first "in the church" (1 Cor 12:28) for the "edifying of the body" (Eph 4:12). How did they speak? Did they bring "glad tidings of good things?" Ponder the remarkable consistency of their message.

- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (Rom 5:1-2).
- "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10).
- "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ." (Rom 8:1).
- "But of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).
- "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ . . . reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them . . ." (2 Cor 5:18-19)
- "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).
- "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

- ❑ *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . . ”* (Gal 3:13-14).
- ❑ *“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins . . . ”* (Eph 2:4-6).
- ❑ *“For He is our peace, who hath made both one . . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity . . . to make in Himself of twain one new man . . . that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”* (Eph 2:14-16).
- ❑ *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. . . . ”* (Phil 2:5-9).
- ❑ *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight”* (Col 1:21).

- sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”* (1 Tim 2:3-6).
- ❑ *“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”* (2 Tim 1:10).
  - ❑ *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men . . . our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Tit 2:11-14).
  - ❑ *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb 2:14-15).
  - ❑ *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition*

- received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts”* (2 Pet 1:16-19).
- ❑ *“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).
  - ❑ *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist”* (2 John 7).
  - ❑ *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called”* (Jude 1).
  - ❑ *“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father . . . ”* (Rev 1:5-6).

**God has never declared another emphasis or message to be His power unto salvation. When, therefore, men come preaching a gospel of the church, the family, prosperity, or even the Spirit, they have, by that very emphasis, forfeited the power of God.**

That is Gospel, *“glad tidings of good things.”* The Gospel of Christ is the hub upon which the salvation of God turns. There is no point in this salvation where the Gospel ceases to be central. There is no level or degree of spirituality where the Gospel of Christ is reduced to obsolescence, or takes a second position to some other emphasis.

- ❑ *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”* (1 Thess 1:9-10).
- ❑ *“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace . . . ”* (2 Thess 2;16-17).
- ❑ *“For this is good and acceptable in the*

- from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”* (1 Pet 1:18-20).
- ❑ *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he*

God has never declared another emphasis or message to be His power unto salvation. **When, therefore, men come preaching a gospel of the church, the family, prosperity, or even the Spirit, they have, by that very emphasis, forfeited the power of God.** Their message may sound good, but it is not, for it is not underwritten by God! It does not contribute to the salvation of men, and God will not bless it. When His Son is pushed into the background, His empowerment abruptly ends.

## OBEDIENCE AND BELIEVING

<sup>16</sup> ***But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'*** Simplistic souls may conclude from Paul's argument that faith always follows the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. After all, it is *"the power of God unto salvation."* "Surely," the naive soul reasons, "nothing will be able to hinder God." Some creeds of Christendom have even spoken of "irresistible grace," as though that expression was contained in

principalities and powers in the heavenly places. How any person could conclude that salvation was simplistic, or that it was accomplished independently of human involvement is a great mystery. That those who are being saved could be the only ones uninvolved in the process is an absurdity so great that only the devil himself could have concocted it.

All of this is to say that men do not automatically believe when they hear the Gospel – even though it was God Himself who sent the messengers to them. This is true even though the message declared by the preacher is unquestionably the *"power of God unto salvation."*

**The word "obey" does mean submit to, hearken to, or yield to. The idea is that the individual adjusts his life to suit the message he has heard. Where this does not occur, the Gospel has not been obeyed.**

### OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

*"But they have not all obeyed the Gospel."* Other versions read, *"However, they did not all heed the glad tidings,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"But not all the Israelites accepted the good news,"*<sup>NIV</sup> and

*"But in fact they have not all responded to the good news."*<sup>NJB</sup>

The word *"obey"* does mean submit to, hearken to, or yield to. **The idea is that the individual adjusts his life to suit the message he has heard.** Where this does not occur, the Gospel has not been obeyed. Keep in mind, those who do not obey the Gospel will be condemned, forthrightly, and without remedy. As it is written, *"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Thess 1:7-8).

### BELIEVING THE REPORT

The Spirit is specific about what it means to *"obey the Gospel."* This involves more than fulfilling a list of demands – although faith never balks at

Divine demands, or commandments.

Here an appeal is made to the prophet Isaiah. The text of reference is Isaiah 53:1. *"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"* Notice the form of reasoning. First the Spirit declares, *"They have not all obeyed the Gospel,"* even though it is the *"glad tidings of good things."* The confirming word from Isaiah, however, does not say *"They have not all obeyed the Gospel."* Rather than making a statement, the prophet asks a question: *"Who has believed our report?"* A contemporary way of saying this would be, *"Has anyone believed our report?"*

Isaiah speaks with astonishment at the fewness of those who truly believed. It was so few, indeed, that he wondered, as it were, if any one believed. It certainly was not because the people had not heard good news – good news from the Almighty God Himself. The fifty-second chapter of Isaiah boldly announced.

- "Therefore My people shall know my name" (52:5).*
- "They shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion" (52:8).*
- "The LORD hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem." (52:9).*
- "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (52:10).*
- "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward" (52:12).*

Add to that the marvelous prophecies of the coming Savior in the fifty-third chapter. Yet, for all of those *"good things,"* the prophet exclaimed, *"Who hath believed our report?"*

With great power, the Spirit will now show us that **great proclamations must be attended by great power,** else they will not be believed. The reason for making this point should be obvious to us. If men do not believe – such as Israel

Scripture.

Those who find it easy to speak in such lifeless ways betray their fundamental ignorance of the salvation of God. It is, after all, wrought out in the arena of conflict. All of heaven is involved in the enterprise, thereby confirming its remarkable complexity. God the Father Himself is involved, never withdrawing from any aspect of His salvation. Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, is administering the entirety of salvation, even interceding daily in order to its accomplishment. The Holy Spirit works to woo men through the truth, set them apart for God, even empowering them and interceding for them. An innumerable company of strong and wise angels have been dispatched to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. Inimical forces upon the earth are controlled, as well as

after the flesh – it is because a veil is over their eyes. If that veil is mercifully lifted, the condition of the people will suddenly change (2 Cor 3:16). Thus, Paul continued to desire and pray that Israel would be saved, knowing the power of the Lord.

If this seems to difficult to receive, consider how Isaiah elaborated on his own statement. *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”* When Divine power does not attend preaching, it does not yield favorable results. Who is the person willing to affirm that a man can speak into the soul of another, penetrating into the inmost being of a person? Is this not specifically declared to be the peculiar prerogative of the Word of God? *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Heb 4:12). This is the process in which the arm of the Lord is revealed.

The point of this passage is not to produce all manner of doubts in the hearts of the saints. Rather, it is to kindle the fire of hope within the human breast. When the *“arm of the Lord”* is *“revealed,”* men **will** respond to *“the report.”* The *“arm of the Lord”* has been *“revealed”* when men receive the Gospel as a true declaration of Divine intent. The message exposes the dire need of humanity, else so much would not have been done for them. It also makes known the deep and compassionate heart of God, else He would not have paid such an awful price.

However, this association does not come from word studies and researching parallel passages. Rather, it is when the Lord reveals His *“arm”* – when He shows the tender heart *“what great things God hath wrought.”*

What person is capable of

*one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor 2:15-16).

#### THE POINT

The point is that God has ordained the salvation of men through a message – a

**Men are not to take it upon themselves to wrest the message in a feeble attempt to get results. Nor, indeed, are they to cease to declare it because the masses do not believe it. This is a word that is always in order, always timely, always powerful.**

prognosticating when, or if, the Lord will *“reveal His arm.”* Or who would dare to say it will never again be revealed, or that Israel, or someone else, has passed beyond any hope of it being revealed? This is an area controlled by God alone.

The flesh takes this statement and uses it to justify NOT declaring the good news. After all, good results are the most important thing – at least that is what we are told. But is this really so? What of the preaching that reveals the unbelief and obstinance of people? What of a commission from God that was calculated to cause people to *“fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken”* (Isa 29:13)? Is it not written, *“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the*

God-ordained message. Men are not to take it upon themselves to wrest the message in a feeble attempt to get results. Nor, indeed, are they to cease to declare it because the masses do not believe it. This is a word that is always in order, always timely, always powerful.

The Gospel of Christ is truly good news, and it is the exclusive message by which men are saved. Men cannot believe on the Lord until they hear this Gospel. They cannot hear this Gospel unless it is preached or declared to them. That preacher will not preach unless he is sent by God. What is more, those who hear such an one with the hearing of faith will highly regard the messenger, esteeming his feet as beautiful, for they have carried good news upon the mountains of grace.

## FAITH COMES

*“<sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* I love these Divine conclusions! They differ so radically from the sophistry of the flesh. This is a conclusion drawn from the affirmation of Isaiah: *“Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”*<sup>NASB</sup>

Without a doubt, this is one of the most profound utterances of Scripture. Yet there is a glorious plainness about it

that is within the reach of every humble and contrite spirit.

#### FAITH COMES

*“So then, faith comes . . .”* This is the spiritually logical conclusion to the foregoing argument: i.e., 1 – No one can call upon the Lord unless they believe on Him. 2 – No one can believe on Him unless they have heard about Him. 3 – No one can hear about Him unless His message has been declared to them. 4 – His message cannot be declared unless a messenger is

sent. Therefore, the Spirit concludes, *“faith comes,”* or is experienced through an appointed means.

While it is the responsibility of men to believe the Gospel, and while they will be condemned if they do not believe it, they do not believe on their own. Faith *“comes.”* It comes TO them. But it comes from outside of them. Believing the report is not a natural response. A latent ability that lies dormant within the unregenerate

is not awakened. Faith “comes,” it is not revived or awakened. It is not the vivification of a natural ability.

This is another way of saying we “have obtained” or received, “like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1), or have “believed through grace” (Acts 18:27). It means it is “given unto” us “to believe” (Phil 1:29), and that faith is “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 6:23). It is for this reason that those who believe “the report” are said to have had “the arm of the Lord revealed” to them. The total glory for the process of moving from darkness to light belongs to God. Those who would rob Him of this glory are in serious jeopardy, for He will not allow any flesh “to glory in His presence” (1 Cor 1:29). Salvation is precisely structured in all of its facets so that it “belongs to the Lord” (Psa 3:8; Rev 7:10; 19:1).

**Faith Through Hearing**

The appointed means through which faith “comes” is “hearing.” It comes “from hearing,”<sup>NASB</sup> or “from hearing the message,”<sup>NIV</sup> or “from what is heard.”<sup>NRSV</sup>

Faith does not come by seeing, else there would have been a deluge of it on the banks of the Red Sea. If men and women are going to believe they will have to hear – hear the message God has appointed as the means to faith. As you must know, this accounts for the rarity of faith in our times. **When the Gospel becomes sparse, faith becomes rare.** When people are fed a diet of Law – even God’s Law – faith will not “come,” for “the Law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12).

**HEARING BY . . .**

The implication of the text is that “hearing” also “comes.” This is not merely hearing with the natural “ears,” like Israel did at Sinai (Deut 5:1). Although what is heard is articulated in human speech, the hearing through which men believe is not merely being subjected to the sound. This will be confirmed in the verses eighteen and nineteen.

Etymologically, the word “hearing” comes from ἀκοή, which primarily means

“the ability to hear.” Thayer’s Greek Lexicon gives the primary meaning as, “to be endowed with the faculty of hearing.” Frieberg’s lexicon gives the primary meaning as “the ability to hear.” The word used here is a noun, not a verb.

**“Hearing,” therefore, as used in this text, is not an activity, but a capacity.** It is used elsewhere in Scripture in this manner, i.e., “the hearing of faith” (Gal 3:2,5).

The Scriptures are clear on this matter, namely that hearing is a capacity granted to men by the living God. I briefly

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covered this under the second section of this lesson, **THE NECESSITY OF HEARING.**

The means by which the capacity to “hear” is received is “the word of God.” Some versions read, “the word of Christ.”<sup>NASB/NIV/NRSV</sup> This can be viewed from different perspectives. All of them have some merit.

**The Word of the Gospel**

**First**, “the word of God” can be understood to be what God has said. In this case, that word would be the Gospel, for faith cannot come by hearing the Law, or the Proverbs. Those are not the life-giving message, nor are they “the power of God unto salvation.” That in no way diminishes the truth declared in the Law, nor does it reduce the responsibility for people to be obedient and moral. But when it comes to the matter of believing

“unto the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:39), the “Gospel of Christ” is the exclusive means of inducing faith. It alone is “the power of God unto salvation.”

**Christ’s Own Word**

**Second**, and more likely the meaning, “the word of Christ” means the command of Christ. Vincent says “Belief comes through the message, and the message through the command of Christ.”<sup>VINCENT’S WORD STUDIES</sup> That, in my judgment, comes close to the meaning. Yet, it can be stated more precisely. Some have felt that “the command of Christ” refers to His commission to “preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). However, this cannot be the meaning, for Isaiah testified that most who heard the word sent to them did not believe. The command of Jesus to the messenger, therefore, is not the root of faith, else those who heard good news from Isaiah would have believed.

The meaning is this: the capacity to hear comes by the authoritative word of Jesus. **He speaks the ability to hear into those with tender hearts.** This should not sound strange to us, for Jesus spoke of this very process when He walked among men. Our Lord referred to two different resurrections that would be effected by His voice. The first was a spiritual resurrection that began while He was yet among us. The second is the resurrection of the dead. Both will be facilitated by His voice.

Here is what He said. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given im authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:25-29). What a marvelous statement of power!

The Spirit reminded the believers in Ephesus that they had experienced the very spiritual awakening to which Jesus referred. They had “heard” Jesus, being given the capacity to so hear as to believe on Him. “*But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have **heard Him**, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21). In this text, not only had they been quickened from the dead (2:1,5), spiritual advancement was also brought about by the teaching of Jesus.

I am affirming this to be the meaning of this verse. Namely, that faith comes to the individual by means of the capacity to “hear,” or being given “ears to hear.” **The capacity to hear comes through Christ’s own awakening voice.**

**Confirmed by Ezekiel**  
Ezekiel spoke of this means of

bringing life to people – namely speaking life into them. His words foreshadowed the truth of our text, as well as the words of Jesus in the fifth chapter of John (5:25-29). “*And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, **I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’** Yes, I said to you in your blood, **‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful . . .**” (Ezek 16:6-7).*

In doing this, man’s volitional capacity is not obviated. However, his spiritual impotence is terminated by Christ’s word in order that an appropriate response can be given to the Gospel of Christ. This is precisely what happened when Lydia believed the report. While she was listening to the word of the Gospel, “*the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul*” (Acts 16:14). That is also what happened to you, moving you

to call upon the Lord. The Gospel was declared to you, and as it was declared the Lord gave you ears to hear. When you heard with those ears, you believed, called upon the name of the Lord, and were saved. Because you believed, you gladly received the Word and were baptized, just as those who believed on that memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

#### A FINAL WORD

Faith will neither “come” nor “increase” where the Gospel is not preached and heard with “*the hearing of faith.*” **When men embrace a religion that moves the Gospel into the background, unbelief comes into the foreground.** God will not allow faith to be authored or finished, to begin or be brought to maturity, independently of hearing and believing the “*record He has given of His Son*” (1 John 5:10-11). Those who believe are glad it is this way.

## HAS NOT EVERYONE HEARD?

“<sup>18</sup> *But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: ‘Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.’*” The Spirit will now move Paul to make a rather technical point, yet one that must be made. He has already reminded us that the Lord was found of the Gentiles who attained unto righteousness, even though they did not seek after it (9:30). In their case, did God dispense with the hearing of

respond in faith to it. **The difference, as Paul has declared, is the Divine factor, not the human factor!**

#### HAVE THEY NOT ALL HEARD?

Early in my new life, I was subjected to a continual flood of statements affirming that most of the world had never heard the Gospel. This was used to lay a great burden of responsibility upon the people for taking the Gospel to those

have been in the first century, when the Gospel was beginning to be preached. The Spirit, however, reasons quite differently than man. “*But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed!*” Other versions read, “*But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have,*”<sup>NASB</sup> and “*But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did.*”<sup>NIV</sup>

He will now show that the Gospel had, indeed, been preached extensively. To the Colossians, Paul made reference to “*the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Col 1:23). The NIV reads, “*This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.*” Every version reads essentially the same, confirming there is no reason whatsoever for not taking the words precisely as they are stated. One may argue from an academic or mathematical point of view, stating that such a thing is not possible. Whatever arguments may be introduced to the contrary, the Spirit has spoken clearly and concisely. His point is not a mathematical one, but that the preached Gospel had, in fact, reached into all the world. We dare not begin with a

**The point He will make here is this: hearing of itself will not produce faith in the hearers. Men can, indeed, be exposed to the glad tidings of good things, yet utterly fail to respond in faith to it. The difference, as Paul has declared, is the Divine factor, not the human factor!**

the Gospel? Not at all! The point He will make here is this: **hearing of itself will not produce faith in the hearers.** Men can, indeed, be exposed to the glad tidings of good things, yet utterly fail to

who sat in darkness. While the intention of such teaching may have been noble, it was sorely lacking in spiritual substance.

If ever such a time existed, it would



theological hypothesis that denies the truth of that statement.

**THEIR SOUND**

To begin with, there were *“devout men from every nation under heaven”* present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5). The extensiveness of their representation is detailed for us (2:9-11).

- Parthians, from of Persia.
- Medes, from Asia and close to Armenia.
- Elamites, also from the vast Persian empire.
- Those dwelling in Mesopotamia, a part of Syria.
- Those dwelling in Judea, the area around Jerusalem.
- Those dwelling in Cappadocia, a region in Asia Minor, who spoke a mixed dialect of Greek and Syriac.
- Those dwelling in Pontus, another province in Asia Minor, dominated by the Romans.
- Those dwelling in Asia, which covered the vast Eastern world of Russia, China, and India.
- Those dwelling in Phrygia, a province in Asia Minor.
- Those dwelling in Pamphylia, another province in Asia Minor.
- Those dwelling in Egypt, the vast area watered by the Nile.
- Those dwelling in parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, known as Africa to us.
- Visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, from Italy.
- Cretans, from an island in the Mediterranean.
- Arabs, from the great peninsula bounded by Syria on the north.
- By the fifth chapter of Acts, the Apostles were charged with having *“filled Jerusalem”* with their doctrine (Acts 5:28).
- Later, the treasurer of the Candace queen of the Ethiopians, returned home from worshiping in Jerusalem. He came back different than he had left, having been baptized into Christ and receiving the Spirit of God (Acts 8:27-39).
- Paul’s preaching took him from Greece to Arabia, and Italy to Asia

and Syria. Cities and areas in which he ministered included Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Pisidia, Attalia, Antioch in Syria, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchræa, Ephesus, Caesarea, Antipatris, Sidon, Myra, Cnidus, Fair Havens, Melita, Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli, Appii Forum, and Rome.

Add to that the travels of the other Apostles and kindred laborers that have been confirmed by church history.

- Simon Peter** – Britain, Gaul (France and Germany), Rome.

*gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.”* We will find, however, that it takes more than the *“sound”* to turn men from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God – even though the *“sound”* is imperative.

**THE QUESTION**

If it is not possible to call upon Him of whom men have not heard, and if it is not possible to hear without a preacher, and if it is not possible for the preacher to preach if he has not been sent, **does that not justify the unbelief of the world?**

Indeed not! God *“has not left Himself without witness”* (Acts 14:17). At the very threshold of the *“day of salvation,”* He

**If it is not possible to call upon Him of whom men have not heard, and if it is not possible to hear without a preacher, and if it is not possible for the preacher to preach if he has not been sent, does that not justify the unbelief of the world?**

- Andrew** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia), Scythia (Central Asia), Asia Minor.
- James** – Martyred early after impacting Jerusalem.
- John** – Asia (Including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Arabia, Egypt, Bangladesh, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia).
- Philip** – Britain, Greece.
- Bartholomew** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia), India, Africa.
- Thomas** – Babylon, Persia, India.
- Matthew** – Persia, Ethiopia, Greece.
- James the son of Alphaeus** – Jerusalem.
- Lebbaeus** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia).
- Simon the Canaanite** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia), Britain, Egypt, Cyrene, Africa, Lybia.
- Matthias** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia)

THE SEARCH FOR THE TWELVE APOSTLES,

William Steuart McBirnie

And that is only a cursory review! Indeed, **the sound** of the Gospel *“has*

assembled devout men from every nation under heaven to hear the glad proclamation of repentance and the remission of sins. The aggressive preaching of the Gospel fulfilled the word of the Psalmist, *“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it”* (Psa 68:11).

God Almighty has been aggressive to get the Word of His Son into the world. He did not depend upon men to send messengers, but sent them Himself, endued with power as well as the message. In the end, when we see all of the *“preachers”* God has sent into the world, it will be even more apparent how devoted He is to our salvation.

Those who have ears to hear *“know the joyful sound.”* They have the capacity to recognize it, rejoice in it, and are blessed because of it (Psa 89:15). When those with ears to hear, HEAR, they are always advantaged by the sound of the Gospel, and God is always glorified in them. It is never in order for those with

ears to hear to refuse to do so.

Settle it in your mind, the Gentiles have

heard the “*sound*” of the Gospel. They have heard it because God has sent preachers, or proclaimers, to them. Yet,

they have not all believed or obeyed that Gospel. That is a most sobering circumstance to consider.

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## DID NOT ISRAEL KNOW?

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<sup>19</sup> *But I say, did Israel not know?*

**First Moses says: ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.’** Herein is a mysterious thing – at least mysterious to the flesh. How is it that the Gentiles found righteousness, receiving the Gospel, but the Jews, who were prepared for it, were unbelieving? There is a Divine strategy behind it all, and it is “*past finding out*” by human knowledge (11:33). Even after it is revealed, it will stagger the human intellect.

### DID NOT ISRAEL KNOW?

The question being asked relates to the acceptance of the Gentiles: **Did not Israel know the Lord would turn from them to the Gentiles, thereby provoking them to jealousy?** Was all of this an unplanned reaction to Israel’s unbelief? Did they take the Lord by surprise by their rejection of the Gospel?

Early on, the Lord revealed what He was going to do. Before Moses completed his ministry, the Lord told him what He would do because of Israel’s provocation. Moses included the words in a song he sang to them before he left the terrain of battle. The Spirit now refers to that prophesy. “*They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation*” (Deut 32:21).

The provocation of which Moses spoke occurred when they “*provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger*” (Deut 32:16). The Psalmist referred to it as the time when they “*provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images*” (Psa 78:58). But never was the Lord more jealous than when Israel beheld their own Savior, and

“*received Him not*” (John 1:11).

### I WILL PROVOKE THEM!

Now the Divine strategy begins to unfold. The Spirit will continue to expound it through the eleventh chapter, and it is marvelous! The “*foolish nation*” to which He refers is the Gentiles. They were “*foolish*” because they did not know the Lord, and were not seeking His righteousness.

The Lord had frequently spoken through the Prophets concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles. “*And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek . . . I have put My spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles . . . I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles . . . I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles . . . I will lift up Mine hand to the Gentiles . . . thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles . . . the Gentiles shall come to thy light . . . their seed shall be known among the Gentiles . . . the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness . . . I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream . . . they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles . . . the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth . . . My name shall be great among the Gentiles*” (Isa 11:10; 42:1,6; 49:6,22; 54:3; 60:3; 61:9; 62:2; 66:12,19; Jer 16:19; Mal 1:11). What a staggering array of Divine commitments!

And, indeed, that did happen. It happened at the house of Cornelius. It took place in Philippi with Lydia and the Philippian jailor. Gentiles in Europe, Asia, and Africa heard and embraced the Gospel. Yet that acceptance of the Gospel angered the Israelites, just as the prophet said it would. They saw no correlation between the acceptance of the Gentiles, the prophecy of Moses, and the testimony

of the Prophets.

And why were the Jews so angry about all of this? Why did they do vigorously oppose, hound, and even persecute Paul for preaching to the Gentiles? **It was because God made them angry through the acceptance of those they deemed foolish.** That is what the Lord said He would do: “*by a foolish nation I will anger you*” (10:19b). Moses said it this way, “*I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation*” (Deut 32:21b).

These were the nations that were “*as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance*” (Isa 40:15), yet they found the righteousness of God before the Jews.

Herein is a perfect picture of how God saves people. The Gentiles were “*not a people*,” having no status whatsoever before God. They were a “*foolish nation*,” devoid of wisdom, and stumbling in moral and spiritual darkness. Yet, a message of good news was sent unto them – a message through which the capacity to hear was granted by the Lord. That faith propelled them out of a state of rejection into one of Divine acceptance.

O, that men could see it! That is how salvation comes to men. It does not come to them because they have been trained to receive it – else the Jews would have obtained it. It does not come because people are suitable, having the right name and bathed in the right culture – else the Jews would have possessed it.

No! Salvation is for the unworthy, the foolish, and those lost in the darkness! That is why it is called “*salvation*.” In it a Divine rescue is accomplished. The transfer to a new realm is realized. Very real sins are cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Transgressions are blotted out like a thick cloud (Isa 44:22). A provocative circumstance, indeed!

## THE BOLDNESS OF ISAIAH

<sup>20</sup> ***But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'***” On a much smaller level than our text, I have often seen the principle declared in it. I have witnessed the dregs of society, unimaginably filthy and depraved, perceive the truth of the Gospel before those who have long been surrounded with the sound of truth. I have witnessed the provocation caused within stilted churches by the new and irrepressible life of a “*newborn babe*.” How often those with no religious culture at all have taken hold of the truth, sprinting past seasoned churchmen, leaving them far behind. That is the very principle being declared in this text.

### VERY BOLD

And why does it say Isaiah was “*very bold*”? His words are found in Isaiah 65:1. *“I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name.”*

It took boldness to declare the message because of the effect it would have upon the pretentious Israelites. It would be like telling a Baptist that a Mormon had suddenly come into the knowledge of God – a knowledge far

greater than any Baptist had ever experienced. Or, more to the point, it would be like telling a member of the Christian Church or Church of Christ that a Christian Scientist had far surpassed the entirety of the Restoration Movement in the appropriation of the blessing of God. Perhaps it would be like reporting to those thinking themselves to be “the one true church” that a greater degree of spiritual insight and fervor was being experienced in the local drunk tank than in the stately cathedrals of the city.

Those who imagine themselves to hold exclusive rights to the truth are incensed when they hear of those whom they despise having more than they do. It is hard for scribes and Pharisees to learn from Galileans, whom they deem to be “*unlearned and ignorant*.”

### WHAT CAUSED THE DIFFERENCE?

Why was the Lord found by the Gentiles who did not seek Him? How is it that He was manifest, or made known, to those who did not ask for Him? This was the effect of the preached Gospel! On the wings of that glorious message came gifts and abilities that could never be generated at Sinai! The Jews worked hard to attain to the righteousness of the Law. The Gentiles acknowledged their deficiencies

and worked on believing God!

The Jews devoted themselves to the commandments. The Gentiles gave heed to the promises of the Gospel. The outcome was that faith took the Gentiles further than works took the Jews.

This is the appointed manner in which men and women are saved. It is how the shackles of sin are broken and slavery to sin and Satan terminated. It comes through a message that is “*the power of God unto salvation*.” Believe that message, and regardless of your past, you will obtain the favor of God! You may not have sought the Lord in the past, but you will find Him! You may not have asked for Him, but He will make Himself known to you. This is the heritage of all who will believe the Gospel.

How marvelously the Spirit states it! *“I said BEHOLD ME, BEHOLD ME, to a nation that was not called by my name!”* Do not imagine for one moment that this is not still happening. The voice of the Lord that breaks the cedars of Lebanon, shakes the wilderness, and even makes the hinds to calve, can shout a person to spiritual alertness through the Gospel! It is His “*power unto salvation*.” Blessed are the feet of those who bring it to us!

## GOD'S PATIENCE WITH ISRAEL

<sup>21</sup> ***But to Israel He says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.'***” Israel was a chosen people, a cultured people, and a highly favored people. Through the Prophets the Lord left no question about His desire to bless them. He warned them with strong warnings, and drew them with great promises. Yet, in spite of all of this, they spurned the advances of their God.

Hear the Lord Himself lament their condition. *“I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh*

*Me to anger continually to My face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day”* (Isa 65:2-5).

How can such a favored people yield such abominable results? And why does God hold out His hands to them, beckoning them to come. Hear Him cry out: *“Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon*

*you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever”* (Jer 3:12). *“Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings”* (Jer 3:22).

You see, dear reader, that is what sin does to people – the sin that entered into the world with Adam's transgression (Rom 5:12). The effects of sin cannot be trained out of people. It cannot be extricated by commandments. Unrelenting patience at the hand of the Lord, and continual pleas from Him do not alter the human character or change the heart of sinners. Laws cannot change men, nor can specific directions and meticulous routines. As it is written, *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the*

*leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23).*

The hands of God are not being held

out to Israel in futility. There is a marvelous purpose and determination behind it all. He will yet reap a harvest from the seed He has sown. It will not come

at the expense of His holiness, nor will it require that man be bludgeoned into submission. In due time, His glory will be revealed in the salvation of the Jews.

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## CONCLUSION

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I cannot overemphasize the indispensability of the Gospel of Christ. It has been vastly underrated in the professed church, often being treated as though it no longer has a place of prominence. Sleeping souls have allowed other themes and issues to upstage the Gospel, thereby relegating Christ Jesus to a subordinate position. But Jesus will not take a back seat. He will cast down those who attempt to dislodge Him from the throne upon which He has been seated. He said it this way, *“Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone ;*

*the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed”<sup>NIV</sup> (Matt 21:42-44).*

I understand that some will affirm the place of Israel in the Divine economy has been finally removed. The Kingdom, so to speak, has been taken from them and given to another *“who will produce its fruit.”* However, let no soul imagine for a solitary

moment this means all hope for Israel has been irremediably thrown to the ground! The next chapter will powerfully develop this aspect of things, warning us not to become complacent about our standing with God, or despising those of the house of Israel.

The absurdity of a dead Gentile church boasting of the cutting off of Israel is the epitome of ignorance! Do such boasters think God cannot take the Kingdom from them, giving it to *“a people who will produce its fruit?”* How solemnly the Spirit will begin to speak to us!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/4/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 1-10 of the eleventh chapter. The theme will be, **“ISRAEL IS NOT TOTALLY REJECTED.”** While this subject is highly controversial in some circles, heaven has spoken clearly and concisely upon it. God leaves no doubt about His heart on the matter, and what He has determined for the ancient people. Presently, they are in a backward motion, but this condition will not always be so. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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

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*The Gospel Preached is the Appointed Means by which Men are Saved--by Given O. Blakely*