

The Greatest Letter Ever Written

An Expository Journey Through the **Epistle of Romans**

Romans 1:16&17

5-The Gospel of Jesus Christ

May 07, 2023

Romans 1:16&17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Now to properly examine these two verses will require that we answer these seven Questions:

1. What is the "Gospel"?
2. What being "ashamed of the Gospel" looks like
3. How is Salvation brought about through the Gospel?
4. What place do "Faith" and "Belief" play in Salvation?
5. Why did Paul say, "**to the Jew first and also to the Greek**"
6. What did Paul mean by the phrase, "**For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**"?
7. What did Paul mean when he said, "**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**"?

1. What is the "Gospel"?

Etymology of the word, "Gospel"

The English word, "*Gospel*" originally came from a combination of two other Koine Greek words, "*eu*" (Good) and "*angelion*" (Message) to form a noun, "*euangelion*" and a verb, "*euangelizo*" (To bring or to announce Good News/Telling). In 382AD- the Greek noun, "*euangelion*" was translated into the Latin Vulgate to form, "*evangelium*". And when this word was taken from the Latin into the first *complete* English Bible by Miles Coverdale in 1535- the Latin noun, "*evangelium*" became the Anglo-Saxon word, "*God-spell*" (Good News; Glad Tidings)- which later evolved into the modern English rendition of "*Gospel*".

Also, the English words associated with the Gospel- like, "*Evangelist*"; "*Evangelism*"; and "*Evangelical*"- all come from the ancient Greek. The Apostles Matthew and John along with Peter's scribe, John Mark¹ and the Gentile Dr. Luke are known as the original four "*Evangelists*" because what they wrote about the Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus the Christ became known as the four "*Gospels*".

¹ "*John*" was a common Jewish name. "*Mark*" was a Latin Roman name. So, it is possible that the writer of the **Gospel according to Mark** was a Jew named "*John*" (Hebrew: *Yohanan*; Greek: *Giannis*), who was called "*Mark*" by the occupying Romans.

Romans was written by the Apostle Paul in approximately 56AD- which makes it probably the ninth New Testament Book written. The other eight are:

- **James** (AD 44-49)
- **Galatians** (AD 49-50)
- **Matthew** (AD 50-60)
- **Mark** (AD50-60)
- **1Thessalonians** (AD 51)
- **2Thessalonians** (AD 51-52)
- **1Corinthians** (AD 55)
- **2Corinthians** (AD 55-56)

... so, by the time that the Apostle Paul wrote **Romans** (around 56AD)- Christians already had two written Records about the Life and Ministry of Jesus (**Matthew** and **Mark**); and six other Epistles. And the *global* Issues; or Topics; or the *universal* Truths that these six Epistles dealt with are:

James: The practical Ways in which the Gospel is lived out in the Lives of Believers

Galatians: The ancient Promises (Covenant) made to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ to the Believer

1Thessalonians: Jesus' Work delivers Believers from the coming Wrath of God in the "*Day of the Lord*".

2Thessalonians: Believers must hold fast to the sovereign Grace that rescued them in the finished Work of Jesus Christ

1Corinthians: The Gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to every Dimension of Church Life

2Corinthians: There is Strength to the Believer in times of Weakness so we may persevere.

... so, in **Romans**- the Apostle defines just what the Gospel (that these other Books describe) is; what it does; and how it is to be administered.

So, just what *is* the "*Gospel*"? In a nutshell, the Gospel is:

The Good News that Jesus' sinless Life *fulfilled* the Requirement of the Law for absolute Obedience and moral Perfection. And Jesus' Death on the Cross *satisfied* God's Requirement for Divine Justice against all our Sins. The literal and physical Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead was the unmistakable Proof that those two Acts were in accord with God's Will and earned God's absolute Approval.

So, by trusting; hoping; embracing; or believing in Jesus- *personally*; and in His finished Work- and through "*turning from*" Sin (Repentance)- wicked rebels are forgiven of all Sin; and are made instantly Righteous and "*fit for Heaven*"- through the imputation of Christ's spotless Righteousness- by the Agency of Faith alone (Justified).

... which is what people mean when they use the word, "*Saved*".

Now in Reality, the "*Process of Salvation*" actually began back in "*Eternity Past*" with the single "*Decree of God*"- and will continue into "*Eternity Future*"- as the justified soul is *united* with a glorified body- to worship God forever in exquisite Joy!

So, the Gospel is the “Vehicle”; the “Means”; the “Catalyst”; or the “Tool” that God uses to save; rescue; heal; or deliver His people from the Penalty of their own individual Sins (as well as the Original Sin of Adam)- which is His unquenchable, just Wrath. And there are at least five Characteristics or Attributes of this biblical Gospel:

- A. The Gospel MUST be *Defined*
- B. The Gospel MUST be *Preached to Everyone*
- C. The Gospel MUST be *Heard and Understood*
- D. The Gospel MUST be *Believed*
- E. The Gospel MUST be *Obedied*

... or not a single Sin will be forgiven and not a single soul will be saved.

A. The Gospel MUST be *Defined*

Galatians 1:6-9

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

If it is true that we are justified by what we “believe in”; what we “trust and hope in”; what we “embrace”; and what we “confess”; and NOT by what we “DO”- then What we believe in- matters. If it is true that lost Sinners are saved “BY” the Grace of God- alone; and if they are saved “THROUGH” the Gift of Faith- alone; and NOT by any good or religious Works that they might perform- then what they have Faith *in*- matters.

In other words- since God Himself set up Salvation in such a Way that unworthy Sinners are NOT forgiven and made Righteous by ANYTHING they can do for themselves- but lost Sinners are saved solely “BY” Grace and “THROUGH” Faith- then the “Object” of that Faith- is paramount. So, what is the Object of Faith in Salvation- as articulated by the Gospel?

The Person of Jesus Christ AND His finished Work

... so, there are two things:

1. Union with Christ
2. Trust/Hope that What Jesus did (and *continues* to do) is enough to facilitate the Forgiveness of ALL my Sins and to make me “fit for Heaven” (Righteous).

... and both of these are given to us “BY” the Grace of God; and both of these are appropriated to each person “THROUGH” the Gift of Faith; and both of these are *mandatory*- for us to possess eternal Life.

Hebrews 11:6b

... he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Romans 10:9&10

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

But because we live in a fallen World; and because there are so many, who seek to *pervert* the Gospel- by either “*adding to*” or “*taking away from*”- what the Apostles received directly from God- the Gospel **MUST** be defined. Today, there are many Teachings that all lay claim to be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, there is,

- The “Social Gospel”
- The “Universal Gospel”
- The “Pragmatic Gospel”
- The “Oppressed/Justice Gospel”
- The “Prosperity Gospel”
- The “Kingdom/Dominion Gospel”

... for example, those deceived by what Joseph Smith taught- call the *Book of Mormon*- “*another Gospel of Jesus Christ*”.

In **Galatians 1:6**- Paul said there was, on the earth at that time- a “**different gospel**” that people were embracing. And that “different gospel” was causing all, who believed in it, to actually “**desert**” or “leave” or “abandon” the God Who was able to save them.

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;²

... but then Paul was quick to say that, since it is true that there is only one single Gospel- that this “different gospel” wasn’t really “Good News” about Salvation in Jesus at all- but a *distortion* of the real Gospel and something that would *disturb* them greatly.

which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

So, back in the mid to late 1st Century- there were people, who held themselves out as being Christians- who were either “adding to” or “taking away from” the Gospel that the Apostles had already given to the Church.

But it is important to understand that what those Additions or Subtractions did- was **NOT** to *improve* or *correct* the already received and articulated Gospel- but rather to simply create a

² It’s important to note here that Paul was NOT teaching that genuinely saved people can lose their Salvation. The people to whom the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written were already IN the Church- holding themselves out as being saved. And as they were deceived by “another gospel” that Paul talks about here- their Response to that false gospel was to “**desert**” or abandon Jesus Christ. However, those who were genuinely saved eventually repented and returned- while those who were never truly saved- may have become saved at some later point or remained deceived.

brand- new Religion- that was NOT Christianity- a “Man-made” fabricated Religion- that could not forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. And by preaching this “other gospel”- saved souls became confused while lost souls remained Lost.

And then in verses 8&9- the Apostle gives what is one of the most frightening Condemnations found anywhere in the Bible when he said,

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Now the English word, “**accursed**” comes from a Greek word (*anathema*; Strong’s # 331); which means: *an indissoluble Vow by God to punish and destroy*. So, this is a Damnation by God- *of which there is NO Forgiveness or Resolution!* So, what was it that was so terrible; so evil; so offensive to God that He will damn those guilty of it- without pardoning them?

... if we [the Apostles], or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you ...

... in other words, if ANYONE- even an Apostle or an Angel from Heaven- preaches; proclaims; teaches; or heralds a “gospel” that is “**contrary**” (opposed; incompatible; conflicting) to the one single genuine Gospel that the Apostles “have” (ALREADY) preached to you...

... he is to be accursed!

... and then to show how serious this really is- in verse 9- Paul *repeats* this powerful and frightening Warning. And that tells us at least two things:

1. The Gospel is so important to God- that it carries one of the strongest Penalties for perverting it found anywhere in the Bible.
2. The Gospel had already been defined

So, by the time that the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written (AD 49-50)- the Gospel had ALREADY been received by the Apostles from Heaven; written down; published; articulated, studied, and discussed; and had already been preached in the Region of the Galatian Churches (the central area of modern- day Turkey)- to the degree that people knew what it was.

Approximately 10-30 years after the **Epistle to the Galatians** was written- the half-brother of Jesus (*Judah/Judas/Jude*) was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write the Epistle that bears his name. And in verse 3- Jude gives the Church of Jesus a solemn Charge as to their *primary* Duty as a sovereign Creation of Jesus Christ:

Jude 3b

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Now the “**Faith**” in view here is NOT the Ability that each individually saved

person has- to believe and hope in Jesus. Jude is talking about *THE* Faith- the *Christian* Faith; or the orthodox Truths given to the Christian Church.

So, according to this “*Divine Charge*”- the Church has the ongoing Duty; the constant Obligation; and the unspeakable Joy; to teach; preach; believe; defend; and support; the Teachings of the Christian Faith- to such an extent- that what we have; what we believe and trust in; and what we hold dear- is the VERY SAME “*Body of Teaching*” that was “**once for all handed down to the saints**” by the Apostles of the 1st Century.³

This is the ongoing Search and Preservation of genuine “*Orthodoxy*” (Right/Correct Belief). It is also called, “*being Biblical*”.

But the Gospel goes on to say...

... now that a person has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; been forgiven and made Righteous; and has been adopted into the Family of God- he now loves God and he loves the “**Things of the Spirit of God**” (1Corinthians 2:14). He has become a true spiritual Jew; is a child of Abraham; and an Heir of all the Promises of God- *including* eternal Life.

The Good News declares that this now “justified saint” has both the Power and the Desire to please God; and to live his Life in such a way that God Alone is glorified- *regardless* of what living that Life may do to him personally.

So, the Gospel also involves the “every-day” manner in which the regenerated; justified, and adopted Believer lives his Life. The Gospel declares that the Life of a genuine Believer is typified by his Worship of God. And this Worship is defined as:

“The ongoing Struggle (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in his daily Life- all to the Glory of God”.

... so, the Gospel” is NOT limited as being merely the “*Vehicle*” that allows Lost people to be saved. But rather the “*Means of Grace*” that facilitates the Lost to be “Found”; as well as the “*Means*” by which the “saved” are *ongoingly* and *progressively* sanctified (made Holy)- all the Way to Glory!

B. The Gospel MUST be “*Preached*” to Everybody

Since the Gospel is the Good News that, through Jesus, Sins can be forgiven and unrighteous rebels can be “made fit for Heaven”- that Good News must be heard and understood by people. And the one single WAY that God has determined that people hear and understand the Gospel- is through the Act of “Preaching”.

Isaiah 61:1-3

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;

2 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

³ This is genuine “*Apostolic Succession*”

3 To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

Matthew 11:2-6

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.

6 "And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

Matthew 24:14

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mark 1:14-15

14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

... so, these four elements of the Gospel should be preached:

1. The Time is fulfilled (Jesus fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy)
2. The Kingdom of God is "at Hand"
3. Repent of Sin
4. Believe the Gospel

Mark 16:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Luke 3:16-18

16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.

Luke 20:1&2

1 On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him,

2 and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?"

The Acts 8:25

So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

The Acts 8:40

But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

The Acts 14:5-7

5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them,

6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;

7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

The Acts 14:21&22

21 After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

The Acts 16:9&10

9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Romans 1:9&10

9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Romans 1:15

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Romans 15:18-21

18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed,

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

21 but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

1Corinthians 1:21

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

1Corinthians 9:14

So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

2Corinthians 11:7b

... did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge?

2Corinthians 10:14-17

14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ;

15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you,

16 so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another.

17 But HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD.

Galatians 3:8&9

8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Hebrews 4:2

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ (Good News) is the very BEST News in all the world- but ONLY to those who believe and repent of Sin. To those who hear the Gospel but who do NOT repent and/or believe- the Gospel is the WORST News they could ever hear and is a Death Sentence to them.

Philippians 4:15&16

15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

1Thessalonians 2:9

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

1Peter 1:12

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.

The English words, “**preach/preached/preaching**, etc..” come from a Greek word, (*keerusoo*/Strong’s #2784) that means: to herald; proclaim; or announce- *authoritatively*. So, the Preacher is to act as a “*Herald*”, who has been sent by the King, to announce his Arrival; or to give Instructions from the King to the people. In this capacity- the Herald has the Authority to proclaim the Message from the King. So, the Message the Herald gives- is to be understood as being a Message from the King himself.

Now many say that “*Preaching*” is nothing more than “*anointed Teaching*”; or “*emotional or energized Teaching*”. So, to them- Preaching is just “*Teaching with more Volume*”. But it goes further than that. Preaching is “*Expositional Worship*”. So, it is the worship of God through the *heralding* of God’s Word to God’s people. That means “Preaching” *could* be defined as: The *Invitational* and the *Exhortational* Proclamation of biblical and theological Truth. And conversely, “*Teaching*” *could* be defined as: The *Explanation* and *Explication* of biblical and theological Truth. So, both “*Preaching*” and “*Teaching*” deal with the very SAME two Subjects or Commodities:

1. Biblical Truth
2. Theological Truth

... so, the main difference between “*Preaching*” and “*Teaching*” lies in:

1. The Mode
2. The immediate Goal

“**Preaching**” involves biblical and theological Content- selected and presented in a “Mode” of “*Heralding*”; “*Announcing*”; or “*Proclamation*” with the *immediate* Goal being that of “*Invitation*” (Believe!) and “*Exhortation*” (Repent!).

“**Teaching**” involves biblical and theological Content- presented in a much more *detailed* and *systematic* Way- for the Purpose of “*Explaining*” and “*Unpacking*” complex Issues; the Details of how they connect; and the Implication they make.

Now there is certainly some Overlap between Preaching and Teaching but there is also important Distinctions between the two.

God’s Elect

Now it is true that the ONLY people who will be saved- are those who have been chosen by God for Salvation (from before the Foundation of the world).

Ephesians 1:4-6

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

... and the Bible calls these people, “*God’s elect*”.

But it is very important to understand that this does NOT mean that those whom God saved are “better” people than the others. They aren’t. In fact, it might be true that the “non-elect” may even be “more moral” or even “less sinful” than the Elect. Those in Hell are NOT “worse” than those in Heaven. And those in Heaven are NOT “better” than those in Hell. That has NOTHING to do with why God chose to save His elect.

God seeks to be the ONLY one who is glorified in Salvation. And so, God set up Salvation in such a way that it doesn’t matter how sinful a person may or may not be. God chose to save His elect, “before they were born” and “before they did anything “Good” or “Bad” (**Romans 9:11**)- so that Salvation will be *entirely* “BY” God’s Grace (alone) and will be appropriated to each individual *solely* “THROUGH” Faith (alone). So, Man CANNOT do ANYTHING to make himself “attractive to God. God chose to save His elect based on His own Divine Prerogative. And Salvation itself is NOT “BY” humanly engineered Works- not even Good, Moral, religious Works.

So, we CANNOT *earn* Salvation by ANYTHING that we do for ourselves; and God is NOT *obligated* to save anyone. That allows for Salvation to be based ONLY on Grace and Mercy and Faith. This allows for God to receive ALL the Glory while Man receives ALL the Benefit.

But even though all of that is true- we don’t know whom God has chosen. So, we have to preach the Gospel to *everyone*. We have to work with *everyone*; pray with *everyone*; and call *everyone* to believe and to obey the Gospel.

Mark 16:15

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

C. The Gospel MUST be *Heard* and *Understood*

The Acts 8:27-35

27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

God has chosen that the Gospel should be preached. And that means that people MUST hear the Gospel that is preached. And part of *hearing* the Gospel is *understanding* what they are hearing. NOBODY is saved *accidentally*. NOBODY is *fooled* into being saved; and NOBODY trips and falls into Salvation. As the Gospel of WHO Jesus is; and WHAT Jesus has done- is heralded- people MUST comprehend it. It does no Good for us to preach- if the Message preached is not heard and understood. And that means that the Gospel may have to be preached and explained over and over and over again- until a person has comprehension as to what it means.

The Details surrounding WHO Jesus is- are some of the *deepest* and most *profound* Truths in the entire Bible. A Being Who was WITH God and Who WAS God (**John 1:1**)- is NOT a simple Issue. A Being Who is both *fully and truly* God and *fully and truly* Man- is NOT a simple Issue. Jesus being the second Person of the triune Godhead is NOT a simple Issue. Jesus being born of a Virgin and living a perfectly *sinless* Life- is NOT a simple Issue. Jesus periodically manifesting His full and true Deity; while manifesting His full and true Humanity at different Times- is NOT a simple Issue. And the Proof that this is true- is in the literally tens of millions of people, all over the world, who have been deceived by one or more of the Heresies concerning the Person of Jesus Christ.

Much of modern Evangelization teaches that we should simply "hit the high points" about Jesus; and then when we "smell blood in the water"- we should get people to "pray the Prayer". But if it is true that people MUST *hear* and *understand* the Gospel- then I would suggest that this would take more time and more explaining than what modern Evangelization classes would let on. How much Truth about Jesus does a person need before he can be saved? I don't know. But we should desire that people have MORE than the "*bare Minimum*" anyway. I personally believe that the main Reason why people only give small bits of Truth about Jesus to

Lost people- is because that is ALL that the saved people normally have. The Reality is that in-depth Teaching (and Preaching) about ANY biblical Truth- went “out of style” many decades ago. And the level of Ignorance in the average church member today about serious and fundamental Truth- is appalling. It is truly the great Scandal of our Day- that God’s people no longer know what God has said. And the biggest culprit is the insulting Truth that, as far as most people today are concerned- the Bible is just boring.

But NOBODY is saved if they don’t understand what the Gospel teaches. And so, if we care about the Lost at all- then we need to learn what the Gospel is- so we can properly and fully articulate it to those we meet.

D. The Gospel MUST be *Believed*

The Acts 15:7

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

The Acts 16:31&32

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

Romans 3:20-23

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 4:1-13

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

One of the most important Reasons WHY the Gospel MUST be Understood- is because unless the Lost person BELIEVES the Gospel- he will NOT be saved. So, the Comprehension of what the Gospel is and what it puts forth- MUST become clear enough to the individual- so that he will willfully *believe* it; embrace it; and so, he will *trust* in what the Gospel declares; and so, he can *hope* in the Promise that the Gospel makes.

What we mean when we say that the Gospel MUST be believed- is that the *essential* Truth that the Gospel teaches MUST be accepted as being Truth and embraced as being “Non-negotiable”. Anyone who denies the essential Truths of the Gospel is NOT saved. They are yet in their Sins. The essential Truths of the Gospel include:

- Who Jesus is
- What Jesus has done
- Justification by Faith alone
- Bearing godly Fruit after Justification

E. The Gospel MUST be Obeyed

The Gospel puts forth two Requirements on all people:

1. Repent of Sin
2. Believe the Gospel

... so, those two Requirements: Turning away from what the Bible describes as Sin; and believing; hoping; trusting; accepting; embracing the essential Truths of the Gospel.

Matthew 3:2

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mark 1:14&15

14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark 6:12

They went out and preached that men should repent.

Luke 13:1-5

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?"

3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?"

5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

The Acts 3:19

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

The Acts 17:30&31

30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

The Acts 26:19&20

19 "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

2. What being "ashamed of the Gospel" looks like

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The Apostle rites infallibly here that he is NOT ashamed of the Gospel. And then Paul gave us the Reason why he was not ashamed of the Gospel:

... for [because] it [the Gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

So, what does it mean to “be ashamed of the Gospel”? One of the most common ways that this “ashamedness” exists today- is when people try their best to either *minimize* or outright *eliminate* the Demands that the Gospel makes on people in order to be saved. Remember what God (through Paul) said about this from **The Acts 17:30**:

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

Now while it is true that genuine Repentance includes “Sorrow”- simply “*being sorry*” or saying they are “sorry” about a particular Sin is NOT genuine Repentance. Look what the Apostle taught about this from **2Corinthians 7:4-11**:

4 Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

5 For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.

6 But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it— for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—

9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Here, Paul teaches that there are two different Kinds of Sorrow:

1. The Sorrow *that is according to the will of God* (verses 9b&10)
2. The Sorrow *of the world* (verse 10b)

...and the Sorrow of the World- “**produces Death**” (verse 10b); while the Sorrow that is according to the will of God- “**produces a Repentance without regret- leading to Salvation**” (verse 10a).

Genuine Repentance has to do with a “*Change of Mind*”; that results in a “*Change of Heart*”; that ends with a “*Change of Behavior*”. And it is this “*Change of Behavior*” that facilitates being “ashamed of the Gospel”.

So, when some, *who say they are saved*- come to realize that this Requirement to have this visible, tangible, and measurable “*Change of Behavior*”- *might* cause the one they are preaching the Gospel to- to become offended or discouraged- they will either never bring this biblical Requirement into the Discussion at all- or they will so *minimize* it that it becomes

irrelevant. And by doing this- they are proving that they are *ashamed* or *embarrassed* at what the Gospel absolutely DOES require.

And the end Result of this “*Ashamedness*” is that the one who is hearing the Gospel doesn’t know that God *requires* him to change the Way he lives his daily Life- so that his normal daily Life glorifies God alone. So, “being saved” is *cheapened*; it is *altered*; it is portrayed as nothing more than some “Addition” to his Life- rather than the *End* of his Life and the birthing of a brand- new Life that exists for one Reason:

To Glorify God

So, “being Ashamed” of the Gospel has to do with any Effort to minimize or eliminate or change or alter the Demands that Jesus makes on ALL who will be saved- such as:

Luke 9:23-26

23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Matthew 10:24-39

24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;

36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. [Micah 7:6]

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Any Effort to alter or change or soften or minimize the Demands of Jesus concerning Salvation- is an Effort birthed in being “ashamed of the Gospel”. We must remember that the ONLY Hope for lost people is that they hear the Gospel; understand the Gospel; and obey the Gospel (repent and believe). So, if we preach “another Gospel” to them- out of the Fear that they might get offended at all that Jesus expects from them- we are cutting them off from the ONLY Means by which they can be saved.

And this is *why* the Apostle Paul was so rigid in his Condemnation of *anyone* who would try to change the Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-9

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

3. How is Salvation brought about through the Gospel?

Romans 1:16a

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation...

As we have seen, the New Testament is clear that preaching the Gospel is the one, single “Means” that God has chosen to save those who believe. Yet, here- Paul says that the preaching is the Gospel- is “Foolishness”.

In What Way is the Preaching of the Gospel, “Foolish”?

1Corinthians 1:21

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

So, why does Paul call the preaching of the Gospel, “foolishness”? It is NOT because there is something foolish about the Gospel itself. Rather Paul is teaching how Lost people see the Gospel. And that is why he taught this in **1Corinthians 2:14:**

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Now the “natural man” refers to the person who is Lost. And Paul teaches here that the person who is Lost **“does not”** accept something. Now the phrase, “does not” has to do with “willful volition”. It refers to a Choice. And Paul says that the person who is Lost DOES NOT **“accept”**- he does not *embrace*; he does not *believe*; he does not *trust* or *hope* or find Joy and Peace in something. Well, what does the person who is Lost NOT accept?

... the things of the Spirit of God ...

So, what are the **“things of the Spirit of God?”** They are those things that are “birthed” or “brought forth” or “initiated” or “given” by God the Holy Spirit- like Salvation and Church and the Bible and Heaven and Righteousness.

So, the person who is Lost DOES NOT “accept” Salvation; he DOES NOT “trust” in the Church; he DOES NOT “believe” the Bible; he DOES NOT “hope” in the Promise of eternal Life; he DOES NOT “find any Joy or Peace” in Righteousness.

Okay, but WHY does the person who is Lost NOT accept those things? Paul said,

... for [because] they are foolishness to him ...

There is that word, **“foolishness”** again. So, what does “foolishness” mean? The word that was translated into English as “foolishness” comes from a Greek word (*moeria*; Strong’s # 3472) that has to do with: *something that is absurd; senseless; or insane*. This word has to do with: *something that no normal thinking rational person would embrace*. He would ONLY see that something as being worthy of nothing but utter Contempt.

So, this is NOT the silly, light-hearted kind of Foolishness. This is something so patently ridiculous that it deserves NOTHING but to be rejected out of hand- precisely because it is so absurd. So, there is a Hostility associated with this word. And that means that the person who is Lost- rejects the Gospel- *passionately*; he actually *hates* the Gospel; *despises* the Gospel; and has NOTHING but utter Contempt for the Gospel.

Now that would be Bad enough. But Paul went even further in the last part of this verse when he said,

... and he cannot understand them...

Now the first part has to do with willful Volition. But this second part has to do with Ability and Power. Paul says here that the person who is Lost CANNOT- he DOES NOT have either the Power or the Ability to understand the **“things of the Spirit of God”**- which includes Salvation.

But why doesn’t the person who is Lost have the Ability to understand the **“things of the Spirit of God?”** The person who is Lost has a Brain; he has cognitive reasoning Capabilities. He can put Thoughts and Concepts together. So, if he had the skill- he could build a bridge or a jet or invest his Money. He has the Ability to raise his Family. So, why can’t the person who is Lost understand the **“things of the Spirit of God?”** Paul tells us in the last part of the verse:

... because they are spiritually appraised

Now the word, “**appraised**” has to do with the Ability to determine the Value or the Worth or the Importance of something. So, the Value and the Worth and the Importance of the “**things of the Spirit of God**”- is ONLY determined by the Spirit of God Himself. And the person who is Lost does NOT have the Spirit of God abiding in himself. So, he has NO Ability; NO Power within himself that would enable him to assign a Worth and a Value and an Importance to the “**things of the Spirit of God**”. So, the “things of the Spirit of God” which should have the highest degree of Worth and Value and Importance in our minds and hearts- have NO Value; NO Worth; and NO Importance and remain something that is so patently Ridiculous- that it merits or deserves NOTHING but utter Contempt. And so, unless God does something to the person who is Lost- FIRST- he will remain Lost and will NEVER be saved.

And so, when Paul wrote the phrase,

... God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

... in **1Corinthians 1:21**- he was NOT denigrating the Value or the Worth of the Gospel itself. Paul was merely teaching how the person who is Lost- “looks at” or “sees” or “understands” the preaching of the Gospel. He sees it as being so patently Ridiculous- that it merits NOTHING but utter Contempt.

Now the way that this verse (**1Corinthians 1:21**) is worded- shows us that the person who is Lost not only sees the Gospel itself as being patently Ridiculous- but also the Vehicle by which the Gospel is given to the people: Preaching.

So, there is NOTHING in the mind and heart of the person who is Lost but utter Contempt for the Gospel itself- but there is also this same Disdain and hostile Rejection of the “preaching” of the Gospel as well. And that is why the person who is Lost will not only mock and reject and be hostile against the Message (Gospel)- but that innate Hostility will spill over toward the Man who preaches the Gospel as well.

How Does Something So Despised Save the Lost?

Ezekiel 37:1-10

1 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

2 He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.

3 He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know."

4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'

5 "Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

6 'I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.'"

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

8 And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

9 Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'""

10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

If it is true that the person who is Lost holds both the Gospel and those who preach it in utter Contempt; and if it is true that the lost person CANNOT know (understand) the **“Things of the Spirit of God” (1Corinthians 2:14)**- how is ANYONE saved through the Method of heralding the Gospel? Why would God choose the Method that is the MOST despised on earth; and seemingly the most ineffective Method- to save His people? God has told His anointed Ministers to preach a Gospel to people who possess two Characteristics:

1. They CANNOT hear/understand what is being preached
2. They despise what is being preached

Over and over God told His Preachers- *“Be faithful to give My people My Word. Now, by the way- nobody is going to listen to you.”* Why would God set up Salvation this Way? And there are ONLY a few possible Answers- three of which are:

1. This is the Way that brings *maximum* Glory to God
2. This is the Way that *eliminates* all human Boasting
3. This is the Way the *excludes* the “non-elect”

1. This is the Way that Brings *Maximum* Glory to God

So, how does this work? How does preaching the Gospel bring about the Salvation of the Lost? And the Answer to this Question is the SAME Answer as to why God does EVERYTHING He does? This Way brings God MORE Glory than any other Way- and THAT is WHY God chose it. God has determined that He will receive MORE Glory through the **“foolishness of the Message preached”** to save His people than He would by any other Way.

And we need to always remember that the Reason God should receive all of the Credit (Glory) for Salvation- is because God did all of the Work. Salvation was God the Father’s Idea. God the Son made the Salvation of Sinners possible through His sinless Life; His vicarious (substitutionary) Death on the Cross; and His physical Resurrection. And God the Holy Spirit is the One, Who drags (draws) the unbeliever to Jesus and the One Who gives the Sinner new, spiritual Life. So, God- in all three Persons- receives all the Glory precisely because God did all of what was necessary to save all of those God has chosen. All that we “bring to the Table”- as it pertains to Salvation- is the Sin that made Salvation necessary to begin with.

2. This is the Way the Eliminates all Human Boasting

You see, with all their supposed Wisdom- Mankind has NEVER been able to approach God and know and love Him- using their own physical and mental Intellect. The Reality is that the ONLY thing that *increases* in proportion to the accumulation of more human Knowledge- are Man's Problems- and NOT any Solutions! By anyone's Measurement- Knowledge has *increased* over the last Century- *exponentially*. And yet, along with this breathtaking Increase in Knowledge- we also see an *exponential* rise in Hatred; Misunderstandings; Conflicts; Wars; Crime; along with huge Increases in both mental and family Problems. And those Issues are increasing- NOT merely in raw Numbers, but also in their Extent and in their Severity!

And this proves the Point that the *more* Man looks to *himself*; and the *more* Man *depends* on himself- the *worse* his Situation becomes. There is a direct Correlation between the Dependence of Man's own increased Wisdom and the amount and the intensity of his Problems.

And this is by Design. God set this up on Purpose. This is all part of God's Plan, as the Words, spoken through the Wisdom of God indicate. You see, when creating Man- God wisely set it up in such a Way that Man could NEVER come to know Him (or love Him) by or through the Wisdom of this fallen World- because that would give Man the Ability to boast in what he has done to save himself. And God despises Man taking Credit for what God alone has done.

As you read the Bible- you come to at least two Conclusions about this Issue:

1. God loves to be glorified
2. God goes to great lengths to stop Man from boasting about what he has done to save himself

... almost everywhere that you see that God desires to be glorified- you also see God prohibiting Man from boasting- about what ONLY God has done. And that is especially true as it pertains to Salvation:

Romans 3:24-28

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

3. This is the Way that Eliminates the "Non-elect"

God desires to save His people that He has chosen. And He desires to save ALL of those He has chosen. But God has no Desire at all to save anyone else. Now this is a very Deep and Difficult Truth that is found in almost every Book of the Bible. But we must love ALL of God's Word and God's Word is crystal clear about this:

God will save ONLY His elect- those He has chosen for Salvation from before the Foundation of the World.

Now there are many Questions that arise because of this Truth. And every Question deserves an Answer. But for the sake of this Study through **Romans**- I want to try to be as concise as possible. So, the Passage I will give to you shows to what extent Jesus went to- so that the "non-elect" (those God has NOT chosen) would NOT hear the Gospel; believe the Gospel; repent; and be saved.

Matthew 13:10-17

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

12 "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;

15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'

16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Now the Question that the Disciples asked in verse 10 was:

"Why do You speak to them in parables?"

... and Jesus responded with this Statement in verse 11:

"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

So, right of "Jump Street" we need to acknowledge that the REASON that Jesus spoke to the people in Parables was because the Knowledge of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven was NOT given to everyone. And that is NOT Blair Bradley saying that- Jesus said that. So, fundamentally- Jesus does NOT want everyone to understand.

Now if that was all that Jesus said- we might come to the Conclusion that Jesus was mean or hard or that He was wayward or even ungodly. But then Jesus quotes from the Prophet in **Isaiah 6:9&10** and said,

**14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;
15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'**

Now why did Jesus give us this inspired, inerrant, and infallible Quote from Isaiah? To show us that this is the Way God has ALWAYS operated about Salvation. God dealt primarily with ONLY the Jews under the Old Covenant- TO THE EXCLUSION OF EVERY OTHER NATION!

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

And God sent these chosen people His Word and His Prophets. God gave the Jew his Land; his Culture; his Language; his Government; God's Law; their Law; their Customs, etc. God did NOT do this for any other Nation. And we can slice this and dice it anyway we want to- but the bottom line is that, under the Old Covenant- God loved the Jew MORE and DIFFERENTLY than He did ANY OTHER PEOPLE!

And now under the infinitely superior New Covenant- God moves in concert with that Pattern. And God has set up Salvation- in such a Way- that the "non-elect" are excluded. And the Mystery about this is that *some* of the "non-elect" are natural Jews!

So, we have to understand that, fundamentally, Man CANNOT solve his own Problems because he *refuses* to recognize or acknowledge the Source of his Problems- which is his own Sin.

And neither can Man truly or fully solve any of his main Problems- because that requires Salvation- which is entirely a sovereign Work of God. Hear the Words of Jesus from **Matthew 15:17-20:**

17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?

18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

Man's own personal sinful Nature is the root Cause of ALL of his Problems- yet no Man can change his own Nature. And even if human Wisdom might be able to periodically *recognize* the Problem- it does not have the Power to fix it.

But God DOES have the Power to recognize Man's root Problem and to fix it- *eternally!* God was well-pleased through the Foolishness of the Message preached to save those who believe. He chose to use that which the world's Wisdom counts as Moronic; Ridiculous; Silly; and Foolish- to save those of the world, who would simply believe.

Now the verb, "**believe**" here implies complete Assent to all the Truth of the Message that is preached or heralded. And that Message is the Gospel. And for those who have been made willing to exchange their *own* wisdom for His- God offers Transformation; Regeneration; and new spiritual Life through the Power of a sovereign Savior- Who lived a sinless Life; died a vicarious (substitutionary) Death; and was raised up from the Dead on the third Day. This "**foolishness**" is Mankind's only Hope.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand,

2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Now Andy Stanley (the Pastor of a mega-church outside of Atlanta) teaches that we need to get away from the Bible and talk more about the single Event of the Resurrection- if we hope to reach the Lost in the 21st Century. Stanley said that saying, "*The Bible says...*" is an outdated Method of obtaining the Divine Authority that gives what we preach Credibility.

Yet when talking about the Resurrection here in **1 Corinthians 15:3&4**- the Apostle Paul did exactly what Stanley (and others) are saying we shouldn't do- he said:

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

So, Paul's Credibility about what he was teaching was based on what the Scriptures teach about the Resurrection- and NOT the Event itself.

So, after he got the Attention of his readers by explaining the Purpose of his Writing and then introducing himself (**Romans 1:1-15**), Paul now gives the main Focus of this entire Epistle.

These two verses (16&17) express the primary Theme of the entire **Book of Romans**, and they contain the most life-transforming Truth that God ever put into the hands of fallen Man.

And the Apostle Paul was completely unashamed of the Gospel and preached it without fail. Yet he was imprisoned in Philippi; chased out of Thessalonica; smuggled out of Damascus and Berea; laughed at in Athens; considered to be a Fool in Corinth; declared to be a Blasphemer and Lawbreaker in Jerusalem; and was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. Yet he never hesitated to proclaim the glorious Gospel.

Some pagans of Paul's day branded Christianity as being "Atheism" because it "believed in only one God. They also said this "new Religion" was "Cannibalistic" because of a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper. They also spread the rumor that Christians were homosexuals because they obeyed what Paul taught in **2Corinthians 13:12**:

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

But the Jewish religious leaders of Jerusalem did not intimidate Paul, nor did the learned and influential pagans at Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth. The Apostle was now very eager to preach and teach this same Gospel in Rome, the capital of the Pagan Empire that ruled virtually all the known world at that time. But Paul was never deterred by Opposition; he was never disheartened by Criticism; and he was never ashamed, for any reason, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now even though the Gospel was then, and still is today, a "stumbling block" to Jews and "foolishness" to Gentiles, it is the only Way God has provided for the Salvation of all people. And so, Paul was both overjoyed and emboldened by the Privilege of proclaiming its Truth and Power wherever he went.

Although every true Believer knows it is a serious Sin to be ashamed of his Savior and Lord, he also knows the difficulty of avoiding that Sin. When we have Opportunity to speak for Christ- we often do not. We know the Gospel is unattractive, intimidating, and repulsive to the natural, unsaved person and to the ungodly spiritual world System that now dominates the world. The Gospel exposes Man's Sin, Wickedness, Depravity, and Lostness, and it declares Pride to be despicable and "Works- Righteousness" to be Worthless in God's Sight. To the sinful heart of Unbelievers, the Gospel does not appear to be "Good News" at all- but very "Bad News". And when they first hear it- they often react with Disdain against the one presenting it; or they throw out Arguments and Theories against it. For that Reason, the "Fear of Men" and of not being able to handle their Arguments is doubtlessly the single greatest Snare in giving others the biblical Gospel.

The so-called "Health and Wealth" gospel that has swept through much of the Church today is not offensive to the World because it offers what the World wants. But that spurious "gospel" does not offer the Truth about Jesus Christ. Like the false Teaching of the Judaizers, it is "**a different gospel**," that is, not the Gospel at all but an ungodly Distortion (**Galatians 1:6&7**). Jesus strongly condemned the Motives of worldly Success and Comfort, and those who appeal to such Motives play right into the hands of Satan.

A scribe once approached Jesus and said, "*Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.*" But knowing that the man was Unwilling to give up his Comforts in order to be a Disciple, the Lord answered, "**The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head**" (**Matthew 8:19-20**). Shortly after 'that,

**21 Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."
22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."
(Matthew 8:21&22)**

Now the phrase, "**bury my father**" did NOT refer to a funeral Service but was a Jewish colloquialism of the 1st Century that had to do going and living with his Father for several years- and awaiting his Death- in order to receive the Inheritance. Jesus therefore told the man, "**Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead**"

Geoffrey Wilson, the former Pastor of *Birkby Baptist Church* in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England wrote,

"The unpopularity of a crucified Christ has prompted many to present a message which is more palatable to the unbeliever, but the removal of the offense of the cross always renders the message ineffective. An inoffensive gospel is also an inoperative gospel. Thus Christianity is wounded most in the house of its friends" (Romans: A Digest of Reformed Comment [Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1976], p. 24).

Paul's supreme Passion was to see men saved. He cared nothing for personal Comfort, Popularity, or Reputation. He offered no Compromise of the Gospel, because he knew it is the only Power available that can change Lives for Eternity.

In verses 16-17, Paul uses four key words that are crucial to understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ: Power; Salvation; Faith; and Righteousness.

POWER

... for it [the Gospel] is the power of God (1:16 b)

First of all, Paul declares, that the Gospel is the Power of God. The Greek word, "**dunamis**" is the term from which our English word, "*dynamite*" is derived. The Gospel carries with it the Omnipotence of God, Whose Power Alone is sufficient to save men from Sin and give them eternal Life.

People have an innate Desire to be changed. They want to look better; feel better; have more Money; more Power; and more Influence. The Premise of all Advertising is that people want to change in some way or another, and the job of the Advertiser is to convince them that his Product or Service will add a desired Dimension to their lives.

And because of secular Psychology- many people today want to be changed "*inwardly*", in a way that will make them "*feel less guilty*" and "*more content*". And so, a whole host of Programs, Philosophies, and even Religions promise to meet those Desires. Many Man-made Schemes succeed in making people "*feel better*" about themselves, but the Ideas promoted have no Power to remove the Sin that brings those Feelings of Guilt and Discontent. So, in Reality- those carnal Ideas encourage people to fight *against* God. In fact, the more successful such Approaches are, from their own standpoint, the more they drive people *away from* God and insulate them from His Salvation. Through Jeremiah, the Lord said,

Jeremiah 13:23

Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.

It is simply not within Man's Power to change his own Nature- which is the "real Problem". In rebuking the Sadducees who tried to entrap Him, Jesus said,

Matthew 22:29

You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.

... only the Power of God is able to overcome Man's sinful Nature and impart to him, "new spiritual Life" (Regeneration/the New Birth).

The Bible makes it clear that men *cannot* be spiritually changed or saved by good Works; by the Church; by the Clergy; by Rituals; by Ceremonies; or by any other human Means. Men cannot be saved even by striving to keep God's own Law- which was given to show us our utter Helplessness to meet His Standards in their own Power. The Law was not given to save anyone- but to simply reveal our Sin and thus drive us to God's saving Grace.

In later Chapters of **Romans**, Paul declares man's complete Impotence and God's Power, when he said,

Romans 5:6

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 8:3&4

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Apostle Peter agreed when he said,

1Peter 1:23-25

23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Paul reminded the Church at Corinth that,

1Corinthians 1:18-25

18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." (Isaiah 29:14)

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The very Power of God that transforms lost Sinners into Saints- is looked at by the lost world as utter Absurdity- that deserves nothing but universal. Condemnation. Yet this is the Power by which people are translated from the Realm of Darkness to the Realm of Light, and delivered from the Power of Death and that which gives them the Right to be called, the “children of God”.

John 1:10-13

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now for many years, I didn't understand verse 13 very well. The three groups of people that John refers to here remained a Mystery to me. It wasn't until I read this same Passage in the New International Version (NIV) that I came to grips with what John actually meant by what he wrote here:

John 1:10-13

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (NIV)

Many of the ancient Pagans mocked Christianity- not only because the Idea of “Substitutionary Atonement” seemed ridiculous on the surface- but also because their mythical “gods” were all Apathetic; Detached; and Remote- totally unconcerned about the Welfare of people. The idea of a Caring; Redeeming God, Who would take on Flesh and sacrifice Himself for sinful people was beyond their Comprehension. While excavating ancient Ruins in Rome,

Archaeologists discovered a derisive painting- depicting a slave bowing down before a Cross with a jackass hanging on it. The caption reads, "*Alexamenos worships his god.*"

In the late 2nd Century- this Attitude still existed. A man named, "Celsus" wrote a letter- bitterly attacking Christianity. In that letter he said,

"Let no cultured person draw near, none wise, none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any is wanting in sense and culture, if any is a fool, let him come boldly [to Christianity]"⁴

Later, Celsus wrote,

"... we see them in their own houses, wool dressers, cobblers and fullers, the most uneducated and vulgar persons"⁵

... and in other letters, this man compared Christians to a swarm of bats; to ants crawling out of their nests; to frogs holding a symposium around a swamp; and to worms cowering in the muck!

But showing the great Distinction between the foolish wisdom of Man and the supreme Wisdom of God- Paul told the Corinthians,

1 Corinthians 2:1&2

2 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

... and later in that same inspired Epistle, Paul said,

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

But every genuine Believer, no matter how gifted or mature, has human Limitations and Weaknesses. Our minds, bodies, and perceptions are always imperfect and weak. Yet, incredibly, God uses us as "*Channels of His redeeming and sustaining Power*" when we strive to serve Him- *obediently*.

Scripture testifies to God's Power in different ways:

- God's *glorious* Power (**Exodus 15:6**)
- God's *irresistible* Power (**Deuteronomy 32:39**)
- God's *unsearchable* Power (**Job 5:9**)
- God's *mighty* Power (**Job 9:4**)
- God's *great* Power (**Psalms 79:11**)
- God's *incomparable* Power (**Psalms 89:8**)
- God's *strong* Power (**Psalms 89:13**)
- God's *everlasting* Power (**Isaiah 26:4**)
- God's *effectual* Power (**Isaiah 43:13**)

⁴ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 21; cf. Origen's *Against Celsus*

⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 21

➤ God's *sovereign* Power (**Romans 9:21**)

The Prophet Jeremiah declared this in **Jeremiah 10:12-16**:

12 It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

13 When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

14 Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

15 They are worthless, a work of mockery; In the time of their punishment they will perish.

16 The portion of Jacob is not like these; For the Maker of all is He, And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; The Lord of hosts is His name.

... and God Himself spoke through that same Prophet in **Jeremiah 27:5** and said,

I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight.

... while the Psalmist admonished,

Psalms 33:6-12

6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

10 The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.

SALVATION

Romans 1:16c

... for it is the power of God for salvation...

The single greatest Manifestation of the Power of God- is NOT the Creation of the Universe; nor is it the mighty Miracles that the Bible describes. The single greatest Display of God's Power is when He brings lost Sinners to Salvation- by transforming their Nature; and giving them Eternal Life through His Son, Jesus, the Christ. And that is why there is so much written about Salvation in the Bible. It is truly the defining Activity of our gracious God.

But look at some odd Statements in the Bible about Salvation:

Psalm 106:4-8

4 Remember me, O Lord, in Your favor toward Your people; Visit me with Your salvation,

5 That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, That I may glory with Your inheritance.

6 We have sinned like our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.

7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

8 Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.

The Apostle used a Greek word (*sooteeria*; Strong's #4991) that was translated into English as, "Salvation". And this word means: *The sum of Benefits and Blessings which Christians, redeemed from all earthly Ills, will enjoy after the visible Return of Jesus from Heaven in the consummated and eternal Kingdom of Heaven.*

5. Why did Paul say, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek"?

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul was NOT the first one to use a phrase like this. When Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman by the well (John 4), He said this:

John 4:21&22

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

This phrase does NOT mean that only Jews can be saved- as some have taught. Rather it simply means that, under the 1st Covenant- God dealt specifically with the Jewish people and almost exclusively with the Nation of Israel. And so, God gave the Jews:

- Their Name (Israel)
- Their Land
- Their Government
- Their Language
- Their Religion
- Their Culture
- God's Law and Commandments

... and God sent His Prophets; His Word; and His Angels- almost *exclusively* to the Jews.

Deuteronomy 10:15

Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 26:18&19

**18 “The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments;
19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken.”**

And so, the Point that Jesus was making in **John 4:22** and that Paul was making in **Romans 1:16** is that, *above all the other Peoples of the world*- the Jews knew about God; and the Jews had the Information that everybody needed in order to be saved.

Sadly, not all Jews were chosen by God for Salvation- even though they were fully Jewish; even though they could trace their Lineage back to Father Abraham; and even though many of them had been circumcised. So, who were the Jews who were chosen? The ones who believed; the ones who loved God; and the ones who struggled to obey Him. The others were not chosen; and they perished in Hell.

And this is true today. Under the infinitely superior New Covenant- Ethnicity; Race; Nationality; and Culture are completely irrelevant. And all those who are chosen by God- will *eventually* come to Jesus for Salvation- whether they are a Jew or a Gentile. And those who don't come to Jesus for Salvation- prove by their continued Rebellion and Disbelief- that they are not chosen. And that is also true- whether they are a Jew or a Gentile. So, it is possible for a *natural* Jew to be a *spiritual* Gentile (an Unbeliever); and for a *natural* Gentile to be a *spiritual* Jew (a Believer).

Romans 2:25-29

25 For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

27 And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Jesus was born as a Jew. And He ministered first to the “House of Israel” and told His Apostles to minister *first*- to the Jew ONLY.

Matthew 10:5&6

5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;

6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

There are some within the modern church who object to terms like, “Salvation” or “Being saved”. And they teach that these terms are “out of date” and practically meaningless to modern people. But the word, “Salvation” is God's term, and there is no better one to describe what He offers fallen Mankind through the finished Work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, and Jesus alone- people can be “saved” (rescued/delivered/healed) from Sin; from satan; from eternal Judgment; from God’s just Wrath against our Sin; and from eternal, spiritual Death.

The Reality is that people are continually looking for Salvation- in one form or another. Some look for “*economic Salvation*”; others for “*political or social Salvation*”; and still others look for “*physical Salvation*” from Disease or Disability. Some look for some form of “*inner Salvation*” from the Guilt; Frustrations; and general Unhappiness that they endure- based on a sinful Life.

Way before Jesus or Paul was ever born- Greek philosophy had turned inward and begun to focus on changing Mankind’s “inner Life” through moral Reform and Self-discipline. William Barclay tells us that the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus called his lecture room “*the hospital for sick souls*.” Another famous Greek philosopher named Epicurus called his teaching “*the medicine of salvation*.” Seneca, a Roman statesman and philosopher and contemporary of Paul, taught that all men were looking, “*ad salute*” (“toward Salvation”). He taught that people in every status of Life are overwhelmingly conscious of their own inherent Weakness and Insufficiency in necessary things; and that we therefore need “*a hand let down to lift us up*”⁶

Salvation of the soul- by God’s Grace and through the Gift of “*saving Faith*” in the finished Work of Jesus Christ is God's powerful Hand, as it were, that He has let down to lift us up. This Salvation brings complete Deliverance from the spiritual Infection of “**this perverse generation**” (**The Acts 2:40**), from Lostness (**Matthew 18:11**), from Sin (**Matthew 1:21**), and from the Wrath of God (**Romans 5:9**). It brings Deliverance to people from their gross and willful spiritual Ignorance (**Hosea 4:6; 2Thessalonians 1:8**), from their “evil Self-indulgence (**Luke 14:26**), and from the Darkness of all false Religion (**Colossians 1:13; 1Peter 2:9**); but only for those who truly believe.

FAITH

Romans 1:16d

... to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The sovereign Power of God working through the Gospel brings Salvation to everyone who believes. The Greek word for “**believes**” as used here is (*Pisteuæ*; Strong’s #4100); and it has to do with trusting in; relying on; having Faith in. And when used in the New Testament of Salvation, this word is usually in the *present, continuous form*, which could literally be translated as “*is believing*”- which denotes an Action that is *ongoing* and NOT something that is only carried out one time.

The Reality is that all of our daily Lives is filled with “Acts of Faith” in one way or another. For example, we put our foot on the brake pedal- in Faith that the car will stop. We board an airplane- in Faith that it won’t crash. And in spite of the occasional Disaster- we trust cars, buses, trains, and airplanes to get us safely to our Destination. People could not survive

⁶ *The Letter to the Romans* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], p. 19.

without having implicit Trust in a great many things. Virtually all of Life requires a “natural Faith”- that even Lost people have. But the Faith that Paul speaks of here- is a “supernatural Faith”- a Faith that is gracious given by God- that Lost people do NOT have. And that is why the Apostle Paul called this “saving Faith” a “**Gift of God**”- that is “**not of yourselves**” in **Ephesians 2:8&9**:

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

NASU

... so, “Eternal Life” is both gained and lived, “*by Faith*” from God in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is so fascinating about biblical Christianity is that, unlike any other religion or Philosophy- God does NOT ask us to Behave first- but to Believe first. All of the “Behaving” with Christianity is carried out AFTER we experience the Miracle of the New Birth. So, the godly Life we endeavor to live out- is actually a humble and joyful (and sometimes weak) Response to the sovereign Work that God has already done in our hearts to give us a new Nature (Born Again); make us fit for Heaven (Justification); and adopt us into God’s Family (Adoption).

The Truth is that all of our Efforts at “right Behavior” always falls woefully short of God’s perfect Standard- which testifies loudly that no one can save himself by his own “Good Works”. Good Works are commanded- but they are the “Product”; the “Fruit” of Salvation (**Ephesians 2:10**), but they are NOT the “Root” or the “Means” of it.

Salvation is not merely professing to be a Christian; nor is it Baptism; moral Reform; attending Church; receiving Sacraments; or even living a Life of Self-discipline and Sacrifice. Salvation is believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and trusting that His finished Work in living a sinless Life; Dying a vicarious Death; and literally rising from the Dead- is enough to forgive ALL of our Sins and make us Righteous (fit for Heaven). Salvation comes through giving up on our own Goodness; our own Works; our own Knowledge; our own Wisdom; and trusting in the finished, perfect Work of Jesus Christ.

And that means that Salvation has no national; racial; or ethnic Barrier as the Old Covenant promoted- but is given to every person who believes- “**to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**” We always need to remember that it was to the Jew *first chronologically*- because Jews were God’s specially chosen people, through whom He ordained Salvation to come (**John 4:22**). And that is why the Messiah came *first* to the “**lost sheep of the House of Israel**” (**Matthew 15:24**). The great Scottish Evangelist

Robert Haldane (28 February 1764- 12 December 1842) wrote,

“From the days of Abraham, their great progenitor, the Jews had been highly distinguished from all the rest of the world by their many and great privileges. It was their high distinction that of them Christ came, ‘**who is over all, God blessed forever.**’ They were thus, as His kinsmen, the royal family of the human race, in this respect higher than all others, and they inherited Emmanuel’s land. While, therefore, the evangelical covenant, and consequently justification and salvation, equally regarded all believers, the Jews held the first rank as the ancient people of God, while the other nations were strangers from the covenants of promise. The preaching of the Gospel was to be

addressed to them first, and, at the beginning, to them alone, **Matt 10:6**; for, during the abode of Jesus Christ upon earth, He was the minister only of the circumcision, **Rom 15:8**. 'I am not sent,' He says, 'but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'; and He commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, '**beginning at Jerusalem.**'... Thus, while Jews and Gentiles were united in the participation of the Gospel, the Jews were not deprived of their rank, since they were the first called." The preaching of the Gospel to the Jews first served various important Ends. It fulfilled Old Testament Prophecies, as **Isaiah 2:3** that says,

Isaiah 2:3

And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

It manifested the Compassion of the Lord Jesus for those who shed His Blood, to whom, after His Resurrection, He commanded His Gospel to be first proclaimed. It showed that it was to be preached to the "chief of Sinners", and proved the sovereign efficacy of His Atonement in expatiating [sic] the guilt even of His murderers. It was fit, too, that the Gospel should be begun to be preached where the great transactions took place on which it was founded and established; and this furnished an example of the way in which it is the will of the Lord that His Gospel should be propagated by His disciples, beginning in their own houses and their own country."⁷

6. What did Paul mean by the phrase, "For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith"?

When I began studying the **Epistle to the Romans** back in the early 2000's- I would have bet money that the most common word or phrase or Concept in the entire Book would have been "Grace". But I was surprised to discover that the most common word or phrase or Concept in this Epistle is "*Righteousness*". Now why is that?

Today, there is hardly any mention at all of "Righteousness"- either in or out of the Church. And yet, Righteousness is a major component of Salvation. In fact- Righteousness is a Requirement in order to enter into Heaven. Most of the time, when the subject of Salvation comes up- it has been "watered down" to be that we tell lost people:

"Just accept Jesus into your Heart"

... which cannot be found anywhere in the Bible.

What we *should* teach lost people- is that they **MUST** do two things in order to become Righteous:

1. Repent of all Sin
2. Trust in Jesus and in His finished Work

⁷ *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* [MacDill AFB, Fla.: MacDonald Publishing Co., 1958], p. 48

... and this is the “Step” within the greater Work of Salvation called, “*Justification*”. And Justification follows after the “Step” of the “*New Birth*”- which is the sovereign Miracle of God- whereby God the Holy Spirit gives “new, spiritual Life” to the spiritually Dead individual. And it is in the Miracle of the New Birth that we are given all that we need in order to Repent and Believe. And this powerful Miracle was foretold many years *before* Jesus was born.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

**31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.
33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

Ezekiel 36:22-27

**22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.
23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.
24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.
25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

Now these Prophecies describe for us (in Old Testament language) what God will sovereignly do “in” us and “for” us in the Miracle of the New Birth. But notice in both of these Old Testament Prophecies, that God Himself is the ONLY one- who is busy doing all that is written here. The individual does NOTHING! And look again at the Basis by which God does all of this:

Ezekiel 36:22&23

22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

The “Name” of God; or the Reputation of God; or the Glory of God; or the Holiness of God had been “profaned” in front of the Nations of the world- by the people of God. How? Because the people of God did NOT *enjoy* God. They had not put their *Delight* in God. Now many of the Old Testament Jews feared God. And some even performed great Exploits in the earth based on that Fear.

But for the most part- the Old Testament Jew did NOT *love* God; and they found no Joy in obeying Him. So, to the lost, Gentile (non-Jewish) world- the one, true, and living God looked like all the other false deities they knew. Their false gods didn’t care about the people and yet they expected absolute Obedience. And so, the false deities of the world had the Reputation of being Cruel and Harsh and Mean and Uncaring.

But the one true God was NOT like that. He DID care. And His Love and Mercy knew no End. But because the “children of Israel” did NOT serve him- GLADLY- they gave the entire world the impression that the God of the Jews was not different from what they were accustomed to.

So, God as angry because He was being *incorrectly* portrayed by His own people. So, they were “*taking the ‘Name’ of God- in Vain*”. In other words, they were testifying many things about God that was NOT true and thus- they were guilty of Blasphemy.

So, in order to “**vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst**”- God said He was going to do something amazing; something spectacular; something that ONLY God could do. Why?

... Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

So, what was this spectacular, powerful, breathtaking thing that God was going to do in order to “**vindicate the Holiness of my great Name**”? He was going to bring in the infinitely superior New Covenant that would do something unheard of:

Ezekiel 36:24-27

24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Jeremiah 31:33&34

33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

... and please take note of **Ezekiel 36:27** again:

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

So, the **ONLY** Reason the people of the New Covenant will obey God (observe His Ordinances)- is because.. **“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes”**. And this is simply another way of saying what the Prophet said in **Jeremiah 31:34**:

They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

So, the Old Covenant had to do with:

You (the people) do this- and I (God) will do that...

... in other words, the Old Covenant taught:

IF we do our Part (first)- then (and **ONLY** then) will God do His part.

... which, in effect, made the Old Covenant a Covenant based on human Performance. And that is what made the Old Covenant to be *“Weak”*- because it was predicated on the Ability of human Flesh to obey.

And this is why we **MUST** be born all over again- NOT that we enter the second time into our Mother’s Womb- but that our soul- which was **“dead” in Transgressions and Sins (Ephesians 2:1)**- receives new, spiritual Life- *directly* from God the Holy Spirit.

John 3:1-21

3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

12 If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

13 No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Romans 8:3-10

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

1Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

1Peter 1:20-23

20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

... and this is why in the “*Nicene Creed*”- the Leaders of the early Church said that God, the Holy Spirit was:

“The Lord, the Giver of Life”

... they were referring to the New Birth whereby God the Holy Spirit gives our dead soul- new, spiritual Life- which opens our eyes; unstops our ears; and takes out of us a stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh (the Gift of saving Faith)- so we now have both the Power and the Desire to Repent and Believe.