

Romans Chapter One

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Overview

In the first 17 verses of chapter one, Paul gave a synopsis of the gospel or “good message” and his role in delivering it: “Paul ... separated unto the gospel of God” (v. 1); “I serve with my spirit [*breath*] in the gospel of his Son” (v. 9); “I am ready to preach the gospel” (v. 15); “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (v. 16). The gospel originated with God Himself, “the gospel of God” (v. 1), and was delivered to the world by His Son, “the gospel of his Son” (v. 9). And Paul had been sent by God’s Son to preach His message to all nations, “called *to be* an apostle” (v. 1), “apostleship, for obedience to the faith [*faithfulness*] among all nations” (v. 5).

The rest of the chapter beginning with verse 18 can only be understood as speaking specifically to God’s own people. God had shown them His wrath and judgment upon sin, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” (v. 18), leaving them without excuse for their sin. And He had shown them His message hidden within the creation narrative, “from the creation of the world” (v. 20), leaving them without excuse for rejecting His Son, “so that they are without excuse” (v. 20). Paul was laying the groundwork here before proceeding to his conclusions in the next chapter about God’s judgment upon His own people and upon the whole world.

Faithful servants of Jesus Christ

“Paul, **a servant of Jesus Christ**, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God” (v. 1). Jesus Christ taught extensively about faithful servants as it applies to our faithful service to Him as Lord: “No man can **serve** two masters” (Mat 6:24); “The disciple is not above *his* master, nor **the servant** above his lord” (Mat 10:24); “So **the servants** of the householder came” (Mat 13:27); “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of **his servants**” (Mat 18:23); “And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent **his servants** to the husbandmen” (Mat 21:34); “And sent forth **his servants** to call them that were bidden to the wedding” (Mat 22:3); “Who then is **a faithful and wise servant**” (Mat 24:45); “Well done, *thou* good and **faithful servant**” (Mat 25:21); “And at the season he sent to the husbandmen **a servant**” (Mar 12:2); “*For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to **his servants**” (Mar 13:34); “Who then is that **faithful and wise steward**” (Luk 12:42); “And sent **his servant** at supper time” (Luk 14:17); “He that is **faithful** in that which is least is **faithful** also in much” (Luk 16:10); “No **servant** can serve two masters” (Luk 16:13); “We are unprofitable **servants**” (Luk 17:10); “Well, *thou* good **servant**: because *thou* hast been **faithful** in a very little” (Luk 19:17); “And at the season he sent **a servant** to the husbandmen” (Luk 20:10); “If any man **serve me**” (Jhn 12:26); “**The servant** is not greater than his lord (Jhn 13:16,15:20).

There are many places in Scripture where God’s people were either called or called themselves “servants” and “faithful”: “Hast thou considered **my servant Job**” (Job 1:8,2:3); “**My servant Moses** is not so, who *is* **faithful** in all mine house” (Num 12:7); “I have found **David my servant**; with my holy oil have I anointed” (Psa 89:20); “Remember ye the law of **Moses my servant**” (Mal 4:4); “And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of **his servant David**” (Luk 1:69); “Who by the mouth of **thy servant David** hast said” (Act 4:25); “grant unto **thy servants**” (Act 4:29); “If ye have judged me to be **faithful to the Lord**” (Act 16:15); “Paul, **a servant of**

Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:1); "Moreover it is required in **stewards**, that a man be found **faithful**" (1Co 4:2); "Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and **faithful in the Lord**" (1Co 4:17); "one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be **faithful**" (1Co 7:25); "if I yet pleased men, I should not be **the servant of Christ**" (Gal 1:10); "So then they which be of faith are blessed with **faithful Abraham**" (Gal 3:9); "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to **the faithful in Christ Jesus**" (Eph 1:1); "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as **the servants of Christ**" (Eph 6:6); "Tychicus, a beloved brother and **faithful minister in the Lord**" (Eph 6:21); "Paul and Timotheus, **the servants of Jesus Christ**" (Phl 1:1); "To the saints and **faithful brethren in Christ** which are at Colosse" (Col 1:2); "Epaphras our dear **fellowservant**, who is for you **a faithful minister of Christ**" (Col 1:7); "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and **a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord**" (Col 4:7); "With Onesimus, **a faithful** and beloved brother, who is *one* of you" (Col 4:9); "Epaphras, who is *one* of you, **a servant of Christ**" (Col 4:12); "And **the servant of the Lord** must not strive" (2Ti 2:24); "Paul, **a servant of God**, and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (Tit 1:1); "James, **a servant of God** and of **the Lord Jesus Christ**" (Jas 1:1); "but as **the servants of God**" (1Pe 2:16); "Simon Peter, **a servant** and an apostle of **Jesus Christ**" (2Pe 1:1); "Jude, **the servant of Jesus Christ**" (Jde 1:1); "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto **his servants**" (Rev 1:1); "to teach and to seduce **my servants**" (Rev 2:20); "And they sing the song of Moses **the servant of God**" (Rev 15:3); "**his servants** shall serve him" (Rev 22:3).

There isn't, however, one place in Scripture where God's people ever called themselves "believers" as we're taught to do today. There are two places in the King James Version where mistranslated statements imply this, "And **believers [pisteuō 4100]** were the more added to the Lord" (Act 5:14), "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the **believers [pistos 4103]**" (1Ti 4:12). The verb *pisteuo* and adjective *pistos* were both incorrectly rendered into English as the noun "believers."

The problem is far more pervasive in newer Bible Versions. The New International Version, for example, calls Christians "believers" over 50 times with about half of the occurrences in the book of Acts alone. Here are just the first five: "In those days Peter stood up among **the believers**" (Act 1:15 NIV); "All **the believers** were together and had everything in common" (Act 2:44 NIV); "All **the believers** were one in heart and mind" (Act 4:32 NIV); "And all **the believers** used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade" (Act 5:12 NIV); "When they arrived, they prayed for **the new believers** there that they might receive the Holy Spirit [*breath*]" (Act 8:15 NIV). The American Standard Version calls Christians "believers" 4 times, the English Standard Version 15 times, the New English Translation about 25 times, and the New Living Translation about 175 times. It's fishy when one Version has "believers" 2 times, another 4, another 15, another 25, another 50, and another 175!

Furthermore, God's people under the Old Covenant were never required to believe anything. There's nothing in the Scriptures about them needing to have faith or to believe. That "Abraham believed [*trusted*] God" (4:4) is a mistranslation. And "By faith [*faithfulness*] Abel" (Heb 11:4), "By faith [*faithfulness*] Enoch" (Heb 11:5), "By faith [*faithfulness*] Noah" (Heb 11:7), "By faith [*faithfulness*] Abraham" (Heb 11:8), are also mistranslations. Since those that lived before Christ weren't required to believe or have faith, then if salvation truly is by faith, how could they have been saved? Did Abel, Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Hannah, David, Isaiah, and Daniel all perish?

That God's people are consistently called "faithful" and "servants" in Scripture but never "believers" is enough to raise serious suspicion about the "gospel" message being preached today. We're being taught that salvation is by faith and ONLY by faith. It's packaged as the doctrine of *sola fide*, Latin for "faith alone." But obviously "faith alone" or "only faith" utterly excludes everything else including faithfulness and service! It exposes itself as false because if it's truly alone then it doesn't matter how any of us live. The most hardened and

unrepentant criminals don't need to do anything but simply believe to be saved. Thus, "faith alone" is self-defeating because it's truly not alone. To mitigate this glaring dilemma, its advocates push the convoluted logic that "faith alone" is never alone—it somehow produces holy living and faithful service. But such an absurdity is a red flag of desperation to push the doctrine of "faith alone."

Paul, called to be an apostle

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle [**apostolos 652**], separated unto the gospel of God" (v. 1). The Greek noun *apostolos* is simply one that is sent by another as a delegate with a message. This word is even used of Jesus Christ Himself sent by God into this world to deliver His message, "**the Apostle [apostolos 652]**" and High Priest of our profession, **Christ Jesus**" (Heb 3:1).

Among Christ's 12 apostles, Paul was unique in that he hadn't walked with Christ during His ministry on earth, and that he had been sent on a different mission with what seemed to be a different message. But what he was sent to preach wasn't at all different than what Christ Himself preached. It was simply the message to the Gentiles that only he had been sent with: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before **the Gentiles**, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Act 9:15); "I will send thee far hence unto **the Gentiles**" (Act 22:21); "**the Gentiles**, unto whom now I send thee" (Act 26:17); "**the gospel of the uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter" (Gal 2:7); "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for **you Gentiles**" (Eph 3:1); "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of **the Gentiles**" (1Ti 2:7); "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of **the Gentiles**" (2Ti 1:11).

Twice in Romans Paul used the term "my gospel," "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to **my gospel**" (2:16), "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to **my gospel**" (16:25). It was "his" gospel in the sense that he was the lone apostle among the 12 sent with the message to the Gentiles, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as **I am the apostle of the Gentiles**" (11:13).

The gospel of God

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto **the gospel [euangelion 2098] of God**" (v. 1). The Greek noun *euangelion* and its verb form *euangelizō* consists of the adverb *eu* for "do good" or "do well" and the masculine noun *angelos* for "ambassador," "courier," "emissary," or "messenger." The adverb *eu* appears only six times in the New Testament: "Well done [*eu* 2095], *thou* good and faithful servant" (Mat 25:21); "Well done [*eu* 2095], good and faithful servant" (Mat 25:23); "ye may do them good [*eu* 2095]" (Mar 14:7); "Well [*eu* 2095], *thou* good servant: because thou hast been faithful" (Luk 19:17); "if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well [*eu* 2095]" (Act 15:29); "That it may be well [*eu* 2095] with thee" (Eph 6:3). The Greek *angelos* appears over 180 times both for angelic beings and human beings functioning as messengers, "**the angel [angelos 32]** of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream" (Mat 1:20), "**angels [angelos 32]** came and ministered unto him" (Mat 4:11), "Behold, I send **my messenger [angelos 32]** before thy face" (Mat 11:10), "And when the **messengers [angelos 32] of John** were departed" (Luk 7:24). Therefore, *euangelion* is literally "good message."

Rather than transliterating *euangelion* into English as “evangelism” in every occurrence, it has been widely translated into the coined and meaningless word “gospel.” When asked what “gospel” means it’s then defined as “good news” instead of “good message.” What has happened is that the broader meaning of *euangelion* has been diminished by replacing this word with something meaningless that can then be instilled with a narrower meaning. While news is strictly a report of information, a message is communication from another person that can also include many other things such as: the reality of things; events that are to come; revelation of what was previously unknown; what is demanded or required; the consequences for actions; assurance, comfort, and hope. The *euangelion* or “gospel” isn’t just a report of news from God, it’s a message from God about who He is, who His Son is, the love He has for us, what truth is, what is required of us, the consequences for our actions, and the hope set before us.

By translating *euangelion* as “gospel” and limiting it to only “good news,” such statements as “But they have not all **obeyed the gospel [euangelion 2098]**” (10:16), “them that know not God, and that **obey not the gospel [euangelion 2098]** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Th 1:8), are puzzling. Obey the news? When we read the newspaper we don’t think to ourselves about obeying it. Thus, “gospel” as “good news” expunges the directive of obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord from the message He preached. We’re being taught today that all we must do to be saved is believe the good news!

Furthermore, Paul’s climactic statement later in his letter, “That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt **believe [trust] in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**” (10:9), is deemed a “faith confession” rather than a “faithfulness commitment.” But in context, it’s pledging ourselves to be faithful to Him as our Lord in obedience to the message He preached, “obeyed the gospel [euangelion]” (10:16). Salvation is by obeying Him as Lord and trusting God with all our heart.

The writings of the prophets

“Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures” (v. 2). By quoting extensively from the writings of the prophets, Paul is going to show in his letter that the gospel he was preaching is “the gospel of God.” At the end of his letter he stated, “by the scriptures of the prophets” (16:26), or “prophetic Scriptures” (DBY, NET, NKJV), “prophetic writings” (NIV, YLT). It isn’t that the men themselves were prophetic but that their writings are. That the gospel is from God Himself and not from men is apparent by His message being hidden since the beginning, “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (16:25). God hid His gospel message within the writings of the prophets and didn’t allow even them to understand what they wrote, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently” (1Pe 1:10). Although Daniel didn’t understand his own writing, “And I heard, but **I understood not**: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?*” (Dan 12:8), we can read and understand, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by **Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (**whoso readeth, let him understand**:)” (Mat 24:15). The Scriptures themselves are “prophetic writings.”

The prophets declared, “I will open my mouth in a **parable**: I will utter **dark sayings** of old” (Psa 78:2), “To **understand** a proverb, and the **interpretation**; the words of the wise, and their **dark sayings**” (Pro 1:6). Their sayings were “dark” in the sense that nobody understood the gospel message kept secret within what they wrote until Jesus shined the “light” for our understanding, “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in **parables**; I will utter things which have been **kept secret** from the

foundation of the world” (Mat 13:34-35). Matthew quoted from Psalm 78 and interchanged “dark” with “kept secret.” Therefore, “light” is the revealing of what had been hidden or kept secret from our understanding since the beginning—God’s gospel message.

Chapter nine is undoubtedly the pinnacle of Paul revealing God’s gospel within the “prophetic writings.” All of his quotations from the Scriptures in that chapter had never been understood for what they really meant: “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (9:7); “At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son” (9:9); “The elder shall serve the younger” (9:12); “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (9:13); “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (9:15); “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” (9:17). Thus, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect” (9:6), is that all the quotes that follow are the gospel that God “kept secret” but took effect or accomplished through Jesus Christ. And Paul led each quote with such statements as “For this *is* the word of promise” (9:9), “It was said unto her” (9:12), “As it is written” (9:13), “For he saith to Moses” (9:15), “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh” (9:17), to indicate that these were “prophetic writings” through which the word of God had indeed taken effect.

The Seed of David

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ [*christos* 5547] our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (v. 3). The Greek *christos* transliterated into English as “Christ” is the equivalent of the Hebrew *māšîaḥ* transliterated as “Messiah.” Its verb form *māšaḥ* means “to anoint,” “to rub,” or “to smear.” It was used of Samuel anointing with oil both Saul and David to be kings, “Then Samuel took **a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head**, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath **anointed [māšaḥ 4886] thee to be captain over his inheritance?**” (1Sa 10:1), “Then Samuel took **the horn of oil, and anointed [māšaḥ 4886] him** in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit [*breath*] of the LORD came upon David from that day forward” (1Sa 16:13). It was also used in a prophecy about the Son of God being anointed with oil by His God, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore **God, thy God, hath anointed [māšaḥ 4886] thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows**” (Psa 45:7). “Christ” is Jesus’ title. He is the Christ, or literally the Anointed One.

That Jesus Christ is “the seed of David according to the flesh” is that He is David’s physical descendant through his son Nathan by birth from His mother Mary, “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being **(as was supposed) the son of Joseph** ... which was *the son* of **Nathan**, which was *the son* of **David**” (Luk 3:23,31). And He is David’s legal Heir to the throne through his son Solomon by His adopted father Joseph, “Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham ... David the king begat **Solomon** ... **Joseph the husband of Mary**, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Mat 1:1,6,16). Thus, He meets the requirements to be the Anointed One or the King sitting upon David’s throne.

Because He descended physically from David, He is “the seed of David according to the flesh.” But because He didn’t descend from him through Solomon, the curse upon David’s royal lineage at the generation of Jehonias or Coniah (Jer 22:30) didn’t extend to Him. And because Joseph was His legal father, the right to David’s throne through Solomon was His.

Before David had fathered either Solomon or Nathan, God had told him, “I will set up **thy seed** after thee, which shall proceed **out of thy bowels**, and I will establish his kingdom ... **I will be his father**, and he shall be my son” (2Sa 7:12,14), “I will raise up **thy seed** after thee, which shall be **of thy sons**; and I will establish his

kingdom ... **I will be his father**, and he shall be my son” (1Ch 17:11,13). But how was this possible? How could David father a son out of his own bowels yet God would be His Father? Of course this could only be through a virgin birth. Jesus came out of David’s bowels from His mother Mary but no man is His father—God is His Father.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter mightily convinced about 3,000 Jewish men that Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord and the Christ promised to David. His first point was that Jesus’ abundance of miracles, wonders, and signs could only have been done by God, “Jesus of Nazareth, a man **approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him** in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Act 2:22). That had been an indisputable fact: “thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (Jhn 3:2); “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this *man* hath done?” (Jhn 7:31); “If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (Jhn 9:33).

Peter’s next point was that right then and there in Jerusalem, all could see for themselves that Jesus’ tomb was empty while David’s was still occupied, “the patriarch **David**, that he is both dead and buried, and **his sepulchre is with us unto this day**” (Act 2:29). David himself had prophesied in Psalm 16, “for he is **on my right hand**, that I should not be moved ... Because thou wilt not leave **my soul in hell [hadēs 86]**, neither wilt thou suffer **thine Holy One to see corruption**” (Act 2:25,27). The Greek *hadēs* translated here as “hell” isn’t a spiritual place of torment in fire but simply an earthly grave or tomb where a dead body is buried. Peter explained, “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that **of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh**, he would raise up **Christ to sit on his throne**; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in **hell [hadēs 86]**, **neither his flesh did see corruption**” (Act 2:30-31). David prophesied that someone would go their grave but wouldn’t be left there “to see corruption” or decomposition of their body. Therefore, David’s prophecy certainly wasn’t about himself because his tomb could be opened to reveal his remains. And nobody since David satisfied that prophecy except for Jesus which His disciples all testified is alive, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Act 2:32).

Furthermore, David also said in that Psalm “he is on my right hand” (Act 2:25). Peter argued that the miraculous sign of instant fluency in foreign languages being witnessed publicly that day was from Jesus Christ Himself presently at God’s right hand in heaven, “Therefore **being by the right hand of God** exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, **he hath shed forth this**, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:33). Of course “David is not ascended into the heavens” (Act 2:34), because his body was still in his tomb. It was in another Psalm that David explained this.

David wrote in Psalm 110, “The LORD said unto **my Lord**, Sit thou on my **right hand**” (Act 2:34). And before Jesus Christ died, was buried, resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of God, He quoted David’s prophecy and stumped the Jewish leaders with a question, “If David then **call him Lord**, how is he **his son?**” (Mat 22:45), “David therefore himself **calleth him Lord**; and whence is he *then* **his son?**” (Mar 12:37), “David therefore **calleth him Lord**, how is he then **his son?**” (Luk 20:44). It’s no problem that David called “my lord” his own father-in-law King Saul, “David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, **My lord the king**” (1Sa 24:8), “And Saul knew David’s voice, and said, *Is this thy voice*, my son David? And David said, *It is my voice*, **my lord, O king.**” (1Sa 26:17). Likewise, everyone called the King “my lord.” But no king ever called “my lord” any descendant of his. So then, since David knew the Messiah would be descended from him, why did he call Him “my Lord”? This conundrum could only be satisfied in Jesus of Nazareth.

After having been seated at God's right hand, Jesus Christ declared, "I am the root and the offspring of David" (Rev 22:16). Roots support the tree so that even if a tree is cut down to just a stump, its roots can still cause a shoot to come forth from it, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa 11:1), "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (NIV). Although David's dynasty was cut down to a stump by the curse upon his descendant Jechonias, a shoot sprung forth out of the stump by nourishment from its roots. Christ is both the Root and the Shoot because He is both before and after David. Therefore, David called his Descendant "my Lord" because, although He descended after him, He was before him and is greater than him.

Peter's conclusion that day, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ**" (Act 2:36). Since David himself called Him "my Lord," all must also call Him "my Lord" to be saved and forgiven, "whosoever shall **call on the name of the Lord** shall be saved" (Act 2:21).

Declared to be the Son of God

When Paul said, "And **declared to be the Son of God** with power, according to the spirit [*breath*] of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**" (v. 4), he was referring to what God "had **promised** afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures" (v. 2), "**I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee**" (Psa 2:7). Paul preached in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, "**the promise** which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath **raised up Jesus again**; as it is also written in the second psalm, **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee**. And as concerning that he **raised him up from the dead**" (Act 13:32-34). The prophecy in Psalm 2 "**this day have I begotten thee**," was about the third day from Christ's death: "raised again the third day" (Mat 16:21); "the third day he shall be raised again" (Mat 17:23); "the third day he shall rise again" (Mat 20:19); "he shall rise the third day" (Mar 9:31); "the third day he shall rise again" (Mar 10:34); "raised the third day" (Luk 9:22); "the third day I shall be perfected" (Luk 13:32); "the third day he shall rise again" (Luk 18:33); "the third day rise again" (Luk 24:7); "rise from the dead the third day" (Luk 24:46); "Him God raised up the third day" (Act 10:40); "he rose again the third day" (1Co 15:4).

The day of Christ's resurrection was the "day have I begotten thee." However, it wasn't a literal begetting but only figurative. His resurrection was a "birth" in the sense that He came to life after having died, "the **firstborn [prōtotokos 4416]** from the dead" (Col 1:18), "the **first begotten [prōtotokos 4416] of the dead** ... I *am* he that **liveth, and was dead**; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:5,18). As "the firstborn," He is the Heir and the prototype of many more to come, "the **firstborn [prōtotokos 4416]** among many brethren" (8:29).

Many times Jesus claimed that God was His Father and that He was His Son: "no man knoweth **the Son**, but **the Father**" (Mat 11:27); "For **the Son** of man shall come in the glory of **his Father**" (Mat 16:27); "For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**" (Jhn 3:16); "**The Father** loveth **the Son**" (Jhn 3:35); "For **the Father** loveth **the Son**" (Jhn 5:20); "That all *men* should honour **the Son**, even as they honour **the Father**" (Jhn 5:23); "Dost thou believe on **the Son of God**?" (Jhn 9:35); "I said, **I am the Son of God**" (Jhn 10:36); "that **the Son of God** might be glorified thereby" (Jhn 11:4); "that **the Father** may be glorified in **the Son**" (Jhn 14:13); "glorify **thy Son**, that **thy Son** also may glorify thee" (Jhn 17:1).

It was His claim to be the Son of God that was eventually used against Him to put Him to death: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, **the Son of God**. Jesus saith unto him, **Thou hast said**” (Mat 26:63-64); “Then said they all, Art thou then **the Son of God**? And he said unto them, **Ye say that I am**. And they said, **What need we any further witness?**” (Luk 22:70-71); “We have a law, and **by our law he ought to die**, because he made himself **the Son of God**” (Jhn 19:7). And the people present at His crucifixion repeated His claim, “If thou be **the Son of God**, come down from the cross” (Mat 27:40); “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, **I am the Son of God**” (Mat 27:43); “Truly this was **the Son of God**” (Mat 27:54).

Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God and died for His claim. God raising Him from the dead vindicated His claim. The event of His resurrection, therefore, testifies that He is indeed God’s Son, “declared *to be* the Son of God ... by the resurrection from the dead.”

The breath of holiness

“And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to **the spirit [pneuma 4151] of holiness [hagiōsynē 42]**, by the resurrection from the dead” (v. 4). The combination of Holy [*hagios* 40] Spirit [*pneuma* 4151] appears over 200 times in the New Testament. It’s composed of the adjective *hagios* modifying the noun *pneuma*. But it’s only here in this one place where “spirit [*pneuma* 4151] of holiness [*hagiōsynē* 42]” are both nouns. The noun *hagiōsynē* is possessive of the other noun *pneuma*. It’s literally “breath of holiness” or “holiness’ breath.” Young’s Literal Translation has it more accurately as “Spirit [*breath*] of sanctification” (YLT). Holiness or sanctification is “a setting apart” or “a separation” as Paul used it when writing to the Corinthians, “Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**” (2Co 6:17), “perfecting **holiness [hagiōsynē 42]** in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1).

The “Spirit [*breath*] of sanctification” (YLT) is that Christ’s resurrection from the dead by God’s breath, separated or set Him apart from everyone else as the Son of God. In His dying words, He committed His breath to His Father, “Father, into thy hands **I commend my spirit [breath]**: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [*exhaled*]” (Luk 23:46). He trusted that His Father would breathe life back into His body: “For the law of **the Spirit [breath] of life in Christ Jesus**” (8:2); “**the Spirit [breath] of him** that raised up Jesus from the dead” (8:11); “being put to death in the flesh, but **quickened by the Spirit [breath]**” (1Pe 3:18). The Father breathing life back into Him on the third day set Him apart as His Son and declared to the universe “**Thou art my Son;** this day have I begotten thee.”

Paul wrote to Timothy that “God was manifest [*phanaroō* 5319] in the flesh, justified in the Spirit [*breath*]” (1Ti 3:16). He wasn’t saying that Jesus Christ is God Himself in the flesh. The Greek verb *phanaroō* for “manifest” means “to reveal” or “to make known.” The Son of God became flesh and made His Father God known to the world, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **he hath declared him**” (Jhn 1:18). He represented His Father to such perfection that He could say “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Jhn 14:9). He was the equivalence of Him, “Christ, who is the image of God” (2Co 4:4), “Who is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).

That He was “justified in the Spirit [*breath*]” is that He was vindicated by God breathing life back into Him. God justified Him from all of the accusations, plots, and traps leveled against Him by the religious leaders during His ministry, and from the false charges that ultimately sentenced Him to death. His resurrection was God’s

seal upon Him as “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jhn 14:6). If anything He had claimed, preached, or taught wasn’t true, He wouldn’t have been raised. Therefore, He was “justified in the Spirit [*breath*]” as having represented God perfectly. He truly is the only way of salvation, the only arbiter of the truth, and the only hope of eternal life.

God’s favor toward His people

“By whom we have received **grace [*charis* 5485]** and apostleship” (v. 5), “**Grace [*charis* 5485]** to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 7). The Greek *charis* is typically translated as the generic word “grace” but simply means “favor.” It would have helped our understanding if it had been rendered consistently throughout the New Testament as “favor.” Sadly, there’s a sinister reason it wasn’t—it was to hinder our understanding. Paul used *charis* twice at the beginning of his letter, three more times in chapters three and four, then a total of ten times in chapters five and six where he taught about God’s favor extensively.

The Septuagint—a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament prior to Christ—used *charis* when Moses spoke of God’s favor toward him and His people above and beyond all others: “And how shall it surely be known, that **both I and this people have found favour [*charis* 5485] with thee**, except only if thou go with us? So **both I and thy people shall be glorified beyond all the nations**, as many as are upon the earth.” (Exo 33:16-17 Brenton). Thus, *charis* speaks of God’s favor toward His above all other people. Our English “cherish” is derived from it. It can be said that God cherishes His favored people.

Moses and the prophets wrote that God separated His people from all others to be special and treasured: “so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth” (Exo 33:16); “ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” (Exo 19:5); “the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Num 23:9); “For what nation *is there so great*, who *hath* God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for*?” (Deu 4:7); “For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth” (Deu 7:6); “For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth” (Deu 14:2); “And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people” (Deu 26:18); “the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth” (Deu 28:1); “And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself” (2Sa 7:23); “For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth” (1Ki 8:53); “For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure” (Psa 135:4); “He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Psa 147:20).

To be favored by God is to be treated differently by Him in comparison with all other people. God sees His people distinctly from other people as His particular and special treasure. He reckons them separate from others and gives them special treatment!

God’s favor is what John meant by, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace [*favor*] for grace [*favor*]. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace [*favor*] and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Jhn 1:16-17). Other translations have, “grace [*favor*] upon grace [*favor*]” (DBY), “grace [*favor*] in place of grace [*favor*] already given” (NIV), “grace [*favor*] over-against grace [*favor*]” (YLT). The Law of Moses itself didn’t bring God’s

favor—His Son Jesus Christ did. God certainly showed favor to His people under the Old Covenant but this was in anticipation of His Son coming into this world. Those alive when their Messiah came were required to receive Him for “grace [*favor*] in place of grace [*favor*] already given” (NIV). Rejecting God’s own Son would be rejecting God Himself and no longer being favored as one of His people.

Paul and Barnabas preached to the Jews in Antioch, “Now when the congregation was broken up, many of **the Jews and religious proselytes** followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to **continue in the grace [*favor*] of God**” (Act 13:43). Jews had to embrace Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah to “continue in the grace [*favor*] of God,” continue being favored as one of God’s people. Writing to Gentile Christians in Galatia, on the other hand, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen from grace [*favor*]**” (Gal 5:4). The last phrase would be better rendered as “fallen out of favor.” His point was that through Christ, Gentiles were now being favored among God’s people. However, if they were to become circumcised with the intent of placing themselves under the Old Covenant, they would be rejecting the favor they had already been given in Christ and would be fallen from it—they would no longer be favored among His people.

Obedience to the faithfulness

Paul’s parallel statements at the beginning and ending of his letter, “obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] to the faith [*faithfulness*] among all nations [*ethnos* 1484], for his name” (v. 5), “made known to all nations [*ethnos* 1484] for the obedience [*hypakoē* 5218] of faith [*faithfulness*]” (16:26), form the bookends of his message to the Romans. The Greek noun *hypakoē* means “obedience” and its verb form *hypakouō* is “to obey,” as with a servant obeying his master, “Servants, be obedient [*hypakouō* 5219] to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh” (Eph 6:5), “Servants, obey [*hypakouō* 5219] in all things *your* masters according to the flesh” (Col 3:22). Derived from the preposition *hypo* for “under” and verb *akouō* for “to hear,” this word carries the idea of being “under the hearing” of someone. A servant is “under the hearing” of his lord or master in that he’s obligated and required to do whatever he hears him say. As a servant or slave, he has no freedom to do otherwise. If he does otherwise, then he is an unfaithful servant and in danger of being disavowed or disowned. His lord or master can refuse to acknowledge him as it is with the Lord Himself: “And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23); “Verily I say unto you, **I know you not**” (Mat 25:12); “**I know you not** whence ye are” (Luk 13:25,27).

Chapter six in particular defines obedience to Jesus Christ as His servants, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves **servants to obey [*hypakoē* 5218]**, his servants ye are **to whom ye obey [*hypakouō* 5219]**; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience [*hypakoē* 5218]** unto righteousness?” (6:16). Paul clearly stated that we’re servants of whom we actually obey, not of whom we claim to obey. Just calling Christ “Lord” doesn’t make Him our Lord if we’re not doing what He said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). We obey Him because we’re His servants, but if we don’t obey Him we’re not His servants. Thus, “obedience to the faith [*faithfulness*]” (v. 5) is that we’re servants of whom we obey, “to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.” Moreover, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus” (10:9), won’t save us if we don’t obey the gospel He preached, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel” (10:16).

Christ’s gospel message is to “all nations [*ethnos* 1484].” The Greek noun *ethnos* is where our English “ethnicity” is derived. Several times in his letter, Paul included all ethnic people along with ethnic Jewish

people: “*Is he* the God of **the Jews** only? *is he* not also of **the Gentiles** [**ethnos 1484**]? Yes, of **the Gentiles** [**ethnos 1484**] also” (3:29); “Even us, whom he hath called, not of **the Jews** only, but also of **the Gentiles** [**ethnos 1484**]?” (9:24); “blindness in part is happened to **Israel**, until the fulness of **the Gentiles** [**ethnos 1484**] be come in” (11:25); “And again he saith, Rejoice, ye **Gentiles** [**ethnos 1484**], with **his people**” (15:10).

Jesus Christ commissioned the gospel to be preached to all ethnicities: “And **this gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto **all nations** [**ethnos 1484**]” (Mat 24:14); “And **the gospel** must first be published among **all nations** [**ethnos 1484**]” (Mar 13:10); “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among **all nations** [**ethnos 1484**], beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). And the gospel message Christ commissioned is “this gospel of the kingdom” He preached. His gospel is entering His Kingdom by obeying His standard of righteousness, “That except **your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case **enter into the kingdom of heaven**” (Mat 5:20).

The “called” of Jesus Christ

“Among whom are ye also **the called of Jesus Christ**: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints** [**hagios 40**]: Grace [*favor*] to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 6-7). Of course, “Among whom” is that all ethnic people can now be favored among the ethnic Jewish people.

The Hebrew adjective *qāḏōš* translated in the Old Testament as “holy” or “saint” means “separated,” “divided,” or “set apart.” God chose His people and separated them from all other people: “For thou **art an holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] **people** unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, **above all people** that *are* upon the face of the earth” (Deu 7:6); “For thou **art an holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] **people** unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, **above all the nations** that *are* upon the earth” (Deu 14:2); “thou **art an holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] **people** unto the LORD thy God” (Deu 14:21); “And to make thee high **above all nations** which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an **holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] **people** unto the LORD thy God” (Deu 26:19); “The LORD shall establish thee an **holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] **people** unto himself” (Deu 28:9).

In the very beginning, God foretold of this division between His people and all others, “God **divided** [**bāḏal 914**] **the light from the darkness**. And God called the light **Day**, and the darkness he called **Night**” (Gen 1:4-5), “the greater light **to rule the day**, and the lesser light to rule the night ... **to rule over the day** and over the night, and to **divide** [**bāḏal 914**] **the light from the darkness**” (Gen 1:16,18). Before having created the first human being, God already showed that He would raise up a people that would be divided from all others and favored by Him. His people called “Day” would be ruled by “the greater light.” They would be favored by Him as His own people by obeying His Son Jesus Christ as Lord. All other people are called “Night” because they obey the lesser lord or “the lesser light.” This was hidden in a mystery within the creation narrative.

As “God divided [**bāḏal 914**] the light from the darkness” in the beginning, He raised up His people and divided them from all others, “I *am* the LORD your God, which have **separated** [**bāḏal 914**] you from *other* people ... And ye shall be **holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**] unto me: for I the LORD *am* **holy** [**qāḏōš 6918**], and have **severed** [**bāḏal 914**] you from *other* people, that ye should be mine” (Lev 20:24,26). And as God foretold that His Son would “**rule over the day** and over the night, and to **divide the light** from the darkness,” His people would be divided and favored through the Lordship of His Son. Disobedience and insubordination to His Son is disqualification from belonging to Him and being favored by Him. He calls us “Day,” therefore, when we obey His Son.

Throughout the New Testament, the Greek adjective *hagios* is translated as either “holy” or “saints” but means “separated” or “set apart.” The Hebrew *qāḏôš* for “holy” is simply the adjective form of the verb *qadash* for “sanctify” or “separate,” “For I *am* the LORD your God: ye shall therefore **sanctify** [*qāḏaš* 6942] yourselves, and ye shall **be holy** [*qāḏôš* 6918]; for I *am* **holy** [*qāḏôš* 6918]” (Lev 11:44), “And ye shall be **holy** [*qāḏôš* 6918] unto me: for I the LORD *am* **holy** [*qāḏôš* 6918], and have **severed** [*bāḏal* 914] you from *other* people, that ye should be mine” (Lev 20:26). God’s people were to be divided and separated from the surrounding sinful people because God Himself was separate from them—He wasn’t their God and wasn’t among them. Peter quoted this statement with its Greek counterpart *hagios*, “But as he which hath called you is **holy** [*hagios* 40], so be ye **holy** [*hagios* 40] in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye **holy** [*hagios* 40]; for I *am* **holy** [*hagios* 40]” (1Pe 1:15-16). When used for God’s people in the New Testament, the translators rendered the adjective *hagios* as “saints” rather than “separated” which obscures the identity of the subjects. The “saints” are simply God’s people, separated from all other people in the world.

Since *hagios* is “separated,” then *hagios pneuma* erroneously rendered as “Holy Spirit” is literally “separated breath.” It’s not a “spirit” being or a holy and revered person living inside our person. It’s God’s breath in the hearts of His people that separates or divides them from all other people.

The faithfulness of the Romans

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that **your faith** [*faithfulness*] is spoken of throughout the whole world” (v. 8). Paul commended the Christians in Rome that their faithfulness to the Lord was known throughout the entire Roman Empire. He said at the end of his letter, “For **your obedience** is come abroad unto all *men*” (16:19). People were talking about their faithfulness and obedience—their actions. There’s a saying, “What you do speaks so loudly that I can’t hear a word you’re saying!” Likewise, sometimes a sports team will “trash talk” before a game while the other team retorts, “We’ll do our talking on the field!” We understand this principle that it’s not what we say but what we do that ultimately matters.

This is also true with salvation. It accomplishes nothing to confess Christ as Lord if we don’t obey Him as Lord, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). James said, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith [*faithfulness*], and I have works [*actions*]: shew me thy faith [*faithfulness*] without thy works [*actions*], and I will shew thee my faith [*faithfulness*] by my works [*actions*]” (Jas 2:18). It’s far better to let our actions do our talking and let others talk about our actions, “your faith [*faithfulness*] is spoken of.”

Serve with our breath

“For God is my witness, whom I **serve with my spirit** [*breath*] in the gospel of his Son” (v. 9). To “serve with my breath” is to serve God with our life. Jesus Christ said to a Samaritan woman, “Ye worship ye know not what: **we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews**. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the Father in spirit** [*breath*] **and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. **God is a Spirit** [*breath*]: and they that worship him must **worship him in spirit** [*breath*] **and in truth**.” (Jhn 4:22-24). In saying “God is spirit [*breath*]” (NET, NIV), He wasn’t speaking literally as if identifying what kind or type of being God is. He was simply using a figure of speech called a metaphor in which a term is

applied to suggest a correspondence. An example from John is “God is love” (1Jo 4:8,16). Of course, God isn’t literally love but because He completely embodies everything that love is, John spoke of Him that way metaphorically. That “God is spirit [*breath*]” is that God is so completely and exclusively the source of our breath that His Son spoke of Him as breath. Therefore, to worship Him in breath is to give back to Him the breath He gave to us—to serve Him with this life in whatever way pleases Him, “I serve with my spirit [*breath*]” (v. 9), “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit [*breath*]; serving the Lord” (12:11).

We breathe in-and-out about 23,000 times a day. That’s over 8 million times a year. In fact, a 65-year old has already breathed over half a billion times! And every single one of those breaths is from God, “God is breath.” Our lives are so extremely fragile that God decides our next breath. Since He is our breath, we must worship Him with the breath He is giving now for Him to give us breath forever.

The prophets stated: “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a **contrite spirit [*breath*]**” (Psa 34:18); “The sacrifices of God **are a broken spirit [*breath*]**: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17); “Better *it is to be* of an **humble spirit [*breath*]** with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Pro 16:19); “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold **the humble in spirit [*breath*]**” (Pro 29:23); “I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a **contrite and humble spirit [*breath*]**, to revive **the spirit [*breath*]** of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15); “but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* **poor and of a contrite spirit [*breath*]**, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2).

Jesus taught, “Blessed **are the poor in spirit [*breath*]**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:3), “**Blessed be ye poor**: for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luk 6:20). Our breath is our life. To be “poor in breath” is to lose or forfeit the life we have now—including all we could have had, could have been, and could have accomplished—for Jesus Christ’s sake: “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that **loseth his life for my sake** shall find it” (Mat 10:39); “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will **lose his life for my sake** shall find it” (Mat 16:25); “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall **lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s**, the same shall save it” (Mar 8:35); “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will **lose his life for my sake**, the same shall save it” (Luk 9:24); “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall **lose his life** shall preserve it” (Luk 17:33); “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that **hateth his life in this world** shall keep it unto life eternal” (Jhn 12:25).

Pray without ceasing

“For **God is my witness**, whom I serve with my spirit [*breath*] in the gospel of his Son, that **without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers**” (v. 9). That God was Paul’s witness of his prayers for the Roman Christians indicates his obedience to Jesus Christ’s teaching on prayer, “And **when thou prayest**, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites ... that they may be **seen of men** ... when thou prayest, **enter into thy closet**, and when thou hast **shut thy door**, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and **thy Father which seeth in secret**” (Mat 6:5,6). Because Paul’s prayers were in private before God, he appealed to God as his witness that he prayed for them without ceasing.

The gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached is, “men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luk 18:1), “Watch ye therefore, and pray always” (Luk 21:36). And Paul also preached: “continuing instant in prayer”

(12:12); “Continue in prayer” (Col 4:2); “Pray without ceasing” (1Th 5:17); “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit [*breath*]” (Eph 6:18).

Paul longed to see them

“Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you” (v. 10). He would tell them toward the end of his letter that he hadn’t visited them yet because he had been occupied with preaching the gospel to those that hadn’t heard, “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named ... For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you” (15:20,22). However, he now was at the point where he had reached them all, “But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you” (15:23).

Imparting spiritual gifts

“For I long to see you, **that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift**, to the end ye may be established” (v. 11). A Scriptural fact is that every time any gifts of the breath were given, there was at least one apostle present. There are no accounts of anyone receiving gifts without the presence of an apostle. This certainly explains why Paul had to come to Rome personally “that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.” The apostles were given the ability to impart spiritual gifts, and they imparted them by laying on their hands.

Stephen and Philip were among seven men the apostles laid hands upon, “Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, **they laid *their* hands on them**” (Act 6:6). And both of them performed miracles, “And **Stephen**, full of faith and power, **did great wonders and miracles** among the people” (Act 6:8), “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which **Philip** spake, hearing and seeing **the miracles which he did**. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and **many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.**” (Act 8:6-7). Although Phillip worked miracles among the Samaritans, it was Peter and John that imparted the Holy breath with accompanying gifts to them, “And when Simon saw that **through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost [*breath*] was given**, he offered them money” (Act 8:18).

Paul imparted gifts to a group of Ephesians, “And when **Paul had laid *his* hands upon them**, the Holy Ghost [*breath*] came on them; and **they spake with tongues, and prophesied**” (Act 19:6). And he stated that signs, wonders, and mighty deeds are the signs of an apostle, “Truly **the signs of an apostle** were wrought among you in all patience, **in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds**” (2Co 12:12). They were signs that someone either was an apostle themselves or had apostolic approval upon them.

We’re told that the purpose of the sign gifts was to confirm the gospel message the apostles preached, “Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature [*ktisis* 2937]** ... And **these signs** shall follow them that believe [*trust*] ... **And they went forth**, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and **confirming the word with signs following**” (Mar 16:15,17,20). The commission to “preach the gospel to every creature [*ktisis* 2937]” was to take the gospel to all people created by God and not just to the separated people of God. Paul was given that mission and fulfilled it, “the hope of **the gospel**, which ye have heard, *and* which **was preached to every creature [*ktisis* 2937] which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a**

minister" (Col 1:23). The sign of immunity to a poisonous snake bite, "They shall take up **serpents**; and if they drink any deadly thing, **it shall not hurt them**" (Mar 16:18), was shown only in Paul's ministry, "there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand ... And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm" (Act 28:3,5). The commission recorded by Mark was given to Paul and confirmed by the signs following him.

The writer of Hebrews also said that signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts were confirmation of what was "spoken by the Lord," "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be **spoken by the Lord**, and was **confirmed unto us by them that heard him**; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb 2:3-4). God spoke to us by His Son, "Hath in these last days **spoken unto us by his Son**" (Heb 1:2), and "them that heard *him*" are His apostles that preached His gospel message to the world. By signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts, God bore witness to their preaching and writing.

It's argued by Pentecostal groups today that Christ's commission, "Go ye into **all the world**, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that **believeth [trusts]** and is baptized shall be saved; but he that **believeth [trusts]** not shall be damned. And **these signs shall follow them that believe**" (Mar 16:15-17), is that the signs would follow anyone and everyone that's a "believer," and that "all the world" means the entire planet. However, "shall follow" is simply a correlation, parallel, or reciprocity with the ministry of the apostles. It's not that signs would be evident in the lives of all Christians at all times in all places. The apostles gave Stephen and Phillip the power to perform miracles even though they weren't apostles themselves. Luke and Mark weren't apostles but accompanied the apostles and wrote Scripture under their auspices. And "all the world" is simply relative to the world at that time. Paul said that the gospel had indeed already gone to all the world, "ye heard before in the word of the truth of **the gospel**; Which is come unto you, as *it is in all the world* ... which was preached to **every creature which is under heaven**" (Col 1:5,6,23). Likewise, "your faith [*faithfulness*] is spoken of **throughout the whole world**" (v. 8), certainly didn't mean the farthest reaches of the planet from Rome including North, Central, and South America!

Another argument by Pentecostal groups that the sign gifts are still in operation today is that we haven't reached "the unity of the faith" because of the denominational disunity among churches, "**gave gifts** unto men ... Till we all come in **the unity of the faith [*faithfulness*]**" (Eph 4:8,13). But this has nothing to do with divisions among what are being called churches today. It's about Jews and Gentiles reaching unity in Paul's day as he had been writing, "**Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the **Circumcision in the flesh** made by hands ... being aliens from the commonwealth of **Israel**" (Eph 2:11,12), "**reconcile both** unto God in one body by the cross ... through him **we both have access** by one Spirit [*breath*] unto the Father" (Eph 2:16,18), "That **the Gentiles** should be **fellowheirs**" (Eph 3:6). All of the "one" statements in context, "**one body**, and **one Spirit [*breath*]**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; **One Lord, one faith [*faithfulness*], one baptism, One God** and Father of all" (Eph 4:4-6), aren't about singularity but unity, "the unity of the Spirit [*breath*]" (Eph 4:3). Jews and Gentiles are to be in unity because they belong to the same body, have the same indwelling breath, share the same hope, serve the same Lord, contend for the same faithfulness, have been baptized with the same baptism, and are children of the same Father God. The "unity of the faith [*faithfulness*]" was accomplished by the apostles, particularly Paul.

Also, certain sign gifts were directed at certain groups of people. Tongues was a sign specifically to God's own people, "**With *men of other tongues* and other lips will I **speak unto this people****; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore **tongues are for a sign**, not to them that believe [*trust*], but **to them that believe [*trust*] not**" (1Co 14:21-22). When God's people heard "*men of other tongues*," foreigners to their

native lands that were speaking to them in their own native languages, they couldn't deny that it was from God. And Gentiles being given the same gift of tongues as the Jews, "God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us" (Act 11:17), served as confirmation to them that God was also saving Gentiles, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Act 11:18). The sign of immunity to a poisonous snake bite was recorded in Scripture only once, "And he shook off the beast into the fire, and **felt no harm**. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and **saw no harm come to him**" (Act 28:5-6). And this particular sign wasn't directed at God's people but a remote group of barbarian people, "the barbarous people ... the barbarians" (Act 28:2,4). It served as a sign to evangelize them.

Furthermore, certain classes of gifts were imparted by the apostles for different purposes. The gifts of miracles and healings were given to Barnabas, Stephen, and Phillip for evangelization. But the vocal gifts of tongues and prophecy were given to Gentile churches to provoke to jealousy the surrounding Jews and hopefully save some of them: "I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are no people*" (10:19); "through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (11:11); "If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are my flesh*, and might save some of them" (11:14); "With *men of other tongues* and other lips will I speak unto this people" (1Co 14:21).

Now, God certainly still heals people miraculously in answer to prayer, but answered prayer isn't the same as the gifts of the breath bestowed on the apostles for the purpose of evangelism, "Through **mighty signs and wonders**, by the power of the Spirit [*breath*] of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully **preached the gospel of Christ**" (15:19). God has always healed in answer to prayer, "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*" (Gen 20:17). And Christians are instructed to pray for each other to be healed, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (Jas 5:14-15).

Speaking from my own personal experience in 13 years among Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Word of Faith groups, and as a graduate of RHEMA Bible Training Center in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and involved in many church services with such people as Kenneth E. Hagin, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, Jesse Duplantis, Joyce Meyer, Fred Price, Benny Hinn, Rod Parsley, Marilyn Hickey, and T.L. Osborne, I never once witnessed an undeniable healing or miracle. Those ministries sometimes try to "prove" their miracles which actually accomplishes just the opposite. The very first miracle performed by the apostles, "And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Act 3:7), didn't need to be proven because it couldn't be denied, "indeed **a notable miracle** hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and **we cannot deny it**." (Act 4:16). True miracles from God "speak" for themselves. And there's nothing miraculous about making babbling noises from the mount. Instant fluency in a foreign language as a native speaker, however, is undeniably miraculous.

What's more, if the gifts of the breath are still in operation today, it would be undermining their very purpose—confirmation of the message the apostles preached. The gifts from Christ working in them confirmed they truly were sent by Him and were preaching the same message He preached. But if the gifts are still here today, then all kinds of confusing and contradicting messages are being confirmed. How could we even know the truth?

That you may be established

“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, **to the end ye may be established [stērizō 4741]**; That is, that I may be **comforted together** with you by the **mutual faith [faithfulness]** both of you and me” (vs. 11-12). Because spiritual gifts hadn’t been imparted to them yet, the church in Rome likely was founded by someone other than an apostle. And the purpose of Paul imparting gifts to them was “to the end ye may be established [stērizō 4741].” He will state at the end of his letter, “Now to him that is of power to **stablish [stērizō 4741] you according to my gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ” (16:25). Paul’s gospel included the impartation of spiritual gifts to churches for them to be *stērizō*, or “comforted,” “established,” “strengthened.”

Paul’s ministry wasn’t just about founding new churches but also strengthening existing ones: “**Confirming** the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to **continue in the faith [faithfulness]**” (Act 14:22); “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, **confirming the churches**” (Act 15:41); “went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening all the disciples**” (Act 18:23); “And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to **establish you**, and to **comfort you concerning your faith [faithfulness]**” (1Th 3:2).

Because churches were constantly barraged with false teaching and persecution, they needed strengthening, encouragement, and also warning. Christ Himself gave messages to the churches in Asia: “thou hast tried them which **say they are apostles**, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev 2:2); “Fear none of those things which **thou shalt suffer**: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you **into prison**, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have **tribulation** ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10); “thou holdest fast my name, and **hast not denied my faith [faithfulness]**, even in those days wherein **Antipas was my faithful martyr**, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth” (Rev 2:13); “that woman Jezebel, which **calleth herself a prophetess**, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev 2:20); “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which **say they are Jews**, and are not, but do lie” (Rev 3:9).

Not only did churches need comfort and encouragement but the ministers as well. They needed each other. And it was the continued faithfulness of the churches that seemed to give Paul the greatest comfort: “**that I may be comforted** together with you by the **mutual faith [faithfulness] both of you and me**” (v. 12); “That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and **may with you be refreshed**” (15:32); “Therefore **we were comforted in your comfort**: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit [*breath*] was **refreshed by you all**” (2Co 7:13); “Therefore, brethren, we were **comforted over you** in all our affliction and distress **by your faith [faithfulness]**” (1Th 3:7).

Visiting the Christians in Rome

Many times Paul intended to visit the Christians in Rome but was hindered from doing so, “Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (**but was let hitherto**), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (v. 13), “but was hindered until now” (NKJV), “but have been prevented from doing so until now” (NIV). And he told them toward the end of his letter what

it was that had been hindering him, “But as it is written, **To whom he was not spoken of**, they shall see: and **they that have not heard** shall understand. **For which cause** also I have been **much hindered from coming to you**.” (15:21-22). He had been occupied with reaching those that had never heard of Jesus Christ.

We are debtors

“I am **debtor [opheiletēs 3781]** both to **the Greeks**, and to **the Barbarians**; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (v. 14). From the Greeks to the Barbarians is essentially the full gamut of Gentiles outside God’s own people. Greeks were esteemed the wisest, most educated, and most civilized while Barbarians were unwise, uneducated, and uncivilized. But Paul considered himself as much a debtor to both groups and to everyone in between. The Greek noun *opheiletēs* and its verb form *opheilō* is indebtedness to someone else, “one was brought unto him, which **owed [opheiletēs 3781] him ten thousand talents** ... But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which **owed [opheilō 3784] him an hundred pence**: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, **Pay me that thou owest [opheilō 3784]**” (Mat 18:24,28).

Jesus Christ washed His disciples’ feet then commanded them, “If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also **ought [opheilō 3784]** to wash one another’s feet” (Jhn 13:14). That we “also ought [opheilō 3784] to wash one another’s feet” isn’t a suggestion. As His servants indebted to Him, He indebted us to each other. If we’re not serving each other, we’re not serving Him.

Paul wrote later, “Owe [opheilō 3784] no man any thing, but to love one another” (13:8). We don’t owe anything but love, yet love is a tall order. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (13:9) is the only commandment we’re required to keep. But if we truly keep it, we’ve done everything required of us. That we don’t owe anything but love is that we owe everything in love.

Preaching to those already reached

“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (v. 15). It sounds a little odd that Paul wanted to preach the gospel to these Romans that had already been reached with the gospel. This actually throws suspicion upon the “gospel” message being preached today that we need only to believe and we’re good to go. The “Romans Road” to salvation message uses several key statements from Romans such as, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (3:23), “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23), “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (10:9). But we’re wise to take heed that the “road” being paved doesn’t lead to an entirely different destination altogether, “*broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat*” (Mat 7:13).

Hearing the gospel is an ongoing need for the consummation of our salvation because we’re actually not saved right now. In the very first evangelistic message, Peter delineated our salvation as coming to pass after the sun is darkened and the moon turned to blood, “**The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood**, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And **it shall come to pass**, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord **shall be saved**.” (Act 2:20-21). And this is also what Paul meant by “confess

with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe [*trust*] in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **thou shalt be saved**" (10:9), because it will come to pass that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved**" (10:13). He taught that our salvation is in hope of this cursed creation being renewed, "For **the creature was made subject to vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath **subjected the same in hope** ... For we are **saved by hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience **wait for it.**" (8:20,24-25). And that our salvation is drawing nearer, "*now is* **our salvation nearer** than when we believed [*trusted*]" (13:11).

Salvation only makes sense when recognizing, not that we're spirit beings living inside bodies that go disembodied either to heaven or hell at death, but that we're physical beings that cease living at death until being raised back to life at Christ's return. The gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached is that we must endure to the end to be saved, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same **shall be saved**" (Mat 24:13), "**the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light**, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then **shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven**" (Mat 24:29-30).

The gospel message Jesus Christ preached

"For I am not **ashamed** [*epaischynomai* 1870] **of the gospel of Christ**" (v. 16). God's gospel message to mankind, "the gospel of God" (1:1), is the message God sent His Son to preach, "the gospel of his Son" (1:9), "the preaching of Jesus Christ" (16:25). When John said, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jhn 1:5), he was equating Christ's preaching with light, "I am the light of the world" (Jhn 8:12,9:5), as when God spoke light into the darkness in the beginning, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3). Paul also taught that the gospel Christ preached was like light shining into this dark world as in the beginning, "**the light of the glorious gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, **should shine** unto them ... For God, who **commanded the light to shine out of darkness**" (2Co 4:4,6). The point is that the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached is the only light in this world. We must listen to Him to be saved, or remain in darkness and perish. If we won't listen to Him, we're completely hopeless.

The gospel message Jesus Christ preached is that His Father is the only true God, "thee the only true God" (Jhn 17:3), and that His Father is His God: "**My God, my God**, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34); "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and **to my God, and your God**" (Jhn 20:17); "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of **my God**, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of **my God**, and the name of the city of **my God**, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from **my God**" (Rev 3:12).

The gospel message He preached is that He is the Son of God: "for he said, **I am the Son of God**" (Mat 27:43); "Art thou then **the Son of God**? And he said unto them, **Ye say that I am**" (Luk 22:70); "For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**" (Jhn 3:16); "Dost thou believe on **the Son of God**? ... Thou hast both seen him, and **it is he that talketh with thee**" (Jhn 9:35, 37); "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, **I am the Son of God**?" (Jhn 10:36); "that **the Son of God** might be glorified thereby" (Jhn 11:4); "Father, the hour is come; glorify **thy Son**, that **thy Son** also may glorify thee" (Jhn 17:1); "These things saith **the Son of God**" (Rev 2:18).

The gospel message He preached is that He was begotten of God: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only **begotten Son** ... the only **begotten Son of God**” (Jhn 3:16,18); “**I proceeded forth** and came from God” (Jhn 8:42); “**I came out from God**. I came forth from the Father” (Jhn 16:27,28). God the Father has no beginning but His Son’s own words about Himself as “begotten,” “proceeded forth,” and “came out from God” attest to His begetting and His beginning.

The gospel message He preached is that His miracles were not of Himself and that He didn’t know everything God knew: “I cast out devils by the Spirit [*breath*] of God” (Mat 12:28); “But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mar 13:32); “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do” (Jhn 5:19); “I can of mine own self do nothing” (Jhn 5:30); “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (Jhn 14:10).

The gospel message He preached is that we must live righteously to be saved. He taught in His Sermon on the Mount, “That **except your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall **in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven**” (Mat 5:20). If we don’t live righteously according to the standard He taught in this very Sermon, then in no case, without any exceptions, will we enter His Kingdom. Toward the end of His Sermon, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, **ye that work iniquity [anomia 458]**” (Mat 7:23), “you lawbreakers!” (NET), “you who practice lawlessness!” (NKJV). The Greek *anomia* is contempt, transgression, or violation of law. And He ended His Sermon with, “Therefore whosoever heareth **these sayings of mine, and doeth them** ... And every one that heareth **these sayings of mine, and doeth them not**” (Mat 7:24,26). If we do what He commanded we’ll be saved, but if we don’t we won’t be. And He said nothing in this Sermon about believing but rather about obeying.

The gospel message He preached is that we must be faithful servants to Him as our Lord: “Who then is a **faithful and wise servant**” (Mat 24:45); “Well done, *thou* good and **faithful servant**: thou hast been **faithful** over a few things” (Mat 25:21); “Well, thou good **servant**: because **thou hast been faithful** in a very little” (Luk 19:17); “**He that is faithful** in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luk 16:10).

The gospel message He preached is that the only two destinies of man are either eternal life or annihilation: “broad *is* the way, that leadeth to **destruction** ... narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto **life**” (Mat 7:13,14); “should not **perish**, but have **eternal life**” (Jhn 3:15); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on the Son **hath everlasting life**: and he that believeth not the Son **shall not see life**” (Jhn 3:36); “He that heareth my word, and believeth [*trusts*] on him that sent me, **hath everlasting life**, and shall not come into condemnation; but is **passed from death unto life**” (Jhn 5:24); “And I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall never **perish**” (Jhn 10:28).

The gospel message He preached is bodily resurrection from the dead: “For in **the resurrection**” (Mat 22:30); “for thou shalt be recompensed at **the resurrection** of the just” (Luk 14:14); “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and **the resurrection** from the dead” (Luk 20:35); “Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of **the resurrection**” (Luk 20:36); “they that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto **the resurrection of damnation**” (Jhn 5:29); “may have **everlasting life**: and I will **raise him up** at the last day” (Jhn 6:40); “hath **eternal life**; and I will **raise him up** at the last day” (Jhn 6:54); “I am **the resurrection**, and the life” (Jhn 11:25).

The gospel message He preached is that annihilation is being cast bodily into *geenna* or the lake of fire: “**thy whole body** should be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]**” (Mat 5:29); “destroy both soul and **body in hell [geenna**

1067]” (Mat 10:28); “having **two eyes** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067] fire**” (Mat 18:9); “having **two hands** to go into **hell [geenna 1067]** into **the fire** that never shall be quenched ... having **two feet** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067]** into **the fire** that never shall be quenched ... having **two eyes** to be cast into **hell [geenna 1067] fire**” (Mar 9:43,45,47).

The gospel message He preached is that we must not be ashamed of Him or the message He preached, “For whosoever shall be **ashamed [epaischynomai 1870] of me and of my words**, of him shall the Son of man be **ashamed [epaischynomai 1870]**, when he shall come in his own glory, and *in his* Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luk 9:26). Paul wasn’t ashamed of the gospel message He preached, “For I am not **ashamed [epaischynomai 1870]** of the gospel of Christ,” but preached it, suffered for it, and died for it. If we’re ashamed of Him and His message when pressured by this world, He will be ashamed of us and we’ll perish.

The power of God unto salvation

The gospel message Jesus Christ preached “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth [*pisteuō* 4100]” (v. 16). The Greek *pisteuō* appears about 250 times in the New Testament and is typically translated “believe” but more correctly means “trust.” Christ’s gospel message isn’t that we just believe some facts about Him are true but that we trust in Him and in His name: “believe [*trust*] on his name” (Jhn 1:12); “his disciples believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 2:11); “many believed [*trusted*] in his name” (Jhn 2:23); “believeth [*trusts*] in him” (Jhn 3:15); “whosoever believeth [*trusts*] in him” (Jhn 3:16); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on him ... believed [*trusts*] in the name” (Jhn 3:18); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on the Son ... he that believeth [*trusts*] not the Son” (Jhn 3:36); “believed [*trusts*] on him” (Jhn 4:39); “believe [*trusts*] on him whom he hath sent” (Jhn 6:29); “he that believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 6:35); “believeth [*trusts*] on him” (Jhn 6:40); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 6:47); “believe [*trusts*] in him” (Jhn 7:5); “believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 7:31); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 7:38); “they that believe [*trust*] on him” (Jhn 7:39); “believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 7:48); “many believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 8:30); “believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 8:31); “believe [*trust*] on the Son of God” (Jhn 9:35); “believe [*trusts*] on him” (Jhn 9:36); “many believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 10:42); “he that believeth [*trusts*] in me” (Jhn 11:25); “believeth [*trusts*] in me” (Jhn 11:26); “believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 11:45); “believe [*trust*] on him” (Jhn 11:48); “believed [*trusted*] on Jesus” (Jhn 12:11); “they believed [*trusted*] not on him” (Jhn 12:37); “many believed [*trusted*] on him” (Jhn 12:42); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 12:44); “whosoever believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 12:46); “believe [*trust*] also in me” (Jhn 14:1); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on me” (Jhn 14:12); “they believe [*trusted*] not on me” (Jhn 16:9).

“For **therein** is the righteousness of God revealed” (v. 17). It’s therein—in the gospel message Christ Himself preached—that God revealed His righteousness to us. His Son taught the standard of God’s righteousness, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and **his righteousness**” (Mat 6:33). To be right with God, we must listen to His Son! His Son said, “He that is **of God heareth God’s words**: ye therefore **hear them not**, because ye are **not of God**” (Jhn 8:47). If we’re “of God,” we’ll listen to His Son. Though many read the Bible every day, memorize verses, read books, listen to sermons, teach classes, even preach from the pulpit, earn seminary degrees, and become full-time ordained “ministers,” if they won’t listen to Jesus Christ, they’re “not of God.”

John said, “**We are of God**: he that knoweth God **heareth us**; he that is not of God **heareth not us**. Hereby know we the spirit [*breath*] of truth, and the spirit [*breath*] of error” (1Jo 4:6). The apostles were “of God” because they listened to His Son. And we can know that we’re “of God” also when we listen to God’s Son and

His apostles. John also said, “Whosoever transgresseth, and **abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God**. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2Jo 1:9). Those that won’t listen to Christ, that transgress and teach a different message than He taught, don’t have God. They’re not helping anyone find God because they don’t belong to God themselves.

When we’re “of God,” we’re sincerely seeking the truth objectively. We don’t care who’s right or wrong but what’s right or wrong. We’re not trying to win arguments and debates, or be right while proving others wrong. Because “Christians” today have been seduced into whatever system of beliefs they’ve been indoctrinated, therefore they’re more faithful and loyal to their system than to the Lord Himself. They won’t listen to Him.

The just shall live by His faithfulness

The rest of the verse, “from faith [*pistis* 4102] to faith [*pistis* 4102] as it is written, The just shall live by faith [*pistis* 4102]” (v. 17), is mistranslated. The Greek *pistis* doesn’t mean “faith” but “faithfulness” which is proven by Paul’s quote from Habakkuk, “the just shall live by his faith [*’ēṃûnâ* 530]” (Hab 2:4). The Hebrew *’ēṃûnâ* appears around 50 times in the Old Testament and always indicates faithfulness in every context. As rendered more clearly in some other Versions, “live because of **his faithfulness**” (NET), “live by **his faithfulness**” (NIV), Habakkuk wasn’t speaking of *our* faith but God’s faithfulness! Abraham foretold of God providing the Lamb, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb” (Gen 22:8). Isaiah prophesied of the Lamb, “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7), and John the baptizer announced the Lamb, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jhn 1:29); “Behold the Lamb of God!” (Jhn 1:36).

It was on account of Abraham’s obedience that God made a promise to him and swore that promise by Himself, “**By myself have I sworn**, saith the LORD, for **because** thou hast done this thing, and **hast not withheld thy son**, thine only *son* ... **because thou hast obeyed my voice**” (Gen 22:16-18). It was because Abraham didn’t withhold his son from God that God promised Abraham that He wouldn’t withhold His Son from him! The fulfillment of this promise, therefore, rested solely upon God’s faithfulness to Abraham in providing His Son as the Lamb. Therefore, “the just shall live” or have eternal life “because of his faithfulness” (NET), “by his faithfulness” (NIV).

“God will provide himself a lamb” (Gen 22:8) was fulfilled in God sending His Son. Many times Jesus stated that He was sent by His Father: “he that receiveth me receiveth him that **sent me**” (Mat 10:40); “he that despiseth me despiseth him that **sent me**” (Luk 10:16); “My meat is to do the will of him that **sent me**” (Jhn 4:34); “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath **sent me**” (Jhn 5:30); “the Father hath **sent me**” (Jhn 5:36); “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that **sent me**” (Jhn 6:38); “As the living Father hath **sent me**” (Jhn 6:57); “I am not come of myself, but he that **sent me** ... I am from him, and he hath **sent me**” (Jhn 7:28,29); “the Father that **sent me**” (Jhn 8:16,18); “I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he **sent me**” (Jhn 8:42); “And he that **sent me** is with me” (Jhn 8:29); “I must work the works of him that **sent me**” (Jhn 9:4); “He that believeth [*trusts*] on me, believeth not on me, but on him that **sent me** ... And he that seeth me seeth him that **sent me**” (Jhn 12:44,45); “he that receiveth me receiveth him that **sent me**” (Jhn 13:20); “they know not him that **sent me**” (Jhn 15:21); “But now I go my way to him that **sent me**” (Jhn 16:5); “I came out from thee, and they have believed [*trusted*] that thou didst **send me**” (Jhn 17:8); “thou hast **sent me**” (Jhn 17:25).

The statement “from faith [*faithfulness*] to faith [*faithfulness*]” is understood in that everything God did throughout Israel’s history was within keeping His promise to Abraham of not withholding His Son but providing Him as the Lamb. Every act of God was ultimately in faithfulness to Abraham. From one act of His faithfulness to Abraham to another act of His faithfulness to Abraham, God fulfilled what He promised.

The promise initially to Abraham, then to his son Isaac, and finally to his grandson Jacob, was God’s purpose in raising up Israel and using them. He told His people that His love for them was because of His love for their fathers and His commitment to keep His promise to them: “And **because he loved thy fathers**, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt” (Deu 4:37); “But because the LORD loved you, and because he would **keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers**, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deu 7:8); “that he may perform the word which **the LORD swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**” (Deu 9:5); “Only the LORD had **a delight in thy fathers to love them**, and he chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this day” (Deu 10:15).

Eternal life by His faithfulness

The Greek verb *zaō* in “The just shall **live [zaō 2198]** by faith [*faithfulness*],” isn’t our manner of living but eternal life itself. The English “live” when used with an object conveys “manner of living” or “way of living,” but without an object it’s “to remain alive” or “to continue to have life.” Paul used both forms in this one statement later in his letter, “For if ye **live [zaō 2198] after the flesh**, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit [*breath*] do mortify the deeds of the body, ye **shall live [zaō 2198]**” (8:13). The first occurrence is with the object “after the flesh” expressing a way of living, but the second is without an object indicating “to have life.” The point is that “The just shall live by faith [*faithfulness*]” is that the just or righteous obtain eternal life by God’s faithfulness in sending His Son.

This was the gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached: “That whosoever believeth [*trusts*] in him should not perish, but have **eternal life**” (Jhn 3:15); “He that heareth my word, and believeth [*trusts*] on him that sent me, hath **everlasting life**” (Jhn 5:24); “believeth [*trusts*] on him, may have **everlasting life**: and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jhn 6:40); “And I give unto them **eternal life**; and they shall never perish” (Jhn 10:28). And this was also Paul’s gospel that he taught in this letter: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, **eternal life**” (2:7); “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto **eternal life** by Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21); “the gift of God *is* **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23).

God’s wrath is revealed from heaven

God’s righteousness was revealed by sending His Son down from heaven. But His wrath had also been revealed from heaven, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18). This refers to three main events in particular: God rained water from heaven in the flood; God rained fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah; God sent the plagues from heaven on Egypt.

There were also a couple of other times God revealed His wrath from heaven, “the LORD cast down **great stones from heaven** upon them unto Azekah, and they died” (Jos 10:11), “And there came down **fire from heaven**, and consumed him and his fifty ... **the fire of God came down from heaven**, and consumed him and his fifty” (2Ki 1:10,12). And in the end times, God’s wrath will be revealed from heaven: “The first angel sounded, and there followed **hail and fire** mingled with blood, and they were **cast upon the earth**” (Rev 8:7); “Go your ways, and pour out the vials of **the wrath of God upon the earth**” (Rev 16:1); “And there fell upon men a **great hail out of heaven**” (Rev 16:21).

To “hold the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18), “suppress the truth” (NET, NIV, NKJV, NLT), is to conceal or cover sinful actions. Rather than confessing his sin and taking full responsibility, Aaron shifted blame to the people and concocted an outrageous claim, “**thou knowest the people**, that they *are set* on mischief ... I cast it into the fire, and there **came out this calf**” (Exo 32:22,24). But rather than covering our own sins, love converts the sins of others: “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but **love covereth all sins**” (Pro 10:12); “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall **hide a multitude of sins**” (Jas 5:20); “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall **cover the multitude of sins**” (1Pe 4:8). Paul taught that love “thinketh no evil” (1Co 13:5), “does not keep a record of wrongs” (CSB), “keeps no record of wrongs” (NIV), “keeps no record of being wronged” (NLT). We all want God to cover our sins against Him, but we must also cover the sins of others against us. Of course criminal wrongs are dealt with by the justice system, but personal wrongs are our responsibility to handle with love.

That which may be known of God

“Because **that which may be known of God is manifest [phaneros 5318] in them**; for God hath shewed [phaneroō 5319] it unto them. For the invisible things of him **from the creation of the world are clearly seen**, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that **they are without excuse**” (vs. 19-20). A false message taught today is that everyone can search for God and find Him through the creation, “from **the creation** of the world are clearly seen ... so that they are without excuse” (v. 20), and from their own conscience, “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience** also bearing witness” (2:15). But the intent behind that teaching is to justify the false doctrine of eternal torment in fire. Everyone recognizes it’s far beyond unjust for people that didn’t ask to be born to not be given any hope of salvation but be resigned to burning in fire forever. Therefore, the creation and conscience doctrine was invented to solve that problem. It gives everyone hope of salvation and also leaves them without excuse if they end up in hell.

It’s argued that when Paul told the Greeks in Athens “That they should **seek the Lord**, if haply they might feel after him, and **find him**” (Act 17:27), that people truly can seek the Lord on their own and find Him. But he also wrote to the Greeks in Corinth, “For after that in the wisdom of God **the world by wisdom knew not God**, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe [*trust*]. For the Jews require a sign, and **the Greeks seek after wisdom**” (1Co 1:21-22). The wisest people in the world were the Greeks, and even they couldn’t find God on their own, “TO THE **UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye **ignorantly worship**” (Act 17:23). Besides, why give Paul the Macedonian Call to preach to them if they already found God on their own? God was proving throughout history, particularly by the wisest of the wise, that nobody could find Him! It’s only by God’s revelation of Himself that we can find Him.

Paul wasn't teaching that the creation itself leaves mankind without excuse for rejecting the existence of God, or that mankind can find God by seeking Him through the creation. He was teaching that the creation leaves God's own people without excuse for rejecting His Son: "Because that which may be known of God is **manifest [phaneros 5318]** in them; for God hath **shewed [phaneroō 5319]** it unto them" (v. 19); "the revelation of **the mystery**, which was **kept secret since the world began**, But now is **made manifest [phaneroō 5319]**" (16:25-26); "**Even the mystery** which hath been **hid from ages** and from generations, but now is **made manifest [phaneroō 5319]** to his saints" (Col 1:26).

God's people that reject His Son are left without excuse by the creation account itself because clearly another person was with God, "And God said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness" (Gen 1:26). And since mankind was made after the image of both, then what they claim about the other person affects themselves. If it was an angel, then they were created after the image of an angel—another created being. But John told us, "In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning **with God. All things were made by him**; and without him was not any thing **made that was made**" (Jhn 1:1-3).

That God's people are without excuse because "God hath **shewed [phaneroō 5319]** it unto them" (v. 19) is the mystery from the beginning according to the conclusion of Paul's letter, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and **the preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to the revelation of **the mystery**, which was **kept secret since the world began**, But now is **made manifest [phaneroō 5319]**" (16:25-26). In God's infinite wisdom, He hid within the narrative of the creation event itself, the gospel message of salvation His Son would preach about 4,000 years later. He hid the message so extremely well under the cover of figurative language that it couldn't be understood without His revelation. However, He also articulated the message so extremely well that it couldn't be legitimately denied after being revealed. Thus, "the revelation of the mystery" by Christ's apostles, particularly Paul, left God's people without excuse for rejecting it.

God's people knew Him

"Because that, **when they knew God**, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but **became vain in their imaginations**, and their foolish **heart was darkened**" (1:21). Only God's people knew and worshipped the true God while all other people were ignorant and without hope: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exo 20:3); "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD" (Deu 6:4); "*I am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me" (Isa 45:5); "But the LORD *is* the true God, *he is* the living God" (Jer 10:10); "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (Jhn 4:22); "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship" (Act 17:23); "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12).

God's people knew that it was because of the evil imaginations of men's hearts that God poured out His wrath in the flood, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen 6:5). Yet by the time of Jeremiah, they were all walking after the imagination of their evil hearts: "neither shall they walk any more after the **imagination of their evil heart**" (Jer 3:17); "walked in the counsels *and* in the **imagination of their evil heart**" (Jer 7:24); "But have walked after the **imagination of their own heart**" (Jer 9:14); "walked every one in the **imagination of their evil heart**" (Jer 11:8); "which walk in the **imagination of their heart**" (Jer 13:10); "ye walk every one after

the **imagination of his evil heart**" (Jer 16:12); "we will every one do the **imagination of his evil heart**" (Jer 18:12); "every one that walketh after the **imagination of his own heart**" (Jer 23:17).

The wisdom of God

"Professing themselves to be **wise**, they became **fools**" (v. 22). Nothing has changed since the beginning. Eve knew what God had said concerning that one tree, "**God hath said**, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen 3:3). Yet instead of listening to Him, she thought wisdom could be found another way, "And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired **to make one wise**" (Gen 3:6). Rather than God Himself being their God, the man and the woman became the gods of their own lives, "ye shall be **as gods**, knowing **good and evil**" (Gen 3:5). And this was what happened with God's people—they became like a rebellious teenager that thinks they know better than their parents, "Behold, the man is **become as one of us**, to know **good and evil**" (Gen 3:22). They began defining for themselves what is good and what is evil.

At the time of the Exodus, God revealed Himself to His people through Moses. He gave them His commandments, judgments, and ordinances so they would know good and evil, "See, I have set before thee this day **life and good**, and **death and evil** ... I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deu 30:15,19). And by choosing the good they would have eternal life. However, they exchanged evil for good, "Woe unto them that call **evil good, and good evil**; that put **darkness for light, and light for darkness**; that put **bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter**! Woe unto *them that are wise in their own eyes*, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa 5:20-21). They no longer listened to God but became fools by counting themselves wise. And just like all other people, God's people got everything backwards—evil became good, darkness became light, bitter became sweet, and foolishness became wisdom.

God is in heaven and His people are on the earth but they turned things upside down, "Surely your **turning of things upside down** shall be esteemed **as the potter's clay**: for shall the work say of him that made it, **He made me not?** or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, **He had no understanding?**" (Isa 29:16), "Woe unto him that **striveth with his Maker**! *Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds* of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, **What makest thou?** or thy work, **He hath no hands?**" (Isa 45:9). Certainly God's people could argue with each other, "*Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds*," yet they were arguing with Him! A clay pot isn't going to tell the potter that formed it, "You didn't make me," "You don't have hands," or "You don't understand," but that's what they were doing.

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1Co 3:19), "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (Job 5:13). God exposes the "wise" as fools by turning their evil against them and working it for His own good. God saved Joseph's brothers from the famine through the evil actions they meant against Joseph, "But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive" (Gen 50:20). This was all figurative and prophetic of what God would do through His Son—His own Jewish brethren would be saved by the evil they meant against Him. This was the marvelous work and wonder that God did among His people, "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do **a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder**: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be

hid" (Isa 29:14). We now marvel and stand in awe at the incredible wisdom of God in using the foolishness of His own people to not only save them but also the whole world.

In God's wisdom, He left the world without any knowledge of Him to prove they couldn't find Him on their own, "For after that **in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God**, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe [*trust*]. For the Jews require a sign, and **the Greeks seek after wisdom**" (1Co 1:20-22). The "wisest" people on earth were the Greeks yet even they couldn't find God, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore **ye ignorantly worship**, him declare I unto you" (Act 17:23). As much as they sought, they never found Him, "That they should **seek the Lord**, if haply they might feel after him, and **find him**, though he be not far from every one of us" (Act 17:27). Therefore, they had to hear "the foolishness of preaching" to know God and be saved, "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured **to go into Macedonia**, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to **preach the gospel unto them**" (Act 16:10).

The message of God's gospel is deemed foolishness by those that reject it. The world considers it foolish that the whole earth was flooded and all life was preserved in an ark, that a man survived three days in the belly of a fish, that the universe is only about 6,000 years old, and that salvation is by a Man convicted to die on a cross. Because they don't want to be seen as a fool, they reject these things as "foolish" and mock them. But the gospel compels us to humility to be saved. We must become a "fool" to truly be wise.

They "made" Him after their own image

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible **God into an image made like to corruptible man**, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (v. 23). God made man after His own image by forming him from the ground with His hands, "Let us make man **in our image**, after our likeness ... So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God** created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen 1:26,27), "And the LORD God **formed man of the dust of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). But time and again, God's people "made" gods after their own image and after the image of various creatures.

God had commanded His people against making any kind of graven image, "**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image**, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth" (Exo 20:4), "Ye shall not make with me **gods of silver**, neither shall ye make unto you **gods of gold**" (Exo 20:23). Of course shortly after this Aaron made the golden calf, "**fashioned it with a graving tool**, after he had made it **a molten calf**: and they said, **These be thy gods**, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exo 32:4). And rather than confessing his sinful actions, he blamed the people and claimed the calf simply made itself, "**thou knowest the people**, that they *are set* on mischief ... I cast it into the fire, and there **came out this calf**" (Exo 32:22,24). This is what sin does—it passes the blame to others and covers its own sinfulness.

"For every kind of **beasts**, and of **birds**, and of **serpents**, and of **things in the sea**, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But **the tongue** can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of **deadly poison**. Therewith **bless we God**, even the Father; and therewith **curse we men**, which are **made after the similitude of God**" (Jas 3:7-9). When we use our tongues to curse people, we're not acting according to the image of God in which we were made but as a beast tearing its prey or a serpent biting with deadly poison. We act like beasts when we

treat others as beasts. But when we treat others as made after the image of God, we act worthy of the image in which we ourselves were made.

Paul told the Galatians, “**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. But if ye **bite and devour one another**, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” (Gal 5:14-15). When we’re biting and devouring one another, we’re acting like serpents eating dust, “dust shalt thou eat” (Gen 3:14), and man is dust, “dust thou *art*” (Gen 3:19). But when we love each other as ourselves, we’re glorifying the image of God in which we were made.

God gave them up

“Wherefore **God also gave them up** [*paradidōmai* 3860] to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts” (v. 24), “For this cause **God gave them up** [*paradidōmai* 3860] unto vile affections” (v. 26), “**God gave them over** [*paradidōmai* 3860] to a reprobate mind” (v. 28). The Greek verb *paradidōmai* is used about 120 times in the New Testament and means “to deliver” or “to give over to.”

The first generation of Israel that came out of Egypt tested God and provoked Him to anger many times, “**tempted me now these ten times**, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that **provoked me** see it” (Num 14:22-23). Their hearts became hardened through sin, “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13). Therefore, God gave them up to die, “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness” (Num 14:29).

What happened to them was an example to us, “lest any man fall after **the same example** of unbelief [*distrust*]” (Heb 4:11), “Now these things were **our examples** ... Now all these things happened unto them for **ensamples**” (1Co 10:6,11). We must fear the same happening to us, “**Let us therefore fear**, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to **come short of it**” (Heb 4:1). God had brought His people hundreds of miles from Egypt all the way to the Jordan River, yet gave up on them just a mile short of entering the land. And it wasn’t only because of what happened at that last mile but what had been happening throughout the entire distance. They infuriated God many times by their complaining and lusting.

Once God swears in His anger, He will never change His mind, “I the LORD have said, **I will surely do it**” (Num 14:35), “Unto whom **I swear in my wrath** that they should not enter into my rest” (Psa 95:11), “**So I swear in my wrath**, They shall not enter into my rest” (Heb 3:11). If we continually provoke God, there comes a point of no return when He swears in His anger against us and we will never enter Christ’s Kingdom.

King Saul is an example. He continually disobeyed God in rebellion and stubbornness, “Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying the voice of the LORD?** Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams. For **rebellion is as** the sin of witchcraft, and **stubbornness is as** iniquity and idolatry.” (1Sa 15:22-23). Therefore, God’s breath left him and an evil breath began vexing him, “But the Spirit [*breath*] of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit [*breath*] from the LORD troubled him” (1Sa 16:14). From that point forward his actions were horribly evil—he tried several times to kill David for no reason, he hunted David like an animal, he had 85 of God’s priests executed unjustly, he sought help from a witch, and finally committed suicide.

Vile affections

“For this cause God gave them up unto **vile affections**: for even **their women** did change **the natural use** into that which is **against nature**” (v. 26). Typically, this statement is taken to mean lesbianism. And although it certainly includes that but more generally Paul was speaking of adultery, fornication, polygamy, and prostitution. That it’s “against nature” is that it’s against the natural purpose for which the woman was created: “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; **male and female created he them**” (Gen 1:27); “*It is* not good that the man should **be alone**; I will make him **an help meet for him**” (Gen 2:18); “shall **cleave unto his wife**: and they shall be **one flesh**. And they were **both naked**, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**.” (Gen 2:24-25); “Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them **male and female**” (Mat 19:4); “But from the beginning of the creation God made them **male and female**” (Mar 10:6).

God commanded His people against using women unnaturally: “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo 20:14); “Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour’s wife, to defile thyself with her” (Lev 18:20); “Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore” (Lev 19:29); “And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man’s wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:10); “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deu 23:17); “So he that goeth in to his neighbour’s wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent” (Pro 6:29); “For a whore *is* a deep ditch; and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit” (Pro 23:27).

However, many times God’s people changed “the natural use” of the woman: “And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:)” (Exo 32:25); “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab” (Num 25:1); “Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her” (Jdg 16:1); “And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives” (Jdg 8:30); “Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (1Sa 2:22); “And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem” (2Sa 5:13); “Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.” (1Ki 11:2-3); “And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)” (2Ch 11:21); “Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours” (Eze 16:26); “Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied” (Eze 16:28); “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1Co 10:8).

When Paul gave Timothy the requirement for bishops and deacons, “A bishop then must be blameless, **the husband of one wife**” (1Ti 3:2), “Let the deacons be **the husbands of one wife**” (1Ti 3:12), it wasn’t an issue of previous marriage as typically taught. It was about upholding the natural use of the woman from the beginning, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1Ti 2:13), “Holding the mystery of the faith [*faithfulness*] in a pure conscience” (1Ti 3:9). Adam hadn’t been with anyone before Eve! Both were virgins and so it must be with bishops and deacons. To uphold the standard of excellence for the flock they oversee, they cannot have ever been with another woman.

Men with men

“And likewise also the men, leaving **the natural use of the woman**, burned in their lust one toward another; **men with men** working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves **that recompence of their error which was meet**” (v. 27). God commanded His people against homosexuality: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination” (Lev 18:22); “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them” (Lev 20:13); “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deu 23:17).

In the days of the Judges, an event transpired that almost exactly mimics what happened at Lot’s house in Sodom, “**certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and** beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, **Bring forth the man** that came into thine house, **that we may know him**” (Jdg 19:22). But the tribe of Benjamin harbored and protected those evil men from the other tribes, “Now therefore **deliver us the men**, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may **put them to death**, and put away evil from Israel. **But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren** the children of Israel” (Jdg 20:13). And the other tribes destroyed all of Benjamin except for 600 of them, “So that **all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men** that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valour. **But six hundred men** turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.” (Jdg 20:46-47). Israel eventually made peace with those remaining men and restored that tribe, “And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them” (Jdg 21:13). And Paul himself descended from those 600 men of Benjamin. His point was that God’s judgment upon Benjamin was justified because they knew what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah, “receiving in themselves **that recompence of their error which was meet.**”

Homosexuality continued in Israel’s history: “And there were also sodomites in the land: *and* they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel” (1Ki 14:24); “And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made” (1Ki 15:12); “And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove” (2Ki 23:7).

A disapproved mind

“And even as they did not like to **retain God in *their* knowledge**, God gave them over to a **reprobate [adokimos 96] mind**, to do those things which are not convenient” (v. 28), “to practice unseemly things” (DBY), “to do those things which are not fitting” (NKJV), “do things that should never be done” (NLT). The Greek adjective *adokimos* is the negation of the adjective *dokimos* which means “accepted,” “allowed,” or “approved.” Some other Bible versions render it “corrupt mind” (CSB), “depraved mind” (NIV), “debased mind” (NKJV), and “foolish thinking” (NLT). The most literal and accurate is “disapproved mind” (YLT). The idea is that God’s own people began doing the very things they knew God disapproved of. By the time of Jeremiah, God said of them, “For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding: they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge” (Jer 4:22).

As God's own people, they knew they were to be holy because He is holy, "ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy" (Lev 11:44), "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy" (Lev 19:2), "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD *am* holy" (Lev 20:26). However, because "they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge," they began doing things that are unbecoming and unfitting for God's people. They no longer feared Him: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding" (Job 28:28); "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom" (Psa 111:10); "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge" (Pro 1:7); "The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil" (Pro 8:13); "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom" (Pro 9:10); "A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil" (Pro 14:16); "by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil" (Pro 16:6).

God foreshowed in the beginning that His people would forsake what He said and no longer fear Him. He gave His commandment and the punishment for breaking it, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it:** for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**" (Gen 2:17). But because of the serpent's deceptions, "**Yea, hath God said,** Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ... **Ye shall not surely die**" (Gen 3:1,4), the woman ignored what God had said and didn't fear Him. And the woman in the beginning was figurative of His people to come.

Being filled with all unrighteousness

Paul now submits a laundry list of the evil actions that God had given His people over to: "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" (vs. 29-31). And he stated next that "they which commit such things are worthy of death" (v. 32). If God's own people doing such things were worthy of death, how much more all other people?

Paul wrote to Gentile churches warning them that if they do such actions they won't inherit the kingdom of God: "Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.**" (1Co 6:9-10); "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**" (Gal 5:19-21); "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**" (Eph 5:5).

"Being filled with all unrighteousness" (v. 29). The gospel message Paul preached is that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1Co 6:9). And this was the message Jesus Christ Himself preached, "For I say unto you, That except **your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall **in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven**" (Mat 5:20). If we don't live to the righteous standard Jesus Christ preached in His Sermon on the Mount, then in no case, without exception, will we enter His Kingdom.

Approving of those that practice evil

“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are **worthy of death**, not only do the same, but have **pleasure in them that do them**” (v. 32), “not only do the same but also **approve of those who practice them**” (NKJV). It’s not just those practicing deviant sexual lifestyles that are guilty before God but also those affirming and defending such practices in the lives of others. Benjamin protected the Sodomites of their land and were also proven worthy of God’s judgment just the same. Thus, Paul’s point is established—those that approve of such things are just as worthy of death as those that actually do them.

Today there’s a massive push by the LGBTQ community to not only allow their deviant sexual lifestyles but also to approve of them. But “the gospel of God” (v. 1), “the gospel of Christ” (v. 16), is that those affirming such practices are just as guilty and just as “worthy of death.” Those sinful actions are an abomination before God: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: **it is abomination**” (Lev 18:22); “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an **abomination**: they shall surely be **put to death**; their blood *shall be* upon them” (Lev 20:13); “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so **are abomination unto the LORD thy God**” (Deu 22:5). Those actions are an abomination to Him.

The men of Sodom accused Lot of judging them, “This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and **he will needs be a judge**” (Gen 19:9). And this is still the tactic used by the ungodly today—they falsely accuse others of judging them. But it’s simply a means of deflecting the issue away from their sinful actions and onto others. The truth is that God was the Judge of Sodom and Gomorrah as Abraham had already stated, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25). And God is still the Judge today. Those that belong to God aren’t judging anyone but simply agreeing with His judgment.

Contrary to the accusations of the ungodly, just the opposite is true. Those that know God’s judgment, “Who knowing the judgment of God,” yet affirm otherwise make themselves judges. This is what Paul concluded next, “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for **thou that judgest doest the same things**” (2:1). Those that agree with God’s judgment aren’t judging. It’s those that disagree with His judgment that are. When they judge the sinful doings of others as good, they condemn themselves just as guilty as if also doing those things themselves.

Paul’s letter to the Romans is the gospel Jesus Christ preached, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God **unto salvation**” (v. 16). And Jesus affirmed marriage between one man and one woman, “he which made *them* at the beginning **made them male and female**” (Mat 19:4), “But from the beginning of the creation **God made them male and female**” (Mar 10:6). When pressed to affirm aberrant lifestyles, will we agree with Christ or be ashamed of Him and His words?

Christ’s gospel is “the power of God unto salvation.” We can’t knowingly and blatantly disagree with the Savior and Him still be our Savior. Salvation isn’t just about believing some facts are true, but submitting to the commandments, preaching, and teaching of Jesus Christ as our Lord.