



# Commentary on Romans

## "The Gospel of God"

### Chapter 1

#### Verses 16-17

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# Chapters

Not Ashamed	3
Salvation	13
The Eternal God	16
Eternal Salvation 'from' Eternity	19
Jesus and the Eternal Offer	25
Jesus and the Eternal Purpose	31
Overcoming the World	48
Jews and Gentiles Included	80
The Righteousness of God	94
Living By Faith	109

## Not Ashamed

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Romans 1:16-17

These are two of the most-quoted verses of the Apostle Paul’s writings—and for good reason. Paul is explaining ‘why’ he spent his life preaching the Gospel of Christ. It’s not because being an apostle was a good career move; not because the job paid well and included great perks; not because being a Gospel preacher gave him a good standing in the community. In fact, being an apostle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the opposite of all that. Paul suffered greatly because of his commitment to the Gospel. The reason Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ was because “it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

These verses are in the context of those that preceded them:

“Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” Romans 1:13-

The Apostle Paul wanted to be part of the great spiritual harvest God was doing in the early days of Christianity. Thousands of people were becoming Christians throughout the Roman Empire and Paul was one of its primary leaders. He was ready (προθυμον – enthusiastically willing, eager) to ‘preach’ (ευαγγελισασθαι – proclaim good news .. from εὖ, good, well done, and ἄγγελος, messenger, envoy, one who is sent) the Gospel to the people of Rome.

Paul had a deep trust in the ‘effect’ of the Gospel based on his many supernatural experiences with God (e.g. Acts 9:1-7; 2 Corinthians 12:1-6). He knew first-hand both the efficacy and the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of Paul’s knowledge and experience, he was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” He knew it was the “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

Here is how the first part of Romans 1:16 reads in Greek – ου γαρ επαισχυνομαι το ευαγγελιον του χριστου. Let’s begin with the word ‘ashamed.’ The word επαισχυνομαι is a combination of the preposition ἐπί (on, onto) and αἰσχύνομαι (put to shame). The word is used 11 times in the New Testament. Here is an example of Jesus using the word:

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:38

Here is an example from Hebrews:

“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Hebrews 2:11

The idea of ‘shame’ in New Testament times came out of what was known as an ‘honor-shame’ culture. This culture can be seen in the Mediterranean societies, including Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Palestinian societies. The primary goal of family leaders was that their family received public honor while they avoided public shame. It was incumbent on every member of the family to participate in this goal whatever the personal cost. If one person shamed the family name, everyone in the family was shamed. Honor or shame was shared by all members of the family.

God included the importance of honor as a commandment to Israel – “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12) Given the understanding of honor and shame, the actions of children honoring their father and mother would be in the context of what was done in public.

Jesus spoke these words to the scribes and Pharisees – “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me *is a gift to God*’— then he

need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites!” (Matthew 15:3-7) The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Ephesians – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’” (Ephesians 6:1-3)

The moral code of God’s commandments also included rising before people with gray hair and giving honor in the presence of an old man. That command to revere the elderly was also connected to ‘fearing’ God’ (Leviticus 19:32).

We see an interesting process of the honor-shame culture in a song of King David:

“Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me! Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion Who seek to destroy my life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor Who wish me evil. Let them be confounded because of their shame, Who say to me, ‘Aha, aha!” Psalm 40:13-15

David wanted ‘shame’ to come upon his enemies. He wanted them to be ‘confounded’ because of their shame. He wanted them to be driven backward and brought to ‘dishonor’ publicly.

The goal of ancient warriors was to appear brave and full of excellence. That was honorable and led to fame. To not appear brave and full of excellence was dishonorable and led to shame. Being viewed as honorable led to heroic ventures. Being viewed as dishonorable was a strong motivation to warriors and others to be heroic so as not to be dishonored and shamed. Dying an 'honorable death' was of extreme importance to ancient warriors in honor-shame cultures.

Here is an interesting insight to honor and shame from the Holman Bible Dictionary:

"Acquired honor was gained through meritorious deeds or public performance. Family social position provided the honor base from which males launched out with hope of increasing family and personal honor. The public forum provided challenges for gaining or losing honor. A challenge might show the superiority of one person or group over another. A challenge could be ignored if not worthy of response due to social distance between the parties, but a true honor challenge required response. The party recognized as winning gained honor and the other lost honor or social standing. For example, when the Pharisees and Herodians observed Jesus to see if He would heal the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-6), an honor challenge took place. If Jesus violated Sabbath law, He would lose honor. If He did not heal the man, He also would lose honor. The trap looked perfect. In response to this unethical challenge, Jesus clarified the Sabbath's intent so He could lawfully heal the man. When the trap failed, they decided to collaborate to

destroy Jesus and His rising social status (which came at their expense).” (Holman Bible Dictionary, Holman Reference, Nashville, Tennessee, 2003, p 1474)

The primary concern in an honor-shame culture was what happened in public. It was being honored or disgraced in a way that people outside of the family could see or hear. This is where the connection of the apostles to the Gospel of Christ becomes important for us to understand. While most people would be ashamed to be publicly disgraced in an honor-shame culture, the apostles of Christ rejoiced in the public disgrace of preaching the Gospel.

“And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him ... And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for

His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 5:27-32, 40-42

For a Jew to be brought forcibly before the ruling council of Israel and rebuked for not obeying a command of the council would usually bring about great 'shame' and dishonor on that person and their family. However, Peter and the other apostles of Christ rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." That was an amazing thing to witness in a strict 'honor-shame' culture.

Christians today view what Jesus did on the Cross as a wonderful thing for Him to do, and it was. He died for our sins. Jesus was 'without sin,' yet died for our sin and shame. He was not 'guilty' of any crime and the Jewish and Roman rulers knew it, but how did Christ's death on the Cross appear in an 'honor-shame' culture?

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2

Dying on a cross was a public event and in an 'honor-shame' culture brought great shame and dishonor on the person on the cross and on his family and friends. That 'shame' was the intention of the enemies of Jesus. It did not matter to them that Jesus had not done anything

wrong. They wanted to bring shame upon Him and His followers. They believed that by killing Jesus and bringing shame upon His name and ministry, they would bring an end to what He had started just a few years earlier. What happened to Jesus culturally was a great 'shame,' but Jesus endured the cross, 'despising the shame' because of the 'joy that was set before Him.' And, as we know from history, the pain and shame Jesus endured at the hands of His enemies led Him to victory over death and a position of public honor at the right hand of the Throne of God.

When the Apostle Peter preached in public in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, he accused the people of Israel of shamefully killing Jesus Christ "by lawless hands." When Peter and other apostles were arrested for preaching about Jesus in the public arena, they accused the rulers of Israel publicly of shamefully murdering Jesus and opposing God who had exalted Jesus to His right hand to be Prince and Savior and to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. When the deacon Stephen defended his preaching of the Gospel in the streets of Jerusalem, he accused the people of Israel of shamefully being "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears" and always resisting the Holy Spirit because they killed Jesus. When Paul spoke publicly to King Agrippa and others who were in attendance that day, he admitted to shamefully persecuting followers of Christ before becoming a Christ-follower.

In this study we will see that Romans 1:16-17 is thematic. Paul presented the thesis for the first section of his letter and it addresses the powerful issue of humanity's shame and God's offer of honor.

Here is the basic flow of Paul's thematic argument in Romans 1:16-17:

- I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ
- It is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes
- For the Jew first and also for the Greek
- For in it (the Gospel of Christ) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith
- The just shall live by faith

Paul lived, traveled, preached and taught the Gospel of Christ in an honor-shame culture and was not ashamed of it. Why? Because it had a unique 'power' within it. The Greek word for 'power' in Romans 1:16 is *δυναμις* and means "power, might, strength, ability, marvelous works, powerful deeds, efficacy, energy." *δυναμις* comes from the word *δύναμαι* which means "to be able, to have power." The Gospel of Christ is the "power, might, strength, ability, powerful deed, ability" of God "to salvation – *εις σωτηριαν*. The word *εις* is a preposition that indicates motion, direction, purpose and result. The direction of the Gospel is from 'shame' to 'honor.'

Paul is going to make a case in his letter to the Romans that everyone, Jew and Gentile, has sinned and come short of God's standard. Paul will make the case that God's standard is

“righteousness,” but every human misses the mark of that standard and is “unrighteous” before Him. The solution is in the Gospel of Christ because it contains the “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

## Salvation

The Greek word for 'salvation' in Romans 1:16 is σωτηριαν and means "deliverance, rescue, preservation, safety, salvation." It comes from the word σωτήρ which means "savior, deliverer, preserver" and from σώζω which means "safe, save, well, preserve, heal, rescue." Paul did not introduce the idea of 'salvation.' It was not a specific 'Pauline' doctrine (teaching). The need for salvation finds its beginning in the eternal plan and purpose of God.

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6

When did God choose Paul and other human beings for every spiritual blessing, to be holy and without blame before Him in love, and to be adopted as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself? "... before the foundation of the world." The Greek word for "foundation" is καταβολή and means 'a laying down, throwing down, casting down, foundation, depositing, sowing, act of conception.' It comes from the word καταβάλλω which is a combination of the preposition κατά (down, against, according to) and the verb βάλλω (to throw, cast).

Jesus used the word καταβολή when he said – “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24)

The Apostle Peter used the word καταβολή in the context of how God saves people through Christ, who was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” to be the unblemished, unspotted sacrifice for our sin.

“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:17-21

Paul wrote to Timothy that he shouldn’t be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because God had a purpose for suffering for the Gospel from “before time began” and it is connected to our salvation and holy calling – “who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace

which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Think about that for a minute. God gave us His 'grace' (which was in Christ Jesus) 'before time began.' How could God give 'us' anything before time began? How could we receive what He gave us before time began? Paul also told Titus that God made us a promise before time began – "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Titus 1:2). That promise was the hope of 'eternal life.'

## ***The Eternal God***

God is called the “Eternal God” and the “Everlasting God” in Scripture (e.g. Genesis 21:33; Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 9:6). God exists ‘from everlasting to everlasting’ – “Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.” (Psalm 90:2)

We also know from Scripture that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are eternal and were involved in creating the universe.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” John 1:1-3

In order to understand something that God purposed, promised and gave before He created the world, we need to consider what God was thinking prior to the beginning of time. To know what God was thinking before time, we need to see what He has revealed to us about that since there is no way we can know that information apart from revelation.

Jesus gave His disciples some insights to what was going on between Him and the Father before time began.

“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” John 17:5

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”  
John 17:24

God the Father ‘loved’ God the Son and shared ‘glory’ with the Son ‘before the foundation of the world.’ These are keys to understanding what God purposed and promised and why He did what He did.

Paul wrote a few years after Romans that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4). In the context of Jesus shedding His blood on the Cross, the Apostle Peter wrote that Jesus Christ our great Redeemer “was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God...” (1 Peter 1:20-21). Paul wrote to Timothy that we shouldn’t be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because God had a purpose for suffering for the Gospel from “before time began” and it is connected to our salvation and holy calling – “who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace

which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:9-10) Paul also wrote Titus that God made us a promise before time began – “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Titus 1:2). That promise was the hope of ‘eternal life.’

## *Eternal Salvation 'from' Eternity*

It's obvious from these Scriptures and many others in the Bible that God's purpose and plan for 'salvation' and the 'Gospel' began **before** His creation of the universe and the beginning of time. This amazing plan is truly eternal.

"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:24-26

God the Father 'loved' God the Son and shared 'glory' with the Son 'before the foundation of the world.' These are keys to understanding what God purposed and promised 'before time began' and why He did what He did.

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed before time began in a perfect, loving relationship. There was no jealousy among them – only perfect harmony and unity. That's important to know and understand because God's character is integral to how we understand and experience salvation – in this life and in the next life.

Jesus spoke of being with the Father “before the foundation of the world,” but does that mean Jesus is eternal? Was Jesus involved in planning eternal salvation with the Father or did God ‘create’ Jesus to carry out that plan? Did Jesus want to do the “will” of the Father because He was eternal and “equal” with the Father or because God created Jesus to do His will?

The earliest religion that taught that Jesus was not eternal nor divine was Judaism. Jesus came specifically to the Jews, but most rejected His offer of ‘eternal life.’ The apostles dealt with many opponents to Christ’s deity during the 1st century AD (e.g. 1 John 4:1-4; 2 John 7). The early Ebionites of the late 1st century and 2nd century AD believed Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, not the eternal Son of God. Arianism was a serious issue during the 4th century. Arians believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but that He did not always exist. Muslims have believed since the 7th century that Jesus is a created being. Socinians kept that idea alive in the 16th century as did the Biddellians (English Unitarians) in the 17th century. The 19th century gave birth to several groups that believed God created Jesus: including Mormons, Jehovahs Witnesses, Christadelphians, and Christian Scientists.

What say the **Scriptures**? The Bible claims that God is eternal (e.g. Deuteronomy 33:27) and that Jesus is God. The Bible teaches that God is “From everlasting to everlasting” (1 Chronicles 16:36) and that Jesus is God. Here are several supporting texts.

"Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God."  
Genesis 21:33

"Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen." Psalm 41:13

"Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God." Psalm 90:2

"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The Lord is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. 2 Your throne *is* established from of old; You *are* from everlasting."  
Psalm 93:1-2

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."  
Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." John 1:1-3

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." Colossians 1:16

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” Matthew 1:23

“But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.’ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” John 5:17-18

“Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:58

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.” John 14:9-11

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:5-7

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."  
Colossians 2:8-10

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory." 1 Timothy 3:16

"I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:13-16

"... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13

"But to the Son *He says*: 'Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.'" Hebrews 1:8-9

“To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:1

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Revelation 1:8

Original (Orthodox) Christianity was clear in its statement that Jesus Christ is God and eternally existent with the Father and the Holy Spirit. That means Jesus was a primary participant in God’s plan of salvation from before the “foundation of the world” and “the beginning of time.”

## *Jesus and the Eternal Offer*

Based on the teachings of Scripture it is our contention that God designed His 'plan' of salvation in eternity for the purpose of sharing eternity with people He created. We will address that purpose in this article.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 3:14-16

Those were Jesus' words to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus was surprised when Jesus told Him that “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” but Nicodemus would not have been surprised by the the use of the words “eternal life” and “everlasting life.”

Another Jewish ruler who approached Jesus asked Him this question: “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16) The idea of 'eternal life' was not something foreign to Jews before Jesus came to earth to offer the 'gift' of eternal life.

Living forever was not foreign to Gentiles either. I addressed this in detail in the book, "*A History of Man's Quest for Immortality*," so I'll be brief here. The Egyptian immortality cult is one example of the quest for immortality and belief in life after death.

"Probably the greatest physical example of dedication to the belief in an afterlife was what happened in ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed in the resurrection of the dead and in the immortality of the soul and body in an afterlife. They believed it was possible to live after death in a wonderful place and never taste death again. That belief led to a complex system of ceremonies dedicated to the preservation of the human body after death and prayers and incantations to the gods for the purpose of helping the deceased return to life and enjoy it fully and without fear in the afterlife." Mark A McGee, *A History of Man's Quest for Immortality*, Fifth Estate Publishing, 2007, pp 218-219

Most ancient civilizations had beliefs concerning life after death. Many of those views were dreary and depressing. However, Judaism's view of life after death was different than many of their ancient neighbors. Jews' belief came from a personal encounter with a personal God.

"The eternal God *is your* refuge, And underneath *are* the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, And will say, 'Destroy!'" Deuteronomy 33:7

“Why should I fear in the days of evil, *When* the iniquity at my heels surrounds me? Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him—For the redemption of their souls *is* costly, And it shall cease forever— That he should continue to live eternally, *And* not see the Pit.”  
Psalm 49:5-9

When Jesus told Martha that her brother, Lazarus, would “rise again,” she replied – “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Martha stated a prevailing Jewish belief that God would raise the dead at the end of time.

“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, *Even* to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:1-3

“Your dead shall live; *Together with* my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew *is like* the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.”

Isaiah 26:19

We know from what Luke wrote about Paul’s speech to the Jewish Sanhedrin that Pharisees in a resurrection from the dead and Sadducees did not (Acts 23:6-9). We also know from what Luke wrote about Jesus’s encounter with the Sadducees that He believed in the resurrection of the dead and they didn’t (Luke 20:27-38).

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him.” Luke 20:34-38

Jesus told a parable about exhibiting true humility at a wedding feast and the importance of inviting the poor, gained, lame and blind. He then explained what they could expect to receive at the “resurrection of the just:

“When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also

invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:12-14

Jesus taught His disciples that He would suffer many things in Jerusalem at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21). Jesus also promised His disciples that He was going to His "Father's house" where He would prepare a place for them so they could live with Him forever.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also." John 14:1-3

We see that place revealed in the last chapters of the Bible:

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be

with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:1-4

## ***Jesus and the Eternal Purpose***

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand.” John 10:27-29

Given all of this revealed insight from the Bible about how God chose from before time that Jesus would come to earth, suffer, die and rise from the dead so that people who believe in Him would live forever (John 17:1-3), why didn’t God just bypass creating a world where salvation would be necessary? Why didn’t God create a heaven and earth the first time where human beings would not fail and not need a divine rescue? Why?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17

The Apostle Paul is just 16 verses into his letter to the Romans and has already use the word “gospel” four times.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” vs 1

“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” vs 9

“So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” vs. 15

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

Paul told the Romans he was “ready” to preach the Gospel to them because it is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” Before we consider the “power” of the Gospel, let’s look at the “purpose” of the Gospel.

## ***The Eternal God***

“Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.” Psalm 90:2

“In the beginning God ...” Genesis 1:1

God. Just God. No universe. No heavens. No earth. No time. No space. No angels. Just God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Based on what the Bible tells us about God, He has always existed. God is ‘self-existent.’ He is the ‘Necessary Being’ and dependent on no one for His existence. God is without beginning or end. He is not encumbered by time or space. He is free from all succession of time.

He is infinite and immortal. God has all power, all knowledge, all understanding and all wisdom and has always had it!

### ***The Eternal Plan***

We come now to one of the most difficult and debated theological issues in all of history – the existence of evil, sin, pain, suffering and death. If God is a “loving” God and an “all-powerful” God, why did He create a world where evil, sin, pain, suffering and death were possible? Why would He allow that to happen when it was within His power to create a world where evil, sin, pain, suffering and death were impossible? What was His purpose?

If God meant for human beings to be able to answer that important question, He would have revealed the answer to us. I say “revealed” because there is no other way humans could possibly know why God chose to do something before time began, before He created the heavens and the earth. As God asked Job – “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4) The answer is simple – Job wasn’t there; no human beings existed when God laid the foundations of the earth. How can we possibly know why God did what He did? He must reveal it to us – and He has – in His Word.

In light of the fact that God promised us eternal life “before time began” (Titus 1:2), chose us in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4) and “has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and

grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9), we see clearly that God had a plan for all of humanity before He created the heavens and the earth. The “gospel of God” was not an afterthought when things didn’t go well in the Garden of Eden. The “gospel of His Son” was not a plan that God threw together at the last minute when He saw things turning out badly for Adam and Eve. The All-Knowing, All-Wise God created the heavens and the earth with an eternal plan that we are witness to every day.

## ***The Plan Revealed***

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

God conceived a ‘plan’ based on His ‘purpose’ and Genesis 1:1 is the beginning of ‘revealing’ that plan to His new creation. As we read God’s process of *bara* (create) in Genesis 1, we see His immense power and size, his phenomenal intellect and wisdom, and we see His incomparable creativity and amazing sense of order. We also see that God is alive (e.g. conscious, aware, moving, acting), personal (e.g. thought, sight, speech, intent, will) and existed before time (e.g. eternal, not encumbered by time or space).

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God

created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Genesis 1:26-28

The creation of man was God's crowning achievement. God (*elohim*) made (*na'a'seh* – let us make) man (*adam*) "in Our image" (*besalmenu*), "according to Our likeness" (*kidmutenu*). The statement is repeated in verse 27 – "So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." God (*elohim*) created (*wayyibra*) man (*haadam*) in His own image (*besalmow*) in the image (*beselem*) of God (*elohim*) He created (*bara*) them male and female He created (*bara*) them.

The Hebrew word for "image," *tselem*, and the word for "likeness," *d<sup>e</sup>mûwth*, work together to help reveal God's intention for humans. The word *tselem* means "a resemblance, a representative figure." It was used in Genesis 5:3 to describe how Adam "begot a *son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth," and in Numbers 33:52 and other Scriptures for how idols were "images" of false gods (graven images). The word *d<sup>e</sup>mûwth* means "similitude, similar in appearance." It could mean both a visual and audible similarity. It comes from the word *dâmâh*, which means "to resemble, to be like." Using the two words together shows that God's intention

was to create a living being that was not just an “image” of Him, but also “like” Him.

God placed so much emphasis on the importance of creating man in His image and likeness that He would say to Noah and his family after the Flood – “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.” The Hebrew words translated “in the image of God” are *baselem elohim* – the same words used in Genesis 1:26-27.

It’s important to remember that when God made man “in Our image, according to Our likeness” He was revealing a plan that Father, Son and Holy Spirit had already determined to carry out. Everything we see God do in the process of Creation is based on that plan – “according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9). It appears that God’s earlier creative acts were part of the preparation for the unveiling of His great plan concerning the *adam* He created “in Our image, according to Our likeness.”

There are many amazing creatures in God’s universe, but only human beings were created in God’s image and likeness. It speaks to a purposeful relationship. God created man, male and female, “in Our image, according to Our likeness” for a specific purpose and relationship.

## ***The Plan to Rule***

From that beginning point we learn that God had two plans in His relationship with man. The first plan was to **rule**.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1:26-27

Part of God’s plan in creating a living being “in Our image, according to Our likeness” was to “have dominion over” other created beings (e.g. fish, birds, cattle, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth). The word “dominion” is a translation of the Hebrew word *wěyirdû* in Genesis 1:26 (“let them have dominion over”) and *ûrědû* in Genesis 1:28 (“have dominion over”). Both words come from the word *râdâh*, which means “to reign, rule over, subjugate, dominate.”

Genesis 1:26-28 is a brief overview of God’s creation of man (male and female). Genesis 2 is a detailed view of God’s crowning creative achievement. Knowing that God purposed and planned the unfolding events of creation “before time began,” watch closely to see what God did and said.

“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 being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,

and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads ... Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' And the Lord God said, '*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they

were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Genesis 2:7-10, 15-25

God created *adam* in a very personal way – “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 being.” The Hebrew word translated “formed” is *wayyîšer* and comes from the word *yâtsar*, meaning “to fashion, frame, to shape, form.” The word was used for the work of a potter in making something from clay. God “formed, fashioned, framed” *adam* from the dust of the ground and “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” The Hebrew word for “breathed” is *nâphach*, which means “to inflate, to puff, to blow.” The outcome of God’s creative action in forming *adam* and breathing the breath of life into his nostrils was that “man became a living being.”

God apparently created *adam* in a place called Eden, then moved him “eastward” to a garden where God had created trees that were “pleasant to the sight and good for food.” God placed *adam* in the garden of Eden “to tend and keep it.” The Hebrew word for “tend” is *âbad* and means “to dress, till, work, labor, serve.” The Hebrew word for “keep” is *shâmar* and means “to guard, protect, preserve, hedge about, attend to, keep watch for.” This was part of God’s plan from “before time began” for man to **rule** the Earth with Him.

Two of the trees in the garden of Eden are identified as the “tree of life” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you

shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” This is the Supreme Ruler commanding the human ruler about a particular danger in the garden. It was one of the trees God had created, but it was the fruit of this tree that *adam* was not to eat. The result of disobeying God’s command would be to “die.”

The fact that God created a tree of the “knowledge of good and evil” and that eating its fruit would lead to death is important to note as we see the revealing of God’s eternal plan in time and space. The fact that God created and identified another tree as the “tree of life” is also important to note. One tree contained the fruit of life, while the other tree contained fruit of death. It would appear that God’s eternal plan contained an important aspect of life and death in time and space. We’ll see more about that in our next study.,

Another aspect of *adam* sharing rule with God was naming “every beast of the field and every bird of the air.” In Genesis 1:26 God said that *adam* would “have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God the Creator brought the animals and birds to *adam* the ‘earth ruler’ to be named. That demonstrates purpose and planning.

It was during the naming of the animals and birds that *adam* realized there was no helper comparable to him. God completed the creative purpose and plan described in Genesis 1:26-28 and “caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had

taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:21-22). Adam understood the physical and emotional relationship involved and named her "Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

In one statement – "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over" – God revealed a major part of the plan Father, Son and Holy Spirit designed "before the beginning of time." Is there anything else to God's eternal plan? There is and we'll learn about that in the next part of our study of Romans.

### ***The Plan to Overcome***

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Genesis 3:7-11

When we last saw Adam in the Garden of Eden he had just named his wife and they were both naked “and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). However, in Genesis 3:7-11 we see Adam and his wife hiding themselves from God because of shame and fear. What happened?

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Genesis 3:1-6

Enter the serpent that was “*more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.*” God “made” the serpent? He did. Was it a mistake? No. Keep in mind that God is revealing the plan Father, Son and Holy Spirit purposed “before time began.”

The serpent deceived the woman (1 Timothy 2:14) with lies about her relationship with God and with God’s command to her husband. What the serpent did was “evil” and we know that the serpent is “*the Devil*”

*and Satan, who deceives the whole world"*(Revelation 12:9). The serpent began by deceiving the woman in the garden of Eden (2 Corinthians 11:3) and from that beginning point reached out to deceive "*the whole world.*"

Once the woman and Adam ate of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and hid themselves from God's presence.

What's God going to do? He sounds upset – "*Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?*" Adam blames his wife and she blames the serpent. Did what Adam and his wife do throw a wrench into God's eternal plan? Watch how God handles it.

"So the Lord God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.' To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I

commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.'

When God saw everything that He had made, He said it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). However, in what appears to be a short period of time, God is upset with three of the living creatures He had made and is speaking about being cursed, eating dust all the days of life, enmity between creatures, bruising, sorrow, pain, toil, sweat and death. The question here is whether something went terribly wrong with God's plan from **before time began**. Let's remember the plan.

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was ... Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." John 17:3-5, 24

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before

the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Ephesians 1:3-5

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:8-10

"... according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." Titus 1:1-2

"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and

gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” 1 Peter 1:18-21

It is because we understand what is in God’s eternal plan that we can understand why He said this to the serpent – *“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”* The Hebrew word for “bruise” is *shûwph* and means “to crush, gape, seize, break, overwhelm.” We know from Scripture that the Seed of the woman is Jesus Christ. God said Jesus would crush the head of the seed of the serpent and the seed of the serpent would crush the heel of Jesus. Both were realized in Jesus’ death on the Cross.

It’s important for us to see that before God spoke to Adam and his wife, He spoke to the serpent and revealed the part He (God) would play in overcoming evil – *“He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”* God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 is explained by God’s Son in John 3:14-17:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

God also revealed the important role "*the woman*" would play in **overcoming** evil – "*I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed.*" God's promise in Genesis 3:15 is explained by the angel Gabriel in Luke 1 –

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end ...

*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*" Luke 1:30-33,  
35

This is God's plan of *overcoming* evil; a plan Father, Son and Holy Spirit designed together in eternity.

## **OVERCOMING THE WORLD**

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:13-15

God has won the final victory for each of us through Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross .. but .. what about thousands of years of human suffering on earth? What about the power of evil in our world? What is God’s eternal plan for all of that?

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

In just one brief statement, Jesus Christ summarized God’s eternal plan. Let’s consider it in four stages:

### ***God Has Spoken***

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the

brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Hebrews 1:1-4

God did not abandon Adam and his wife after they began to die in the garden of Eden. That wasn't His plan. God's plan was and is an epic adventure to go through every part of life with them, struggling with them, suffering with them, providing for them, rescuing them.

The first part of God's provision was to cover their nakedness (e.g. guilt and shame).

"Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them." Genesis 3:21

The next thing God did was to remove them from the garden because it had become a dangerous place to live. If Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of life, they would have lived forever in the terrible position of unrighteousness and enmity with God. That was not part of God's eternal plan. His plan was to rescue them.

"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'— therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove

out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3:22-24

God did not keep His eternal plan a secret from His people. He spoke to them directly, through *“the prophets”* and *“by His Son.”*

When Cain became jealous and angry, God said to him – *“Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it”* (Genesis 4:6-7). After Cain killed his brother, God provided another son for Adam and Eve through whom the “Seed of the woman” would eventually be born (Genesis 5:3). God’s plan from eternity.

When the wickedness of humanity became so great that God was grieved in His heart and considered destroying all of mankind, He chose to save Noah and his family through His grace. *“So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord’”(Genesis 6:7-8).* God’s plan from eternity.

When the human race rebelled against God, the Lord chose Abram telling him – *“I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Genesis 12:2-3). God’s plan from eternity.

When God purposed to set His people free from the oppression of Egypt's pharaoh, He chose Moses – *“And the Lord said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt”* (Exodus 3:7-10). God's plan from eternity.

When God purposed to establish an earthly throne for His Son, He chose Samuel – *“Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons”* (1 Samuel 16:1) – and God told Samuel to choose David to be King – *“And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward”* (1 Samuel 16:12-13). God's plan from eternity.

When God purposed to save the world, He sent His Son – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”* (John 3:16-17). God’s plan from eternity.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and joined with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in determining an eternal plan “before time began.” We see God’s Plan revealed through God’s Word.

## ***The Need for Peace***

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

In just one brief statement, Jesus Christ summarized God’s eternal plan. We are considering this amazing statement in four stages. We’ve seen that **God has spoken** through prophets and His Son. Now we move to the second stage.

What happened in the garden of Eden moved Adam and Eve from a position of **ruling with God** to being in need for **reconciliation with God**. That was a big change in their relationship – a change God had planned for in eternity.

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ Genesis 3:8-10

God knew where Adam was, but His question addressed the heart of humanity’s problem. Adam and Eve “hid” from the presence of their Creator. The problem? Fear. Why fear? Because Adam knew what he had done. He was afraid of what was coming. God had told him – “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17) Adam knew he had disobeyed God and brought a terrifying change into their relationship – that change was “sin.”

Rejecting “the word” of God is **rebellion** against God. That rebellion of rejecting God’s Word “is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Samuel 15:23). “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). There can be no **peace** where there is rebellion, lawlessness and wickedness (Isaiah 48:22). Even though God immediately introduced the ultimate path to forgiveness of sin in His words to the serpent (“He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel”), the human race would suffer greatly from the rebellion.

“To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you.’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:16-19

God made tunics of skin and clothed Adam and Eve before they left the Garden of Eden for the struggles that awaited them outside. God taught them how to make “sin offerings” that He would accept. Adam and Eve taught their children how to present the offerings to God (Genesis 4:2-5). As descendants of the first parents rebelled against God, the Lord started again with Noah and his family and taught them about the penalty of rebellion and the importance of obedience and offerings to God (Genesis 8:20-21). As descendants of Noah rebelled against God, the Lord chose Abram and taught him the importance of obedience and offerings to God (Genesis 15 & 22). As descendants of Abraham rebelled against God, the Lord chose Moses and taught him and the people of Israel the importance of obedience and offerings to God (Exodus 12 & 29; Leviticus 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14, 17, 22, 23).

All of these offerings were pointing to THE PLAN God designed in eternity "before time began," that He then revealed "in time". God planned to **offer HIMSELF** to make peace with those who rebelled against Him. That PEACE would come in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

### ***Peace In Christ***

The **He** in "He shall bruise your head" is Jesus Christ.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Romans 5:9-11

We have peace with God through the "*blood of His cross.*" Another plan made in eternity.

"For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." Colossians 1:19-22

When God told the serpent (Satan) in the garden of Eden that He would put “enmity” between Satan and the woman and between Satan’s seed and the woman’s Seed, who would bruise (crush) the head of Satan’s seed, God was presenting His plan for human reconciliation. What we see in God’s eternal plan is that God would do everything in reconciling humans spiritually and physically. God the Father would send God the Son from Heaven to earth who would be born of a virgin after God the Holy Spirit had “come upon” her (Luke 1:35). God the Son would die on the Cross and “triumph” over Satan by wiping out the requirements against us, “taking it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14-15).

The Hebrew and Greek words for “peace” are used hundreds of times in the Bible. Peace is a primary theme in God’s eternal plan. God wants us to have peace with Him and with each other.

The Hebrew verb שָׁלוֹם (*shalam*) can be translated as “be whole, be complete, make amends, make safe, be sound, be uninjured, requite, recompense, reward, offer sacrifice, make peace-offering.” The noun *shalom* can be translated as “completeness, sounds, welfare, safety, health, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment, friendship, well-being.”

Here are some examples of how the Hebrew words for peace are used in the Old Testament.

"Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age." Genesis 15:15

"So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them." Joshua 9:15

"Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the Lord." 1 Kings 2:33

"The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace." Psalm 29:11

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak, For He will speak peace To His people and to His saints; But let them not turn back to folly." Psalm 85:8

"You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on You*, Because he trusts in You." Isaiah 26:3

[Other Hebrew words translated as "peace" include שָׁלוֹם (*chashah*), תּוֹדָה (*todah*), אָשׁוּב (*sega*), and שְׁלוֹמָה (*shalvah*)]

The Greek words translated "peace" include the noun εἰρήνη (*eiréné* – peace of mind, harmony, concord, security, safety, felicity, tranquility), the verb εἰρηνεύω (*eiréneuo* – keep the peace, bring to

peace, be at peace, live in peace), and the adjective εἰρηνοποιός (*eirénopios* – peacemaking, peacemaker).

Here are some examples of how the Greek words for peace are used in the New Testament.

“Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

“And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” Mark 5:34

“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” Luke 2:14

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27

“For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.” Romans 8:6

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” Romans 12:18

“For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:33

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Ephesians 2:13-16

God is the “author” of peace. The “fruit” of the Holy Spirit is peace. Jesus “made” peace in “one body through the cross” so He might reconcile Jew and Gentile to God. Our peace is truly “in Christ.” **Peace** is God’s eternal plan.

### ***Tribulation In The World***

The third stage of God’s eternal plan is dealing with “tribulation” in the world. The Greek word translated tribulation is θλιψιν and means “persecution, pressure, affliction, distress.” It comes from θλίβω which means to “rub together, press together, constrict, compress, afflict.” The word “world” is κόσμῳ (*kosmo*), which was understood in ancient Greek writings to include the order of the universe, the earth and the human inhabitants of the earth.

God told Adam that he would die if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In addition to death, God revealed other

types of “tribulation” that Adam, Eve and their descendants would struggle with during their lifetime.

“To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you.’ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:16-19

Sorrow, pain, desire, curses, toil, thorns, thistles, sweat, death. Adam and Eve and their descendants experienced all of that and much more until they died and their bodies returned to dust. Tribulation, stress, distress, affliction, persecution. That’s what Adam and Eve faced every day of their lives. They suffered great sorrow when their son Cain murdered their son Abel. God sent Cain away from his mother and father, but He gave Adam and Eve another son to carry the seed of reconciliation forward (Genesis 5:3-8). One of the most powerful statements in the Bible is Genesis 5:5 – “So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” God said Adam would die and Adam did die. Tribulation and death are our future as well.

Adam and Eve were not the only ones who would suffer because of their sin. Within several generations from our first parents the wickedness of the human race was so great on the earth that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). God also suffered sorrow and was grieved in His heart by the actions of humanity (Genesis 6:6). God said these words – "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). Was it God's eternal plan to destroy the human race, both man and beast, creeping things and the birds of the air? No, it wasn't. God's eternal plan was to reconcile man to Himself. In Genesis 6 we see how the wickedness of the human race affected God. That was part of God's journey with His creation. God's plan is reconciliation and He demonstrated it by once again revealing His love, grace and mercy – "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).

The words translated "grace" are used hundreds of times in the Bible. Even though we see God's grace in creation and in how he dealt with Adam's sin in the garden, Genesis 6:8 is the first time we see the word "grace" used in the Bible.

The Hebrew word translated "grace" in Genesis 6:8 is *חֵן* (*chen* – from *חָנַן* *chanan*). The noun means "favor, acceptance" and the verb means "show favor, mercy, pity." Dr. William Wilson explained the usage of the word this way – "denotes a free and spontaneous willingness to bestow good on him that is destitute of it, either in a

way of kindness  $\tau\omicron\eta$ , or in a way of compassion ... The word excludes all idea of merit or desert in the object of free favour” (Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies, William Wilson, MacDonald Publishing Co., 1975).

## ***Grace and Mercy***

The world God saw in Genesis 6 was certainly not deserving of favor, mercy or pity because “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” God felt deep sorrow and was grieved, but His eternal plan was to reconcile mankind to Himself. God demonstrated grace and mercy to one man, Noah. God demonstrated His grace toward humanity after Cain killed Abel by giving Adam and Even another son, Seth, through which the Seed would be born. Noah was from the lineage of Seth.

“Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.” Genesis 8:1-2

God began again with the human race to effect reconciliation. The Lord expanded His covenant with man through animal sacrifice (Genesis 8:20-22), the sanctity of life, the penalty for murder, and the sign of the covenant (Genesis 9:1-17). God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” So, how did the family of man respond to God’s grace?

“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake *them thoroughly*.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:1-4

They rebelled against God. God’s eternal plan was reconciliation, so how did He respond to their rebellion?

“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, ‘Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.” Genesis 11:5-9

God confused the languages of people and they scattered across the earth according to their family and language (Genesis 10 lists the early families and the locations where they scattered). What was next in God's eternal plan of reconciliation? He chose a man named Abram who was of the lineage of Noah and Shem.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

Genesis 12:1-3

Abram, who later became Abraham, was the man God chose to complete His eternal plan of reconciliation. Abraham and his wife Sarah had a son named Isaac who would carry the seed forward (Genesis 21:12). Isaac's son Jacob was later named Israel and had 12 sons. One of them was named Judah and it was from his lineage that God would bring the promised Seed of the woman to reconcile the world. Jesus Christ is the promised Reconciler, the Redeemer, of the world – “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals ... You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:5, 9-10)

## ***The Sufferings of Christ***

What happened in the thousands of years between Abraham, Judah, David and Jesus Christ at the end of time? Tribulation, trouble, persecution, struggle, sorrow, grief, pain, and death. God has suffered with His creation. He has known sorrow and grief. He has suffered the pain of rejection. God the Son came to earth to "save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11), but the people to whom Jesus came rejected Him and He suffered and died a horrible death on the Cross paying the penalty for their sins and our sins. Isaiah the prophet wrote that Messiah would be "despised and rejected by men," would be a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, would be smitten by God and afflicted, would be "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities." (Isaiah 53:1-6) That was God's eternal plan for reconciliation. It was the Father's will and the Son obeyed.

Jesus said that in this world we "will have tribulation." He told His disciples that the world hates them because they hated Him. Jesus said the world would persecute them because they persecuted Him (John 15:18-25). The Apostle Paul told Timothy that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). The Apostle Peter told Christians that though they had "been grieved by various trials" and their faith "tested by fire," they could "rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" knowing they would receive the end of their faith – "the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:6-9). James wrote to believers that they should "count it all joy" when they

fell into various trials, knowing that the testing of their faith produced patience. James also wrote that the believer who endured testing would “receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:2-12).

Christians, of all people, should not be surprised that we live in a world of pain, sorrow and death. God said that it would be that way and it is. Jesus said we would have tribulation in this world and we do. Even as we know that to be true, we also need to remember that God is always with us. He also feels pain and sorrow and experienced the death of His Son. He has traveled every step of man’s journey from Adam to the present and will continue to journey with His people throughout eternity. God will never leave us.

“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you ... And the Lord, He *is* the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.”  
Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

“No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you ... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:5, 9

“... and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”  
Matthew 28:20

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:28-30

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

“*Let your* conduct be without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”

Hebrews 13:5-6

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

We are currently looking at God's Eternal Plan for **Overcoming the World** – a plan Father, Son and Holy Spirit designed together before time began, before God created “the world.”

### ***Be Of Good Cheer***

The fourth stage of understanding God's Plan for Reconciliation is to “be of good cheer.” The Greek words translated “be of good cheer” are *αλλα θαρσειτε* and mean “but be of good courage.” The word *θαρσειτε* comes from *θάρσος* and means “courage, confidence, emboldened” (from the Greek word for “bold”).

Jesus presented His disciples with a prophetic picture of their lives: trouble in the world, but courage and confidence in Christ Who had “overcome” the world. As the youngest apostle of Christ would write to Christians in the last years of his life – “Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.” (1 John 3:13) That picture has not changed in the years since Jesus first spoke them to His closest followers. At every point in Church history we see Christians facing “tribulation” in the world. We also see many Christians demonstrating great courage as they face great opposition from the enemies of Christ.

## ***Overcome the Wicked One***

The Apostle John was the last apostle alive when he wrote Christians about the great battles they would fight in the Name of Christ.

"I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one." 1 John 2:14

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." 1 John 2:18-19

"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also." 1 John 2:22-23

"These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to deceive you*." 1 John 2:26

Deception of believers began with Satan in the Garden of Eden –

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has

God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” Genesis 3:1

“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” 1 Timothy 2:14

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” 2 Corinthians 11:2-4

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”  
Revelation 12:9

John made it clear in his letter to Christians at the end of the 1st century AD what the purpose of Jesus Christ had been from before the beginning of time.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8b

Jesus Christ, Who came into the world to “destroy the works of the devil,” warned His disciples about how deception would be a primary way Satan would oppose His followers –

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. ‘Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.’” Matthew 24:3-11

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.” Matthew 24:23-24

The Lord's Apostles continued His warning about deceivers —

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” Ephesians 5:6-7

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be

complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:12-17

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward." 2 John 7-8

### ***Overcoming By Faith***

Jesus Christ commanded the Apostle John to "write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." (Revelation 1:11) Jesus dictated seven letters to seven churches, called on them seven times to "overcome," and gave them seven promises —

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Revelation 2:7

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." Revelation 2:11

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden

manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.” Revelation 2:17

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.” Revelation 2:26

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Revelation 3:5

“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. *And I will write on him My new name.*” Revelation 3:12

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Revelation 3:21

What methods did Jesus give His disciples for “overcoming” the wicked one? Faith in the One Who overcomes.

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:4-5

How does this "faith" express itself in the process of "overcoming" the wicked one?

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 John 4:1-6

Christians come from a long line of "overcomers" —

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured,

not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens* and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” Hebrews 11:32 – 12:3

Overcoming is not easy and it often comes at great cost, but overcoming is God’s eternal purpose for those who believe in Him.

### ***God’s Eternal Plan – To Overcome***

Paul said he was NOT ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, “for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” The “good

news" of Jesus Christ is that He came from Heaven to earth to "destroy the works of the devil."

Jesus accomplished that eternal objective by dying on the Cross – "For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:19-20) — and rising from the grave – "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5)

From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, God's plan is clear and unmistakable – Jesus Christ is the Great Overcomer and those who belong to Him will overcome with Him and "inherit all things" —

"Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.'" Revelation 21:5-7

## ***The Gospel of God***

As we continue our study of the “Gospel of God” in Paul’s letter to the Romans, let us remember that the Gospel is “good news” because Jesus Christ won the victory over wickedness, unrighteousness, sin and death and that through Him we too are conquerors —

“What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? *It is* God who justifies. Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-39

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep,

but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?' The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

## ***Jews and Gentiles Included***

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Romans 1:16-17.

We just finished a special study about God’s Eternal Plan for **Overcoming the World** – a plan that Father, Son and Holy Spirit designed together before time began, before God created “the world.” If you haven’t read it yet, you may find it helpful before moving to the next part of our study.

You may also find it helpful to look back at our introduction to Acts 1:16-17 to remember some of the important aspects of Paul’s letter to the Romans and the honor-shame culture in which they lived.

Romans 1:16-17 is thematic. Paul presented the thesis for the first section of his letter and it addresses the powerful issue of humanity’s shame and God’s offer of honor.

Here is the basic flow of Paul’s thematic argument in Romans 1:16-17:

- I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ
- It is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes
- For the Jew first and also for the Greek

- For in it (the Gospel of Christ) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith
- The just shall live by faith

Paul lived, traveled, preached and taught the Gospel of Christ in an honor-shame culture and was not ashamed of it. Why? Because it had a unique '**power**' within it – the power to bring salvation and honor to the lost soul. Paul is going to make a case in his letter to the Romans that everyone, Jew and Gentile, has sinned and come short of God's standard. Paul will make the case that God's standard is "righteousness," but every human misses the mark of that standard and is "unrighteous" before Him. The solution is in the **Gospel of Christ** because it contains the "power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." The Gospel of Christ is the "power, might, strength, ability, powerful deed, ability" of God "to salvation" – εις σωτηριαν. The Gospel is the "saving power" of God "for everyone who believes."

The Greek reads παντι τω πιστευοντι – "to everyone believing." The word for "everyone" is παντι and means "all, every part." The word "believing" is πιστευοντι and means "have faith in, trust in, have confidence." It comes from a root word for "persuasion" (to be persuaded). The word "believes" impacts the word "everyone." The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for believers. Belief (trust, faith, confidence) is a vital aspect of how God expresses "saving power."

## ***The Jew First***

Who is this “everyone” who believes? Paul answers –

“... for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

The Greek reads ιουδαιω τε πρωτον και ελληνι, “to Jew both firstly and to Greek.” This is God’s eternal plan, so let’s think about the order Paul gives us. It goes back to a promise God made to a man thousands of years ago.

“Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

Genesis 12:1-3

God called a man and his family to leave their home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land God would show them. The man was Abram and the land was Canaan (Genesis 11:31; 12:5). God told Abram that He would make him “a great nation” and make his name “great.” God also told Abram that “all the families of the earth” would be blessed through him.

Let’s go back to Romans 1:1-4 for a reminder about how Paul is weaving together the facts of biblical history to understand how the Gospel is the power of God “to salvation for everyone who believes.”

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:1-4

Paul began his letter to the Romans by telling them that the “gospel of God” concerned His Son Jesus Christ, “who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The Greek for “according to the flesh” is *κατα σαρκα* and addresses the physical genealogy of Jesus. The first verse of the New Testament reads – “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” (Matthew 1:1) Here’s how David connects to Abraham –

“Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.” Matthew 1:2-6

Both Matthew 1 and Romans 1 remind us that Jesus is the “promised seed” of Abraham who would become a blessing to Israel and all the nations of the world.

Soon after Pentecost Peter addressed the issue of how God would bless the world through Israel because they were the “seed of Abraham.”

“So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. ‘Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like

me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities." Acts 3:12-26

### ***All the Families of the Earth***

God sent His Son Jesus to bless Israel and through Israel to bless "all the families of the earth." However, the religious leaders of Israel rejected God's offer by killing Jesus and some of His Jewish followers (e.g. James, Stephen), so God opened the door to the Gentiles in a new way.

God made a solemn promise to Abram: He would make of Abram a *great nation*, He would *bless* Abram and make his *name great*. God also said that Abram would *be a blessing*. God said He would *bless* those who blessed Abram and *curse* those who cursed him. God also promised that in Abram *all the families of the earth* would be blessed.

We come now in our study of Romans to the full realization of that holy promise made thousands of years ago.

Paul started his letter to the Romans by stating that this Gospel, which is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, was promised through His prophets “in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh ...” The connection to David is powerfully Jewish. Matthew 1:1 reminds us of the direct connection from Jesus to David to Abraham – “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.”

Jesus, according to the flesh, was “of the seed of David,” which means He was Jewish by birth. So, how did this “gospel of God” go from being shared exclusively to Jews to “also for the Greek”?

We look to the Book of Acts to see how God expanded the blessing of the Gospel to “all the families of the earth.”

“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Acts 9:1-2

This is the same Saul who consented to the murder of Stephen and headed up a severe persecution of followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 7 & 8). Saul was on his way to Damascus with letters from the high priest to the synagogues of Damascus to arrest followers “of the Way” and bring them bound to Jerusalem.

“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ Acts 9:3-6

The men who were traveling with Saul took him into Damascus where he remained blind and didn't eat or drink for three days. While Saul was waiting to see what he would be told to do next, Jesus spoke to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias.

“So the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’ Acts 9:11-12

Ananias was hesitant because of Saul's reputation for persecuting followers of Jesus, but the Lord told him to go to Saul because He had a special purpose for him.

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of

Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15-16

Saul was a "chosen vessel" of Jesus Christ to "bear" His name before "Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." This is the first indication that God had something special planned to reach "all families of the earth" with the blessed Gospel. Though Saul (Paul) would always have a special place in his heart for his fellow Jews (e.g. Romans 9:1-5), he understood his special calling from Jesus to be an "apostle to the Gentiles" (e.g. Romans 11:13; 2 Timothy 1:11).

Acts 15 and Galatians 2 are powerful demonstrations of how Jesus used Paul to reach Gentiles with the Gospel of Christ.

"Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles." Acts 15:12

"Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might

continue with you. But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. *They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." Galatians 2:1-10

### ***Peter's Influence***

The Apostle Peter played a major role in convincing the Jerusalem Council of apostles and elders about the legitimacy of Paul's calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

"Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up *and* said to them: 'Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who

knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” Acts 15:6-11

Peter reminded the other apostles and the elders that God had chosen him to preach Christ to a Gentile named Cornelius who was “a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout *man* and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:1-2). God first demonstrated to Peter that He was doing something new to prepare Peter to preach to Cornelius and his family (Acts 10:9-16). God then demonstrated that the new outreach to Gentiles was His choice according to His sovereign purpose (Acts 10:44-48). Peter faced opposition to what he had done when he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-3) and explained to them that what had happened was God’s choice (Acts 11:4-18). After the apostles and elders heard Peter’s explanation in Acts 11, “they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’” (Acts 11:18).

## ***Paul and Barnabas in Antioch***

The next verse (Acts 11:19) begins a new section that follows the Apostle Paul and his ministry to Gentiles. Except for Acts 12 (Peter arrested) and Acts 15 (Peter speaks to Jerusalem Council), Peter is not mentioned again in Acts. Luke's focus from Acts 13 – 28 is about how the Holy Spirit used Paul to fulfill the calling of Jesus Christ on his life –

“Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.” Acts 13:1-4

That was the start of Paul's missionary journeys to Gentile nations to begin preaching the Gospel of God to “all the families of the earth.” As we follow Paul and his companions in Acts, we see how the Holy Spirit guided them in reaching new people with the Gospel of God.

“Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” Acts 16:6

“After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.” Acts 16:7

“When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’” Acts 19:21

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.” Acts 20:22-23

“When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.’” Acts 21:11

The Book of Acts ends on a powerful note concerning Paul’s ministry to Gentiles. Soon after arriving in Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself in a rented house with a soldier who guarded him. Three days after moving in to his new residence, Paul invited the leaders of the Jews in Rome to visit with him. He told them about being arrested and how he had appealed to Caesar. The Jewish leaders said they had not received letters from Judea concerning Paul and that no one had spoken evil about him. They were interested in learning more from him about the “this sect” (Christianity). They appointed a day to hear him and many Jews came to Paul’s house to hear from him. Paul talked from morning until evening about Jesus Christ from both

the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Paul persuaded some of the Jews, but others did not believe him. They left Paul after he said this:

"The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. *Their* ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *theirears*, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' 'Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!'" Acts 28:25-28

The Jews left Paul after he said those words and had a great dispute among themselves. Paul lived in his rented house for two years, "and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him." (Acts 28:30-31)

In Paul's own words, "the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" The Book of Acts comes to an end with a powerful demonstration of God's purpose to save people from "all the families of the earth."

## *The Righteousness of God*

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Romans 1:16-17.

We move now to the words “from faith to faith.” What does that mean and what impact does it have on our understanding of how “the righteousness of God is revealed”?

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith ...”

δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν

A literal translation could be – “a righteousness for of God in it is revealed from faith to faith.”

Let’s begin with the word for “righteousness” – δικαιοσύνη. It comes from δίκαιος, which comes from δίκη. In ancient Greek, the word δίκη was a judicial decision. It carried the idea of a legal decision that was “right, just.” The Jewish translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (Septuagint) used δίκη to translate the Hebrew word *rî* (lawsuit). The meaning of δίκαιος is “righteous, just,” and δικαιοσύνη (the word Paul used in Romans 1:17) means “justice, righteousness.” It carried the idea and weight of a judicial verdict, approval. A judge heard evidence and ruled “rightly, righteously, justly.”

The first time we see the word “righteousness” in the Bible is Genesis 15:5-6 where God spoke with Abram – “Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” The Hebrew word translated “righteousness” in Genesis 15 is :הקדָּוָה (*tsedaqah*) and carried the idea of that which is “true, honest, ethically right, legally right, just.”

In the context of Paul’s writing to the Romans, δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ means the “judicial verdict, approval, of God.” God’s approval, His judicial verdict, is far higher and nobler than even the best human judgment. What was it that met God’s approval, His judicial verdict of “righteousness”? ἐν αὐτῷ – “in it”. What is “it”? The “gospel of Christ.”

Think about that for a moment. The Jews had their concept of what was “right, just” even as did the Greeks, but what Paul is saying is that “in” the Gospel of Christ “the righteousness of God is revealed.” God’s “righteousness” is a part of who He is according to His eternal nature. How is it revealed to human beings? In the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The full story of who Jesus is and what He did for humanity “reveals” the “righteousness” of God. When did that “gospel of Christ” begin? Immediately after the head of the human race fell from right standing with God. God spoke first to the serpent (Satan) who deceived Eve.

“So the Lord God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:14-15

God announced the heart of the Gospel of Christ – Jesus would conquer Satan through His death and restore the right standing of human beings with God again forever.

The Jews believed their righteousness came from their position as God’s chosen people and their interpretation, understanding and practice of God’s Law. Jesus took on the Jews concept of what was “right” according to the Law of Moses and said: “You have heard that it was said to those of old ... But I say to you ...” Jesus, who is God, explained that the “righteousness of God” is far above the interpretation and understanding of Jews and their religious leaders. He also explained that it had consequences.

“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:20

Imagine the impact that statement had on the crowds of people listening to Jesus (including the scribes and Pharisees!). Jews were taught that the religious leaders understood and modeled “righteousness” because of their relationship to Yahweh and

knowledge of the Mosaic Law, so how could Jews possibly "exceed" the righteousness of their religious leaders? And did Jesus mean that no one, not even the scribes and Pharisees, could enter the kingdom of heaven?

Paul also addressed the Greek concept of "righteousness," which pagans saw as coming down to them from the gods and/or through social customs and expectations (e.g. ethics, morality). Greek philosophers (e.g. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) taught and debated much about justice and ethics. Paul had a powerful understanding of what Greeks believed and spoke directly to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens. We learn something about ancient Greek beliefs concerning righteousness from what Paul said to them.

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 'God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined

their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:22-31

Each of Paul's comments directly refuted an aspect of Greek philosophy and demonstrated the superiority of Christianity – from the origin of the universe, to fate, to pleasure, to God's personal involvement with His creatures, to life after death.

Paul also quoted from Greek philosophers in his Athens speech (e.g. Epimenides, Aratus), further demonstrating his understanding of Greek philosophy and ability to explain the Truth of the Gospel in a pagan culture.

The Apostle Paul addressed Jewish and Gentile concepts and concerns about righteousness in his letter to the Romans. Paul used the words "righteous" and "righteousness" almost 40 times in

Romans, more than twice as many times as any other New Testament letter. "Righteousness" is a primary theme in Romans, so we'll see it many times during this study series.

## ***Righteousness Revealed***

The word "revealed" is αποκαλυπτεται. The word means "to uncover, bring to light, reveal that which was hidden, make known what was unknown." It comes from combining από (away from) and καλύπτω (hide, conceal, covered over, kept secret).

Is there anything about God that we could or would know unless God revealed it to us? Anything? We might have questions about life and the universe around us, but what would we "know" unless God revealed the answers to us? Very little. We have the answers to life's most challenging questions because the Creator of life has revealed the answers to us through His Word.

Some of life's toughest questions are about why life is hard .. why people suffer .. why people die .. is there anything after death .. is there something beyond this world .. is there a higher intelligence in the universe? How would we know the truth about any of these vital issues unless God revealed them to us? We wouldn't .. we would just be guessing, making assumptions, hoping without assurance.

That's what Jews and Gentiles were doing in the 1st century AD about the important issue of "being right" before God or the gods. They were making assumptions based on their personal thoughts and opinions. That's much like people in the 21st century who express

their opinions about what is true, what is right and wrong. However, having an opinion about what is true does not mean they “know” what is true. Having an opinion about what is right does not mean they “know” what is right. When we grasp the concept of the existence of an Almighty God, we find ourselves at the entrance to truth .. truth that is “revealed” to us by Almighty God.

Paul is writing about the “power” of the Gospel of Christ. That POWER is the “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” As we saw in an earlier study “salvation” is necessary because people are lost and in need of rescue. That “power” came from a “revelation” from God concerning “right and wrong.” As it turns out, God is “right” and the human race is “wrong.” We will discover that very soon as we continue our study of Romans. God is RIGHT (righteous) and Jews and Gentiles are WRONG (unrighteous).

### ***From Faith to Faith***

Paul told the Romans that the righteousness of God is revealed “from faith to faith.” What does that mean?

ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΕΙΣ ΠΙΣΤΙΝ

The word πιστεω is a noun in the Genitive case. The word πιστιν is a noun in the Accusative case. Both words come from the same root, πείθω, a verb meaning “to persuade, urge.” The meaning of “faith” in the Greek is a confidence based on trust in truth based on evidence. There is no “blind” faith in the Greek understanding of the

words. Faith is based on looking at the evidence with "eyes wide open."

So, what does it mean that the righteousness of God is revealed "from faith to faith"? First, we need to understand that God is the One doing the "persuasion" here. It's not one person persuading another person about something. God does the persuading – thus the "power" of the Gospel of Christ. As Paul wrote in an earlier letter –

"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:3-5

The "righteousness" of God is something He does based on the fact that He is "righteous." God is the "necessary" Being. His creatures are "contingent" beings. Our very existence is contingent on God's existence. If God did not exist, we would not exist. God is necessary to the existence of the universe and all life in it. That also means that "righteousness," the quality or state of being righteous, is dependent on God. Righteousness for a contingent being is dependent on the righteousness of a necessary being. If God was not righteous, He could not make us righteous. We should be forever grateful for the fact that God is both a righteous *Necessary Being* and that He has chosen to share His righteousness with us contingent beings.

The idea of “from” or “out of” “faith to faith” can be understood as moving from the origin of faith to the maturing of faith – the full “journey” of faith. Other interpretations of “from faith to faith” include from God’s faithfulness to man’s faith in God’s faithfulness, from the faith of the preacher (Paul) to the faith of the believers, from the faith of the Jew (who was first) to the faith of the Greek, and even from the faith of the Old Testament to the faith of the New Testament.

Here are some thoughts about the phrase “from faith to faith” from several well-known commentaries –

“It is not from faith to works, as if faith put us into a justified state, and then works kept us in it; but it is all along from faith to faith; it is faith pressing forward, and gaining the victory over unbelief.”

Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible

“It is by faith that man first lays hold on the gospel, and its latest product is a heightened and intensified faith. Apart from faith, the gospel remains null and void for the individual. It is not realised. But when it has been once realised and taken home to the man’s self, its tendency is to confirm and strengthen that very faculty by which it was apprehended.” Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

Q. d. ‘is unfolded, and displays faith, and only faith, as its secret, at each disclosure.’ (1) The initial step, the entrance to justification, is faith: (2) The life of the justified is maintained by faith: faith is the starting-point and the course.—‘Is revealed:’—a present tense in the Gr.:—is revealing. The idea is of a

perpetually recurring process: 'to each fresh discoverer it is revealed.'" Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

"from faith to faith; that is, as say some, from the faith of God to the faith of men; from the faith of preachers to the faith of hearers; from the faith of the Old to the faith of the New Testament saints; or rather from one degree of faith to another; for faith, as it grows and increases, has clearer sights of this righteousness, as held forth in the Gospel." Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

"this apostle seems to delight in such repetitions, and there is an elegancy in them: see Romans 6:19 2 Corinthians 2:16 2 Corinthians 3:18. The words are variously interpreted: from the faith of the Old Testament to the faith of the New; so that no person ever was or shall be justified in any other way. Or, from a lesser faith to a greater; not noting two faiths, but one and the same faith increasing to perfection. He saith not, from faith to works, or from works to faith; but from faith to faith, i.e. only by faith. The words to be must be understood: q.d. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God to be from faith to faith. The beginning, the continuance, the accomplishment of our justification is wholly absolved by faith." Matthew Poole's Commentary

"Most interpreters (judging from the sense of such phrases elsewhere) take it to mean, 'from one degree of faith to another.' But this agrees ill with the apostle's design, which has nothing to

do with the progressive stages of faith, but solely with faith itself as the appointed way of receiving God's 'righteousness.' We prefer, therefore, to understand it thus: 'The righteousness of God is in the gospel message, revealed (to be) from (or 'by') faith to (or 'for') faith,' that is, 'in order to be by faith received.' (So substantially, Melville, Meyer, Stuart, Bloomfield, &c.)." Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

"The expression, in our translation, from faith to faith, is interpreted by some of a gradual series of still clearer and clearer discoveries; but the translation of the clause given above, namely, the righteousness of God by faith is revealed in order to faith, seems evidently to express better the apostle's meaning." Benson Commentary

"Construe the righteousness which is of or from faith, as we have presently after the just from faith [i.e. he who is justified,—whose righteousness is, of faith]. The phrase, from faith to faith, expresses pure faith; for righteousness of, or from faith, subsists in faith, without works. Eις denotes the destination, the boundary, and limit; see ch. Romans 12:3, and notes on Chrysostom's work, De Sacerd, p. 415. So 1 Chronicles 17:5. I have gone [lit. in the Heb. I was or have been] מֵאֹהֶל אֶל אֹהֶל from tent to tent, where one and another tent [different tents] are not intended; but a tent [the tabernacle] as distinguished from [or independently of] a house or temple. Faith, says Paul, continues to be faith; faith is all in all [lit. the prow and stern] in the case of Jews and Gentiles; in the case of Paul also, even up to its very final consummation, Php

3:7-12. Thus εἰς sounds with a beautiful effect after ἐκ, as ἀπὸ and εἰς, 2 Corinthians 3:18, concerning the purest glory. It is to avoid what might be disagreeable to his readers, that Paul does not yet expressly exclude works, of which, however, in this Statement of Subject [Proposition], an exclusion of some kind should otherwise have appeared. Furthermore, the nature of a proposition, thus set forth, bears, that many other things may be inferred from this; for inasmuch as it is not said, ἐκ τῆς πίστεως εἰς τὴν πίστιν, from the faith to the faith, but indefinitely ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν from faith to faith, so we shall say [we may say by inference] from one faith to another, from the faith of God, who makes the offer, to the faith of men, who receive it, ch. Romans 3:2, etc.; from the faith of the Old Testament, and of the Jews, to the faith of the New Testament, and of the Gentiles also, ch. Romans 3:30; from the faith of Paul to the faith of the Romans, ch. Romans 1:12; from one degree of faith to still higher degrees, 1 John 5:13; from the faith of the strong to the faith of the weak, ch. Romans 14:1, etc.; from our faith, which is that of expectation, to the faith, which is to be divinely made good to us, by the gift of life ["The just shall live by faith"].—καθως, as) Paul has just laid down three principles: I. Righteousness is [of, or] from faith, Romans 1:17 : II. Salvation is by righteousness, Romans 1:16 : III. To the Jew and to the Greek, Romans 1:16. What follows confirms the whole, viz., the clause, the just by faith, shall live, which is found in the prophetic record, Habakkuk 2:4; see notes

on Hebrews 10:36, etc. It is the same Spirit, who spoke by the prophets the Words, that were to be quoted by Paul; and under whose guidance Paul made such apposite and suitable quotations, especially in this epistle.—ζήσεται, shall live) some of the Latins, in former times, wrote the present 'lives' for the future "shall live" (vivit for vivet);[10] an obvious mistake in one small letter, and not worthy of notice or refutation. Baumgarten, following Whitby, refutes it, and observes, that I have omitted to notice it." Bengel's Gnomon of the New Testament

"From faith to faith indicates

I. The exclusiveness of faith. Faith all in all in a man's justification. Works not in the account. Not from faith to worlds, but from faith to faith (Romans 3:22; Rom\_3:28).

II. The growth of faith. From one degree of faith to another. Advance made in clearness, simplicity, strength.

III. The many sidedness of faith. From one kind of faith to another. From faith which saves to faith for still further blessings. From faith which justifies to faith which sanctifies. From faith of the intellect to faith of the heart. (*T. Robinson, D. D.*)" The Biblical Illustrator

"Rev., *by faith unto* faith. According to the A.V. the idea is that of progress in faith itself; either from Old to New Testament faith, or, in the individual, from a lower to a higher degree of faith; and this idea, I think, must be held here, although it is true that it is

introduced secondarily, since Paul is dealing principally with the truth that righteousness is *by* faith. We may rightly say that the revealed righteousness of God is *unto* faith, in the sense of *with a view to produce faith*; but we may also say that faith is a *progressive* principle; that the aim of God's justifying righteousness is *life*, and that the just lives by his faith (Galatians 2:20), and enters into 'more abundant' life with the development of his faith. Compare 2 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 6:19; and the phrase, *justification of life*, Romans 5:18." Vincent's Word Studies

"From faith to faith. This is to be joined with 'revealed,' not with 'righteousness.' The righteousness is revealed 'from faith' as the starting-point, and 'to faith' as its aim, continually producing new faith. This is substantially the generally accepted explanation. (It is improper to refer 'from faith' to God's faithfulness.) The gospel makes known constantly that faith on Christ is the subjective cause of the righteousness from God, the condition of its imputation, the organ which appropriates it; and it further makes known that thus faith is produced; faith is the beginning and end, the vital principle is ever the same. 'Faith,' in the New Testament, has well-nigh invariably the subjective sense, not what is believed, but *believing*. It includes knowledge and belief, assent and surrender, appropriation and application; and hence cannot be limited to a purely intellectual credence." Schaff's Commentary on the New Testament

Whatever interpretation you prefer, it would seem Paul's case is clear that "faith" in what God says is true is forever combined with God's eternal plan to save many souls. When God designed the method for being saved, He included the necessity of expressing **faith** (trust) in Him and His method.

## *Living By Faith*

We now move to the last thought in Paul's thematic statement – an idea that was centuries old even when the apostle wrote to the Romans 2,000 years ago.

“as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

Paul quoted from the Old Testament Book of Habakkuk, most likely written toward the end of the 7th century BC. Habakkuk was a prophet from Judah who began his Writing by asking God two questions. It was after the second question that we find the context for Paul's usage of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk's first question –

“The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, And cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.” Habakkuk 1:1-4

God's reply –

Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded!  
For *I will* work a work in your days *Which* you would not believe,  
though it were told *you*. For indeed I am raising up the  
Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through  
the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places *that*  
*are* not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment  
and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also  
are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves.  
Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar;  
They fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat. ‘They all come for  
violence; Their faces are set *like* the east wind. They gather  
captives like sand. They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned  
by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up  
earthen *mounds* and seize it. Then *his* mind changes, and he  
transgresses; He commits offense, *Ascribing* this power to his  
god.” Habakkuk 1:5-11

Habakkuk's second question –

“Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One?  
We shall not die. O Lord, You have appointed them for  
judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. *You*  
*are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on  
wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal  
treacherously, *And* hold Your tongue when the wicked devours  
*A person* more righteous than he? *Why* do You make men like

fish of the sea, Like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them? They take up all of them with a hook, They catch them in their net, And gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice to their net, And burn incense to their dragnet; Because by them their share *is* sumptuous And their food plentiful. Shall they therefore empty their net, And continue to slay nations without pity? I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected." Habukkuk 1:12 – 2:1

God's reply –

"Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write the vision And make *it* plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 'Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.'" Habakkuk 2:2-4

Habakkuk asked God questions about a challenge that has concerned many through the centuries – why does God allow the wicked to devour the righteous? God's answer was clear that He had a plan and the future for the wicked would not be pleasant. God is Supreme, Sovereign and Perfect and uses the wicked for His purposes. No one is in a position to seriously challenge God –

“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” Habakkuk 2:20

Habakkuk also introduced an aspect of God’s character that was important for Jews to understand at the end of the 7th century BC. It was also true for Jews and Gentiles to understand when Paul wrote the Romans ... God is pure and righteous –

“*You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.”

Habakkuk shares more about God’s righteousness in the “woes” God spoke against the wicked –

- “Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house ...”
- “Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity!”
- “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing *him* to your bottle, Even to make *him* drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!”
- Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’ To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’ Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it there is no breath at all.

Even though the Book of Habakkuk was written to an ancient people, the words are amazingly modern. The prophet’s prayer to God also has a modern sound to it in light of what we face in our world today –

“O Lord, I have heard Your speech *and* was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known; In wrath remember mercy.” Habakkuk 3:2

The prophet Habakkuk ended his writing with a statement of strong faith (trust) in God no matter what happened –

“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s *feet*, And He will make me walk on my high hills.” Habakkuk 3:17-19

That is the context from which the Apostle Paul drew the phrase – “the just shall live by faith.” It is a context God’s people have faced for thousands of years and still face today. Being a Christian in the Roman Empire was both difficult and dangerous. The wicked seemed to have the upper hand in the 1st century AD, not unlike the upper hand of the wicked in Habakkuk’s time. What did God tell Habakkuk?

“Write the vision And make *it* plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. ‘Behold the

proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.”

What did Paul tell the Christians in Rome?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The answer now, as then, is the same – “The just shall live by faith.”

*v'tzaddik be'emunato yich"yeh*

The Hebrew literal is “the righteous, by his faithfulness – shall live.”

ο δε δικαιος εκ πιστεως ζησεται

The Greek literal is “Now the just man by faith will live.” Paul repeats it in Galatians 3 –

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’”  
Galatians 3:10-12

It is repeated again in Hebrews 10 –

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, *And* He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’” Hebrews 10:35-38

### ***The Faith System***

God established from eternity that His relationship with humans would be based on a “faith system.” That’s where the Creator speaks Truth to the created and the created respond in faith believing the Creator. We have already seen in our series that the human relationship with God broke down because of a lack of faith in what God had said –

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be

like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” Genesis 3:1-7

Humanity has an enemy who continually challenges its thinking about the Truth the Creator has spoken. The Bible is a story of what the Creator has said and done, how the enemy attacks God’s Truth, and how God gives success to His creatures who live by faith.

Paul is about to make a powerful case in Romans that the “just shall live by faith.” He will explain it in the context of God’s righteousness and mankind’s unrighteousness. It is the story of humanity in relation to its Creator.

As we continue our study in *Romans – The Gospel of God*, keep in mind the theme Paul has given us in these words –

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

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