

Apostle Paul and *The Gospel*

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INTRODUCTION

Apostle Paul wrote thirteen New Testament letters, more than any other New Testament author. Nine were written to churches and four were written to fellow co-workers. His messages to churches deal with issues of theology, worship, leadership, new revelations, behavior, and discipline. Letters to his fellow-laborers deal with a multitude of pastoral concerns mixed with helpful advice to his fledgling associates.

Some Christians regard the four Gospels with a higher value than the letters of Paul because these center more on Jesus and record His actual words. “Red-Letter” Bibles are known as such for the assumed words of Christ appear in the color red. Unfortunately, some well intending believers esteem the Gospels to a higher level than the writings of Paul. Not a few Christians have contended that Paul’s teachings were just his own opinions, and further insist that one must pause on his teachings until the same can be authenticated by the four gospel writers. This should not be. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God,”* 2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV), or more literally God-breathed (Greek, θεόπνευστος, Strong G2316 *Theós*, God + G4154 *πνέω*, to breathe). Spiritually mature Christians recognize the Holy Spirit as the real author of the entire Bible.

The purpose of this article is to refute these contentions. I shall demonstrate that Paul’s teachings are the earliest record we possess concerning the ministry of Jesus. Paul’s nine letters actually predate each of the four gospel writers. His thoughts and words stand in full harmony with the thoughts and words of Jesus.

Mark, the second of the four Gospels was penned in the late 60’s, Matthew and Luke in the middle 80’s, and John in the early 90’s. Contrariwise, Galatians was the first of Paul’s letters to be written around 50-53 and his letter to Titus about 62-64 A.D. Every one of his letters were written before the four gospels. The Pauline Epistles give us an introduction to the ministry of Jesus and harmonize well, unless he first qualifies something to be his own opinion. We read in 1 Corinthians 7:6, *“In my opinion that is what should be done,”* (CEV). In the very same chapter, he indicates in verse 25 that he has no direct instruction from the Lord, and in verse 10 Paul specifically states that what he says *IS* the very instruction of the Lord.

How could Paul disclose the very words of Jesus when the four gospels did not exist? Because Paul had a close relationship with Jesus who appeared to him on at least five occasions: Acts 9:4, Acts 18:9, Acts 22:18, Acts 23:11, and Acts 27:24. Throughout his ministry Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit, Acts 16:6. It may be of interest to know that Paul cited words of Jesus which do not appear in any Gospel. Acts 20:35, *“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”* (NCV)

SPIRITUAL REVELATIONS

Galatians 4:4 *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son (divine), born of woman (human), born under the law (Jewish).”* (ESV)

Philippians 2:6 *“At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (NRSV) Also Romans 14:11

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So, encourage each other with these words.”*

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1 Corinthians 15:51-53 *“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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” (ESV)*

Galatians 1:11-12 *“Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not based on human thought. For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation from Jesus Christ.” (HCSB)*

Not from a human source. That says it all. Apostle Paul was given special insight into divine matters, unknown to anyone else. Whereas the four gospels record historical events, Paul explains and interprets the ministry of Jesus. It should be noted that not only do these contentions stand against the veracity of Paul’s teachings, but that the exact opposite is even more plausible. Each of the gospel writers should be applauded for conveying their accounts, but it is the ministry of this Apostle that demands the highest echelon of our respect.

WORDS & THOUGHTS

Aside from the fact that he penned about half of the New Testament, he alone demonstrates Jesus’ prophetic fulfillment of atoning redemption predestined by God. Interestingly Paul records some of the most sacred words of Jesus before the four gospel writers even touched their quills.

Paul: *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, ‘Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.’ After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, ‘this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come,’ ” 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. (KJV)*

Jesus: *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this, and divide it among yourselves’ ... And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’ Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you,’ ” Luke 22:17-20. (KJV)*

Paul: Romans 14:14 *“I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.” (ESV)*

Jesus: Luke 11:41 *“But give from your heart to those in need, and then everything will be clean for you.” (NET)*

Paul: Romans 13:7 *“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.” (KJV)*

Jesus: Luke 20:25 *“And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.” (KJV)*

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Paul: 1 Corinthians 9:14 *“In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who tell the Good News should get their living from this work.” (NCV)*

Jesus: Luke 10:7 *“And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.” (KJV)*

JESUS PROCLAIMED, PAUL EXPLAINED

The *Age of Grace* did not start in Bethlehem’s manger. It descended on humanity at that special moment when God rent the Veil of the Temple from the top to the bottom (*Matthew 27:51*). Literally, descending from heaven to earth. Differences between the focused ministries of Jesus and Paul can easily be explained within this context. Jesus stated the purpose of His mission in *Matthew 15:24*, *“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.”* Paul stated the purpose of his mission in *Romans 11:13*, *“I am an apostle to the Gentiles.”*

Jesus preached repentance among the lost sheep of Israel. *“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance,”* *Luke 5:32*. Paul preached grace to the Gentile world, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith,”* *Ephesians 2:8*. Their messages were different because one transpired before the moment of atonement at Calvary while the other commenced beyond. We must remember that until the Veil was rent, the Law of Moses was still in effect. Nearly all of the four accounts occurred under Old Testament Law even though placed in the New Testament. Jesus came to fulfill the Law (*Matthew 5:17*), not destroy it. By saying this He was telling Israel that obedience to every part of the Law was not impossible as it had seemed (*Acts 15:10*). Jesus was going to do just that. He would live perfectly by every statute – and He did.

Grace (χάρις, *khar'-ece*, Strong G5485) appears 102 times in the letters of Paul. The best-known verse is probably *Ephesians 2:8-9*, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (KJV)* Paul was the herald of God’s sovereign grace through the atonement of Jesus to all people, *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,”* *1Timothy 2:3-4. (NASB)* The Law was broken by Israel but faithfully lived by Jesus. Grace was the original intention of God and Paul fervently proclaimed it.

Paul is the human gateway to understanding the plan of God by which Jesus would redeem fallen sinners through repentance, to become adopted children of God by their faith and His gift of grace.

Romans 5:1-2 *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (KJV)*

Galatians 4:4-5 *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as his children.” (ISV)*

THE FOUR GOSPELS

Jesus and the Gospels writers have their rightful place in our faith journey. Embedded deep within us are memorable events and teachings. Creeds of the early Church were shaped around these four accounts. Usually beginning with the Father then the Son and ending with the Holy Spirit, interposed with notable events such as the virgin birth, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, the second coming, and finally the Church.

Each of the four men endeavored to connect their narrative with a specific audience. Matthew writes to Jewish Christians with an emphasis on fulfilled prophecies that prove Jesus is the promised messiah. Shortest of

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all is Mark who is thought to have been in Rome with Peter. He portrays Jesus as a suffering servant, a needed model for Christians suffering persecution in the capital of the Empire. Luke pictures Jesus as perfect and sinless to an unknown man named Theophilus. Matthew's account is the most Jewish and John is the most Gentile. John's purpose is firmly stated in 21:25, "*But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*" (NRSV)

But if we always refer to these as the four gospels, we miss the richness of *The Gospel* as proclaimed to shepherds, "*I bring you good tidings of great joy,*" Luke 2:10. (KJV) The real Good News is that Jesus died in order to forgive sins and promise eternal life, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,*" John 3:16. (KJV) Four great men have introduced us to The Gospel but it would remain for Paul to explain the necessity or scope of *The Gospel*.

DEPTH & PERCEPTION

Paul's epistles were widely disseminated. A fellow apostle speaks of his letters as "*hard to understand,*" 2 Peter 3:16, from Greek, δυσνόητος, *doos-no'-ay-tos*, Strong G1425, a derivative of δυσνόητος, G3539, meaning "*to exercise the mind.*" In other words, to understand Paul, you need to think! Deeply and astutely. Christians reading his letters in a modern world face several challenges that may elude or confuse.

He was a strict Pharisee devoted to the Torah which requires a Hebraic approach to fully comprehend his depth of interpretation. Not a few Hebrew idiomatic concepts do not easily transfer into the Greek language and are further misconstrued when translated a second time into modern English.

Biased theology can mislead even serious biblical study when previously instilled with concepts before actually reading an epistle (did Paul teach "*we are no longer under the law*"). Peter was keenly aware of such predilections in his own time and offered a few examples, "*the ignorant and unstable twist.*" Ignorant doesn't mean dumb but rather unschooled, easily predisposed to "*twist*" original concepts to their own way of thinking.

Modern believers can likewise see duplicity in the Roman epistle and "*twist*" his words themselves, "*you are not under law but under grace,*" Romans 6:14 (HCSB) with Romans 3:31, "*Do we then cancel the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*" (HCSB)

How do we resolve that which seems inexplicable? Cultural background. Gentiles coming to Christ from a pagan background might feel compelled to follow the Law in order to be saved. To them Paul stresses grace instead of the Law, but to the Jewish mind he stresses the spirit of the Law. For if the Jewish believer thought Paul was abrogating the Torah, they may appear as Judaizers who want to preserve their heritage. Mix both in one room and you can understand the conflicts and better appreciate his ministerial proficiency. "*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all,*" Romans 10:12. (ESV)

What the four gospel writers introduced is now expounded by Paul who published long before them. Paul was relying on Jesus to guide him, not that of men. "*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ,*" Galatians 1:11-12. (NASB)

Grace and faith are essential to each other so Paul begins his journey with the faith of Abraham, solidly rooted within Judaism, his first audience. "*What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'* Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness," Romans 4:1-5. (ESV)

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Salvation could be described as God the Father reaching downward from heaven with the gift of grace, and in response we reach upward with our faith, and the shed blood of Christ binds each together. This mutual handshake solidifies our justification with the Father and concludes with our eternity in heaven.

THE POCKET GOSPEL

“Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious standard, and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. They need to be made free from sin through Jesus Christ. God sent him to die in our place to take away our sins. We receive forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus’ death,” Romans 3:23-25. (NCV)

Pastors and educators have labeled these verses *The Pocket Gospel* meaning the entirety of God’s plan of redemption can be neatly summarized in a few words. Imagine, all four Gospel accounts in one Pocket.

- ❖ Everyone is guilty of sin.
- ❖ Jesus died to remove our sins.
- ❖ God forgives our sins because of Jesus.

The book of Romans is an immense Christology. Paul explicates the full intentions of God from the Patriarchs to the Prophets. From the Exodus to the Monarchy. From the Babylonian Captivity to the ministry of Christ. From Christ’s resurrection to His return. Paul cultivated a miniscule sect of believers across a multitude of nations that would later grow into a worldwide community of devotees.

“So, we continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God’s presence as a mature person in Christ. To do this, I work and struggle, using Christ’s great strength that works so powerfully in me,” Colossians 1:28-29. (NCV)

JEW FIRST THEN GENTILE

Paul anguished over the outright rejection of Christ by his fellow Jewish community. He described their spiritual blindness as the veil on the face of Moses in the wilderness. *“Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed,”* 2 Corinthians 3:15-16. (ESV)

His emotional sorrow for Israel is devastating, Romans 9:2-3, *“I have deep sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were condemned and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh.”* (ISV) Nevertheless, he persisted in winning them to Christ. Eventually their recalcitrant attitude directed him to focus on the Gentile world as was originally commissioned by Jesus. *“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles,”* Acts 13:46. (ESV)

Who among us can truly fathom the overwhelming odds against Paul? *“But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles,”* 1 Corinthians 1:23. (HCSB) He steadfastly committed himself to seek out lost souls without regard for personal loss. *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,”* 2 Corinthians 4:5. (KJV) This message was preached in Corinth, one of the most sinful regions in the 1st Century. Their own pejorative comment was *“To create a pervert was to Corinthianize him.”* Jesus assured Paul that no harm would come to him in this city (Acts 18:10) because there are many to be saved.

Jesus was the Messiah to the Jew and Christ to the Greek speaking Gentile. As usual, Paul began his mission with fellow countrymen, *“the Jew first, and also of the Gentile,”* Romans 2:9-10. (KJV)

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HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Every letter of Paul following the book of Roman is generally correctional in nature. Romans is key to understanding matters from God's point of view, the necessity of Jesus' ministry, and our comprehension of the basic framework. His letter to Rome explains the heart of *The Gospel* and how it should evoke an appropriate response to God's grace in our daily lives. We are introduced to the assurance of salvation by our response. Very basic spiritual elements are fully explained, many times interjecting unthought of analogies.

Pagan Knowledge of God

"For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse," Romans 1:18-20 (HCSB)

Verse 18 begins the first major section of Romans that will progress into chapter 3. After having just presented brief yet good words about the gospel of Christ, in stark contrast, Paul now gives us bad words about the ungodly with the subtlety of a battering-ram. His lengthy arguments might easily coalesce into one word – "condemnation." The gauntlet of debate has been thrown.

The Apostle forcefully charges unrighteous people with suppressing the truth about God. Suppress emanates from κατέχω (*katéchō*, Strong G2722, hold down) and implies a willful intent to conceal the attributes of God which Paul claims have been "evident" to every unconverted member of the human race since the creation of the world. Everyone? On distant islands? Those never hearing *The Gospel*?

Imagine a prosecuting attorney submitting an indictment against the unrighteous to a court of law without hesitation. Paul argues before the judge that the evidence of God's eternal nature has been "clearly seen," (φανερὸν ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, "manifest in them"). Φανερὸν (G5318) literally means to shine. In this context it refers to an inner presence of mental illumination.

Finally, his closure to the jury. "Without excuse," ἀπολογέομαι (*apologéomai*, G379, "to speak in defense"). Preceded by the letter "A" (*anapologētos*) creates a negative form. No defense. We see no wiggle room for a rejoinder. His purpose is to fiercely demonstrate the urgent need of *The Gospel* by everyone. He is not saying you need the Gospel because of loneliness, insecurity, or financial ruin. He wants unbelievers to realize they need the Gospel because they are under the wrath of Almighty God who offers no tolerance for complacent sin. More bluntly. Folks, you're going to hell!

But there is hope. *"Therefore, just as one man's trespass (Adam) led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness (Jesus) leads to justification and life for all,"* Romans 5:18. (NRSV)
Adam got us into this mess and Jesus can get us out of it through His propitiation for us.

Watery Grave

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life," Romans 6:1-4. (KJV) See also Romans 6:11-13.

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Water composition of the human body is about 60-65 percent. Humans need water to stay hydrated. Life could not exist without it, but water is also responsible for more deaths by natural disasters than earthquakes and tornados combined. Above water, people can live. Under water, people can drown. How interesting that water can be a symbol of both life and death.

Continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid translates μή γένοιτο (*mē*, not + *gínomai*, come into being) “*Not to exist!*” The analogy of water is brilliant. We are “*baptized into His death.*” Plunged into a watery grave with Christ. Staying there means dying there. Immersion is a symbolic dying to our former sin nature. “*Buried with Him.*” If held under the water, baptismal candidates will die. Likewise, if forced to remain in the grasp of sin, everyone will die an eternal death. As candidates are lifted from their watery grave, they are given another chance to live, physically. As Jesus was resurrected from a garden tomb, in a symbolic way, baptismal candidates are resurrected from their watery grave to live, spiritually. Thus, the modern Christian should also “*walk in newness of life.*”

Conditional Election

“*If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved,*” Romans 10:9. (HCSB)

Programmers understand conditional statements very well. *IF* a condition is true *THEN* do something. If not, then do something *ELSE*. This construct is labeled an *IF–THEN–ELSE* routine. Logical operators are also used to bind two or more conditions together. In this passage from Romans there are two conditions, divinity and resurrection, joined with the logical operator *AND*. Therefore, both conditions must be true for the statement to be valid.

“***IF** you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord **AND** believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, (**THEN**) you will be saved.*”

What is the first condition in order to be saved? We must acknowledge that Jesus is God. The phrase Lord Jesus (*Κύριον Ἰησοῦν*) is a direct reference to His divinity, *AND*, you must also believe a second condition that God raised Him from the dead. By this you have acknowledged His resurrection which grants you victory over death. If you agree with both conditions, the Holy Spirit guarantees that you shall be saved. (See also 1 John 5:11-13)

How often has this question been asked? “*How can I really know for certain that I am saved?*” Paul supplies a very uncomplicated explanation with some very profound concepts.

Confess (ὁμολογέω, *homologéō*, Strong G3670, affirm, declare, praise, Matthew 7:23, Acts 24:14, 1Timothy 6:12, Hebrews 11:13) Declare publicly (*mouth*) that Jesus is God.

Believe (πιστεύω, *pisteúō*, G4100, firmly convinced, persuaded, Mark 11:23, John 5:46) In your comprehension of reality you assent without hesitation that something is true and valid.

Raised (ἐγείρω, *egeíro*, G1453, rise, awake, set upright, Matthew 8:25, Acts 12:7, Galatians 1:1, the act of bringing someone to life or waking them from sleep.

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Providential Dominion

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,” Romans 8:28. (HCSB)

“Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν Θεὸν” / “πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν”

Very few English translations deliver the same word order as that of Greek manuscripts. The first clause in Greek reads *“For those who love God”* followed by *“all things work together for good.”* Paul begins this statement with a particular emphasis on those who love God. In his mind, loving God is more important than how things may culminate. But the second clause begs us to see things from God’s point of view, not our own. “τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὔσιν” Literally it reads *“to those, according to (His) purpose, being called.”*

Jesus responded to the lawyer with the very same emphasis, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,”* Matthew 22:37. (ESV) Both Paul and Jesus are acknowledging the first greatest commandment, taken from Deuteronomy 6:5, *“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”* (KJV) Faithful believers are precious to God. We are the “apple” of His eye (Zechariah 2:8, Proverbs 7:2). *“I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands,”* Isaiah 49:16. (MEV)

Israel Chosen, Gentiles Grafted ~ Romans 11

1. *“I say then, **has God rejected His people? God forbid!** For I also am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 **God has not rejected His people** whom He foreknew.”*

11. *“I say then, **have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! But through their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles,** to make them jealous. 12 Now if their transgression means riches for the world, and their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will **their fullness** mean?”*

17. *“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive shoot, were **grafted in among them** and became a partaker with them of the root and richness of the olive tree, 18 **do not boast against the branches.** If you boast, **remember you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you.** 19 You will say then, *“The branches were broken off, so that I might be grafted in. 20 This is correct. They were **broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith.** Do not be arrogant, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.”* (MEV)*

Romans 11 is an explanation of the partial unbelief of Israel so that Gentiles may believe. Although this chapter is not an integral part of explaining *The Gospel*, it should clarify a long-standing issue with one segment of Christianity. Replacement Theory or Supersessionism asserts that the New Covenant of Jesus supersedes the Old Covenant between God and the Jewish people. Followers of this belief claim that the Church is the new Israel and all former promises now belong instead to the Church.

In opposition is Dual-Covenant Theology which holds that the Mosaic Covenant remains in effect for the nation of Israel, and the Church may benefit from those promises as a result of being *grafted* into the same tree by God. Adherents stress that the moral law of the Old Testament still applies to Christians. For example, Levitical dietary restrictions would not apply to Christians because these are not moral statutes. However, stealing, murdering, and lying do apply because they have moral implications. The only way to maintain Replacement Theology is to simply ignore Romans chapter 11.

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Spiritual Gifts

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So, we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,” Romans 12:4-5 (KJV)

“There are various gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. There are various operations, but it is the same God who operates all of them in all people,” 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. (MEV)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law,” Galatians 5:22-23. (KJV)

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,” Galatians 5:16. (NKJV)

One aspect that is not developed in the four Gospels is the matter of Spiritual Gifts. Naturally, the ministry of Jesus centered on the Jewish nation (*Matthew 15:24*). It was not until the feast of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit permanently resided in the lives of believers. Acts 2:4 is generally marked as the beginning of the Church Age. It would stand to reason that any commentary about Spiritual Gifts would be found in Paul’s letters instead of the later gospel writers.

A human body is comprised of many different parts with different functions. Hearts pump blood. Lungs extract oxygen. Intestines digest food. Brains think. Nerves move electricity. Paul likens Christians and their organizational functions with the human body. As human body parts need to work in cooperative harmony, so should Church members work harmoniously with others.

Jesus is the head of the Church who governs its development. The Holy Spirit dispenses various talents and skills to each member, to supply needed functions in and out of the Church. Preaching and singing within and evangelism plus service without, as a few examples.

Fruit bearing requires skills, planning, dedication, maintenance, and then harvest. Spiritual fruit bearing requires much of the same skills if expecting a good harvest of souls. Unfortunately, modern attempts at evangelism fall short of methods demonstrated by Jesus. Too often a worship services may provide little more than entertainment. Youthful needs might center more around contemporary rewards. Adults often expect spirited sermons at one extreme to political and world commentary on the other. Seniors come to church with a variety of expectations. Perhaps reassurance and comforting words. But how much of these well-intending reasons focus on individual, one-on-one saving of lost souls?

Jesus took the cultural risk of talking with a woman in a public location which challenged the universal norms of ancient times (*John 4:27*). Additionally, her life was a culmination of sinful living. Yet through her enthusiastic response, an entire city was exposed to the saving message of God.

He took the gospel to Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon with glorious results. He unbraided the cities of Galilee for their unbelief, stating that if the same miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, those cities would have repented in sackcloth and ashes (*Matthew 11:21*). Even the city of Sodom would have remained to His day (*Matthew 11:23*).

Paul founded more churches, witnessed to more people, instructed more leaders, bore the marks of more beatings than modern evangelists could imagine. He preached to government officials and converted some in the royal household of Caesar (*Philippians 4:22*). This is the outcome of Holy Spirit gifts.

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Rewards for Service

“For no one can lay another foundation than that which was laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble, each one’s work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. If anyone’s work which he has built on the foundation endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss. But he himself will be saved, still going through the fire,” 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. (MEV)

“The Son of Man will come again with his Father’s glory and with his angels. At that time, he will reward them for what they have done,” Matthew 16:27. (NCV)

“Look! I am coming soon. I will bring my reward with me, and I will pay everyone back according to what they have done,” Revelation 22:12 (NTE)

“For our God is a consuming fire,” Hebrews 12:29. (WEB)

When buildings are destroyed by fire, it is natural to comprehend the event in a negative way. There is loss of property and valued possessions. But to the chemist a flame simply reduces materials to their most basic elements such as carbon, minerals, gemstones, or crystals, devoid of human emotion.

God is also a flame that will consume the activities, works, and thoughts of our lives. Once again Paul yields new Holy Spirit revelations of that future *Day* when God will consume or reduce the many years of our lives to their most basic values. Gold, silver, precious stones represent materials that fire cannot reduce to simpler components. They remain unchanged. In the same way our spiritual contributions to the work of Christ will remain for eternal reward. Wood, hay, and stubble represent materials that fire easily consumes with nothing of value remaining which may correlate to selfishness, pride, or lethargy. Christians bound for heaven may possess all of these traits but only what is done for Christ will remain.

Church Taken Away

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So, encourage each other with these words.”*

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 *“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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”* (ESV)

Paul alone was given this special revelation on how the Church would be taken up in clouds to abide with the Lord. These two passages have surely been the most preached about, written about, sung about, and prayed over than any other promise of the New Testament. Even movie producers have repeatedly tried to capture this event. No other writer knew such intimate details of the Lord’s return to gather His saints and firmly transfer them into eternal glory, forever. Paul’s final words of comfort and assurance have blessed millions of believers (v.18).

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Predestination

“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love; He predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will,” Ephesians 1:4-5. (MEV)

If his previous words brought comfort to many, these words have brought more dissension than perhaps anything else written by the Apostle. The very word Predestination evokes arguments between two different and opposing theological camps: God’s Sovereignty vs Human Free Will. *Enough said.*

Cultural Shift

“But the Lord said to me, Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles,” Acts 22:21 (NLT)

“How the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly,” Ephesians 3:3 (ESV)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast,” Ephesians 2:8-9. (KJV)

“Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous one will live by faith. But the law is not based on faith, but the one who does the works of the law will live by them,” Galatians 3:11-12. (NET)

“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. (NASB)

During his early ministry Paul engaged a Jewish audience. Naturally, we would expect words appealing to them alone: miracles, signs, prophecy, crucify, leaven, tongues, exorcist, or visions. But in his later epistles we observe more Gentile flavored words: grace, faith, spirit, mercy, love, hope, or mystery.

His later Prison Epistles convey deeper and more glorious truths concerning Christ and His Church as in Colossians 1:18, *“He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He may have the preeminence.”* (MEV) And dazzling exclamations of praise, *“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever,”* Ephesians 3:21. (ESV) But chief among them is the magnificent description of Jesus fulfilling prophesy by descending from heaven to dwell with mankind. Truly becoming Immanuel (*Isaiah 7:14*).

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Philippians 2:5-11. (ESV) Also Romans 14:11

Understandably, confined to prison quarters and sadly denied freedom to travel, Paul had the quietude which allowed him to think and visualize, contemplate and meditate in peace. Colossians being the most general of these prison letters and Ephesians certainly the most formal.

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Practical Advice

Jesus bestowed upon Paul many appearances, visions, revelations, through which he was granted an enviable relationship that few modern-day Christians could not possibly enjoy. Paul was blessed to experience an intimacy with Jesus that enabled him to virtually become a human mouthpiece for Christ. Paul shares many practical ways that can enable us to live more faithfully to the expectations of a holy and loving God. Through his close relationship with the Lord, we are blessed to receive his wisdom.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” Romans 12:1-2. (KJV)

“So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will never fulfill the desires of the flesh,” Galatians 5:16. (ISV)

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit,” Galatians 5:25. (KJV)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.,” Galatians 5:22-23. (HCSB)

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” 1 Corinthians 6:19. (NET)

“For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live,” Romans 8:13. (MEV)

Advanced Revelations

“I knew a man in Christ over fourteen years ago—whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I knew that such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows— was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible words not permitted for a man to say. Of such a person, I will boast. Yet of myself I will not boast, except in my weaknesses,” 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. (MEV)

“God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul’s hands, so that even facecloths or work aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them,” Acts 19:11-12 (HCSB).

“Therefore, it is said, when he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people. When it says, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things,” Ephesians 4:8-10. (NRSV)

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure,” 2 Corinthians 12:7. (KJV)

“And he was seen by Cephas, and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Next he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and finally he was seen by me,” 1 Corinthians 15:5-8. (ISV)

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Over five hundred Christians personally seen Jesus in the flesh after His resurrection, and Paul indicates that most of them were still alive when he wrote 1 Corinthians. (53-54 A.D.?) This fact alone surely validates the truthfulness of his Epistles, for anyone of these hundreds of witnesses could have testified to any errors or falsehoods in Paul's statements. None came forward at that time nor anyone thereafter. Small matter since he claims in Galatians 1:11-12, "*For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it,*

but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

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