

FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM SERIES

Tract One

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM The One and Only Gospel of the Grace of God

A discussion of the kingdom and its good news (or "gospel") inaugurates the *Foundation of the Kingdom Series* because of its preeminent importance in Scripture. Properly understanding its centrality, and indeed, Jesus' pivotal message during His earthly ministry, will the gospel's salvific message instruct us to look away from the evil desires of this Present Age and focus on the righteousness of the Coming Age.

This tract seeks to demonstrate that the gospel's proclamation comes to fruition only by singularly believing in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, through Whom alone one attains salvation from sin's penalty (justification), power (sanctification), and presence (glorification), being fully expressed and realized at the advent of His Messianic Kingdom. Only thoroughly investigating contexts in conjunction with God's salvation where the verb euangelizw ("to announce good news/gospel") and its corresponding derivative noun, euangelion ("good news/gospel"), may the gospel's breathtaking and full-orbed implications be understood.¹

INTRODUCTION

Foundation of the Kingdom Series advocates only one gospel throughout Scripture, revealed in essential and progressive stages, culminating in the apostolic proclamation in the New Testament.² The gospel prior to the cross is the same after the cross, however now, gloriously amplified because of Christ's resurrection. The gospel of the Coming Redeemer is fulfilled in Jesus Who came and Who is coming again. The latter necessarily arises out of the first. The cross and the triumphal resurrection of Jesus crowned His ministry, embodied and confirmed all that He and the prophets had taught about the "good news" of God.

The gospel's continuity in Scripture may be demonstrated by citing a few brief examples from Isaiah. The good news of Zion's liberation and restoration, celebrated in Isaiah 40:1-9, is interpreted in the New Testament as adumbrating the good news of a greater liberation and restoration, the salvation procured by Christ (cf. Isa. 40:3//Matt. 3:1-3 and Mk. 1:1-3; Isa. 40:6-8//1 Pet. 1:22-25). Isaiah 52:7 defines the content of the gospel: *peace, goodness, and salvation. Your God reigns!*, and applied by Paul in Romans 10:15 to those proclaiming the gospel. Furthermore, in Isaiah 40-66 it is the LORD Himself Who is

¹ A complete concordance study of the words euangelizw (verb; "to preach"; "to announce good news/gospel"), euangelion (neuter noun; "good news/gospel") and euangelisths (masculine noun; "bringer of good news, evangelist"), occurs at the end of this tract. It is not a good practice to omit or evade certain passages that do not fit neatly into our theological preconceptions.

² For example, in his continuing defense to the Galatians of the "one" gospel (cf. Gal. 1:6-9), Paul affirms that the same gospel proclaimed to the Galatians is the same gospel herald during the lifetime of Abraham. Paul substantiates this by quoting Genesis 12:3 (Gal. 3:8),

ultimately proclaimed in the good news: the herald is told to "say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!' " (Isa. 40:9). So in the New Testament those who herald the gospel summarize their commission in words such as these: "what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5).

Most important of all texts in Isaiah 40--66 for the New Testament usage of "gospel" is Isaiah 61:1-2a, where an unnamed speaker introduces himself by saying, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed³ me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD". In Luke 4:17-19, while in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus reads this portion of Isaiah and applies it to Himself for the proclamation of this gospel. This is also the same Scripture Jesus quotes in reply to John the Baptist's question from prison (Matt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22) to prove conclusively that He is indeed the "Coming One" to whom John had pointed forward.

It is important to underscore that the prophet in Isaiah in 61:1-3 does not distinguish between Jesus' accomplishments to be fulfilled in the first advent and those to be fulfilled in the second. When Jesus quoted this passage in Lk. 4:17-21, He stopped in the middle of verse 2, for the remainder was to be accomplished during His Messianic Kingdom. However, both aspects of Christ's advents are under the rubric of the same "good news".⁴

This "one gospel" approach is in contraposition to many who assert a distinction between "the gospel of the kingdom" preached before Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, and "the gospel of the grace of God" proclaimed subsequently. Because of this, a few excerpts from those who defend a multiplicity of "gospels" will serve as a basis for comparison. Those quoted at length are all distinguished authors who herald kingdom truths.

G. H. Pember, a well-known and prolific writer of the past century, maintains that while the "gospel of the grace of God" can only be proclaimed after His crucifixion and resurrection, the "gospel of the kingdom" was only operable during His ministry.

³ The verb "to anoint" is derived from the Hebrew מָשַׁח (m*sh^j). The nominal form is transliterated into Greek as *messias* (messias), which is then transliterated as "Messias". The Hebrew noun is translated "Messiah" only twice in the Hebrew Scriptures (KJV, Dan. 9:25-26). The other thirty-seven occurrences are translated in the KJV as "anointed" (four times of the high priest, Lev. 4:3, 5, 16; 6:22; twice of the patriarchs, Ps. 105:15; 1 Chron. 16:22; and the remaining times of the king, usually of Israel, but even Cyrus the Persian whom the LORD elevated as king and chose as His instrument, Isa. 45:1). The thirty-nine instances of the nominal form in the Hebrew Scriptures are all translated in the LXX by the Greek *cristoŷ* (c ristos, "anointed"), which is the frequent title applied to Jesus in the New Testament (transliterated in most English versions as "Christ"). Here in Isaiah 61:1, "anointed" is undoubtedly being used figurative for a commission for a specific task. This specific task Jesus may be alluding to in Lk. 4:43: "But He said to them, 'I must preach (euaggel iŷasqai/xeuangelisasqai; "to preach the good news") the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose' ".

⁴ This is only a sampling from Isaiah who painted in advance a portrait of which Jesus Christ is the original.

"This announcement, which we have already explained, is now termed 'the Gospel of the Kingdom;' and it is essential that we should have a clear idea of the meaning of the phrase, and not identify it, as many do, with the Gospel of the Grace of God, or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For the latter phrases indicate the glorious truth, that Christ died for sinners, and that there is now no condemnation for those who place their trust in Him. But the Gospel of the Kingdom is the joyful news, that the Lord is all but ready to begin His Millennial reign. Hence, while the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed at any time during the present Dispensation of Grace, the same cannot be said of the Gospel of the Kingdom. That was, indeed, preached by John the Baptist, by the Lord in the first period of His ministry, by the Twelve when they were sent out to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and by the Seventy on their similar mission. For the Kingdom, that is to say, the Heavenly Kingdom, had then come near as a possibility: it was offered exclusively to the Jews; and, had they been willing to accept Jesus as their Lord, they would shortly have obtained it.

. . . It is then, clear, that the Gospel of the Kingdom has no direct reference to salvation by the Blood of the Lamb; but to a subsequent result of that salvation. It is the good news, that Satan is just about to be deposed from the Principdom of This World and of the Power of the Air, and the Kingdom of This World to become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, Who shall reign for ever and ever."⁵

Gary T. Whipple, pastor of Lamp and Light Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida, and author of *Shock & Surprise Beyond the Rapture!* and *The Matthew Mysteries*, writes,

"When Jesus Christ entered His public ministry, His message was the same as John the Baptist's: 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). One may ask why Jesus did not preach the message of John 3:16 in Matthew. The answer is twofold. First, the message of John is not written generally to Israel, but to all nations that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31). Second, John 3:16 could not be preached until after the crucifixion, since it is a different gospel, the gospel of grace. In view of this, it is important for the reader to understand that the mission and message of Jesus, while in the flesh, was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It was the 'gospel of the kingdom' that He preached and not the 'gospel of grace'."⁶

⁵ *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church* (Hayesville: Schoettle Publishing Company, 1998), p. 55-56. This work is volume four of a four-volume set entitled, [The Great Prophecies](#), originally published in 1909 by Fleming H. Revell Company, and recently republished by [Schoettle Publishing Company](#).

⁶ [The Matthew Mysteries: A Revelation of the Higher Wisdom Concerning the Church, Israel, and the Gentiles in Prophecy](#) (Hayesville: Schoettle Publishing Company, 1995), p. 33. This work and [Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture](#) may be ordered through Schoettle Publishing Company, P. O. Box 1246, Hayesville, NC 28904.

Gary Whipple further maintains that there are five different gospels in the New Testament.

"For centuries, the church has been confused over the interpretation of the book of Matthew. The major reason is that they have not discerned the difference between the five distinct gospels that are in the Bible (also called five aspects of the gospel of God). These are: the 'gospel of the kingdom,' the 'gospel of grace,' the 'gospel of glory,' the 'everlasting gospel' and 'my gospel' (Paul's gospel). In Matthew, it is the 'gospel of the kingdom' that Jesus preached to the Jews."⁷

The late A. Edwin Wilson, a very competent writer and who had invaluable influence on many concerning the kingdom both by his preaching and writings, also makes a distinction between the "gospel of the kingdom" and the "gospel of grace".

"The gospel of grace is the good news pertaining to the grace of God. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of the establishment here on earth (in fulfillment of the covenant God made with David pertaining to his house and his throne) of His kingdom, over which the Seed of David as King would rule and reign for one thousand years.

The gospel of the grace of God is, '... Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

Under the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom the nation of Israel was called upon to REPENT for her disobedience to the commandments of God; and after the crucifixion of Christ, she was called upon to REPENT of her rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, individuals are called upon to BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 10:43; 16:30, 31; Rom. 1:16).

According to Matthew 10:5, 6, the gospel of the kingdom was to be preached only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' The preaching of the gospel of grace is to the Jew first, but it is ALSO TO THE GREEK (Rom. 1:16).

Under the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, they were to provide neither gold, nor silver, nor extra clothing (Matt. 10:9, 10). Under the preaching of the gospel of grace, they were to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men' (Rom. 12:17). They were to distribute as the necessity of the saints demanded (1 Tim. 6:18).

The gospel of the kingdom called for a man to sell all that he had and give all to the poor (A rich man could hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven according to Matt. 19:21, 23). But under the gospel of grace, rich men are exhorted to do good with

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

their riches and be ready and willing to distribute, and to communicate to those who have need. They are not charged to sell all and give to the poor (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Notice in this connection that, 'The living God giveth us richly all things to enjoy' instead of requiring the oath of poverty."⁸

The above quoted sources' conclusions will now be tested principally with that of Philip's preaching the gospel of the kingdom in Acts 8:4-40 to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch, Peter's heralding the good news in Acts 10:34-43 to Cornelius, and Paul's preaching the "gospel of the grace of God" to the Ephesians in Acts 20:16-27.

PHILIP'S PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The works cited above display something in common; nowhere in their writings is Acts 8:4-25 considered, especially verse 12. Philip, one of the appointed seven men chosen to serve and an evangelist in the early church (cf. Acts. 6:3-5; 21:8), preached concerning "the gospel of the kingdom"⁹ well after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, targeted toward a non-Jewish audience, the Samaritans. These verses are now quoted at length.

⁴"Therefore, those who had been scattered went about **preaching the word.** ⁵And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and **began proclaiming Christ to them.** ⁶And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. ⁷For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸And there was much rejoicing in that city. ⁹Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; ¹⁰and they all, smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, 'This man is what is called the Great Power of God.' ¹¹And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. ¹²But when **they believed Philip preaching the gospel about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.** ¹³And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed."

Contextually, the boldfaced portions, "**preaching the word**", "**proclaiming Christ to them**" and "**preaching the gospel about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**", are in practical terms, semantically synonymous. In addition, "when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received **the word of God**, they sent Peter and John"

⁸ *Selected Writings of A. Edwin Wilson* (Hayesville: Schoettle Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 15-16. The editor of *Selected Writings* was Arlen L. Chitwood, founder of [The Lamp Broadcast](#).

⁹ This is the only occurrence of perij (peri)with th" basileia" tou qeou in the Greek New Testament.

because of the overwhelming response to Philip's preaching in Samaria (Acts 8:14). Furthermore, the same gospel that Philip preached, the apostles Peter and John proclaimed to "many villages of the Samaritans" on their way back to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 8:14 with 8:25).¹⁰

Are we to assume when Philip was "proclaiming Christ" and "preaching the gospel about the kingdom of God **and the name of Jesus Christ**" to the Samaritans, that he omitted the importance of Christ's death and resurrection? Of course not! However, this is the basis upon which many differentiate between the "gospel of the kingdom" and "the gospel of grace". Jesus Christ is the foundation of his proclamation as it was for Peter: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This is because the fullness of the Person and work of Jesus Christ may be seen in His name as predicted by the angel of the Lord: "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

The "kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" are mightier than the kingdom of darkness or any earthly name such as Simon's (v. 9). Baptism was a decisive step for these Samaritans in renouncing their former superstitions and linking themselves with the name of Jesus. Moreover, not only were the deceived liberated (v. 12), but also the deceiver (v. 13)! An important aspect in Philip's preaching concerning the gospel of the kingdom should not be overlooked: their response.

Their Response

Philip's message evoked both a common belief and baptism. "But **when they believed** Philip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized men and women alike. **And even Simon himself believed; after being baptized**, . . . (Acts 8:12-13a). Whereas those who "believed" (v. 12) are looked upon as having genuine faith, many view Simon's faith as a "said faith", even though the identical verb is employed. **Most importantly, verse 13a does not declare what Simon said, but the Holy Spirit's ascribing to him a faith in no way distinguishable from that of those in verse 12.** Nor is Simon's experience with the truth any different than others, for he "believed also" and "was baptized". There are no special conditions to be met even by the worst of sinners.

After Luke remarks "even Simon himself believed; after being baptized . . .", he adds that Simon accompanied Philip, "and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed" (v. 13b). Simon became too much captivated by the miracles he saw. His immature faith was corrupted, however, being subsequent to his believing and

¹⁰ Since the word "gospel" in Acts 8:25 and 8:40 is used without any further qualifier(s), *i.e.*, "the gospel concerning the Kingdom of God", the aforementioned "gospel about the kingdom of God" that Philip preached, is most assured.

being baptized. The fact that a person needs repentance following baptism is not proof that they were never regenerate (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9-12; 1 Jn. 1:9--2:2; Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19).

Verses 14-17 bring into the sharpest relief their present and former state of these newly regenerated Samaritans. Whereas in Simon they believed they had found "the Great Power of God" (v. 10), only now in the Holy Spirit did they really experience it.¹¹

Simon's faith is suspected because "when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit' " (vv. 18-19).¹² To Simon's proposition, Peter strongly retorted:

"May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.** Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity" (vv. 20-23).

If there had been no ensuing remarks about Simon's request, there would be no cause for anyone to make a judgment concerning his true state of faith, except by those who think that God's grace is only for those who have no need for repentance after regeneration. Simon brings into his regenerated life--as many do--the erroneous outlook from their past. Doubtless money could in the past have secured the exercise of Simon's powers, and so he thought it could secure God's. The sharpness of Peter's words in verses 20-23 were designed to bring Simon to repentance, and it did: "But Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me' " (v. 24).

Prayer is an important element in this context (vv. 15, 22, 24). Simon missed that prayer laid behind the giving of the Holy Spirit. He only saw the external laying on of the apostles' hands (vv. 18-19). Yet, his greatest need was prayer (vv. 22, 24). The heart enamored by money is blinded to prayer. The heart controlled by prayer is blinded to money. Those who are engaged in godly pursuits realize prayer alone can obtain what is really needed and worthwhile. Simon is brought to realize the triviality of money in the things of God, and the transcendent power of prayer. He begins by seeking to buy, he ends by asking for prayer.

¹¹ The unusual method the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands prevented schism and rivalry. The Samaritan religion rejected the claims of the Jews. The Samaritan converts are now made to sense their indebtedness to them. The Jews despised the Samaritans (cf. Jn. 4:22), yet here are Peter and John laying their hands on them and praying for them. Had the Spirit been given in Samaria at the same time as in Jerusalem, this might have been used to distort the Samaritan error of "separatism" between them and the Jews.

¹² This act of Simon gave rise to the term "simony" in our ecclesiastical vocabulary.

Philip's preaching of the gospel of the kingdom extended "to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). During this time, his explanation of Isaiah 53:7-8 to the Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candance, queen of the Ethiopians, would certainly be included (Acts 8:26-39).

³⁰"And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, 'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

'He was led as a sheep to slaughter;
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He does not open His mouth.
³³In humiliation His judgment was taken away;
Who shall relate His generation?
For His life is removed from the earth'

³⁴And the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?' ³⁵And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' ³⁸And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing."

What is central and germane to our discussion, is that, since the Lord Jesus Christ had historically been led as a sheep to the slaughter when they put Him on the cross, Philip was able to take this Old Testament passage and interpret to the Ethiopian what Christ's sacrifice meant as prophesied in Isaiah. In essence, he was proclaiming the meaning of Christ's death, and in doing so, he was proclaiming an issue involved with the gospel of the kingdom. At the least, the message of the gospel concerning the kingdom of God now included the meaning of the Messiah's death. However, no one could have done this historically prior to the cross. As throughout Scripture, the good news of the kingdom is both revelatory and progressive.

Luke's last comment regarding Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom¹³ occurs in Acts 8:40: "But Philip found himself at Azotus; and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea". Not at any time does Philip's preaching command the hearers of the good news to sell all they have and give it to the poor as in the case of the rich man in Matthew 19:21 and Mark 10:21. The rich man's original question was, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life" (Mk. 10:17). He

¹³ See footnote #11.

understood that since he was already a "son of the kingdom" (cf. Matt. 8:11-12; 21:42-46), and thus the issue was **inheritance**, and not justification. The crux with the rich man was his lack of faith. His unwillingness to sell all that he had and follow Jesus demonstrates this.¹⁴

Inheritance is a family subject-matter, and not an initial regeneration issue. Furthermore, Jesus parallels inheritance of eternal life with that of entering the kingdom (Mk. 10:23-25), to which the disciples retort, "Then who can be saved?" (v. 26). Jesus' disciples were not under a misconception what salvation entailed. In fact, what they understood as salvation is never redefined anywhere in the New Testament.¹⁵

Summarizing Philip's proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God in Acts 8:4-40, the sovereignty of God and the Name of Jesus Christ were immanently associated with his declaration of the gospel. Philip did not present a different gospel from that which John, Jesus or His apostles proclaimed before the Cross. Its keynotes were still repentance, faith, and forgiveness of sins, accompanied with baptism. What is essential to underscore is that all these things had acquired a much deeper significance since the great events of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and the events of Pentecost. Philip's message was the same good news as Jesus foretold would be preached among all the nations, and which before His ascension He charged His disciples to make known in Matthew 28:19-20:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age".

No other Gospel in the New Testament records more what Jesus taught concerning the good news of the kingdom than Matthew. To posit that the apostles, or those associated with them, herald a different gospel later than presented in Matthew, is absurd.¹⁶ For them to do so, would be in direct contradiction to what their Lord commanded them.

¹⁴ Note that what precedes this incident is Jesus' teaching concerning entrance into the Kingdom (Mk. 10:13-16).

¹⁵ Suffice to say at this juncture, believers' "inheritance" and "entrance" into Christ's Millennial Kingdom to rule with Him are issues after regeneration, although both are enjoined in the gospel (to cite only a few examples, Acts 26:18-23; Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5-7; Col. 3:22--4:1; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Rev. 2:25-29). These issues revolve around a justified person continuing to believe and persevere in the midst of a perverse and crooked age. This is why Paul can say in Romans 1:15, "Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome", even though he is contextually speaking to the "saints" in Rome (1:5-7). This is also the underlying reason why authors of the New Testament persistently used the present active participle to describe the gospel in relationship to God's salvation: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone believing [not "believed"], to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

¹⁶ The gospel of the kingdom as presented in Matthew will be dealt in detail at a later time in this tract.

It must also be mentioned that a galvanizing cohesiveness of the gospel as proclaimed by Jesus in Luke's Gospel and the apostolic circle in Acts exists when Jesus' parting charge in Luke 24:45-47 is compared to that of Acts 1:1-4.

Luke 24:45-48

⁴⁴"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled'. ⁴⁵Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and He said to them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; ⁴⁷and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witness of these things'."

Acts 1:1-4

¹"The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when He was taken up after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostle whom He had chosen. ³To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period of forty days*, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁴And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' *He said*, 'you heard of from me'."

Acts is the companion volume to Luke's Gospel (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1). Luke's second volume is an account of the things which Jesus continued to do and teach through the apostolic circle after His ascension by the Holy Spirit. What did Jesus teach His apostles during the forty day interim between His resurrection and ascension? Luke declares He continued to instruct them on the same subject as He taught during His public ministry: "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (v. 3).

This is the same good news as Jesus Himself had proclaimed earlier, but now given effective fulfillment by His triumphal resurrection. We may reasonably conclude that the teaching which He relayed to the apostles about the kingdom of God during these forty days manifestly had bearing on these saving events. The gospel of the kingdom of God which the apostles were commissioned to proclaim was the same good news of God's grace manifested in Christ.

Apostle Peter's proclamation of the gospel to Cornelius (a gentile) in Acts 10:34-43 is now briefly examined. What is notable is that, this is the same message which had been sent to the "sons of Israel" earlier. Between Philip's proclamation of the gospel to this one by Peter in Acts, there are only statements and conversations, but no speeches.

³⁴"And opening his mouth, Peter said: 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, ³⁵but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him. ³⁶The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching [literally, "preaching the good news"] peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)-- ³⁷you yourselves know the thing [literally, "the word"] which took place throughout all

Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. ³⁸ *You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.* ³⁹ *And we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.* ⁴⁰ *God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible,* ⁴¹ *not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.* ⁴² *And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.* ⁴³ *Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins'.*"

Peter begins by commenting on his own development of thinking concerning God's "no partiality" policy. He has come to "understand" the purpose of God in such a manner that he had not perceived before. The uniqueness of the covenant people had blinded him to the breadth of God's salvific purposes.¹⁷ Peter, with his own countrymen, had been so impressed with their distinctiveness as the chosen people that they had relegated others to a subordinate position. Thus, Peter's insight led him to understand that God is without "partiality" (cf. Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17).

The historical priority of "the Jew first and also the Greek" (Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16; 2:9) does not detract from this remarkable truth. The prophets insisted that God's choice of Israel was an act of His grace, not of partiality, and that it called for a response of obedient service, not of careless complacency.

The discussion now turns to Paul's cornerstone message, "the gospel of the grace of God"¹⁸ as recorded in Acts 20. The subject of Paul's gospel is the grace of God as revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. This gospel of grace was revealed to him by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12, 15-16).

Paul's Gospel of the Grace of God

The "gospel of the grace of God" that so many authors differentiate between the "gospel of the kingdom" is found in Acts 20:24. Acts 20:16-27 is quoted at length to set verse 24 within its context.

¹⁶"For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus in order that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the

¹⁷ One only needs to reflect on the Canaanite high priest, Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-24, who came out and encouraged Abram after his victory over the four kings) and the Assyrian city of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10).

¹⁸ See also Acts 20:32; 14:3; Rom. 5:15ff. 2 Cor. 6:1ff; Eph. 1:7ff.; 3:2; Col. 1:6.

church. ¹⁸And when they had come to him, he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from **declaring to you anything that was profitable**, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹**solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**. . . . ²⁴But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, **to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God**. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that all of you among whom **I went about preaching the kingdom**, will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷For I did not shrink from **declaring to you the whole purpose of God**.'

Paul's three year tenure at Ephesus¹⁹ afforded him to declare the entire council of God. During which time he solemnly testified to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Contextually, then, this is what Paul did when "testifying solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" in verse 24.²⁰

Paul's expanding statements concerning his ministry while at Ephesus (vv. 21, 24, 25), envelops one another that crescendos to his climactic declaration in verse 27: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God".²¹

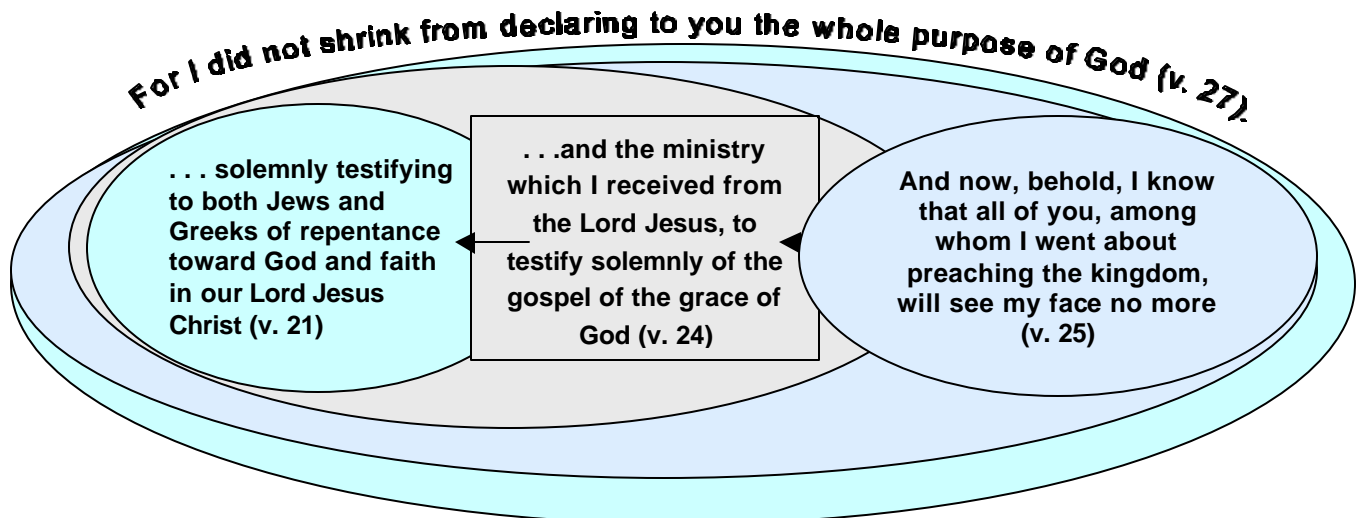


Figure 1.

¹⁹ Acts 20:31

²⁰ The verb *diamarturew* (*diamarturew*) is used in both verses 21 and 24, meaning to "solemnly testify".

²¹ A comparison of v. 27 with v. 20 indicates that to Paul "the whole purpose of God" was the measure of what was truly "profitable".

This overarching expression engulfs Paul's "preaching the kingdom" (v. 25), which in turn swallows up "testifying solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24), and the content of this gospel is "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 21). Figure 1 illustrates this enveloping development.

A somber side comes with "proclaiming the kingdom". As Paul departed, with no expectation of seeing these people again, he spoke freely in which he had discharged his responsibility as a custodian of "the whole purpose of God". If one disregards the kingdom, and thus the "gospel of grace", what only remains is judgment. This explains his reference to being "innocent of the blood of all men" (v. 26; cf. Acts 18:6; Ezek. 33:1-6).²²

Paul's "testifying solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" and "preaching the kingdom" are NOT in opposition to one another. One message is not of grace and the other of works. From the first breath of the "New Birth" (justification), through maturity (sanctification), until the time we are glorified (glorification), it is by grace! "For by grace you have been saved (εἰστε σεσωσμένοι/este seswsmenoi; a present perfect periphrastic) through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.²³ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). God prepared the works. The works that will endure when believers stand at Christ's Judgment Seat (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10) will be His works, for they will owe their durability to their preparation by God. Believers do not invent good works; they are not the creators of these works; by walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26) they carry out by their daily conduct those works "prepared beforehand" by God.²⁴

Whereas many regard "to testify the gospel of grace of God" and "preaching the kingdom" distinct, a comparison of Acts 20:24 and 25 not only makes them compatible, but Paul in his speech to the Ephesian elders links them inseparable. **The "preaching of the kingdom" has a message, and this message is "the gospel of the grace of God"; and at its core is essentially "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ".** Specifically Paul mentioned repentance and faith, and significantly he said nothing about other matters which some have mistakenly failed to regard as peripheral.

²² dioti (dioti), "therefore" (v. 26), links with κηρυσσων (khrusswn, "preaching") in verse 25. If anyone now goes astray, Paul is stating that he is innocent; he has fully discharged the ministry of the kingdom that he had received from the Lord Jesus Himself.

²³ The word translated in the NASB as "that" in v. 8 is a relative neuter pronoun. Because of grammatical concord, it is impossible for "grace" or "faith" to be the relative pronoun's antecedent, for both of these nouns are feminine. It is better to understand the relative pronoun functioning proleptically, emphatically looking forward to the "gift" of God which is also neuter. Thus, both the grace and faith is the gift of God.

²⁴ In a later tract, the believer's obedience is discussed in relation to God's grace.

A short but necessary digression is needed at this point in our discussion. Historically, Paul's epistle to the Galatians had been penned by the time of his departing speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. This is a significant matter to consider, especially when he underscores twice in Galatians 1:6-9 the importance of proclaiming the one and only gospel.²⁵

⁶"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed".

The unexpressed content of Paul's gospel in Galatians 1:6-9 would not have been different than what he had proclaimed to the Ephesians (or any where else): "teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks **of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Acts 20:20b-21), which is the "gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24c), the indispensable message when one properly proclaims the kingdom (v. 25b) and the "whole purpose of God" (v. 27).

When Paul said, "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8), he was not speaking rhetorically. Paul illustrates his point with Cephas [Apostle Peter]²⁶ who "stood condemned" because of his hypocrisy of not being forthright about the truth of the gospel.

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. **But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel,** I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you, compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" Gal. 2:11-14.

We usually only associate those who preach "another gospel" with the "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4) and the cultists--never with Apostle Peter or Barnabas! If it was true of Peter, can it also be true of our pastors and favorite radio and television Bible personalities?

²⁵ More will be commented later concerning these verses.

²⁶ The Apostle Simon Peter is unmistakably meant because of Galatians 1:17-18, 2:7-10; 1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34.

From what deeds would a believer need to repent? Although he does not give an exhaustive list in Galatians 5:19-21a, the apostle Paul does list fifteen deeds of the flesh, namely, "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these". He then to the Galatian believers immediately and emphatically states, "of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21b; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-12; Eph. 5:5-7). Failure to continually repent from these deeds, even partially, will prevent a person from inheriting the kingdom of God. For "now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). Thus, crucifying the flesh (putting the deeds of the flesh to death listed in vv. 19-21), *i.e.*, repentance toward God, is parcel with inheriting the kingdom of God. Clearly, repentance toward God is not one issue, and inheriting the kingdom another. They are one issue, inseparable, comprising the same gospel. However, many will not persist in repenting from their evil deeds because of their lack of faith. They refuse to believe the implications of Jesus' High Priestly ministry, and thus will not continually come before "the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). For these Christians, the desires of this present age are dominant and more desirable, not taking to heart Paul's final warning to the Galatia believers in Galatians 6:7-8:

⁷"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Only two options are presented by the apostle: "the one who sows to the flesh shall reap corruption" (those performing the deeds of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21), and "the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life" (those walking by the Spirit, Gal. 5:16-17, 22-26). If we mistakenly understand that Paul is speaking to a mixture of unregenerate and regenerated individuals in the Galatia churches, the force of his statement will be minimized.

Those who comprise the Body of Christ is the Church, and the Church is the Body of Christ. They are equated as being identical in the following two passages of Scripture.

"And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (Col. 1:17-18).

Thus, when Apostle Paul wrote to "all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2), he was not writing to a mixed group, but those who are the Body of Christ, the churches (local assemblies who combined together constitutes the Church²⁷).

An erroneous misconception has crept into the Church that all those who occupy a building on Sunday make up the Body of Christ. It very well may be there are unregenerate individuals present among the Body, but they do not constitute the Church; nor are they those to whom any New Testament epistles are directed (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; etc.), including the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2--3 (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Those who teach anything differently adhere to a modern blunder with no Scriptural support. Their rhetoric misdirects all the warnings found in the New Testament concerning Christians who do not walk by the Spirit, including Paul's stern warning to the Galatia believers: "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap**" (Gal. 6:7).

Keeping the foregoing in mind, the quintessence of the Pauline gospel comes during his defense before King Agrippa in Acts 26:1-29. Paul reiterates for the third time in the Book of Acts his apostolic commission from the Lord in verses 12-18.²⁸

¹²"While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; ¹⁷delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸**to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me'."**

The purpose behind the revelation of the Lord to Paul on the Damascus road had to do with a task--the work to be performed and the result to be achieved (v. 18). There are three purpose clauses in verse 18, each one introducing the next. Jesus was sending Paul to the Gentiles "to open their eyes ". Why? "So that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God." Why? "In order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified". How? "By faith in Me".

²⁷ We see this same principle operating in Revelation. Whereas letters were addressed to an individual church (or assembly), all the churches were to have an attentive ear: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Also, the early "churches" met in people's homes, and not in a structure called a "church" (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2).

²⁸ Paul's other testimonies concerning his experience on the Damascus Road are in Acts 9:3-8 and 22:6-11.

So much for Paul's mission. But what did Paul proclaim? He now tells King Agrippa.

¹⁹"Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, **that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance**".

Paul places himself in line with John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2, 8), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), and Peter (Acts 2:38) in teaching the indispensability of repentance and the proof of it in terms of a changed life. Since the Gentiles were included in Paul's sphere of testimony, it is clearly improper to maintain that repentance is the demand made on Israel and faith the demand made on the Gentiles. Both groups needed both elements (cf. Acts 20:21).

Now before King Agrippa, Paul testifies,

²²"And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; ²³**that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.**"

What Paul insisted on here, as on previous occasions, was that which offended the Jews. Far from being foreign to their prophetic history, was actually nothing different from what the Law and the prophets had predicted (v. 22; cf. 24:14). When Jesus experienced the same resistance, He pointed out its inconsistency (Jn. 5:45-47). For Paul, the great thrust of the Old Testament was its Messianic prophecy, which pointed to the coming of the Christ, His suffering, His resurrection, and subsequent proclamation of salvation to both Israel and the Gentiles. By yoking his own proclamation with the prophetic content of the Old Testament, Paul affirms the unity of the biblical message. **What the Old predicts, the New presents in terms of fulfillment--the one and same gospel.**

In obedience to his apostolic mission commissioned by the Lord, Paul preached the gospel. We see several aspects of this gospel in Acts.

Paul's defense before Festus (Acts 24:14-16)

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men."

Paul had a reason to keep a "blameless conscience" before God and men, for he knew that in the future "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked". Paul's firm belief in a coming resurrection and the consequent appearance before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10) had a moral restraint upon him.²⁹ If Paul was assured of partaking in "the resurrection of the righteous", the subsequent clause, "in view of this", loses its stinging force.

Paul's defense before Felix (Acts 24:24-25)

"But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, 'Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you'."

After a few days after arriving, Governor Felix and Drusilla, his wife (youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I), sent for Paul and listened as he expounded "faith in Christ Jesus", constituting among other things, "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come". Such preaching made Felix uncomfortable and fearful. But Paul fulfills his obligation as a witness for Christ.

Along the same vein, Romans 2:1-16 makes believers uncomfortable. Therefore, this passage by large is relegated in Christendom addressed to "unbelievers", the unregenerate. However, those who are addressed as "you" in verse 1 are the same group as addressed as those who "are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints" in Romans 1:6-7! Let's read this portion as it was applied by the apostle Paul--to the "saints in Rome".

¹"Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶**who will render to every man according to his deeds:** ⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness [He will render] wrath and indignation. ⁹*There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For

²⁹ The verb rendered as "maintain" is *aἵκνω/askw* and implies a moral severity without the force of asceticism.

there is no partiality with God. ¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

As Paul addressed the Galatians (Gal. 6:7-8), he sternly warns the Roman believers that a judgment is coming wherein God "will render [pay back]³⁰ to every man according to his deeds. Just as in Galatians, this judgment will have one of two outcomes: "those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life"; or "to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth . . . [He will recompense] wrath and indignation".

Demonstratively, the recompense God will reward to "those who by perseverance in doing good . . ." is eternal life. We know this because the words "eternal life" (zwhn aijwvion/zwhn aiwnion) is the direct object of the verb, "render".³¹ As we read later in this same epistle, "eternal life" is the outcome of sanctification in believers who by faith do not allow sin to dominate their lives (Rom. 6:12-22, esp. v. 22). Even though "eternal life" is a "reward", it still remains God's gift (Rom. 6:23)³²; for no believer is able to attain this gift except that it be given to them--but according to their deeds!

"Eternal life" may be literally translated from the Greek as "age-lasting life". Strikingly, the Greek words translated as "eternal life", is NEVER attributed to God as possessing it. **The One who should possess such life would be God, if indeed, this combination meant "eternal" life.** However, authors of the Greek New Testament always reserved different terms for God's incommunicable and eternal nature--in contrast to finite man. An excellent example is found in 1 Tim. 6:11-19, especially verse 16.

¹¹"But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of [the] faith; take hold of the eternal life [aijwniou zwh"/aiwniou zwh] to which you were called, . . . ¹⁴that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which He will bring about at the proper time--He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; ¹⁶**who alone possesses**

³⁰ Gk. apodidwmi/apodidwmi means to "render, reward, recompense" in both good and bad senses (cf. Matt. 6:4, 6, 18; 16:27; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 18:6; 22:12).

³¹ This is almost indiscernible in EVV. For example, in the NASB, there are twenty-two words separating the verb, "render", and its direct object, "eternal life". A clearer and more effective translation would have been: "who will recompense to every man according to his deeds, eternal life . . .". However, this would remove the obscurity from our present day translations and make too many people nervous--and rightfully so.

³² Gk. cavisma/c arisma "gift" is the effective outworking of God's gracious gift, dwreaw/dwrean.

immortality [ajʌnasia /aʌnasia]¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world [*lit.* "age"] not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. . . .¹⁸ to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is [the] life indeed".

By definition, "eternal" means having no beginning or end, transcendent of time. Because mankind was created by the truly "eternal" God, his nature is temporal, having a beginning. This gulf between the Creator and the creation is fixed and immutable: "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; **who alone possesses immortality**".

In the Scripture quoted above, Apostle Paul commands Timothy, his "true child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), to "take hold" of "the eternal life" to which he was called (v. 12b). In like manner, at the conclusion of the passage, Paul instructs Timothy to teach those who are rich "to be rich in good works . . . storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is [the] life indeed" (vv. 18-19).³³

This tract must come to a conclusion with a brief comment on 1 Corinthians 15:1-3. This passage is voiced by many as the epitome of the gospel which Paul preached, "the gospel of the grace of God", although this qualifying phrase is absent in 1 Corinthians 15! However, what Paul herald as the gospel historically in Acts, would not be any different than he had proclaimed to the Corinth church; for him to do so, Paul would be proclaiming a "different gospel".

The *Foundation of the Kingdom Series* advocates that the Kingdom of God is the golden thread which runs throughout God's revelation; and of this kingdom, all of Scripture is its exposition.

All of human history are preparatory stages for the Kingdom's manifestation. It is the end which serves to explain the means; it is the object for which ages have passed and are ever to revolve, and never to be repeated; it is the coming of Jesus that inaugurates "the blessed hope", and when all the angels will bow down to worship the Son of Man; and that which the prophets, Jesus and the apostles continually focused upon as the bright light, clearly illuminating the past and present so that we will endure.

All Scriptures quoted are from the New American Standard Bible, published by The Lockman Foundation, 1978, unless otherwise noted.

³³ The Greek article appears before "life" in v. 19, signifying "the life" which would be evident by the context.