

At the opening of human history; it is revealed that God wants to restore the man he created to be back in fellowship with him. Creation itself displayed God's mighty power and glory, but said nothing about any plan that would save man from his sins. The reason being, that when creation was done; there was no sin. But when there was sin; God began to demonstrate his intentions of restoration in various ways. The flood was a statement that he would not tolerate sin. It was also a statement of his longsuffering and love toward man.

Later, there were signs and wonders done in Egypt as described in the 105<sup>th</sup> Division of the Psalms. These were the methods most often used to inform man that God had a message for him. It was a miracle that the bush that God called Moses from, would not be totally consumed.. Elijah and Elisha were able to do signs and wonders to turn the hearts of the people back to God. Signs and wonders were copied by sorcerers and soothsayers, like those in Egypt and Babylon.(Plagues in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, grazing in the pasture for seven years. It was only Daniel that could read the writing on the wall; Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego were miraculously spared in the fiery furnace; they lived while others perished.)

When Jesus came, he would use signs and wonders to prove himself to be of God. Nicodemus said, **"WE KNOW THOU ART A TEACHER COME FROM GOD, FOR NO MAN CAN DO THE MIRACLES THAT THOU DOEST, EXCEPT GOD BE WITH HIM.** The **"WE KNOW,"** shows that many knew his message was from God. After the **resurrection**; Peter preached this on Pentecost, **"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN APPROVED AMONG YOU BY MIRACLES AND WONDERS AND SIGNS which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know:...."** Acts 2:22.

Ignorantly, Israel and the religious systems since Christ, have gone about to establish their own righteousness by works; trying to keep the law. God had made a **PROMISE** to Abraham and his **SEED**, 430 years before the law and years before he was circumcised, and **"He believed God, and it was accounted unto him for Righteousness."** Rom. 4:3.

#### Gal. 3:6-22 (READ)

Gal. 5:22 **"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to all that believe."** Even all the good works that Abraham did as works of faith, (e.g. offering Isaac) did nothing in the way of saving him. Because when God made this covenant of grace to Abraham; and made circumcision the **"SEAL"** of the covenant; it could not be changed.. The scriptures seeing that God would justify the heathen through faith; preached to Abraham saying, **"In thee shall all nations be blessed."** (Again, Abraham was saved before the Law.)

In Rom. 4:6-8; **"Even David (who lived under the law) described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying,"** Blessed are they to whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord **will not** impute sin." Then Paul, (who lived after the law,) in Gal. 2: 16, 19,20,21. flatly condemned the works of the law for salvation.

The burden of Paul's preaching was that God had made provision for salvation through faith in his Son. This truth was not to be taken lightly. It was not something he just threw in his preaching every now and then. It was the **heart** of the revelation that God had given him as an apostle. Sin had to be removed in order to remove death.(Where there is no sin; there is no

death.) Some of the strongest statements in Scripture, is the curse that was pronounced on those who would preach "another Gospel." Gal. 1: 6-9. Also, 11 Cor. 11: 4; 13-15.

The Jerusalem council in Acts 15; settled the issue that men's hearts were purified by faith and not circumcision of the flesh. "For Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained righteousness." Rom. 9: 31. Verse 30 had said, "The Gentiles which followed NOT after righteousness, hath attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith ". The Gentiles didn't bother about what the law said to do. We have the examples of Cornelius and his household just sitting around listening to Peter, and was saved through the same faith as Abraham; without the works of the law. Acts 10:43 When Peter returned from the trip and reported to the church his experience among the Gentiles; they were shocked that Gentiles had received the Spirit without circumcision.

As the Apostles were to preach that Christ had fulfilled all the requirements of the law; they were given supernatural powers to prove that their message was directly from God. They healed the sick; raised the dead and spoke in other languages. Mk. 16:20 . There were false apostles then as now. In Rev. 2:2, the church at Ephesus. **"TRIED THEM SAY THEY ARE APOSTLES AND ARE NOT, AND HAST FOUND THEM LIARS."**

We need to remember that in Matt.10:2; We find that Jesus **PRAYED ALL NIGHT** before he divinely selected his apostles by name and number. Another list in Lk. 6:13; In Acts 1:13; we are given the names of the eleven disciples. Before he ascended back to heaven; he had **"THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST** given commandments to these apostles whom he had chosen." Acts 1:2.(Jesus preached in the power of the Spirit.) Lk. 4:14-21

This is a couple of Qualifications to be an apostle.

1. Must have seen the Lord. Paul said, " He was seen of me.." 1 Cor. 9:1

2. Had signs and wonders. Heb. 2:1-4.

3. Were inspired writers of scripture. 1 Tim 3:16; as the prophets were.

It is obvious that the charismatic movement of our day; could not qualify to do the signs and wonders the Apostles did. They have NOT seen the Lord; **RAISED** the dead, etc.

SAME GOSPEL

1 Peter 1:9-12 (READ)

. In Acts 2:22-24; Peter made Jesus the object of faith from the O.T. scriptures, that convicted the three thousand that heard it. He showed that Christ was what was preached to the fathers for salvation. Acts 15:9,10. When Philip preached from Isaiah 53; he preached Jesus. When Paul preached to the Corinthians about how Christ died for our sins;(1 Cor.15:1-3.) it was according to the Old Testament scriptures. The New Testament books were not gathered together until much later, and could not be what Paul was talking about. In 2 Tim 3:15; Timothy had knowledge of the Holy Scriptures that was able to make him wise through FAITH unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus. (Proves both the same.) In the Roman letter; the plan of salvation is described as "The Gospel of God," separate from any or all good works. Any system that **demands reward** for personal righteousness; would make God a debtor to man. The sacrifice of Jesus was what Paul preached; it was what the Old Testament preached.. Luke 24:26-32. (Road to Emmaus.) Jesus reasoned with the two disciples out of the Old Testament scriptures.

In Galatians; Paul goes to extraordinary pains to show there is only one gospel that is right.

The first part of the book of Galatians is adamant about Salvation by grace, and condemns the works of the law for righteousness that God will accept.. The latter part of the book shows the liberty we have in Christ, and all the works we do are motivated by love for Christ. Gal. 5:1. (More on this later.)

Where do you find a sinner? Under the law. Free him from it and write the new covenant in his heart, and he will live by its principals. Gal. 4:4 teaches that "In the fullness of time; God sent for his son; made of a woman under the law to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive adoption of sons." A sinner knows he has been saved when he feels no more condemnation. Rom 8:1. The gospel is hidden, until conviction of the Holy Spirit takes him to Calvary. He then rests in the finished work of Christ, **through repentance and faith. WHEN THE LIGHT OF THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD SHINES INTO HIS HEART; HE IS A NEW CREATURE.** Under Roman law; when you saw a man going down the road carrying a cross; you can believe he has already said goodbye to family, friends and the world. So is the man that has spiritually died at Calvary. He must needs to have said "Goodbye" to the world. On the other side of the Cross, he does not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear; but has the Spirit of Adoption, and cries, Abba, Father. The Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.. He has died with Christ, and old things have passed away. This truth has been confirmed by the saints of all ages.

There has been a new "Gospel" emerging in the last several years. It has come in unnoticed by many, and seems to be the same as the old. The cross that this new gospel holds up, is not the same cross Paul and the apostles preached. The new message is comfortable in Hollywood, the bars, and the sports arena. It is friendly to the ecumenical movement, because of so many "common causes," and a loss of concern for truth. Religious correctness, dictates a new message and a new cross. People are unaware they embraced "another gospel." Instead of a cross that kills sin; this new one has been adjusted in the pulpit, so as not to disturb the sinner or to make scriptural demands of the saint. The new message allows for men to live as they please; supposedly without consequences. The old message preaches liberty in Christ, (Gal. 5:1) but not as an occasion to the flesh, but by LOVE serve one another.(Gal. 5:13.)

In Heb. 2:3,4; Paul speaks in the past tense that this time of apostleship with the signs and wonders used of God; had established their ministry to be of God. In 1 Cor. 13:8-13; we are taught only faith, hope and charity remains. **THESE THREE.** When a foundation is built; there is no further need to work on it; so you go on to the next part of the structure. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc. 1 Cor. 3:9, 10. Paul warned that we take heed **HOW** we build upon that foundation. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine..." Acts 2:42, was to be understood by all of the churches to be the right doctrine, even though some refused to turn loose of the law. The right gospel needed to be taught on the Missionary journeys; to Jew and Gentile alike.

Over many of his letters; Paul puts his badge of apostolic authority at the beginning of these books, so all would know that all the words that were said; were directly from God. He said that this was the same gospel that God had promised "afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures." Rom 1:2 following: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power; according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead..." The above scriptures lay at the foundation of the gospel; Jesus Christ himself the chief corner stone. Eph. 2:20. In Rev. 21:14; the walls of the City had twelve foundations, and in them was the names of the twelve apostles.. (Their names are at least two places in Heaven: The Book of life and in the foundation of the walls.) This clearly

shows the apostles' doctrine was how men got to heaven, and that was what the Lord built his church upon; himself being the chief cornerstone. (The names of the children of Israel's names on the gates; indicates to me the same truth got them there.)

It is amazing how much history in scripture was devoted to showing the only way to heaven would be apart from human effort, and done by grace alone; by faith alone; by Christ ALONE! Not additional works done by us. But there is a neglected part of scripture that makes many stumble by not understanding the harmony of faith and works. (Explained in #7 of our Articles Of Faith.)

## THE WAY THE APOSTLES PREACHED FAITH AND WORKS

James makes the right connection of faith and works, using much of the book to do so. In chapter 2:14-26; he shows the difference between a saving faith, and a "professed" faith. The works of saving faith comes from the faith that God instilled in our hearts when he saved us, and also has a love for God and man that was not there before. Living faith will always be accompanied by good works. Gal. 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh BY LOVE. This is the fruit of Justification. A faith that does not produce a change in the life,(Sanctification) is not saving faith. There should be alarm in the pulpit over this issue. There are few scriptures that show people who are living in the world, are truly children of God. It is possible, as the lives of Lot and David shows; but that's not the rule of thumb. Unfortunately, many believe that "going back into the world" is the norm of christian experience. Do we do the gospel service, if we get up in testimony and tell about being back in the world for years? (We have to be truthful in our testimony and not try to hide something, but careful how we describe it; lost people do not understand spiritual matters.) Rather, what would we give to stand in that great day, to have just one scar on our backs from the battle of faith we fought! would it be satisfactory to have **JUST ONE** evidence that our labors here below was **MOTIVATED BY LOVE**? This should be the only way for a saved person to think. Paul: "I fought a good fight...."

## Conclusion

Surely, there was much in the apostolic HANDSHAKE given Paul at Jerusalem, that even the Gentiles were hearing the right gospel. No doubt, he was strengthened by another trip to Jerusalem to visit with Peter for 15 days. What a meeting that must have been, when Peter showed him the places where Jesus preached, and the miracles he did; showed him where he was crucified.

We can just hear Peter say, "The women had intended to anoint the body of Jesus, but came back and said an angel had told them he was not there; he was risen. I ran to the sepulcher, and his grave was empty!!! Peter must have given Paul a tour of where events occurred around Jerusalem; including the upper room!!!"

Like us, Paul and Peter went their separate ways. When their ministries were finished, they were summoned to meet with Jesus and his people for the meeting that will be eternal!!!