



Believing the Evangel



BELIEVING THE EVANGEL

If ever you should be avowing with your mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in your heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, you shall be saved. (Rom.10:9)

This verse is probably employed more than any other in today's popular, formularized preaching in which advice is given concerning "how to get saved." Such an interpretation and application, however, is a gross misuse of the Word of God. This important text must not be taken out of its context, divorced from its setting, and assigned an altogether new purpose of our own devising.

In our consideration of this passage, it should first of all be noted that Paul is not speaking here concerning the nations, but Israel. The subject of the context is the salvation of Israel; the pronouns "you" and "your" are in reference to individuals of that nation. Their salvation was the delight of Paul's heart as well as his petition to God (Rom.9:31-10:1).

It should further be noted that the usage of "if ever," does not speak of a salvation that is in doubt, but of a salvation that is certain to occur—for Israel.

In the phrase "if ever," "if" is not the if of doubt but of argument. It is the practical equivalent of "when-ever," in reference to the salvation which *will* then be occurring. The sense is, Whenever the sons of Israel should finally be avowing with their mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in their heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, they *shall* be being saved.

The teaching of practically the entirety of Romans 10 and 11 is that God does *not* thrust away His people whom He foreknew (Rom.11:2), and hence that the day will yet come when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom.11:26a). Israel will then be saved not only out of her stubbornness and unbelief, but out of the great affliction which shall befall her in the conclusion of the eon. In that day, "Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer. He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, *whenever* I [Yahweh] should be eliminating their sins" (Rom. 11:26b,27; cit. Isa.59:20,21; Psal.14:7; Jer.31:34).

Thus it is gloriously true that "if ever" Israel should be avowing with their mouth the declaration that Jesus is Lord, and should be believing in their heart that God rouses Him from among the dead, they *shall* be saved. They will then enter into the particular salvation which God has for them, that of life in the terrestrial kingdom in the coming eon, according to the writings of the prophets.

"Intense zeal, religious fervor, coupled with self-righteousness, does not lead to salvation. God demands subjection to His righteousness in Christ. The law should establish Israel's *un*righteousness and thus reveal God's righteousness, which is manifested in Christ. Israel, as a nation, will be saved when they see Him Whom they stabbed, and recognize Him as their Righteousness.

"The law demanded obedience first, and promised life to those only who continued to keep it. But even in the law there was provision for faith. It taught that Yahweh Himself, *He* was their Life (Deut.30:20). In the day when He gathers them out of the peoples and brings them back into the land He will bring the word of faith very near to them (Deut.30:1-14). In place of their own efforts He will put the humiliation and

resurrection of Christ before them. Their salvation, under God, will depend on their avowal of Christ's lordship and resurrection.

"In the words, 'Whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved' (Rom.10:13; cit. Joel 2:32), there is an allusion to the ancient custom, still in vogue in eastern lands, of the right of sanctuary (*cp* Num.35:6-28). One who is in danger of death by the hand of the blood avenger, if he cannot reach a safe place in time, may invoke the name of some great and powerful person, and thus find salvation through his name. If the avengers of blood refuse to listen to his appeal, and take his life, it devolves upon the person on whose name he has called to take swift and summary vengeance. He gathers together all his friends and allies to assist him in punishing the outrage and in defending the honor of his name.

"Thus, 'Whoever should be invoking the name of [Yahweh], shall be saved.' When vengeance visits the earth, the only shelter will be the name of Yahweh. Therefore, it will require not only heart belief, but the avowal of the mouth. Thus it is that Israel will be saved and all others who, in that day, will seek refuge in His name."¹

The full text of Joel 2:32 (from which Paul cites in Romans 10:9 and 10:13) is: "And it comes that everyone who shall call on the name of Yahweh shall escape, *for* in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem *deliverance* shall come to be, just as Yahweh says; and among the survivors are those *whom Yahweh is calling*." All such ones will then call on the name of Yahweh and escape, *for* in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, His deliverance shall come to be. Their invocation of His name will be *because* of His deliverance, according to His

1. adapted from A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.240.

calling. Hence their invocation should never be conceived as a means controlled by man in order to gain His deliverance.

It is especially wrong, then, to wrench these words from their context and employ them as a "formula" today, setting these words before the listener as "how to" advice as to what requirements he must fulfill in order to "get saved," or, become spiritual.

It is true, incidentally, whenever anyone today is graciously enabled to recognize and avow that Jesus is Lord and to believe in his heart that God has roused Him from among the dead, that he then enters into a certain salvation of his own. But it is a salvation from ignorance and unbelief, not from being unchosen by God prior to this time. And it is certainly not some sort of qualifying step which then obligates God to include him among His chosen ones in return.

Indeed, we were chosen by God long before we were born, in accord with His purpose and the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian. In the counsels of God, it was actually "*given to us.*" This is what Paul says (2 Tim.1:9); not that it was merely made "available" to all who might one day qualify themselves for its possession. Membership in the body of Christ is by God's grace, not by human qualification.

As long as we are altogether stubborn toward the things of God, we are "soulish, not having the spirit" (*cf* Jude 19). "Now the soulish man is not receiving those things which are of the spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and *he is not able to know them, seeing that they are spiritually examined*" (1 Cor.2:14).

One either has the spirit of God or else he does not. If he does not have it, he does not—he cannot—receive those things which are of God's spirit. Indeed, the truth is, claim what he will, such a person considers them to be so much stupidity. He is unable even to

know the things of God, much less to speak of them before others. "No one is able to say 'Lord is Jesus' except by [*en*, 'in'] holy spirit" (1 Cor.12:3).

Those who do not yet have the spirit of God do not receive Christ at all actually, even if they, in their own flesh, may attempt to do so, having been misled into such a course through false teachings. In such cases, the "faith" is "feigned," in the sense that it is *simulated* (*eikê*, SIMULATEDLY; 1 Cor.15:2), not genuine. Human efforts toward self-conviction are all in vain; we truly believe only when God *graces* us to do so, in His own time and according to His own powerful operations (*cp* Gal.1:15; 1 Tim.1:16).

Only those who have already been given God's spirit receive Christ; their receiving of Him is a *fruit* thereof, as natural—and as much the work of God—as the spring blossoms on an apple tree.

INVOKING THE NAME OF THE LORD

On this subject, Dean Hough wrote, "It is ironic that these words of Paul [in Romans 10:9] should have been taken as standardized directions which must be followed if a person wants to be saved. Faith itself is thus given a legalistic twist, contrary to the whole tenor of Paul's apostleship. Even in addressing Israel, the apostle is not imposing a set of rules for them to follow in gaining their salvation. Rather he is showing the pathway Israel needs to take, and indeed *will* eventually take, for the enjoyment of the salvation God has provided for them. It is a pathway of discovery, not human achievement. The salvation does not arise from either the avowal or the faith, but is *found* through their exercise

"The previous verses [Rom.10:6,7] show what Israel must *not* be saying if they wish to exhibit faith in God's words and enjoy the blessings of salvation.

This verse shows the opposite. Here is what they *will* be saying in response to true faith in the heart. They will acknowledge the lordship of Jesus, the One Who walked among them as a servant and Who was crucified as a criminal. And they will believe that God roused Him from among the dead . . .

"The acclamation of the mouth [Rom.10:10], in the Scriptures, is an open expression of what is honestly believed. It must not be false. The Lord said, 'Out of the superabundance of the heart the mouth is speaking' (Matt.12:34). The sacredness of such an avowal can be traced back to the 'ten words' of the law, where it is written, 'You shall not take up the name of Yahweh your Elohim for futility' (Ex.20:7). What is said concerning God and His operations is to reflect His glory and manifest Israel's confidence in Him.

"However, . . . even that future expression of Israel's faith will not actually make them righteous or gain them salvation. What Paul has written concerning us in the earlier chapters of Romans and what he says concerning Israel in chapter 11 will help us supply the ellipses, somewhat along the following lines: 'For with the heart it is believed for [the manifestation of] righteousness [established by God], yet with the mouth it is avowed for [the continuing display of] salvation [gained through Christ's descent, death and resurrection].'

"These matters in brackets, though helpful to us in following the overall teaching of Romans, are not of immediate importance in Romans 10. Here Paul is presenting the way to righteousness (by faith) in a manner most calculated to appeal to and be understood by Israel, so as to make the strength of Israel's resistance all the more evident. He is not concerned here with the basis and purpose of salvation, but with

the simple human situation which is the *evidence* of that salvation

"The attractiveness of the evangel, especially to those zealous for righteousness, is so great that we can only marvel at the strength of Israel's stubbornness. Yet we would be the same apart from the grace of God. Israel remains under the disgrace of disbelieving God, stumbling and tripping, desiring the anathema of rejecting Christ, while we have the joy and peace of believing on Him Who is the Saviour of all mankind.

"'For everyone, whoever should be invoking the name of the Lord, shall be saved' (Rom.10:13). Once more Paul borrows from the Hebrew Scriptures, this time from Joel 2:32. This continued tying in of Old Testament passages with the message Paul was presenting before Israel should logically have made that message more welcome to them. The harmony of salvation through faith with the proclamations and pleas of the prophets is very striking, especially considering the place of the law in the days of such stalwarts as Isaiah and Joel. No wonder Paul testifies that the evangel of God was promised before through His prophets (Rom.1:1,2), and that the righteousness of God was 'attested by the law and the prophets' (Rom.3:21)!

"The differences between Paul and Joel are obvious to anyone who considers each passage in its context. But the similarities are what the apostle emphasizes here. The pathway to salvation is not distant, complicated or obscure. It is straightforward and near at hand. All Israel needs to do is believe, proclaim and invoke. But still they are *locked up in stubbornness* and will not heed a message of such bountiful mercy.

"As for us, we are aware that God is operating, and He is operating all, even the affairs of Israel. He is operating all these matters together, in a harmonious and

glorious way. And He is operating them all together for good. This is the faith that God has implanted in our hearts and which we rejoice in acclaiming with our mouths, to the glory of God the Father."²

DECEPTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Spontaneous informal petitions, prayers, pleadings, and thanksgiving to God, as circumstance evokes or occasion inspires, are but the natural outflow of our spirits. As the desire or need arises, such prayer and praise, even if very brief, is often most heartfelt and earnest. If we *are* walking in spirit, in the course of everyday life many occasions arise, or may well be before us continually, in which either petition or praise are regularly in our consciousness if not on our lips, even as they become our unintermittent experience, in spirit. Conversely, often, when we are *not* walking in spirit, it is both the painful trials and the special joys of the day that serve to awaken us to reliance upon God even as to thanksgiving and praise unto Him, in the name of Christ.

In order to minimize the intrusion of the flesh, ordinarily, except for brief public blessing or supplication, prayer should be made "in hiding"; that is, either privately or in silence (so to speak, "in your storeroom," after "locking your door"; Matt.6:6). Indeed, it is the "hypocrites" who are "prolix" (i.e., abundant and extended) in prayer (Luke 20:47), who thus engage themselves that they may be seen of men, making "useless repetitions even as those of the nations" (Matt.6:7). Even though such prayers are directed to the God of Israel, faithfully speaking, they are largely but "useless repetitions," even so. The Lord Jesus

2. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.74, pp.91-96, "Faith in Heart and Mouth."

declared of such ones, "They are supposing that they will be hearkened to in their loquacity. *Do not, then, be like them*, for aware is God, your Father, of what you need before you request Him" (Matt.6:8).

Devoutness in general and communion with God in particular, must be natural and sensible, not contrived, artificial, or sensuous. Yet as a technique by which they suppose they can regulate the flesh and "gain" the spirit, some will repetitively vocalize such phrases as, "O Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus!" doing so with much zeal and great gusto. Though this mantra-like practice is termed by some, "Calling on the name of the Lord," it might more aptly be called, "Calling out the name of the Lord," since, as ordinarily practiced, with much repetition of phrases, it becomes not so much a prayer of dependence upon God as a mood-altering technique, controlled by man.

Doubtlessly, if such procedures are practiced with sufficient frequency and sincerity, certain positive effects will be obtained as a result—especially if one is taught to expect such results. Such essentially pagan practices will often induce a certain ephemeral euphoria, which, in turn, deters those thus distracted from certain overt sins. One's dependence upon such subjective, self-generated emotionalism, however, hinders if not precludes one's dependence upon God.

Such exuberant vocalizings and related practices are, in fact, as fleshly and injurious in their way as those more conventional fleshly thoughts and deeds which they are designed to attenuate. Self-regulated experiences of ebullience, albeit in the name of Christ, constitute a spurious spirituality. Irrational, self-generated emotionalism is unhealthy, not to mention unwise. For some, such religiosity may gratify the senses or distract the flesh; but it cannot truly nourish the spirit of any. Nor is any such aura of reli-

gious euphoria somehow useful in preparation for the spirit's presence—as if the Almighty had need of our crude devices in order that His testimony might be heard or His influences rendered effectual.

“INVITATIONS” AND “ALTAR CALLS”

Many have been deceived into conceiving of the evangel in proud and conditional ways through the false teachings of those who have been unfaithful to its message. Ever so many have been put through the paces of taking part in an “acceptance” of Christ which supposedly only brought salvation to them inasmuch as they fulfilled its “terms.” Such claims and practices have only perpetuated confusion and deception. Wherever God intends, however, the power of the evangel itself still works salvation—in spite of the presence of these errors.

The customary invitation or altar call of today is simply a vain tradition of men (*cp* Mark 7:8). It is used because it “gets results.” Through such means, many become converts to the “Christian religion.” Such popular techniques are based upon the false idea which has well been termed “decisional regeneration.” The number of those from among such throngs whom God Himself has already chosen is known to Him, not to us.

Entrance into the terrestrial kingdom under law is one thing; the apostle Paul's evangel of grace among the nations is quite another. Yet on the basis of Matthew 10:32,33 (and Luke 12:8,9), many today are warned that they must not only believe but also “confess” Christ before men in order to be saved. The scope of these words, however, is confined to the Circumcision. It is true that it was necessary for those called into Christ *through the evangel of the Circumcision* to heed all such instructions if they would enter into life. God, however, graciously fulfilled in His cho-

sen ones all essential obedience (*cp* Isa.26:12). They would have life eonian only if they obeyed; but their obedience was due solely to His grace.

Therefore, all in Christ who had a part in that Circumcision calling heeded His words: "For this is the love of God, that *we* may be keeping His precepts. And His precepts are not heavy, for all that is begotten of God *is conquering* the world" (1 John 5:3,4a; *cp* John 3:15,16; 5:24; 6:37-40). Many others, however, rejected Him from the beginning, or eventually renounced Him: "Out of us *they* come, but they were not of us, for if they were of us, they *would have* remained with us" (1 John 2:19).

In the Circumcision calling, personal righteousness and endurance are *essential*, but they are not provided by man. Those in Christ of that calling, whether in the beginning or end of their life of faith, are saved entirely in grace, as much as ourselves. The throngs at large, some of whom had a certain recognition of Christ, must be distinguished from those who were truly chosen of God, "begotten anew" and "in Christ."

Such matters as these do not concern us; it is a corruption of Paul's evangel to attempt to incorporate them into his message, especially when the *grace* which alone can fulfill the essential obedience of that calling is denied.

For ourselves, it is not that we must acclaim Christ, but simply that we gladly do so, according to His grace. We should not speak of "confessing" Christ, but of "acclaiming" Him. When *exomologeō* (OUT-LIKE-LAY [say]) is used in a positive sense, the CV translates it "acclaim" (e.g., Matt.11:25). When it is used concerning sin, it is translated "confess" (e.g., Matt.3:6). If a new believer should wish to share his first joy in Christ with others during a meeting of his fellow believers, this should be encouraged. But such

actions must not be psychologically induced, or made into veritable laws or ceremonies.

Many may actually believe for some time before they ever "go forward" at a church service. *If so, they are already in Christ, and complete in Him (cf Col.2:10).* But if their faith has lacked commitment and obedience, not yet knowing His grace, they may well suppose that by taking part in this tradition they will somehow motivate God to bless them in return. Indeed, "orthodoxy" teaches this error, and proclaims it as truth.

If any should genuinely believe for the first time during such a meeting, this will be so only because God has decided to grant them faith in the message of "Christ crucified" upon this particular occasion. If so, one should glory in God in it all, in God's good pleasure to be graciously granting faith, and not taint such a marvelous occasion with an abundance of boastful imaginings about "having done one's part" by going forward at the altar call.

HERALDING "CHRIST CRUCIFIED"

The message of Christ crucified was a snare to the Jews (1 Cor.1:23). It by no means met their approval that God's Anointed should fail to remove the Roman yoke of bondage which lay so heavily upon the people. And that He should suffer and die, stumbled them altogether (1 Pet.2:8). To the Greeks, in their perpetual quest for "wisdom" and their fondness of intellectual splendor, the heralding of Christ crucified was extremely stupid (1 Cor.1:23), for to them our Lord was merely a dead man hanging on a cross. He was not what men expected the Christ to be. Such a One as He was not acceptable to them, for He did not meet their preconceived standards.

Similarly, that our present salvation in Christ and resultant eonian life and glory should be entirely a

gracious gift, and therefore a blessing which is given only to those of God's own choosing, is an altogether unacceptable concept to the great majority of those who are naming the name of the Lord. It is not what they expected the gospel to be. In their conceit, many consider it very significant insofar as truth is concerned that they should disapprove of it.

Nevertheless, the evangel of our salvation is that Christ died for our sins, was entombed and roused the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor.15:3,4); that, in God's reckoning, we were crucified together with Christ, and died together with Him (Rom.6:3,8). The evangel reveals to us that before the disruption of the world, in accord with His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace, God had already chosen us in Christ, to be holy and flawless in His sight, and designated us beforehand for the place of a Son for Him through Christ Jesus (Eph.1:3-6).

A HOLY CALLING

How wonderful it is to know that God saves us and calls us with a *holy* calling. It is a calling to which we are consecrated or devoted; and, it is a calling which is to be distinguished from other callings in which requirements are a factor, for we are saved and called *not* in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own *purpose* and the *grace* which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian (2 Tim.1:9). What good news this is!

We are called according to the purpose that, those whom God foreknew, He designated beforehand also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now the truth is, those whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also (Rom.

8:29,30). This is God's message of grace to us, we who are His *chosen* ones, according to Paul's evangel (Rom.8:32,33; 16:25).

Therefore, evangelization is not to be conceived as an offer of how one may qualify for glory and escape wrath, for it is not an offer at all. Instead, it is simply an announcement, a heralding of these great truths which constitute the evangel of our salvation. *They are all fully true entirely apart from our faith in them and acceptance of them.*

OUR FATHER, ABRAHAM

In this connection, let us consider the particulars concerning Abraham, "who is father of us all" (Rom. 4:17a), which are pertinent to this discussion: God had already chosen Abraham before He made Himself known to him, and had already decided as well just what He would do for him and through him. He *informed* him of His plans: "A father of many nations *have I appointed you*" (Rom.4:17; Gen.17:5); "Thus *shall be your seed*" (Rom.4:18; Gen.15:5); "At 'this season' *I shall come 'and there will be for Sarah a son'*" (Rom.9:9; Gen.18:10).

When Abraham believed God's declarations concerning himself (Gen.15:6), he did not make them true, nor did he thus qualify himself to be the object of His promises (Rom.4:16-22). Instead, he simply faced the truth, and believed it of the God Who is vivifying the dead and calling what is not as if it were (Rom. 4:17). The word of God was already sure. Therefore, it was quite impossible for Abraham ever to disqualify himself for that which God had already decided, and promised, to give him. This was so even though, in Abraham's case, unlike our own, it was also true that God granted the blessing to Abraham because of his obedience (Gen.22:18; 26:5).

As it turned out, Abraham's blessing, in itself, was granted as a reward or in response to essential obedience. There was nothing comprised in God's initial promises which precluded the possibility of subsequent essential obedience. The promise only spoke of the *certainty* of the blessing. Yet that was a great deal of which to speak.

Abraham was not told that he would be blessed "if . . .," much less that he would be blessed if he did certain things by means of a "free will." Instead, Abraham was simply told that he *would* be blessed. Period. It is evident, then, that Abraham's obedience itself was the product of God's grace. Abraham's obedience could not *not* occur, for while his obedience was essential, the promise had already been made.

Even though it is obvious that Abraham's obedience was *essential* (since the immediate [or proximate] cause of the granting of the blessing was his obedience), it is just as obvious that the *futurity* of his obedience was *certain* long before it ever occurred. Therefore, Abraham's obedience itself was ultimately because of God's gracious operations.

As in all other matters in which human obedience is essential, Abraham's obedience, though it was *through* works, was *out of* grace. "God has *graciously granted* [the allotment] to Abraham *through the promise*" (Gal. 3:18). "Therefore it is of faith *that it may accord with grace*" (Rom.4:16).

Abraham's faith gave him conviction and expectation; it afforded him assurance. God had already determined what He would bring to pass with regard to Abraham and his seed prior to the time in which He revealed this to Abraham, and quite apart from any of his own opinions in the matter. Indeed, if he had failed to believe God's word to him (while it is true that he thereby would have lost all the power

and joy of faith), he still would not have nullified God's promises. As Paul says, "For what if some disbelieve? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? May it not be coming to that!" (Rom.3:3,4). The same would be true in our case, were we to disbelieve. In fact, beyond the message that Christ died for their sins and rose again, most of those classified as believers seem to be full of unbelief concerning the evangel of their salvation. Yet its glorious message remains true on their behalf.

According to His will, God graciously grants at least a small measure of faith concerning the work of Christ and His victory over death to all who are His (*cf* 1 Cor.15:10,11; 1 Thess.4:14; Rom.12:3). But whatever faith each one may have as a result does not make the evangel of his salvation *become* applicable to him, for it was *already* applicable to him long before he was born, and certainly long before he first believed. One may possess great riches of which he is ignorant. As with the slaves during the American Civil War who heard and believed the news of their emancipation, we do not make the gospel of our salvation true by believing it. When we believe, we only enter into a realization and appreciation of what is already true.

THE EVANGEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION

In the evangel of the Circumcision (Gal.2:7), the privilege of life in the terrestrial kingdom in the coming eon is a reward for obedience, and God is a Rewarder therein. It is neither a gracious gift nor an unmerited provision. While it is quite true that the obedience of the elect in Christ under the evangel of the Circumcision is *due* solely to the grace of God, that is another matter.

Under the Circumcision evangel, it is only those who are *worthy* to happen upon that eon and the res-

urrection from among the dead (Luke 20:35), who will be requited, or repaid, with the consummation of their faith, the salvation of their souls (1 Pet.1:9). On the other hand, the lawless will be requited with the wages of injustice (2 Pet.2:13). Even those who once fled from the defilements of the world by a recognition of Christ, would find their last state worse than the first if they should again be involved in these defilements. It were better for them not to have recognized the way of righteousness, than, recognizing it, to go back to what was behind, from the holy *precept* given over to them (2 Pet.2:20,21). In all such cases, because of one's having disqualified himself for eonian life, such a course can only lead to eonian death (Heb.6:4-8).

Personal righteousness is a prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of the heavens (Matt.5:17-20). The workers of lawlessness will be told to depart; only the one who *does* God's will will enter into life and remain for the eon (Matt.7:21-23; 1 John 2:17). In that calling the Lord's counsel, even to the disciples, was, "If your hand should ever be snaring you, strike it off. It is ideal for you to be entering into life maimed, rather than, having two hands, to come away into Gehenna, into the unextinguished fire" (Mark 9:43).

The "wreath of life" is given to the Circumcision believers who endure trial and become *qualified* (James 1:1,12). In essence, the Lord informs them, "Become *faithful* unto death, and I shall be giving you the wreath of life" (Rev.2:10). For them, life in the coming eon is a matter of qualification and faithfulness. There is an abundance of testimony concerning those of the Circumcision, all of which is to this same end, throughout the Greek scriptures. And this evangel, in which righteous works are essential to future life, is everywhere true—*except* within the epistles of Paul, in his

presentation of the evangel of the *Uncircumcision*, the evangel which is for the members of Christ's body.

In Paul's evangel, with respect to one's being justified in Christ and receiving of eonian life, personal righteousness has no place at all, and is to be deemed as refuse (Phil.3:7-9). In his evangel of grace, insofar as life eonian is concerned, "where sin increases, grace superexceeds" (Rom.5:20,21). *This is not true under the evangel of the Circumcision.* But it is true according to Paul's evangel for the nations, the evangel of the Uncircumcision (Gal.2:7).

REQUIREMENT, REQUITAL, AND REWARD

We need to understand just what it is that constitutes one a merchant, employer or rewarder. Then, if we should find that God exhibits these characteristics with respect to our salvation in Christ, we should freely acknowledge that He is such a one, and not a dispenser of gracious gratuities.

It is a deception to reject or deny terminology which describes one's true position in an accurate way and to claim to believe the scriptural words of the evangel, when, in fact, this is not the case. We do not change the nature of our position by giving it a name which describes something else.

Men will be rewarded, or compensated, for their work, for the deeds that they do (Heb.10:35; Col.3:24). The same is true concerning one's pay or wages: "Lo! I am coming swiftly, and My wage is with Me, to pay each one as his work is" (Rev.22:12). Wages are given to the *worker*; they are a *debt* owed to him, not a gracious gift or favor (Rom.4:4). For ourselves, our own practices, both good and bad, will "fetch" (*komizō*, *FETCH*) their own "requital," or repayment (2 Cor. 5:10; Eph.6:8).

An employer *requires* that his employee do certain

work in order to receive his pay. A rewarder only grants his reward to one who *qualifies* himself for it by meeting the conditions of the offer. The idea is that of an *exchange*: this *for* that. One who meets the conditions or stipulations attending such an agreement *obligates* the one making the offer to give it to him *in return*.

By definition, such a relationship between two parties is that of a contract or covenant. The essential element in all such relationships is that the first party *requires* the second party to do or furnish to him something which upon receipt, obligates the first party to reciprocate, and thus "meet his part of the bargain." A merchant will say to a customer, "In return for your money, I will give you my goods"; or, "Except you give me your money, I will not give you my goods." It is merely incidental that the merchant's requirement, in this example, is that of money. For it is not the nature of his requirements that makes him a merchant, but the sheer fact that he imposes requirements upon the dispensing of his goods and will not give them out unless the requirements are met.

There is nothing intrinsically dishonorable as to one's being a merchant. But if anyone, *according to his own policies*, is indeed a merchant, neither he, nor we, should try to deny that this is so.

It must be understood that in all such instances as we have illustrated, one *does* act as a merchant (or, as an employer or rewarder), and not at all as a dispenser of gracious gifts. Such a one by no means gives his goods away gratuitously; for he insists that all who would *acquire* them meet the established conditions.

FAITH MAKES THE EVANGEL KNOWN

Therefore, it is not at all proper to attempt to represent God in our salvation even like a man who pres-

ents a gift (such as a valuable watch) to an associate for his acceptance. In this example it is only true merely in the nature of the case that if the man would enjoy his benefactor's gift he must accept it. For the benefactor does not at all *require* the man to accept it, nor does he promise to kill him if he should fail to do so! And yet it is insisted that God does require our acceptance of His supposed offer, and that He will at least kill us for a time, if not torment us in fire for all eternity, if we should fail to accept it.

Besides, in this matter of the evangel of our salvation—unlike in the example of the watch—our being endowed with its graces does not even involve our acceptance of the message. *For Christ died for our sins whether we think so or not.* In God's sight, we died to sin when He died for our sakes, even if we should deny this. *And*, the fact is, God long ago had already chosen those of us who are now in Christ, according to His pre-eonian grace and purpose, designating us beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son, having set His hand to call us, justify us, and glorify us, all in His time.

This is the evangel of our salvation—whether we think so or not! If we are believers at all, we are included, but not because we believe. Our faith affords us assurance of our salvation *in Christ*; it makes the truth known to us. Indeed our being saved out of unbelief is in itself a great saving work of God (*cf* Eph.1: 19,20; *cp* Col.1:13).

The evangel of our salvation (*cf* Eph.1:13) is fully true in itself, entirely apart from whether we believe all of it, some of it, or none of it. So let us stop all our ill-disguised proud boastings as to how it is that we, unlike other men, have been good enough to "accept Christ," and thus have saved ourselves from wrath while obligating God to bless us. Such concepts are

present, whether expressed or not, whenever salvation is conceived in a conditional way, whenever such "steps" are believed finally to occur because of man's actions rather than God's.

Such inner pride—though in most cases also exhibiting itself outwardly—may well pass for humility, but only among those of a similar disposition. However pleasantly it may be manifested, it is still a boasting in man, for it adds to the work of Christ. Consequently, the advocates of all such views are following a course that is destructive to faithful service in the Lord, and one's appreciation of the truth of the evangel. For, however unintentionally, in denying the full significance and purpose of the cross of Christ, they have thus become its enemies (Phil.3:19; *cp* Gal.5:11b).

"Now I am *making known* to you, brethren, the evangel which I bring to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are [being] saved, if you are retaining what I said in bringing the evangel to you, outside and except you believe feignedly" (1 Cor.15:1,2). Paul made the evangel *known*—the evangel that Christ died for our sins, was entombed, and that He has now been roused! If we are retaining this evangel in unfeigned faith, being attentive to it, then it is having some measure of practical saving influence upon us, cleansing and keeping us in many ways.

Yet if the evangel's significance has become clouded to us through a mistaken belief that it is finally by our own obedience—the cross of Christ notwithstanding—that we fend off God's indignation, we will lose much precious truth of great practical value. This is because, with such an outlook, our life of faith will necessarily become self-centered, instead of Christ-centered.

We enjoy mercy simply because we are *vessels* of

mercy (Rom.9:23). Others, who will eventually enjoy God's mercy themselves (Rom.11:32), will first of all receive His indignation simply because they are *vessels* of indignation (Rom.9:22). It is just this simple. To all objectors, we can only reply with the apostle, "O man! who are you, to be sure, who are answering again to God? That which is molded will not protest to the molder, 'Why do you make me thus?' Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor?" (Rom.9:20,21).

Now God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes. *Much rather, then, being now justified in His blood, we shall be saved from indignation, through Him* (Rom.5:8,9).

May our God and Father give us grace not only to be invoking (calling *upon*, or petitioning) the Lord out of a clean heart (2 Tim.2:22), but to be correctly cutting the word of truth (2 Tim.2:15), heralding the evangel of His grace to the honor of His name.

James Coram



Grateful am I to Him Who invigorates me, Christ Jesus, our Lord, for He deems me faithful, assigning me a service, I, who formerly was a calumniator and a persecutor and an outrager: but I was shown mercy, seeing that I do it being ignorant, in unbelief. Yet the grace of our Lord overwhelms, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all welcome, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, foremost of whom am I. But therefore was I shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ should be displaying all His patience, for a pattern of those who are about to be believing on Him for life eonian. (1 Tim.1:12-16)

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