***The Benediction, No. 5
RO205-05***

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Romans 16:20b through 27, the end of the Book of Romans. Our subject is the Benediction, Segment Number 5.

**What Links Christ to a Lost Sinner?**

Religious people who profess Christianity are generally in agreement on 2 principles. First of all, they agree that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty of death for the sins of mankind and thereby to satisfy the justice of God against sinners. They are also in agreement on the fact that by birth human beings are under the cloud of eternal death, condemned to eternal sufferings in the Lake of Fire because they are born as lost sinners. The area of disagreement, however, is the question of what links the payment of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world to the lost sinner for his salvation. What is the link? The human viewpoint link is always some form of human works to make oneself worthy of receiving the benefit of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. When people sit down and think, how will I benefit from what Christ has done as Savior of the world to cover my doomed condition, human reason always says, "Make yourself worthy. Mormons have no hesitancy of using that very term. They tell you that it is up to you to prove yourself worthy of eternal life if you expect to have it. Therefore, they zero in on the link, which is a works connection. These human works are in the form of good deeds or religious rituals like water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This non-Biblical link of human works, however, can never join the lost sinner to the payment made by Christ on the cross. Human Works is not the link. Satan has cleverly not tried to deny the atonement which has been provided by Jesus Christ nor the sinful, doomed condition of man. When you talk to people, it kind of surprises you. You talk to a Roman Catholic and he'll say, 'oh yes, of course, Christ died for our sin. He is our Savior.' You talk to a Roman Catholic, and he'll say, 'yes, we are doomed, we're under the wrath of God, we're going to hell.' They admit both of these things. Satan, of course, has been very wise not to try to deny that, not to try to get people to dismiss that. People know that that is true. What Satan has done instead is to deceive people on how God links the 2 together for the eternal salvation of the sinner. That's where you discover that a Roman Catholic who sounds like he knows what the problems are does not understand what the link is. The connection to him is works and the administrations of his church. Satan has successfully then led humanity to believe that human works are the means, both of linking up with salvation and of keeping it. Whole religious denominations teach this human works connection, and thereby they take their devotees into Hell.

**Believe**

The Bible, of course, makes it very clear that the link between Christ and the sinner is trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. It is an act of faith. It is an act of believing the gospel. That is the true link. All of us know John 3:16. John 3:16 very clearly, very definitively spells out the link for you. Jesus said this to Nicodemus, He said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life;" believing that Christ has indeed covered his sin, believing that Christ will take him into heaven if he depends upon the Savior to do so. It's just that simple. The sinner who does no more than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved permanently, and he will go to Heaven. The sinner who tries to add, however, his own merit of good works, to the merit of Christ will remain lost and go to the Lake of Fire. For some people, that is a very challenging and kind of a statement that they resent: to be told that they can believe that Christ died for them, they can believe that they are sinners, they can believe that He died to cover their sins, but if they add their human works, if they add their water baptism, their Lord's Supper, their penance, their whatever, God has been denied the ground of grace and He cannot save them. And we regularly have people in our services who, when they hear that kind of a distinct separation of human effort from God's provision, you can see the steam coming out of their ears as they're indignant and enraged inside because they're part of a denomination that is told that no water baptism, no salvation, no going to the mass, no eternal life. The Bible makes it clear the connecting link is the merit of Christ alone. God must give a lost sinner salvation as a free gift, or God cannot give it to you at all. That's what we call Free grace salvation.

By the way, to be sincerely wrong on the link between Christ and the sinner makes no difference when you stand at the Great White Throne Judgment to hear yourself condemned to the Lake of Fire. This is the other defense. This is the other cover. Many of you have told me how your relatives like to say, 'well, what you do in trusting in Christ only for your salvation will get you into Heaven. We are going to get there even more so because we serve Him with good works and with good morality. We have even a better basis for going to Heaven.' Do you see how clever Satan is? What he has done is gotten these people to believe a lie! That very thing of adding to what Christ has done, has neutralized what Christ has done, and is going to take them into the Lake of Fire. So, pity your relatives who think that they can add something to the work of Christ with impunity. You cannot. It'll cost you your soul.

Christians which teach a salvation plan based on the work of Christ and the work of the sinner, are false teachers, and they deny Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church claims the prerogative of sending people to Heaven or Hell, but they lie and telling in you that. There is no earthly human agency which has the authority to determine one's eternal destiny. The Mormons say that Joseph Smith will be sitting at the right hand of Jesus Christ and when you come before him, Joseph Smith must approve your entrance into Heaven or Jesus will not let you in. They lie as well. No earthly human agency or person has the authority to determine your eternal destiny. Believing the gospel of the grace of God, which provides salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, that alone determines your destiny. Satan has confused the length of faith in Christ by causing even true believers to use pop Christianity expressions to describe the link. The description of this link is believe. That's what the link is. Everywhere in Scripture, as you already know, we've gone over this in some detail in recent weeks.

The connection is believing the gospel and trusting thereby in Christ for salvation. But how many preachers do you hear using pop Christianity expressions like 'invite Jesus into your life,' 'invite Jesus Christ into your heart?' Bob Larson, that many of you listen to on radio, has an excellent radio ministry and is generally very sound. But regularly he fails to clarify the link of salvation as believing. He likes to use these terms of inviting Jesus Christ into your heart. Last week, as I listened to a portion of his program, I thought I recognized the voice of our Bob Evans calling in. I later found that indeed it was he. He called in and he raised the question to Bob Larson, 'what he meant by inviting Jesus into your heart. How do you get him into your heart? What do you do, how do you put him in there?' And he just raised the question in a variety of ways. Well, Larson really got abusive. He got hot under the collar immediately. He claimed 'that people, of course, knew what he meant, that he didn't mean sticking Jesus into the left ventricle of your heart, your physical heart.' He said 'what I mean?' And then he gave a confusing philosophical discussion and the definition of putting him into the innermost consciousness in the resources of your being, the recesses of your inner being. I understood that, I went back to putting him into your heart. I understood that better than I understood his philosophical discussion after he got through defining it.

Well, Mr. Evans said, well, what about John 3:16? It's key word about believe. That really made Larson mad. This guy has the audacity to start bringing Bible words into this discussion about how to get to Heaven. Larson did not take up the question of John 3:16. He didn't touch it at all. Instead, he told Evans that he was just antagonistic to Christianity. Mr. Evans says, "Well, how do you know I'm not a born again Christian?" And then he asked, "And what about John 3:16?" He pushed it again. And Larson once more did not touch John 3:16 because that verse has in it the word "believe." You don't tell people that they get to Heaven by believing the gospel. You don't tell them if you're de rigueur and smooth, a real world traveler, a guy who's been around, you don't just say 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' That's all right for some hick town preacher like the apostle Paul who can't stay out of jail to say something like that. But when you're de rigueur and up around and you're a guy who knows things, you use pop Christianity terms. You're cool... invite them into your heart, invite them into your life, and all the other phrases that go with it. Well, Larson did not pick up the issue of John 3:16 and its focus on believing as the link into eternal life, a statement which clarifies for every human being, you what it means to believe or not believe something.

But these other phrases, you don't know what those mean or how you can do that. So, Larson completed when Bob asked him, 'How do you know I'm not a born again believer?' Larson concluded with indignation that Evans was not a Christian but a pig, and he clicked the phone off. I don't know whether that's true about Bob Evans or not, but he is right on John 3:16. And you see that here is a preacher on radio who has vast influence and needless to say, vast financial resources pouring in. And that the critical point of everything he's doing, is to give the connecting link between the death of Christ and the sinners doomed condition. What does he do? He fouls it up every single time. It is amazing how people hate, even in Christian circles, the Biblical word "believe." Scores of times each week, sinners seeking salvation are directed by Bob Larson to a confusing link or, as he loves to do, ask people to repeat a prayer after him, and that brings them into salvation. Yes, some people through that approach are saved in spite of his non-biblical explanation. But most people are very confused by it and I suspect are left outside of the family of God.

Why such antagonism toward the word believe? The apostle Paul wrote this whole book of Romans to clarify this link between what Christ did on the cross and the lost sinner’s condition. Paul reiterated again and again that the link is faith, believing in Christ, trusting in Jesus Christ alone to receive salvation as a gift from God. Born again spiritually is a permanent condition of salvation for the very fact that it's entirely the work of God. You are born again into the family of God, and you can never be unborn out of it because you didn't have anything to do with it. It's a work of God alone. Therefore, there is no human contamination that is involved. Nothing that we do can reverse the work of God.

**No Other Way**

So those who seek salvation on any other way than God's way will never be saved. God's way is no secret. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [salvation] not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Then in Romans 11:6 we also learned that to add anything to that grace basis is to neutralize that grace basis. Romans 11:6 says, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." That is a chilling verse. If salvation is by grace, it cannot be on the basis of works, even a little bit of works, otherwise, grace is no longer grace." A little bit of works removes all the grace basis.

**The Age of Grace Revealed**

The gospel of the grace of God, we have found is a part of a larger revelation to the apostle Paul on the Church Age, the Age of Grace. The Church of Grace was a well-kept secret in the Old Testament. God's plan for the Church of Jesus Christ was finally revealed to the New Testament prophets by the Holy Spirit. The marvelous plan of Free grace salvation in the Church Age was a creation of the mind of God, and He kept it a secret to Himself until it was revealed to the New Testament apostles and particularly to the apostle Paul. So, this morning in Romans 16:26, the apostle Paul says, "But now is manifested. In it we have this little word "now." It looks like this in the Greek Bible "nun" n u n. This word is an important word because it indicates a strong emphasis on the contrast between God's past silence about the Church Age truths and the current revelation of them: the contrast between the Old Testament Scriptures, which were totally silent about the Church and the New Testament revelation, which reveals everything about it.

The same contrast is indicated in Ephesians 3:5 where Paul says, "which" referring to the mystery of the church, "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." And the word "as it has now been revealed" is not a comparison word here in the Greek Bible, it is not as if it was partly revealed a little bit in the Old Testament, but now, in contrast, it is really revealed in the New Testament, that isn't what it means. It means, as we know from other scripture, simply that it is a defining word, it is a dividing word. It was the church was never revealed in Old Testament Scriptures as it is now being revealed in New Testament Scriptures. Colossians 1:26 helps clarify that, where the apostle Paul says, "that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints." So, you see, this helps us to understand that the IS is not telling us in the previous verse that it was partially revealed, but now fully revealed, Colossians 1:26 shows it was never revealed.

What has been done is something has been manifested. The Greek word looks like this, "phaneroo," p h a n e r o o. The word "phaneroo" means "to proclaim or to publish something." God's secret about the church is what is in view here. At a certain point in time, that is that the First Coming of Jesus Christ, the truth about the Church was finally made known. It refers specifically here to the Ministry of the Holy Spirit who revealed Church Age truth to the apostles. Please turn to Ephesians 3:1-10 where the apostle Paul talks about the Church as a mystery. I stress this to you because all of the confusion that is involved in Christianity today, where you have priests and altars and Old Testament type of system of religious activity, it all is a confusion because people do not understand that the Church has nothing to do with the Jew. The Church has nothing to do with Judaism, with Israel as a nation. The Church is a totally new work of God made up of Jews and Gentiles. You cannot go back to the Old Testament for any information about the Church. But now the Holy Spirit reveals all this to the apostles of the New Testament.

Ephesians 3, notice verse one. Ephesians 3:1, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles- if indeed..." And by the way, Paul starts off in verse one to make a sentence and then he stops. He gets to the middle of a sentence and maybe in your Bible you see that dash there, because right as he begins writing this sentence, which he doesn't complete until he gets down to about verse 14, he picks it up again, something is brought to his mind by the Holy Spirit in the form of clarification. So, he says, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles- [By the way, and he goes on in verse two,] if indeed you heard of the stewardship [or the dispensation] of God's grace, which was given to me for you." Paul was the administrator of God's grace to the Gentiles, he was their special apostle. Then verses 3-4, "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. [He's referring to the mystery of the Church.] And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight to the mystery of Christ." The divine secret of the Church was not discovered by Paul, but revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Verse 5, "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it now has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." The Church doctrine totally unknown in the Old Testament prophets, but revealed to New Testament apostles and prophets. Verse 6, "to be specific, [Here's the mystery. Here's the secret!] that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." It was unthinkable in Old Testament times that Gentiles could ever be joined with Jews in any kind of a spiritual relationship, any kind of a spiritual work of God, and here to say that Jews and Gentile believers are now in one body so that they are fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers of Christ Jesus.

Verses 7-8, "of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." The apostle Paul says, "I, who was once an adamant enemy of Christians, of all things, I have been made the channel of the information concerning the great and marvelous grace of God, the era of the Church. Verse 9, "and to bring light what is the administration [or the dispensation] of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things." Paul was the one primarily who brought to light the secrets about the church, which God had kept hidden. Verse 10, "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places." This marvelous new relationship of a unique body of believers who would form the royalty of all ages, they would be known as the Royal Family of God, the Church. This relationship was not only not known by Old Testament people, but of all things, he said, the rulers and the authorities in heavenly places didn't know about them. The angels didn't know anything about them. The loyal angels didn't know that God was going to do this. The demon angels didn't know he was going to do this. You can imagine the thrill that the loyal angels had when they discovered this great program of God.

**Access to the Living God**

Verse 11, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Church was God's secret plan from eternity past. Now He is carrying it out. Then verse 12, "in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." The result of all this is that you Christians have the right at any moment, boldly and confidently, to approach God the Father in prayer. Whatever the need, whatever the circumstance, you, a born again sinner, can walk up before a holy God who cannot tolerate any evil in His presence. You can speak to Him person to person. You do not have a priest that you have to go through. Certainly you don't approach Him through some saint like Mary, the Virgin Mary, or anyone else. You, because of this great work of God, have that kind of access to the living God.

**Not Just Writing, But Revelation!**

And so Paul says, in Romans 16:26, now in his day is made known this great secret. Then he says, "By the Scriptures of the Prophets." The word "Scriptures" here is really the Greek word "graphe." This is not a good translation. The Greek word "graphe," that means "a writing." Then the word "prophets" is the word the prophetikos, p r o p h e t i k o s. That isn't the word for prophet. It's the word for prophetic. It's an adjective. So, what this is saying is the prophetic writings. You can understand that as "the writings of the prophets," but it is important to understand that he is not talking about Old Testament prophets. The prophetic writings are the writings of the prophets in the Scripture, which contain the information about the church mystery. Since the Old Testament did not contain this information, he is obviously referring to the prophetic writings of the New Testament. Paul received Holy Spirit revelation about the church. He recorded it in his letters and this information has now been made available to all of us. When we use the word revelation, we do not mean illumination of something already written. "Revelation" means "new information," and the prophets receive new information, so you see the ridiculousness of the charismatics who today stand up and they claim that they have a prophecy from God. When they use the word prophecy, they're saying God has given me some new information, a new revelation. And God is not giving us new information, new revelations; the prophetic writings are already completed. This revelation means spiritual information from God. It was brand new. If you read through the 2 chapters of Acts 10-11, you will see how hard it was for the apostle Peter to believe that a Gentile was going to be part of the Church of Christ. He could not believe the Gentiles were also in the body of Christ.

Paul says, "This information, which has been revealed about the Church, has been recorded in the prophetic Scriptures "according to the commandment of the eternal God." God gave a commandment about this record, this New Testament record. I have to tell you about this word "commandment." I have to show you this in the Greek word; the word commandment is "epitage," e p i t a g e. There are several words for commandments in the Bible. This word is not the word that is used when you talk about a commandment like the Ten Commandments; that word is the Greek word "entole," e n t o l e, a distinctively different word. You'll find that, for example, in Matthew 5:19 where it is referring to moral commandments. But this commandment that Paul speaks of here, "according to the commandment of the eternal God," is made up of 2 words. The first part of the word "epi" is a preposition, which means "upon." The last, "tage" comes from the verb "tasso," which means "to order." So, what this word is, "to order upon" or "to give an order." This is a military term. What he is saying is that here is a military order given by the eternal God, the sovereign God. He has ordered that the revelation of the mystery of the Church now be made public knowledge.

Isn't it amazing that one of the most confusing doctrines in the Christian community today is the Doctrine of the Grace Age of the Church, all mixed up with Old Testament legalisms, people who cannot understand how it is to live your life as your own priest, in privacy before the living God, to whom you alone must account for what you do with your life. Churches cannot conceive of not putting pressures on people in one way or another to make them do right, instead of teaching them what it is to be led by the indwelling Holy Spirit and the principles of doctrine and that they are free to do right or free to do wrong. See, that's what freedom means. Freedom means the privilege to fail as well as a privilege to succeed. This is what the Eastern European countries are going to have to learn following their communism. They have not understood the principle of freedom. They been all reared with the concept that you cannot fail. You cannot be in want. You cannot lack food. You must not lack clothing. You must not lack shelter. You must not in any way fail to possess something that you really need or should have. So, we're going to put you in this beehive. You are all going to be taken care of, but you do the job in the hive that we tell you to do and you stay within the parameters that we outlined for you in the hive. You do not have freedom. You have security, but you do not have freedom.

**Commanded to Make Grace Known**

Now here, God has said 'here is the freedom of the grace of God, the age of personal liberty, as human beings have never known this before.' You know what goes on in churches? You know what people how people think about dealing with God. You know, how people like to buck their noses into other people's lives. You understand how shocking it is to think that I can live my life before God as my own priest. Yes, I might tell you that you're doing something wrong. I might tell you that you are wasting your life. I might tell you that you might want to reconsider what you think your future is. But having said that and having alerted you and having cautioned you as one Christian to another, what you do about it is your own business. No one has the right to impose authority over you. Here, the living God uses a word that is a military term, and God, as it is, is saying 'now here Me well. This is an order people. I want you to proclaim the Age of Grace.' That's what churches are supposed to do. That's what Christians are supposed to be aware of. The commission, the great commission of Matthew 28:19 is an expression of this order to make known Grace Age Salvation. This is from the eternal God, the God who has no beginning and no ending. The orders to reveal the church secrets come from the living creator God. This is not the edict of some church organization or denomination. God really wants sinners to be saved and to go to Heaven, and He has made the necessary information available so they can do that.

But what happens? People come with pop Christianity expressions about how to be saved, so they plow up the water. People come up with the concept that they have to deserve by how good they are, how they live, whether they're going to go to Heaven or not. They deny the eternal God a grace basis for their salvation.

So, you see, you people are very important in the program of God. You're among the few on the face of the earth who perhaps understand grace orientation so that you can direct people indeed toward a concept of eternal life that really will gain eternal life for them. Yes, you're going to find people very resentful when you tell them that. People are going to get all up in arms and become indignant because their religious background has told them something else. Unless your information comes from the Word of God, you're not speaking for God. You may be speaking for your denomination. You may be speaking for your pope. You may be speaking for Joseph Smith. You may be speaking for your structure of church authorities and hierarchies, but you're not speaking for God if it doesn't come from Scripture.

**Ambassadors of the Eternal Living God**

Paul has received a manifestation concerning the secret of the church. And in the form of written Scriptures of the New Testament prophets, on the basis of an order from the eternal living God, this information has now been made known to all nations. This word "made known" looks like this in the Greek Bible, "gnorizo," g n o r i z o. This is a word for "proclaiming information." At some point in time when you speak to a lost person, you make known grace salvation principles to that person. This information sits there. It has to be made known by you. It cannot be made known by itself on its own. It proclaims the information that is now in New Testament Scriptures. The apostles of the New Testament were God's missionaries publishing the revelation of Church Age doctrine. For that reason, we Christians today who now possess this information are the ambassadors of the eternal living God.

And you should not take that lightly. 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." That's what we're doing. We're asking people to get lined up with God's standard of absolute righteousness. That's what reconciled means. We're pleading with you as representatives of the eternal God who have the information that will get you into Heaven if you will act upon it. And you make the decisions: you either think that we grace Christians don't know what we're talking about, and you ignore it and you do it your own way by works, and you'll have all eternity to regret your choice.

We Christians are also the vanguard of those, remember, who will rule the millennial world under Jesus Christ. Today, Saddam Hussein is bringing us closer and closer to our Coronation Day. For all we know, he may tip the scale and propel us into the final days, the return of our Lord and the Millennial Kingdom. You should be aware of the fact that as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, you're not going to be disfranchised: you're not going to have your portfolio removed when the millennium begins, you're going to be continuing in that role.

There is, of course, no greater calling, no greater honor on earth than to fulfill the mission of informing sinners on how to be saved God's way, particularly in the face of so much rebellion and so much misconception. Acts 17:24-27, Paul says, "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and boundaries of habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." Yes, people are groping for God, and that's why they look to the Virgin Mary. People are groping for God and that's why they look to the pope and his church. People are groping for God and that's why they look to their own good works and their merits. The only way that they're not going to grope themselves right into Hell is if you ambassadors hand them an evangelism brochure, if you ambassadors drop a word and ask them to consider what the Bible has to say about getting into Heaven. Those that He has prepared, I guarantee you will pop up their antennas and their receiving units will turn on and they will look to you and they will pursue the information with you.

Some of you have been telling me recently some of your experiences along that line. You know what I'm talking about. When God has led you to a prepared person and you open the door as His ambassador, they listen. Jesus Christ, who is now ready to be the lost sinner's Savior from Hell, will, if you reject Him, become your judge and send you into the Lake of Fire. In Acts 17:30-31 Paul says, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, [and you repent by believing the gospel, means you change your mind] because He has fixed the day in which He will judge the world and righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, [the Lord Jesus Christ,] having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." It is the Lord Jesus Christ that all of the Muslim world rejects. So, all of the Muslim world goes into Hell. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who in fact, all of the Catholic world rejects and instead substitutes the access through Mary and through the works of the church. They are going to be in the Lake of Fire. All of the access by human effort is going to take people into that lake.

God is perfect. His plan to free grace salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to go. God's ambassadors, you and I, must make it clear, perfectly clear, that the natural attitude of people to approach God by their works is a fatal error. You cannot appease a holy God's wrath by your efforts. When you tell that to people, they will resent it. I had some here last Sunday morning and their ears were steaming and their indignation because they were trusting Jesus Christ and their water baptism as the link to take them in. They don't like to be told that they're not going to make it. But I'd rather that in Hell they remember that day they sat here and heard the caution and the warning that adding to the work of Christ denies God the grace basis of saving you. At least they can say to themselves, I wish I had listened. How could I have missed it? Why did I not pay attention? Rather to say, why did that preacher make us laugh, tell us cute stories, entertain us and not alert me to my danger? You must answer the same question. Whether you're going to be a nice sociable person or a courteous person who clarifies the issues of grace salvation.

**Made Known to All Nations**

"Has been made known to all nations leading to obedience of faith," All nations: this is the Greek word "ethnos," e t h n o s. And that's the word for Gentiles. The Old Testament revealed that salvation through the Jewish Messiah would be extended to the Gentiles. Abraham was told that in Genesis 12:3, reiterated in Genesis 22:18, and then in the New Testament, Paul points back to that promise to Abraham. Galatians 3:8-9 indicates that when Abraham was told that all the nations of the world are going to be blessed in you, Paul says, 'God was talking about free grace salvation.' The Gentiles as a group were in a hopeless spiritual condition until they became the beneficiaries of grace salvation and now they are the royal family of God in the Church Age. The Old Testament did not reveal the temporary removal of the Jewish nation from God's special blessing. The Jews didn't know that that was going to happen. But it is a temporary removal while God forms a new body of saints for Himself, the Church Age. But one day very soon, the Lord Jesus is going to return to this earth and He will then rule all nations as King of kings and Lord of Lords. We, the Church, will be His bride. We will reign with Him. At that time, all Gentile nations will be born again in the Millennial Kingdom and Revelation 11:15 that we looked at last Sunday will be fulfilled, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

**Faith**

The last part of Romans 16:26 summarizes the issue. God the Holy Spirit has made the revelation of the mystery of the Church Age and free grace salvation clear to Paul. This has been recorded in the written Scriptures of the New Testament. And by the command of the eternal God, this information has now been proclaimed through missionary effort to all nations of the world, "leading to," "why." This word indicates the purpose, the Greek preposition "eis," e i s. Unto what purpose, ... "to the obedience of faith." The subjection of faith, "pistis," p i s t i s, is the word that gets you into Heaven. This word faith means trust. So, at the end, the purpose of the revelation of the secret of the Church Age is obedience to God by faith in Jesus Christ as Savior by the vast realm of Gentile people. At the beginning of Romans in Romans 1:5, the apostle Paul declared this objective when he said, "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His namesake." Obedience to what? Free grace salvation, to the gospel, which is ignored by most Gentiles today. Religious people seek salvation by their works rather than by faith in God's work for them in Christ, trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation is an act of obedience to the eternal God, resulting in eternal life in Heaven.

The Holy Spirit will lead some lost sinners to believe your testimony when you proclaim it. Those who believe will be baptized by the Holy Spirit immediately into Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13. Those who believe in Christ the Savior and receive this free grace salvation will immediately be indwelt permanently by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, John 14:20. They will also be permanently indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:19. God's salvation is based on obedience to God's gospel proclamation, not to good works or religious rituals.

I could not help thinking of this verse as I stood in the great Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris a few weeks ago on the banks of the Seine River. As I walked in on a Sunday morning, packed with people from Paris, and from other parts of the world, and walked in on not just the mass, but on a high mass, and saw these people following obediently to the teachings of their church and waiting expectantly to be able to make a personal move toward salvation. I'd like to tell you what I saw, how I ended up in the confessional, and the sadness of seeing people who were counting on themselves instead of on the Lord Jesus Christ. All those I saw in that cathedral will also have another meeting someday with their priests and all in the Lake of Fire because they do not know the obedience of faith.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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