

The Epistles: Paul's Apostleship

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[0 : 00] I think I met Diana. She and Mike Wright were seniors in high school at Miami East, and they were dating at the time.

And I attended the school and taught a psychology class, a one-time thing, or maybe I taught twice during that week. And she and Mike Wright were in that class as a couple of seniors, and that's been a while ago.

And now they're in Mommy and Daddy three times. That is really something. Come to really appreciate them, too. Well, folks, I know that I have said this about every series that I have ever taught here at Grace, but you would be disappointed if I didn't say it about this one.

In many respects, this present series on progressive revelation in the Bible is the most important we have undertaken in our 16 years at Grace.

And that is especially true in the area of interpreting and applying the Bible to life. And who cares about that anyway? Well, only those people who are serious about their faith.

[1 : 13] To be concerned about understanding and applying this book, you've got to know certain basic things, or you won't even be concerned.

And what we are attempting to do is unfold to you the responsibilities that are incumbent upon you as a believer living in this day and age with the kind of accessibility that we have to the Scriptures in various versions and translations and helps and so on.

And I say all of that because this is why it's important. The time is going to come when you and I are going to be evaluated on the basis of the contents of this book.

We are going to be called into an account in light of the exposure that we have had to this record.

And granted, there are those who haven't had any exposure to it. They've lived in darkness for all their lives. They will be judged accordingly. And we will be judged accordingly. It is a sobering thought to me to realize that the time is going to come, as sure as I am standing here living and breathing, the time is going to come when I am going to stand before one to whom I will be asked to give an account.

[2 : 33] Well, Marv, what about it? What's that going to be like? You cannot do what you are supposed to do unless you are what you are supposed to be.

You cannot be what you are supposed to be if you have no idea what the standards are or what the requirements are or what the pattern is or anything else. You're just operating in the dark.

But God has provided us this word for the reason that we need not operate in the dark. Granted, it is a record which places us under great responsibility for which there will be, as I've said, an ultimate accounting.

But it also places us under tremendous opportunity. We want to be accountable and we want to be responsible and we want to take advantage of the opportunity.

It has been said many times over, and it's true each time you hear it, well, the Bible is subject to a lot of different interpretations.

[3 : 49] It means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. That's true. That doesn't mean it means a lot of different things, but it means that people regard it as meaning a lot of different things.

And I am amazed how it is that some people approach the Bible as they would no other book.

Granted, it is no other book. But there are similarities in which we need to approach it as we would any other book.

And by that I mean this. You cannot look at the Bible, see it teaching two different things that are apparently opposite one to the other, and take the conclusion that it really doesn't matter which one you go with.

Some people go with this one and some go with this one. And they're both right. That is an impossible kind of situation. And I realize that what I am bringing this down to, bottom line analysis, is this.

And I don't know how else to do it. We are going to arrive at a conclusion whereby I am going to have to say, this is it.

[5 : 03] And if you don't buy this, you're wrong. That's hard for me to say.

I don't want to appear opinionated, bigoted, narrow, intolerant. So I'm going to add something to it. This is the way it is in accordance with how I see it. Well, now, how else would you expect me to teach it?

What else can I do other than teach it the way I see it? But I want to add a disclaimer to that and say, now, the way I see it has no guaranteed infallibility behind it.

I am not an infallible preacher or teacher. If I thought of myself as being that, I'd have to find some excuse for all the mistakes that I've discovered, things that I've taught in the past that weren't so.

[6 : 11] So that argument goes right out the window. But what we are talking about today is a conclusion that I have already reached, and I am going to present to you, and I'm going to say, folks, this is the way it is to the best of my ability to understand it.

This is the way I perceive it. And what you're going to have to do when you walk out of here is say, well, that's the way I perceive it too. Or, that's not the way it comes across to me.

I think you're reading something into it, Mark. I don't think it says that. I think it means thus and so. Now, each of us is going to kind of be personally on trial in that we're going to have to make up our own minds.

I cannot teach the Word of God any other way than the way I understand it. I don't think you would want me to teach it any other way. So that's what we're going to do, and we're going to reach a conclusion that perhaps is somewhat, no, perhaps about it.

It is somewhat unorthodox. And yet, rather than be intimidated by what might appear to be novel, I'm just going to have to teach this in accordance with the way I see it and let the chips fall where we may.

[7 : 27] And that's what we're going to do. All right? We have noted an obvious progression or updating of doctrinal truth in the Old Testament and the Gospels, and there is no dispute there.

And then we have noted it in the Acts of the Apostles as well. We have seen that there are some absolutely undeniable things that must be treated. Now, nobody will give you any argument regarding the progression of doctrine from the Old Testament to the New.

All you have to do is just briefly remind people that in the Old Testament they practiced animal sacrifice. The bullocks and the rams and the goats, well, we're not into that today.

Nobody will argue that. Why aren't we? Well, those times are changed. We're in a different dispensation now, and we don't sacrifice animals because Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and he put an end to the need of all sacrifices.

So we know there is an obvious progression of revelation as to what God has required between the Old Testament and the New. No argument there.

[8 : 33] But when we come to the Gospels, we find a progression even within the Gospels, wherein our Lord said to the apostles, Go not to the Gentiles, neither to the Samaritans.

Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Confine yourself to them. But in the same Gospel, in Matthew chapter 28, as opposed to Matthew 10, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go, therefore, into all the world. Preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There can be no dispute.

The First Commission is limited. Don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Samaritans. In the same Gospel, he says, Go into all the world. And we noted another thing that is rather striking.

As the Acts open up, we discover the same basic commission. You shall be witnesses unto me, Jesus said, right before he ascended, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

[9 : 42] And he told them to go into all the world, beginning at Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth. But we note at a later chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, that when persecution, this is in chapter 8, when persecution arose in connection with the stoning of Stephen, all of the brethren were scattered throughout the whole region because things got too hot for them

in Jerusalem.

So everybody split. And the text says, Except the Apostles. We ask the question, What are they doing in Jerusalem?

They were told to go into all the world. What are they doing there? This is years later. They're still there in Jerusalem. That doesn't look like they're being very obedient. And we concluded that they are not being disobedient.

They are following the commission that the Lord gave them to proclaim the Gospel, baptizing and discipling in all the world, beginning at Jerusalem.

Then, the broader environment of Judea. Then, further yet, Samaria. Then, the uttermost parts of the earth. Problem is, they never met with adequate success in Jerusalem.

[11:00] And they never left Jerusalem. Now, I just cannot look at those things, look at those facts and dismiss them. I've got to walk with them and deal with them, and I've got to ask the questions, Why?

Why is this? What's going on here, anyway? It has to make sense to me. It has to gel. It has to fit. I cannot believe that the Word of God is put together in just some kind of disconnected, discombobulated way, where you just kind of reach in and pick out and helter-skelter and whatnot. There is continuity. There is flow. There is connection. And we've got to recognize that. And we've got to ask the right questions. And when I ask the right questions, sometimes the right answers are difficult to come by.

But the answers that I've come up with, I want to relate to you now. You are, by the way, encouraged to submit written questions that you may have that will challenge, that will disprove, or seek clarification or whatever with anything that I teach.

And you don't even have to sign it. You can just write out your questions, put them in the offering box. If you want to wait and ask them from the floor, you can. But you'll get an answer off the top of my head, and that might be all the more that it's worth, which usually isn't a whole lot.

[12:20] So if you want a better answer that is better thought out, let me have some time to think about it, and I'll promise to address your question. If you want to ask it from the floor, you take your chances, and what you get is what you get.

Okay? Today we want to note whether the pattern of progressive revelation that we have discussed is revealed in the epistles. And the logical place to look is in the books that follow the Acts.

We have noted that the Acts of the Apostles constitute a transition and a very strategic section of Scripture in that they form, the Acts forms a bridge from the Gospels to the Epistles.

And you cannot go from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you cannot go from John straight into Romans without missing a lot of valuable content.

You've got to ask yourself, whoa, what's happened here? There's a lot missing. Well, there is a lot missing, and what's missing is the 30 to 35 years of history that transpired in the Acts of the Apostles.

[13:25] So it is very important that we consider that. And we have looked at it for probably three or four studies, and those sessions are available on preceding tapes. Now I want to go to Romans and Galatians, and I'll ask you first to come, if you will, to Paul's letter to the Romans.

Romans and let's begin with something that is related in chapter 10, if we may. And while you're turning to that, let me preface this with a few more remarks.

We asked the question and answered it. Is there any doctrinal significance to the fact that, in the Acts, which we've been studying for the past few hours, is there any doctrinal significance to the fact that, for the first 12 chapters, the principal character that you read about who is on stage front and center is Peter and the 12.

He is the one who delivers that powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost. It is followed up with an additional offer of the kingdom to Israel in Acts chapter 3. Their imprisonment and persecution is dealt with in Acts chapter 4 and 5.

The account of Ananias and Sapphira is in chapter 4. The stoning of Stephen is recorded in Acts chapter 7. It is very strategic. In Acts chapter 6, Peter is involved in that.

[14:49] And in Acts chapter 10, we find the very pivotal and germane passage wherein Peter goes to Cornelius, who is a Gentile, and that represented a real breakthrough. In chapter 11 and 12, chapter 11, Peter gives an account for his having gone to Cornelius because his Jewish brethren didn't appreciate it.

In Acts chapter 12, Peter is wonderfully and miraculously released from prison by a miracle, by an angel who intervenes. And after Acts chapter 12, Peter drops off the scene. We don't hear any more about him. He's just gone from the Acts. But someone has been coming on and coming on strong. And his name is Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the Apostle. In the midst of his personal vendetta and bitter persecution against the Jew, he himself is converted to Christ. On the road to Damascus, and the account is given in Acts chapter 9. From chapter 13 on through the balance of the Acts, all you read about is Paul the Apostle and his missionary journeys and his compatriots.

[16:02] John Mark, Barnabas, Silas, some of the others, Luke the beloved physician. Peter has gone off the scene. Now, is there anything significant about that?

Is there any transition involved there? I suggest that there is. Let me ask it this way. Is there any theological or doctrinal significance to the fact that you read more about the conversion and personal testimony of Saul of Tarsus in the Word of God than you do about all of the other people and their conversion throughout the Word of God combined, Old and New Testament. That strikes me as being very significant. Why should so much space and time be given to one person? Not only is his conversion account given in chapter 9, but the whole of it is repeated in detail both within the context of the book of Acts on two different occasions when he stands before powerful people of his day.

He relates to them the details of his conversion. And when you take the chapter and verse and all of the space and time and content involved, there is more devoted to the conversion of Paul the Apostle than there is everyone else in the Bible, Old and New Testament put together. Now, I can't ho-hum that. I can't look at that and say, well, so what? That's just an interesting coincidence. I cannot believe that. I get the impression that God is setting the stage and is preparing a man and preparing a people for something really different, really significant.

[17:44] This is the launching pad. Something is about to be launched, something different and striking. And is it ever? Is it ever? Revolutionary would be a word.

Now, when I say that Paul is going to replace Peter by way of prominence and influence and activity in the Acts, let me clarify a couple of things that I do not mean.

I do not mean that we slight or put down Peter. There is nothing for which we should put down Peter. He had a couple of lapses of faith in accordance with the flesh like all of us are prone to do. But we do not mean to suggest at all that Peter is rejected of God in favor of Paul. No one is saying, nor would I agree with being accused of it, saying, well, Peter fumbled the ball and God fired Peter and he's hired on Paul and he's saying Paul will get the job done where Peter failed.

I don't have any indication that Peter failed. I mean, he denied the Lord three times and all, but I'm talking about ministry related. Despite the fact that there is a fiasco in Galatians 2 that we'll look at a little later, one apostle is not pitted against another.

[19:13] Peter has done precisely as he was supposed to do. Peter was not out of line. Peter is removed from the center of action because the scene has shifted.

The center of action is no longer confined to Jews, but it involves all, including the Gentiles. Peter has long since been established with the twelve as the apostles to the circumcision.

That is so absolutely important. I cannot believe there's anybody here now that wouldn't know that. I hope that that is not the case. Paul is becoming established as the apostle to the Gentiles and the theater of operation is changing.

The emphasis is shifting from Jerusalem and the twelve and the kingdom and Israel. It is shifting to Antioch and the one and the body and the emphasis is upon grace.

To me, that is so critical and so absolutely essential to understanding the whole thrust of the New Testament, words fail me to describe how important it is.

[20:29] How come there were twelve apostles anyway? Why did Jesus choose twelve? Why didn't he choose ten? Why didn't he choose fifteen? Why twelve? Twelve because there are twelve tribes.

So? So what? So he said, you who have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of Man comes into his throne, into his glorious kingdom, you also shall sit upon the twelve thrones of Israel, judging the twelve tribes.

I think that's why he chose twelve. They are going to fulfill that responsibility when the kingdom is established. They are going to execute justice seated upon the twelve thrones of Israel.

But the church is not to be confused with Israel as a nation. We aren't made up of tribes. The church is made up of individuals. And how many apostles have we? One. How many bodies are there? One. One body, the body of Christ. Who is our apostle? It's Paul, who is labeled as the apostle to the Gentiles.

[21 : 32] One Lord, one faith, one baptism. Paul is our type. Paul is our pattern. Now, I think this will become abundantly clear as we look at what is transpiring here.

And let's begin with Romans chapter 10 and see the dynamic that ensues. Romans chapter 10, and I'd like to begin with verse 16. We've just got to jump in here and see what God is doing as regards Israel as a nation and the church as a body.

Romans 10, 16. However, they, and the they, if you look at the context, the they personal pronoun refers to the nation of Israel.

Romans 9, 10, and 11 principally address the Jew, although there is some content for the Gentiles. We'll see that also. However, they, the Jew, did not all heed the glad tidings.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? The idea is, hey, we've preached our heart out, and who's listened to us? Nobody.

[22 : 44] Relatively. Don't be misled by the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost. We're glad for every one of them, but they constituted a definite minority. Most did not listen.

Most did not repent. So, faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they?

Indeed, they have. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? Was Israel responsible?

Did they have the information? Oh, they most surely did, says Paul. Earlier in Romans, he says, the Jew, his countrymen, to whom are given the promises and the covenants, and who had the law, and whose are the fathers, and on and on and on, all the privileged positions that the Jew had.

And here he says, Moses says, God says through Moses, addressing the nation Israel, I will make you jealous. Now remember, God is speaking through Moses, and he's talking to the children of Israel, prophetically saying, I'm going to make you, you Jews, you, the nation of Israel, I am going to make you jealous by that which is not a nation.

[24 : 02] who is that? That's you. That's me.

They are the Gentiles to whom Paul preached. And it's interesting enough that we'll not turn to it, but in Acts 13 and verse 45, when Paul began preaching to the Gentiles, the text says the Jews became jealous.

They became jealous. And it is repeated in Acts 17, 5, but the Jews were stirred with jealousy. They didn't want the message. They didn't want the Gentiles to have it either.

God says, I'm going to stir you to jealousy by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you. Who are these people? A nation without understanding. That's us. Bunch of dumb old pagan Gentiles who don't spiritually know enough to come in out of the rain. We don't know from anything. We don't know about Moses. We don't know about the law. We don't know about creation. We worship sticks in the ground.

[25 : 05] We worship animals. We worship all kinds of stupid things. That's what paganism is. People who don't know anything. Who manufacture and conjure up gods and idols and statues and all kinds of who worship the heavenly bodies.

About as unplugged in as you can get. A nation without understanding will I anger you. Israel. And Isaiah is very bold and says I was found by those who sought me not.

Now what Paul is doing here and this is so important folks. What Paul is doing here is he is contrasting the incredible privileged position, the strategic position, the blessed position that was occupied by the nation of Israel and he is saying here you people had everything going for you. You had it all. Man you had the revelation, you had the insight, you had the wisdom, you had the miracles, you had everything. And what do the Gentiles have over here?

Pagan, idolaters, moon worshipers and whatnot. What did they have? Nothing. Just dumb and happy or dumb and miserable. They didn't have anything. Were they seeking after the true God?

[26 : 23] Not on your life. They were interested in playing their petty games. They were interested in their immorality. Read the catalog in Romans chapter 1. It is an accurate depiction of what Gentiles were like.

Every vice and every evil in the book. Were they looking for the knowledge of the true God? Absolutely not. Then how is it that Gentiles got hooked up with this God for whom they were not even looking?

Grace. Grace. Grace. Nobody gets hooked up with God apart from grace. And nobody has ever sought for the Lord.

The Lord seeks for them. I've heard people say it and I try to be gentle with them, you know, not to blow them away too much.

But they almost give you the impression, well, I look for the truth for so many years and I sought for God all these years and he rewarded my seeking with salvation. That may sound nice, but it sure isn't true.

[27 : 30] There is none that seeketh after God. We are all together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

You may think that doesn't include you, but I want to tell you up front, it includes me, I was found by those who sought me not.

I became manifest to those who did not ask for me. That's the Gentile. But as for Israel, in contrast to that, as for Israel, he says, all the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.

Incredible. Absolutely amazing. these who had all the promises, all the advantages, all of the blessings, and what do they do with their knowledge? They go stubborn, disobedient, stiff-necked, turn into a bunch of spiritual, spoiled brats.

Hmm. Well, if that's the way Israel is going to be, if that's the way they are going to conduct their affairs, if that's all they think of their relationship to Jehovah, what is Jehovah going to do?

[28 : 44] What should he do? What do they deserve? You better believe it. You kick them out. You say to the Jew, I'm finished with you. Get out of here.

I don't ever want to see you again. Look at what you've done. Look at all the privileged information you've had, and look what you did with it. Look what you did to my son. I'm through with you Jews forever.

That's it. Ichabod, kaput, you're done, finished, over, gone. Get out of here. That's what they deserve. Absolutely, that's what they deserve.

That's what you deserve, too. Is that what God did? No. No.

Do you know what God would have been like if he had done that? He'd be just like people. He'd be just like people.

[29 : 47] He didn't do that. Ignore the chapter division. Keep reading with me. I say then, God has not rejected his people, has he?

Well, he should. They sure do deserve to be rejected. Boy, I'd give those people their walking papers. I would write off the Jew. I'd never. May it never be.

This is the strongest negative in the Greek. Meganoiito. Has God cast away his people? God forbid! I, too, am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. He's not through with Israel. Israel? Or do you not know what the passage says, what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

Elijah's had it up to here with all these, you know. Lord, I'm the only one who's faithful. I'm the only one who's true. You can't count on anybody else. I'm the only guy who's sticking with you.

[30 : 50] That's called the Elijah complex. Kind of like a martyr's complex. And the Lord revealed himself to Elijah in tender endearing terms something like this.

Knock it off, Elijah. That isn't true at all. Get up off the pity party now. You are not standing all by your lonesome.

I have 7,000 others who have not bowed the knee to Baal. I imagine Elijah was thinking, where are they? Could you show me a few?

Encourage me a little. I mean, when these guys hide out, they hide. You've got 7,000. Wow! I wouldn't have dreamed it. In the same way then, verse 5, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

But if it is by grace, and it is, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace. What then? That which Israel is seeking for it has not obtained.

[31 : 59] But those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened. Just as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not, and ears to hear not, down to this very day.

Well, he has confirmed them in their rejection and in their unbelief. But it isn't final. Look at verse 11. I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?

This is Israel the nation now. And he's talking about the national interests of these people. And he is saying, they didn't stumble or misstep so as to fall and be utterly cast down, and that's the end of them, did they?

And Paul says, Meganoido, may it never be, God forbid, no, Israel is down, but they're not out. Israel is set aside, but they have a future.

God is going to bring them back. He has set them aside in unbelief. But because he made promises, unconditional promises, wherein God laid his integrity on the line.

[33 : 06] He promised to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, thy seed. He promised to David, thy son, and the throne, and all that goes with it. And God cannot abrogate these promises.

Listen. If God kept only the promises that he made to us that we deserve him to keep, God wouldn't keep any of his promises.

We must understand that God does not promise and fulfill on the basis of people. We break our promises right and left.

You can't find a treaty that has been drawn up between two nations that's worth the paper it's written on. Because our word doesn't mean anything. We can justify abrogating our promises, every whip stitch that comes along.

But God is locked in. He cannot go back on his word. If we are unfaithful, he abides faithful. He cannot deny himself.

[34 : 08] May it never be. Now I want you to look at this. The last part of verse 11 here is just absolutely captivating.

Look at this. But by their transgression, whose transgression? Israel. What was their transgression? It's singular here. By their transgression. What was their transgression? Their transgression was, we will not have this man to reign over us. Crucify him. That was their transgression.

They rejected him. With what consequence? So they rejected him. Now what? Well, their transgression, by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Hmm. To make them jealous. Who? Israel. Now, if their transgression, verse 12, and their rejection of the Messiah, if their transgression be riches for the world, how is it riches for the world?

[35 : 15] Because through the rejection of Israel, God has dispatched the gospel of the grace of God to all who are not Israel, to all Gentiles.

Their transgression results in riches for the world, and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be. What does that mean?

What Paul is saying is, look, the time is coming, even though when Israel, even though Israel is disobedient, the time is coming when they're going to be an obedient people. God is going to bring them back online, and Israel is going to be fruitful and blessed.

Christ. But the point that Paul is making is, you see how wonderfully blessed the Gentiles are through the disobedience of Israel.

Think of how incredibly wonderful it's going to be when Israel finally does get in line and is obedient. How much more will their fulfillment be?

[36 : 17] When will that be? That will be during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ when he establishes the throne of David in Jerusalem and occupies it, and all nations of the earth will flow into Israel, and Christ will rule and reign in righteousness, and the earth is going to become a virtual utopia.

That will be paradise regained. The kingdom will be established. Israel will be obedient. I am speaking to you who are Gentiles, and as much then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.

If somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen, Jews, and save some of them, for if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

And what Paul told the Jews everywhere he went and preached, you reject the message of God, you reject the offer of eternal life, you will not have it, all right, I'll turn to the Gentiles.

They will hear it. And boy, Paul was right. And what happened with the Jews then? The Jews said, no, Paul, we don't want your message. We don't believe that.

[37 : 28] And we don't want the Gentiles to believe it either. Gentiles. They wouldn't take Jesus as their Messiah, and they didn't want the Gentiles to take him. Almost like kids spitting and feuding on the playground.

They don't want to play with it, but they don't want anybody else to play with it either. Incredible mentality. It was just rotten old human nature. And then he goes on to talk about the olive trees and how the Gentiles are wild olive trees.

Quite remarkable. Verse 24, you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree. That's Gentiles. Gentiles are growing up, developing as nations and as people with no spiritual roots, with no spiritual base, just kind of helter-skelter, like a wild tree that just springs up but nobody planted. That's the picture of Gentilism. It's paganism. But here is a cultivated olive tree. And this cultivated olive tree has been babied and pampered and watered and fertilized and cared for and given every opportunity.

That's Israel. That's Israel. And he's saying, look, do you understand, you Gentiles, do you understand that you were just out there in the wilderness growing helter-skelter with no rhyme or reason at all, just slapdash, hit and miss, what not, paganism, idolatry, and all the rest of it?

[38 : 55] And God graciously reached over and he took from that wild olive tree and he grafted a branch of you into the cultivated olive tree.

that's what he's done for you. Why should he do that? Grace. Grace. No other reason. No reason I can think of.

He just loved us. That's why he did it. And they are grafted in. Verse 23, if they do not continue in their unbelief, Israel, that is, they will be grafted in.

God is able to graft them in again and he will graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

I skipped something I want you to note in verse 18. Do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root. But the root supports you.

[40 : 09] Now what that means is this. Listen. You Gentiles. You Gentiles. Don't you be haughty. Don't you be puffed up.

You have nothing to be proud of. Don't you for a moment say, well, look at us. We are the people. We've really got something going.

Listen. I want you to understand that the reason you have a position of blessing and opportunity is because the Jew.

the Jew afforded it to you. You know why? Because the Jew is the natural olive tree. And Paul says, listen, you are a branch grafted in.

You do not support the root. The root supports you. They were there first. You are an add-on. You are attached as a people in the favor of God by His grace.

[41 : 12] And because of the disobedience of the root, you see, Israel is cut off, but not at the root. The root's still growing. The root's still intact. Israel is coming back.

And when Israel comes back... Paul's conclusion to all of this is in verse 33.

It's just as though he's blown away by it and captivated by the truth of it all. And he says, All the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways.

Now let's come, if we may, for the time that remains to us to Galatians chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1. And see how Paul is going to relate to this idea of the Gentile and the Jew in Romans.

Question. Was Paul's apostleship, which is designated as being directed to the Gentiles, was Paul's apostleship and calling really unique and different from the Twelve, or was he merely an extension?

[42 : 30] Now for someone who may not have thought this through too much, like I didn't for many years, you may well ask the question, Well, I'm not really sure what difference it makes and what's for. I'm not really sure that I care.

I can understand how anybody might think that way. But what is at stake is quite considerable. And if you don't see it now and don't have a clue to it, you will, very shortly.

Paul's apostleship and calling is not as a thirteenth apostle, although technically he is a thirteenth apostle. There were twelve chosen.

Technically, I guess you could say he is the fourteenth. Judas is out of the picture, Matthias has taken his place, and Paul has come on board. But the point that I wish to make is that he is not merely a continuation of the twelve.

He is not performing the same ministry of the twelve. He is not preaching the same message of the twelve. That, to me, was quite a breakthrough.

[43 : 32] And it was one that I did not readily accept at first because I could not countenance the idea of Peter and the twelve preaching one message and Paul the apostle preaching another message.

I mean, they both preached salvation by faith. They both preached the finished work of Christ. They both preached... Didn't they? If Paul was merely more of the same in his message and methodology and in his commission, why did he receive an abundance of revelations that the twelve did not have?

Why did Paul need additional information in order to carry out the same commission that the twelve had? Why didn't they just brief him?

But he says very clearly and in a way that you almost get the impression that he wants to make really sure that this is understood. I really want you to get this because it's important.

And you know what we do? We don't get it. We don't get it. We look at it and say, well, I don't know that it means that. Well, if it doesn't mean that, what does it mean? Look at this. Galatians chapter 1 and verse 11.

[44 : 45] Look at this. Paul says, I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Well, what does that mean? Well, it means that it doesn't have human origins. It means, Paul is saying, the gospel that I preach is not something that I or some other man sat down and thought, well, now, let's see, what could we come up with?

Ah, yes, this would be a nice gospel to preach. Let's, he says, nobody conjured this up in their head. This isn't some man's idea. But he says something else that is almost equally significant.

Not only is it not according to man, but neither received I it from man, nor was I taught it.

That means, I didn't think it up, nor was it communicated to me through human instrumentality. Nobody else told me what to preach.

[46 : 03] Now, I've got to go back here and ask a few questions. Who was the first person to arrive on the scene preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?

Do you know who the first person is in the New Testament to deliver that message? Anybody?

Thank you. John the baptizer. Nobody preached that message before John.

And do you know who some of John's very earliest disciples were? Remember when Jesus came on the scene and began preaching and was introduced by John?

And some of John's disciples left following John and began following Jesus. And John didn't have any problem with that.

He said, hey, I came to appoint men to him and he must increase and I must decrease. And some of those were Peter and James and John.

[47 : 03] They were disciples of John the Baptist before they became disciples of Jesus. Where do you think these disciples of John got their information and their gospel?

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Well, they got it from John. He preached it. They picked up on it. Jesus came along and reinforced the same message that John the baptizer was preaching.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And he sent the 12 out to do that and he sent the 70 out to do that. And they were all taught one of another. Jesus elaborated on what John taught and he gave a lot of information to the apostles by way of parable and so on.

But they were all taught of men. Now Paul is saying I didn't get my gospel that way. And here's another interesting thing. Do you know that on at least two occasions in Romans and in

Thessalonians and in Timothy Paul refers to the gospel as my gospel.

my gospel. And when he is writing in concert with Timothy or Barnabas or Silas he says our gospel.

[48 : 21] Now I ask you the question where does he get off doing that? Is there anyone who comes here to grace to hear Marv's gospel?

Boy I hope not. You talk about being outclassed. The difference is finiteness and infinity.

That's the difference. It's not my gospel. And the gospel that I preach to you I did I did not receive by direct revelation. I was taught it I was taught it by this and I was taught it by others who communicated it to me.

There's a tremendous distinction that is beginning here and it is building and we have missed this and missed it and missed it and we just write it off. Paul says it's my gospel. Now it is not Paul's gospel in the sense that he originated it but it is his gospel in the unique sense that nobody else was preaching it before he was.

And when he did preach it he got in a lot of trouble. I received this gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

[49 : 31] Now my question is this if Paul preached the same thing that Peter and the twelve preached why was it necessary that he get this revelation direct? The fact that God is doing an entirely different thing with a new work is to me readily apparent here.

Let's continue on and see what happens. The case builds and it gets even stronger. Paul says in verse 15 when he who had set me apart even from my mother's womb called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles among the Gentiles.

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. That's another way of saying I didn't talk to anybody about it. I didn't go to anyone for counseling. I did not consult with flesh and blood nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me.

They still there? They sure are. Who are they? Peter, James, John, Nathaniel, Andrew, Philip, all the rest of them. They're still there. He said I didn't go up to Jerusalem to compare notes.

Boy, that's what I would have wanted to do. I would have lit out for Jerusalem. I said man, I can't wait to get there and tell these fellows what's happened to me and get some instruction from them. And he didn't do that.

[50 : 48] And the reason he didn't was because the Lord didn't want him to. He had other plans for him. Here's what he did. He went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus. Then, three years later, listen, this man has been a Christian for three years.

Three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, that's Peter, and stayed with him 15 days. That must have been an incredible 15 days. I told the folks in the early service, I'd give anything to have been a little old mouse hiding over in a corner.

Listen to those conversations for 15 days. It must have been absolutely outstanding. Can't imagine. He says, But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now, in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.

Why do you think he put that in there? I think he put it in there because some people read that and say, oh, come on now. Oh, Paul, come on. Hey, listen.

I assure you before God, this is the truth. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ.

[52 : 02] That's where Jerusalem is. They kept hearing that he who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy, and they were glorifying God because of me. Then, after an interval of 14 years, listen to that.

14 years added to the three years earlier. Folks, we are talking about 17 years after the conversion of this man.

Now, he did not take his first missionary journey until he had been a believer for well over 10 years. And now, he says, I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also, and it was because of a revelation that I went up. It wasn't his idea to go.

And I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. What did he have to do that for? Wasn't that the same gospel they were preaching among the Jews?

[53 : 12] No. Absolutely not. Folks, that's the whole point of this passage. Man, have we ever missed it. Missed it and missed it and missed it.

That's exactly what he's saying. He's trying to yell at us and scream at us off the page. Hey, it's different. This isn't the same thing they were preaching. I went up to Jerusalem and I ran my gospel by these fellows, so I wanted them to know what I was communicating to the Gentiles.

What's the big deal about that, Paul? You're telling the Gentiles the same thing that they're telling the Jews. No, no, I'm not. That's what caused all the stir. Well, he's Gentiles, you've got to circumcise them.

Paul says, no, we're not going to circumcise them. What do you mean we're not going to circumcise them? You mean to tell me that you are preaching the gospel to Gentiles and they come to faith in Jesus as a Messiah, as their Lord and Savior, and you're not telling them to be circumcised? No. Well, you can't do that. They've got to be circumcised. They've got to come under the covenant of Abraham. Paul says, no, no, no, no. Look at this text.

[54 : 15] I tell you this thing has grabbed me and it won't let go. I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private. That means when I got there, I got all the head honchos together.

You know, I saw Peter, James, John, he felt I'd really like to get together with you. I've got something to discuss. Can we meet privately? Sure. So they all get together. They've got this little enclave there and they meet and he says, I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentile.

I did so in private to those who were of reputation for fear that I might be running or had run in vain. Now let me say what he's not doing. He is not repeat. He is not submitting his gospel to them for their approval.

He has already got the highest commission he can have. This gospel that has been communicated to him has come from headquarters itself and he isn't going to go and ask the apostles at Jerusalem whether it's all right with them if he preaches it.

[55 : 29] He's already been commissioned of the Lord to preach this gospel and he had been doing so for years. Years. But he knows because he is a Jew. He knows this is not what all the others are preaching.

And it's going to cause a lot of confusion and a lot of difficulty. And I don't want people misunderstanding what's taking place here. I don't want these apostles whom I love and respect to misunderstand what my mission is as opposed to their mission.

I want to sit down with them in private and square away on these things. I sure don't want them telling people one thing and me telling people something else.

We've got two distinct audiences here. The transition is involved. There is one fading in, one fading out, and it is a time of real confusion. We've got to adjust to that and understand that. This for fear that I might be running or head run in vain.

There is no possibility that Paul could have any occasion to fear that if his message was no different from the message they were preaching.

[56 : 35] That's the whole point. Paul says, look, I don't want my ministry and my work among the Gentiles dismantled or confused by those who say, well, now you've got to serve.

that's the whole basis for the council at Jerusalem in Acts chapter 15. Certain brethren came from Jerusalem and said, except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved. They had a big hubbub about it. And Paul is really clearing the air here. And he says, Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, here's a landmark decision coming up.

This is a biggie. Though he was a Greek, he was not compelled to be circumcised. Well, he sure would have been before. You better believe it.

I am satisfied that part and parcel of receiving a Gentile into the fold of Judaism then, if circumcision was a foregone conclusion, I mean, you just, you absolutely had to be circumcised if you're going to be a full fledged Jew.

[57 : 44] But Titus, even though he was a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren, false brethren, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. What is that truth? That truth is found in verse 16 of chapter 2, Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, since by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

That's the truth of the gospel that Paul is talking about. It is the gospel of the unadulterated grace of God. salvation by grace through faith plus nothing.

No sharp knives and no water baptism. But, from those who were of high reputation, and he means those who occupied the positions of prominence, what they were, makes no difference to me.

Paul was not impressed with the station of life. God shows no partiality. Well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. That means Peter, and James, and John, and all the others. They didn't tell me anything that I didn't already know.

[59 : 22] They didn't contribute anything to me. But, on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter with the gospel to the uncircumcised.

Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Would you look at that? Is that two different gospels? If it isn't two different gospels, what is it? The gospel to the uncircumcised. The gospel means the good news, the message.

To whom? To the uncircumcised. Who are they? They are non-Jews. They are Gentiles. There is a gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised.

The gospel there is italicized in the New American. But it is just as Peter with or Peter to the circumcised. I think they put it in because it is understood.

[60 : 32] And it is. There are two different classes of people, two different recipients of the message, and two different thrusts of the message. Now, neither is devoid of grace.

Man is always, ever, forever justified by faith. Old Testament, New Testament, and everything in between. The emphasis is decidedly different.

You do not preach the same thing to Gentiles that you preach to Jews. So, which is preached today? The answer is, both. No wonder Christianity is so confused.

No wonder we make such little impact. No wonder there are so many difficult things.