

## CHAPTER 1

# THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

<sup>1</sup> Paul<sup>[a]</sup>, a servant of Jesus Christ, called<sup>[b]</sup> *to be* an apostle, separated<sup>[c]</sup> unto the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> (Which he had promised<sup>[d]</sup> afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) <sup>3</sup> Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed<sup>[e]</sup> of David according to the flesh; <sup>4</sup> And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection<sup>[f]</sup> from the dead: <sup>5</sup> By whom we<sup>[g]</sup> have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: <sup>6</sup> Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: <sup>7</sup> To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1–7)

**[a]** Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), is the writer of this epistle. Paul calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ in 2 Timothy 1:3. Paul says he served God from his forefathers “with a pure conscience,” yet he refers to himself as having been a “blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious” (1 Timothy 1:13). But then he goes on to say, “But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” We would conclude that his conscience was pure because he was operating on the basis of ignorance. This is the condition of the people our Lord spoke of in John 16:2. “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing service to God in persecuting the believers in Jerusalem. A study of our Lord’s parable in Matthew 21:33–38\* makes it clear that this wasn’t the condition of some of the leaders of Israel. They knew Jesus was the Christ but weren’t willing to let Him have what was rightfully His. Had that been Paul’s case, he would not have obtained mercy.

\* Acts 4:13–30 indicates that those same leaders of Israel took knowledge of the disciples after our Lord’s resurrection that they had been with the resurrected Lord.

**[b]** Paul is called to be an apostle. He is a special apostle, being uniquely “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). As such, he was given the apostleship of the uncircumcision, while Peter and the Twelve were given the apostleship of the circumcision (Galatians 2:6–8). Paul’s apostleship involved making known the work Jesus Christ did as the “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ

Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity” (1 Timothy 2:5–7). There are twelve apostles who are one day going to sit on the twelve thrones in the kingdom of heaven, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Matthias was selected to fill the place among the apostles that had been (Acts 1:16–26), vacated by Judas.

[c] Paul says in verse 1 that he was “separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures).” This is the first verse of Romans. As we compare this (the first verses in the book of Romans) with the closing verses, there appears to be a contradiction. Let’s note those closing verses: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Romans 16:25–26).

In Romans 16:25, the apostle speaks of the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; but in 1:1–2 he talks about being separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures. Realizing that there are no contradictions in the Bible, we look for the solution to this dilemma, whereby Paul says he was “separated onto the gospel of God which [God] had promised afore by his prophets” in 1:1 and tells us about the mystery, which was “kept secret” and “in other ages not made known.”

The solution is to recognize that Paul is talking about two different things in Romans 16:25. When he speaks of “my gospel” and “the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery,” he is talking about two different concepts our Lord revealed to and through Paul. What Paul called “my gospel” in 16:25 is what he called “the gospel of God” in Romans 1:1. This is the gospel God spoke in Genesis 3:15 regarding the “seed of the woman,” which would one day crush Satan’s head. The means by which the seed of the woman would do that wasn’t (indeed couldn’t be) revealed until *after* it was accomplished. It was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross that totally defeated Satan. This fact was first made known through Paul as “the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). Paul therefore calls it “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16) and “my gospel” (Romans 2:16).

What our Savior accomplished on the cross had to be kept a secret, or it wouldn’t have been accomplished (1 Corinthians 2:6–10). The full meaning of what was accomplished on the cross is actually presented for the first time in the Bible in Romans 3:21–28. First Corinthians 15:3–4 simply states that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” What Paul calls “the mystery” in Romans 16:25 involves God calling out a body of believers from the Gentiles (fallen Israel included [Romans 11:32]) called “the church which is his body” (Colossians 1:24). No Old Testament prophet spoke anything about this mystery, because it was “hid in God” (Ephesians 3:9) from the beginning of the world until it was revealed through Paul.

Paul is the only Bible writer who talks about this mystery. In Ephesians 3:2–6, he says, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation

he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” He goes on in Ephesians 3 to describe the content of this message Jesus Christ revealed to the world through him. There we find the following:

- The subject of the mystery is the one body (Ephesians 3:6).
- The ministry of the mystery is given to Paul (Ephesians 3:7–8).
- The operation of the mystery is fellowship (Ephesians 3:9).
- The divine purpose for it is to show the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).

The mystery our Lord revealed to and through the apostle Paul is different and distinct from the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven our Lord speaks of in Matthew 13:11. The mystery Paul speaks of wasn’t revealed until the Lord revealed it to him. This was after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and actually after His ascension back to heaven. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven have to do with the fact that the gospel of the kingdom (the good news of the establishment of an earthly kingdom through redeemed Israel) will be preached without the king being present. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew’s Gospel are intended to prepare the Twelve for their ministry in the early period of the book of Acts and eventually to prepare the Jewish remnant for their ministries in the coming tribulation period.

[d] It is a most interesting fact that the gospel the prophets “promised” wasn’t made known to the prophets. Isaiah 64:4 says, “For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.” Paul quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 2:6–10 but adds, “But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10). What “eye had not seen nor ear heard nor entered into the heart of men” in Isaiah 64:4 is now made known to us in Paul’s epistles (1 Corinthians 2:6–10). If you asked Paul, “What is the gospel?”, he would have given you 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. But during our Lord’s earthly ministry and at Pentecost, the Twelve couldn’t tell anyone that because they didn’t know it yet.

The Twelve preached what is called “the gospel” (Luke 9:6). When the Lord sent the Twelve out, it is said, “And they departed, and went through the towns, *preaching the gospel*, and healing every where” (Luke 9:6, emphasis added). Yet in Luke 9:44–45, we find something very interesting. Jesus told them, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men” (Luke 9:44–45). The next verse says, “But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.”

In Luke 18, the point is driven home to us even more plainly. There the Lord starts to prepare them for what was coming. “Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and the third day he shall

rise again.” Yet note the very next verse, which says, “And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken” (Luke 18:31–34).

We may think, *Surely by the time we get to Pentecost at the beginning of the book of Acts, they would have known what was really accomplished on the cross.* Yet we don’t find in Peter’s message to Israel at Pentecost any reference to the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins. What we do find is that Peter warns Israel that the one they crucified was truly their Messiah and that Jesus was going to sit at the Father’s right hand until it was time to make His enemies His footstool. Carefully note Peter’s words: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:32–36).

When Peter’s audience (which included only “Jews and proselytes” [Acts 2:10]) was convicted of the fact that they had put their Messiah to death, they asked, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” What would Peter’s answer then be? Would Peter tell them what Paul had said in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, “that Christ died for their sins”? Had they known that, they would certainly have made that known to their audience. Rather, Peter tells them to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Clearly their message of Pentecost didn’t include the message of what was accomplished on the cross (Acts 2:38).

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made<sup>[e]</sup> of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared<sup>[f]</sup> to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.<sup>[g]</sup> (Romans 1:2–4)

[e] Verse 3 says Jesus Christ, our Lord, was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. The phrase “according to the flesh” refers to His earthly ministry to Israel under the gospel of the kingdom, which the Twelve preached. The gospel of the kingdom included the following:

A king—Jeremiah 23:5 says, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”

A kingdom—Daniel 2:44 says, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Our Lord ministered this gospel to Israel.

- Matthew 4:23 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee teaching ... in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” This will again be the message in the coming tribulation.
- Matthew 24:14 says, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” This promise will ultimately be fulfilled.

- Revelation 11:15 says, “The seventh angel sounded ... The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

Verse 4 goes on to add, “And declared to be the son of God with Power ... by the resurrection from the dead.” While the Lord’s earthly ministry was “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24), His resurrection ministry was much broader (as we shall see).

Christ is presented as man—the seed of David and as God—the Son of God with power. He was “made” the seed of David, but He was “declared” to be the Son of God with power.

He always was the “the Word” (John 1:1–14) from eternity past, but He began to be referred to as the Son of God when He became man. He was the Son of God by birth but only needed to be “declared to be the Son of God with Power” by the resurrection. The words “according to the flesh” described His human nature, while the words “according to the Spirit” described His divine nature.

[f] Though our Lord did many miracles and demonstrated His power during His ministry here on earth, His resurrection from the dead fully demonstrated his power. Ephesians 1:19–23 says, “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

Hebrews 5:5–6 refers to the day of our Lord’s resurrection as the day He was begotten as the Son (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5). Though He was begotten of God when He was conceived in Mary’s womb (Luke 1:35), He is declared the son of God *with power* by His resurrection. As a result, He will be preeminent from eternity past to eternity future (Ephesians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:9) and from things under the earth to things far above all heavens (Philippians 2:10). As a result of His resurrection, “all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

By whom we<sup>[g]</sup> have received grace and apostleship, for obedience<sup>[h]</sup> to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye<sup>[g]</sup> also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:5–7)

[g] Who are the “we” of verse 5 and the “ye” of verse 6? Verse 5 speaks of Paul and his companions, Timothy, Luke, Jason, and Sosipater (Romans 16:21) as well as Tertius, the gramateus (16:22). The apostleship, which is spoken of, is that of Paul and Timothy (Paul’s yokefellow). The “ye” of verse 6 speaks to the saints of Rome, who received salvation and were called to be saints because of their “obedience of faith.”

[h] The phrase “for the obedience of faith among all nations” is significant here because our Lord’s earthly ministry was only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6; 15:24; Romans

15:8). However, the resurrected Christ now had a ministry to the Gentiles through Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. That ministry is actually a result of Israel's rejection of Him as their resurrected Messiah.

<sup>7</sup> To all that be in Rome<sup>[i]</sup>, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace<sup>[i]</sup> to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> First, I thank<sup>[k]</sup> my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken<sup>[l]</sup> of throughout the whole world. <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with<sup>[m]</sup> my spirit in the gospel<sup>[n]</sup> of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; <sup>10</sup> Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. (Romans 1:7–10)

[i] Paul's first epistle in the canon of scripture is addressed to believing Gentiles in the capital city of the Gentile world political system. Under the gospel of the kingdom, all these political systems were to be destroyed and replaced by Messiah's kingdom. But here we find these Gentiles "beloved of God" and "called to be saints" in spite of Israel remaining in unbelief.

[j] Each of Paul's epistles starts with the greeting "grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This is significant because what was due prophetically when Saul got saved was actually the tribulation period in which Jesus Christ would come to "judge and make war" (Revelation 19:11).

[k] Paul, as in all of his epistles, gives thanks to God for fellowship and upholds his fellows before God in prayer. Paul's prayers to God are in the name of Jesus Christ. His thanks to God for fellow believers are through Jesus Christ.

[l] Paul's thankfulness concerning the Roman saints is that their faith is spoken of through the whole world. Faith is rooted in understanding a thing that is known to be true and therefore trustworthy (Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is the result of teaching (Romans 10:14–17). Faith can be subjective (our faith) or objective (Christ's faith). Our faith must have an object—in other words, a trustworthy basis. The object of saving faith for us today is the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on Calvary. Faith must have a basis. The basis of our faith is the infallible, inerrant Word of God. Saving faith here is referred to as obedience in the sense that it is implemented in one's life. The obedience of faith is heart belief as opposed to simple head knowledge (Romans 10:10). Obedience to the faith is a conformance of one's life to the Word of God (1:5). These Roman saints were basically Gentiles. This is the first place in the scripture where the Word of God addresses Gentiles independently of Israel.

[m] Paul served the gospel of Christ with his spirit. Our human spirit is the part of our makeup that enables us to relate to God and communicate with Him to provide a means whereby God communicates with us.

[n] "The gospel" is the focus of this epistle as is evident by its repetitive use of the following:

- The gospel of God (v. 1)
- The gospel of His Son (v. 9)