

What About Sinners Who Will Never Hear the Gospel?

Romans 1: 16-32

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

¹⁹ because that which is **known** about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His **invisible attributes**, His **eternal power** and **divine nature**, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, **so that** they are without excuse.

²¹ For even though they **knew** God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing to be **wise**, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴ Therefore God **gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God **gave them over** to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,

³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

(Rom. 1:16-32 NAU)

Introduction

Perhaps no other passage in Scripture better summarizes the culpability of unbelievers, particularly unbelievers who have not had access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What they have now, and what they have had since the beginning of the world, is **access to the truth about God revealed in His creation, including the creation of those who bear His image**. We call this

general revelation in contrast to **special revelation** which is given to OT prophets, NT apostles and prophets, the revelation that is now collected in the 66 books of the Bible.

In this passage Paul says that the **visible creation** reveals the **invisible attributes** of the being of God. The psalms make essentially the same claim, that the invisible being of God is inescapably seen in what He has made.

The **heavens are telling of the glory of God**; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (Ps. 19:1 NAU)

The **heavens declare His righteousness**, And all the peoples have seen His glory.⁷ Let all those be **ashamed** who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols... (Ps. 97:6-7 NAU)

Note the phrase, “And all the **peoples** have seen His glory.” The psalmist is speaking exhaustively of all the inhabitants of the earth. The word, **peoples**, is the same word used in many other OT texts to indicate non-Israelite people.

"You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the **peoples** who surround you, (Deut. 6:14 NAU)

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the **peoples** who are on the face of the earth. (Deut. 7:6 NAU)

We will look at three questions.

- I. What is the content of general revelation and how do men respond to it?
- II. How effective is general revelation in revealing the nature of God to unbelievers?
- III. What are the implications of general revelation for missions and evangelism?

I. What is the content of general revelation and how do men respond to it?

According to verse 20, general revelation consists in **what has been made**. God created a material world—sun, moon, stars, clouds, rain, sunsets, oceans, rivers, mountains, animals, trees and flowers—last and most importantly, the crown of creation, male and female who are made in God’s image.

In addition to this, **material** creation generates the **non-material** conceptualizations or ideas about the One who created these things, what Paul calls God’s **invisible attributes**. Both the visible creation and the concepts deduced from visible creation make up the content of general revelation given not only to the elect, but to **all men**.

Paul names only two of these **attributes** in v. 20, but it appears that these two are only summations of God’s attributes revealed in what he has made—namely, “His **eternal power** and **divine nature**.” God is eternal, without beginning or end, and His power is eternal power. By definition, God must be eternal; otherwise, there exists some other being or power previous to

God which then must be recognized as God. The **eternal power** of God must also be omnipotent power capable of caring for all creation. A god who is limited in power, by definition, cannot be God. His divine nature would include his **wisdom** and **providential care** of his creation, among other things. The psalmist says,

He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains;¹¹ They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. (Ps. 104:10-11 NAU)

He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.¹⁴ He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth... (Ps. 104:13-14 NAU)

The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God. (Ps. 104:21 NAU)

O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. (Ps. 104:24 NAU)

They all wait for You To give them their food in due season. (Ps. 104:27 NAU)

Man can reason from the providential care of creation that God is also **good** and that he **loves** his creation, something which Jesus mentions in the Sermon on the Mount.

"But I say to you, **love** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ **so that** you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the evil and the good*, and sends rain on *the righteous and the unrighteous*. (Matt. 5:44-45 NAU)

Being a sinner, man often disputes the goodness of God because of circumstances, but if Scripture is allowed to correct our understanding of general revelation and providence, we learn that despite ours and others' circumstances, God is good. Nevertheless, his goodness cannot be disputed even if the sinner has no access to Scripture's correction. Men are **obligated** to acknowledge God's goodness from general revelation alone; and when he fails to give thanks for it, he is judged. When Paul speaks of the invisible attributes of God, he must be including many which are not specifically named.

Using an **oxymoron** in v. 20, Paul says that the **invisible** attributes of God have been clearly **seen** in creation. Being made in God's image, men are capable of reasoning from the visual images of creation and providence to the invisible concepts and ideas about the nature of God. In his address to the Athenian philosophers, Paul assumes this capability.

...He did not leave Himself **without witness**, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17 NAU)

To serve as a **witness**, something or someone must be intelligible, clear, and unambiguous. The witness of God's goodness to the Athenians **should** have been understood because it **could** be understood.

Last, but not least, the general revelation of God to all men includes God's invisible attributes of **holiness** and **wrath**. Paul has already alerted us to the revealed **wrath** of God in v. 18 which is manifested toward those who **suppress** the truth about God in unrighteousness. And in v. 21, the **hearts** of those who **knew God** but did not **honor** Him as God or give Him **thanks** were darkened. The verb is passive. They did not darken their own hearts. Their hearts were darkened. Paul uses another passive verb in distinguishing elect Israel from non-elect Israel.

What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest **were hardened**; (Rom. 11:7 NAU)

From the context of vv. 24-32, it would appear that this **wrath** is manifested against sinners in two ways: **Temporal judgments** and the **consciousness of eternal judgment** for violating God's law.

In vv. 24-28, Paul uses the common literary method of **parallelism** in which he repeats many of the same vices using different words with similar meanings, piling up term upon term, making no attempt to be exhaustive in his list, but **impressing upon the reader's consciousness the gravity and extent** of man's guilt. Man is thoroughly and hopelessly guilty.

(1) First of all, in this life God judicially **delivers** the sinner over to the degrading consequences of his own **apostasy and idolatry**. The fundamental sin is not sexual immorality or any of these other sins on Paul's vice list in vv. 24-28. The fundamental sin underlying all other sin is idolatry which gives birth to everything else.

Paul uses the expression **gave them over** three times for emphasis.

(a) V. 24. He **gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. **Impurity** is a general term meaning uncleanness, commonly indicating sexual uncleanness of any kind. The phrase **lust of their hearts** indicates that those who are **given over** were already immersed in the sin to which they are delivered. God never compels people to sin nor does he tempt people to sin (James 1: 13), but He does hand them over to the escalating bondage of their own lusts and deceit.

(b) V. 26. He **gave them over** to the degradation of unnatural sexual passions which resulted in individuals receiving "in their own persons the due penalty of their error". The **error** in v. 27 is the error of suppressing the truth, dishonoring God, refusing to worship Him and failing to give him thanks. God punishes this error by handing them over, in this particular case, to the practice of homosexuality. It is the **homosexuality** itself, or elsewhere in the vice list illicit heterosexuality, which is the **due penalty**, not AIDS or any other sexually transmitted diseases. Many people engaged in such sins do not get these diseases, and other innocent people, including spouses and children, do.

In his epistles, Paul mentions sexual sins more than any other, possibly due to his cultural context, but most likely because sexual sin is against one's own body which, in the case of the Christian, is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6). So then, God hands over the sexually

immoral person to more sexual immorality and the emptiness and dissatisfaction which inevitably results from more sex, whether it be homosexual, illicit heterosexual, or bisexual sex.

(c) V. 28. He **gave them over** to a **depraved mind**. He did this because “**they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer.**” Once more, the temporal judgment is the consequence of apostasy. “God gave them over to a depraved mind, **to do those things which are not proper**.”

But notice also that the **depraved mind** does not manifest itself **only** in the degradation of **wickedness** and **evil**, words which might be interpreted as sexual immorality. Rather, the depraved mind is exhibited in behavior that many modern evangelicals are **tempted to white-wash** as “respectable sins”: greed, envy, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, arrogance, pride, disobedience to parents, untrustworthiness, being unloving and unmerciful. We are reminded of Col. 3: 5 in which Paul mentions four words normally associated with sexual immorality; and then, boom, he blasts us with something we didn’t expect.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to **immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire**, and **greed**, which amounts to **idolatry**. (Col. 3:5 NAU)

Greed is **not** good. The market place must be tempered with Christian virtue. Otherwise, it becomes a jungle where people devour one another. Greed, envy, and dissatisfaction (failure to give thanks) is also the source of all sexual immorality.

At the end of any of Paul’s **gave them over[s]**, he could have substituted any of the other sins which he catalogs in this vice list: greed, envy, slander, etc. In every case, God delivers the sinner over to whatever he is already doing. God hands over the greedy man to more greed. Since he is not satisfied with God, he is never satisfied with anything. He must have more. God hands over the argumentative man to more **strife**. The Nabal’s of this world can’t get along with anybody. The **deceiver** can’t tell the truth even when the truth is more convenient. God’s retributive justice is always at work in the universe. Men will be repaid in like kind.

So, first of all, the **wrath of God** is manifested **temporally** by delivering sinners over to the escalating consequences of their own idolatry illustrated, but not exhausted, in Paul’s vice list.

(2) Secondly, the **wrath of God** is manifested in man’s consciousness of eternal punishment for violating His moral law.

³² and although they **know** the **ordinance** of God, that those who practice such things are **worthy of death**, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

The word for **ordinance** in v. 32 is [*dikaioma*], also translated **judgment** or **righteous decree**. It is the same word used in Romans 8: 4.

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ so that the **requirement** of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-4 NAU)

The word, *dikaioma*, is also translated in 8:4 as “righteous requirement of the law” or “righteousness of the law”.

In other words, all men **know** something of God’s righteous decree or moral requirements. He also knows the judicial punishment of death for violating these requirements. His knowledge of these requirements is by no means exhaustive, and it is certainly distorted; but it is **real**. This is more clearly explained in Romans 2.

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,¹⁵ in that **they show the work of the Law written in their hearts**, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately **accusing or else defending them**, (Rom. 2:14-15 NAU)

We may then ask, what is the **source** of this knowledge of God’s moral requirements and the penalty for violating them? It is **not** from the Law of Moses since the pagan Gentiles Paul is referring to do not have the Law of Moses. The source is from within themselves, this intuitive sense of right and wrong present in the mind and heart of every rational creature.

Every civilization on earth, however primitive, possesses a moral code, a sense morality derived from the witness of creation inherent in the image of God. This moral code is twisted and suppressed by man’s sinfulness; but it cannot be obliterated, no matter how much men may try. It is a derivative of God’s **holiness** manifested however faintly or strongly in man’s conscience.

Now, one would think that man’s moral sensibility and his awareness of the eternal consequences of sin would **moderate** his sin, and we do understand that men and women are not as bad as they can be. There is God’s **common grace** to sinners restraining their sin and cultivating many good qualities. Some unbelievers are very nice people outwardly, nicer than a lot of believers I know. After all, the work of the Law is written on their hearts, and this work is demonstrated in varying degrees among men.

However, the **moderating influence of common grace** is not Paul’s burden in this passage. His **burden** is to demonstrate the downward spiral of sin and its consequences leading to eternal death; and he does so to emphasize man’s desperate need of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation. We have **no evidence from Scripture** that the knowledge of God **mediated** through general revelation has any positive effect in moving men toward a saving knowledge of God. In fact, this passage is the most detailed passage in the NT dealing with general revelation, and it is entirely **pessimistic**. Something far more compelling than general revelation is needed which is explicated through chapter 11.

Instead of reforming himself, man not only continues in sin but “gives **hearty approval or encouragement** to others who practice the same sins.” As Murray says,

To put it bluntly, we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation.

John Murray also makes three inferences from this verse:

- (1) The most degraded of men...are not destitute of the knowledge of God and of his righteous judgments...Conscience asserts itself.
- (2) This knowledge does not of itself prevent these same persons from indulging the sins which they know merit the judgment of God and issue in death.
- (3) The knowledge of God's righteous judgment does not create any hatred of sin nor does it foster any disposition to repent of it.

II. How effective is general revelation in revealing the nature of God?

Multiple verses in this section imply that this revelation is **effective**. It is **effective** in accomplishing God's purpose of **revealing his eternal and divine nature to men**. Verse 19 says,

¹⁹ because that which is **known** about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Then in verse 20, Paul says that the invisible attributes of God are "**clearly seen**". They are "**understood**" through natural revelation. Moreover, as we have seen, they also "**know**" the **ordinance** or **righteous requirements** of God's law because the work of the law is written on their hearts; and they "**know**" that all who violate those requirements are "**worthy of death**". According to this passage alone, unbelievers know **a great deal** about God. To quote John Frame,

The unbeliever...ought to believe in God without any...argument at all, **simply on the basis of God's revelation in creation** (Rom. 1: 18-21...). If our task is simply to put the unbeliever into a position where he **ought** to believe, then we are best advised to do nothing, for he is in that position **already** (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 63, emphasis mine).

In his study guide to the WCF, G. I. Williamson comments on Chapter One: Of the Holy Scriptures, which says,

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men **inexcusable**; yet they are not **sufficient** to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation...(WCF, 1, emphasis mine).

It has long been the habit among Christians (even of Reformed persuasion) to speak of the insufficiency of natural revelation, as if there were something defective in the revelation it makes of God. This may be seen in the traditional use of the theistic proofs.

- (1) From the world as a great effect we may argue the possibility of a great cause.
- (2) From the apparent order and design in the world we may argue the possibility of a designing intelligence.
- (3) From the apparent rule of the world by moral law we may argue the possibility of a moral lawgiver.

After these, and similar arguments, were developed and brought together, it was hoped that unbelievers might be convinced that (a) "a god" **probably** exists; and that (b) if he does exist, he might **possibly** be the God of the Bible. Only when the possibility of the existence

of “God” was thus “proved” was it expected that the unbeliever would admit further evidence that might confirm that God **really does exist**. Observe that in this scheme the creature fixes the terms under which God must present his credentials. Facts are not allowed to say, “The true God is,” but only, “A god may **possibly** exist.”

What is wrong with such an approach? Simply this: every fact (and the sum total of all facts) *proves* the existence of the God of the Bible...

All men know God, the true God, the only God. They do not merely have the capacity for knowing him; **they actually do know him**, and cannot possibly evade knowing him. (G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*, pp. 2, 3; emphasis mine).

Of course, Williamson is not saying that men have a knowledge of God that results in salvation, but that they know a great deal about the true God, just as Paul says they do in Romans 1.

But the inefficiency or insufficiency of natural revelation in bringing men to a saving knowledge of God **does not rest in the revelation itself**, but in man’s **distortion and misinterpretation** of creation, namely, his active suppressing of the obvious facts about God in creation. The problem is not that general revelation is **not clear**, but rather that it is **too clear**, for it reveals the wrath of God against man’s ingratitude and idolatry. There is nothing **deficient** about general revelation itself. Yet, because of the noetic effects of sin (effects upon the mind), creation is incorrectly interpreted or distorted to fit man’s agenda of disobedience.

The effectiveness of material creation in providing the knowledge of God becomes even clearer when Paul says that the revelation of creation is effective in rendering men **without excuse** (*anapologetos*; literally, “without apology” or without a defense). This is just to say that unbelievers have no defense for their unbelief.

For what, primarily, are they **without excuse**? For responding to this general revelation with **irreverence, idolatry** and its consequent **immorality** rather than with **honor**, genuine **worship** and **thanksgiving**.

²¹ For even though they **knew** God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing to be **wise**, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God **for an image** in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

In vv. 23 and 25, idolatry is described by Paul in terms of two parallel **exchanges** or **substitutions**.

First, sinful men and women “exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an **image** in the form of **corruptible** man”.

Secondly, they **exchanged** the truth of God for a lie.

Men's history is replete with the worship of **images**: idols carved and chiseled from wood and stone, idols in "the **form of corruptible man** and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures". Paul has in view graven images of creatures, including humans, as objects of worship, something forbidden in the second commandment. These creatures are **corruptible**, perishable. On the other hand, God's **glory**, represented in the diversity of his attributes, is **incorruptible**, imperishable, immutable, eternal—something Paul says that men "know".

²⁰For since the creation of the world His **invisible attributes**, His **eternal power** and **divine nature**, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, **so that** they are without excuse.

We have already seen from the text that these attributes include his **providence** in caring for his creatures, suggesting the attribute of **love**. They also include his **holiness and wrath** because men **know** the righteous decree of God against those who violate his law, so that they intuit the wrath of God against their disobedience. They **deny** this knowledge, but they cannot **dodge** it any more than they can dodge an avalanche.

The second **exchange** in v. 25 is parallel to the first but expressed in a different way. They "**exchanged the truth** of God for a lie." What is the **truth**? From the context, it is the truth about who God is. Here, he does not say that men worship the **form** of these creatures, but that he **worshipped and served the creature** itself: including human beings, animals and birds, the sun, moon, anything created. Worshipping the manufactured idol is the same as worshipping the thing represented by the idol.

The verbs are translated with the **past** tense: **exchanged, worshipped, served**, and so on; but we cannot limit these exchanges to the **past** as if they were **substitutions** that are no longer taking place. Man is not done with his idolatry. Notice the **present tense verbs** of vv. 18 and 19: the wrath of God **is revealed**; and that which **is known** of God **is evident**. These exchanges have been going "since the creation of the world", and they continued in Paul's day up to this day until the very end of the age with the "earth-dwellers" of Revelation worshipping the **beast**.

False worship is not limited to established religions. It obviously includes pornography, sexual fantasies, and all other forms of sexual immorality. But Paul doesn't stop there, either. He includes **greed and envy** leading to **murder, strife, slander, deceit and hatred**. It would include the worship of one's own reputation and status in the **community**. By nature, all men and women are narcissists starving to death while worshipping their own reflection in a mirror.

This is why the worship of celebrities is such an important aspect of our **national cult religion**: Movie stars, musicians, athletes, super-successful businessmen are images of what common people aspire to be; and these images are most often in blatant **contradiction** to the image of Christ into whose image believers are being conformed day by day.

Idolatry is fundamentally the **exchange** of the true God for any **substitute** of our imaginations. Husbands may worship their wives or wives their husbands. Parents often worship their children

and want their children to be successful replicas of themselves or other successful people. People worship material things and the green paper currency that represent material things. They worship power and influence, because power gives them the illusion of being their own gods. God's covenant people often fall into these same sins. As Calvin has said, "Our hearts are idol-factories."

"But," Paul says in effect, "It's all a big, fat lie."

We think our culture is sex-crazed, and it is. But it doesn't even compare with Paul's first-century, Greco-Roman culture. Can you imagine Joseph Wheat on Sunday morning warning Highlands members to stop consorting with prostitutes without once citing Scripture? But Paul does this with the Corinthians and Thessalonians: (1 Cor. 6) "Don't unite the body of Christ with a prostitute." (1 Thess. 4) "This is the will of God, that you abstain from sexual immorality." As direct addresses to these congregations, it's not the same thing as a preacher reading it out of the Bible. Paul addresses these issues because they were occurring among professing believers.

Both verses 23 and 25 help answer the question: **How effective is general revelation in communicating the knowledge of God?** The exchanges indicate that general revelation is very effective for this purpose. You cannot exchange one thing for the other if you don't have something to exchange. I can't exchange \$3 for a gallon of milk if I don't have \$3. But in Paul's analogy, the exchange is more like trading the **glory** of a rare diamond for a gallon of milk. "Diamonds are forever"; milk spoils in less than two weeks.

That is how absurd idolatry is! Men trade **eternal glory** for **dust and ashes**—things and people that perish. And it is **not true** that they don't know what they have and make the exchange based on **ignorance**. Throughout the passage Paul says that men **know**. They **know God**. They know who he is and what he is like. They can **clearly see** and **understand** his **invisible attributes**.

They possess the **truth** of God and trade it for a **lie**. It is a non-coercive exchange.

General revelation is **infallibly effective** in communicating the truth about God to men who have never heard the gospel. It is the **unwritten word of God to all men** in contrast to **special** revelation, the **written word of God to specific men** (Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*).

It is this passage that leads many, including me, to the conclusion that the terms, **honest atheist** or **honest agnostic** are oxymorons. Unbelievers **know God**; yet (and this is important), they also **don't know God** at the same time.

They know him through general revelation, but because they are sinners who **distort** and **suppress** creation's witness to God, their knowledge of God will not lead them to a saving relationship to God.

As I have said, we have **no evidence from Scripture** that the knowledge of God **mediated** through general revelation has any positive effect in moving men toward salvation. There is no optimism either **explicitly stated or anticipated** in Romans 1—and, for that matter, Romans 2

and 3—for man’s positive response to creation. Something far more compelling than general revelation is needed.

Christian Inclusivism

Yet, for the last 30 years, the doctrine of **Christian inclusivism** has been gaining ground in the evangelical church—possibly not in PCA circles, but then, who knows?

Christian inclusivism is not **universalism** in the sense that all people without exception will be saved. It is also not **pluralism**, precisely speaking, which teaches that men may be saved through a number of different religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc. Christian inclusivism teaches that although the **atonement work of Christ** is essential for the salvation of every human being without exception, it is not necessary for a person to consciously know about Jesus or his atoning work. So, although not pluralism, inclusivism at its very root *is* pluralism because one may be following another God and be saved by through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

In other words, one can be saved through Christ without **knowing Christ** or **believing in him**. Said another way, the atoning work of Christ is applied to him irrespective of explicit faith in Jesus Christ.

Christian **exclusivists**, on the other hand, believe that no one can be saved unless he **hears** the message of the gospel and **exercises explicit faith** in the saving work of Jesus (Rom. 10: 1-11, one of many proof texts of the necessity of explicit faith in Christ).

In *The Last Battle*, Volume 7 of his series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis tells the story of Emeth who was a follower of the false god, Tash. At the end of the story, Emeth encounters Aslan the Lion who is the character of Christ throughout the *Narnia* series. Upon seeing the lion, Emeth believes that he is surely doomed.

“Then I fell at his feet and thought, Surely this is the hour of death, for the Lion (who is worthy of all honor) will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him. Nevertheless, it is better to see the Lion and die than to be Tisroc of the world and live and not to have seen him. But the Glorious One bent down his golden head and touched my forehead with his tongue and said, Son, thou art welcome. But I said, Alas, Lord, I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child, all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me. Then by reasons of my great desire for wisdom and understanding, I overcame my fear and questioned the Glorious One and said, Lord is it then true, as the Ape said, that thou and Tash are one? The Lion growled so that the earth shook (but his wrath was not against me) and said, Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites, I take to me the services which thou hast done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath’s sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man does a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted. Dost thou understand, Child? I said, Lord, thou knowest how much I understand. But I said also... Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days.

Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.”

The *Last Battle* was first published in 1956.

In his book, *The Wideness in God's Mercy* (1992), Clark Pinnock derives **two criteria** for “recognizing true religion among pagans” from the Apostle Peter’s encounter with Cornelius in Acts 10. In that passage, Peter says to Cornelius,

...“I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality,³⁵ but in every nation the man who **fears Him** and **does what is right** is welcome to Him. (Acts 10:34-35 NAU)

The two criteria are, therefore, **cognitive** (the fear of God) and **ethical** (doing what is right). Pinnock says,

The **first criterion** tells us to ask, if we are trying to discern the spiritual condition of pagans, Does this person fear God?... We must be discerning in this matter—some outside the church do and some do not worship the true God in their religions. Some **intend** the same reality Christians **intend** when they believe in God (as personal, good, knowing, kind, strong, etc.). But others do not. When **Jews and Muslims**, for example, praise God as the Creator of the world, it is obvious that they are referring to the same Being. There are not two almighty creators of heaven and earth, but only one. We may assume that they are **intending to worship the one Creator God that we also serve.** The same rule would apply to Africans who recognize a high God, a God who sees all, gives gifts to all, who is unchangeable and wise. If people in Ghana speak of the transcendent God as the shining one, as unchangeable as a rock, as all-wise and all-loving, how can anyone conclude otherwise than that they **intend to acknowledge the true God as we do?...**

The **second criterion** tells us to ask, Do people pursue righteousness in their behavior?... Spirituality is disclosed in morality. God is pleased when peoples’ lives reflect his will for behavior. Verbal profession is not enough. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 7: 21). Paul says the same thing. “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (Rom. 2: 6-8). One can make a faith response to God in the form of actions of love and justice (p. 98).

There are really too many unproven assumptions and outright errors in this quotation to mention them all. But first, where in Scripture do we find anyone worshipping the true God in religions other than the true religion of Yahweh (OT) or Jesus Christ (NT)—identified clearly with Yahweh in John’s gospel with the many references to “I am”. Melchizedek and Job (Pinnock’s examples) do not provide evidence of the “holy pagan”. Pinnock has to assume without proof that these men had no contact with the true religion, but it appears that both did. Melchizedek’s blessing of Abram fulfills God’s promise to Abram that He will bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him. Further, Melchizedek does not use any name for God from the Canaanite pantheon of gods; and, later in the episode, Abram equates El Elyon with Yahweh, the

covenant name for God (Gen. 14: 22) (Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 410). It would also appear very strange that a worshipper of Canaanite gods would be considered by the author of Hebrews as superior to the father of the chosen nation (Heb. 7: 7) or that Abram, singularly chosen of God, would pay a tithe to a king who worshipped such. Moreover, if Pinnock is correct in his employment of Melchizedek for his argument (p. 94), serious questions arise about the favorable comparison of Melchizedek to Christ (Heb. 7: 11-28). Pinnock's use of Job as a holy pagan is equally questionable. Modern scholars date Job from the time of the patriarchs to the post-exilic era. Hartley prefers the seventh century B.C. (Hartley, *Job*, pp. 17, 20), long after the Pentateuch was written with which Job demonstrates much familiarity (Job 24: 1-10; 29: 10-12; 31: 1, 16-22).

According to Pinnock's second criterion, "Do people pursue righteousness in their behavior?", even the religion of the Jewish nation degenerated from the righteousness of faith (Gen. 15: 6; cf. Rom. 4: 2-3) into another version of **works righteousness** which Paul says in Romans 10 did not obtain to the righteousness of God. Judaism is, therefore, a false religion (Gal. 1-2); and it is not "obvious" that Jews and Muslims are "referring to the same Being" as Christians since this being is not the trinitarian God of the Bible. If Pinnock is correct, the word "idolatry" has no meaning, for any of the gods of the nations may be identified as the true God by another name. The only real criterion is the intent. If their intentions to worship the true God are pure, then their worship of a false god is magically transferred to the true God. Apparently for Pinnock, the essence of God (ontology) may be loosely defined. Any god will serve the devotee so long as he "intends" the right one, leading to the next point.

Third, good **intentions** are not sufficient to make men right with God. Paul had sterling intentions of serving the true God, but he was **persecuting** the second person of the Trinity (Acts 9: 5), rendering his good intentions null and void. It was necessary for Jesus to meet him on the road to Damascus by a special revelation to turn him around. Looking ahead, the implications of Romans 1 for missions and evangelism is obvious. If good intentions were sufficient, then missions—including the witness of thousands of Christian martyrs who have died for their faith rather than swearing allegiance to a god with another name—would be unnecessary.

Pinnock's emphasis on the necessity of good works as a verification of genuine faith is noted. "Faith without works is dead," James tells us, and the kind of faith producing no works will not save (Jas. 2:14 NASB). Yet, relying on the analogy of Scripture, we also know that **works without faith** makes the cross of Christ null and void. Moreover, we cannot please God without faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of good works.

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (Gal. 2:21 NASB)

And without faith **it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb. 11:6 NASB)

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is* not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin**. (Rom. 14:23 NASB)

We must assume from the Biblical context that Paul is speaking specifically about faith **in Christ**, not just any faith. The prophets of Baal had faith that Baal would send down fire from heaven, but their faith proved futile because Baal did not exist (1 Kings 18: 26).

In Romans 4, Abraham, the father of all believers, was declared righteous because of his faith **before** he was circumcised. In Romans 11, Paul states very plainly that salvation by works and salvation by faith cannot be dual bases for salvation. Salvation is either by grace or by works, but not both.

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, **otherwise grace is no longer grace**. (Rom. 11:6 NASB)

Moreover, as noted earlier, we know that **sincerity and zeal** are not enough. Saul the Pharisee was very zealous and sincere, but sincerely lost; and Paul laments the spiritual lostness of his fellow Israelites in Rom. 10.

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is **for their salvation**.² For I testify about them that they have a **zeal** for God, but **not in accordance with knowledge**. (Rom. 10:1-2 NASB)

If there were any people group in the history of the world that could have been saved on the basis of a **clear knowledge of God** and a proper response to that God, even lacking an understanding of Christ's atoning work, it should have been the Jewish nation. Yet, it is clear from Paul's sorrow expressed in Romans 10 (see below) that even the Jewish people fell short of a saving knowledge of God and the proper response to Him. They had **zeal**, but no salvation. Thus, Paul affirms the necessity of correct **theological content**—in accordance with true knowledge (orthodoxy)—without eliminating the need for the **genuineness** of faith expressed in behavior (orthopraxy). Orthodoxy is essential for orthopraxy; otherwise, Paul would not have exerted such energy in his epistles laying out the essentials of doctrine before espousing the proper behavior predicated on these essentials (Rom. 6, 8, 12).

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (Rom. 6:1-2 NASB)

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-4 NASB)

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.² And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2 NASB)

After quoting the passage from C.S. Lewis cited above, Pinnock then says,

To mention examples of our own, how can one fail to appreciate the noble aspects of the Buddha, whose ethical direction, compassion, and concern for others is so moving that it appears God is at work in his life?... how does one come away after encountering Buddhism and deny that it is in touch with God in its way? (p. 100) ...

Excuse me, didn't Buddha abandon his wife and child to find enlightenment? Where was his compassion toward them? And is anyone aware of any Buddhist relief agencies in east Asia helping the sick, widowed, or orphaned? I am not. Like Christian pastors, are Buddhist monks tolerant, yet solicitous, toward others who are trying to find god in their own way? CBN News reports on 4/18/2016 of increasing persecution of Christians by Buddhist monks.

Christians are facing increasing levels of persecution in the heavily Buddhist country of Sri Lanka, and the pressure has turned violent in several cases.

Release International, a ministry that exposes persecution of Christians, reports the targeting is coming from several fronts, perpetrated by Buddhist monks and government officials alike.

They have been forcing churches and prayer meetings to close down. And in several instances the monks have refused to allow Christians to bury their dead in public cemeteries, or even on church grounds.

A local human rights lawyer has documented at least 120 cases of persecution against Christians over the past year.

"You don't normally associate Buddhism with violence, but time and again we hear that it is Buddhist monks who are leading the attacks against the churches. And our partners have found the monks are being aided by pro-Buddhist authorities," said Paul Robinson, chief executive at Release.

In January of this year, 100 villagers led by two Buddhist monks forced their way into a church service in Kurunegala District. They shouted at the pastor: "If you continue this service we will physically assault you!"

The local police refused to provide protection and told the pastor to stop all worship meetings unless he could get court approval to meet.

Release also reports that in August of 2015, ten Buddhist monks and 30 villagers interrupted a church meeting in Galle District. They attacked members of the congregation, including the pastor and his wife.

Mobs have launched violent attacks in other areas too. A crowd led by Buddhist monks set fire to a pastor's home and car at a church in Hambantota District.

And in Gampaha District, two people abducted a pastor, partially strangled him and threatened that if he did not stop the worship services, 200 people would come to destroy his church.

So much for Pinnock's assertion of the "the noble aspects of the Buddha, whose ethical direction, compassion, and concern for others is so moving that it appears God is at work in his life".

Pinnock continues.

Who can deny the striking similarities between the prophet Muhammed and the Old Testament prophets? Would not admitting this have momentous consequences for our witness to Islam? (p. 100) ...

But false prophets were put to death (Dt. 18: 20-22), something that radical Islamists seem to understand, given their penchant for beheadings.

When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield, strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly. (Sura 47: 4)

This is the 2016 edition cited from The Noble Quran.com. The new citation from the same website in January, 2021, reads as follows:

So when you meet the disbelievers 'in battle', strike 'their' necks until you have thoroughly subdued them, then bind them firmly. Later 'free them either as' an act of grace or by ransom until the war comes to an end.

Whatever translation is the true one—and radical jihadists seem to prefer the first one—the violent means of propagating Islam is diametrically opposed to the mode of spreading Christianity. The steel sword once essential for the preservation of the Hebrew nation from extermination by hostile nations has been replaced with the sword of the Spirit and the full armor of God, in a word, Christian missions and the Great Commission (Eph. 6: 10-20; Matt. 28: 18-20). Pinnock continues.

Nothing that has been said here denies the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn. 14: 6). Jesus *is* the only way to God the Father, to God who is boundless love. His is a unique disclosure without any rival at all. But this does not deny the reality of the knowledge of God that people possessed before Jesus came, or of that knowledge of God they possess today where he has not yet been named... None of these texts should be taken to annul the grace of God that has penetrated human history along **other** channels and at lower levels from the beginning of time—before the messianic revelation was given (pp. 101-102) ...

We might ask, where is Pinnock's evidence of "other channels" of God's grace other than the Hebrew nation, the Jewish messiah, and His church? But here is his most important statement in the context of our examination of Romans 1.

Because of **cosmic or general revelation**, anyone can find God anywhere at any time, because he has made himself and his revelation accessible to them. This is why we find a degree of truth and goodness in other religions (p. 104).

Faith is what pleases God. The fact that different kinds of believers are accepted by God proves that the issue for God is not the **content** of theology but the **reality** of faith (p. 105). What God really cares about is faith and not theology, trust and not orthodoxy (p. 112).

A brief comment here concerning Pinnock's assertion, "anyone can find God anywhere at any time". According to Paul in Rom. 1, **men have already turned their backs on the true God who has revealed Himself effectively in creation**. According to Romans 1, they are looking for a god of their own making. And in Rom. 3, he says that no one is looking for the true God in the first place.

as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." (Rom. 3:10-12 NAU)

"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES." (Rom. 3:18 NAU)

There are seven negations in these three verses. Both **criteria** of Pinnock's "godly pagan" are lacking here, the **cognitive** and the **ethical**. There is no **fear of God**—namely, the true God—and there is no **righteousness** acceptable to God. There is not even one person **who does good**. Getting back to the Cornelius event in Acts 10, Cornelius must have been someone in whom the operations of God's saving grace were already in effect. He was seeking the true God because God had already sought *him*. The Jewish scriptures were his introduction to the gospel (Acts 10: 1-2). Besides, Peter explicitly reports in Acts 11 that the angel instructed Cornelius to send for him, saying,

¹⁴ and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' (Acts 11:13-14 NASB)

Notice that **words** would be spoken to Cornelius which contained discernible content leading to salvation. But if he already **feared God and did what was right**— and he did—then why was it necessary for him to receive any more information? And why wasn't he already saved by such genuine piety (cf. Acts 10: 2? Cornelius met both of Pinnock's criteria for salvation.

They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, **a righteous and God-fearing man** well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a **message** from you." (Acts 10:22 NASB)

But the angel said that Peter would speak words to Cornelius and his household **by which you will be saved**. Was it possible for Cornelius and his family to perish without hearing the gospel? This would contradict everything the Bible teaches about election by which God not only chooses a people for himself but also the means by which they will be chosen—invariably **special revelation** communicated by His people. The doctrine of election alone refutes the thesis of **inclusivism**. If God wishes to save someone, He will not stop short of saving him in the **name** of Christ—or, in the OT, the uncompleted revelation of Christ provided throughout redemptive history. There is **no other name** among men by which anyone will be saved (Acts 4: 12). It will not come as a surprise that Pinnock also denies the doctrine of election as well as the

omniscience of God on the grounds that if a person's actions are free, they cannot be known ahead of time by God. He is no friend of Calvinism, and he views Augustinianism as "a package of dismal beliefs that would eat its way into the consciousness of Western churches and erode the positive biblical spirit in their thinking" (p. 39). And though I would not encourage anyone to ask Calvin or Augustine into their hearts for salvation, I believe that much of what they taught, particularly on the subjects of God's sovereignty and soteriology, is consistent with the *only* final authority of faith and practice, the holy Scriptures.

Is Pinnock's assertion, "anyone can find God anywhere at any time" verified from Scripture? Can it be reconciled by Paul's description of the pagan Ephesians before their conversion to Christ?

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—¹² *remember* that you were at that time **separate from Christ, excluded** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world.** (Eph. 2:11-12 NASB)

Having no hope? Without God in the world? This doesn't seem to agree with Pinnock's confident assertion that people can find God anytime and anywhere. Paul writes as a Hebrew, using the customary parallelism of Hebrew authors. **Separate from Christ** is equivalent to (1) **excluded from the commonwealth of Israel**, (2) **strangers to the covenants of promise**, and (3) **having no hope and without God in the world**. The reader will also notice in this passage the means by which God brought people into a saving relationship with Himself before the advent of Christ. **The covenants of promise** were revealed through God's chosen people; and those, like Rahab and Ruth, who embraced those covenant promises were just as saved as those who embraced Christ as Savior during and after his sojourn on earth. Is there any hope for unbelievers today? Yes, but only through their introduction to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, they are **without God** and **have no hope**.

In his book, *Is Jesus the Only Savior* (1994), Ronald Nash, a Calvinist, says that based on his observation of evangelical leaders and Christian college and seminary professors, the percentage of Christian inclusivists may be higher than 50%. The percentage of inclusivists among Southern Baptists, Nash's own denomination, was even higher in his estimation. He also estimates that 30% of evangelicals nation-wide would have inclusivist leanings. After the erosion in evangelical theology for the last three decades since then, it is probable that this percentage is much higher today. Anything to relieve the materialistic, consumer-driven evangelical church from admitting its neglect and apathy of the missionary enterprise. This leads me to my third major heading.

III. What are the implications of Romans 1 for missions and evangelism?

A. Since men cannot know God in a saving way through general revelation, the proclamation of the gospel is essential in revealing the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.

This becomes clear in Paul's thematic statement in Rom. 1: 16.

For I am **not ashamed of the gospel**, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16 NAU)

The necessity of **proclamation** is more explicit in Romans 10.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³ for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

Then, using a series of four rhetorical questions demanding negative answers, he brings home the necessity of the missionary enterprise of the church.

¹⁴ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? [*Assumed answer: They won't call upon Him.*]

How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? [*Assumed answer: They won't believe in Him.*]

And how will they hear without a preacher? [*Assumed answer: They won't hear about Him.*]

¹⁵ How will they preach unless they are sent? [*Assumed answer: They won't be able to preach unless they are sent.*]

Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" (Rom. 10:12-15 NASB)

There is not the slightest evidence from this passage that God has provided any other means of salvation other than the faithful proclamation of the gospel—aided by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit—by which sinners are enabled to **call on the name of the Lord** (Rom. 10: 13).

We must notice the implications of this passage. One must **call** specifically on **Him**, even Jesus Christ, not upon some generic god known by many names. Moreover, they cannot call upon someone of whom they have never **heard**. However, everyone on earth has **heard** of a supreme being, god, who is known by many different names. Paul says adamantly that they must hear specifically about Christ to be saved. We have already seen from Romans 1 that although all men know something about the true God from creation, even about his true nature and attributes, they purposely choose to worship a god of their making. This true knowledge of God from creation was insufficient to bring men into a saving relationship with this God. Something else had to be provided to bring them into this relationship, precisely why Jesus said, "I am **the way**, and the truth, and the life; **no one** comes to the Father but through Me. (Jn. 14:6 NASB) Therefore, it is essential that the nations are exposed to the God-man, Jesus Christ, in order to understand further who God really is in the face of Jesus Christ. Before Christ came, preliminary knowledge of Christ was provided through the sacrificial rituals in the Law of Moses, precisely why Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations before THE Light came into the world.

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6 NASB)

Notice, secondly, that those who **must** hear about Jesus Christ will **not** hear without the efforts of those who proclaim Christ, **preachers** (broadly defined). Contrary to the intuitive knowledge of a supreme being common to all men through the medium of creation, the knowledge of Christ, the incarnation of God, must be communicated as a message with particular content (contra Pinnock), the message that God has sent His son into the world to die for our sins and that all who believe in **Him** will be saved. However, if men and women can be saved apart from this gospel message, there is no need for any **preacher** to be sent. For belief in some kind of god is ubiquitous throughout the world in every culture, and if generic faith in God is sufficient unto salvation, as inclusivists like Pinnock maintain, then Christian missionary endeavor is a superfluous waste of time, money, and people. But Paul didn't think so.

Implicit in the necessity of the messenger, **the preacher**, is that there will be **sufficient** information about the Christ communicated to facilitate salvation. Paul believed that sufficient communication did not require **exhaustive and perfect** communication. After all, God chose to communicate the message of salvation in Christ through flawed human vessels, not angels. But He would assure that the message, though not exhaustive or perfectly communicated, would be sufficient to communicate the truth about God in Christ. In the same sense, He has providentially protected and transmitted His word, the Bible, throughout the ages by the medium of human vessels inspired by the Holy Spirit; and this Bible has been translated—imperfectly though sufficiently—into thousands of languages resulting in the phenomenal growth of the church. Our evangelism and missiology are not infallibly inspired, but Paul believed that these imperfect evangelists sent by an imperfect church would communicate the message of salvation clearly enough to bring men to God.

At the same time, he believed that this message could be sufficiently distorted to such an extent that it would not communicate the truth about Christ or qualify as the gospel. Some of the Christians in Asia Minor were being duped by Judaizers who were teaching salvation by works rather than grace.

But *it was* because of the **false** brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, **in order to bring us into bondage**.⁵ But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that **the truth of the gospel** would remain with you. (Gal. 2:4-5 NASB)

But when I saw that they were **not straightforward about the truth of the gospel**, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? (Gal. 2:14 NASB)

In Paul's view, there was **the truth of the gospel** which brought **liberty** as well as **false brethren** preaching something other than the true gospel leading to **bondage**. Apparently, then, there was the necessity of remaining true to the original message communicated through the apostles. Anything else was a **false** message which would not facilitate salvation. Yet, Pinnock would have us to believe that "the issue for God is not the **content** of theology but the **reality** of faith... What God really cares about is faith and not theology, trust and not orthodoxy." This is true to a point. God does not require perfect, exhaustive orthodoxy from those who believe; but it is obvious on the surface that He discriminates between that which is essentially and fundamentally false and

that which is essentially and fundamentally true. To insist otherwise makes utter nonsense of Paul's insistence on theological accuracy in conveying the gospel message.

Paul was not alone among the apostles for setting a minimum standard of orthodoxy. Peter, admitting the difficulty of understanding some of Paul's scholarly treatment of the Christian faith, nevertheless agreed that Paul's writings were inspired with the rest of Scripture, and that those who distorted his teaching did so to their own judgment.

and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,¹⁶ as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, **which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.** (2 Pet. 3:15-16 NASB)

Likewise, the Apostle John warned his audience that whoever failed to abide in the apostolic tradition concerning the person and work of Christ forfeited a relationship with God and acceptance in the body of Christ.

Anyone who goes too far and **does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.**¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and **do not give him a greeting;**¹¹ for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. (2 Jn. 1:9-11 NASB)

Doubtless, John was not requiring a high level of theological sophistication, but rather a basic understanding of the fundamental tenets of the person and work of Christ without which Christianity cannot be distinguished from any other faith.

God's arm is not too short that he cannot save (Ps. 44: 3), and it is no limitation upon God to say that He will save people **only** in the manner which is expressly stated in the Holy Scriptures. And this is the crux of the matter—**by what authority do we claim that there is any other way, or by any other name, to be saved other than the one plainly given to us in the Bible?** It is conventional "wisdom" that claims God would be unfair for damning sincere Muslims, Buddhists, animists, et al. But we have already covered this objection from Romans 1. Everyone knows about the true God, but not sufficiently unto salvation. Is there any other **name**—Allah or Lewis' Tash in *The Last Battle*—that God will recognize as an acceptable substitute for the name of Christ simply because the worshipper is sincerely committed to this name? None. This leads me to the second implication of Romans 1 for missions and evangelism.

B. We should not be ashamed of the simplicity of the gospel.

We might wonder why Paul says that he is not **ashamed** of the gospel. Why would anyone be ashamed of it? Apparently, some Roman believers were; otherwise, Paul would not have mentioned it. The historical context of this statement is made more understandable from 1 Cor. 1: 18-21. Like the Roman church, the Corinthian church lived under the pressures of Greco-Roman culture and its derision of the gospel as **foolishness**.

¹⁸For the word of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."

²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God **made foolish** the wisdom of the world?

²¹For since **in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God**, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (1 Cor. 1:18-21 NASB)

By examining this text along with Romans 1, we conclude that although unbelievers know God, they do not know him at the same time. They know who he is and something of his nature and being, but their knowledge of these things will not lead them to an understanding of how they can be in a right relationship with God, to know him sufficiently and efficiently in order to be saved. General revelation does not reveal God's plan of salvation.

In verse 21, Paul says that man's **wisdom** did not lead him to a saving knowledge of God. Creation efficiently and sufficiently revealed the nature of God. Man's conscience—also part of this creation—revealed the holiness of God and man's guilt and future punishment for violating His law. But man's sin rendered him incapable of coming to the **proper conclusion**:

- (1) that he must worship and serve exclusively the true God made known in creation
- (2) that he must be grateful to God
- (3) that he must repent of his violations of God's law revealed in his conscience and throw himself at God's mercy for forgiveness and grace.

Romans 1 shows that men have not, and will never, come to **this conclusion** through unaided human reasoning. Paul suggests no reason for optimism in the entire passage.

But in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul indicates that it was never God's intention in the first place that man would come to the proper conclusion without the aid of **special** revelation.

"In the wisdom of God" has been interpreted to mean "in the midst of the manifestation of God in creation". That is, man was surrounded by God's wisdom which was displayed in the wonders of creation, including man himself. Despite this display of wisdom, men did not read it correctly and did not come to know God. This is the interpretation of Charles Hodge, Calvin, Meyers, and others. Albert Barnes in his *Notes* acknowledges this as the most common interpretation, but rejects it in favor of another one, as does Gordon Fee.

"In the wisdom of God" may also be interpreted as God's **ordination** or **plan**. God never intended that men's observation of creation through unaided human reasoning would result in salvation. If human observation and reasoning had reached that destination, it would have produced the very thing the gospel was **designed** to destroy, the pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency of man. So then, **to forestall any opportunity for boasting**, God ordained a means of being right with Him which eliminated any occasion for boasting. This, of course, begs the question of the necessity of the atoning work of Christ. Was there any other method of saving us at God's disposal? The answer would require a lengthy discussion, but the short answer is no.

There simply was no other way for God to be both just and justifier of believers, and Christ's testimony is very clear on this point (Lk. 24: 16).

Paul asserts that it was within the province of God's own wisdom that he so arranged things. He does not explain how so here, but the reason seems clear. A God discovered by human wisdom will be both a projection of human fallenness and a source of human pride, and this constitutes the worship of the creature, not the Creator. The gods of the "wise" are seldom gracious to the undeserving, and they tend to make considerable demands on the ability of people to understand them; hence they become gods only for the elite and "deserving" (Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 72-73, emphasis mine).

This interpretation is consistent with the context of Paul's argument throughout 1 Cor. 1: 18-31 in which he develops the **antithesis** between the **wisdom** of man and the **foolishness** of the gospel. If men had had their way, they would have devised an entirely different method of salvation based upon one of two things. For the Jews, God's favor would be earned through keeping the law. For the Greeks (as well as for eastern mystics like Gautama Buddha) ultimate reality, purpose, and meaning would have been understood through philosophical speculation. Paul was well-acquainted with the failure of his own people who had missed the righteousness of God by manufacturing a righteousness based on law-keeping. He was equally familiar with all the philosophical schools of Athens from Plato and Aristotle to Zeno's stoicism. All the philosophers and philosophical schools had failed in pointing men to God, leading Paul to say,

²⁰ Where is the **wise man**? Where is the **scribe**? Where is the **debater** of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

²⁷ but God has chosen the **foolish things** of the world to **shame the wise**, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to **shame the things which are strong**,

²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

²⁹ **so that no man may boast before God.**

So, for four thousand years from Adam to Christ (I am a six-day creationist), God conducted a test of man's reasoning to see if it would come to a positive end—i.e. a **saving knowledge** of God (cf. Barnes' comment below). The result of this test was never in doubt; yet, God proved experimentally that men would consistently fail to put 2 and 2 together to make 4. Even the Old Covenant administration with Israel was a foreordained, purposeful, methodological failure in bringing men to God but a success in proving that even in the best of revelatory circumstances amidst the miracles of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, Israel still would not, and could not, keep His law because of inherent sin (see Hebrews 8 as well as Paul's statement of the law's failure in Romans 8: 3, "For what the law could not do, **weak** as it was through the flesh, God *did*.")) Thus, a new administration of grace was necessary which consistently solely of the proclamation of a "foolish" message, first through the NT prophets and apostles, and now through the missionary outreach of the church, the only chosen mediums revealed in the Bible. Let me repeat: If the Judaistic method of attempting to be right with God through law-keeping (the favored method of most, if not all, other world religions) failed to bring the Jews to salvation, then upon what basis do we claim that any other system of knowledge will be acceptable?

Likewise, even Plato and Aristotle—quite possibly the greatest minds of human history—failed to bring mankind to an understanding of meaning, purpose, and the underlying justification for human morality and virtue. The history of western philosophy is the history of dead-ends, failure and self-contradiction. Barnes comments:

(1.) It was desirable that the powers of man should be *fully tried* before the new plan was introduced, in order to show that it was not dependent on human wisdom, that it was not originated by man, and that there was really need of such an interposition. (2.) Because *sufficient time* had been furnished to make the experiment. An opportunity had been given for four thousand years, and still it had failed. (3.) Because the experiment had been made in the most favourable circumstances. The human faculties had had time to ripen and expand; one generation had had an opportunity of profiting by the observation of its predecessor; and the most mighty minds had been brought to bear on the subject. If the sages of the east [*e.g. Buddha in the 5th century BC*], and the profound philosophers of the west [*e.g. Plato and Aristotle of the 4th century BC*], had not been able to come to the true knowledge of God, it was in vain to hope that more profound minds could be brought to bear on it, or that more careful investigation would be bestowed on it. The experiment had been fairly made and the result was before the world (*Barnes Notes, 1 Corinthians*, p. 17).

This is a profound statement from a famous biblical commentator, and it is a partial explanation of why God waited four thousand years from Adam to become incarnate in human flesh. It was to provide tangible proof that men in their frail wisdom could not find their way to God, although they **should** have been able to do so and were **culpable** for failing. In His sovereign initiative, God the Spirit must hold them by the hand like little children and lead them to His Son, precisely why Jesus said that unless one becomes like a child, he would not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mk. 10: 15). Likewise, this interpretation connects with Jesus' insistence throughout his ministry that unless the Father sovereignly draws men to the Son, they **will not** come to him. Indeed, God has hidden the "things" pertaining to the kingdom of God from those who are "wise and intelligent" in their own eyes, but has revealed them to "infants" (Matt. 11: 25). All those whom the Father gives the Son will most certainly come to him in saving faith (Jn. 6: 39).

I have not detoured into the doctrine of election in my argument for Christian exclusivism. This would take considerable time. However, it should go without saying that God has not ordained the **end** (salvation) without also ordaining the **means to the end** (the faithful preaching of the gospel). If God is sovereign, and if He is able to accomplish the salvation of sinners, it stands to reason that He will do so without relinquishing one ounce of his glory to any other **name** or **religion** under heaven but that of Jesus Christ. Any other means is unthinkable and unworthy of a sovereign God who will bring all of his sheep into **one** flock (the church) with **one** Shepherd (Jn. 10: 16). All of his elect will hear **Christ's** voice, and no other, and will follow **Christ** (Jn. 10: 27), and no other. God's sovereign control eliminates the need to reduce the message of the gospel to the lowest common denominator of truth in order to save that small minority of people in the world who are sincere in their quest to know God. As if to say, "Well, most people will never hear the gospel; but at least if they have a sincere desire to know God, they will qualify as recipients of Christ's atonement." I have already addressed this question under Romans 1. Men already know about the true God and continue to reject him. But if the former discussion does not satisfy, then I will argue that the doctrine of God's sovereignty in election eliminates any

need to reduce the claims of the gospel to lower standards. If God has chosen someone to salvation, He has also chosen him to be saved through the means revealed only in the Bible; and the clarity of this message will most assuredly be revealed to him in due time. But is this message clear?

Does Scripture itself warrant this doctrine of the clarity of God's written Word?

I will consider this question in terms of the lordship attributes. First, in relation to God's *control*: God is fully in control of his communications to human beings. When he intends to communicate with a human being, he is always able to do it successfully. But another name for successful communication is *clarity*. An unclear word is one that does not succeed, that fails to accomplish its purpose. But we know that God's word always accomplishes its purpose (Isa. 55: 10-11). Therefore, his word is always clear.

Why, then, do people fail to understand God's word? The ultimate answer is that God did not intend for them to understand. Note again God's commission to Isaiah, in 6: 9-10. God's word in Isaiah's mouth, oddly enough, brings dullness and a lack of understanding, not complete understanding. Jesus quotes this saying in Matthew 13: 14-15 to explain why he speaks in parables. Note also verses 10-13...

Jesus says here that he intentionally speaks in parables, which enlighten the disciples as to the mysteries of the kingdom, but hide those mysteries from those outside the circle. His words are clear to one group, unclear to another. They have exactly the power he intends them to have. He intends to communicate to one group, so to them his word must be clear. To the other group, he does not intend to fully communicate; so to them the word is not clear.

The clarity of the Word, therefore, is selective. It is for some, not all. It is for those with whom God intends to fully communicate (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pp. 204-205).

Man's knowledge of God will always fall short of the necessary requirement of being in right relationship with God, however brilliant or zealous he may be. This failed test is now part of general revelation called "world history" and part of the special revelation called the Bible, namely, the history of the Jewish people who were zealous for God but **not in accordance with knowledge**.

We should not be ashamed of our simple gospel; for in this "weak", "foolish" gospel, the wisdom and strength of God are demonstrated to be superior to man's reasoning. In the gospel God has joined together the educated and the uneducated, the brilliant and the mentally weak, the parent and the child (Matt. 19: 14). He has also brought together the rich, the poor, and all those in-between. And because of this, we should not allow our carnal desires for comfort, class status, and reputation for learning cause us to create churches which are mere replicas of the world. We should care nothing if the world regards us as poor and foolish, for apart from regeneration Christ will **always** appear this way to the world. Indeed, it was God's **intent** in the first place that man would not discover the way to Him through superior intellect and ethical performance. He has chosen the insignificant of this world to shame those who are wise in their own eyes.

Had God consulted us for wisdom we could have given him a more workable plan, something that would attract the sign-seeker and the lover of wisdom. As it is, in his own wisdom he left us out of the consultation...Not from the world's "beautiful people," but from the lower classes, the "nobodies," God chose those who for the most part would make up his new people. Thus they themselves evidence the foolishness of God that confounds the wise...By bringing "good news to the poor" through his Son, God has forever aligned

himself with the disenfranchised; at the same time he has played out before our eyes his own overthrow of the world's false standards. Every middle-class or upper-class domestication of the gospel is therefore a betrayal of that gospel (Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 77, 78, 82; emphasis mine).

I have emphasized Fee's words, "for the most part", to point out that God has not left out the rich, educated, and members of the elite class. However, Paul clearly indicates that among the Corinthians, and most likely in all the churches, "not many" fit into those categories.

C. Our point of contact with unbelievers is the knowledge of God we share with him.

When speaking with unbelievers, the Christian is not placed in the predicament of proving to the unbeliever that God **probably** exists, followed by convincing proofs of his existence which are then exposed to the unbeliever's autonomous reasoning and rejection. To repeat John Frame,

The unbeliever...ought to believe in God without any...argument at all, **simply on the basis of God's revelation in creation** (Rom. 1: 18-21...). If our task is simply to put the unbeliever into a position where he **ought** to believe, then we are best advised **to do nothing**, for he is in that position **already** (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 63).

If we needed a persuasive argument for the existence of God, is it not strange that God never gave us one within the pages of Scripture? Instead of an argument, we have declarations that the heavens are declaring the glory of God (Ps. 19: 1), that only fools say that there is no God (Ps. 14: 1; 53: 1), and that men already know that God exists and what he is like (Rom. 1). It is not an argument for God that the unbeliever needs, but a reminder of what he already knows and suppresses in his unrighteousness.

However, this does not imply that the use of evidence is illegitimate, as if our argument is a small closed circle, "God exists because God exists" or "God exists because the Scriptures say that He exists." This would be unscriptural since Paul's argument in Romans 1 is that there is **clear evidence** for the existence and attributes of God exhibited in natural revelation. The problem is not lack of clear evidence; it is unbelief and suppression of God-given knowledge. As Van Til would put it, every fact of the universe cries out for the existence of God, for there is no intelligibility in any fact which cannot be related to all other facts and eventually back to the God who created them. In other words, if God does not exist, then people, places, things, and events are random collisions of molecules which have come together by chance rather than by design. And while materialism may be the predominant philosophical opinion among unbelievers, including most scientists, there is not a single one of them who can live by this "faith" practically.

Most of them believe in some kind of **morality** and some kind of **human dignity**. They will step on a cockroach but risk their lives pulling a small child out of a burning building, although according to their materialistic philosophy, both are products of chance and, therefore, meaningless. They will also bury their loved ones when they die, but not cockroaches. Many will be faithful husbands and loving fathers. Most of them believe in some form of **love, kindness**, and so forth. However, none but none believers can philosophically **account** for such beliefs.

Love, kindness, human dignity, and morality are not material things which can be observed under a microscope; yet, in order to entertain any meaning for life, they must believe by faith that such things exist. (I will excuse, for the moment, the Muslim belief in Allah who presumably spoke through Mohammed. Then the argument is not about the existence of God but who he is and which “holy book” is really God’s communication with men—a lengthy discussion. In short, I would summarize the argument by saying that the Bible will stand up against any other so-called communication.)

Unbelievers also believe in **cause and effect** which cannot be accounted for on the basis of a random collision of molecules. Scientific laws are mental constructs, not material things which may be observed. Although we may observe men walking down the stairs a thousand times, we may not deduce from empiricism alone that it would be safer the next time to take the stairs rather than jump out of a third story window. Logical inference is immaterial and unobservable.

Dodging the existence and attributes of God, as well as the logical inferences from an intricately designed universe, is like dodging an avalanche. You can try to escape the direct path of an avalanche, or deny that it exists, but it will catch up with you and smother you in its reality. Based on the inescapable reality of God, we may challenge unbelievers with the logical consequences of their belief that there is no god, and that even if a god exists, he is not the God of the Bible; for the God of the Bible who has spoken to us in his Son is the only proper destination of any evangelism.

D. Salvation in No Other Name

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, ² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. ⁵ On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; ⁶ and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. ⁷ When they had placed them in the center, they *began to inquire*, "**By what power, or in what name, have you done this?**" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, ⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene**, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—**by this name this man stands here before you in good health.** ¹¹ "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*. ¹² "And there is salvation in no one else; for **there is no other name under heaven** that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:1-12 NASB)

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (Exod. 20:7 NAU)

"Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let *them* be heard from your mouth. (Exod. 23:13 NAU)

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." (Exod. 33:19 NAU)

-- for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-- (Exod. 34:14 NAU)

"You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones.³ I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. (Lev. 20:2-3 NAU)

"You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the LORD who sanctifies you,³³ who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the LORD." (Lev. 22:32-33 NAU)

The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. (Now his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.)¹² They put him in custody so that the command of the LORD might be made clear to them.¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,¹⁴ "Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him.¹⁵ "You shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he will bear his sin.¹⁶ Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. (Lev. 24:11-16 NAU)

'You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (Deut. 5:11 NAU)

"You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.¹⁴ "You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,¹⁵ for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. (Deut. 6:13-15 NAU)

"But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. (Deut. 12:5 NAU)

"You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. (Deut. 14:23 NAU)

"You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name. (Deut. 16:2 NAU)

but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt. (Deut. 16:6 NAU)

and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. (Deut. 16:11 NAU)

'But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' (Deut. 18:20 NAU)

"And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, *from* nations and their gods? (2 Sam. 7:23 NAU)

"Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name.' (1 Ki. 5:5 NAU)

Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. (1 Ki. 18:21 NAU)

"Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.²⁴ "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."²⁵ So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*."²⁶ Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. (1 Ki. 18:23-26 NAU)

He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." (2 Ki. 21:4 NAU)

Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. (2 Ki. 21:7 NAU)

David said to Solomon, "My son, I had intended to build a house to the name of the LORD my God.⁸ "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed *so* much blood on the earth before Me.'⁹ 'Behold, a son will be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.¹⁰ 'He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.' (1 Chr. 22:7-10 NAU)

And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. (Ps. 9:10 NAU)

Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God. (Ps. 20:7 NAU)

I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. (Ps. 22:22 NAU)

O magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together. (Ps. 34:3 NAU)

If we had forgotten the name of our God Or extended our hands to a strange god, (Ps. 44:20 NAU)

I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever. (Ps. 45:17 NAU)

For You have heard my vows, O God; You have given *me* the inheritance of those who fear Your name. (Ps. 61:5 NAU)

How long, O God, will the adversary revile, *And* the enemy spurn Your name forever? (Ps. 74:10 NAU)

Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled, And a foolish people has spurned Your name. (Ps. 74:18 NAU)

Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You, And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name. (Ps. 79:6 NAU)

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake. (Ps. 79:9 NAU)

Fill their faces with dishonor, That they may seek Your name, O LORD. ¹⁷ Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever, And let them be humiliated and perish, ¹⁸ That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth. (Ps. 83:16-18 NAU)

Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. (Ps. 96:8 NAU)

who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal? (Jer. 23:27 NAU)

"BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASSED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. ¹⁹ "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. ²⁰ "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY. ²¹ "AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE." (Matt. 12:18-21 NAU)

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." (Matt. 18:20 NAU)

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶ "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷ "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ "But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (Matt. 24:4-9 NAU)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20 NAU)

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. (Matt. 6:9 NAU)

"You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (Matt. 10:22 NAU)

'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.' (Acts 2:21 NAU)

Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NAU)

But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-- walk!" (Acts 3:6 NAU)

"And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:16 NAU)

When they had placed them in the center, they *began to* inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health.¹¹ "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*.¹² "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:7-12 NAU)

"But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name."¹⁸ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:17-18 NAU)

saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (Acts 5:28 NAU)

They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them.⁴¹ So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. (Acts 5:40-41 NAU)

and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; (Acts 9:14-15 NAU)

"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10:43 NAU)

"Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.¹⁵ "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,¹⁶ 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT,¹⁷ SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'¹⁸ SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO. (Acts 15:14-18 NAU)

men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 15:26 NAU)

She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. (Acts 16:18 NAU)

Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13 NAU)

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11 NAU)

which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:20-21 NAU)

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11 NAU)

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects."²³ "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."²⁴ "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'²⁹ "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man."³⁰ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:22-31 NAU)

For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.⁶ But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),⁷ or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."⁸ But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.¹¹ For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (Rom. 10:5-11 NAU)

