

REFUSING GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

REFUSING THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

The Bible teaches us that the God of the Bible is a great Giver; that God so loved a world of enemies, ungodly sinners, that He gave His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to suffer, bleed and die on Calvary's cross (even numbered Him with transgressors), for the eternal redemption of lost, condemned sinners. Yes, God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The Lord Jesus said, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" . . . "I lay down My life for the sheep." Then He said that He came to give His life a ransom for many. Later on we are told that the "due time" for others came; that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all. (I Timothy 2:4 to 7). (I John 2:2). The apostle Paul made it very personal in Galatians 2:20, saying that Christ "loved me and gave Himself for me." Then in Ephesians 5:26 to 28 we learn that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for the Church, and why he did. The Bible sums it up in this language: "The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

In the last Epistle written by the apostle Paul before he departed to be with Christ we read that the believing sinner is saved, "not according to our works, but according to God's own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (II Timothy 1:9). It should not require much thought to know that a person need not work or be religious to obtain a free gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves . . . THE GIFT OF GOD . . . NOT OF WORKS . . . LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST." (Ephesians 2:8 to 10). Boasting is excluded by the law of faith. (Romans 3:27).

When we think of God's great, love gift, His Son on the cross, we know that if He had not been born, we would not have a real Christmas message to proclaim; but if He had not suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God (I Peter 3:18), we would have no good news for lost sinners. Let us never forget that Christ was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that He might, by God's grace, taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9); that Christ died for our sins (I Corinthians 15:1 to 4). When we read in God's Bible, Romans 5:20, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," we should think of Isaiah 1:18 and Psalm 51:7 . . . "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" . . . "wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." When Christ shed His precious blood on the cross He took the place of Barabbas, the thief, who was also a notable criminal, a murderer, an anarchist. Think of the eternal, omnipotent, Divine, sinless Christ dying and such a criminal being set free. This is to teach us that no person on this earth is so bad, has committed so many sins, that he or she cannot be saved by the grace of God and faith in the perfect redemptive work of the perfect Christ. But the Bible teaches just as clearly and dogmatically that no person is so good and moral and religious that he or she can be saved without the grace of God and faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, the adults of this world are divided into just two groups; "dead sinners" and "living saints." The dead sinner becomes a living saint by accepting God's gift, not by his good deeds or his religious act. We should all have sense enough to know that it is a great sin to refuse or reject God's gift. The penalty is great.

PAUL THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST FOR GENTILES
(Ephesians 3:1)

We quoted I Timothy 2:6, that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, and II Timothy 1:9, that the believer is saved, not according to his works but according to God's grace and purpose given us before the world began. It is both interesting and significant to note that each of these statements is followed by Paul's testimony; "WHEREUNTO I am an apostle and a preacher and teacher of the GENTILES." In Colossians 1:27 we learn of the mystery among the Gentiles, "the dispensation of God" (Colossians 1:25), "the mystery" (Colossians 1:26) "hid from ages and from generations": and in Colossians 1:23 we again read, "WHEREUNTO I, Paul, am made a minister" (also Colossians 1:25). Because Paul was a faithful steward of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4:1 to 4), because Paul knew that members of the Body of Christ were established by the preaching of his (Paul's) gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25), because Paul knew Whom he believed and that that omnipotent One was able to keep him with his deposit (II Timothy 1:12), Paul was faithful unto death, suffering as an "evil-doer" in chains (II Timothy 2:9), and dying, as he had lived, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for Gentiles."

Perhaps, you have compared Romans 15:8 with Romans 15:16 and Romans 11:13: "Jesus Christ 'WAS' a Minister of the CIRCUMCISION, to CONFIRM promises made unto the fathers" . . . Paul was a minister of Jesus Christ to the GENTILES" (Romans 15:16) . . . "For I speak to you GENTILES, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify (glorify) mine office." Something of this same difference is recorded in Galatians 2:7 to 9, in the ministries of Paul and Peter. In Matthew 4:23 we read that Jesus, on earth, was proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom" in the synagogues. In Acts 20:24 Paul said Christ was sending him to proclaim "the gospel of the grace of God." In Matthew 10:5 to 7 we read Christ's instructions to Peter and his fellow-apostles: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles." In Acts 22:21 we learn that Christ said to Paul: "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." When the apostle Paul began this special ministry he was abiding at Antioch in Syria, outside the land of the Jews, and his first missionary journey took him to Antioch in Pisidia, where he attended the Sabbath synagogue services of the Jews. (Acts 13:14 and 15). Paul was given the opportunity to address the religious Jews. He told them that God RAISED UP Christ, in incarnation, to be Israel's Saviour (Acts 13:23); then God RAISED UP Christ AGAIN to give unto them "the sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:33 to 37). This is what Peter told the Jews, in somewhat different language, in Acts 5:29 to 32. Then Paul told the Jews that they could not be justified by the law of Moses; but from all things they could be justified by believing in Christ. (Acts 13:38 and 39). Although Paul followed this message of "justification by faith without the law" with a solemn warning (Acts 13:40 and 41), Israel did not heed; but rather committed the sin, which Christ had said, in Matthew 12:31 and 32, would be unpardonable. They blasphemed as they resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:45 and 18:5). The Holy Spirit was sent by Christ to convict the world of sin, because they believed not on Christ. (John 16:7 to 10). Israel continued to stumble; rejecting the message of Acts 13:39, (Romans 9:31 to 33), until they had a GREAT FALL. (Romans 11:11).

When Israel blasphemed after hearing Paul's threefold testimony in the synagogue; that God had raised up Christ, in incarnation, to be Israel's Saviour; that God had raised up Christ, in

resurrection, to be Israel's Saviour; that the Jews in that synagogue and all other Jews could be justified completely by faith in Jesus Christ; Paul uttered words, most significant, when he said to Israel; "it was necessary that the Word of God should FIRST have been spoken unto you (and this was about twelve years after the death of Christ and the pronouncement of Matthew 23:37 to 39 and 33); but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES." Shortly thereafter a multitude of Greeks believed. (Acts 14:1). Then Paul returned to Antioch in Syria, his temporary headquarters (for several years), and there he rehearsed all that God had done and how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. (Acts 14:27). When did Paul say, "LO WE TURN TO THE GENTILES"? Why did Paul say, "LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES"? When did God open the door of faith unto the Gentiles? Was it before or after Paul said, "LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES"? (This was about twelve years after Pentecost.) About seven years after Pentecost Peter said, that it was an unlawful thing for Jews and Gentiles to fellowship (Acts 10:28). The scattered Jews, who were disciples of Christ, preached the Word to none but Jews only. (Acts 11:19). The Christian Jews were displeased when and because Peter preached to Cornelius.

CHRIST CAME UNTO HIS OWN . . . HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT

Christ's Own was "ISRAEL." Christ was born, "RAISED UP" (Luke 1:69), to deliver Israel and save Israel from Gentile domination and from all their enemies; that they might serve God without fear all the days of their life (Luke 1:67 to 77); to reign over the house of Israel forever. (Luke 1:30 to 33). This is why those disciples, after the death of Christ, said, "We trusted it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24:21). It is not during the days that Christ is rejected as Israel's Messiah, King and Deliverer, when David's throne is unoccupied, that we have God's authority to preach "PEACE ON EARTH," the favorite Christmas verse of so many (Luke 2:14). The rejected Christ asked this question: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? NO." (Luke 12:51). Why? Because Christ was not received as King and Prince of Peace by Israel (Isaiah 9:6 and 7). Christ said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with." (Luke 12:50). This referred to his suffering on the cross. Christ was going to the cross of Calvary and not to the throne of David; so "PEACE ON EARTH" was postponed, except as individual Jews and Gentiles go by faith to Calvary (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:14), and then are at peace with God and can enjoy the peace of God. (Romans 5:1; Colossians 3:15 and Philippians 4:7). Concerning Israel's national redemption and the postponed "PEACE ON EARTH," the Lord Jesus said it was because Israel did not know the things that belonged to their peace and the day of their visitation. (Luke 12:42 to 44). Some day Israel will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35); for the Son of man will come in the cloud with power and great glory for Israel's redemption (Luke 21:27 to 33). Israel is to be saved after this period and age of special Divine favor for Gentiles has run its course. (Romans 11:25 and 26).

WHY ISRAEL REJECTED THE SON OF MAN

It may be somewhat confusing to some people, nevertheless it is most interesting, to read in Acts 4:27 and 28, Acts 3:18, Acts 2:23, Acts 13:29, Matthew 21:42 and I Peter 1:18 to 21, that when wicked men killed the Prince of Life, the Lord Jesus, they did none other things than God's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Therefore, three great facts should be known . . .

first, that Israel's sin against the Son of man was a pardonable sin (Matthew 12:31 and 32 . . . John 12:37 to 41 . . . Matthew 26:24 . . . Luke 24:46 . . . John 3:14 . . . 12:27 to 33) . . . second, if Israel had not killed the Prince of Life, He would not have died for our sins, "ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES" . . . third, because Christ died as He did and when He did by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23 and 3:18), it was right that Christ should pray on the cross, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34), and then tell Peter to preach the good news to Israel that God would charge their great sin to "IGNORANCE," and send Christ back for their national redemption, if Israel would repent. (Acts 3:12 to 21). Christ came to be sinned against. Therefore, Israel's rejection of Christ, in incarnation, would be forgiven. The Stone thus rejected by the builders was the Lord's doing. (Matthew 21:42).

In John 3:14 we learn, that "the Son of man must be lifted up." In Matthew 12:40 and 41, after the Lord Jesus had told Israel the difference between rejecting Him, in incarnation, and rejecting Him in resurrection, by sinning against the Holy Spirit, He stated in plain language that the great sign to them would be that the Son of man would be in the earth for three days and three nights, that the men of Nineveh, who repented after Jonah had been three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, would rise up against them (Israel) in judgment. When Israel resisted the Holy Spirit, indwelling and controlling Stephen, Israel was told that the Son of man was standing in heaven. (Acts 7:51 to 60). That sin against the Holy Spirit is explained in Acts 5:31 and 32. In Acts 5:30 Peter preached to Israel that God RAISED UP Christ, in incarnation, to be Israel's Saviour. In Acts 5:31 Peter preached that God RAISED UP Christ, in resurrection, to be Israel's Prince and Saviour; to save them. Then one of the most important, interesting and significant statements in the Bible, Acts 5:32, the 'first mission of the Holy Spirit . . . to witness to Israel, that God RAISED UP Christ TWICE to be Israel's Saviour. Israel had had the great sign of Matthew 12:40 and 41; and Christ had been RAISED UP, in fulfillment of David's Prophecy, to take the throne of David. (Acts 2:27 to 33). Peter preached to Israel, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). This message had no place in the gospel of the grace of God for Gentiles, proclaimed by the apostle Paul, and of course has no place in this present "grace" dispensation.

So Israel killed the Prince of Life (Acts 3:12 to 15). Israel resisted the Holy Spirit and blasphemed (Acts 7:51 to 56; Acts 13:45; Acts 18:5). Israel fulfilled Christ's words, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Luke 19:14. Then Israel forbade the apostles to preach to the Gentiles. Then note what happened. (I Thessalonians 2:14 to 16).

ZACCHEUS UP IN THE TREE

All who have carefully read the story of little Zaccheus up the sycamore tree have found real interest in the story. In connection with that incident note the interesting and significant words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 19:9 and 10: "This day is salvation come to this house; forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham: for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." This certainly sounds like a wonderful Christmas message, that is, for "the sons of Abraham." But how about the poor, unfortunate, lost, condemned multitudes who were not sons of Abraham? So many Christians cannot understand why the Lord Jesus definitely commanded His messengers: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles." (Matthew 10:5 to 8). In Ephesians 2:11 and 12 we learn something of the status of the Gentiles during the years Christ was on earth as Jesus of Nazareth in the midst of Israel, doing wonderful things in the land of the

Jews (Acts 2:22 and Acts 10:38 and 39). At that time the Gentiles were aliens from Israel, far off from God, in the world having no hope, without God (“atheos”), “atheists.” But there is wonderful, good news for Gentiles in Ephesians 2:13 to 22 a most radical change after the FALL of God’s chosen, religious nation. In these verses in Ephesians we read that the Jews (the remnant according to the election of grace of Romans 11:5 and 6) and the far off Gentiles brought nigh by the blood of Christ, were reconciled in one Body by that cross; “you which were far off, and to them that were nigh.” Let us not forget that Ephesians was written after the Lord’s awful judgment upon Israel recorded in Acts 28:25 to 28 and more than thirty years after Christ’s plain statement in Matthew 15:24: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Now in connection with the publican in the sycamore tree, let us read from Ezekiel 34: for in this chapter we read some of the promises Christ was confirming to Israel. Now Ezekiel 34:11 to 13 and Ezekiel 34:22 to 28: “For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out . . . As a shepherd I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them . . . I will bring them to their own land . . . I will seek that which was lost . . . Therefore, will I save My flock, and I the Lord will be their God. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen . . . Ye flock of My pasture are men and I your God.” Remember Acts 13:23 that God raised up Christ to be Israel’s Saviour: also Acts 5:29 to 32. Remember Christ’s words: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24): and why salvation came to Zaccheus, the despised publican: he was a son of Abraham.

As we read the wonderful promises in Ezekiel in chapter thirty-four, thirty-six: and thirty-seven concerning Israel’s redemption and possession of their promised land under the reign of the true King David, surely we will not be stupid enough to believe that these prophecies foretell the truth of I Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 2:14 to 18, that believing Jews and believing Gentiles, reconciled by the blood of Christ, were to be baptized into the unpropheesied Body of Christ. Surely when we read in Romans 11:26 to 29, that all Israel will be saved, and why, we know that this salvation differs from the salvation during this reign and age of grace when all believers are members of the joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6, of “THE ONE NEW MAN” of Ephesians 2:15.

Romans 11:25 and 26 tell us when Ezekiel’s prophecies will be fulfilled concerning Israel, the land of Canaan and David’s throne.

In Luke 2:27 to 29, we find Christ in the arms of an Israelite who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. In Luke 23:50 to 53 we find Christ in the arms of an Israelite who was also waiting for the consolation of Israel. In Luke 1:67 to 80 we learn the true sense in which Christ was born for Israel’s redemption; not only to save individual Jews but to redeem that nation from Gentile political domination. The apostle Peter, in Acts 3:21, speaks of this as “the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.” So we better understand the expectation of Israel expressed by two of Christ’s disciples between Christ’s resurrection and ascension when they said, “We trusted it had been He Who should have redeemed Israel.”

HE BUILT A SYNAGOGUE

One of the most interesting and significant stories recorded in the Bible is found in Luke 7:1 to 12. There we read the account of a Gentile who was seeking the Lord Jesus in earnest. The Lord Jesus was not seeking that Gentile. That Gentile knew that Christ, in a very definite sense, was Israel’s Saviour, and as that Gentile was not a son of Abraham he requested some sons of

Abraham to intercede for him. The Gentile declared himself “unworthy.” . . . The sons of Abraham told Christ that the Gentile was worthy. Why? Because he loved the sons of Abraham, and had built them a synagogue.

Like the other Gentile of Mark 7:24 to 28 and Matthew 15:21 to 28, who received a blessing from the Lord Jesus while He was on earth, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law (Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 2:16 to 18), the Roman Gentile of Luke 7:1 to 12 was of “GREAT FAITH.” It is more than noteworthy that the Holy Spirit has told us concerning these two Gentiles in such detail, both being of great faith as well as of great humility, knowing that they had no covenant claim to deserve the Lord’s blessing. In Acts 10:38 and 39 Peter told another Gentile, who loved Israel and gave them money (Acts 10:22) of the mighty works that Christ on earth did in the land of the Jews. But when Christ ministered to the Gentile woman of Matthew 15 and Mark 7 He was outside the land of the Jews. Christ was not seeking the Gentiles. It would seem from Mark 7:24 that He was trying to hide from the Gentile woman who was determined to reach Him. The twelve apostles, in obedience to Matthew 10:5 to 8, certainly did not seek that poor, needy woman. Unless we understand the purpose of the earthly ministry of our Saviour, we might think that not only were the apostles cruel when they ask Christ to send the woman away, without the blessings she sought (Matthew 15:23), but that Christ Himself was cruel: He spoke of the Jews as “children” and as “sheep” and referred to Gentiles as “dogs.” What a difference! What happened to change the status of Gentiles, as recorded in Roman 10:12 and 3:22, “NO DIFFERENCE” . . . the great change as told in Ephesians 2:19? Peter had learned something of that great change at the time he uttered the words of Acts 15:9 to 11. But some seven years after the Lord Jesus died Peter declared that it was an unlawful thing for Jews to associate with Gentiles. (Acts 10:28). Peter received very special instructions from the Lord at that time that it was His will and program for Peter to go to Cornelius and preach, “in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of God” (Acts 10:34 and 35), a message quite different from the “grace” message the risen Christ revealed to Paul to proclaim, as recorded in Romans 4:4 and 5 and Titus 3:5 to 8 and Ephesians 2:8 and 9 and II Timothy 1:9, salvation and righteousness, the gift of God, by grace through faith without works of righteousness.

DID PETER SEEK GENTILES?

We cannot find in the Book of Acts the record that Peter or any of the apostles associated with him went out seeking Gentiles. Note Acts 12:19, concerning Peter; “he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode.” With the exception of Peter’s meeting with Paul in Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the statement of Acts 12:19 is the last we hear of Peter in the Book of Acts. There is no “ACTS” record of the missionary journeys of any of the Twelve to Gentiles outside the land of the Jews.

The Greek Gentile of Mark 7:24 to 28, the Roman Gentile of Luke 7:1 to 12, the Gentile, Cornelius, and the Roman Gentile of Acts 13:7, all were seeking the Lord.

What a change after Israel refused the wonderful gift of God, after Israel rejected Christ, first, in incarnation, and then, in resurrection. They committed the unpardonable sin, resisting and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and then forbidding the apostles to preach to the Gentiles. (I Thessalonians 2:14 to 16). When we teach that Christ came unto His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11), and know that Christ had to be lifted up (John 3:14), that Christ had to be in the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40 and 41), that Israel

could not believe, because Christ's suffering had to precede His glory (John 12:37 to 42; I Peter 1:11 and 12; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:24 to 28; Acts 3:18), even the babe in Christ should know that the FALL of Israel that brought reconciliation and the "grace" gospel, program and dispensation to the Gentiles, in the special ministry of the apostle Paul, did not take place when Israel rejected Christ, in incarnation, thereby committing their pardonable sin, but when they rejected Christ raised from the dead to be a Prince and a Saviour unto Israel, sinning against the Holy Spirit, not accepting His witness recorded in Acts 5:31 and 32.

Paul became the debtor to every kind of Gentile sinner, sent by Christ far hence to the "far-off-from God" heathen, alienated from the life of God.

Then Paul and his fellow-workers went to seek and to save the lost Gentiles, who were not sheep. Without religious observances, carnal ordinances or good works the Gentiles who were dead sinners became living saints by grace through faith; and brought nigh by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus they were identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glory, having all their sins forgiven according to God's riches of grace by Christ Jesus, Whom they no longer were to know after the flesh.

When and because of the FALL of God's religious nation, God brought an end to religion, and sent forth His ambassadors of reconciliation to beseech sinners to be saved.

This was not the Son of man seeking His lost sheep, in fulfillment of Ezekiel 34, but ambassadors of reconciliation, beseeching sinners (Gentiles), in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, because of Romans 5:9 to 11, and when and because Israel was cast away. (Romans 11:25). A great difference.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

We quoted Romans 15:8, that Jesus Christ on earth was a Minister to Israel preaching and doing that which God promised in the thirty-nine Books from Genesis to Malachi. Then we quoted Romans 15:16, Paul's special ministry to the Gentiles. Now let us compare Romans 15:8, Christ's prophesied ministry, as Jesus of Nazareth, under the law (Galatians 4:4 and Acts 2:22), to Israel, with Paul's testimony in Ephesians 3:8: "This grace is given that I should preach among the Gentiles the 'UNSEARCHABLE' (past-tracing-out) riches of Christ." "UNSEARCHABLE" is defined in the language of Colossians 1:26, as Divine truth, a Divine program and message, "which hath been hid from ages and from generations"; in Ephesians 3:9, "HID in God from the beginning of the world"; in Romans 16:25, "kept SECRET since the world began." Should not a babe in Christ know the difference between the prophesied ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, under the law, to Israel under the law, and the unprophesied ministry of the apostle Paul to Gentiles, not under the law? Christ on earth had a ministry of "CONFIRMATION" to Israel, accompanied by wonders and signs. (Acts 2:22 and Acts 10:38 and 39 and John 20:30 and 31). The twelve apostles before and (for some years) after the death of Christ had a ministry of "CONFIRMATION," accompanied by wonders and signs. (Hebrews 2:3 and 4 and Acts 5:12). Paul's first ministry was a ministry of "CONFIRMATION." (Acts 26:22; Acts 9:20; Galatians 1:23). Paul's gospel to sinners was in fulfillment of Prophecy. (I Corinthians 15:1 to 4). Later on Paul was given, by the risen Christ, a ministry of "REVELATION," a message and program concerning which all of God's former prophets and apostles had been both silent and ignorant; "kept secret since the world began." The "CONFIRMATION" message was spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:21; Luke 1:70; Acts 3:24; Acts 2:16; Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37; Acts 10:43; Acts

15:15; Acts 13:29 and 30). For some years after Paul was given from heaven his "REVELATION" ministry he continued with his "CONFIRMATION" ministry, and because the saving gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 was in fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 13:29 and 30), signs and wonders continued in the ministry of Paul, even among the Gentiles (Romans 15:18; II Corinthians 12:12; Acts 19:11 and 12). For a limited times sign-gifts were given to the members of the Body of Christ. (I Corinthians 12:8 to 13; I Corinthians 12:28; I Corinthians 13:8 and 13). After the FALL of Israel and the full revelation of "the dispensation of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9), "the mystery of God's will" (Ephesians 1:9), "the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 1:19 and 20), "the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3 and 4), after the mixed "CONFIRMATION" and "REVELATION" message and program was superseded by the unmixed "REVELATION" ministry in Paul's last Epistles, signs had purpose, "THE MYSTERY" completed the Word of God (Colossians 1:25 and 26), signs and sign-gifts, including tongues and the gifts of healing, together with religious ceremonies passed away. This does not mean that God does not heal in answer to prayer. But when we read that all of the sign-gifts were practiced by the Corinthians, many of whom were carnal, defrauding their brethren, eating meat offered to idols, who continued as babes in Christ (I Corinthians 3:1 to 4; I Corinthians 6:5 to 7; I Corinthians 8:10; I Corinthians 5:1), we should know that sign-gifts were given to the least spiritual and faithful of the early Church. We should also know that Christians who teach that they would be in evidence, if God's people were as spiritual and as faithful as the saints at Corinth, are very much mistaken. During the years that Paul was preaching his "CONFIRMATION" message his hearers could search the Scriptures (from Genesis to Malachi) to confirm his "CONFIRMATION" message. (Acts 17:11). But they could not confirm his "REVELATION" message by searching the Scriptures, because that truth was then "UNSEARCHABLE." Now we can SEARCH all of the Scriptures, including Paul's PRISON Epistles, and know the difference between the prophesied truth concerning Christ, Israel and the kingdom of heaven, and the unprophesied truth concerning Christ and His Body, God's eternal purpose, Divine truth first revealed to and through the apostle born out of due time, Christ's prisoner unto the Gentiles. Now abideth faith, hope and love. And God would have every Christian on this earth to first know, and then make known, "the dispensation of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9), the eternal purpose of God, as revealed in Ephesians 1:3 to 5; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 5:25 to 28; Romans 8:28 to 30; Colossians 1:24 to 26; II Timothy 1:9. There is no place for signs and religious ceremonies in this present age and reign and dispensation of grace. If Galatians 2:21 was true during the years before the full and final revelation of "THE MYSTERY," how much more is this true today. Let us join with Paul in his prayers of Colossians 4:3 and 4, Ephesians 6:19 and 20 and Ephesians 1:15 to 19, for open doors, open mouths and open hearts and minds for the proclamation and reception of the most wonderful truth for saints in all of the Bible.

And this closing word for Gentiles, "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." (Romans 11:21). Remember the warning of the wrath of God, in Hebrews 10:29 to 31 and John 3:36 and II Thessalonians 1:7 to 10, upon both Jews and Gentiles who refuse God's Son and His precious shed blood. For all such, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Read carefully those most important words, significant words recorded in Romans 11:30 to 32, learn why Gentiles receive Divine mercy, and the truth that God permitted all things that happened, that He might have mercy upon all. The free gift of God is eternal life, Divine righteousness, sanctification, Divine sonship, the Holy Spirit, membership in the Body of Christ, identification with the crucified, resurrected, glorified Christ in an eternal

and inseparable union, eternal glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, all according to the riches of God's grace. (Ephesians 1:4 to 7). Will you have the gift? Will you exchange your religion for Christ and eternal life? Is any one and every one exceedingly stupid who refuses or fails to accept God's unspeakable gift? How about you?