

Why Is God Doing This, This Way?

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I am going to begin this sermon quoting from the book of Romans. I did so yesterday because that series of verses encapsulated the major theme of my sermon that followed. It is as though that series of verses most clearly showed us the drift of our responsibilities from these few verses in Ecclesiastes 7 yesterday.

God is faithful. Our responsibility is to live righteously keeping His commandments, and that brethren, is wisdom stated very clearly.

Romans 11:26-32 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written; “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins.” Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. [He will not change His mind, He will not withdraw them.] For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, [remember this is written to a Gentile nation] even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

God has wisdom and love in everything that He does. We may not know why He is doing what He is doing but this is comforting to know that what He is doing has love involved in it and it is going to provide good for those He is dealing with.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the

Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

This comes at an appropriate place, because in chapter 9 of the book of Romans, Paul began explaining how and why God was dealing with Israel in the way He did, and why the gospel and the callings had gone out to the Gentile peoples. What we are going to be touching on in this sermon is this point. Paul shows how God is dealing with the unconverted nation of Israel as a result of their hardness of heart and rejection of Jesus Christ.

We began this by saying all Israel shall be saved—despite the fact that they rejected Him, despite the fact that they rejected Jesus Christ—so God has not lost His patience. He has not lost His love for Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is going to carry through and save as many as possible and that is why He says, “All Israel shall be saved.” I do not believe that the word ‘all’ should be understood that every single Israelite is going to be saved, but it certainly includes the overwhelming group of them.

It goes on from here because, on the other hand, Paul shows in a positive way how the gospel came to be preached to the Gentiles. This is between chapter 9 and the end of chapter 11. Many had become converted. He proceeds to show that the church is being formed by means of God converting Israelites and Gentiles at the same time. Therefore both are parts of one body, a body of very diverse people. It is not a nation, it is the church that these very diverse people are all a part of.

A major object of this arrangement is not merely to learn how to get along, but to actually grow in love for each other despite all the differences. It was not just difference in language, it was difference in personality, difference in habits formed in their lives. It was overcoming the natural enmity that one might have for the other because one looked upon the other as inferior—or some felt that they were superior—and those people were being called into the church and they were rubbing against each other and it caused friction between all of the members.

In order to accomplish this, God in His wisdom has gifted all of us in the church basically the same way to enable us to live by faith in Him. Using the faith in Him to learn to love one another is important.

In this series of verses, Paul clearly shows that God will continue converting Gentiles until He is satisfied with the number converted. He will then turn His major attention back to Israel even stating that “All of Israel shall be saved.” Here is the catch for you and me: we are still living in this interim period. He is still calling Gentiles, He is still calling Israelites, and we are still getting mixed together in the church.

Even in the United States, which is commonly considered to be a melting pot of all kinds of different peoples—some of them came here from Europe, some from India, you name it—we still carry some of characteristics of the old country with us, and some of the feelings and ideas regarding those things that we got from our parents.

We are still living in this interim period, and this is a challenge we still face. God has not turned His full attention back to Israel. That will begin when Jesus Christ returns. We must learn to see us as God sees us and make full use of our gifting.

Since the last Feast of Tabernacles I have given a series of loosely related sermons squeezed between Ecclesiastes sermons, and until recently I did not perceive that the squeezed-together sermons are actually related to each other but it is clear to me that now they are.

The purpose in each was to help us see who we are more clearly, and I think seeing who we are more clearly is essential to our growth. I did not choose a specific subject to be given at a specific order, as if I had the entire picture predetermined, but there is very definitely a relationship within each as part of a larger picture.

I gave each one of those sermons because I hopefully want us to see ever more clearly, in spite of all the distractions of living life at this time in history, that the church is a chosen group, unique from all others. Not just unique from all other churches, but unique from all others on earth.

Unique means it is one of a kind, having no equal or like, singular, stands alone. In order to be unique it must have a body of distinctive characteristics that, in this case, no other religious group has. This sermon is devoted to showing some of these distinctive characteristics.

This unique position was brought about solely by God's choices, and the package is an awesome gift dropped into our possession as a *treasure of value beyond comprehension*. We must not let this slip from our grasp! What is it that makes us unique? It is not just one thing, it is the whole package that makes us unique. I will not be able to give you the whole package, but we are going to touch on quite a number of them.

We will begin in Deuteronomy. These are familiar scriptures but there are things that I want to emphasize as we begin laying the foundation here. That of course is God's feelings, His attitude toward you and me.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God [This is the way God sees us. It applies to Israel and also the church. We are to live by every word of God.]; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. [That is unique. God does not exaggerate regarding things like this.] The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

God is love, and even as Satan personifies sin, God personifies love in His *every* activity. These verses show God does not express His love to everyone to the same degree. If He did, He could not make those statements that He loves us more than anybody else on earth. He is not lying! God does not express His love to everyone to the same degree. That is quite a statement.

This verse clearly shows that He loves Israel, and of course He now loves the church in a way that He does not love the world or others. The biblical love—

agape love—is an action. It keeps God's laws. In this context He expresses love by setting Israel apart from all other nations. He not only loves us but in His mind's eye we are apart from everybody else. He has separated us out. That separation has already taken place. We have not moved in order to cause the separation but in His mind's eye there is the capacity to do that. He has set us apart.

He has put us, in a sense, in His mind's eye so that we can be in a position to perform what He wants performed. He did not do that for every nation. In like manner God expressed His love for us by calling us and setting us apart from others. He did it for Israel and this He has done for the church.

He has delivered us not merely from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, but from the hand of Satan, king of the world. We are, in God's own words, a special treasured possession. This applies to us even more so than it applied to Israel, because of the final outcome for those who are set apart in the church.

I Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Take notice of those descriptors. Some of them have changed significantly from what Deuteronomy 7 says. We are not only called but now, he is telling us that we are royal. That puts us in a different category.

Not only that we are royal, holy, and special but an overall spiritual purpose has been given, and that is to proclaim His praises, and a very, very special spiritual deliverance provided from Satan's darkness to marvelous light. An indication that we have not only been delivered from Satan as his prisoners or slaves, but our minds have been open to begin removing the darkness that is in it to God's truth. So there is an understanding that is given here that was not present in Deuteronomy 7.

Please turn to I Corinthians 1. I will interject here so that you can follow maybe in a more orderly fashion. Every one of those scriptures that I have

turned to is a gift from God. The calling and all of those descriptors in Deuteronomy 7, I Peter 2:9—every single one of them is a gift with a purpose attached to it. He is first of all building us up, helping us to understand we are an unusual people, gifted by the great Creator in a way no other group of people on earth can even begin to come close to in terms of a relationship with God, and the gifts that He has given.

I Corinthians 1:26-29 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

God just stuck a thumb tack in the balloon, but I want you to think about this. He gave these awesome gifts to these people. That is what we have to work with, if we take Him seriously. It might be very easy to get a big head about who we are, but on the other hand, if we are really looking at ourselves levelheadedly, with a sound mind, we can begin to understand that He is going to bring us up out of the pits and we are going to accomplish some things because of Him that otherwise would never have been done.

Who gets all of the glory? We will give it to Him. The world will learn but we have to understand this is where we begin, it is not where we end. We see that we have a great deal of work given, responsibilities fulfilled, and that God will supply that need as we go along.

God has purposely operated in this manner, and we must understand that though we are so unique there are no external marks to distinguish us. We are not better, we do not wear our calling like a badge.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by

Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

This confirms again that it is a choice on His part, and in this that we have just read there is some measure, some degree of predestination on God's part that is frankly beyond my comprehension. Whether He planned this out so well that He knew us even then, is a possibility. I am talking about before the foundation of the earth, or whether He perceived the church as a whole, and what it was going to be. Done either way we understand this: of all people who have lived and died on earth, billions upon billions of people from the time of the beginning of the creation of the earth, He did this for you and me. That is awesome.

We have nothing to brag about. We have not accomplished this on our own, and yet this great, awesome God picked *us* to begin revealing these things to. There exists a measure of predestination on God's part. I want to confirm this in the book of Romans.

Romans 9:8-15 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.” And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”

Here in this chapter the apostle Paul is using the selection of Jacob over Esau as an example of what God has done on a much larger scale for you and me. He chose you and me out of billions of people on earth! He could have showered love on them just as well as He did shower love on you and me. He set us apart. This underlies everything else that is going to follow. What

has happened in our life has been truly amazing, it is awesome, and it has been the Great Creator's doing that did it.

If you are thinking, you will understand clearly and be awed by it. He knows you and me personally, nothing is done by God randomly, nothing is done out of necessity. He planned it, He did it, He evaluated, I want you, and so we have been set apart.

What we see here in Romans 9 indicates a deliberate choosing on God's part. It is not random, it is not haphazard, it is not as though we have worked our way toward it in any way. God simply did it.

The major purpose of I Corinthians 1:26-30 is to remind us to be humble. This is important. I want us to see what God says regarding humility in I Peter 5.

I Peter 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all of your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

What I want us to see from this simple statement is, humility is a choice. We can choose to be humble about our calling, we can choose to be humble about what God has revealed to us and given to us. Even as we can choose to get the big head, we can also choose to be humble.

Why must we choose to be humble? Because the accomplishment of the purpose for what God has given all these things to make us unique and distinctive, requires our attention given in the right attitude.

As a complete package this uniqueness must be not merely factually known. Right now I think you all factually know, if you believe the Scriptures, that you have been called of God. What God is aiming for is not that we *just know*, but rather that we appreciate it. That makes all the difference in the world. If we evaluate ourselves and we are coming to appreciate it, we will choose to humble ourselves before God because we know and we know that we know, we do not deserve it one bit, any more than our next door neighbor, but it came to us.

What is our calling's purpose? This is one of those which no doubt has many answers and all of them are correct, but I am seeking an answer that applies directly and immediately as we are living our daily life in this time. That was described in the book of Romans, and at the same time is a major part of our uniqueness.

You probably do not realize this at this time, but that really narrows the field of correct answers that can be given. Please turn to II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:4-7 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight.

What caught my attention in one of the previous sermons that I gave between Ecclesiastes sermons, I referred in these verses the word 'prepared.' God's purpose in calling us and preparing us for His calling, is to live by faith. God has all of these gifts that I have given you so far, and more that I am going to give you. They are given so that we can live by faith.

We heard in the sermon this morning from Richard that there are people who believe in God, and they believe that He exists, but they do not believe what God says. If they do not believe what God says, you know very well they are not living by faith. These sermons are beginning to connect with one another.

God has prepared us so that we can be changed into the image of Jesus Christ and that requires our co-operation, and is one of the reasons why we have to choose to be humble. But even if we choose to be humble, we have gifts that God has given to us in order to make it possible to do what we have to do in order to have these things built within us.

Is God going to put us into His Kingdom without knowing at all whether we are even going to obey Him? He will—as He sees us submitting to Him, obeying Him, as we are going along in our calling— but we cannot do that unless He gives to enable us to do it. God not only gives us gifts in calling,

He gives us all kinds of gifts to make sure we can do what He wants us to do. He gives us the tools to work with.

The first part of this sermon is a major tool that we need to work with, that is confidence that God knows who we are, confident that He called us, confident that He loves us, confident that He knows what He is doing, confident that we know that He can save us. There is more to come that may be more difficult and we need more gifts as we go along. God has not hung us out to dry at all. God has given so many gifts that we have no excuse for failure.

We cannot say to God, “I can’t do that,” because He has given us the gifts to work with. One of the biggest gifts is the ones we just went through, the confidence to know that He knows us and that He is part of our life.

We are finding that He has prepared us for living by faith. Paul's overall objective in this context is somewhat different from mine, but II Corinthians 5:4 could easily say this, “we who are in this circumstance groan, being burdened, not because we want out of this circumstance, but rather further along, that our weakness may be swallowed up by immortality.” We would like to just get it over with in a hurry. We like to take shortcuts, we do not want to do the hard things.

What God has done in His preparations of us contributes to our present state of our uniqueness. The term ‘prepared’ indicates diligently working with and in someone, much as an instructor trains a student in anticipation of His graduation and life of service to the community. Notice God the instructor does not merely get the process started and then wander off being busy elsewhere. He continues on until graduation—that is when our transformation and glorification occurs.

As an overview so we grasp the drift, here is a list: (1) He has given us life, (2) He has provided us with a secular education so we at least have the basics of reading and writing. (3) He converts us, (4) He gives us a basic faith in Jesus Christ, (5) He gives us His Holy Spirit, (6) He gives us gifts to fulfill a place in body of Jesus Christ, (7) He provides His Book, the Bible, for guidance, and (8) we can look ahead to see He is going to resurrect us and give us each a glorified body, and everlasting life in His Family Kingdom.

So that you understand the theme of this sermon, I will ask a question. I want you to think about the whole wide world, and all of the things that I have already given you. How many people do you know who have been prepared in this manner for daily life, lived by faith in the eternal Creator? I think most of you could answer that outside of the church you do not know anybody.

There are people who claim they do, but they are few and far between, and their concept of living by faith is nowhere close to what God is requiring of us. In order to do what God wants us to do, we really have to live His Word. That is the only way He is going to be glorified, it cannot be faked. It is the only way we are going to be changed into the image of Jesus Christ, that cannot be faked—no one would make it, nobody would do it, unless God prepares them to enable them to do it. Even then it will be scary, and it is going to create in us a great deal of pretty sobering thinking that somehow or another we are probably falling short, and we would if God was not so merciful.

Are you beginning to get the drift of this? There are not very many people apart from the church of God, who are actually living their life by faith. If they are living their life by faith, they are probably in the church and they have already been gifted to do it, even though they may not be part of a congregation that we are aware of.

The preparations were made because God has willed that our preparations for living and serving in His Kingdom, following the resurrection, must be created through the processes of living by faith. This requirement really puts the pressure on and further increases our uniqueness.

There is more. We are not even going to leave II Corinthians 5.

II Corinthians 5:16-19 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. [He is talking about our calling, God's preparations for us living by faith.] Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. Now

all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Because of the gifting that God is doing in our behalf in His preparations, God is putting us through an action so that we no longer view the world and its citizens from a worldly point of view. What God is doing, what Paul is announcing there, is that God is in the process of radically changing our world view. He is talking about the way we look at things. If we continue to look at things the way we did in the past we will never change. Something has to change. God is gifting us so that our mind will change. It will accept change. It will be something that we are willing to do.

Our perspective of life began changing, and for some folks sometimes drastically so. Our perspective of Christ changed considerably as we became converted, as we saw Him concerning compared with how we perceive Him as He became our Savior. When we first began looking at Him carefully, He is nothing more than a historical figure, and He has done wonderful things in the world. Those are facts, but it has no real impression upon us until God begins to change our mind and the way we look at Jesus Christ.

This is why he said in verse 16, “Therefore, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ, according to the flesh, yet now we no longer know Him thus.” Our perception of Jesus Christ as our Savior is far different than it was before He was our Savior.

The apostle Paul is a clear example. Hardly anybody meets what happened to him, to the degree that he went through, but all of us go through it to some degree. His world view changed from seeing Jesus and the church as the enemy of all that he fervently believed in, till Christ became his God and Savior almost in the blink of an eye when he was struck down on the road to Damascus.

This does not happen as dramatically to everybody as it did to the apostle Paul, but that quick Paul was saying, “What do you want, Lord?” This is the man he was trying to kill. This is what Paul was talking about here. It is not

as dramatic with everybody as it was with the apostle Paul, it does not happen so quickly with everybody, and it does not happen to the degree that it did with the apostle Paul. He was a special chosen vessel that God gave this gift to a change of his mind almost in a blink of an eye, and now he was ready to obey Christ to the death.

This is what Paul is talking about here in verse 16, and continuing on through 17. God is gifting you with a mind that is willing to change in the direction God wants it to change. What we see in verse 16 is God wants us to look at Jesus Christ as our Savior, our King, our ruler, our boss, our Creator. I know for sure that there is not a person in here, not an adult in here who looked at Him that way before God began changing your mind. He was simply a historical figure. That is why Paul said, we no longer look at Him as a normal person. He is not normal.

God is doing that for every one of us. He is giving us a gift, a spiritual gift, to enable us to change our mind in the direction that He is going to influence it in. That is why He says it in verse 17, because of this ability to change our mind, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.” We will never be in the image of Jesus Christ until we change our mind to think like Jesus Christ does.

Verse 17, “Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.” Like I said earlier, God is working a radical world view change in our minds. Things that used to be important do not have the same importance, and some of those things that you used to look on with a great deal of pleasure may eventually disappear from your life. They are just a memory that you used to do, but you do not do them any more.

Verse 18, “all things regarding this are of God.” This is a gift from God, so that we can change our mind. “Who has reconciled us to Himself, through Jesus Christ, and given us the ministry of reconciliation.” In verse 16 the interesting thing about this word ‘know’ is that there is a difference between knowing a person, and understanding a fact. Before our conversion Jesus Christ was a fact in our mind, we knew certain things about Him, but now we find in John 17:3 that we have to come to know not only Him but the Father as well.

You can know a fact about a person, but it may have no measurable impression upon us, especially emotionally, but the verb ‘to know’ in this verse means to be intimately acquainted with one while standing in a close relationship with them. An example: has anything happened to your spouse or one of your children that caused you to either a fright or a great deal of pleasure? The same thing could happen to somebody that you have some knowledge of but they go through that and it barely registers on your mind because it is nothing more than a fact. But if it happens to you and your loved ones, then it really means something. That is what this verb ‘to know’ pictures.

We never knew Christ in the way that we know Him now—how we know Him now is a gift from God. That makes all the difference in the world because that Christ may want us to die for Him.

Are we going to do that for somebody whose name we barely do not even know? This One that we love and know so well has willed that we are to die for Him. Big difference. Again a gift from God. He gives us the wherewithal to meet this challenge, and we would die for Him as maybe you and I would die for our children or for our spouse.

We are *in* Christ. This is exceedingly important. It says in verse 17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.” Please turn to I Corinthians 12. The same terminology is used there, only they explain it a little bit.

I Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

We are in Christ. This term describes an awesome spiritual reality that brings about the transformation of our life. It is as though we are being nourished and changed from within Him, as though we are a cell in His body. It is as though we are being nourished and changed from within Him to what He is in terms of nature.

This is important. In John 15:5 it connects to where Jesus Christ says, “without Me you can do nothing.” We have to be part of His body. Considered in this way, for this to be accomplished in practical facts, being

in Christ is as though our life begins a complete back-to-innocence reversal and it is here that old things begin to lose their attraction. New things begin and the inner man begins to abhor the world, and the life that we once admired and absorbed and sought fulfillment in. This change is a very tiny one only because we are such a minor thing.

In the real aspect of God's declaration this is the beginning of the fulfillment in our life where God says, "Behold I create all things new."

I know that this is kind of a foggy description that I am giving you, but this is something that I personally have not gone into until I began on this sermon, and began to see all the gifts that are connected to God's promise to prepare us for living by faith.

That is why those people do not live by faith, they are not prepared to do it, they do not have the spiritual wherewithal to believe God enough to do it. These are sincere people but they do not even keep the Sabbath. You and I might think that is any easy thing, but that is impossible for them, they are not prepared to do it. We are doing what we are doing because we have been *prepared* to do it. Much of it is a mental preparation by the Spirit of God, and we are willing to accept these things, and put them into practice.

This verse also says that we are a new creation, and even here it is loaded with power. The Greeks have two words that can be translated as 'new' in terms of innovation, or repair. The other indicates new in the sense of fresh existence.

It is the second that Paul uses to describe the Christian's transformation. It is not a repair job, it is not a renovation, it is not that we are being refreshed in God's point of view. We are viewed as a brand new person with a new family, with a new set of values, new motivations, new positions in terms of character and attitude. And it is these preparations that can make us truly unique in a visible way to those who know us.

I wish that I could explain it with a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of clarity, but if there is nothing else that you get out of this it is: we would not be in this

position unless God was making it possible through His preparations to each one of us. They are not all given at the same time, to every person. They are worked upon as we go along.

Along with all of this newness, there is something else, it is still right in this context.

II Corinthians 5:18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Everything that I have been talking about is something God has made possible by working in and through us spiritually. He has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and He has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:19-21 That is, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Here is another part of our uniqueness. In its largest sense, unique in these peculiar ways has been given us as a responsibility, it is to preach the gospel. However, here it is in a more narrow sense than Christ's command to the apostles in Matthew 28. It is to declare that Jesus is the means of reconciliation with God. We are uniquely prepared to perform this responsibility because Jesus Christ has given us more of the entire gospel than others, and we grasp this reality in its proper balance.

This particular responsibility is not the totality of the gospel. That is given in Matthew 28:19-20. This is a specific responsibility of witnessing to people that Jesus Christ is the reconciliation for our sins. If you are familiar with what is going on in the world in terms of the evangelical preaching, this is what they concentrate on. They see that it is a responsibility of the church, which is to proclaim Jesus as the means of reconciliation. That is why they

accept Christ. They are making a mess out of it because they are leaving most of the job out, but it is a specific responsibility given to those called of God.

There is another responsibility that is brought on by God's preparations of us so that we might live by faith. We might call it a dark side because in His calling God makes us more vividly aware of our sinful human nature than before our calling. It is that we become a person with a split personality. God makes us become truly aware of the truth that is contained in Romans 8:7, "the carnal mind is enmity with God, for it is not subject to the law of God neither it can be," because the old man is still present in the new life of the converted person.

God has willed that we must bear this burden that makes us feel so terrible when we think about ourselves. We must strive to overcome it beginning with recognizing the influence that it is still having upon us. One of the reasons for this is in order that others may witness the transformation and God will be glorified because they see the changes that take place in the exterior of our life.

This too is a part of our uniqueness, as well as being part of our preparations for the Kingdom of God.

Please turn to the book of Colossians. This becomes a special responsibility for those called. Colossians was written to a congregation that was having a bit of difficulty, they were losing their enthusiasm. It was waning because of uncertainties in member's minds. The uncertainties were primarily over doctrinal matters. The reason they were having the problem is because there were people in the church, attending in the church, who had ideas that were different from the accepted doctrine of the church.

You might be aware of Colossians a little bit through Philemon, to whom the epistle Philemon was written to. He was a notable member of this congregation. The manner that Paul responds touches on the subject of this sermon, because in an overall sense he is reminding them of their uniqueness caused by the spiritual understanding they had received. What Paul does in the book of Colossians is he touches on things that are important to our salvation and he wants us and them to know that these things still hold true.

In the first part of the book of Colossians, he reminds them that their Savior is also their powerful Creator. By verse 12, he assures us that we are qualified to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. In verse 13, we are delivered from the power of darkness and thus far more discerning spiritually than before.

We are delivered from darkness' power which means in practical fact that we are far less likely to fall for temptation's persuasions. Also in verse 13, it states that our citizenship is already transferred into the Kingdom of God. This is no mean gift because it zeros in on where our loyalties in life are in regard to religious, political, and military responsibilities within the nation we live in.

He is reminding them they are there and that these loyalties will be tested. In verse 14, he assures us and them that we are already redeemed—we are not only part way out of Egypt, we are redeemed.

In verses 20-22, we are reconciled to the Father and able to be presented to the Father, holy, blameless, and above reproach. Can you see that he is trying to buck these people up, and God is doing this through Paul? These things *are* going to happen to us. We will get discouraged over one thing or another.

All of these things mentioned are given to prepare us to live confidently in faith. In verse 23, what he is teaching suddenly makes an interesting and sobering turn, because he says:

Colossians 1:22-23 In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

That is a sobering reminder to you and me, as well as to these people, that God is going to hold us responsible for all the gifts that He gave us. I do not know what level the responsibility will be attached to each one of us but we *must* use the gifting that He made available to us. This is why I said to you

very early in this sermon that God presents us in such a way that we have no excuse. He has given us enough, with His help, that we will make it, but we have to continue on.

We cannot earn salvation, but we do have to carry through meeting our responsibilities and by and large the world looks upon salvation as a freely-given gift with almost no responsibility to carry out.

I will end this sermon this way. I will give you a list of just the gifts that God gives us and I wonder if we are making use of it.

Philippians 2:12-16 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Here are some factors that God has gifted just so we can live by faith.

1. God loves the church to a greater degree than those not in the church.
2. He gives a multitude of gifts that make living by faith possible.
3. He reconciles them, that is us, to Himself through Jesus Christ.
4. He absolutely requires that the church lives by faith, something that is not required of others who cannot possibly do it.
5. He strenuously educates the church regarding elements of character that reflect upon Him and His purpose.
6. He radically changes the member's world views.

7. He reveals the mysteries of His teaching to us.
8. He sets it apart and openly declares that it is royal, holy, and a special treasure.
9. He makes certain that we know that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. This is huge because this is what changes us. (John 15:1-5)
10. He allows those in the church to come to know Him purposely, revealing Himself to them.
11. He gives its members specific responsibilities like overcoming human nature, and preaching the gospel.
12. He considers them qualified already to inherit the Kingdom to become citizens of it.
13. He adopts us as a part of His family. He specifically charges us to learn that man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God.
14. He makes sure that through Jesus Christ, we understand that none of His Word is done away, from Genesis to Revelation. (Matthew 5:17-19)
15. If we give Him a chance, He will keep us humble, submissive to Him, and safely in His arms.

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

That is a promise. He will take care of us, He will provide for us, He will be with us, He will continue to do what He has to do to get us into His Kingdom.