



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 41

Hess Video 3; devoted to destruction.

Taking Alan's points seriously and analyzing them Scripturally for the sake of the truth of Paul's gospel.



This issue of the ZWTF will be a point-for-point analysis of Alan Hess' latest teachings about Paul's gospel (those points that I left hanging last week). No one should take Alan's "There is only one gospel!" teaching lightly, as this teaching will potentially cause anyone who believes it to pick and choose from *any* New Testament writing and apply it to him or herself. This could potentially result in losing sight of Paul's specific message, falling into sin, disbelief, even despair. It is my duty (2 Timothy 4:2) to expose the false teaching and rebuke the person teaching it. This is not fun for me, but

it's my job. I'm not setting myself up as a person who knows everything, but I do know about this.

Alan says there's only one gospel. This is in direct contrast to Galatians 2:7, which says that there are two gospels. Alan says that there is no difference between what Paul taught and what Peter taught. If there's no difference between what Paul and Peter taught, then why would there be any difference between what Paul and other New Testament writer's taught? Hebrews; James; Jude; 1 John; Ephesians—take your pick. To Alan, it doesn't matter. It all applies to us. This is the implication of his teaching—an implication that I'm not even sure Alan himself has realized.

Paul himself tells us what ought to be the assessment of any teaching brought to the body of Christ besides his teaching. Here is the apostle in Galatians 1:6-9—

I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to a different evangel, which is not another, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to distort the evangel of Christ. But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! As we have declared before and at present I am saying again, if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!

As I wrote to you last week, Paul here warns the Galatians against accepting two different messages: 1) the mixed evangel which bastardizes Paul's legitimate gospel by mixing it with foreign elements (the "different" gospel), and 2) the Circumcision evangel, which truly was another gospel, but not one meant for those who had come under Paul's teaching due to its divergent goals, divergent truths, divergent Scriptures and divergent destinies. The Galatians (and other members of

the body of Christ in all the other ecclesias) were not to receive any other message other than that which came to them through Paul and by his pen. Anyone who would bring either a false gospel or the Circumcision gospel to the body of Christ would be anathema.

Alan Hess unwittingly places himself under this anathema by a failure to recognize the wall surrounding Paul's gospel. I want to be careful to say that Alan Hess, who is my friend, is not *directly* teaching a false gospel, but his refusal to place borders around Paul's specific message (that is, to segregate it from other Scriptures) allows doctrinal leakage from the Circumcision writers to taint and water down Paul's specific truths. Paul himself builds a wall around his gospel by the phrase "my gospel," used three times throughout his letters. Here are the references—

- ▶ Romans 2:16— "...in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity, according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ."
- ▶ Romans 16:25— "Now to Him Who is able to establish you in accord with my evangel, and the heralding of Christ Jesus in accord with the revelation of a secret hushed in times eonian..."
- ▶ 2 Timothy 2:8— "Remember Jesus Christ, Who has been roused from among the dead, is of the seed of David, according to my evangel."

Paul's gospel was entirely of the glorified Christ, and so Paul alone calls his message "the gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:12—not the gospel of "*Jesus* Christ" but of "Christ"). That he also calls it "my gospel" can only be explained by the fact that Christ (the glorified Christ) gave it first to Paul—exclusively.

Additionally, Paul built a wall around his gospel by verifying it with his signature. As he writes to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 3:17—

The salutation is by my hand—Paul's—which is a sign in every epistle: thus am I writing.

What was Paul's signature a sign of? It was not only a sign that the letter was not a forgery, but that it was his gospel. Any other letter with any other name was not his gospel. 1 & 2 Peter are not signed by Paul, therefore they are not his gospel. 1, 2 & 3 John are not signed by Paul, therefore they are not his gospel. James is not signed by Paul, therefore it is not his gospel. Same with Hebrews, Jude and Revelation.

"MY GOSPEL"

No one else in Scripture could claim "my gospel," and neither can we. Some may ask why Peter never called his gospel, "my gospel." The answer is simple: the gospel that Peter preached did not originate with him, but rather with Abraham. Centuries later it was certified by the terrestrial Jesus, Who came to Earth as a Jew to confirm the Abrahamic promises (Romans 15:8). Since Peter's gospel wasn't new, he could not very well call it "my gospel." Not only was Paul's gospel new, it behooved Paul to distinguish it from the ancient message given to Abraham, then Jesus, then Peter.

That Paul uses the phrase "my gospel" whereas Peter doesn't ought to convince even the casual reader that Paul taught a different gospel than Peter. And yet some are so desperate for Peter and Paul to be teaching the same things (I'm not sure why) that they will attempt to redefine the word "my." This is clearly a sign of desperation. "My"—taken literally as it must be—means just what we think it means. This phrase "my evangel" needs believed, not explained. If someone tries to explain to you what the word "my" means, this will be a sign unto you that such a person is on the wrong track, selling tickets to the wrong train, which cannot but transport the unwary hearer to an unwanted destination.

Paul repeatedly says that the dispensation of the grace of God was given to *him* (Ephesians 3:2, 3:7; Colossians 1:25; Romans 15:15). The Lord revealed to *Paul* (not Peter, not James, not John, not Jude) a truth kept secret from times eonian (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:3). Paul was the chosen vessel of the Lord, divinely appointed to the office of apostle of the Nations by Christ Himself (Romans 11:13; 2 Timothy 1:11).

An entire administration was entrusted to him (1 Corinthians 9:17). He did not get his gospel from a human being (Peter didn't pass the Jewish gospel on to him), nor was it *of* human beings, but it was given to him directly by Christ (Galatians 1:1, 1:11). Even Peter had to learn that God had given Paul a specific revelation concerning God's grace (Galatians 2:9).

As it was truly *his* gospel from Christ, it was his responsibility to announce this gospel wherever he went—

Since you surely hear of the administration of the grace of God that is given to me for you...and to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the

multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Ephesian 3:2, 9-11).

We learn the gospel of Christ and the transcendent grace of God from Paul's writings and nowhere else. This is what I would like to hear Alan say, at which time he would have to acknowledge that there are indeed two gospels. Anyone insisting that we can learn Paul's gospel from anywhere besides Paul's letters (such as Peter's letters, for instance) is anathema. This is Paul speaking, not me.

James Coram of the Concordant Publishing concern and contributor to *Unsearchable Riches* magazine writes in an article titled "Studies in Galatians"—

Paul's words, "if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema!" (1:8), make it clear that an evangelist's divine authority is vested not in the messenger, but in the message. If Paul himself, or even "a messenger out of heaven," must be anathematized should he bring a different evangel than that of the grace of Christ, it is impossible to believe that any contemporary man, whether priest or pastor, would be exempt from this same proscription.

Alan Hess has unfortunately anathematized himself by teaching his congregation and his YouTube viewers that Paul really doesn't have a distinct message at all, but that it is only a development and a refinement of Peter's gospel, which really can't be "Peter's gospel," either, because according to Alan, Peter and Paul are teaching the same thing. I'm not saying that Alan is not teaching the grace of God, but that he is not teaching Paul's gospel. He *can't* be teaching Paul's gospel—even if he says he is—because he doesn't believe that Paul's message is distinct from Peter's (Galatians 2:7). So to Alan, it's just "the gospel." Not "Peter's," not "Paul's," but "the." I wish he would stop calling it "Paul's gospel" unless he actually means it. But if he were to say it and actually mean it, then he would have to acknowledge the existence of two gospels and trash his three videos. Wouldn't he?

Alan is not saying, specifically, "Let's mix law and grace." In fact, he abhors the very thing. And yet he engenders the very thing that he abhors by refusing to recognize the wall surrounding Paul's gospel. Chalk this up to an unaccountable yet steadfast refusal to believe Galatians 2:7 as translated ("the gospel *of* the Circumcision" and "the gospel *of* the Uncircumcision"), forwarding to his listeners a blithe alteration of the inspired "of" to "to" in accord with his own pleasure, Greek be damned. Thus, Alan—though not meaning to—invites every New Testament writer into Paul's message. This not only waters down Paul's message, it destroys it. I do not believe he realizes that this is happening. But by refusing to acknowledge the divine wall of distinction between Paul's message and that of the Circumcision apostles, Alan exposes Paul's message to every foreign element that would invade it from the writings of Peter, James, John, Jude, Hebrews.

ANATHEMA

What does "anathema" mean? Here is James Coram again in the same article—

But what does it mean to be "anathema," and of what does the anathema consist here in Paul's warning?

In the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), "anathema" is the translation of the Hebrew *cherem*. It speaks of something that is "devoted," yet in the sense of, unto adversative judgment; hence, "devoted to destruction" (or "loss"; e.g.,



Deut.7:26; Joshua 7:1,11-13). Certainly, an anathema is something that no one would care to invite upon himself. When Paul, then, says of any who bring a false gospel, “let him be anathema!” the sense is, Let him be subject to certain, adversative judgment. The word itself, however, tells us nothing of the particulars or duration of any such judgment. For this we must consider the nature of the case, in any specific pronouncement of anathema.

The “anathema” which Paul pronounces in Galatians 1:8,9, consists of many grave consequences, but these do not include being subjected to “eternal condemnation.” Life’s justifying is for all mankind; and through the obedience of Christ, the entire vast throng of the human race shall be constituted just (Rom.5:18,19). We rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind (1 Tim.4:10), Who will abolish death and become All in all (1 Cor.15:26,28).

Neither does Paul’s anathema consist in the loss of eonian life for any such opposing teachers, those who nevertheless are in Christ. Eonian life is a gracious gift (Rom.6:23); grace reigns, for life eonian, through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom.5:21; cp Titus 3:7). Nor does Paul’s anathema consist, in the case of any in Christ who indeed must come under its judgment, of also coming under God’s indignation. God has not appointed us to indignation (1 Thess.5:9a); we shall be saved from the indignation of God through Christ (Rom.5:9).

Finally, Paul’s anathema does not impose soulish suffering. There is much that is destructive, that nonetheless is not at all destructive to health, wealth, and pleasure. For example, untroubled resignation concerning, combined with an unbridled zeal to uphold, the teaching of a horrible hell where the vast majority of men must spend eternity, coupled with an ethic that can finally only thank oneself for one’s exemption therefrom, is conducive neither to pity nor humility. Yet since most, especially if they should enjoy a good measure of conventional well-being, are insensitive to the deep injuriousness of such attitudes and beliefs, they remain oblivious to the very real anathema to which their own apostasy has subjected them.

For all the things which Paul’s pronouncement of anathema does not bring upon those who come under its judgment, this anathema does result in the preclusion of its subjects from the circle of those who are faithful dispensers of Christ (Col.1:7), and ensures all such persons’ inclusion among that company who are fraudulent workers (2 Cor.11:13), deceivers (2 Tim.3:13), and enemies of the cross of Christ

(Phil.3:18). One may be all of these, without intending to be any of these, while being confident that one is none of these.

Paul’s anathema upon those who proclaim a different evangel, entails their loss of wages at the dais of Christ (cp 1 Cor.3:14,15; 2 Cor.5:10), even as their disqualification for a position of reigning (cp 1 Cor.9:27; 2 Tim.2:12a). It means that, apart from repentance, such will spend their careers in essential and vital opposition to the grace of God. It means that their ministries cannot but become a substantial disservice to others, through which many are injured and deceived. Worst of all, Paul’s anathema entails God’s displeasure with the ministry of all such ones, at least with respect to the essential character and content of their teaching. It means a life lived under the power of strong delusion; a strong delusion of a most insidious nature.

Again, some may argue that Alan is not bringing a false gospel. Doesn’t he teach the grace of God? He does teach the grace of God. I’m not saying that he’s *purposely* teaching a false gospel (he doesn’t wake up in the morning determined to do that), but he’s doing it unwittingly by refusing to recognize the wall around Paul’s message.

Alan will use the phrase “Paul’s gospel” (as in the title of Video 3), but this is confusing because at the same time he refuses to segregate Paul’s letters from the other New Testament letters. This, as you know, is my main concern. It’s why I keep repeating it. There is no end of the confusion resulting from mixing Israel truth with Paul truth. I think that Alan owes us clarity on this. What I’d love to hear him say is, “We can only get Paul’s gospel from Paul’s letters.” But if he would say this, then he would be tacitly





acknowledging that the other writers heralded a different gospel, at which time he would have to admit to the presence of two gospels and recant his three videos. I would phone and ask him about this directly, but I can't do that because he thinks I'm out to set him up. He attributes devious motives to me that I don't have.

Alan using the phrase "Paul's gospel" but then refusing to segregate Paul from the other New Testament writers is like a mother pointing from a distance to a group of seven children on a swingset at the park and saying to a stranger, "Those are my kids." The fact is that only two of them are her kids and the rest are cousins, but the stranger to whose attention the children are being called naturally assumes all seven children to belong to the mother. This is precisely what Alan is doing when he points to the entire New Testament and says, "There's Paul's gospel." Yes, Paul's gospel is in there, but none of the other writers belong to Paul. Like the mother, Alan fails to note an important distinction. Like the mother, Alan confuses the very people he seeks to enlighten by his failure to define and demarcate critical differences. The mother's message, as presented, is false. Alan doesn't mean to be teaching a false gospel, but because of his carelessness, that's precisely what he is doing.

As soon as Alan stops doing this, he will no longer be anathema.

SHIFTING SANDS

In the three videos that I have seen, Alan seems to shift his argument as he goes. First he seemed to be insisting that Peter was in the body of Christ. Next he said that Peter was *not* in the body of Christ, but failed to explain why Peter *wouldn't* be in the body in light of his teaching that Peter's epistles say the same thing as Paul's. He has, so far, failed to explain why the rest of the New Testament writers would not be in the body of Christ, seeing as "There is only one gospel!" and that the "one gospel" dates from the time of Paul's conversion (Video 2)—which Alan changed from the first video (Video 1), when he said that the Circumcision gospel stopped being announced at the death and resurrection of Christ.

It seems that Alan—although without any stated reason or explanation for it—has now changed his argument from "There is only one gospel!" to "There is only one gospel being heralded today!" But these are two entirely different arguments. When did the switcheroo take place? As I told you last week, the sands of Alan's presentation shift with the wind. I'm not sure that anyone is really trying to keep up with it except me—and it has become a part-time job. No one else has committed themselves to slowing down the film and taking all these shifts seriously and pointing them out. I'm not sure that anyone listening to Alan is completely certain, at this point, what his argument still is. (I have yet to watch Video 4.) I feel that he's simply going to move on when he returns from his hiatus and not comment any further. In my mind, this would be like leaving the scene of an accident.

Alan owes us fewer decibels and more clarity.

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

Concerning the council at Jerusalem in Acts chapter 15, Alan says in Video 3—

They were debating on whether the Jews still had to be circumcised or not.

Say *what?* I wrote down this statement verbatim as I listened to it on the video. The statement was so off the wall that I was tempted to assume that Alan misspoke, and that what he meant to say was, "They were debating on whether the *nations* still had to be circumcised or not." But then I realized that the presence of the word "still" precluded such a generous assessment, for only Jews would *still* need to be circumcised; the nations never



were circumcised. I will therefore comment upon this interpretation as it was uttered by Alan Hess in Video 3, also known as, “Paul’s is the Only Gospel, Part 2,” assuming that this is indeed what he meant to say. Well, it’s what he *did* say.

The record shows (I’ll be quoting it shortly) that the topic of debate at the Jerusalem council was not whether or not the Jews needed to *continue* being circumcised, but whether or not the nations should be *required* to be circumcised. Thus, Alan has turned the Jerusalem council on its head. Alan argues that, rather than being a symposium on a radical new development occurring among the nations with a new apostle (Paul) commissioned with a new charge received directly from the glorified Christ, the Jerusalem council was instead an invitation and, indeed, a challenge, to the tens of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus but who were still zealous for the law of Moses, to cast off the Circumcision evangel that Jesus Christ had given to Peter. The scenario that Alan would have us believe is that the Jews in Jerusalem were so excited and so titil-

lated by the sheer fun of Paul’s “grace, not law” message, that they were now considering throwing away everything that they had heard from Peter concerning Israel’s expectation, who, himself, had heard it from none other than Jesus Christ. For here is what Jesus Christ said to His disciples in Matthew 5:17-20—

“You should not infer that I came to demolish the law or the prophets. I came not to demolish, but to fulfill. For verily, I am saying to you, Till heaven and earth should be passing by, one iota or one serif may by no means be passing by from the law till all should be occurring. Whosoever, then, should be annulling one of the least of these precepts, and should be teaching men thus, the least in the kingdom of the heavens shall he be called. Yet whoever should be doing and teaching them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I am saying to you that, if ever your righteousness should not be superabounding more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, by no means may you be entering into the kingdom of the heavens.”

It was *these* people, here at this council in Jerusalem who, according to Alan Hess, were mulling over whether or not *they* should continue with circumcision and, indeed, whether or not they should continue with the law of Moses at all.

Let's explode this absurdity forthwith—from the horse's mouth. Here is Luke's account of the Jerusalem council from Acts 15:1-5, with the purpose of the council stated at the outset—

And some, coming down from Judea, taught the brethren that, "If you should not be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you can not be saved." Now as Paul and Barnabas come to have no slight commotion and questioning with them, they prescribe that Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them are to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this question. They indeed, then, being sent forward by the ecclesia, passed through Phoenicia as well as Samaria, detailing the turning about of the nations. And they caused great joy to all the brethren. Now coming along into Jerusalem, they were received by the ecclesia and the apostles and the elders. Besides, they inform them of whatever God does with them. Yet some from the sect of the Pharisees who have believed rise up, saying that they must be circumcised, besides charging them to keep the law of Moses.

Clearly, there is not even a hint here that the Jews were even remotely considering casting away the law of Moses. But some of the Jews *were* insisting that the nations, who were coming under Paul's ministry, must not only be circumcised, but keep the law of Moses. Who are "the brethren" in Luke's opening statement except those of the nations who had come to believe in Christ through Paul?

Paul and Barnabas were teaching outside of Judea when this tumult began, and it was the Jews *from* Judea who came down to Paul and Barnabas to tell their converts, "If you should not be circumcised, you can not be saved." The question was obviously *Greek* circumcision, not Jewish. The Jews certainly needed no exhortation to circumcise.

Off went Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem, where they met with the same consistent insistence they'd gotten from Jews everywhere, namely, that the nations not only needed to be circumcised, but also to keep the law of Moses.

To disprove Alan's theory that the believing Jews in Jerusalem were re-thinking their own God-given customs and requirements (their own law and evangel), we need

only consider the outcome of this council to see that, no, the debate was not—as Alan insists—"whether the Jews still had to be circumcised or not," but whether the *nations* had to be circumcised. Here is the declaration of James in verse 19—

Wherefore I decide not to be harassing those from the nations who are turning back to God.

If this council was what Alan said it was, then *this* should have been James' declaration—

Well, it looks like these nations are really onto something. It looks like Paul has really opened up something interesting, exciting and new. Frankly, gentlemen, I really like this idea of not following law. And to tell you the truth, it's a major hassle and expense taking our kids to the temple on the eighth day to have their foreskin cut off. Yuck! My wife is pregnant now and—I will tell you this—I'd rather avoid the whole thing. Here is my proposition: I say that *we* drop this circumcision business and—hell's bells—while we're at it, let's just drop the whole law of Moses as well, part and parcel. I want to be more like the Gentiles!

Why the funny look, Peter? What about all that stuff *Jesus* told us, you say? Well, maybe all that stuff that Jesus told us was kind of like, oh I don't know, kind of like maybe...*figurative*? Who knows. And frankly, who cares. I propose that we write a letter to the nations and tell them that we here in Jerusalem will all be joining them in their circumcision-free, law-free existence. Man, I feel better already! You guys? Let somebody else's righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees. Let somebody else worry about annulling one of the least of the precepts. Let's chuck the precepts altogether, men! What do you say? Let's all go down to the Lobster Shack and talk about it over a platter of shrimp and Oysters Rockefeller—and don't hold the bacon.

MEXICAN OR ITALIAN?

Since Abraham, the Jews have been destined to lead the other nations to God. But any Gentile come to God through the Jews will remain a second-class citizen to the favored nation. Such will be beholden to Israel. The Jews are indispensable as priests to any man or woman of the nations wanting to learn of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is why Peter calls the people to whom he is writing in 1 Peter 2:9— "A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."

If there is only one restaurant in town, no one argues about where to eat. For centuries, there was only one gospel in town, and it was the gospel of the Abrahamic covenant, to become known as the gospel of the Circumcision. It was *of* Israelites and *for* Israelites, but its purpose was to eventually bless the nations during a millennial kingdom. Non-Israelites could get in on it early, but they had to be circumcised and do the law. (There was a special court for them at the temple), and then, once in, they were subservient to Israel. They were never on equal status. These people were known as proselytes.

Around the year 34 A.D.—for the first time since 1,300 B.C. when Moses received the law at Sinai and the temple service began—God sent another evangel to Earth. It was called “the evangel of the Uncircumcision” (Galatians 2:7) to contrast it with the ancient gospel, the gospel of the Circumcision, i.e. the Israel gospel; the gospel of the Abrahamic Covenant. Now there were two restaurants in town. This is why the book of Acts seems confusing to some, because of the opening of the new franchise.

Alan Hess comes across in Video 3 as though the presence of two evangels would be an insurmountable problem; as though it would require a Ph.D. in order to survive a 1-2 choice. Here is Alan from Video 3—

“Can you imagine if you, as a Jew, had two apostles coming to you telling you two different things?”

Yes, actually I can imagine it, and quite well. It’s not that difficult. Listen to this: When I was a homeowner, I was once approached by two different companies that wanted to side my house. Recently, at a grocery store, I had to choose between organic and non-organic eggs. One time here in Florida, when a guest was in town, a decision had to be made concerning lunch: “Mexican or Italian?” I survived all of these choices and even thrived because of them. I believe that, in every case, I made a wise decision and improved my life.

I’m not seeing a problem with two gospels, Mr. Hess. In fact, I’m seeing great fun and wild times. I am seeing God in heaven laughing His head off and skipping about on the clouds with glee because, through Paul, He now unburdens His heart of the grace held within—God never truly delighted in the sacrifice and the blood of animals—while at the same time still giving Israel her promised kingdom.

Let’s forget the Jews for a moment. How about the nations? Yes, how about them. For the first time since—



really—the call of Abraham in 2,100 B.C., there was a new swinging door opening to a knowledge of the one true God—a door swinging independently of Israelite mediation. Call a Jew? Forget it. Heck, you could do it from the comfort of your own home. That’s right, no need to call Peter; no need to kill animals, go the second mile, turn the other cheek, or give your last shirt and pair of pants to a homeless person. It’s a radical new door, but not *that* radical because the Son of God, Who came to Earth for Israel, is the same One bringing the exiting new portal into the deepest recesses of God’s mind. In fact, the new gospel that is really cracking God up has been endorsed by Peter, the chief apostle of the earthbound Christ. And just when you think that it can’t get any better or more certified, the man to whom God gave the new message—namely Saul of Tarsus, soon to become Paul the apostle—heals people with his clothing, makes cripples walk, raises people from the dead, drives demons out of crazy women, and shakes deadly poisonous snakes off his arm. Impressive signs! Where do I sign up?

Many from the nations *did* sign up. Why wouldn’t they all ink such a deal? Some Gentiles had already attached themselves to Israel. These were the proselytes. They loved

Israel and enjoyed a familial bond with the covenant people. They *heard* about Paul's gospel, but were unwilling to let go of what they knew. Israel was a comfort zone for them.

Imagine having a girlfriend, and you love her. You've been with her for three years, with a rich history together, but one afternoon a very attractive woman happens by (she's much better looking than your girlfriend) catches your eye, winks, hikes up her skirt, twirls a finger through her hair as the fair sex does—the twirl is perfectly silent yet freighted with plum-blossomed sound. She clearly wants you. Approaching you while feigning other interests, she passes you a note—"I've got a penthouse suite; we will live there together, making beautiful love. I'll tend to your every need.—" She's legit. She means it. She is of good stock and pure intention. (And please do not forget that she's a deep pool of restless gold, an ocean of hopeless passion; she stands, holding the universe together with a beauty to make a bishop kick a hole through a stained glass window, eyes darker than King David's lute.)

This is the gospel of the transcendent grace of God. What I have just described to you is Paul's gospel.

It's not that you're unmoved. And yet your gaze returns to sweet Sarah with her ponytail, cardigan top, bobby socks and saddle shoes—your love for this woman is so pure and deep that an army could not pull you away, no, not even a deep pool of restless gold.

This is the Gentile fascination with Israel. It is why some of the nations—proselytes of Israel—politely yet firmly stiff-armed Paul.

Ruth, a Moabitess, joined herself to Naomi, a Jew. You know the story. Do you think that if Paul had appeared offering a funner, leaner, sexier experience than that of Naomi, that Ruth would have abandoned her patroness? Here's Wikipedia on "The Book of Ruth"—

The book tells of Ruth's accepting the God of the Israelites as *her* God and the Israelite people as her own. In Ruth 1:16–17, Ruth tells Naomi, her Israelite mother-in-law, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

If this is true of a *Gentile* grasping onto Israel's gospel and culture, how strong do you think is the pull on the natural stock? And now let's put it on steroids: how strong is the pull on the very disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ? The very idea that these men would, at the wink of a

flirtatious, foreign eye, abandon their native gospel is ludicrous. The only way Paul himself embraced it is that he *didn't* embrace it. It was forced on him. The Owner of it knocked him to the ground and blinded him. It grew on him, though, and he befriended it. He learned to love it. It was an arranged marriage though—make no mistake. Paul came to love it so highly and grasp it so deeply that some even of Israel couldn't resist his presentation. He seduced them to death. Yes, such was the appeal of the message and messenger that some even of the Jews grasped on. Not many, to be certain, but some. It was *for* them if they wanted it. But how much easier for a Gentile to fall under the spell—a person of the nations who was not dating anyone anyway.



These are all relative considerations. Absolutely, it is God Who decides who hears what, who latches onto what, and whose ears never detect anything. In my book *The First Idiot in Heaven*, I compare the two gospels to two radio frequencies—one FM and one AM—and the people of earth I describe as pre-fitted with either an antenna for the FM or the AM bandwidth. Or no antenna at all.

How is any of this hard? When the new “restaurant” comes to town, Jews either stay with their program (most did; certainly the intimates of Jesus did), or marry Paul. For Jews who “marry” Paul, their national advantage disappears (Jew and Greek are equal in the body of Christ).



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They trade away an earthly glory for a celestial one. It’s a lopsided trade to their advantage, but try telling a Peter that, or a John, or a James. Try telling Ruth that. Of course there’s that pretty little bonus: the rare perfume of not having to do law. But Israelites grew up *loving* the law of God—and rightly so.

From the unattached Gentile perspective, on the other hand, you’re suddenly face-to-face with the sexiest thing you’ve ever seen and heard, a welcomed alternative to second-wife status (you’d actually be but a concubine) to the favored nation. If you’re tied to Israel as a proselyte (as was Ruth to Naomi) and you love all things Abraham, then good for you; stay where you fit. You’ll get your millennial glory. No one will blame you. You refused the come-on of the penthouse apostle, but all the world loves true love, even in bobby socks. Your devotion will become legend.

How is this complicated?

* * *

I have barely begun—it seems to me—and now I’m done. For today anyway. I wanted to finish analyzing the Jerusalem council, and especially Peter’s words there. You must understand why Peter said what he did. When I show you what had just recently transpired with the chief apostle of Christ, his words in Jerusalem will make sense to you, if they don’t already. I will do this next week.

I fully intended, in this edition, to spotlight Alan’s most egregious error of applying Paul’s “the two become one” statements to anything or anyone outside of the body of Christ. This solves everything and I think that Alan himself will see it when it’s spotlighted.

Alan wrestles with the phrase, “mixing law and grace,” but I will explain to you why this phrase doesn’t mean what Alan thinks it means, and why some of us have perhaps explained it wrong, including myself. And of course, next week, more insider information on the famous Peter & Paul conflagration in Antioch. That’s one for the history books.

Remarkably, it burns among us today. —MZ

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