

99-12-05a

Let's begin our worship through the study of God's Word this morning with a moment of prayer. Father, we thank you, as always, for the wonderful privilege we have of living in this life not alone, not unaided, not left to our own devices, but in the power of your Spirit, equipped with the truth of your Word and with meaning and purpose and definition to our lives. We thank you that we have these things because of the love that you expressed toward us in sending your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us, and because of his work on the cross, we have been made acceptable in your sight.

We are the beneficiaries of your mercy and your grace. We thank you for the plan and the purpose that pertains to us in this age. We are members of the body and bride of Christ.

We enjoy fellowship with one another because we are united together in him. We pray this morning that as we spend time together in fellowship and in the study of your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will accomplish his purposes in and through us, that each one present will have the opportunity to minister to others through the exercise of their spiritual gift. We pray that our conversation will be salt and light and will be edifying to the hearers.

We pray that our lives as we worship together this morning will be a reflection of your glory and that we will be built up in the faith and more closely conformed to the example and the goal that is a living example before us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for those who are in governmental authority over us as debates and decisions are ongoing in terms of the next set of elections. There are issues both foreign and domestic that face the leadership of our country, that face the leadership of our military services, and all of the other areas of civic life that pertain to us as citizens of the United States.

We pray for those individuals who are entrusted with authority and responsibility to set priorities and to make those decisions that you will continue to hold their hearts in your hands so that our freedom and our opportunities as believers are safeguarded in this environment. We pray for those who have been given the privilege of communicating the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, both at home and abroad, that you will continue to bless their ministries and that God the Holy Spirit will find fruitful fields in terms of receptive hearts and those who will recognize the responsibility that is placed before each one of us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of him. Once again we ask your blessing on us as we study your word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will superintend that the truth we see in your word will become a part of the resources in our souls to equip us and enable us for every good work. We pray these things in the name of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For a scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Romans chapter 10. Romans chapter 10. We recently sallied forth into Romans chapter 9. We go boldly where angels fear to tread and we want to look this morning because it pertains directly to our study in Genesis chapter 32 at what Paul the apostle has to say about the nation that springs from the individual we are studying in Genesis.

Jacob who this morning as we study will find himself given a new name, the name Israel. The nation that bears his name is in view in Romans chapter 10 and we find that this naming is not accidental, it's not a superficial thing. There are many aspects of Jacob's existence and his approach to life that are reflected in the nation that bears his name.

These are some of the things that Paul points out in Romans chapter 10. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. I should pause and remind you that in many of our previous studies and investigations in both the Old Testament and the New, we understand that the words here in particular, the *sozo* word group that are translated saved, salvation and so on, need to be understood in context.

This is not a reference to eternal salvation. If you were able to go through Romans with us in the not too distant past, the theme of Romans is righteousness by faith. The call of God to Israel is the call to the lost sheep, the sheep that belong to God that have strayed from the fold and need to have a change of mind and return.

Paul understands that calling. That is the mission of the eleven disciples who became apostles to Israel. Paul, of course, has as his primary focus the Gentiles.

It seems initially somewhat out of balance that you have the small group of Israel to whom eleven men are sent. You have the entire world of Gentiles to whom one man is sent. But this is another one of those ironic twists that God has included in his plan.

Through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, because of his great faith and his great gifting and the exercise of his gift through faith in God, God is able to give us quite a lot of the inspired scripture of the New Testament through the pen of Paul. He is, however, an Israelite. He is circumcised on the eighth day and has a heart for his kinsmen.

I believe that is the reason we have the book of Hebrews. This, I think, is Paul's anonymous appeal to his countrymen couched in language that he knows very well, having grown up as a Pharisee, having been trained as an Old Testament scholar. Those who interpret the word of God and are not real sure that Paul is a candidate for writing Hebrews point to the fact that the vocabulary is quite different in that book from the letters of Paul.

Paul mentions in one place that he signs all of his letters with his name at the end. This is the mark of their authenticity, and that isn't found in Hebrews. The book of Hebrews is addressed to Israel.

That's why it has the name that it has. Paul is persona non grata in many quarters in Israel, so it would make sense not only that the vocabulary would be different in the same way that when a Marine is in a room full of Marines his vocabulary is likely to be somewhat different than it is when he is at an ice cream social on a Sunday afternoon. A computer guy, when he is talking to other computer guys, is going to use a lot of vocabulary and refer to a lot of things that wouldn't crop up in his ordinary conversation.

In the same way, Paul, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, talking to his fellow Israelites might very likely use different figures, different vocabulary, even slightly different thought progressions than you would find in epistles addressed to the Gentiles. I say all of that to say that it is clear, and Paul explicitly states, that it is his heart's desire that Israel be delivered. Delivered from what? Delivered from the judgment of God that comes upon those who hear the truth and reject it.

This is a universal truth, whether you are an unbeliever or a believer. God convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. God comes to his people, both Israel and the church, and faces us with the truth.

This is what we are seeing in our Lutz study on Friday nights. We are forced to the point of decision. I was reminded, KAAM, our big band station, has had to go through a couple of incarnations and rising from its own ashes to stay on the air.

It used to be on 1310 and then it went to 620 and now it is on 770 AM. But it is back, it is alive and well. One of the things that I used to listen for on Sunday mornings was the Norval Slater program of hymns and great sacred music.

So I turned on the AM radio this morning to see if, of course, Norval passed away and his widow was carrying that on for several years. But I either tuned in too late or maybe they didn't pick that program back up somehow. But when I turned on the radio between 7 and 7.30, what I heard was the Billy Graham Evangelistic Hour.

If you are familiar with Billy Graham, you know that he has had a magazine for a number of years that bears the same or similar name to his radio program. His radio program is called The Hour of Decision. The magazine is called Decision Magazine.

I found copies of that from the early 60s up in my dad's inexhaustible supply of sheet music and song books and various other flotsam and jetsam that he has accumulated over the last several decades. I was just looking at that a week or so ago and there is an old Decision Magazine up there. But Billy Graham understands the central thrust of the Word of God and that is, this is truth.

And when you are confronted with it, you have to make a decision. Israel has been confronted with the truth of God's plan and God's purpose through Jesus Christ himself. They missed it.

They rejected him and his message. They crucified him. And Paul now says, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be delivered.

That they will wake up and see the truth and understand it. And this is clarified for us in verse 2, I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God. There are unbelievers who say, I don't know if there is a God.

I don't care if there is a God. I don't have any interest in the things of God. If there is a God, so what? This is what you hear from the agnostics and the atheists and people that float around today making out like they don't know that there is a God.

Of course all of them do. God the Holy Spirit convicts everyone of that truth. Paul says in this very book in chapter 1 that everyone has the knowledge of God and they are without excuse when they reject him.

But these Israelites have a zeal for God. Paul says, I will attest to it. I've been there.

I've lived among these for God. I was one in effect. They have a zeal for God.

What is their problem? It's not rejection of the concept of God. It's not rejection of the knowledge of God or of saving faith in God. What does it take to be saved? Hebrews 11.6 Without faith it is impossible to please God.

He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him. Israel believes that there is a God and they do believe that he will reward those who diligently seek him. But they don't understand the means.

They don't understand how to please God. And that's what Paul is going to go on to talk about here. They have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.

For being ignorant. Their problem is not lack of faith. It's lack of knowledge.

They don't know the truth. They haven't been persuaded of the truth. They haven't come to a knowledge of God and his purpose.

And their problem is not being unsaved. Their problem is ignorance. They, being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

The only way you can understand this as salvation is to jump in with the lordship salvation bunch. That to be saved you have to submit to the lordship of Christ. You have to own him as the Lord of your life.

And that if he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all. And this kind of thing. And you can jump in there with John MacArthur and the others who want to add something to faith as the condition for salvation.

The problem in Israel is they do not submit. These are believers who have not been obedient. Submission and obedience are two sides of the same coin.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. You recall our study of Romans. The law was not a means of salvation, was it? The law is the rule of life for the people of God.

It is the means of, this is God's description of how to be pleasing in his sight. To love him and to love your neighbor as yourself and to honor your father and mother and observe the Sabbath. Don't take the name of the Lord in vain and so forth.

That's the law. But we don't get saved by the Ten Commandments. Israel wasn't saved by bringing a bull or a lamb down to sacrifice.

And we've gotten so conditioned. We have such a mental knee-jerk reaction when we see saved and we think eternal salvation. And that's one of the reasons that Romans as a book, and this chapter along with 9, has been so misunderstood.

Paul explains what he's talking about. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. The law was a description of how to lead a righteous life.

It's living faith that is in view. Living righteousness. How to be pleasing in God's sight and not be a child that comes under constant discipline.

And Christ is the answer for pleasing God. To become Christ-like. To grow in grace and knowledge of him.

For everyone who is trusting. Everyone who is exercising faith. Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law.

The man who does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way. Do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven.

That is to bring Christ down from above. Or who will descend into the abyss. That is to bring Christ up from the dead.

But what does it say? The word is near you. In your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith which we preach.

The standard of righteousness. The standard of pleasing God in daily life is faith in what God says. His promises.

His principles. His doctrines. The expressions of his character that exist in his word.

That's what we trust. So that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus. And believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead.

You will be delivered. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness. With the

mouth confession is made unto deliverance.

And once again we are so conditioned. This is one of the first verses I ever memorized as a child in Sunday school. And it is always presented as salvation.

And you think well now Sam. I understand everything you are saying about Romans. But when you get here to verse 9. Confess with your mouth.

Believe in your heart. Stop and ask yourself this question. Is verbal confession a part of eternal salvation? Do you have to speak the words with your lips? Because that's what this is talking about.

It doesn't say confess in your heart the Lord Jesus. Or trust in your heart. It says confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus.

And believe in your heart what? That he is the propitiation for our sins. That he gave his only begotten son. This is belief in the resurrection.

Is belief in the resurrection a critical part? This is one of the exercises they gave us in seminary. Boil down to its essentials. The gospel.

What is the content that must be believed in order to receive eternal salvation? Do you have to believe that Jesus is the son of God? Do you have to believe that he died for your sins? Do you have to believe that he was buried? Do you have to believe that he rose again? Can you just believe that he is the son of God? Can you just believe that he died for your sins? But maybe he is not the son of God? What about the people who think that Jesus was just a really holy man? What about people who believe in the crucifixion, but they don't necessarily believe in the resurrection? Are they saved? They believe that he was a propitiatory sacrifice, but they think the disciples kind of got overwhelmed in grief and had a mass hallucination, and that it's a spiritual resurrection, that Jesus wasn't literally raised from the dead. What kind of resurrection do you need to believe in? You see the problem. When you start trying to define the content toward which faith is directed, God looks at it and says, okay, you're saved from the lake of fire.

You're not. What if you don't believe in eternal security? Are you really saved? Because that impinges on the nature of the work of Christ. Is it efficacious once for all? Or can you be born again and then sort of be unborn? If you don't believe in eternal security, are you not really saved? God says, well, unless you believe in the efficacy and the absolute saving power of the work of Christ on the cross, you just think it's sort of saving and not totally saving.

Well, this is one of the reasons people get wrapped around that particular axle, because not observing the context of this verse, flattening out the concept of salvation, here we are talking about confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus. This is a commitment. If you're willing to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, if you own him publicly,

and this is one of the reasons people have gotten fouled up with walking the aisle, well, you have to make a public confession.

Sure, you can believe and technically you're saved, but the Bible says confess with your mouth. This verse is the justification for people giving altar calls and wanting people to walk the aisle. It's sad because it obfuscates the truth.

It takes one category and applies it to another. We're talking here about Israel. We're talking about believers who have strayed, who need a change of mind back toward God.

What is this deliverance? What are we delivered from here? Or Israel, who is primarily in view. The judgment of God, the wrath of God on those who should be walking in obedience and are not. Israel has just crucified the Messiah, just a few decades before Paul writes these words, and they are now actively resisting the church and the growth of Christianity.

They don't want the gospel to go to the Gentiles. They are far from understanding the plan and the purpose of God. They can't see it.

Their eyes are blinded. Their ears are deafened. Their hearts are hardened.

What's going to happen to believers who have blind eyes, deaf ears, and hardened hearts? Go back and read Isaiah. Go back and read what God says is going to fall on His people. Look at the pattern in the Old Testament when the people of God become unfaithful and apathetic and deceive themselves and go after other things, pursue righteousness in a superficial and false way.

This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient, he doesn't say an unbelieving and hell-bound generation. It's a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

And this is a universal truth. Anyone, not only Israel, if you, he says, acknowledge with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. What does belief in the resurrection accomplish? This is change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God like we find it in Hebrews 6, verses 1 and 2, where for a believer to understand that there is life and vitality and fruitfulness in the spiritual realm through God, that we have new life, it is understanding what God gives us after our regeneration and that that is the power in which we should walk.

To believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, what else has Paul said in Romans about identification with Christ? The death He died, He died to sin. The life He lives, He lives to God. Israel has to understand that the life, believers have to understand that the life we live is to be lived to God.

That He is the first priority. This is belief in the resurrection from the dead.

Understanding that resurrection, believing it, and that God raised Christ from the dead so that we too might walk in newness of life.

That's a phrase right out of this book. What's the point? You will be delivered. There's no reason for the wrath of God to descend on you as a believer.

There's no reason for you to be the dead branch that is snapped out of the tree and gathered and burned, as Paul is going to go on to talk about in this very same book in the next chapter. You get over there these branches that have been snapped out of the tree in chapter 11 of Romans. So just give your soul a chance to listen to these words of Paul in the light of the context of the book.

Paul has spent nine chapters talking about the theme of the walk of believers, righteousness by faith. Romans 1.16, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God for deliverance to everyone who is trusting.

The Jew first and also the Greek. And this is deliverance from the discipline of God on believers as we've covered when we went through all 16 chapters here. And that's what's being talked about here.

And this is important because this pertains to our study in Genesis. The prototypical Israelite, Israel himself, is going to be in this very same category. You've got to confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus.

Believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead. You will be delivered. Why? For with the heart one trusts unto righteousness.

Righteousness by faith. Go back to the first few verses in Romans chapter 5. And with the mouth confession is made unto deliverance. For the scripture says, whoever believes on him will not be put to shame.

Where is that? That's in Isaiah 28.16. Go back and look at what's going on in Isaiah. We don't have time to do it for our scripture reading, but if you go back and look at that, who is God talking to? What is he talking about? It's not eternal salvation. It's deliverance from the wrath of God.

But Isaiah, in his entire book, is warning and calling and beseeching. He's the one who says all day long, I've held up my hands to a disobedient and stiff necked people. God calls his people to trust in him.

If we trust in him, we will not be put to shame. It's a shameful thing to undergo discipline from God. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek.

Verse 12. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him. These are the people for whom God is Lord.

He is the Lord over all and he is rich to all who call upon him. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. Go back to the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple.

When he says, if your people stray from you and get into disobedience and so forth, if they come to this place and call on your name, then hear their prayer and heal them and restore them. That's a brief summary of a much longer prayer. That's what's being talked about here.

It's so easy to flatten. It's easy because then we can apply all of these verses to someone else. Because it's the unsaved that need to be reading Romans chapter 10.

It's the unsaved who need to be reading Romans chapter 9. In fact, the entire book of Romans. We give the Roman road to unbelievers. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

That's those unbelievers. The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That's a reward passage. That's not talking about heaven and hell. That's talking about the judgment seat that Paul depicts in Romans chapter 2. Sadly, we've missed the applicability of each of these passages to ourselves.

We are the ones who should be cautioned. We are the ones who should be aware of the fact that if we persist in sin, we die. We become a dead fruitless branch just as Israel has.

Read chapter 11 of this book. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach unless they are sent as it is written? How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. But they have not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? Who's Isaiah? He's a prophet. He's an Israelite. Who's his audience? Nineveh? Assyria? It's Israel.

It's the people of God. Have they not heard? Yes, indeed. Well, I'm sorry.

I skipped the most important verse here. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. What kind of faith? This is not deliverance from the lake of fire faith that is in view.

It is living faith. The faith that pleases God. The faith that is accounted for righteousness.

Abraham. Go back to Romans chapter 4. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. It is faith in the word of God.

But you can't exercise living faith if you don't heed the word. How can you trust the promises of God if you don't know them? How can you place confidence in the principles and the doctrines of the word of God if we don't know them, if we don't meditate on them and see their applicability to our own lives? Faith comes by hearing. Hearing comes by the word of God.

You can't have living faith if you don't spend time in the study of the word of God and if you do not meditate on it afterward. Did not Israel know? Moses says I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.

Isaiah is very bold and says I was found by those who did not seek me. I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me. But to Israel he says all day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.

He goes on in chapter 11. Has God cast away his people? Certainly not. Why does it say has God cast away his people? People say well this is a generic reference to the nation of Israel but it still includes the unbelievers.

The same people are in view all the way through. These disobedient and stiff necked people who don't heed the call have not been cast away. Verse 2 God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.

These people who are disobedient, stiff necked, who have heard and didn't respond, they haven't been cast away. They are believers. They are still going to be resurrected.

God will still fulfill his covenant promises to them. We don't have time to go all the way through Romans but the central point here that we want to pull out of Romans chapter 10 is verse 2. Paul says I bear them witness they have a zeal for God but not according to right to knowledge. They being ignorant of God's righteousness seeking to establish their own righteousness have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

This is an obedience problem. This is a knowledge problem. Why does Paul talk down here about how can they believe in him who they have not heard? Knowledge is the problem.

There have been preachers sent with the knowledge, with the truth that they are supposed to exercise faith in and they heard it but they didn't listen. They had eyes to see but they didn't perceive. They had ears to hear but they didn't comprehend.

Their heart has grown dull. Without that knowledge they can't exercise living faith. They can't exercise the faith that yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Let's turn back now to Genesis chapter 32 and we will find out how this scripture reading is illuminated by Israel's early experiences and vice versa. We left off last time seeing Jacob gathering the gifts to send ahead of himself to his brother Esau. He has left Laban.

They have set up their pillars and their heaps and they have said their peace. Laban has rambled on and on. Don't cross over for evil and this stone will be a watch.

Laban seems to set a lot of store by stones. He has the teraphim and he sets up these pillars and heaps and says they will be the watchmen and so on. Then in chapter 32 Jacob went on his way.

We don't want to lose sight of the fact that in 32.1 when Jacob went on his way the angels of God met him. These are the malakim. Malak is the Hebrew word for messenger.

Im of course makes it a plural. The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, is malak with the first person singular possessive suffix. My messenger.

Malak-i. The angels of God met him. Jacob saw them and he said this is God's camp.

He called the name of that place Mahanaim. Two camps. Notice he doesn't say this is the angels camp.

Why doesn't he say this is the angel camp? This is their forward post. I saw them going up and down the ladder. Evidently God is up in his heaven.

They come down here and this is the angel camp. He doesn't call it Malakim. He calls it Mahanaim.

He explains that by saying this is God's camp. This is important for us to understand for what we are studying this morning. When Jacob sees the angels to him that is the presence of God.

The presence of an angel is the presence of God. He meets the angels. He says this is God's camp.

God is here. God is camped here. This is a very common understanding in ancient times all the way down to the present.

If you go over to Washington D.C. and hang around there outside the United Nations building. That is in Washington D.C. isn't it? United Nations? Or is it in New York? Go to New York. Hang out outside the United Nations.

Or wait for one of them to come down to Washington D.C. And find the ambassador of some foreign country and insult him. Pour international distress orange paint all over his car. Slap him in the face with a glove.

This creates an international incident because to do something to the ambassador is to do something to the country. To attack a country's embassy where the ambassador resides and does his work. That ground is considered to be the territory of that country.

That is why you have all that diplomatic immunity and so forth going on. People understood this even from ancient times. To receive an emissary or an ambassador from God.

You are basically talking to God when you talk to that emissary or that ambassador. The Roman centurion, we will see this in Luke, in some of the gospel accounts. When he sends to Jesus and says, my son or my close trusted servant is ill and at the point of death.

Please come heal him. Jesus says, I will come. He says, no you don't need to come.

Just say the word. Not found so great a faith not in Israel. If you look at the parallel gospel accounts.

In one of the accounts it says the man himself spoke to Jesus. If you go to the parallel account it says his messengers spoke to Jesus. To the gospel writers it is one and the same thing.

To speak to the messenger is to speak to the man. In the Old Testament to speak to the messenger is to speak to God. To have an encounter with the angel of the Lord is to have an encounter with the Lord himself.

Just to make sure we understand this. We have already seen it here in 32.2. When Jacob sees the angels he says this is God's camp. Let's turn over to Judges chapter 6. Of course we are laying the ground work for Jacob wrestling all night with someone.

Who is that someone? Is it God? Is it an angel? Is it a man? Who is it? It helps us to have a little bit of background. Judges chapter 6. This is the story of Gideon. The children of Israel in the beginning of chapter 6 are doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

Which is not uncommon. Every other segment of Judges the children of Israel are doing evil in the sight of the Lord. This is part of what we have just been talking about.

So the Midianites are prevailing against them. In verse 4 they encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth. They come up with their livestock in their tents.

In verse 5 coming in as numerous as locusts. Remember these are the Midianites. This is Moses' father-in-law Jephthah and that crowd.

It came to pass in verse 7 when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Because of the Midianites that the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel. Who said to them thus says the Lord God of Israel.

I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage. I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you. And drove them out before you and gave you their land.

Also I said to you I am the Lord your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. What is the problem? You have not obeyed my voice.

Why are they oppressed? Why do they need salvation? Why do they need deliverance? Disobedience. And God has allowed them to be sacked. Ransacked.

It's worse than locusts. Look at verse 11. Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah.

Which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. Of course Abie you know Ab his father. E means mine and Ezra.

So Joash his father is Ezra. Abiezra my father is Ezra. While his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites.

So he's skulking around trying to get his work done without the Midianites taking what he has. So he's inside the winepress. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.

It's such a comical scene because here's Gideon skulking around hiding from the Midianites trying to thresh his wheat. You can imagine the winepresses and olive presses a lot of times were in caves. It's a little known fact that the Garden of Gethsemane is actually a cave.

And they have found it and it is fitted out as an olive press. And this is the place where the disciples and Jesus would often find shelter. They weren't just out there under the trees.

They were in the cave of Gethsemane, the olive press of Gethsemane. It's right there next to the Mount of Olives. It makes sense that that's what would be there.

I've got pictures of it in the Biblical Archaeology Review. So here's Gideon skulking in the winepress trying to hide from the Midianites and trying to do this furtively. And when you're threshing and you're trying to separate, this is cramped quarters.

People usually do this in the great out of doors. Remember the threshing floor of Arona that was up at the high place of Jerusalem? You've got to have some room to do this. And he's cramped inside this winepress trying to thresh the wheat.

And so the angel comes in and says, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. And he's got wheat stuff sticking to him and he's inside this cramped airless cave type environment. Gideon says, Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? He's standing there with these wheat things falling off of him in the oppressive heat there.

And he says, Why has the Lord let this happen to us? Where are all of His miracles which

our fathers told us about? Saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. Well, Gideon ought to know the answer to this question because God has just sent them a prophet. Up in verse 10, who told them why this is? But sometimes you hear the truth and it just doesn't seem to sink in.

What does it say in verse 14? The Lord turned to him and said, Go in this might of yours and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. This is salvation from Midian. Have I not sent you? The Lord turned and says, I have sent you.

But what did it say in verse 11? The angel of the Lord came and sat under the tree. And the angel in verse 12 appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, speaking of the Lord in the third person. He doesn't say, I am with you.

Does he? But this angel, this emissary, messenger from God is interchangeable with, for the purposes of communication, talking to the angel is talking to the Lord. The angel turning is the Lord turning. The angel speaking is the Lord speaking.

Very interesting. He said to him in verse 15, O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. It's interesting about Manasseh when we get to the end of Genesis.

Who are the two sons of Joseph? Ephraim and Manasseh. Who is the firstborn? Manasseh is the firstborn. Why are they always listed Ephraim and Manasseh? Because Jacob crossed his hands and gave the blessing to the younger and said, Ephraim will be the greater tribe.

Manasseh will be a people and be prosperous and so forth. But Ephraim is going to get the right hand blessing. So Gideon, the tribes of Joseph are virtually last in Israel.

Benjamin is the only one that comes after chronologically. And here is Manasseh who was the elder son but got the lesser blessing. And Gideon is from that tribe.

God in Gideon's career is demonstrating his strength through weakness. Remember the later episode of the 300 men. My clan is the weakest in Manasseh.

Not only is he from the tribe of Manasseh, his clan is the weakest in Manasseh. You can't get any more lowly than Gideon. And here is the lowliest and the lowliest clan and the lowliest tribe hiding in a cave, trying to thresh wheat, breathing in all this wheat dust, covered with little sticky pieces of straw.

You are going to use me to deliver Israel? The Lord said to him in verse 16, I will be with you. You shall defeat the Midianites as one man. He says to him, If I have found favor in your sight, show me a sign that it is you who talk with me.

Do not depart from me, I pray, until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you. Gideon went, verse 19, prepared a goat, leavened bread from a loaf of flour, put the meat in a basket, put the broth in the pot, brought them out to him under the tarimah tree, presented them to God. The angel of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock and pour out the broth.

Now you ask yourself, what about Abraham? We studied him under a tarimah tree and it looked like it was God and two other men. Was that also an angel of the Lord? What is the difference? In that case, the two men are clearly messengers. They go on to talk a lot and so forth.

But when Abraham prepares the meal and sets it out, God partakes of that meal, what happens here? He says, set it out under a rock and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread.

Fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread and the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. If this is a meal for God, it goes to God. It goes up in the smoke of the offering just like the other sacrifices in Israel.

And once again it says, Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. The Lord said to him, and apparently this is a voice out of heaven, Peace be with you.

Do not fear, you shall not die. So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it the Lord is peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

It came to pass that same night the Lord said to him, take your father's young bull and so forth. But I just want you to observe the duality here of the messenger and the one whom the messenger represents. Sometimes it's the angel, sometimes it's the Lord himself turning, speaking, speaking in the first person.

But in reality this is the angel. You will recall the passage in the New Testament, No man has seen God at any time. The Israelites understood the fact that no man can see God and live.

And that is a true thing. So how can you converse with God? How can God speak to you in the first person without killing you? Other than as a disembodied voice. Well, he can speak through his angel, through his messenger.

We have a similar passage in Judges chapter 13. Just flip a few pages over. This is Manoah, the father of Samson.

And the mother of Samson are involved in this. Verse 2 of 13 of Judges, there was a certain man from Zorah, the father of the family of the Danites, another tribe that had

troubles. Name was Manoah, his wife was barren, had no children.

The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, Indeed now you are barren, have born no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, not to eat anything unclean, and you shall conceive and bear a son. No raiser, he's going to be a Nazarite.

The woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came to me. His countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very awesome, but I did not ask him where he was from and he did not tell me his name. Verse 6. Verse 7, He said to me, You shall conceive.

Verse 8, Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, O my Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child. God listened to the voice of Manoah. In verse 9, the angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field.

He said to her husband, The man who came to me the other day has just now appeared. Verse 11, Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said to him, Are you the man who spoke to this woman? He said, I am.

Manoah said, Now let your words come to pass. What will be the boy's rule of life and his work? The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, Of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. He repeats what he told her earlier.

Manoah said, Please let us detain you and we will prepare a young goat for you. We will offer it to the Lord. Manoah did not know he was the angel of the Lord.

Follow this conversation on down. In verse 19, Manoah took the young goat, the grain offering, put it on the rock to the Lord. He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on.

It happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. Very similar to Gideon's experience. Manoah and his wife saw this.

They fell on their faces. The angel of the Lord appeared no more. Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord.

Why? Because we have seen God. His wife said, If the Lord had desired to kill us, he would not have accepted our offering, nor would he have told us these things. Sure enough, verse 24, the woman bore a son called his name Samson.

The child grew and the Lord blessed him. The spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahana Dan, camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtoel. So there is a very close

affinity between the messenger of God, the angel of the Lord, and God himself.

He ascends in the flame right up there to God, but he is distinct and separate. He says, Don't offer it to me. Offer it to the Lord.

We are going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we are going to look at Jacob wrestling with a man until daybreak and having a conversation with him afterward. We will see how Romans chapter 10 ties in to that episode.