

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Jesus' Resurrection: No Corruption, Sure Mercies

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:34–39, KJV 1900)

Paul quoted three Old Testament passages in this sermon in the synagogue. Although he was preaching to Jewish people who believed in God and in the Old Testament, the idea of Jesus and the resurrection was not the message that they heard in their ordinary Sabbath gatherings. The first passage that he cited was from Psalm 2, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Paul's interpretation of this verse was that God raised Jesus from the dead. He continues this focused interpretation of the two passages cited in the verses that we study here.

I will give you the sure mercies of David. Paul's interpretation of this passage from Isaiah 55:3 continues his theme, "*And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise....*" The sure mercies of David as Paul interpreted the verse, and as the Holy Spirit included his sermon in the inspired text of the New Testament, relates to Jesus' resurrection, not to a future restoration of Jewish people to the blessings of the gospel, or to an end times millennial Jewish kingdom. Our view of the text should agree with Paul's. The "sure mercies" that God promised David, though he did not deserve them, was fulfilled in Jesus, God's prophetic and greater David, not in any form of national restoration.

Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Paul cited these words from Psalm 16. We saw in Peter's Day of Pentecost sermon (Acts 2) that Peter also used this Psalm in precisely the same way that Paul here interprets it. When the Holy Spirit enlightens a man's mind to see the truth that He reveals in Scripture, you will not hear one private interpretation after another. You will see harmony in his teaching with the teaching of other men who also follow the Holy Spirit's teaching and not their private interpretations. And the Holy Spirit's teaching always agrees with the words that He directed chosen men to write in our Bible. Claims of a "Private revelation" that espouses ideas that contradict Scripture never come from the God. Any of us who regularly study the Bible occasionally

may ponder an interpretation of a passage that is a bit different from other interpretations that we've heard or read from other believers. Such a difference should sound a caution to our minds. The Holy Spirit has been revealing truth and true interpretations of Scriptures to His people throughout the New Testament era. He doesn't change His mind about what a given passage teaches. Nor does He reveal one idea to one Bible student and another wholly different idea to another believer. While Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit reveals truth to the Lord's people, it never teaches that He reveals contradictory ideas to different believers. He rather reveals consistent truth, **and only truth**, to all believers who seek and listen to His counsel. Further, His revelation is never mystical or private. It always comes in association with Scripture. "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." (2 Timothy 2:7) What Paul "said" to Timothy in this letter is part of the New Testament's inspired text. We may repeat Paul's words only so far as we faithfully preserve his words and teaching. The Holy Spirit gives eternal life wholly of His own power and apart from agencies or tools of any kind. (John 3:8) Scripture describes this life-giving work as being wrought on someone who is dead. (John 5:25; Ephesians 2:1-7) However, after the new birth is completed, He leads and teaches the child of grace according to Scripture. Notice; the same truth and lifestyle that we read in Scripture is the truth and lifestyle that the grace of God teaches "us" in Titus 2:12-14.

Further, the Holy Spirit never singles out one man to understand truth, while leaving other believers in the dark. The fundamental vehicle that God uses to preserve His truth is not individual people, but His church, "...the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) In sixty years of studying the Bible and observing human behavior, I have seen multiple occasions when one person rejected the mind of the church of his membership and defended his personal interpretation. While I sadly have witnessed churches making mistakes, experience has strongly confirmed the truth of this

passage. The peaceful mindset of a church is far more reliable as a mark of Biblical truth than one person's divergent opinion. We are all vulnerable, and quite sincerely so, to bad interpretations of Scripture, leading us to bad beliefs of error. The Lord's stated vehicle to maintain stable truth that He preserves is "...in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages...." (Ephesians 3:21) The Lord preserves His truth by this "pillar and ground of the truth," not by individual believers who claim superior enlightenment or knowledge of Scripture. More than once I have engaged men in conversation who held to Belief A and later embraced a near opposite and contradictory Belief B. When I questioned their illogical change in belief, they most often claim, "The Lord revealed to me...." In that state of mind, they forget that even our most sincere private interpretations are to be submitted to and tested by Scripture, not by our measure of personal sincerity or by our claims of a private revelation. The community of the Lord's church, His "pillar and ground of the truth," puts our private interpretations and sincere ideas to a test that we should profoundly respect, not despise if it disagrees with our ideas. The nineteenth century saw multiple major departures from historical Christian faith in our country, and, without exception, every leader of every major departure claimed a divine revelation. When the Lord truly does reveal truth to His people, He always guides them to Scripture as confirmation, not to their esoteric experience. And, with equal consistency, these men degraded the Lord's church, claiming that it had either wholly or substantially died, and that God had singled them out to restore pure Christianity to the world, a patent contradiction of the Lord's promise to preserve His church in Ephesians 3:21.

The Lord's revelation of truth to His people today is by Scripture and by Scriptural-based preaching. It follows the pattern that we see in our study passage and throughout the New Testament. Paul cited three Old Testament Scriptures to the people who heard him preach on this occasion, and he used these Scriptures to affirm the truth of Jesus and the resurrection.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Peter enlarges this truth in his Pentecost sermon, teaching the same truth and interpretation from the psalm. When David wrote the words, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," he wrote of Jesus and His resurrection, not of himself or his body. He died and somewhere even today his body lies in a tomb. He saw "corruption." His body decayed and followed the course of death's work on it. But Jesus of whom the Holy Spirit directed David to write spent a bare three days in a borrowed tomb, arising to life and shortly on to glory. He saw no corruption. His body did not decay and decompose in His grave.

Forgiveness and justification, as Paul preached these principles, comes through and by the Lord Jesus Christ. While many Bible students interpret belief in this passage as a further condition for forgiveness and justification, I suggest that belief more properly describes those whom the Lord forgives and justifies than adding an added requirement. Paul didn't say that forgiveness and justification are available, but "You must believe" if you want to obtain them. This interpretation harmonizes with Jesus' words in John 5:24, "...is passed from death unto life," and with John's words in 1 John 5:1, "...is born of God...." In both of these lessons, hearing and or believing describe a person who has already been born again, has already passed from death to life. Despite believing in gospel instrumentality for the new birth, A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, in his grammatical explanation of 1 John 5:1, quotes another writer who specifically states, "The Divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing." Robertson could not have stated the point more clearly. The new birth occurs prior to our believing, not because of it or subsequent to it. Thus, whether we are reading in John 5, 1 John 5, or Acts 13, our belief does not precede or serve as a cause or an instrument in our new birth. God produces the new birth sovereignly and irresistibly; then we are empowered to believe.

"...all that believe...." Paul makes no distinction whatever between the Jewish people in the synagogue and Gentiles on the street. God's grace in the heart, not a person's superficial association with a given race, makes the difference. We could frame the point simply, "Salvation is by grace, not race." Paul neither imposes a penalty on the people in the synagogue or gives them an advantage. The ground at the foot of the cross is level ground. No believer in Christ stands on higher ground than another.

Once the Holy Spirit has produced the new birth in a chosen child of grace, eternal (The consequences of what God does are eternal) forgiveness and justification that Jesus secured for His people is a fact, a permanent fact in that person. The gospel preached according to the truth revealed in Scripture brings the knowledge of God's gracious forgiveness and justification to light in the heart and mind of the child of grace. In this lesson, Paul seems to emphasize that point with his focus on "...all that believe...." Through the knowledge of what God did for us and in us through the Lord Jesus, we discover the joy and the deliverance of knowing about His loving grace. The synagogue congregation to whom Paul preached were looking for that deliverance through Moses' law, and they never found it, never. Paul shows them the path to what they could never find in Moses' law. How sadly often we substitute a legalistic equivalent to Moses' law in our own lives and seek our joy in those things instead of in the loving grace and person of God's Son. We need Paul's sermon!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor