

# The Work of the Word (“I Know Who We Are”)

Romans 10:20-11:12, 11:25-29

*Romans (no. 30 in the series)*

August 21, 2022

Peter Hiett

*Video and audio versions available online:*

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-work-of-the-word-i-know-who-we-are/>

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*This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter’s notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!*

## Prayer

God, we pray that you would speak your Word into our heart and you would seal it with your Spirit, and we would know even as we are known. Jesus, this is number 30 of the sermons from the book of Romans and so I pray that you would help us remember all the sermons before, which is hard for people that are here for the first time. So, I pray that your Holy Spirit would connect the dots and that we would see, and we would know what you want us to see, what you want us to know, and what you want us to be this morning. So, Jesus, I ask that you would preach us, even as we’re preaching you. It’s in your name that we pray, amen.

Video clip: *Taken* Trailer  
Twentieth Century Fox. (2008)

*Scenes from the movie scroll as audio plays. Brian Mills (Liam Neeson) and his daughter Kim (Maggie Grace) discuss her summer plans.*

Kim       Dad, guess what.  
Brian      Um hm.  
Kim        You know my friend Amanda?  
Brian      Yeah.  
Kim        Her cousins asked us to spend vacation with them in Paris. I really, really wanna’ go.

*Scene changes to a hotel in Paris. Kim’s phone rings, it’s her father.*

Kim        Hi daddy.  
Brian      You were supposed to call me when you landed.

*Kim is watching through a window into her friend’s hotel room as she is abducted.*

Kim        [In a terrified tone] There’s someone here.  
Brian      What?  
Kim        [In panicked tone] Oh my God, they’ve got Amanda. Dad, they’re coming.  
Brian      Alright, listen to me. Go to the next bedroom, get under the bed and tell me when you’re there.  
Kim        I’m here.  
Brian      Now, the next part is very important—they’re going to take you.

*Kim is pulled from under the bed, grasping for her phone. The scene cuts to a speaker Brian has attached to his cell phone. Scenes of Brian fighting people in a hunt for his daughter flash on the screen.*

Brian      I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. If you are looking for ransom, I can tell you that I don't have money. But what I do have are a very particular set of skills, skills I have acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that'll be the end of it. But if you don't, I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you.

Unknown    Good Luck.

I never actually saw that movie because I figured that I basically knew what it was all about and you can probably tell what it's all about, just from the trailer.

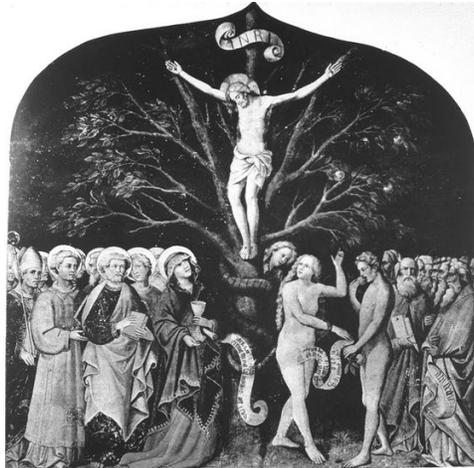
I did read the plot summary on Wikipedia, just a couple of days ago. Liam Neeson plays Ex Green Beret and CIA Operative, Brian Mills, who gets a frantic call from his daughter on a trip to Europe, as men break into her hotel room and attempt to abduct her and her friend. It turns out that they're sex traffickers planning to sell Brian's daughter as a harlot. But it also turns out that Brian Mills has a certain set of skills.

The movie had two sequels and the trilogy grossed 992.5 million dollars. So, it hit a chord with us. Wouldn't we all like a "set of skills," and wouldn't we all like to be men, and women, of action like Brian Mills. "Listen Satan, I don't know who you are, and I don't know what you want. If you are looking for ransom I can tell you, I don't have money. But what I do have are a very particular set of skills..."

We all want to be people of action, so we come to church and say, "Pastor tell me what to do." And we all want skills—as Napoleon Dynamite once said: "Girls want boys with skills—numb chuck skills, bow hunting skills, computer hacking skills." "So, Pastor, teach me some skills—demon fighting skills, healing skills, raising the dead skills and if you can't do that, let's, at least, form a committee."

We come to church and sometimes it seems like all we get is words. And I anticipate that may be the way that you're feeling about Paul's letter to the Romans. "Hey Peter, we started out well—a year ago—Paul talked about all sorts of things we shouldn't do but then he said we had done them all. And then for 10 chapters it's like just words. So, what am I supposed to do?"

Well, if you want to know what to do, it's coming in chapters 12 through 15 and you're more than welcome to read ahead. But if you're not doing everything in chapters 12 through 15 and doing it because you want to. Well then, perhaps you haven't heard the Word. Perhaps you're even crucifying the Word. And you need to go back to the garden and listen.



*"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena*

You know, there was a time when the church changed the world. They really had no skills, and church committees were illegal. There were some miracles, but also, a whole lot of martyrdoms. It seemed as if all they had were some words. Words preached by ridiculous little men like Paul of Tarsus. And then, whispered, sung, and repeated by slaves, prisoners, and women.

In Romans 10 Paul quoted Moses speaking to a nation of slaves, saying “The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart, (‘so that you can do it,’ says Moses).” So, the word was in the Israelites, 3500 years ago. And it was in the folks who received Paul’s letter 2000 years ago. And it’s in you, right now. And Paul told us that the Word is Christ, who is the Word of Faith that we proclaim. But even faith cometh by hearing and hearing by a Word of Christ.<sup>i</sup>

Quoting the Old Testament, Paul showed us that The Word is constantly whispered by all creation. It’s sung when we have failed and so nailed it to a tree. But it conquers in a garden where it walks out of a tomb. Nothing is more powerful than the Word, for reality itself is the work of the Word, and reality is good, and everything else—everything evil—is something more like an illusion or bad dream. Which implies that all of us are dreaming, for in our reality evil seems to be quite real, and none of our words seem to matter; it’s like they’re all dead.

**Romans 10:20:**

**Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”**

That’s Isaiah that’s writing but the Word of the Lord that’s speaking. It was through Isaiah that the Lord informed us that “a Word of righteousness”<sup>ii</sup> has gone out from his mouth, and it won’t return empty, but will accomplish that for which it was sent; it even finds those that were not looking.

**Romans 10:20-21:**

**Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”<sup>iii</sup> <sup>21</sup> But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”**

This is the tremendous problem with which Paul has been wrestling with. In Romans 9:6—has “the Word of God failed?” And not just failed with anybody, but failed with His own people, Paul’s Church, to whom belongs “the adoption, the promises, etc. etc.”<sup>iv</sup>

Romans 11:1, “I ask, then, has God rejected his people?” You know, if you read the Old Testament, it sure seems like God has rejected his people. In Deuteronomy 31, just after Moses says the stuff about the Word being in them, God tells Moses that Israel will whore after foreign Gods and quote “I will forsake them, and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured.”<sup>v</sup> And then he teaches Moses the Song they are to sing in that day—the song which is the story of how he will redeem them.<sup>vi</sup> But first he says that he will forsake them and devour them.

Paul’s been quoting Deuteronomy and Isaiah throughout Romans 10. In Isaiah 43:27 God says “I will... deliver Jacob (that’s Israel) to utter destruction [*Herem*—that’s the very same thing that he did with Jericho]. I will deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling...” And then he says, “Fear not, oh Jacob, my servant.” ... pretty weird huh?

Romans 11:1, “I ask, then, has God rejected his people?” Well Nazis and a whole of a lot of Christians, have said, “Well of course he’s rejected his people because they rejected him and so, they’re no longer his people—hell is full of jews, just like Judas.”

American Evangelicals will then argue, “No God has actually blessed his people with some real estate in the Middle East and the military support of the United States of America but yes, after that he will reject them forever and torture them, endlessly. with fire. Because, you know, God is Love and... Free Will and stuff.”

**Romans 11:1:**

**I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!”** [*Me Genoito*—“Hell no!” In the strongest possible words: ‘NO.’”] **For I myself am an Israelite, [of the seed] of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.**

God has not rejected his people, but this is the problem: his people have rejected Him and his Word, who is the Righteousness of God. That’s what Paul has been describing.

Romans 10:3 “Being ignorant of the Righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” Actually, they took his life on the tree in the garden, and why was that?



*Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). The Passion of the Christ [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.*

Well, they were men of action, and they wanted his skills.

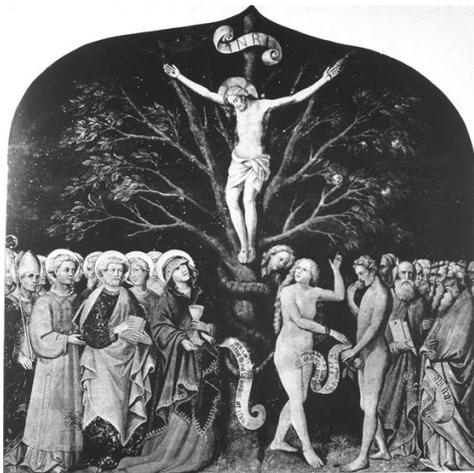
On Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>, 1994, (My daughter Becky would've just turned 3; Elizabeth would've been 5), I was driving home from work, listening to the radio, when Paul Harvey told a story that just rocked me to the core. He told of a young father who had a 6-yr.-old daughter—the love of his life. Wanting to play a game with her dad, she went and hid in the closet planning to jump out and surprise him with giggles and hugs. But when this young father heard the rustling in the closet, he imagined that he had found an intruder, and so wanting to protect his daughter he got his gun and snuck up to the closet door. When his daughter jumped out and yelled, "Boo!" He shot her dead. Before he heard the word, he pulled the trigger. As she lay bleeding, her last words were, "Daddy, I love you." Can you imagine? I think that would literally unmake me; I cannot think of a harsher judgment upon Peter Hiatt's Ego than that.

You know the Israelites had waited over 1500 year for the Messiah (the Christ), the Promised Seed, the Root of Jesse, and Root of David. For an Israelite, he was the distillation of all their hopes and longings—he was the love of their life. They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah but when he refused to use his skills as they desired, they figured they must have been mistaken. So, imagining that they were doing the work of the Messiah, they crucified the Messiah—and his last words were: "Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing... and into your hands I surrender my Spirit." It's the greatest crime in history and what should be their punishment? Would you send them to hell?

Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of these, my brothers, you do to me."<sup>vii</sup> They (Israel) are our Lord's brothers. And so, wishing them to hell is wishing Jesus to hell, which is literally wishing your life to hell, which is exactly like shooting your own daughter when she jumps out of the closet to surprise you or actually worse—because you would never wish endless torture on your own flesh and blood. Being ignorant of the Word, and seeking to establish their own Word, they did not surrender to God's Word but, they took action.

Maybe if we would've just surrendered to God's Word, we would've been known by the Word, and not tried to establish our own Word. And we would've avoided the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, for Christians would've seen Jews as temples containing their very own life. And we

would've avoided the Middle East Crisis and all the suffering of the Palestinians for the children of Isaac would've seen the children of Ishmael as their own flesh and not as intruders in the house of the Lord. And we would've avoided the war in Iraq, 100's of thousands of dead civilians, and now, famine in Afghanistan, for in the aftermath of 9-11 (which might not have happened), we might have realized: They don't know what they're doing and we don't know what we're doing and yet, we're all the children of Adam. We might have heard the Word before we took action.



*"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena*

Hopefully we see that it wasn't only the children of Israel that took the life of the Word on the Tree in the Garden. When we look on the one whom we have pierced, every one of us will be undone and only the Word of God will be able to put us back together, or perhaps, just put us together, like for the very first time.

**Romans 11:1-2:**

**I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!" For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?**

Paul is referring to 1 Kings 19, in which Israel has been seduced by Ahab and Jezebel, to play the harlot with Baal and Asherah, the Canaanite fertility Gods. Ahab and Jezebel are like the epitome of evil in Israel at that time. And, of course, the epitome of evil in Israel in Paul's time was Judas, and the high priests of Israel, who bought and sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver as if he were a harlot and we were his pimps.

In 1 Kings 19, Elijah wants to give up on Israel, but the Word of God meets Elijah in a cave on Mt. Horeb (Saini), which turns out to be a womb. He says, "Elijah there are still 7000... a remnant, who are faithful to me." "A remnant" ...and, of course, by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day in the garden on Mt. Calvary—there is only one that is faithful, and that's the Seed, the Word of God hanging on a tree.

**Romans 11:2-5:**

**Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? <sup>3</sup>“Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” <sup>4</sup>But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” <sup>5</sup>So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.**

Now, if you’re anything like me, Paul has lost you at this point. Indeed, I think he’s lost all of Western Civilization, at this point. He’s arguing that God has not rejected his people because there is this remnant of his people, 7000, which seems weirdly prophetic. In I Kings 19 all we know of is one hundred prophets hidden in a cave somewhere. But no matter the size just one (like the Seed), or 7000, what does a few have to do with the whole? I mean Elijah is Elijah and Ahab is Ahab, so just kill Ahab and let Elijah go. (And apparently God does kill Ahab<sup>viii</sup>, and yet God does the same thing with Moses and all of Israel).<sup>ix</sup> But now, what does the remnant have to do with the whole? Paul just said, “God hasn’t rejected his people... for I myself am an Israelite” And we all say: So, what? Paul is Paul and the people are the people. And yet this is the weird way that the Bible speaks of the people of Israel.

Remember chapter 9? We noted that when Paul writes “not all of Israel is Israel,” he seems to be speaking of the man named Israel. And now he’s speaking as if the People of Israel were just one man and not just the individual man who lived 3500 years ago. And if you’re like me, this is what has made the Old Testament rather unintelligible, which just might make Jesus rather unintelligible too.

Take Deuteronomy 30 for instance, the speech which Paul has been quoting. God says to Israel (through Moses), “And when all these things come upon you (singular), the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup>and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup>then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. Did you hear it? It’s not just that God is using the second person singular pronoun “you,” but he’s using it over the span of thousands of years, in reference to hundreds of millions of persons in hundreds of millions of places, including Sheol, that is *Hades* (in Greek), often translated Hell (in English). And so, I used to read the Old Testament and think “All these promises suck.” So, what if a few of my great, great x 1000 grandchildren move to Palestine while I languish or burn in “hell?”

I went to the nation of Israel, and they said, “Isn’t this great? This is the fulfillment of all those Old Testament promises.” And I thought, “Well then, those promises suck—I mean, nice for you with your condo on the beach, but not for the 6 million that died in the Holocaust, or the entire generation that left Egypt with Moses only to descend into *Sheol*.”

And yet God says, “I’m going to gather you (singular)” as he looks at them in the wilderness 3500 years ago, in the desert. In the Prophets, it’s the same thing: God speaks to Israel using a singular pronoun and says stuff like “I will deliver Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to

reviling” Isaiah 43:28. Next verse “But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen...Fear not! I will pour my Spirit upon your seed.” He refers to them as one man, who must somehow be destroyed and resurrected. And so modern Western Scholars read Isaiah, and say, “Well it’s all poetic language—you can’t take it seriously, and it has nothing to do with Jesus.” Well, my point right now, is that in the Old Testament and the New

- It’s as if you can’t be a someone unless you’re a part of everyone.
- It’s as if you can’t be an individual unless you’re connected.
- It’s as if you can’t be a real person without other persons.

At the end of World War 2 there were a couple hundred French POW’s that suffered from amnesia. And so, one day, having published their pictures in the paper, the authorities had them stand in front of a crowd gathered in the Paris Opera house. One by one, they would step forward, and pleadingly say, “Does anyone know who I am?”<sup>x</sup> And what did they want? Not ID numbers and addresses; they wanted stories about relationships with persons—for if they got those, they would discover themselves and part of that crowd would become family, like:

- Cain and Abel
- Isaac and Ishmael
- Jacob and Esau
- or Jesus and Judas—his brother (There’s a thought to ponder).

But you see, it’s rather inconceivable for the Hebrew Mind to think that God might save one, and not save all of your family, or tribe, or nation, for one is all and all are one. And you know this, or are coming to know this the older you get. I can’t tell you the number of people that have said to me something like, “I used to think it was simple, God sent suicides and sex offenders to hell and then my daughter told me she was gay and my son shot himself in the head—if they’re not in heaven, I don’t want to go, because they are who I am.”

So, who is Peter Hiatt? I honestly wouldn’t know, without Susan, and Jonathan, Elizabeth, Rebekah, and Coleman...and Dan and Evelyn Hiatt, and Rachel and Lydia Hiatt...and Andrew and Alan and Frances and Aram and Brian Newman and my old friends in the EPC. I wouldn’t know who I am, without all of these relationships in which I loved and was loved, or even longed for love and didn’t get it, yet. So, you see, if my daughter is not saved, how could I be saved? And if her husband Francisco is not saved, how could she be saved? And if Francisco’s Dad isn’t saved, you see this web of faith, hope and love, extends to everyone that’s anyone. When I’m honest, I have to admit that my psyche, my life, my soul, is inseparably linked to all these other psyches. When I’m honest but I’m often not honest, for it feels unsafe.<sup>xi</sup>

Several times Jesus said, “If you seek to save your psyche you’ll lose it, but if you lose your psyche for my sake, you’ll find it.”<sup>xii</sup> You see there’s something wrong with my psyche: It only wants to save itself and yet only wanting to save itself is literally losing itself, because my psyche is literally comprised of all of these relationships with all these other psyches—psyches, which each began in a relationship with God who breathed them into existence in the first place. And yet Jesus does tell me that if I lose my psyche, for his sake, I’ll find it—in other words, I’ll get myself and all my relationships back in a new way.

At the cross, my self-centered psyche is literally undone, and yet I get it back; I get that psyche back, in a new way, for all my relationships are no longer harlotry, but the freedom of unconditional Love and that's the psyche of Jesus, the head of the Body. The Church, (the Israel of God), is not an institution; We are a body. And if we've heard the Word—which is literally the logic of life—then we are a body that is rising from the dead.<sup>xiii</sup> For we will love as we have been loved, and Life is communion of Sacrificial Love.

Well, my point is that if Israel is not only many, but also one, then Paul's argument makes perfect sense. He's saying there's something left to save In Israel, and you can't save that something without saving all of Israel. A Father knows this: he knows that he can't be saved unless his children are saved, for he knows that he is somehow in his children. In Luke 15, the Father isn't saved until his prodigal son is saved, and his self-righteous son (the older brother) is also saved; only then can he enjoy the party.

A Father knows that his physical seed is in his children, but he has also come to realize that the Seed is so much more than physical. I remember sitting on our old couch with Elizabeth when she must have been about 12 months old. I was feeding her goldfish crackers, and she was covered in boogers, spit, and orange mush when suddenly I saw a thought enter her little brain—she reached in her mouth pulled out a glob of orange goo, put it in my mouth, and smiled—and it just kind of undid me. I suddenly realized that the Spirit in her was communing with the Spirit in me, and it was the same Spirit—she was me and me was she. And so, saving her would be saving me, and saving me would always be saving her.

I suspect that Parents know this about their children for they know and are known by their children, before their children take knowledge from the tree and begin to judge themselves, justify themselves, and hide in an ego. You see, no one told Elizabeth, "The right thing to do is sacrifice some of your Goldfish crackers as an offering to your father." Elizabeth's love was free love, even though she didn't yet know who or what it was, it was like an Eternal Seed in that little temporal bag of dust. Over time Elizabeth would judge it, try to justify it, and try to become it. And so, trying to create herself, she would stop being herself.<sup>xiv</sup> (We sometimes call this junior high but in truth it's all our "adult life.")

And yet a dad knows, a mom knows, that the seed is still there, not because we read about it in a law, but because we know IT, for IT has known us—IT has put orange Goldfish goo in our mouths, smiled, and said "Daddy." It's true of everyone that's anyone, but you don't know it, and they don't know if, for they're caught in the illusion that they are their own creator, unaware that they are the Creation of God, by means of his Word.

It must have been about two years later, that Rick and Kathy Noeling invited us over to their home for a church party. We all gathered around their swimming pool, laughing, eating hors d'oeuvres, and enjoying the summer evening. I had laid down the law—particularly for Elizabeth— "No playing by the pool." As I was talking to some friends, I heard a little splash, kept talking, but thought maybe I should check on Elizabeth. And when I turned around, she wasn't there. I looked in the pool and then I saw her, in the bottom of the deep end, floating in silence.

And immediately, as if Elizabeth was connected to my own autonomic nervous system—you know when you put your hand on the stove, you don't have to even think "I should move my hand;" your autonomic nervous system does the thinking for you. Immediately as if Elizabeth were my very own flesh, I dropped my food, threw myself in the pool, swam her back to the surface, pulled her out, held her close to my chest as she started to breathe, and I thanked God uncontrollably for her life, which was my life, which is still our life. She'd broken my law, but I didn't give a shit about the law, I had only made the law because of my love for her.

Immediately I became a man of action, and I employed all my skills, not because someone told me I should but because it is who I am. I am Elizabeth and Elizabeth is me. And no matter how many laws she breaks or how wretched she becomes; I know who she is under all the crap her ego may have manufactured. I know there's always something infinitely valuable to save, for that something has known me... put mush in my mouth and called me "daddy." I will always know that there's always something infinitely Valuable to save, and that I can't be saved unless she is saved for she is me.

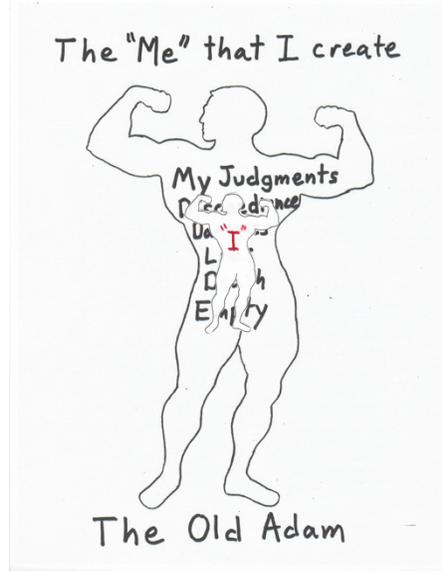
So why did Brian Mills, Ex Green Beret and Cia Operative, suddenly become a man of such action employing all of his skills? Was it because someone said you really should save girls that have been taken by pornographers, and if you do, we'll give you a salary and benefits? Or was it that he heard a word on the other end of the phone and the word was "Daddy...Dad?" And so he didn't even have to think, he dropped everything and dove in the pool, just as quick as you pull your own finger out of a flame?

- What if everybody is one body—and that's your body: the Body of our Lord?
- What if everybody has a father...even if they're convinced that they don't?

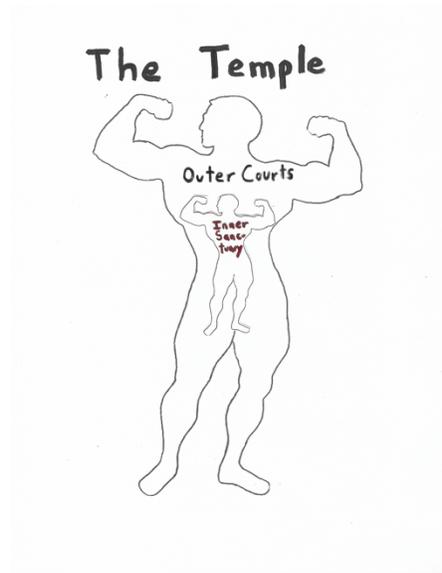
In the movie Taken, Brian Mills Daughter is taken by sex traffickers, who try to sell her as a whore—and Brian Mills uses his skills to save her and of course he kills her captors, in the process. But what if your daughter is taken by a lie, and so sells herself as a whore?<sup>xv</sup> Well then, you need a much more powerful set skills than those of Brian Mills. For if you killed her captor, you'd be killing her, for she needs to be saved from herself and so do you. And this is what Paul has revealed in the last 10 chapters:

- We need to be saved from ourselves—
- We need to be saved from our bad decisions, with a good decision, called "faith" (or "faithfulness") and it comes by a Word and at first, it's only the size of a seed.

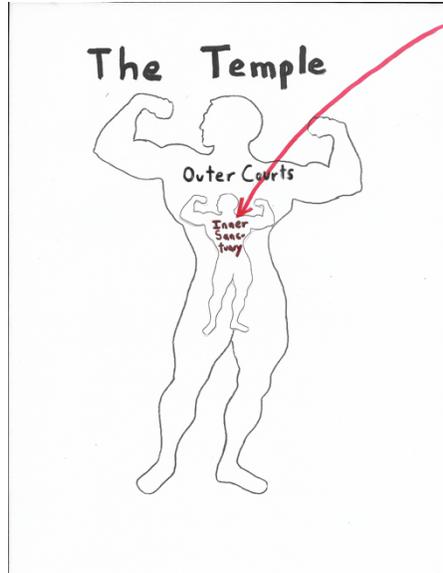
In Isaiah chapter six, Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up, and he hears the Seraphim cry "the whole earth is filled with his glory." Then Isaiah is called to preach Israel down to a remnant. But then even the remnant gets burned down to a stump, which is a root, and that root is the Holy Seed—it's the psyche of God, our Lord Jesus.<sup>xvi</sup> I think Paul is saying that just as Jesus was in the body of Israel as a Seed, so the Word exists in the depths of each of us—perhaps not "abiding" ("at home") in us<sup>xvii</sup>, but imprisoned in us, like Spirit in a jar of clay, or a Seed buried in dirt, or eternity behind the curtain in the Sanctuary of a soul. He was breathed into us in the beginning, by Our Father. And he is worth saving; he is worth raising from the dead.



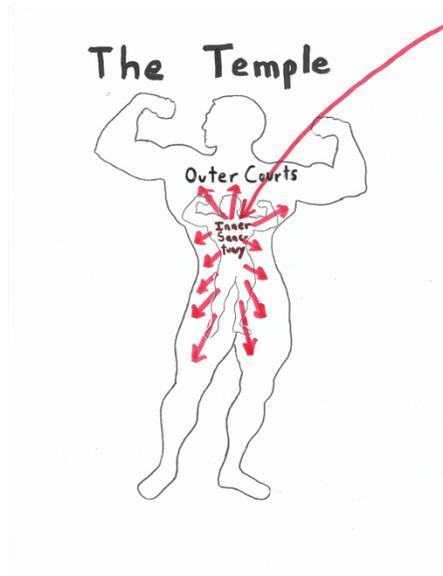
So, like Moses said to the Israelites—"the Word is in your heart." And like Jesus said to us, whatever you do to the least of these my brothers you do to me.



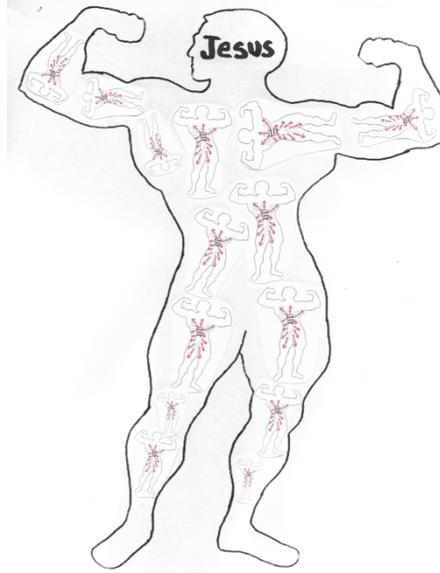
Each of us, and all of us, have been taken by a lie, and so we have imprisoned the Word in the stone temple that is our hardened heart—our ego.



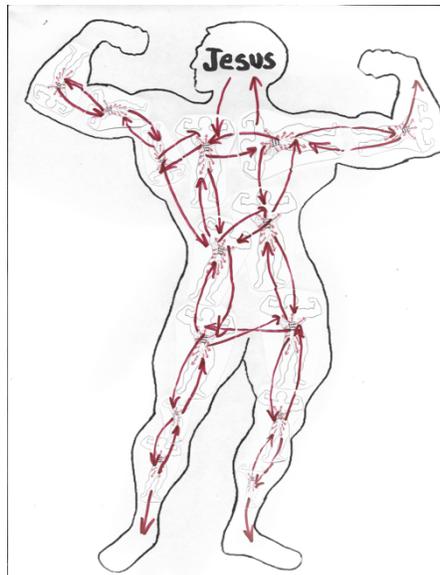
But when the Word preached, communes with the Word in our soul (even in the sacrament of the covenant of communion), we are begotten from above, the curtain rips, and the life of God begins to fill the temple (like a baby fills a womb).



But my temple is actually our temple, for we are literally the Body of Christ—which is the Israel of God—not an institution, but a communion called "Life."



So, once you've heard the Word, you'll know what to do—not as knowledge “taken” from a book of law but more like life given and now flowing in your veins.



You'll know what to do and have the skills to do it. You will bleed Grace and speak the Word—the Logic of Life, Sacrificial Love. That's a skill far more powerful than any that the Green Berets or CIA could ever teach. That's the work of the Word, who creates all things and brings all things together

I know it's hard to believe but I prepared these awesome graphics myself. I don't know if they're entirely accurate but hopefully you get the picture.

**Romans 11:5-7a:**

**So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. <sup>7</sup> What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect [ekloge=ek (of)+lego (say)<sup>xviii</sup>, the called, the chosen] obtained it...**

Now remember the point of election is not that some are chosen for heaven, and others for hell; the point is that God is the one that elects, the one that chooses—so you're not rewarded for your good free choice, your good free choice is God's gracious free choice given to you. In other word you're not rewarded for Love for there is not greater reward than to Love and be Loved, God is love, and Love binds everything together—that's God's choice! And if you think it's simply your choice you're dreaming.

**Romans 11:7b-8a:**

**The elect [the chosen] obtained it, but the rest were hardened, <sup>8</sup> as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor,**

That's Isaiah 29:10 and in the Hebrew "spirit of stupor" is this fascinating word, *tardemah*, used only a few times in the Old Testament. In Genesis Two before the fall God puts Adam in a *tardemah*, and there's no mention of God waking him up, until at least Isaiah 52 or maybe Easter. In Isaiah 29 Israel is dreaming that they are their own Creator.<sup>xix</sup> It's the dream in which each of us is trapped—the illusion that we can create ourselves—it's the product of the lie, that becomes the nightmare, which we often call "the ego."

**Romans 11:8b-10:**

**God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.<sup>9</sup> And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; <sup>10</sup> let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever [pas: always]**

That's David in Psalm 69:22, but check this out, it's also Jesus, who is the Word in David. Psalm 69 includes the words of Jesus spoken from the cross; the previous verse (69:23) is "They gave me sour wine to drink." Maybe the Word is waking David from a dream that has become a nightmare?

**Romans 11:11:**

**So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? That is: Did God harden their hearts, and trip them up, just so they'd fall? By no means! [Hell NO!]  
Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.**

Do you remember how the Prodigal Father poured his mercy on the prodigal son? He didn't just do that for love of the Prodigal Son; he did it for Love of his self-righteous son (the older brother) who was caught in the deepest darkness. He did it so both sons—all his children--- would believe that everything is Grace and so enjoy the Party.

**Romans 11:12:**

**Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!**

God is, and always has been, saving Israel—all of Israel. For his Word was spoken into Israel, in the beginning, as a seed. And now he can't save One without saving All. And he is that One, he is "Abba, Daddy," the Father who can't save himself without saving his children—all his children, his family. He can't enjoy the Party if you remain alone in outer darkness. He can't raise Jesus from the dead, without raising his Body. "I can't be saved without you, for I am you," whispers Jesus from behind the curtain in the Sanctuary of our Soul.

If you've heard the Word, you will know what to say, and all your skills will be employed in saying it. But if you haven't heard the Word, you will only speak law, and you won't bring life—you'll only spread death. You'll believe that some are hated, and others are loved, and you must save people from the judgment of God, when it's the Judgment of God to save us from ourselves (You'll do the work of the devil for him). But if you've heard the Word, you will speak the Word, even as the Word calls to you from the soul of your neighbor saying, "Who am I?" You will listen, and then respond:

- "I know who you are: you're a temple and the Spirit is deep within you; you're a manger that contains the Christ, you are a theater for the revelation of the glory of God."
- "I know who you are, and I know who we are: We're a family; we're a body; we are a party just waiting to happen—if only someone would save us from our insecure, competitive, arrogant selves."
- "We are one; I am you and you are me, and so I can't be saved without you."<sup>xx</sup>

When asked, who would be in heaven, Abraham Lincoln replied, "Everyone or no one."<sup>xxi</sup> Abraham Lincoln had heard the Word, and so he became a man of action but I'm not referring to a battle fought with guns; I'm referring to his words. He didn't just save the North from the South or the South from the North, he saved the nation from division and death.

A few months ago, Susan and I visited the Lincoln Memorial. And as I was standing there reading the Gettysburg address, right around the middle where Lincoln says something like, we can't dedicate these soldiers, but we can dedicate ourselves. Susan walked over to me and whispered in my ear, "Peter I just heard Jesus say, 'So many voices yet to be heard; So many people yet to be freed.'" I think Jesus is asking us to listen for his voice in the voice of our neighbor and then speak to that neighbor saying, "I know who we are."



## Communion

So, on the night that he was betrayed, the Word of God in flesh took bread and broke it saying, this is my body given to you, take and eat and do it in remembrance of me. And in the same way, after supper, he took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood; drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.

This is the Word of God [Peter points to the bread], in flesh [Peter points to the congregation], incarnate.

“Oh come, oh come Emmanuel. And ransom captive Israel...”

“Oh come desire of nations bind all peoples in one heart and mind...”

This is not heresy; it's answered prayer.

## Benediction

So, Lord Jesus, you are the king of kings and the Lord of glory, and I thank you for all that you've done for me, and for us. Lord God, I know that we've had all sorts of theories and ideas about why you hung on that tree or had to hang on that tree. Jesus, I think what Paul is saying is not simply that you took our place, you enter our place and actually make us your place. And you whisper from behind the curtain, "I can't be saved now, without you, for I have made you me."

And so right now—maybe you've never even prayed this. But maybe as you were listening to the sermon you thought, "dang, I hope that's true." Maybe that hope is just the size of a seed. Well, for a moment, live in that hope, walk into that hope, because this is what I think Jesus is asking you to pray: Dad, help me, save me from myself with yourself." When we call Abba Father, writes Paul—when we cry daddy—it is the Spirit himself, that's the Spirit of Jesus, bearing witness with our spirit now testifying to this fact that we are children of God. It doesn't mean there won't be suffering, you're in the process of being born but have hope because our Daddy's good, all the time. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jesus ate with Tax Collectors and sinners, and they seemed to enjoy it. And so, we've arranged for you to eat with some Tax Collectors and sinners as well—we're having a picnic on the patio. As you eat with these people you will notice some faults. But what will you say? How will you respond? I've always been amazed at how Jesus could say really hard things like, "Yes you have had five husbands... or go and sin no more." And yet sinners love to party with Jesus.

I suspect that it was because of the fact, that even as Jesus spoke the hard Truth, he incarnated the entire Truth. And so, with all his being, he communicated, "I know who *you* are, and I know who *we* are. We're a party, just waiting to happen. We're the kingdom of God. We're one, even as I and the Father are one." That means you are the answer to my prayer. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>ii</sup> Isaiah 45:23, 55:11

<sup>iii</sup> Isaiah 65:1-2

<sup>iv</sup> Romans 9:4

<sup>v</sup> Deuteronomy 31:17

<sup>vi</sup> Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47

<sup>vii</sup> Matthew 25:40

<sup>viii</sup> 1Kings 22:34-38

<sup>39</sup> "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." – Deuteronomy 32:39

<sup>ix</sup> Apparently, God even kills Elijah--John 3:13 "No one has ascended into heaven..." In 2 Kings 2, Elijah is taken up into "Heaven" (which can also be translated sky). But that wasn't the "heaven" from which Jesus descended, unless Elijah wasn't simply Elijah, but "The Son of Man." For "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (John 3:13). "It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Paul was, apparently, somehow, the Son of Man, or at least the Body of the Son of Man...

<sup>x</sup> Tony Campolo, *Everything You've Heard is Wrong*, p. 31.

<sup>xi</sup> As CS Lewis said so well, "The only place safe from all the dangers... of Love is hell."

<sup>xii</sup> Luke 9:24 and parallels

<sup>xiii</sup> Eternal life is an endless communion of sacrificial love and God is Love.

<sup>xiv</sup> We sometimes call this junior high but in truth it's all our "adult life."

<sup>xv</sup> Remember the story at the end of our last sermon? I once read the testimony of a girl, who had been beaten by her pimp and was lying alone in an ally, when she made a choice to call her parents and it saved her life. When asked what gave her the strength to make that call, this is what she said:

"I cheated and lied to my parents for two years before I ran away from home. Mom would try so hard to get through to me, but I treated her like dirt. Almost every day my mother would tell me that she loved me. She would say to me, ***'There's nothing you can do to make me stop loving you.'***" (Just words)

"I never gave her the satisfaction of knowing that her words were getting through. After running away, I would hear those words in every quiet moment. After being beaten senseless by the man who wanted to be my pimp, I was lying in a filthy alley ashamed and beyond hope, and my drugged and beaten brain could only handle one thought: ***There is nothing you can do that will make me stop loving you.***

I picked up the phone and called my mom. I may have given up on myself, but there was hope that she had not given up on me."

<sup>xvi</sup> The general truth that redemption will be universal, including the whole created order, is selectively represented, and realized, through a narrowing series of particularities-the whole Creation, Man, Israel, the faithful Remnant, the suffering Servant, Jesus

the Christ-which thereafter becomes a widening series represented and realized by the Apostles, the Church, redeemed Humanity, redeemed Creation.

- Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (S. C. M. 1951), pp. 115-117. Cited in J. S. Whale, Victor and Victim, page 89

<sup>xvii</sup> In John 5:38, Jesus says to “the Jews” of Israel, “You do not have his (the Father’s) word (logos) abiding in you.” And yet John has already told us that through the Word God has made everything that’s anything and that this Word in flesh is Christ. Moses tells the Israelites that the Word (dabar) is in their “heart” (Deuteronomy 30:14), and in Romans 10 Paul tells us that this Word is Christ. So perhaps the Word doesn’t “abide” in those “Jews” and yet it is “imprisoned” in those Jews, but not so they can do it, for their hearts need to be “circumcised” (Deuteronomy 30:6).

<sup>xviii</sup> Just the construction of this verb tells us that the chosen are the work of the Word. They are those whom the Word (logos) has spoken (lego) into existence: “of, or out of, speaking.” The true you, that God has created, is “the chosen.” The false you that you think you have created is the condemned and rejected for it is of it’s father the devil, the product of the lie (John 8:44)

<sup>xix</sup> Isaiah 29:16

<sup>xx</sup> Scripture is clear that Jesus descended into hell, and so this is what I think he whispers to every child of God, trapped in their own ego, “You are me, and so, I can’t be saved without you.” In praying for those struggling with abuse in their past, it appears that Jesus is always there, in the place of abuse, although not perceived. Once when praying for a friend who didn’t want to see an old memory, which she thought would be herself tied up and locked in a closet, we discovered that it was, in fact, Jesus tied up and locked in the same closet. When we went back in prayer and she opened the closet door that is what she saw—Jesus tied up in her closet. By refusing to love herself in that place, she was refusing to love Jesus in that place in herself. And by speaking the Word of Grace in that place, she saved Jesus from that place. “Whatever you do to the least of these you do to him,” even if, perhaps especially if, the least of these is yourself.

<sup>xxi</sup>David Bentley Hart in this lecture titled, Universalism and the Nature of Persons:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=594&v=5Sgz2ffFAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=594&v=5Sgz2ffFAo)

When Abraham Lincoln was criticized for being too courteous to his enemies and reminded that it was his duty to destroy them, he gave the great answer, “Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?”

- Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1975). *The Gospel of Luke* (p. 130). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.